

Foreword

The media and communication research associations of the Nordic countries in cooperation with Nordicom have held conferences every second year since 1973. These Nordic conferences have contributed greatly to the development of media and communication research in the Nordic countries. The 19th conference in the series was held in Karlstad, Sweden, 13th-15th August 2009. Host for the conference was the Association for Swedish Media and Communication Research (FSMK). About 265 scholars from Denmark (37), Finland (43), Iceland (2), Norway (53) and Sweden (114) gathered to discuss current research and findings. In addition, some participants came from further afield, from the Baltic States, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, South Africa and the USA.

The conference proceedings included plenary sessions with keynote speakers and thematic seminars in different working groups. In addition participants enjoyed a number of social gatherings and cultural events. The theme of the plenary sessions this year was *Body, Soul and Society*. This special issue of *Nordicom Review* contains all the lectures held in plenary sessions.

As usual, the main business of the conference took place in the working group sessions. More than 175 research papers were presented in 12 working groups:

Environment, Science and Risk Communication; Journalism Studies; Media and Communication History; Media, Culture and Society; Media, Globalization and Social Change; Media Literacy and Media Education; Media Organizations, Policy and Economy; Media, Technology and Aesthetics; Organization, Communication and Society; Political Communication; Theory, Philosophy and Ethics of Communication; and Theme Division: Body Soul and Society.

Responsibility for arranging the conferences is divided into two parts. More comprehensive questions, such as the theme, keynote speakers, working groups and fees are the responsibility of a Nordic Planning Committee, whose members are appointed by the national media and communication research associations and Nordicom. Members of the Committee that planned the conference were Lars Holmgaard Christensen, SMID (Denmark); Sinikka Torkola and Juha Koivisto, TOY (Finland); Þorbjörn Broddason (University of Iceland); Kristin Skare Orgeret and Audun Engelstad, NML (Norway); André Jansson, FSMK (Sweden); and Ulla Carlsson, Nordicom.

A Local Planning Committee at Karlstad University was responsible for the arrangements and details of the conference: André Jansson (Chair), Miyase Christensen, Lars Högberg, Helena Persson, Malin Svenningsson Elm and Jakob Svensson (conference general).

The next *Nordic Conference on Media and Communication Research* is to be held in Akureyri, Iceland, 11-13 August 2011.

Göteborg in May 2010

Ulla Carlsson

Director

Nordicom

Body, Soul and Society

Rethinking Media and Communication Ontologies

The 19th Nordic Conference on Media and Communication Research

Miyase Christensen & André Jansson

It is a common discernment that modern Western societies entail a problematic division between the conceptual realms of “body” and “soul”, and that the ideal of rational thinking and progress (the mind) has come to dominate both. It is also a commonplace argument that Western modernity – in its disciplination, individualization and commodification of body (and soul) – differs sharply from both traditional societies and Eastern philosophies. A brief look at the past few centuries of Western thinking, however, reveals obvious fields of tension within the various veins of Western social theory and their conceptions of modernity. Efforts towards understanding modernity were always accompanied by inquiries into the forces of rationality and discipline, on the one hand, and enchantment and hedonism, on the other. Earlier social theorists conceived differently of the individual and society, and the social versus spiritual realms against the backdrop of modernity, producing competing visions. Where Marx saw a capitalist society and grounds for revolution, Durkheim (following Comte) saw an industrial society and the need for evolution, and Weber a paradox of rationalism that deeply marked modernity, which ultimately produced a disenchanted culture. Questions of body and soul, in all their articulations, have been crucial to both social scientific and humanistic analysis, and continue to be integral to numerous current debates – not least in media and communication studies – and to normative visions of what constitutes the “good life” and “good society”.

Ontological understandings of Body, Soul, Society and related concepts are also linked, and increasingly more directly, to the status of media and communication in society. Parallel to this, as media and communication studies evolve in their increasing interdisciplinarity, a holistic approach to identifying and expanding upon the enduring and emerging patterns of such conceptual, theoretical formations becomes necessary. Various landmarks in the social scientific and humanistic roots of the field provide entry points for such deliberation: from functionalist sociology to the collapse of arts and aesthetics into critical theory, to the more autonomous accounts of the “cultural” and the “aesthetic” in post-structuralist analysis; from the Romantics’ sublime and the banal to “new media” aesthetics of remediated visuality; and, from the mind-centred conceptions of the triad of human agency-social life-modernity in Freudian and Lacanian theory to the body-oriented psychology of Reich, to postmodern, gender and queer theoretical accounts of the self and society in a state of ambivalence and dislocation.

The development and appropriation of media technologies, ideologies, and cultural forms (re)produce and respond to these fundamental notions – as “conceptions of re-

ality". In particular, political and moral debates regarding the "fears" and "wonders" of new media vis-à-vis lifestyle habits tend to highlight society's basic (competing) assumptions concerning the material and mental/spiritual nature of human ontology. Added to these are the growing centrality of risk communication and environmental sustainability issues in media and communication studies, and the emphasis placed on effective communication methods for social change.

The objective of the conference theme for NordMedia 2009 was to scrutinize the triadic interplay between Body, Soul and Society in terms of how they have been, and are currently, understood, implied and implemented in media and communication studies and to what ends. The approach was twofold, dealing, on the one hand, with how Body, Soul and Society have been applied as concepts of "reality", and, on the other, with how they have (re)produced certain formations of knowledge. How do these concepts, in their broadest sense, produce certain ways of thinking in media and communication studies? How is the thinking around these categories bound up with (inter)disciplinary fields of power in terms of scholarly traditions and paradigms? A reflexive analysis of the different conceptions of these and a wide range of related notions throughout the history of media and communication studies would also offer an important key to our understanding of the development of certain fields and paradigms.

While each concept attains a certain autonomous status, and may therefore be associated with different kinds of scholarly work, the goal of the theme was above all to consider Body, Soul and Society as an ontological ensemble. Through the conceptual locus of Body, Soul and Society, the conference was geared towards ontological debates of broader concern than what might be achieved through "intra-disciplinary" concepts such as media, communication, audience, convergence, etc. This means that the theme also assessed where and how media and communication studies are linked to surrounding fields and disciplines, as well as how contemporary transformations of media and communication research are related to historical debates and concepts. In order to bring about this double dialogue, the theme was also operationalized through a re-assessment of classical scholarly debates, which have problematized the Body-Soul-Society interplay in various ways.

Mission Impossible?

Neoliberal Subjects and Empowerment

Mikko Lehtonen

My contribution today has two immediate contexts. First, in an ongoing multidisciplinary research project “The Power of Culture in Producing Common Sense (POWCULT)”, funded by the Academy of Finland (2007-2010), I have for some time now tried to comprehend the mechanisms of contemporary power in late-modern societies. Second, I have become loosely involved in a new green-red Finnish social movement that unites civil activists, politicians from social democratic, leftist and green parties, researchers and others who are against neo-liberalism. The movement uses for itself the title “Freedom to choose otherwise”. In both the POWCULT research project and in this emergent political movement, I have frequently wondered about the paradox of contemporary Finnish politics that can be formulated in the following way: If people in all opinion polls, at every turn, indicate that they support anti-neo-liberal objectives, why do they equally persistently, in elections, cast their votes for those who implement neo-liberal policies?

So: Where is the liberation in contemporary media culture? The traditional emancipation-oriented answer to this question would emphasize that dominant media are a vital part of an oppressive system because they are too close to the ruling powers. An advocate of this view might argue that commercial media are owned by capitalists and promote proprietors’ interests, whereas publicly owned media are controlled by the political system and tend to promote the interests of those wielding political power. According to this traditional view, in order to make space for liberation, media should be distanced from both economic and political rulers and brought closer to the people.

There are important initiatives based on such thinking in which people try to promote alternative, more democratic forms of media. Movements for civic or citizen journalism are noteworthy examples of such efforts. Today, however, I will not link the media’s complicity in the subjection of human beings to the fact that they are too close to the ruling powers. Instead, I want to point out that the media are part of the hegemonic order specifically because they are too close to the “people”.

Before you start pelting me with rotten eggs, let me clarify that by the term “people” I am not referring to those humans, flesh and blood, who live in today’s Nordic countries. On the contrary, I use the term “people” to refer to the *ideal constructions* that the dominant media produce by perpetually framing everything in terms of nationalities. By

looking at reality through the peepholes of Finnishness, Danishness, Icelandishness, Norwegianness or Swedishness, the Nordic media make themselves part of the “national-popular” project of neo-liberalism, where “us” is incessantly defined by representing ideas of what “we” should be like and who fits into this concept of “us”.

As such, the “people” – an ideal construction of the dominant media – has little to do with the traditional notions of “people” cherished by the nationalist movements of the 19th century or by the leftist movements of the 20th century. This is due not least to the fact that, in the Nordic countries, we can no longer find such authentic, uneducated and hence unspoilt “people” so treasured by these influential social and cultural movements of the past. For instance, in 2007, 65 percent of the Finnish population had completed upper secondary school, vocational school, polytechnic or a university education. Furthermore, among Finns aged 25 to 29 years, some 85 percent had this level of education (Statistics Finland 2008). The democratization of education has eroded traditional cultural hierarchies and hence rendered problematic national-romantic or leftist notions of the “people” as in any sense “authentic”.

In a situation where the vast majority of the population has received not only a basic education but also at least some further training, in media publicity the ideal “us” tends to be identified with the middle classes. These middle classes have, for their part, an inclination to perceive themselves as the vanguards of modernity. This ideal “us” consists of people who consider themselves to be broadminded, law-abiding and industrious citizens, who at the same time are also active but responsible consumers. This “us” refers to modern people who are committed to traditional virtues, but who also have “the capacity to be forward-looking, innovative and entrepreneurial” (Clarke and Fink 2008, 231).

The ideal neo-liberal citizens are moral, choice-making, self-directed and self-regulating subjects (Clarke 2005). The contemporary dominant media are complicit in producing such ideal subjects because they – the media, that is – form a huge decency machine that constructs the respectable mass it represents as the moral majority. Acting as a decency machine, both “serious” and “popular” media reproduce day in and day out the standard wisdom or common sense, namely, that which is taken for granted and within which the majority of people mostly make sense of their lives (cf. Williams 1977, 110).

The *modus operandi* of the dominant media in producing this hegemonic order is to create two groups: “us” and “them”. “Us” consists of active citizens capable of governing their lives by themselves, whereas “them” is built up of such populations that require interventions from the authorities in order to adapt to the prevailing order (cf. Dean 1999, 167). The production of the self-governing “us” and the governed “them” is achieved by decoding the empirical population – the population that is socio-demographically inevitably diverse – into an ideal, relatively uniform people, “us”, that does not include those who do not conform, “them”.

In this sense, nations are not just “imagined communities”, as they were famously characterized by Benedict Anderson (2006), but also “political imaginaries” (Clarke and Fink 2008, 228). In other words, “nations” and “people” are ideal constructions. To use Partha Chatterjee’s (2004, 36) terms for peoples and populations, the heterogeneous “social” that contains everyone is translated in the media into the homogeneous “national”, consisting only of those who respond to the ideal definitions of “usness”.

To put it differently, a system of differences – the population – is decoded into an imaginary unity – the people (cf. Clarke and Fink 2008, 234). In the dominant media, the discrepancy between the homogeneous national self-image and the heterogeneous social reality is then swept under the carpet by reviewing everything from the point of view of this ideal “us”.

Let me add that this “us” is not only exclusive in the sense that it depends on excluding part of the population outside the “people”. As a matter of fact, this “us” can be in a hegemonic position only by virtue of being inclusive. In other words this “us” must incessantly try to incorporate various formerly “foreign” elements into its own domain. Hence there is an ongoing project for translating new social and cultural elements among the population into the language of “us”, thereby domesticating them and linking or articulating them into “usness”. A relatively recent example of this is how the first Finnish Eurovision song contest winner *Lordi*, who was certainly nowhere near mainstream notions of Finnishness, was grafted into the national imageries in 2006. In this way, the “us” can retain its dominant position as a result of its incessant incorporation of emergent socio-cultural elements (cf. Williams 1980, 38-39).

Stressing the processes of incorporation, however, is not the same as saying that the political system or the dominant media publicity represents the population and its characteristics in all their diversity. Nowadays there is lot of talk about how media publicity has been colonized not only by celebrities, but also by ordinary people. It is said that each of us is now entitled to our 15 minutes of fame. But when pondering whether or not this is true, we must also take into consideration that even in cases where ordinary Joe’s and Jane’s have become more prominent on the agenda of various media, this does not necessarily mean that they themselves can determine how they are framed in the media. Not everyone present in the media is there as an object of desire or as something everyone is expected to identify with.

Perhaps this constant dividing of the population into sheep and goats in the dominant media publicity is what makes it too easy for cheap populists to claim that they represent the so-called “forgotten people”. The whole concept of “forgotten people” may well be possible only because the empirical lower classes so seldom, if ever, appear in quality media publicity except in a negative light, as examples of all that must be avoided at any cost. Consequently, demoted populists can rest “on claims that the voice of the people is typically excluded or repressed by the dominant institutional forms of politics and social life” (Clarke et al. 2007, 11).

In highlighting the respectable middle-class “us” and repressing the not-so-well-off “them”, the media function in much the same way as the prevalent direction of politics during the past two or three decades. Again taking Finland as an example, the real income of all population groups has increased over the past 40 years, but, as is well known, those with the highest incomes have increased their share of this whole faster than anyone else has. When differences in income are discussed, however, it is seldom noted that, on top of the rich becoming filthy rich, middle-income people have become considerably wealthier than have low-income people (see Statistics Finland 2009). In other words, the relatively well-off are better off than before, whereas the not particularly well-off are relatively worse off than they used to be.

Let me add in passing that the division between “us” and “them” I have outlined here resembles the ideas concerning the so-called “the two-thirds, one-third society”

(Therborn 1989), where two thirds of the population are relatively well-off, while one third are either engaged in de-skilled part-time work or form a new “underclass” of the unemployed and unemployable.

As noted, the dominant media are the key arena for the erection of the cultural order corresponding to these growing differences between various population groups. In contemporary Nordic societies, publicness is the space where people imagine who they are, who they ought to be and who they want to be. “People”, “decency” and “usness”, which are incessantly defined in the media, are pillars of the cultural order that occupy the hegemonic position in these societies.

Just as people imagine themselves belonging to a national community, they also think of themselves as certain kinds of persons who live in certain kinds of societies. Members of the modern middle classes can, then, conceive of themselves as law-abiding and hard-working. They can feel “named, incentivized and rewarded” as they are “offered forms of choice and voice, garlanded with varieties of tax credits, and blessed with [...] ‘relative autonomy’” (Clarke 2005, 458). These middle-class people have the right to choose – as long as they choose correctly.

British sociologist Beverley Skeggs writes about this drawing of boundaries between the modern middle classes and their others in her *Class, Self, Culture* (2004, 94) as follows:

The working-classes are being spoken of in many different ways: as underclass, as white blockage to modernity and global prosperity, as irresponsible selves to blame for structural inequality, as passive non-market competitors, as lacking in agency and culture, whilst the middle-classes are represented as the vanguard of the modern, as a national identity and a cultural resource. In this symbolic identification and evaluation we see class divisions being made.

Skeggs refers here to Pierre Bourdieu (1986, 6), who famously remarked: “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier.” What is at stake in the relation between the middle and lower classes is not, however, just what people like and favour. Equally important is what they dislike and reject. According to Bourdieu (ibid., 56): “In matters of taste, more than anywhere else, any determination is negation; and tastes are no doubt first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance (“sick-making”) of the taste of others”.

Such, then, is the ideological effect of the tabloid press or reality television: When those who identify with “us” are horrified by all the tastelessness they are seduced or compelled to witness, they at the same time use all this vulgarity as the building materials of their middle-class selves. In other words, they realize who they are by recognizing who they are not: “Whatever or whoever we are, we definitely are not like that!”

From this perspective, popular publicity is a focal arena for setting norms for oneself and for others. It is a scene of the constant definition of right and wrong, normal and deviant, desirable and reprehensible. As such, it is a venue where two figures that were earlier thought to be separate from each other are intertwined with each other. These figures are the “citizen” and the “consumer”.

“Citizen” has long referred to a responsible and rational figure who moves in areas of cultural, social and economic life, whereas “consumer” has been seen as an inhabitant of the marketplace. Splitting the modern subject in half, into the “citizen” and the “con-
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mer”, reflects the liberal political imaginary where *homo politicus* and *homo æconomicus* co-exist, occupying different areas or domains of social life (Clarke et al. 2007, 3).

Both the citizen as a political construct and the consumer as an economic construct are key figures in the liberal social imagery of Western capitalist democracies (ibid., 2). The former is a public, the latter a private figure. The citizen is “an egalitarian figure, lodged in a republican imaginary of liberty, equality and solidarity” with horizontal relationships to other citizens and vertical relationships to the state that evoke bonds of mutual obligation. By contrast, “the consumer is located in economic relationships”, “engaged in economic transactions in the marketplace” and “exchanging money for commodified goods and services” (ibid.).

To use Foucauldian terms, the citizen is a farsighted “subject of right” or “*homo juridicus*”, whereas the consumer is an egoistic “subject of interest” or “*homo æconomicus*” (Foucault 2008, 252- 253, 274). As *homo æconomicus*, this subject is, to quote Michel Foucault, “an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself” (ibid., 226), who nevertheless is in need of “a political and moral framework” (ibid., 243) so that society will not totally collapse. Indeed, even our late-modern societies are in need of some kind of order, constrained or internalized, so as not to break down due to alienation and anomie (cf. Eagleton 2000, 70).

Now these two, the citizen and the consumer, create a new hybrid: the “citizen-consumer”. The term “citizen-consumer” was first deployed by New Labour in an administrative document in 1998 (Clarke 2007, 161-162). It was connected to New Labour’s aim to transform “citizens from passive recipients of state assistance into active self-sustaining individuals” (Clarke 2005, 448). In the governmental parlance, the term normally refers to an idea of people being “experts of their own condition” and “co-producers” of services (ibid., 172), highlighting “choice” in such areas as education, social and health care. The concept of “citizen-consumer” indicates “the potential spread of market-based experiences, expectations, practices and relationships to the public realm” (Clarke et al. 2007, 4). Here, however, I want to expand the area the term covers and propose it as a means to refer to such neo-liberal subjectivity, where the two sides of middle-class modern subjects, responsible citizenship and hedonistic consumerism, are articulated to each other.

Citizen-consumers are not governed only from “above” or “outside” but also and rather from “inside”. Mediatization, the increasing role of media in people’s ideals and practices, brings sites of governance from outside of the subjects inside them. If Michel Foucault spoke of *panopticon*, where the few control the many, Thomas Mathiesen (1997), Zygmunt Bauman (2001) and others have more recently underlined that in modernity the mass media set the many to watch over the few. This *synopticon* is not, however, just between the many and the few, but also between the many and the many, meaning that each and everyone oversees not only everyone else but also him-/herself. By this constant surveillance of others and oneself, individuals incessantly set limits not only on others but also on themselves.

For those in the hegemonic position, this can only be good news, as their views and values in this way manage to permeate the guts of “us” and become a more or less integral part of what “we” feel we are. In this way, the dominant media of today not only constitute a decency machine, but also a huge apparatus for producing and reproducing various forms of selfhood. A fundamental aspect of the identity construction of

this middle-class “us” is that people thus interpellated distinguish themselves from the lower classes, those backward obstacles to modernity and global prosperity who lack in responsibility, culture or working capacity.

The distinction between “us” and “them” entails both the consumer and the citizen halves of the citizen-consumers. As hedonistic consumers with mature tastes and quality lifestyles, “us” can identify themselves with modernity and upward mobility. As responsible citizens, the very same “us” can see themselves as parts of a national whole who, even though they are undeniably pleasure-seeking consumers, do not think only of instant gratification of their desires, but are also capable of thinking of their own long-term interests as well as the interests of society as a whole.

Where does this, then, take us in relation to empowerment? What has empowerment to do with these neo-liberal subjects, the “us” of citizen-consumers? And how about “them”, those not too well-off who may especially be in need of all kinds of empowerment?

I’m afraid that there’s no good news for either, “us” or “them”. As far as “us” are concerned, the views I have outlined imply that activating and empowering “citizen-consumers” may well represent a new form of subjection. I have no time to develop the argument here, but only quote what the principal character Mother Courage interjects in Bertolt Brecht’s *Mother Courage and her children* (ca. 1940): “Let’s you and me go fishing, said the angler to the worm.”

In other words, the hegemonic system is able to persuade the decent “us” to work in the interests of those in power by portraying the interests of the few to be the interests of the many. From this perspective, empowerment can be seen as a technology of citizenship, “a strategy or technique for the transformation of subjectivity from powerlessness to active citizenship” (Dean 1999, 67). When these active consumer-citizens, “us”, are busy differentiating themselves from “them”, they have neither the time nor inclination to stop to ponder how free they ultimately are.

Needless to say, this active citizenship must then be bound to certain limits. As noted, active citizens and consumers have the right to choose – as long as they choose correctly. Perhaps this “us”, then, lives in a concentration camp with the word “Freedom” written over the gate.

But how about “them” and their empowerment? When we in cultural and media studies speak of empowerment, don’t we normally mainly have in mind the variously underprivileged people? The story may be largely forgotten, but notions of empowerment were first elaborated in the 1960s among leftists in the US who wanted to generate political resistance (Cruikshank 1999, 68). The whole notion of empowerment, however, ever since its coinage, has been a battleground between leftists and neo-liberals, the latter seeing it as means of producing “rational economic and entrepreneurial actors” (ibid.). To neo-liberals, empowerment, as a technology of citizenship, could be seen, as Barbara Cruikshank (ibid., 69) points out, as “the means by which government works *through* rather than *against* the subjectivities of citizens”. According to Cruikshank (ibid., 72), the will to empower is “neither clearly liberatory nor clearly repressive; rather, it is typical of the liberal arts of conduct and the political rationality of the welfare state”.

There remains, then, empowerment and empowerment. Perhaps this is why we as researchers should not take for granted that all the empowerment we are so fond of is automatically opposed to the structures and tendential forces of hegemonic social formations. As Lawrence Grossberg (1997, 197) has pointed out in relation to popular

readings of cultural texts or popular consumption, not even “all ‘negotiated’ readings or uses of a text are oppositional, or even resistant”. This is why cultural or media scholars should not, according to Grossberg, “construct the everyday as if it were absolutely autonomous, and its practices as if they were always forms of empowerment, resistance and intervention”. For Grossberg, this would simply answer too many questions ahead of time. He underlines that “[e]mpowerment by a single practice is, after all, never total, never available to everyone, never manifested in exactly the same way, and moreover, its success is never guaranteed”.

Grossberg (*ibid.*) acknowledges that “[t]he recognition that there is a politics operating within everyday life is an important advance, which further enables us to talk about the complex effects of cultural practices in multiple domains”. This insight as such, however, is not enough, because after discerning these everyday micro-politics, we have to ask about their relations and effects on the various workings of power, macro level included.

Wendy Brown (1995, 22-23) makes a similar point when she observes that “empowerment” sometimes “registers the possibility of generating one’s capacities, one’s ‘self-esteem,’ one’s life course, without capitulating to constraints by particular regimes of power”. “Indeed”, Brown (*ibid.*, 23) remarks, “the possibility that one can ‘feel empowered’ without being so forms an important element of legitimacy for the anti-democratic dimensions of liberalism”. Is it not the case that, as consumers especially, we often have strong feelings of empowerment that, on closer inspection, do not actually increase our ability to direct our own lives?

Such views as Grossberg’s or Brown’s call for a more careful analysis of empowerment. The two especially stress the need to link analyses on the micro level to those on the meso and macro levels. There may be and certainly are all kinds of “empowering” practices we as researchers are able to detect and celebrate. There are, however, no guarantees that such empowering practices will not be incorporated into the dominant culture. Sometimes the dominant culture can even count on the attractiveness of such empowering practices when launching new products, just as, for instance, those studying “girl power” (e.g. Miles 1998, 123) or cosmetics advertising (Lazar 2006) have shown. “Empowerment” may form the basis of truly alternative or even oppositional practices that effectively go beyond the limits of dominant definitions of the good and just life. This cannot, however, be assumed beforehand, but must always be demonstrated in a concrete analysis of empowering practices in their specific historical contexts.

It is time to sum up these contemplations. Where, then, is liberation in contemporary media culture? In light of what I have said, liberation does not necessarily reside in agency or empowerment *per se*, as increasing control over one’s life, as desirable as it might as such be, is not necessarily equivalent to emancipation. When researchers discuss empowerment, the focus is too often on individual or small group agency. When we think of liberation or emancipation, however, the focus should be not only on these micro or meso level activities, but also on the level of majorities.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines emancipation as “the action or process of setting free or delivering from [...] restraints imposed by superior physical force or legal obligation” or “delivering from intellectual, moral, or spiritual fetters”. Subjugated individuals or small-scale groups may well achieve some at least temporary emancipation without major changes in the power structures of their societies, but their empowerment cannot be guaranteed without some more general emancipation of the majority.

As long as this does not happen, the agency of “citizen-consumers” may well advance the interests of the neo-liberal regimes. Not even openly resistant activities are safe from the regime, as they, too, may be incorporated into the workings of the system. Isn’t capitalism, ultimately, the most flexible and adaptive economical and political system in human history thus far? Doesn’t it constantly dissolve barriers, deconstruct oppositions and pitch diverse life-forms together (Eagleton 1996, 61)?

I have no magic formula to blow the current regime to bits. I do not, however, want to give up on searching for a cure to our maladies. One of the most urgent tasks in the Nordic countries is to do something to stop the expansion of populist xenophobia. Interestingly enough, fear of strangers seems to be most common among those who do not seem to fit into the modern “us”. The “us”, instead, have little to fear in the face of immigration. It is easy to be tolerant and preach tolerance to others if one meets immigrants mostly in the media or while picking up exotic spices from ethnic shops.

Instead of relying on the traditional enlightenment of the educated and hoping for the best, I propose an alternative strategy. If those who feel excluded from the decent middle-class “us” could find their experiences and conceptions aired in equal measure with those already blessed in policy decisions and in the media, they would not necessarily need to feel threatened or discriminated against. If the dominant policies and prevailing media representations did not blame these human beings, if they were not seen predominantly as backward people in need of general enlightenment, if the official society and dominant media discussed their genuine concerns and the actual contradictions that may accompany the multiculturalization of Nordic societies, then cheap populism could possibly be kept from acting in the name of these people.

In media culture, this would require abolishing the model of viewing everything from the viewpoint of the decent middle-class “us”. Instead of a media of an ideal “nation” we should have a media of the actual “population”. Generating such media is also one of the challenges for researchers who seek to contribute to liberation in contemporary media culture.

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Utopia and Torture in the Hollywood War Film

Rikke Schubart

I want to show how an unpleasant element – the torture scene in the Hollywood war film – may be read as a site of Utopia. Viewed in a larger perspective, I claim that Hollywood can envision a better society and that popular film can address political ideas of progress and freedom. This approach is, of course, naive and Utopian in the derogatory sense of the word.

The talk is divided into three parts: first, a discussion of *Utopia*; second, a look at *the torture scene* in the Hollywood war film; and, third, popular culture as a site of *naive* political discourse.

Utopia

Now, why use “Utopia”, a word that indicates the very *opposite* of war, in connection with war?

“Utopia” brings to mind Thomas More, the English author and statesman who coined the term and based his novel *Utopia* (1516) on eyewitness accounts of America, the newfound continent. To Europeans, America symbolized a Utopia – constructed from the Greek *uto* (meaning no) and *topos* (place) – which was the dream of an ideal society that existed nowhere.¹ It is not in this sense I use Utopia. Instead, I wish to turn to historian Jay Winter who, in *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the 20th Century* (2006), distinguishes between “major” and “minor” Utopias and Utopians.² Major Utopians are people such as Hitler, Stalin, and Osama Bin Laden, who wanted to alter the order of the world. With their crimes against mankind, the term Utopia was contaminated, says Winter, and rings today with echoes of war, tyranny, and genocide. Reclaiming the term’s positive content – the ideal society – Winter coins the expressions *minor utopias* and *minor utopians*. Minor Utopians are people with visions of things that will make the world better, “visions of partial transformations, of pathways out of the ravages of war, or away from the indignities of the abuse of human rights. Such imaginings are powerful and sketch out a world very different from the one we live in, but from which not all social conflict or all oppression has been eliminated” (Winter 2006: 5).

One example of a minor Utopian is French lawyer René Cassin, who after being wounded in the First World War fought for war veterans’ rights and, during the Second World

War, for human rights. Cassin believed such rights should be above politics and nationalism. In 1948, his labor resulted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is an example of how minor Utopians “have focused less on nation and social class and more on civil society and human rights” and have “a more limited, decentered, eclectic, transnational approach, which paradoxically aims at the construction of ‘global civil society’” (Winter 2006: 6). Working within nations and institutionalized systems, minor utopians seek to realize their visions to the benefit of a global and transpolitical civilization.

Winter points to a paradox at the heart of Utopia: It is both a narrative “imagining a radical act of disjunction, enabling people, acting freely and in concert with others, to realize the potential imprisoned by the way we live now,” yet on the other hand it is also a discourse that “force(s) us to face the fact that we do not live there; we live here, and we cannot but use the language of the here and now” (Winter 2006: 3). Utopian discourses envision stories of a better world knowing very well that this world is not ours, yet hoping to realize it in the near future. Aware that today is a period of more warfare than the preceding decades, Winter still points to minor Utopias as “spaces in which the contradictions of a period are embodied and performed, and new possibilities are imagined” (Winter 2006: 205).³

Winter’s Utopians are from the world of politics, law, and religion. I wish to widen his perspective and include film. After all, what better medium than Hollywood to create the visions of which Winter speaks? Many will disagree that Hollywood has anything to do with Utopia, as Hollywood represents a “valueless” culture to both the cultural left and the cultural right. Such an argument, however, is aesthetic rather than political, and I shall leave this out of my talk.

In my use, a minor Utopia is a vision of a better world, a vision that locates problems and ambiguities, that searches for action, that is born out of a faith in mankind and a desire to inspire hope and that, finally, transcends nation, culture, and religion. It is “minor” in the sense that it harbors no illusions of being able to alter the world, yet insists on trying to make it a better place nonetheless.

Torture

I wish now to turn to the torture scene. We find torture in most genres concerned with violence, among them westerns, gangster films, crime films, and horror films.⁴ Here, I shall address torture in the war film and war drama.

The torture scene opens a *zone of confrontation* between “us” and an “enemy”: “we” are virtuous, innocent, strong, and brave, while the “enemy” is evil, sadistic, weak, and inhuman. We find this confrontation in Hollywood films like *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Missing in Action* (1984), and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985). The torture scene uses two metaphors, namely *soldier-as-man-of-steel*, that is, a hero-soldier who does not break under torture (because a “real” man is a man of steel), and *torture-as-test*, that is, torture as a test of the hero’s masculinity (is he a real man?).⁵ Before 1991, the torture scene in war films would use the discourse of masculinity (does this hurt?) and only rarely the discourse of law (is this legal?).

The myth of masculinity in the torture scene ties in with two other metaphors of war described by George Lakoff as *enemy-as-demon* and *the-fairytale-of-just-war*. Lakoff points to an asymmetry between hero and enemy:

The hero is moral and courageous, while the villain is amoral and vicious. The hero is rational, but though the villain may be cunning and calculating, he cannot be reasoned with. Heroes thus cannot negotiate with villains; they must defeat them. The *enemy-as-demon* metaphor arises as a consequence of the fact that we understand what a just war is in terms of this fairy tale (Lakoff 1992: 467).

Before 1991, the conservative metaphors of *soldier-as-steel*, *torture-as-test*, *enemy-as-demon* and *the-fairytale-of-just-war* dominated the American war film. After 1991 and after what we call “the new world order,” these metaphors began to change.

Let me use David O. Russell’s *Three Kings* from 1999 to show this. In *Three Kings*, four American soldiers steal gold from Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War in 1991. As they take the gold from a bunker in the desert, they find dissidents who are being tortured by Saddam’s soldiers. At first they ignore the dissidents, but on a second visit they try to liberate the dissidents while stealing the gold. During the escape, one American soldier is captured and taken down to the cellar.

Down in the cellar, the torturer Captain Said (Saïd Taghmaoui) asks a strange question: “My main man, tell me something: What is the problem with Michael Jackson?” “What do you mean?” says Troy (Mark Wahlberg), the soldier. Said explains: “He come to Egypt. I see picture in newspaper. ‘Hello’ with the white glove. I’m Michael Jackson in my hotel room with my chop-up face. Your country make him chop up his face!” When Troy says Michael Jackson did this to himself, Said hits him: “Your sick fucking country made the black man hate himself, just like you hate the Arabs and the children you bomb over here!” Then the topic changes from Michael Jackson to family. An American bomb has killed Said’s one-year-old son and left his wife without legs. “Can you think how it feels inside your heart if I bomb your daughter?” he asks Troy. Troy imagines his wife and three-week-old daughter Krystal hit by a bomb. And Troy cries. Sitting in the cellar and being tortured by the enemy, the American soldier cries when he imagines what it would feel like if the Iraqi military did to his country what the American military is doing to Iraq.

Comparing this scene with the torture in *Deer Hunter* or *Rambo*, “us” and “the enemy” have changed: in the seventies and eighties, Americans were tortured so they could kill a demon-enemy. Necessity was in place and legitimacy was not an issue. Now, in 1999, the enemy is humanized – the torturer Said only signed up so he could earn extra money for his family – and the hero is a thief. The torture is not harsh, but almost *torture-light*, an educational torture that teaches the American hero to see things from the enemy’s point of view. He realizes the Gulf War is about oil, and when Troy is free he does not kill Said.

The dialogue about Michael Jackson is about torture and about discrimination against two peoples, the Afro-Americans in the US and the Arabs in the Middle East. Metaphors change from *the-soldier-as-steel* to *the-caring-soldier* (after the torture Troy helps the dissidents escape) and from *torture-as-test* to *torture-as-intense-attention*. The torture scene is widened from a zone of confrontation to a *zone of contact* where values are debated.

After 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the metaphors changed once again. Films like *The Road to Guantánamo* (2006), *Rendition* (2007), and *Body of Lies* (2008) problematize torture and the question of legality in, among other places, Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib. The mythic discourse of masculinity, which has until now dominated the torture scene, now meets the juridical discourse of law and politics.

Let me use Ridley Scott's *Body of Lies* (2008) to illustrate this development. Both a drama, a thriller, and an action film, the plot is about CIA agent Ferris (Leonardo DiCaprio) who is hunting terrorists in the Middle East, in particular the terrorist Al-Saleem who is second in command in al Qaeda and responsible for a bombing in Manchester, which we see at the beginning of the film. Ferris is first in Iraq, then in Jordan, where he asks for the help of the Head of Jordanian Intelligence, Hani (Mark Strong).



1. CIA-agent Ferris (Leonardo DiCaprio) must watch the American interrogating of suspects in Ridley Scott's war drama *Body of Lies* (2008), where looks at torture and scenes of torture are constantly in play.



2. Is this torture or interrogation?



3. Bad conscience

Most films place torture in the middle of a plot, where it tests the protagonist, but *Body of Lies* has three torture scenes, one at the beginning, one in the middle and one in the end. Torture frames and structures the entire plot. In *the first torture scene*, CIA agent Ferris is lying on his bed haunted by the memory of Americans beating a man tied to a chair, filmed in blue colors with a camera circling from the victim to Ferris, who is sitting with his back to the beatings, listening and clearly upset. The man dies from being hit with a baseball bat. *The second torture scene* is when Hani, the Head of Jordanian



4. Syrian head of secret police, Hani Salaam (Mark Strong), forces Ferris to watch how they punish people in Syria.



5. Is this torture or punishment?

Intelligence, makes Ferris watch how a prisoner, who is naked and tied to a table, is caned by a Jordanian police officer. As Ferris looks through a glass window in the door he says, “I thought you didn’t believe in torture, Hani Pasha.” “This is punishment, my dear,” responds Hani, “It’s a very different thing. Keep watching. Tell Edward what you have seen.” Edward Hoffman is a CIA officer and Ferris’ boss. Ed (Russell Crowe) has lied to Ferris and Hani. Hani has asked that Ferris does not lie to him if they are to work together, however, the CIA consistently lies to Hani and to everyone else.

Now, in *the third torture scene*, Ferris is captured by terrorist El-Saleem (Alon Abutbul) and tied to a chair with his hands placed on a table. “I have an agent of the CIA,” says El-Saleem, “and that’s what I came to see. And that’s what matters. In this world there’s enough poverty and frustration and danger and passion. There will never be a

shortage of martyrs.” El-Saleem hacks off one of Ferris’ fingers and says: “You know what that camera is for? It’s not for this [the torture]. This . . . this is intermission. It’s for what comes after this. For what comes now.” Ferris tries to talk his way out of the chair. But there are no arguments. “Welcome to Guantánamo,” says El-Saleem and hacks off another of Ferris’ fingers. Then Hani’s men enter the room and Hani, impeccable dressed in suit and tie, turns off the camera.



6. Terrorist leader Al-Saleem (Alon Abutbul) is happy that he has captured CIA-agent Ferris



7. Is this torture or, as Al-Saleem calls it, “intermission”?



8. Ferris has become the victim of war

Several things are interesting:

First, the *zone of torture* has turned from a *zone of confrontation* and a *zone of contact* into a *zone of confusion*. It is unclear *what* exactly we are witnessing: Is the first scene interrogation? Is the second scene punishment? And is the third scene a take to be put out on YouTube? Agents and victims of torture exchange places, and borders dissolve between torture and interrogation, punishment and humiliation. Speaking of borders between heroes and enemies in the war film, Holger Pötzsch points out that they are “crucial factors in a construction of the other as dangerous and less than human – as dogs, the killing of which appears justified and unproblematic” (Pötzsch 2009: 1). When borders dissolve they open a space between hero and enemy that Pötzsch calls *liminal* and where agents can become *liminal beings*:

The term *liminal beings* refers to border-crossing subjects who have equal access to, and thereby render intelligible, both camps divided and constituted through a border. They question and disrupt notions of borders as barriers and facilitate their reconstitution as zones of contact and negotiation (Pötzsch 2009: 7).

In *Body of Lies*, Hani is a liminal agent, namely an Arab who is neither an American soldier nor a Muslim terrorist. Hani is educated, civilized, intelligent, honest, and secular. “You see, Mr. Ferris, here in Jordan to the fundamentalists I am, myself, the enemy. Perhaps the worst kind.” Hani is also uncompromising. His “primitive” violence eventually rescues Ferris, who resigns from the CIA and stays in Jordan where he has fallen in love with a woman, the Iranian refugee Aisha.

Body of Lies presents torture as outside both military and civil law, in a zone of exception. In *State of Exception* (2005, original 2003), Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben says that “the state of exception appears as a threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism” and places his discussion in the context of the military orders given by President Bush on November 13, 2001, “which authorized the ‘indefinite detention’ and trial by ‘military commissions’ (not to be confused with the military tribunals provided for by the law of war) of noncitizens suspected of involvement in terrorist activities” (Agamben 2005: 3). Agamben points out that only democratic states operate with the state of exception, which is claimed when a democracy suspends its democratic laws in order to defend itself, feeling threatened on the level of its very existence.

The problem is how to define legality in a state of exception. What laws apply when laws are suspended? Agamben compares law to language and its application to speech acts. The grammar is to speech what law is to its application. Meaning is attributed to acts not *a priori*, but *in* their actual doing. To the state of exception, which is a “threshold” and a “zone of indifference,” Agamben adds the “floating signifier”: “In this sense, the floating signifier . . . corresponds to the state of exception, in which the norm is in force without being applied” (Agamben 2005: 37). In *Body of Lies*, torture is a floating signifier. On the DVD’s commentary track, director Ridley Scott compares the caning to his own caning as a boy: “I used to get it at school regularly and people were always horrified that I was caned and it was my fault. But you know what? We’d walk away with pride because there’d be some bruises, so you’d walk away with pride because they were war wounds. You see, the guys would think, wow, that’s fantastic.”⁶

In *Body of Lies*, the discourse of the juridical (is this legal?) is brought to the fore by making Ferris a complicit witness to torture and making the terrorist Al-Saleem acknowledge the illegitimacy of the American torture (“Welcome to Guantánamo”). But *Body of Lies* continues to use the mythic discourse of masculinity (“pride” and “war wounds”). In the third torture scene, the CIA agent is still a *soldier-of-steel* who does not break under torture.

In real life, torture has no place in any definition of law as practiced by any nation that has signed the Declarations of Human Rights or the Geneva Conventions. There are no exceptions. In U.S. memos of 2002, 2003 and 2004, pain was the subject of several memos signed by president Bush (Pfiffner 2008: 155). Discussing the legality of the torture committed at Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, political scientist James Pfiffner says the Justice Department “prepared legal memoranda that construed the law so as to exempt the president from constitutional law, criminal law, international law, and customary international law.” But, says Pfiffner, “the president of the United States is in fact bound by these laws and conventions . . .” (Pfiffner 2008: 146). And Agamben concludes by denying the state of exception any juridical legitimacy whatsoever: “[T]his is essentially an empty space, in which a human action with no relation to law stands before a norm with no relation to life” (Agamben 2005: 86).

In the Hollywood war film, torture primarily serves dramatic purposes. Before 1991, it was presented in the conservative discourse of myth using metaphors of masculinity, nationalism, and war. After 1991, the discourse remained mythic, but metaphors went global, criticized America and challenged the soldier myth. After Guantánamo, the discourse of myth came to be mixed with the discourse of law, questioning the legality of torture. The borders between “us” and “them” are now porous, allowing for inter-racial mixing and contamination with Hani as the ambivalent hero and Ferris staying in Jordan. However, the *soldier-as-man-of-steel* runs too deep to be obstructed by politics, be they national or global.

Ethics and Naive Optimism

Let me now return to Winter’s concept of minor Utopia and minor Utopians.

Hollywood is *not* a place of radical politics. Yet it is also not always a site of complacency. In my research on the Hollywood war film after 1991, I have found directors who I would like to claim as utopian in their engagement with conflict, in their appeal to empathy and debate, in their use of history, in their desire to touch audiences, and in their wish to make the world a better place. One is Steven Spielberg who with *Schindler’s List* made a generation remember Auschwitz and was allowed to film a scene at the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. Another is Clint Eastwood, who made two war films about Iwo Jima, one of them the first American film in Japanese, and filmed scenes on the island of Iwo Jima, now a Japanese memorial site. Less prolific directors are David O. Russell, who in *Three Kings* employed Iraqi refugees to play dissidents, or Antoine Fuqua, who in *Tears of the Sun* (2003) used refugee child soldiers from Sudan to play war victims. Ridley Scott is a less obvious minor Utopian. His *Body of Lies* is conflicted in its take on torture, yet it places the American hero in a world where American politics and capitalist values are *not* to be equated with America. When Ferris quits, his boss Ed says: “That means you’re

giving up on America.” To which Ferris responds: “Just be careful calling yourself America, huh, Ed.”

Minor Utopians seek to engage everyman in a change. Human Rights, NGO movements, global citizenship. Such dreams are naive, yet still dreamt. The concept of Utopia calls for two kinds of engagement with the world: on the one hand, a naive optimism and hope for a better world, and on the other hand, an engagement in the present in discourses of critique and politics, knowing that our world is not a Utopia.

Hollywood, although capitalist and commodified, can be a site for utopian dreams. In a somewhat different context, Alison Landsberg in her book *Prosthetic Memory*, claims that a revolutionary politics need not be located at the margins, but can also exist at the very center: “Instead of simply disparaging commodity culture, as many cultural critics have done, I believe that the only way to bring about social change and transformation is by working within the capitalist system. There is not some pristine world of politics apart from the world of consumption. Instead, we must use these commodified memories toward politically progressive ends” (Landsberg 2004: 146).

Let me end by quoting one of today’s minor Utopians, Barack Obama, who as a senator in *The Audacity of Hope* (2006) wrote: “I believe a stronger sense of empathy would tilt the balance of our current politics in favor of those people who are struggling in this society. After all, if they are like us, then their struggles are our own” (Obama 2006: 68). As a true Utopian, Obama insisted on a naive optimism: “. . . at the core of the American experience are a set of ideals that continue to stir our collective conscience; a common set of values that bind us together despite our differences; a running thread of hope that makes our improbable experiment in democracy work” (Obama 2006: 8).⁷

In Hollywood stories and in politician’s memoirs, dreaming Utopian dreams of peace and freedom is easy. Reality is more complicated. However, the two may benefit from one another through us, audiences and ordinary people, whom both popular film and politicians address.

Utopia is not an object, it is an idea. And a choice. Our choice.

Notes

1. For an account on America and Utopia, see the introduction in Rikke Schubart, *Med vold og magt: actionfilm fra Dirty Harry til The Matrix* (With Passion and Power: The Action Movie from Dirty Harry to The Matrix, Copenhagen: Rosinante, 2001). There is also a pun on *eu* (meaning “good”).
2. I thank Professor Helle Porsdam who in a paper given March 22, 2007, at the seminar “Assessing the Bush Presidency” at the Copenhagen Business School introduced me to minor Utopians and Jay Winter.
3. Also, speaking of imagination, Ruth Levitas, in her book on the social Utopias of the nineteenth and twentieth century, *The Concept of Utopia* (1990), points to four aspects: content (the ideal society); form (Utopia as a literary genre); function (to work for a better society); and, finally, desire. While content, form and function vary, the last element, desire, is constant: “This [constant] element, I would argue, is that of desire – desire for a better way of being and living . . . This includes both the objective, institutional approach to utopia, and the subjective, experiential concern of disalienation. It allows for the desire to be realistic or unrealistic.” Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (New York: Philip Allan, 1990), 7,8.
4. Infamous, of late, are torture-porn films like *Saw* and *Hostel*, the genital torture scene in the Bond film *Casino Royale*, and the FOX drama television series *24*.
5. See Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* vol. 1 & 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, org. 1977) for an analysis of the male soldier based on a sociological reading of the German Freiburg Corps soldiers.
6. Quoted from commentary track with director Ridley Scott, screenwriter William Monahan and novelist David Ignatius on the DVD from 2009 of *Body of Lies* (2008). Scott ends: “I’d never go and discuss it with my parents, are you kidding! I’d probably get clipped ‘cause it was my fault.”

7. As a president Barack Obama has promised to “ . . . end the use of torture without exception and eliminate the practice of extreme rendition; close the Guantánamo Bay detention center; revise the PATRIOT Act so that it gives law enforcement the tools they need without jeopardizing the rights and ideals of all Americans; prevent illegal wiretapping; and restore the right of habeas corpus.” *Change We Can Believe In: Barack Obama’s Plan to Renew America’s Promise* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008), 114.

Filmography

The Bridge On the River Kwai	1957	David Lean (UK/US)
Deer Hunter, The	1978	Michael Cimino
Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence	1983	Nagisa Oshima (UK, Japan)
Missing in Action	1984	Joseph Zito
Missing in Action 2: The Beginning	1984	Lance Hool
Rambo: First Blood Part II	1985	George Pan Cosmatos
Rambo III	1988	Peter MacDonald
G.I. Jane	1997	Ridley Scott
Three Kings	1999	David O. Russell
Hart’s War	2002	Gregory Hoblit
Tears of the Sun	2003	Antoine Fuqua
Syriana	2005	Stephen Gaghan
Rendition	2007	Gavin Hood
Body of Lies	2008	Ridley Scott

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Body and Soul

Notes on Challenges to Freedom

Sverker Sörlin

It is probably a good thing that the theme of this conference has puzzled me. I see this as a sign that there is research going on and that frontiers are being moved – although I have not been part of it and therefore have something to learn, like most people. That is how research should function: discover the unexpected, ideally in the most mundane and everyday context.

However, is this really an issue? What could they mean by asking us, in our day and age, to consider Media, Body and Soul? Then I read the following passage, only a few months ago:

I've been a journalist for 30 years and for most of that time a good part of my livelihood has been writing columns, comments and first-person humour pieces for the sorts of features pages that are becoming increasingly hard to write for. Traditional feminine self-deprecation is part of the territory; it's where a lot of the humour and the empathy comes. But there has always been a line beyond which we weren't expected to go, a balance between good copy and self-respect.

But in the last couple of years we have been asked to write some toe-curling stuff, especially about our bodies. It's mainly in the tabloids, but it appears in the upmarket titles too. Editors no longer want my shorthand or my interviewing skills, or even my way with words. They want my body and soul, two things I'm not used to hawking.

This is Jill Parkin in *The Guardian*, 27 April 2009. She tells of younger colleagues stuffing themselves with chocolate or booze and waking up in anxiety and fear, just to be able to report on it, at the whim of some sensationalist, pound-smelling editor. One of her own recently offered commissions was to be part of "How You Look Good Naked". The application form asks you to submit photos of yourself front, rear and in profile, naked, but in underwear. She refused, but somebody else probably did not.

This is probably an old genre in the media, although it used to be more common to report on your deeds rather than on your degrading. But even the deeds of progress are using body and soul more starkly than before. In the leading Swedish daily – if I still may say so – *Dagens Nyheter*, one journalist has used the past six months to try to prune her quite everyday-ish body using humiliating and excruciating methods. She reports

on these methods as if she had returned from a Burmese concentration camp, and, yes, she has lost 20 pounds or so...

Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) was a bestseller. Not exactly Shakespeare, but still. Reality media is the phrase, and reality seems to mean Body and Soul.

I don't really know what to do with this. But somehow, I'm convinced that the organizers of this conference are on to something.

Is this something going on in the media only? I mean, is it reserved for the 7/24 global freak show that sells audiences to advertisers, being just a sort of radicalization of it? Media historians will one day be able to tell us the answer, perhaps even before this weekend is over.

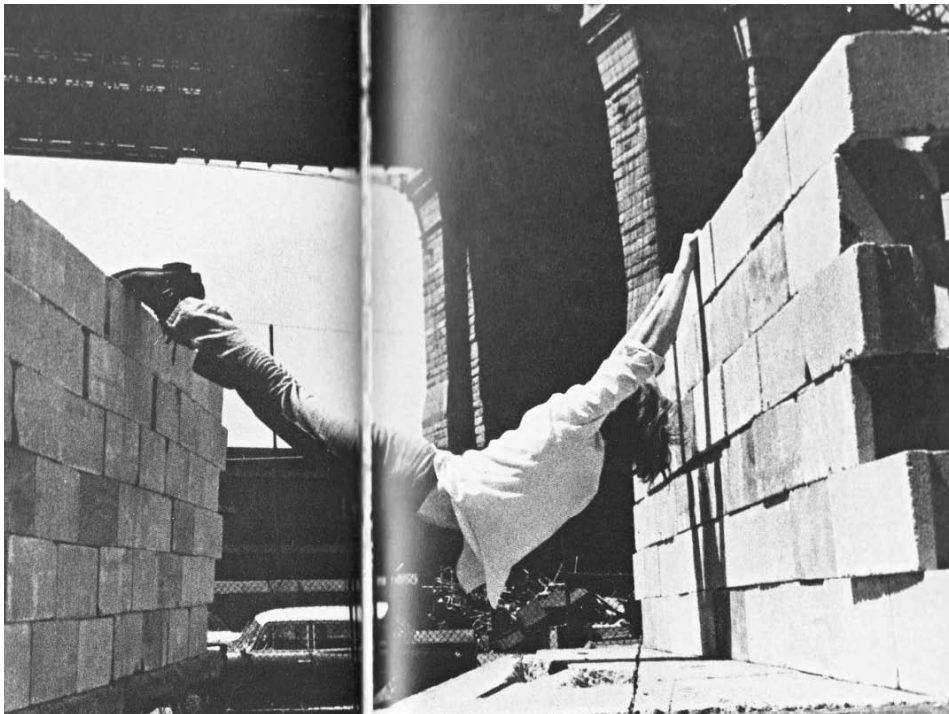
...

Something is going on with us.

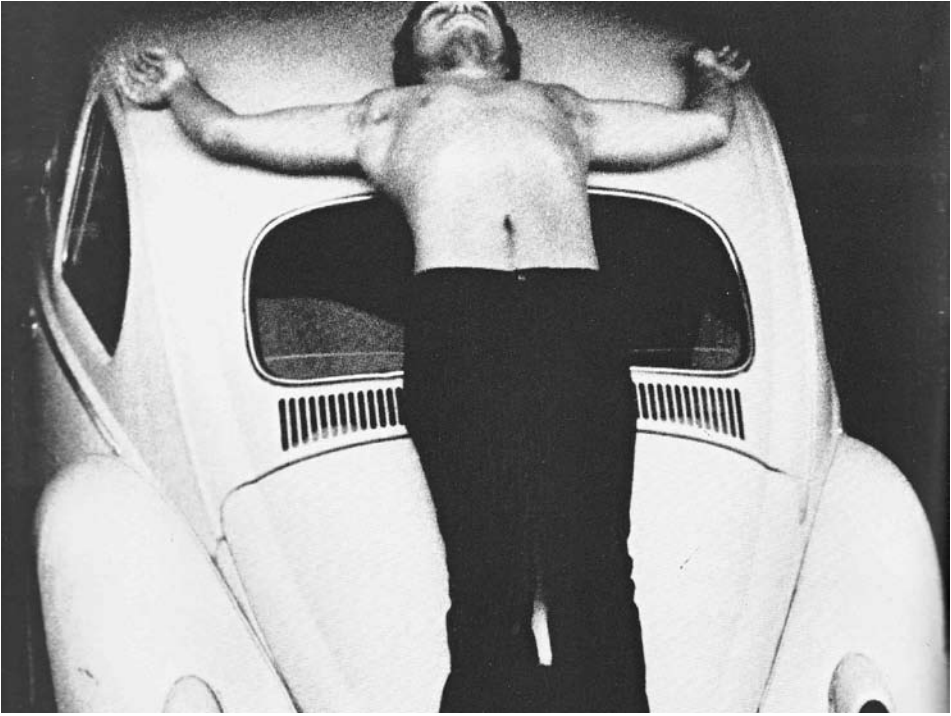
I just recently met a guy who had been off our radar screens for a while. He called it an exile and I didn't dare ask what it was. After having said hello, he said, on his second or third sentence, that he went to the gym every day. As sort of evidence of his new commitment to a straight life.

Only ten years ago, even five, fifty-year-old college educated professionals would not say this about themselves. So even if Jill Parkin is right that this is partly a women's and feminist issue in media culture and sociology, men are not unaffected.

I had to admit, in this conversation, that I also go to the gym occasionally, as if that placed us on the same rational side of reality, i.e. not among those who did not care about



Dennis Oppenheim, *Parallell Stress*, 1970.



Chris Burden, *Trans-fixed*, 1974.

themselves and their self-fashioning, as Stephen Greenblatt called it in his important study of early modern literature.¹ Or “technologies of the self”, as Foucault would say, if I translate him properly to English.²

But didn’t we use to care about others? Or at least claim that we did?

Never really watching much of the mud wrestling on TV, I now realize that as a regular gym client I have enough current anthropology to sort out without it. When I was twenty, like so many people I see in the locker room are now, most of my contemporaries thought of society as something that was real, and a legitimate object of collective responsibility and collective action. Therefore they were active in social groups, study circles, they used their bodies and souls, more or less as they were, to promote some cause beyond the personal.

• • •

The most widely debated piece of art this year, in this country, is an installation by an art student who reenacted and documented, on live camera, her own faked suicide attempt and what then happened among ordinary citizens, the police, and at the psychiatric clinic. Much could be said of this work, which has drawn thousands to art shows and the web to see it who would otherwise probably not come anywhere near contemporary art.³

Here I will only say that it fits our theme. It is a very solid example of how the media have become extremely apt at transforming what is social into a matter of individualized bodily experience. In a sense the artist did that too, and who uses whom here is not obvious. Both do, probably.



Chris Burden, Shoot, 1971.



Hermann Nitsch, Aktion Eindhoven, 1983.

Clearly, art has been around for a long time, exposing dung and mud and bare flesh and suffering, even in the days when most media considered it below what decent society should become engaged in. To expose body and soul was to say something important about society, art, and the human condition.

Drawing on earlier work by Dadaism and experimental theatre and dance, “body art” really took off in the 1960s and 1970s. Dennis Oppenheim x-rayed his own intestines as ginger cakes meandered through them and turned himself into a human bridge, pushing to the limits what a body could perform.

Chris Burden let a friend shoot him in the arm in a Los Angeles gallery, and then made a statement on the car society by crucifying himself to a Volkswagen, which actually rolled down the street for a couple minutes with the engine at full speed, “screaming” as it were for the victim.

Viennese artist Hermann Nitsch performed live acts with blood, lambs, cows and a host of Christian symbolism in an extension of abstract expressionist painting, literally uniting body and soul in orgies of frenzy and revulsion.

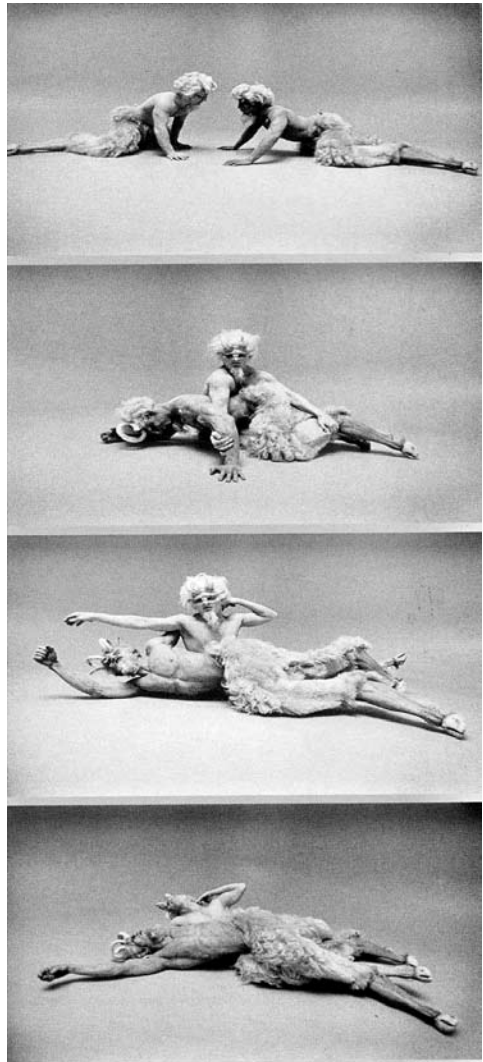
Matthew Barney turned bodies into nightmarish fairy world tales with animalistic features.

Many artists, like Ethyl Eichelberger, would refer to the orgiastic, transboundary eroticism, the bizarre and the morally challenging aspects of the body.

Crossing boundaries finally became almost a cliché. In Stockholm some years ago, a Russian artist turned himself into a dog and barked and bit visitors on the leg.

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I have referred to art partly to make us see that the media usage of body and soul is the result of sampling. I do not deny its creative elements, but as scholars we should also contextualize and we should acknowledge the significant role of art in the development of mainstream media form and content. Like the fashion industry also exploits art, and the street, the media use art, and the street.



Matthew Barney, Envelopa: Drawing Restraint 7 Guillotine, 1989-1995.

And it is not just body, or body and soul. It could also be almost only soul. A very successful, and widely sold, book this year in Sweden is one by my colleague in Uppsala, Karin Johannisson, on melancholy as a cultural phenomenon. It is not a typical academic treatise. No, it is intimate, it brings on the personal souls, and indeed bodies, of philosophers, scientists, artists, and authors. Pokes around there, reads the scars and the tattoos. It does not influence the science itself very much, I think, but it has already influenced the way ordinary people talk about it.⁴

Come to think of it, I have written a book myself that will be published in a couple of weeks, an essay on the life of Charles Darwin, which does something similar: makes him very intimate, turns him into body and soul. Why did I do that? I have written thirty pages explaining that it has to do with understanding how knowledge is actually produced as a practice, as a site-specific local and physical (“situated”, is the term) phenomenon, rather than as a flow of Big Ideas in an airy construct called “intellectual history”.⁵

My argument is partly captured by the title of a book that appeared a decade ago, *Science Incarnate* (1998). In it, Stephen Shapin and Christopher Lawrence and a half dozen other contributors set out to demonstrate that what has been regarded as pure science – not just as a value free, but also as a body free, flesh free, de-odorized search for truth – has in reality been a history of embodiments, of material, sensual practice, of human fragility.⁶

That book was a sign of its times. It foreboded an interest that has grown since. We understand science better if we also consider bodies and souls.

But, and an important *but*, it was of course not a plea to substitute rationality with carnal juices or to explain away method using mental fabrication.

But that is of course my rationalization also. Am I – along with Shapin and Lawrence – also part of this trend I am trying to dissect, although perhaps under a different production logic than Jill Parkin? Preparing for this conference has made me wonder, which is, again, a good thing.

Typical explanations of the current body and soul trend in the media revolve around the change in commercial logic. It was perhaps expected that the intimization and privatization of the media that have been ongoing for a long time would quite logically take this route, especially as the presence of anyone on the Web has brought the lowest common denominator of human expression to the attention of millions. We talk in the public realm now as we talked at the kitchen table, or in the locker room, in the past.

I believe there is a change going on and that we should take it seriously. I will return to our contemporary concerns shortly. But perhaps we should also, and indeed we always should, historicize the phenomenon. Perhaps we could see some new things clearly here, partly because they are in fact old.

My first impulse is to look at religion. The confessional is a religious genre, used famously by Augustine in the book about his own life in the late 4th century. The body is what the saviours and the prophets use, along with their words, to convince us of their serious intent and the depth of their undertaking. Indeed, their words, it seems, would not be much if it weren't for their deeds, and the ultimate deed is material, not ideal.

Chris Burden on his Volkswagen thus belongs to a grand tradition.

When Ignatius Loyola goes to his grotto to discover things, he experiments on himself, lets hair and nails grow. To reach the truth you must endure pain, on the cross or on your way through the Inferno or Purgatory.

In a certain sense, there has always been an oscillation between the expressive and the rational, between body and mind, the carnal and the cerebral. And we are perhaps in a phase of inward, carnal and expressive passions, just like the ones observed by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944/1947), although their deceptive commercialization, the “Aufklärung als Massenbetrug”, was of course much more timid then. We could expect the tide to turn again, hopefully.

But if it doesn't? The truth is, after all, that even if there is a dialectic process at play, there is also always an irreversible change going on.

You may say – thinking of Christ on his cross, or the eremite on his desert column, or the gladiator whose body might save him from death – that two thousand years ago truth issues were settled in a physical way. In the Grand Narrative of Western Reason and Liberation, this changed during the Renaissance and even more so during the Enlightenment. Truth was separated from revelation and the individual physical body was removed from the evidence.

Religious belief was increasingly individualized, and the soul and the body became parts of the private sphere. As religion retreated what grew was a new idea of the public sphere, one not ruled by priests but by secular thought and ideas of civic virtue. I am talking now of course of the Western world, for simplicity's sake.

The media, at least a very large and hegemonic part of them, claimed and were granted membership in this rational, civic, public sphere. In that sense, there has always been a close relationship between the idea of freedom, at least Western style, and the growth of the media.

I think it is important to note this relationship as we witness current media trends. The call for this session underscores avant-garde movements of the past like the futurists, the Russian constructivists, or Guy Débord's Situationist International. It is true that they articulated compelling versions of liberty, often going against the grain of social conventions and mainstream norms, including the regular media. They were probably also prepared to use the body as a form of expression, although that is certainly not the only thing they did.

There are links between these oppositional movements and the kinds of movements that are now occurring on the Web and that are expressing themselves in the new media. The experimental unites them. The scepticism of the public realm does so too. And now as before, critical social movements can achieve a great deal by creating counter cultures and their own autonomous public spheres.

But is that freedom?

The front cover of the book on melancholy (*Melankoliska rum*) that I just mentioned is a painting of a bed on which a woman is lying. But we cannot see her face, only her back. It is not like in the adverts for *Hästens* or *Dux* beds. It is not inviting or cosy. The image rather conveys a sense of loss. There used to be a promise here, but it did not come to fulfilment.

And aren't we all there? Am I not legitimately preoccupied with taking charge of my life and getting under the skin of my melancholy? Indulging in the carnal failures that seem to unite us? The fat and the ugliness? Turning the loss we can see everywhere around us into, if not freedom, at least some personal success? And finding, through this private soul searching, a new lease on life?

I suppose that is what drives much of the economic logic of the media boom in the Body and Soul business, although this boom is found in many other industries as well. It drives the publishing industry, it drives tourism, travel, spas. It is part of a wider market of disenchantment, the longing of the empty, and as such it has very little to do with freedom.

This aspect of the media has in fact only a cursory connection with the civic and the public spheres. It seems as if the passions are what could unite the masses, and therefore what drives the media industry. Very little in the social media seems to me to have countered that logic so far.

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In the spheres that are closest to my own attention, I fear there is mostly gloom. Science and cultural sections of the media are increasingly mainstreamed and cater to a limited number of best-selling items. Profound discussions are rare. I see a rapid fragmentation of the public sphere and a migration of social elites away from the common interest.

Some time ago I was in Umeå – after all a university town with quite a strong civic spirit. I wanted to see a movie with my oldest daughter, just turned 17. She walked us into the Sandrews movie theatre with some ten or so screens. Couldn't we go somewhere else, I asked her. No, she said. Why not? When I lived here a decade ago there were four other theatres? Now there is only one, she said, quite matter-of-factly, as if monopoly were perfectly okay.

I looked in shock and awe at the selection of films in this monopoly: Harry Potter, Ice Age 3 or 4, this or that 5 or 6. Brüno. But there was a new Woody Allen movie, of course. Was she interested?

Woody Allen, who is that?

I suppose cultural conservatives have always sounded like I do in a certain sense. And I suppose it doesn't help much to merely *claim* I am at least comparatively radical.

But given the kinds of issues you will be discussing these coming few days, I would like to remind everyone that dystopia was also a word used in the call to this conference.

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Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury's 1953 novel, has a scene at the end where people have congregated like a religious sect to rehearse the content of the books, by heart, in a sub-culture of political memory, because the book burning brigade has destroyed almost all of them. We are not there yet, but perhaps there we can now see why he wrote this during the Cold War, and perhaps even more clearly why Francois Truffaut's film version was released in 1966, when the free word was at peril and when carnal pleasures and carnal avant-gardism started spreading, despite bigotry and censorship.

I could now turn this into a final sermon on what societal values I believe in and why I think they are threatened by the unreflected continuation of the media commercialization of Body and Soul.

I could, but I will not; it is probably redundant. It would require another lecture, and perhaps a church or a political theatre rather than an academic auditorium. But I will

finish by expressing my curiosity: Why aren't media scholars more visible in this debate? Are they now elevated high above such mundane and simple tasks?

My horizon is of course not as wide as yours, but I would like to see at least reflexions of the leading lights of media research being brought to bear on these debates. Even in Sweden.

Or are we already beyond the point where critical knowledge has any right to speak in mainstream contemporary media? If that is the case, I see no hope of liberation in contemporary media culture, although I would like to be convinced I am wrong.

Notes

1. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, IL & London, The University of Chicago Press, 1980).
2. For example in his *Histoire de la sexualité*, vols. 1-3 (1976-1984). See also Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the self", in L. H. Martin, H. Gutman and P. H. Hutton (eds), *Technologies of the self* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), pp. 16-49.
3. <http://www.konstfack2009.se/bachelor/bafa/anna-odell/#>. A large number of articles are available on www.dn.se.
4. Karin Johannisson, *Melankoliska rum: Om ångest, leda och sårbarhet i förfluten tid och nutid* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 2009).
5. Sverker Sörlin, *Den blinde skaparen: En essä om Darwin och livets sammanhang* (Stockholm: Weyler, 2009).
6. Stephen Shapin & Christopher Lawrence, eds., *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

The Body as Design Project in an ‘Order of Pure Decision’

*Transformable Bodies in Makeover Shows
and Steven Meisel’s Fashion Photography*

Anne Jerslev

In a brief but suggestive article about risk and morality from 1993, French political scientist Francois Ewald coins what he somewhat catchy, but also illuminatingly, calls a contemporary *order of pure decision*, an order in which “the nature we are confronting today and that we have chosen as our partner is nothing other than our own double” (Ewald 1993: 225). ‘Nature’ is no longer a sacred objectivity we can refer to. The order of pure decision “can nourish itself only on its own values, and cannot rely on an objectivity that supposedly transcends it” (ibid.). Australian cultural studies scholar Jane Goodall (2000), in her elaboration on Ewald’s term, reasons that, evidently, ethics “comes to the fore as the only means by which we can steer a course through this order of pure decision” (Goodall 2000: 150). Everything, including the body, is transformable and negotiable, and each act – each act on the body – involves judgements and negotiations of a social and ethical nature. Goodall continues that in an order of pure decision

the convention of equating freedom with choice breaks down in a situation where there is no freedom *from* choice. As advances in medical technology are continuously expanding the domain of human decision-making, choice itself becomes an *inescapable obligation* in areas from which it was previously excluded (Goodall 2000: 150-151 – my italics).

Choice-making is inevitable in all areas of life; it is not only the means of individual control (over the body and a whole way of life), but also a burden, an individual obligation with social ramifications and no escape. Therefore, acting in an order of pure decision is profoundly ethical in nature.

Not least the body as human form and biology (physically and physiologically) has become a contested area within this order of pure decision. The body is radically negotiable, increasingly designable and ontologically conceptualized as an ongoing design project, as well in scientific as in mediated and non-mediated social and cultural discourses. It is at the same time regarded as the embodiment of new aesthetic and technological possibilities, new challenges and new risks, a utopian tribute to techno-

logy and individualization and the epitome of a dystopian collapse of boundaries post postmodernism. Thus the material body itself has become an ethical project, and the discussion of the contemporary body is most often discursively inscribed in a vocabulary with references to an idea of the body natural.

In a paradoxical way, the occupation with *body modifications* (Featherstone 2000), *plastic bodies* (Davis 1995), *technical bodies* (Craik 1993) and *customized bodies* (Pitts 2003) and the challenges to the body posed by new technologies (cf. for example Balling 2002) has caused a rhetorical re-invention of the notion of ‘the natural body’. The discussion of and public debates on the modifiable body in contemporary culture are embedded in a discursive revitalization of a nature-culture, or nature-technology, or natural body vs. artificial body dichotomy in order to conceptualize and understand these new ideas about and possibilities for working on the body through new technology. For example, in much of the criticism of cosmetic surgery practices, the body is, surgically constituted as *artificial*, operated on *against nature’s will* as the sacred protector of the soul (cf. Pitts-Taylor 2007), whereas to proponents of the same practices, the “notion of Nature-as-the-ultimate-constraint is replaced by nature-as-something-to-be improved upon” (Davis 1995: 18). Featherstone claims that “[c]ommon to many of the accounts of body modification is the sense of taking control over one’s body, of making a gesture against *the body natural*” (Featherstone 2000: 2 – my italics). Even Goodall, in her discussion of the designable body, uses a phrase like “the will of nature” (Goodall 2000: 149). The same applies to the articles in Balling (2002).

In the visual culture of the past decades, the body has been the object of a range of different experiments with and discussions about transcending the boundaries and constraints of ‘the natural body’ and improving its ‘natural’ capabilities by technological means, put forward theoretically in the 1980s, of course, by Donna Haraway’s seminal postmodern cyborg essay (Haraway 1991 [1985]) and by cyber culture fantasies in the 1990s about a *posthuman condition* and *posthuman bodies* (for example Hayles 1999 and Halberstam & Livingston 1995), but also more recently by a range of scholarly works about body culture, bodily transformations and new (surgical) technology (Featherstone 2000, Pitts 2003, Pitts-Taylor 2007, Fortunati, Katz & Riccini 2003, Balling 2002, Baling & Lippert-Rasmussen 2006). In the media entertainment narratives of the past decade, the camera has penetrated the skin and has produced popular cultural visual imageries of transcended bodily boundaries. Close-ups of the materiality of the inner body, its fluids, tissue and fat abounds in medical shows and cosmetic surgery makeover programmes, which are, on the other hand, mostly about the surgical efforts to diminish its volume or control its anarchic growth. On the one hand, the two different TV genres expose the materiality of the body as chaotic and unformed biology. On the other hand, the shows are about the technological means to surgically control the inner fluid and make it fit into a new and – aesthetically or otherwise – improved design for the individual body.

The whole idea of working on the body as a plastic material and regarding it as a technology that has become *obsolete, not functional or inadequate for the current situation*, as famous body artists like Australian Stelarc and French Orlan (besides a range of scholars within the humanities and computer sciences) have coined it, and that must therefore be subjected to technological modifications, presumes for its radicalism to work a logic of a ‘natural’ or ‘non-artificial’ and finite biological body. A body has now,

under the current conditions, become dysfunctional, obsolete, a burden. For example Stelarc, in relation to his on-going high-tech biology *Extra Ear* project, which he is working on after the virtual *Third Arm* project (a metallic prosthesis) states that

I have always been intrigued about engineering a soft prosthesis using my own skin as a permanent modification of the body architecture. The assumption being that if the body was altered it might mean adjusting its awareness. Engineering an alternate anatomical architecture, one that also performs telematically. (<http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/earonarm/index.html>) (cf. also Farnell 2000)

Even though he declares on his website's front page that human beings have always been prosthetic bodies connected to technology, cyborgs and zombies at one and the same time, the point is that, in this experiment, he takes the idea of the body as cyborg one step further operating as well imaginatively as in reality with organic prostheses instead of metallic. In *The Extra Ear* project, he works with human tissue – his own tissue. In order to improve the material body and enhance its communicative capacities, he is experimenting with the cultivation of a permanent third ear on his arm. He wants at once to improve one of the body's senses and expand on its functionality by transforming it into a techno-organic transmitter, a wireless Internet service immediately connecting him to the wider world. Thus his artistic aim is in a sense to construct an updated, wired 'natural' body where technology and biology have merged organically and provide us with a prototype of a modern idea of the body with new organs:

This project has been about replicating a bodily structure, relocating it and now re-wiring it for alternate functions. It manifests both a desire to deconstruct our evolutionary architecture and to integrate microminiaturized electronics inside the body. We have evolved soft internal organs to better operate and interact with the world. Now we can engineer additional and external organs to better function in the technological and media terrain we now inhabit. (cf. also for a discussion of similar scientific examples Emmeche 2002)

Along a similar vein, performance artist Orlan (b. 1947), who has worked artistically on her own body in surgical body performances since the beginning of the 1990s, constructs on her website a virtual "I" that is also a "me" by means of her invitation to "discover my face" and "click on me" (www.orlan.net). On the front page's large close up of the artist, one can choose to click on the two famous bumps she added to her forehead in the 1990s, on her pupils under the glasses or on her lips. By clicking one alters the colour of the lips and iris or transforms the bumps into multi-coloured glittering skin protrusions. Hence, the artist's face functions at once as a traditional identity sign ('this is Orlan' or 'I am Orlan') and an illustration of who this website belongs to ('this website is mine, Orlan's'). However, at the same time, she voluntarily relinquishes the face as a signifier of individuality and leaves it to the modifying operations of others, transforming the face into a very literal interface. Finally, the large close-up of the face also functions as a strange *index* of the artist as she understands herself; a digital and, hence, designable, transformable identity, at once technological, virtual, and material, real. At once a "self colonized by technological invasion" (Clarke 2000: 190), both surgically aestheticized and computerized, and an ongoing construction site in social interchange and collaboration with visitors.

The Technological Body

Cyber theorist Alluquère Roseanne Stone (1993), in an article written a couple of years before Ewald's, argues that the category of 'nature'

has become nothing more (or less) than an ordering factor – a construct by means of which we attempt to keep technology visible as something separate from our “natural” selves and our everyday lives. In other words, the category “nature”, rather than referring to any object or category in the world, is a strategy for maintaining boundaries for political and economic ends, and thus a way of making meaning (Stone 1991: 102).

Stone emphasizes that the concept of a natural body partakes in a rhetorical operation in contemporary culture more than it actually refers to common, agreed upon bodily characteristics or social and cultural realities. Referring to a 'natural body' as a finite and unchangeable standard rooted in Romanticism (Klausen 2006) is an easy and often ideological or politically justified way of pathologizing the individual decision to optimize the body by means of new technology. On the one hand, it seems that the only way of discussing the optional, transformable design body and conceptualizing differently a new body ontology is through the discursive construction of an opposition between a natural body, on the one hand, and technology, on the other. But the valorization of the poles and their conceptualization as either dichotomies or tensions differ. In some scientific discourses, both within the humanities and the natural sciences, 'nature' is primarily a heuristic term, although with some references to a grounded, agreed upon idea of what 'natural' might refer to. In the technology sceptical discourse, on the other hand, the natural body is always the given, untouched body, whereas the technological body is the artificial, commodified, even freakish body constructed by an unhealthy and perverse culture obsessed with fashion, youth and the stopping of time. These parameters seem to be the ethical point of departure for passing moral judgements on, for example, cosmetic surgery practices. However, like Stone reminded us about a little less than 20 years ago, the prominence of references to 'nature' or the 'natural body' in cosmetic surgery debates may – even though we know that it is an inadequate and simplistic but also highly complex term with a complicated history in science (Klausen 2006) – signal that the many new technological means of affecting and altering the human body and, no less, the decisions to make use of these design possibilities are no easy task. They are embedded in and raise difficult moral and social questions for each individual.

But from a media studies point of view, it should not be forgotten that much of the past few decades' discussions about the possibilities and limitations, the naturalness or artificiality of the transformable design body in popular media culture and the arts is indebted to McLuhan's (2009 [1964]) classical and sophisticated understanding of *the body itself as technology*. In his discussion about the relationship between the body, the media and technology, McLuhan started by dismantling the culturally pervasive nature/culture/technology dichotomy: on one of the first pages of *Understanding Media*, he implied that technology should be regarded as extensions of our bodies or, conversely, that contemporary bodies are by definition technologically enhanced organisms:

During the mechanical age we have extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous

system itself in a global embrace [...] Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extension of man – the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media (McLuhan 2009 [1964]: 3-4).

In Brügger's (1998) excellent reading of the discussion of an ontology of the body that merges technology and bodies in the works of Marcel Mauss, Marshall McLuhan and Paul Virilio, the Danish media researcher emphasizes that, to these three thinkers, media and technology have always, although in different ways, functioned as kinds of bodily prostheses and not as separate and oppositional entities.

But whereas Mauss, in Brügger's reading of the French sociologist and anthropologist's article "Les techniques du corps" from the mid-1930s, uses the word techniques to basically name the social and cultural coding of the body, McLuhan, 30 years later, regards both media and other technological, mechanical devices as well as everyday technical aids – such as shoes (which may make us walk better and quicker than on bare feet) and clothing (which function as extensions of the skin) – as technological extensions of the body's 'natural' capacities. The development of each new media both changes and enhances our sensory capacities.

In the most contemporary thinker, Paul Virilio's works on technology, body and speed, Virilio is occupied with understanding a technological development in which technology gradually becomes incorporated *into* the inner body as visual or otherwise sensory prostheses in order for the body to expand *outwards* and penetrate new spaces. "Vision machines" (Virilio 1994) invalidate the 'natural' perceptual capacity to judge distance and dimension and replace it with the ability to visually penetrate perceptually unknown territory (what Virilio calls the *aesthetics of disappearance*). Thus new technology constitutes the human body as both virtual and real. Just like in Stelarc's artwork, Virilio theorizes about bodies that will increasingly be filled with "*technical organs* which are swallowed or surgically inserted" (Brügger 1998: 19 – my translation and italics) in order to become 'natural' parts of the human body.

The body as design project is a fitting way of conceptualizing and imagining the body in an order of pure decision – an aesthetic and functional artefact, which it is possible to change with the changing of time and fashion. The *design* metaphor is suitable for encompassing the paradoxes of a situation where there is individual freedom to choose (your bodily appearance or your body's functional capacities) – at least if you have the money – but where there is also "no freedom from choice" as Jane Goodall put it. One might object that making the body one's own decision and project and regarding it as a transformable design is nothing new – the body has always functioned culturally as a fashionable object, shaped by fashion as much as shaping fashion (Entwistle 2000). And the idea of the body as machine is not new either (Balling 2002). And yet, an important shift or development has taken place with the advancement of the technological means to alter parts of the body. First in the sense that the body itself has become an ethical project, and second, in the sense that it is increasingly and ever more radically regarded as consisting of separate and interchangeable parts. Impression management through strategic transformations seems in contemporary culture to be at once a solution and a moral obligation, not an option. In this sense and just like Orlan illustrated, the body is both one's own in a radical sense and does not belong to oneself at all.

The Body as Morph

In the second part of this article, I wish to go into two examples of mediated constructions of the body as design. First, I will briefly discuss the construction of the body in cosmetic surgery makeover television from the first half of the decade (shows like *Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan*), which I have been working on for the past few years (cf. for example Jerslev 2008). My second example is American fashion photographer Steven Meisel's significant fashion spreads of female design bodies for *Italian Vogue* from recent years.

In cosmetic surgery makeover programmes, the body is divided into parts and scrutinized under the surgical gaze for its aesthetic deficiencies. Not least the idea of *the body as morph* (Sobchack 2000, Sobchack 2000a, Duckett 2000) functions as a strong and structuring fantasy in the programmes, where the body is constituted as a material form that can quickly and easily be re-modelled in accordance with any wishes. Each new surgical procedure functions as an improvement of an earlier morph and the programmes' staging of the bodily changes as *quick-changes* eliminates any traces of the previous morph. Makeover programmes construct an ideal of a smooth bodily surface without wrinkles or signs of the traces of everyday living in a particular social environment. In addition, the programmes show no scars after surgery – hence the suggestiveness of the computer graphic metaphor, which also encompasses the cosmetic surgical logic that the bodily changes are made independent of time and biology.

The irreversibility of time, and hence, of time's imprint on the body, is countered by a fantasy of infinite, 'morphic' reversibility, smooth and quick transformations. In makeover programmes, the cosmetic morph is not monstrous, as the programmes, just as insistently as they display the body as re-designable morph, finish it off in a sculptural and useful form. The whole point of cosmetic surgery makeover programmes is to argue that the bodily transformations are a means to another end, the production of a self-governing empowered subject, which is now able to overcome the constraints of class and psychological deficits. The improved body is the individual's new social capital, which may lead to a more successful and happy life. It is in that sense that cosmetic surgery is ethically justified in cosmetic surgery makeover programmes.

Regarding the body as design project turns it into a contested geography. In a sense, the contemporary body is in a permanent state of crisis or permanently under stress because it is always under the obligation to be scrutinized for possible updating and re-designs. A body caught in the tension between freedom of choice and no freedom from choice. However, makeover programmes optimistically constitute the body as the means for the remodelling and improvement of the whole life – the gateway to The Good Life. The activity of re-fashioning the body is constituted as identity work and, hence, as both a social obligation and an individual right, the right to work on feeling at home in your body. The programmes constitute identities, which have the right to choose their own bodies and to define themselves not only by their bodies but also by their capacity to decide to work on themselves. This unity of the right body and the good life is of course pushed to its unambiguous extremes in cosmetic surgery makeover programmes, but the same logic is at work in style/beauty makeover programmes such as the famous BBC programme *What Not to Wear*, where the hosts Trinny and Susannah explicitly situate the makeover as a cultural technology for empowering women to empower themselves – as Laurie Ouellette and James Hay (2009) put it – to make it successfully in society. Technology,

the big and small fixes, here constitutes a healthy and efficiently communicating body, healthy because it's efficient, one might say. In the *order of pure decision*, one needs guidance because not only is each individual choice always moral, but the decision to work on oneself is also a moral obligation. This is the logic of makeover shows.

In the August 2005 issue of *Italian Vogue*, American fashion photographer Steven Meisel made an ironic tribute to cosmetic surgery in a fashion editorial narrative called *Makeover Madness* (Jerslev 2007). On more than 40 pages, he used cosmetic surgery scenarios as the backdrop for showing high fashion. In the last photo the model posed as a triumphant, self-confident and powerful *post-op'ed* and totally recovered, totally healthy businesswoman completely inhabiting her new and preciously made over body and parading her bandaged, presumably lifted face like just one more expensive accessory adding value to her bag and sunglasses. Despite the irony and the luxurious, upper-class scenarios, the series constructed makeover processes in much the same manner as the television makeover shows do. Meisel's fashion photographs staged the body as a site of *quick-changes* and *marvellous transformation* (Sobchack 2000, Sobchack 2000a) in the form of fashionable female morphs. The female models were not only posing as women captured in the act of (re)designing their bodies in the most fashionable way they could possibly choose, but they were also made to pose in order to convey a story about their activity as the most *natural* thing in the world. The ironic and critical twist to the *Italian Vogue* fashion narrative was that, in many of the spreads, the models were photographed and styled to look more or less alike, thus forming what Anne Balsamo (1996) so eloquently has coined *assembly line beauty*. In *Makeover Madness*, the designed body is exactly a fashionable body. It is contemporary and new but not unique, the result of deliberate choice and yet the choice of the same.

In many of Meisel's narrative fashion spreads for *Italian Vogue* for the past half decade, Meisel has constructed the fashionable female body as larger-than-life cyborg-like appearances. In his stylized photographs, the designed body, flawless and generalized, is staged as frozen technologized morph, not the result of but the very embodiment of digital image manipulation processes. Like the models in the *Killer Vogue* editorial for *Italian Vogue* September 2005 or the uncannily similar mannequins in his *Red Alert* series (*Italian Vogue* August 2004), Meisel's fashioned female bodies are often situated in a field between living and dead, between animate and inanimate, between model and mannequin, real and virtual at the same time. In Meisel's photographic body fantasies, the body is at once acted upon and transformed into a computer-manipulated female appearance that bears only a vague resemblance to its owner or may easily be doubled into an uncanny likeness to its same.

The visual style in the *Killer Vogue* series points self-consciously to the digitized image production process and it constructs the fashionable designer items – the clothes and the model's body – as identical digitized wonders. As such, the bodies are no more human than their virtual surroundings. Meisel had the models styled and made up as dolls or mannequins and pose in front of a green screen. In the digital postproduction process, the design firm *EyeBallNYC* combined the photographs with the company's own digitally produced backdrops assembled from different photographs of New York to form suggestive noir scenarios. The *Killer Vogue* spreads show fantasies of spectacular and wasted bodies, beautiful and corps-like at the same time, tossed eloquently or posing triumphantly on piles of urban decay and decomposition.

A master of using a wide array of popular cultural body imageries and narratives for his commercial fashion photographs, Meisel has – like other contemporary fashion photographers, characterized as *master manipulators* by Jopling (2002) – again and again constituted the ideal body as the technological body: a digitally manipulated, impenetrable, smooth and shiny female hard-body with extremely long and slender proportions, which duplicates the shiny and extremely sharp hyper-real image surfaces of the Master Manipulators' photographs. However, after the *Makeover Madness* editorial, Meisel has in a strange way turned to a more pessimistic vision of the contemporary body in crisis. In a range of editorials for *Italian Vogue* and American magazines *W* and *V* since 2005, he has created fashionable scenarios involving situations of sickness, death, imprisonment and transgressive exposure. Since 2005, his fashionable design bodies seem more the object of and trapped in the visual regime of an order of pure decision than the triumphant agent of its multiple possibilities for (re)design. Meisel at once creates visual scenarios that touch upon the flip side of the condition of the body in an order of pure decision and pursues the commercially successful aim of contemporary non-mainstream fashion photography: provocative spectacles rather than beauty.

Like the *Makeover Madness* editorial, Meisel's photographic narratives add a critical comment to the fashion world's obsession with the designer body, at the same time as they are situated firmly within the field of commercial, 'edgy' fashion aesthetics and promote expensive designer items. In *Supermods Enter Rehab* (*Vogue Italia* July 2007), he works through a fantasy of the addicted, vulnerable and imprisoned (model) who has lost control over her body; in *State of Emergency* (*Vogue Italia* September 2006), we find the violated body. In the spreads, Meisel places his usual morphed hard bodies in humiliating scenarios, posing as if submitted to the harsh scrutiny of airport security guards or situations of deprivation of individual freedom by police officers clad in riot gear. However, in the series' last photographs, the model has taken up shooting lessons, seemingly in order to master self-defence. The series thus mimics popular cultural narratives about humiliated individuals who take the law into their own hands.

The *Silent* editorial (*Vogue Italia* August 2008) pays homage to the late Yves Saint Laurent. The spreads stage melodramatic and dramatic situations from a funeral and show the mourning, crying body out of control in a series of black-and-white shoots. Male models console female models and grieving females cling hysterically to graves, crying their eyes out, even pose picturesque, dead-like on a grave. In *Live on the Web* (*Vogue Italia* January 2007), the theme is the monitored body. Not least by means of the photographs' grainy video surface aesthetic and the construction of the frames like webcam interfaces, the spreads mimic males and females posing for their private webcams in intimate situations. Some are having a good time, whereas others seem to be involuntarily trapped in the gaze of the camera they have apparently set up themselves. *Law and Order* (*W* magazine August 2009) shows the imprisoned body in a series of photographs mimicking mug shots, shots from a women's prison and snapshots from the trashy life of young female juvenile delinquents. In some of the spreads, the styling shows models clad according to a British lower class style, whereas in others the models flash the expensive dresses in photographs taken of the models behind prison bars, on trashy toilets, in a prison courtyard taken from the other side of the fence, in a prison's visitors room, and so on.

Finally, in the series *Dogging* in *V Magazine* (November/December 2008), the naked body poses as if it were captured off guard. In the series, which was originally meant for

Italian Vogue but refused because of its audacity and then sold to American *V Magazine*, Meisel seemingly used night vision cameras to stage an impression of voyeuristically capturing real scenes of sexual activity. On the first page of the series, he explains that *Dogging* is a

British expression for participating in sexual acts in a semi-public place (usually a secluded car park or a forest preserve) or watching others do so. Often there are more than two participants. As watching is encouraged, voyeurism and exhibitionism are heavily associated with dogging. The people taking part often meet either randomly or arrange to meet up beforehand on the Internet.

The models pose as if they were not posing in the photographs, which borrow a contemporary trendy snapshot aesthetic. The pale-green colour grading provided by the night vision camera makes the half-naked bodies appear vulnerable, thin and unnaturally pale, caught in forbidden acts. The ambiguous semi-pornographic mock-realist scenarios constitute the body as being captured by an uninvited visitor's gaze.

In all these examples, the vision is not of up-dated designer bodies, but fantasies of fragile disempowered bodies more or less exposed to different media technologies, the webcam, the voyeuristic night vision camera, the camera inside the otherwise closed institution, deprived of their freedom to choose.

Concluding Remarks

Fashion photography is of course, by definition, the very epitome of designed bodies, just like computerized, airbrushed, modifications of bodies are used everywhere in fashion magazines. But even though the genre, no matter what, constitutes 'off guard' as yet another pose and an image aesthetics, the narratives in some of the more edgy fashion editorials like Meisel's may show that, at least when it comes to the fashioned body, choice and bodily self-mastery are perhaps not really an option or not an easy option in an order of pure decision. They may also make us repeat that the mediated body is also a moral arena, which may easily be subjected to conventionalized, stereotypically gendered and increasingly commercialized ideas of design.

James Hay and Laurie Ouellette (2008) argue that (style/beauty) makeover shows convey a "can-do philosophy that everyone can make small improvements by sticking to shopping regimens designed to conceal deficiencies and highlight "assets"" (Hay & Ouellette 2008: 116). Pathologizing the surgical body or the bodily morph does not take into consideration that aesthetic self-mastery is no unimportant thing in contemporary society, that it may procure valuable strategic capital. But one could also argue that the makeover programmes are symptoms of a *must-do* logic. They are not about what you *could* do to yourself but what you *should* do to yourself, what you are obliged to do to yourself – within a rather narrow aesthetic normative framework, that is. Makeover shows argue that a beautiful body is a functional body, whether surgically modified or re-fashioned by other means. Meisel's photographs at once constitute and pay tribute to an aesthetic version of the technologized design body. His latest editorials, on the other hand, may remind us that bodily agency might not be a choice at all.

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The Face of Health

Makeover Culture and New Body Ideals

Thomas Johansson

In Western countries, we can see an increased awareness of health issues, and the importance of taking care of our health. We have also seen the development of certain welfare diseases, for example burnout and other stress-related syndromes. Among the Western middle classes, people are more aware of the importance of eating good and healthy food, exercising and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. However, health is also a global issue. On the one hand, we have the Western affluent middle classes, who are becoming more aware of the connection between lifestyle and health. On the other hand, we have large proportions of the world's population that lack even the most rudimentary systems of health care.

Life expectancy today is high in many countries. The ageing of the world's population – in developed and developing countries – is an indication of improved global health. In Japan and France, people can expect to live well over 80 years (WHO statistics, 2009), and in some other countries such as Chile, Jamaica and Lebanon, the life expectancy now reaches over 70 years. However, there is a darker picture to add to this. In many African countries, the life expectancy is only 40 years, and in the US, the discrepancy between the life expectancy of higher and lower socioeconomic groups are as high as 20 years.

Although we can see some positive developments within public health worldwide, there are also reasons to be pessimistic. Comparing different countries, or people with different class affiliations, gender or ethnic positions within the same country, we find great differences and health inequalities. Good health is not only a state of physical, mental and social well-being, it is also defined as: “access and control over the basic material and nonmaterial resources that sustain and promote life at a high level of satisfaction” (Lupton 2003: 9). Health is, therefore, an indicator of wealth. The healthy body is also a well-trained, disciplined, and hard-working body. Increasingly health has come to be connected with fitness, physical desirability, youth and social status. However, at the same time as the disciplined body is celebrated, there are also strong associations between health and the ability to ‘let go’ and ‘relax’ (Lupton 2003). Today, many affluent people in the developed countries spend their weekends at a Spa or a retreat somewhere out in the countryside.

Health education and health promotion have changed considerably during the twentieth century. During the greater part of this century, attempts were made to educate

and foster national populations. Information was directed towards the collective, and various social and medical reforms were intended to raise public awareness of health issues and to create a healthy nation (Palmbiad and Eriksson 1995). During the later part of the twentieth century, however, there was a shift towards increased *individualization* of health management. Accordingly, there is now a growing focus on each individual's ways of dealing with health issues. The information given is directed towards the individual. If you suffer from poor health, if you drink too much, eat too much or smoke, it is your own responsibility to change your lifestyle.

This may sound like quite a winning change, but does it mean that societal control and attempts to control the public are historical phenomena? Or does it merely mean that the system of control and disciplining has transformed into something more sophisticated? Deborah Lupton argues that the societal control systems are still intact, but only dressed in a new disguise:

The rhetoric of public health discourse is such that the individual is unaware that the discourse is disciplining; health is deemed a universal right, a fundamental good, and therefore measures taken to protect one's health must necessarily be the concern and goal of every individual (Lupton 2003: 35).

Against the background of the discussion on health and individualization as well as recent developments within health promotion, it is possible to explore the contemporary *makeover culture*. I will use this term to describe different techniques used to transform the body, and new perceptions of the desired and ideal body. In many Western countries, people are prepared to invest money and time in transforming and creating a slim, well-trained and beautiful body. There are a number of effective body techniques available today that can be used to create an ideal body. The notion of the slim and well-trained body, the fitness body, is often associated and intermingled with the healthy body. The increasing possibilities of constructing a healthy fitness body, combined with the increased exposure of ideal bodies in the media, have led to successive changes in people's perceptions and visions of the healthy body.

The argument put forward here is that the availability of contemporary body techniques and the circulation of 'perfect bodies and faces' in the media are successively transforming our ideas about the healthy body and face.

Plastic Surgery and Body Modifications

In order to achieve the most ultimate result of the operation, the consulting surgeon will give proper feedback to the patient. This is done on a regular basis, irrespective of if, when and how the body should be modified. The plastic surgeon can discover and point out asymmetries and defects, earlier unknown for the patient (Edung 2002: 22).

The American Association of Plastic Surgery was established in 1921. The early history of plastic surgery is connected to war and to attempts to reconstruct soldiers' damaged bodies. Over the years, the profession has gained more recognition, and in the early 1940s, the American Board of Plastic Surgery was constituted. During the post-war period, the American public became more accustomed to the idea of plastic surgery. During the 1950s, Hollywood stars became the reference point for beauty and the per-

fect body. Film stars, for example Marilyn Monroe, contributed to the establishment of a new female ideal body characterized by large breasts. Increasing numbers of women went to plastic surgeons to enhance their breasts (Haiken 1997).

Looking at recent statistics from *The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery*, it is obvious that this trend has continued. From the late 1990s until today, there has been a huge increase in the number of plastic surgical operations (Johansson 2006). Recently, TV series such as *Extreme makeover* and *Dr. 90210* have contributed to a gradual normalization of plastic surgery. In reality TV, we meet 'ordinary' people who suffer and who want to change their bodies. In 2004, *Extreme makeover* was broadcast in Sweden. We could meet Sandra, twenty-three years old, who had given birth to four children, and who was horrified by the decay of her body. She did not dare to show her body on a beach. After consultation sessions, Sandra decided to modify several parts of her body. At the end of the show, the viewers get to meet these people again, and now they are all happy, and their bodies are more in line with cultural ideals.

Through reality TV and the increased public awareness that many celebrities have modified their bodies, plastic surgery has gradually come to be seen as a possible method, and as an alternative to feeling bad about your body. In the Nordic countries, there has been a strong resistance to these forms of body modification. Feminist movements have opposed the idea that women should use any means possible to fit into societal and cultural ideals. However, during the past decade, we have seen a gradual acceptance of certain beauty ideals, and methods such as plastic surgery have become more accepted. The discussion and resistance continue.

Contemporary methods of plastic surgery create possibilities for people to modify their bodies and to create 'the perfect body'. Over time, it has gradually become more important to look healthy, well kept and youthful. Discourses on health and the good life connect to and are deeply implicated in the creation of contemporary ideal bodies. People want to look healthy and like 'winners'. The fat, sloppy and badly kept body is often associated with laziness, passiveness and a 'bad attitude' (Johansson 2006). Health, beauty, happiness and success have become part of a modern middle-class lifestyle.

However, there is also a massive critique of the new makeover culture. Here, there are several tragic stories about famous or semi-famous women who have enlarged their breasts, creating dangerous bodily configurations. One of these women, Lolo Ferrari, made around 25 cosmetic alterations, most of them to enlarge her breasts. She had the largest breast implants in the world, and became an almost mythic porno figure. Ferrari died in early 2000, and the cause of death was not properly established, probably an overdose of anti-depressants. In an article on this kind of makeover culture, Meredith Jones (2008: 102) writes:

When makeover culture is 'correctly' performed it embodies elasticity, adaptability and mobility in physical, mental and emotional terms. And it values, above all, a state of constant becoming. Makeover culture, for all its endless construction of newly finished surfaces, also always creates sites that are in disarray: the dusty 'ruins' of renovations-in-progress, the chaos of redecorating and the blood, bruised mess of the body in surgery and in recovery /.../ These are reminders that cosmetic surgery and makeover culture are still subject to death and finality, and that in fact it is these inevitabilities that they work in connection with.

Part of the critique deals with consumption and the connection between beauty and success. This critique often targets people's futile attempts to avoid death and ageing. Using Botox, which is a neurotoxin, it is possible to freeze the muscles of the face. Consequently, the face is not able to perform the movements that produce wrinkles and the signs of ageing. According to Cooke (2008), Botox injections are a billion-dollar industry.

There is a massive discussion on these issues within the feminist movement. The critique is directed towards the objectification of the female body, although there are also studies on male bodies. Atkinson (2008) argues that the increased interest among men in plastic surgery – both invasive (e.g., eyelid surgery and breast reduction) and non-invasive (chemical peels and Botox) cosmetic procedures – can be seen as a symptom of the 'crisis in masculinity' in Canada. Since the 2000, Canadian men have turned to plastic surgeons in order to recapture their masculinity. Even though this trend could be interpreted as a sign of the considerable feminization of men, Atkinson instead sees this as involving the reframing of hegemonic masculinity. Gill and McLean (2005) agree with this and emphasize the different normative strategies used by men to integrate body modification in a framework of individualism and a new masculinity. There are, however, other interpretations of this phenomenon. Coad (2008) argues that *metrosexuality* is replacing traditional and conventional masculine values and behaviour. The term metrosexual is often used to refer to changes in masculinity related to a more aesthetic, eroticized and exposed masculine body.

Feminist theorizations of aesthetic surgery are challenged today. Some researchers reject the often totalizing explanations of this phenomenon as a sign of domination. The critics argue that feminist explanations leave out the positive outcomes of surgery (Holliday & Cairnie 2007). Feminist discourses of subordination, objectification and victimization neglect young women's active decisions to cultivate both good looks and an active and independent lifestyle (Holliday & Taylor 2006). During the next decade, we will probably witness a considerable change in how people view these kinds of body modifications. There is little doubt that we will continue to have debates and discussions on the role of plastic surgery in contemporary culture.

The Face of Health

'Perfect bodies' are marketed and sold on a global market. Such bodies command a high price on the international market. This cult surrounding the beautiful body is nothing new. But modern science has made possible a closer examination of the human body and the development of techniques that can be used to create a perfect physique (Johansson 2000, 2006). Gradually, and without our reflecting on them, the norms for what should be aesthetically attractive have become increasingly narrow and out of reach. The ideal body must be formed through training, diet and surgery.

Advertisements for various training techniques and diet preparations must be interpreted as strong arguments for the total plasticity and formability of the body. Certain ideals are distributed throughout the world through mass media and advertisements. The perfect body exists on the plane of ideas and is an abstraction, but it is nevertheless also 'real'. The bodies and faces we encounter in the mass media are deceptive in the sense that they are created to pay tribute to the idea of the perfect body. These bodies are

created and manufactured through intensive training, diet and modern media techniques – retouching and other methods of editing the picture material.

This global fitness culture also has its backbiters, who raise objections to the fitness prophet's message of health, training and a 'sound lifestyle'. There are other ways to live the good life. But, at the same time, it is difficult to avoid being confronted with the bodies that appear on the TV screen, in advertisements and various health and fitness magazines. For many people, these bodies function as a bad conscience – a reminder that they eat and drink too much, exercise too little and, most importantly, that they do not look like the people who populate the media world. Such a bad conscience can be transformed into internal torment that drives people to a life of constant dieting and despair (Johansson 1996, 1998).

Fitness culture and beauty ideals have become interchangeable. According to many fitness experts, it is possible to "read" the body and to use this knowledge to draw conclusions about a person's lifestyle, behaviour and character (Johansson 2006). Such specific methods bear many likenesses to how medical practitioners of the 19th century 'read' bodies and interpreted different physical signs within a moral discourse as expressions of either normal or deviant bodies (Johannisson 2004). This way of diagnosing the body has many similarities with how lifestyle, diet and fitness experts read the contemporary body. Fatness, for example, is regarded as a sign of an unhealthy relation to the body, and sometimes also as a sign of moral weakness. If we study advertisements for different dieting techniques or methods to reduce overweight, we find so-called 'before' and 'after' pictures. These images are used to show how body techniques can help to create a more admirable and healthier body. The message is: 'if you want to change your life and to put a stop to your unhealthy lifestyle, it is always possible to change and become a better person'.

The fitness industry has established strong links between certain body ideals and the notion of a healthy lifestyle. According to this view, fatness and overweight signals poor health, an unhealthy lifestyle and personality flaws. The question is what impact the increasing market for plastic surgery and sophisticated techniques of body modification will have on our perceptions of health and morality.

The plastic surgeon can help us preserve a youthful body and face. Through different techniques it is possible to, for example, remove wrinkles, bags under the eyes and other signs of ageing. How will this affect us, and even more importantly, how will this affect our view on health and healthy appearances? At present, we can find before-and-after images of people who have paid plastic surgeons to build a new face. Perhaps our perception of a healthy face will change considerably in the future, forcing us to either pay for a new face or to be considered as unhealthy persons?

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Better (Red)TM Than Dead?

*Celebrities, Consumption and International Aid**

Lisa Ann Richey & Stefano Ponte

Bono's launch of Product (RED)TM at Davos in 2006 opens a new frontier for development aid. Product RED is 'a brand created to raise awareness and money for The Global Fund by teaming up with iconic brands to produce RED-branded products'.¹ Consumption, trade, and aid wed dying Africans with designer goods. With the engagement of American Express, Apple, Converse, Gap, Emporio Armani, Motorola, and now Hallmark, Dell, and Microsoft, consumers can help HIV/AIDS patients in Africa. They can do so simply by shopping, as a percentage of profits from Product RED lines goes to support The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Aid celebrities – Bono, Jeffrey Sachs, and Paul Farmer – guarantee the 'cool quotient', the management and the target of this new modality of aid. Linked to commerce, not philanthropy, Product RED reconfigures international development around aid celebrities and consumer-citizens united to do good by dressing well.

Since its introduction at Davos in 2006, RED products have been made widely available in the UK and the US (where it was launched on the Oprah Winfrey Show). Some RED products have been released in Japan, Switzerland, France, Canada, and Singapore. RED has already received extensive media attention, including promotions on CNN's Larry King Live, two RED issues of *The Independent* (edited by Bono and Giorgio Armani), Trafalgar Square's (MOTO)RED SQUARE concert featuring the Scissor Sisters, and a massive \$25 million marketing campaign by Gap. This campaign included stars photographed by Annie Leibowitz and wrapping Chicago's three-story Michigan Avenue Gap store in RED vinyl. The 5 August 2006 issue of the internationally prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* was a co-branded product: (*The Lancet*)^{RED} contained advertisements for RED products and contributed \$30,000 'in support of this important project'.² From Emporio Armani RED watches to a RED iPodTM and from a MOTORAZRTM RED phone to a (RED)GAP sundress, a percentage of the profits from the sale of all RED branded products is contributed by the 'iconic' partners directly to The Global Fund. RED grants are made through the Fund's standard disbursement processes and have been dedicated to the Fund's best-performing programs for AIDS in Africa – so far funds have gone to Rwanda, Swaziland, and Ghana.

Product RED is a quintessential concoction of current understandings of 'best practice' in corporate strategy, aid delivery, and trade. In relation to corporate strategies,

it promotes the concept that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is good for societies, environments, and for business. Over a decade of civil society action against corporations' labour practices, environmental mismanagement, predatory extraction of natural resources, high prices for medical treatment against HIV/AIDS, and unfair trade practices have pushed the agenda of CSR. Often, corporate responses have been reactive, rather than pro-active. In contrast, Product RED pro-actively seeks to engage businesses in its version of CSR that marries co-branding and help to Africa. The fact that such successful brands participate in this exercise implies for others that it meets their financial, social, and environmental objectives (the so-called 'triple bottom line').³ Also, Product RED's architecture takes its inspiration from the currently favoured form of corporate organization – the 'network' company – flexible, organized by projects, lean and generally better able to plug into several different networks.⁴

In relation to aid delivery mechanisms, Product RED fits the sought after model of delivering aid efficiently and with a lean and flexible structure. It is a private initiative providing funds to a public-private fund. Product RED is an initiative that is not burdened by additional bureaucracy. All the elements are present already: The Global Fund, which prides itself of having overhead costs of only three percent; DATA (Debt, AIDS, trade, Africa), Bono's own 'lean' organization from which Product RED springs out; and the flexible, lean, and compassionate corporations that produce the fashionable goods (or rather, they market them). The Global Fund notes explicitly that 'the agreements with RED and its partner companies do not add significant administrative work for The Global Fund or its recipients, ensuring that the funds raised go to where they are needed most'.⁵ Finally, Product RED fits a newly consolidated paradigm that both aid and trade are central to development. Far removed from the old days of leftist tirades against trade (aid, not trade) and the opposing neo-liberal stance against aid (trade, not aid), the 'consensual' 2000s have marked the rise of the 'trade and aid' mantra.

Product RED provides a new mechanism for development finance that weds business with help, consumers with celebrities, and doctors with rockers. The RED genesis story as popularized through mass media coverage depicts RED as the creative fruit resulting from many seasons of labour by the aid celebrity extraordinaire, Bono.⁶ RED is described as the outcome of Bono's having thought that his ideas for helping the poor needed to be marketed in a less 'misty-eyed, bleeding-heart way'.⁷ Bono clarified at the RED launch: 'Philanthropy is like hippy music, holding hands. Red is more like punk rock, hip hop, this should feel like hard commerce'.⁸ And in fact, 'the real surprise is that Bono turns out to be a card-carrying capitalist. He wants companies selling RED products to make a profit by helping the poor – doing well by doing good'.⁹ In the words of the American Express RED launch representative, it is 'conscientious commerce' – good for business, good for all.

Product RED seeks to bring 'Africa' to the minds of the idle rich, thus providing an opportunity for them to 'help.' In July 2007, Bono guest-edited a special issue of the magazine *Vanity Fair* – the purpose of which was to 'rebrand Africa'. Given the legacy of slavery and colonialism and the history of extraction of resources and supply of armaments to the continent, it is difficult to imagine a time when the rich have not been interested in Africa. Assuming that Africa is far from the minds, lives, and income-sources of the rich readers of *Vanity Fair* contributes to the myth that there is no real

linkage between the rich and the poor, between the entrepreneurs and Africa, or between capitalism and disease.

While acknowledging that any initiative with such hype and crass consumerism would struggle to gain credibility as a legitimate contribution to international aid, our article demonstrates that Product RED should be given serious analysis as a manifestation of: (1) the impact of aid celebrities on policymaking, (2) the legitimacy of consumers as citizens, and (3) the construction of Africans with AIDS as worthy recipients of profits generated from heroic shopping.

In this article, we do not seek to adjudicate the ‘success’ of the RED initiative, nor to compare RED as a modality of aid with other types of existing interventions.¹⁰ Our investigation will show how Product RED functions using the guarantee of celebrity together with the negotiated representation of a distant ‘Africa’ to meet competing, and perhaps incommensurable, objectives. We will show how Product RED reconfigures the modalities of international aid around compassionate consumption through the guarantee by aid celebrities to save Africans with AIDS. RED unapologetically promotes status, capitalism, and conspicuous consumption in the name of ‘helping.’ While this may seem far removed from conventional aid interventions, we argue that RED may be as much reflexive realism as crass hypocrisy. A close examination of Product RED will demonstrate how relations of inequality are inherent in donor-recipient exchanges. Negotiating the terms of giving speaks as much about the donors – or in this case, the consumers – who give, as about the needy Africans with AIDS, who receive. Product RED relies on the mutual coexistence of proximity and distance, or empathy and separation, between the shopper/helpers and the producer/sufferers.

In the next section, we discuss the context of RED as development aid to Africa, channelled through a public-private institution – The Global Fund. Then, we introduce the ‘aid celebrities’ who are the critical functionaries performing the totemic work of mediating between consumers and their beneficiaries. In section four, we describe the construction of the RED recipients in which the ‘rock man’s burden’ frames the ‘problem’ along familiar constructions of sex, gender, race, and place. In section five, we highlight how Product RED depicts its consumer-citizens as fashion-conscious but yet actively engaged and reflexive. But by prioritising disease over the social and environmental relations of trade and production, Product RED effectively fetishizes the commodities sold under its umbrella. We argued that by marrying consumption of iconic brands and aid through celebrities, it makes consumption ‘compassionate’ and ‘conspicuous’ at the same time. Finally, we elaborate some conclusions on Product RED as a new modality of international aid and its implications for linking shopping and helping with representations of global giving and receiving.

Aid to Africa, AIDS and The Global Fund

Product RED provides a new modality for international development assistance to fight AIDS in Africa. Yet, while it looks very chic and contemporary, it is simply joining a larger bandwagon of donors who want to fight disease to achieve ‘development’. Aid to African AIDS is currently in vogue because it fits comfortably under declared intentions of global change, it is a pet aid project of the current US administration, it can be done ‘efficiently’, and it provides a straightforward entry-point for linking business and donors.

International development assistance has always been linked to donor countries' need to give aid in particular ways and to concerns that the funds given are used as intended. The current basis for all development assistance rests under the three pillars of the 'Monterrey Consensus':¹¹ country ownership, a comprehensive and long-term approach, and partnership.¹² This framework is meant to direct aid toward reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by 189 states. Included among these goals is to 'halt and begin to reverse the spread of AIDS by 2015' and also to 'provide, in cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.'¹³ International trade agreements have been revised in order to enable increased access to generic AIDS drugs, but these have had limited impact.¹⁴

Foreign aid to the world's poorest countries, most of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa, has been mired in controversy since its inception. Over the past three decades, rich countries' levels of foreign aid as a share of their GDP have plummeted.¹⁵ Yet, aid to AIDS in Africa thrives. In spite of the comparably low proportion of its money given to development assistance,¹⁶ and a reluctance to use foreign policy as social work,¹⁷ the US embraced aid to Africa under President George W. Bush, with a \$15 billion African AIDS initiative as its flagship.

Donor initiatives make up 68 percent of all funds, public and private, spent on AIDS in developing countries as calculated for 2005: this far higher than the eight percent share agreed upon in Cairo in 1994.¹⁸ HIV/AIDS accounts for almost all development assistance for control of sexually-transmitted diseases.¹⁹ Activists and the many affected by HIV/AIDS would argue that this is a reasonable response to the disease-burden of AIDS. Still, AIDS receives far more dollars per DALY (disability-adjusted life years) than any other cause.²⁰ Why? Effective advocacy, the fear factor that if not controlled in developing countries, AIDS could have a greater impact in rich countries, and a well-publicized 'efficiency' argument.

Former US Senator Jesse Helms notoriously disparaged aid to poor regions such as Africa as 'throwing money down a rathole'.²¹ Yet, in spite of such perceptions, when the then US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill returned from his tour of Africa in 2002, he declared that more money would be given to poor countries, but that this money must be used with more efficiency than in the past. De Janvry and Sadoulet (2004) argue that the 'efficiency condition' can be met in international aid in two ways: either through limiting aid to those countries which follow good economic policies, or through funding 'good programs' whether or not they are in the context of 'good policies'. The latter, easier option has been embraced by donors and includes the creation of a semi-autonomous distribution mechanism that allows programs to be set up even where policies are weak. These social funds are neither state, business, nor civil society but can be a mix of any of these in varying proportions.

Product RED's profits go to one of the most well-known social funds – The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, an independent, private foundation governed by an international board that works in partnership with governments. The Global Fund is strictly a funding and not an implementing agency. In spite of the publicity given to social funds as new modalities, they are financed mostly by the traditional sources of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA): donor-country governments as represented in the Development Assistance Committee and to a lesser extent, multilateral institutions like the World Bank.²² Yet, Product RED gives the impression that the work that it funds

to combat AIDS is innovative, outside of the usual bureaucratic mire of development aid, and reliant on individuals. However, the point, we argue, lies not in the effectiveness of Product RED as a funding modality, but in its innovative characterization of the relations of consumption and donation. This is essentially mediated by celebrities.

Celebrities

Celebrity activism for worthy causes has been taking place for decades. International development experts, associated with celebrity activists, have become ‘aid celebrities’ themselves. They embody a new positive, ‘win-win’ approach toward solving poverty and disease. After more than three decades of defeatism in development, aid celebrities are the new totems of possibility.

Prominent celebrity activism has been taking place since the 1960s. A first wave, inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King, took place during the US civil rights movement.²³ A second wave coalesced around the anti-war movement and opposition to the draft in the US, when the first ‘benefit concerts’ took place. A third wave followed from the 1970s, where activism aimed at responding to global concerns.²⁴ But perhaps the most important events that marked the growth of celebrity activism were Bob Geldof’s re-recording of ‘Do They Know It’s Christmas’ in 1984 and the related Live Aid concerts of 1985. An estimated 2 billion people watched the concerts, and the telethon raised almost \$150 million, the largest ever at that time. Geldof’s use of sponsorship at Live Aid made it possible to minimize costs and maximize the amount of donations to the cause: linking business profits with charitable fundraising set the stage for Product RED. Furthermore, ‘Live Aid’s use of highly emotional televised images to stimulate donations . . . changed the face of international fundraising’.²⁵ Now, we are saturated with these images, so much that we do not need to refer to them, they are always out there in the collective subconscious. This allows Bono and Product RED to focus on cool, sexy branding rather than on poverty, inequality and disease. Although sponsorship had become accepted practice after Live Aid, with Product RED the marriage of consumption and social causes has become one and indivisible.²⁶

Aid celebrities are not only important because they underpin Product RED. A trinity of aid celebrities (Bono, Jeffrey Sachs and Paul Farmer) is also behind the establishment of The Global Fund, the main beneficiary of RED. The influence of this trinity over the agenda of aid for AIDS is unrivalled. It was actually Sachs who started The Global Fund. Sachs describes Bono as an ‘enthusiastic supporter,’ noting how ‘none but the incomparable Bono has opened the eyes of millions of fans and citizens to the shared struggle for global equality and justice’.²⁷ However, ‘one more piece was missing’²⁸: it was still believed that AIDS treatment was impossible to implement in poor countries. As told by Sachs, ‘my colleague Paul Farmer put those arguments to rest for me and, in some ways, for the world’.²⁹ Sachs, Farmer and two other colleagues from Harvard prepared the Consensus Statement by Members of the Harvard Faculty to show that treatment was possible and scale-up could be practical in poor countries.³⁰ On the basis of Sachs’ advice, the UN secretary-general announced at the Abuja Summit on AIDS in April 2001 his support for the creation of The Global Fund. This was followed in the coming months by support from US President Bush, the UN General Assembly and the G8 leaders – and thus The Global Fund was born.

The Bard: Guarantor of Cool

Only Bono, the quintessential ambassador, could have started Product RED. He is compelled to reconcile the ‘divides that separate Northern Ireland from the Irish republic, rich from poor, Catholic from Protestant, Democrat from Republican, aggressor from victim, Christian from Muslim’.³¹ Now he has reconciled corporations and inequity, branding and disease.

Bono’s engagement in political activism dates at least to the early 1990s.³² His letters to newspapers, public challenge to Tony Blair and meetings with world leaders are thought to have had a direct impact on the debt cancellations that the G7 offered in 1999 and on the US contribution to the Heavily Indebted Poor-Country (HIPC) initiative. More recently, Bono joined the campaign against pharmaceutical companies to lower their prices for antiretroviral (ARV) treatment against AIDS. He was photographed with G.W. Bush in Monterey in 2002, when the president announced that the US was to increase its foreign aid budget to \$5 billion between 2004 and 2006 – in what was termed a Compact for Global Development. Later in 2002, Bono and then-US Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill took a 10-day tour of Africa, also known as ‘The Odd Couple Tour of Africa 2002.’

Bono played a key role in the 2005 Live 8 series of concerts organized by Bob Geldof to put pressure on G8 leaders meeting in Gleneagles. According to the LIVE 8 promoters, ‘the G8 leaders have it within their power to alter history ... LIVE 8 is calling for people across the world to unite in one call – in 2005 it is your voice we are after, not your money.’³³ Interestingly, Bono’s Product RED turns this statement on its head, implicitly suggesting that ‘we are after your money, not your voice.’ Product RED is about individual consumption, not about public engagement in activism or advocacy. It is a private commitment showcased by wearing RED products in public, with Bono guaranteeing the cool quotient.

The Teacher: Guarantor of Efficiency

Jeffrey Sachs is the economist behind many of the initiatives to cancel debt and ‘eradicate poverty’ that have emerged in the last decade. Sachs has not only piled up an impressive number of high-pedigree positions in the development arena, but is also a true global celebrity. He was named one of the 100 most influential people in the world by *Time* magazine in 2004 and 2005. He was deemed ‘most important economist in the world’ by *The New York Times Magazine* and ‘the world’s best-known economist’ by *Time* magazine. The status he has achieved as a ‘progressive’ economist is even more striking, considering that in the late-1980s and early-1990s, Sachs spent most of his time advising Eastern European and former Soviet Republics on ‘shock therapy’, a series of economic reforms that were meant to help former communist regimes to find the path of capitalism painfully but quickly. Generally, Sachs in the 1980s was part of the wave of economists that criss-crossed the world to advise developing and transition country governments on structural adjustment and market liberalization.

Then, in the mid-to-late 1990s, Sachs went through a populist transformation, re-packaging himself as a progressive economist. He became interested in the macroeconomics of public health and went back to his early career interest on debt reduction and restructuring, now modified into debt cancellation. He also became more interested in

Africa. He collaborated with Ann Pettifor in raising the public profile of the Jubilee 2000 debt cancellation campaign. He began accompanying Bono on many occasions – both of them embodying the image of relatively young, successful professionals that carry the torch of ‘soft capitalism’ and Western values. Both men, on separate occasions, met with Pope John Paul II – Sachs did it twice. Yet many of the poor and diseased Africans Sachs is now trying to save became so at least partly as a result of the reforms he advocated in the 1980s – public sector retrenchments, roll-backs from the provision of public goods and services, and the elimination of parastatal entities that controlled commodity trade and exports and that used to cushion farmers from commodity price shocks.

The Healer: Guarantor of the Solution

When Bono claimed at the November 2005 *Time* Global Health Summit that ‘a world without malaria or TB is no longer unthinkable’,³⁴ the reference was to Paul Farmer. Physician and medical anthropologist, he has shown by example that ARV treatment can resurrect patients suffering from the late-stages of AIDS, even in the poorest circumstances. He is an accomplished scholar and a clinical physician with dual practices in the US and Haiti. Farmer began his life’s work while still a medical student at Harvard, when he set up a community-based healthcare delivery system on the central plateau of Haiti, the poorest country in the West. To support the work, in 1987 he founded a Boston-based charity called ‘Partners in Health’, which supported the work of the Haitian centre *Zammi Lasante*. He began with a one-building clinic. ‘Today, the well-equipped facility, with its operating rooms, blood bank, satellite communications, laptops, and other components of modern medicine, is a global model for delivering public-health services’.³⁵ Farmer’s tactic of ‘social medicine’ includes providing lifesaving medicines and surgical care together with clean water, food, housing, education and social services. In 2005, Partners in Health received the world’s largest humanitarian award, the \$1.5 million Hilton Prize, for their multi-faceted and unconventional approach to aid. Farmer’s work in Haiti was a pivotal factor in the country’s selection as the first in the world to receive money from The Global Fund.

Farmer’s books link his medical and moral missions with an important political message of ‘putting the poor first’.³⁶ He has become the first ‘global doctor,’ known through the anecdotes and photographs of his Haitian community members, and substantiated with science, effectiveness, and efficiency.³⁷ While Farmer’s moral tone and ascetic lifestyle (carbon footprint notwithstanding) do not at first glance seem compatible with the flashy, bling image of Product RED, such an approach would have been impossible without his revolution in the potential of AIDS treatment, embodied in his own totemic role as the healer. Farmer guarantees that more money can do something to solve the problem of AIDS in poor countries.

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More than simply exercising their networking capabilities, aid celebrities act as emotional sovereigns, in the classical republican sense where the sovereign manifests the true will of ‘the people.’ Bono, Sachs and Farmer are called upon to speak truth to public health. Their field experiences are recounted as narrative devices in various and

dissimilar publications. For example, a recent World Bank working paper authored by a team of macroeconomists outlines a monitoring model for the MDGs.³⁸ As a text, it is characterized by decimals, Greek letter coefficients and tables of regression results. Yet, the introduction consists of a lengthy quotation from Bono's interview with a popular American news program, NBC's 'Meet the Press'. The celebrity totem says the things that the economists cannot – 'it is the most extraordinary thing to watch people dying three in a bed, two on top and one underneath, as I have seen in Lilongwe, Malawi'.³⁹

Sanitized sensationalism is intended to link the arduous work of constructing quantified targets for monitoring each goal of the MDGs with the 'avoidable catastrophe' of human suffering. The same story is told in slightly different words in the first chapter of Jeffrey Sachs' *The End of Poverty*. What is important about this vignette is not its description of an African clinic mired in poverty, but that it is repeated like a mantra by aid celebrities. Collectively, the three celebrities totemically embody the 'good' and have their life stories to guarantee for that. After more than three decades of development pessimism burdening the conscience of left-leaning development enthusiasts and 'ethical' consumers, and the increasing need for 'meaning' among mainstream brand consumers, totemic aid celebrities merge disparate longings into a new modality for resolving the disparity between rich and poor, well and diseased.

The Rock Man's Burden: Sex, Gender, Race, and Place

Product RED promises resolution to myriad historical conflicts about the possibilities of being 'donor', and of confining the most intrinsic problems of development within a geographical demarcation that can be kept separate from the Western self. AIDS provides the quintessential cause as the outlet for RED's hard commerce approach to doing good, because – like fashion, rock music, or celebrity – it is about money, power, and sex.

While modern philanthropists have morphed into postmodern consumers, the stationary supporting cast is dragged back onto the development stage to justify this newest version of assistance, the 'rock man's burden'. That Product RED's beneficiaries are African is not coincidental, as re-imagining Africa is part of the RED vision. Mbembe has argued that the real and the imaginary are interwoven in the category of 'Africa'.⁴⁰ Ferguson takes this further by suggesting that 'Africa' has a particular place in 'globalization' – a 'place' understood as both a location in space and a rank in a system of social categories.⁴¹ The 'forcefully imposed position in the contemporary world – is easily visible if we notice how fantasies of a categorical "Africa" (normally, "Sub-Saharan" or "black" Africa) and 'real' political-economic processes on the continent are interrelated'.⁴² Africa seems the obvious 'place' where RED money could buy pills to save women and children with AIDS, and where the constructions of donor and recipient would not be challenged, as Africa's 'place' in the hierarchy of development is well-established.

Global HIV/AIDS has been described as an 'epidemic of signification'⁴³ in which the representations of the disease are intrinsically related to the ways in which the disease is perceived and managed at all levels. Within global AIDS, Africa remains a 'dark zone'⁴⁴ – 'a dark, untamed continent from which devastating viruses emerge to threaten the West'.⁴⁵ Photographic images play a particular and significant role in representations of AIDS in Africa, serving as 'visual quotations'.⁴⁶ In an analysis of photographic representations of African AIDS, Bleiker and Kay argue that 'at a time when we are

saturated with information stemming from multiple media sources, images are well suited to capture issues in succinct and mesmerizing ways'.⁴⁷ From LiveAid onwards, the dominant images of African AIDS are those of suffering, more likely to generate pity than compassion, portraying Africans as victims with no agency set in circumstances that are far removed from the Western lifestyle.⁴⁸

Product RED completely avoids humanitarian imagery of death and suffering, and presents its RED products and promoters with the same glitz, glam, and fashion-magazine gloss as any other luxury goods. As described in *The Sunday Times*, 'the sex appeal of red' comes also from stars like Scarlett Johansson, 'the sizzling face of Bono's new ethical brand'.⁴⁹ While a first reading suggests that the messages promoted by RED are not only unrealistic, but in total contradiction to the 'Abstain, Be Faithful or use Condoms' (ABC) approach to African sex, a closer examination suggests that RED may be offering sexual alternatives, for those who can afford them. Individuals are encouraged to express their sexuality, their attractiveness, and their desire through consumer choices, not through intimate actions. 'And that's what RED is all about, the knowledge that desire – the desire to shop – and virtue – the wish to see the world a better place – are not always contradictory.'⁵⁰

Product RED is about helping the poor and curing global problems, but it is also about redeeming sex and stylizing gender relations. The defining characteristic of HIV/AIDS in Africa is that it is a sexually-transmitted disease. Much of the mythology surrounding African AIDS has been based on stereotypical neo-colonial depictions of the sexual savage.⁵¹ Representations and images of AIDS in the West have never before been cloaked in Armani glasses, but they have functioned similarly in representing African culture as hypersexualized. This time, there is an implicit contrast with the sexualization of Western consumption. 'If we as a society continue to desire a "face of AIDS," it will not be to show that we are basically the same but, rather, to show that those who are already projected as deviants do not live here'.⁵²

While the racialization of sexuality long pre-dates the contemporary AIDS initiatives,⁵³ RED takes a new twist in which sexuality is being reclaimed by the West as healthy. Bono provides the healthy and sexy body to contrast with the 'African woman dying from sex' body. In the role of the totemic celebrity, he redeems sex, while reclaiming masculinity, and restoring a social hierarchy where cool, rich, white men save poor, voiceless African women and children. All of this is managed within a discourse of concern, care, and ethics. Bono states, 'I represent a lot of [African] people who have no voice at all. . . They haven't asked me to represent them. It's clearly cheeky but I hope they're glad I do'.⁵⁴ The complex scripts of race, gender, and global economic inequality are ignored with justifications that 'AIDS is an emergency' and thus, normal rules do not apply. At the same time, the 'normality' of consumption, and the social and environmental relations of trade and production that underpin poverty, inequality, and disease, are not questioned.

Mi(RED) in Commodity Fetishism: Consumption and International Aid

The material and cultural aspects of consumption, the role and limitations of consumer activism, and consumption politics have been the focus of a large body of literature over the last two decades, with the classic critiques of conspicuous consumption dating back to the early 20th century.⁵⁵ Rather than providing a detailed review of the large

consumption literature here,⁵⁶ we briefly highlight some broad tendencies and focus on how commodity fetishism, via celebrity mediation, successfully marries consumption and international aid.

Characterizations of consumers in the literature vary according to how much power is placed on consumer agency and how material or symbolic the act of consumption is thought to be. In very simplified terms, both rational choice models based on *homo economicus* and much of the contemporary cultural/symbolic approaches to consumption see consumers as empowered and dominant actors. The Frankfurt school of sociology⁵⁷ and political economy/regulation approaches⁵⁸ have portrayed consumers as dominated – either through subtle manipulation or sheer retail and advertising power. Extreme post-modern positions have moved beyond the issue of agency and see consumption as entirely symbolic.⁵⁹

Condemning accounts of consumption still abound in the literature – from critiques of commodity culture as ‘debasing’⁶⁰ and of consumerism as the ‘economics of deception’,⁶¹ to accounts of the so-called processes of MacDonaldisation⁶² and Disneyization.⁶³ But much of the recent consumption literature has underlined the reflexivity and multiple identities of consumers,⁶⁴ the complexity of acts of consumption, consumer politics, and consumer agency,⁶⁵ and the tensions between consumption and citizenship.⁶⁶

Product RED plays well in the subtle relation between consumption and citizenship that characterizes ‘stakeholder capitalism’.⁶⁷ In stakeholder capitalism, rather than relying on the state or the market, consumer rights are exercised through consumer organizations. These rights are exercised not only to obtain ‘value for money’, but also to demand social and environmental change. Action takes place via engagement of consumer organization with the state and corporations, and (increasingly) via individual acts of ‘conscious consumption’ – backed up by systems of certification, labelling, and codes of conduct.⁶⁸ In this operating environment, consumers-citizens are portrayed as ever more informed, reflexive, active, (sometimes) socially and environmentally conscious, and empowered to make a difference with their purchasing power.⁶⁹ This is a far cry from the duped and victim consumer depictions of the past. Furthermore, in stakeholder capitalism, while consumer agency may take the form of collective action through campaigns and consumer organizations’ pressure, the act of consumption remains irrevocably individualistic. Depictions of Product RED consumers as fashion-conscious yet actively engaged, reflexive, able to personally customize their purchases, and therefore inspi(RED) are part and parcel of this trend.

We neither seek to glorify nor to vilify consumption here. We do not seek to describe how much power consumers have, or how reflexive they are. We observe the processes of enrolment that celebrities perform in linking consumption to aid for AIDS in Africa, and reflect on the implications of placing priority on disease over the social and environmental relations that underpin the production and trade of the goods that are sold under the Product RED umbrella. Indeed, Product RED sees trade and investment in low-wage countries with poor environmental and labour regulation (and enforcement) in very peculiar ways:

In addition to its contribution to the Global Fund, Gap is making an even deeper level of investment in Africa by producing some of its products there. The (Gap) RED T-shirt, for example, was produced entirely in Lesotho – a small country in

sub-Saharan Africa in which 25-30 percent of young women are HIV-positive. A woman working in a Lesotho garment factory that produces Gap products becomes part of a cycle of hope ... She works for an employer that offers her services and support and access to HIV testing and treatment. And she's making a product that's being sold around the world, the profits from which will be invested back into her country.⁷⁰

Labour conditions, the environmental impact of production, and the real or threatened mobility of the location of production all disappear in the 'cycle of hope'. It is almost as if Gap was in Lesotho to do women affected with HIV/AIDS a favour. This is the same Gap that (along with Nike, parent company of Converse) was the scourge of international labour activism in the 1990s for the practices of its manufacturing contractors in the developing world. Similarly, Motorola disregards the coltan controversy linking mobile phones with African conflict in Eastern Congo and environmental devastation, and instead states that 'our support of The Global Fund is one way that we're able to give back to the region.'⁷¹ Thus, Product RED, in its positive spin, masks the social and environmental relations of trade and production that underpin poverty, inequality, and disease. This process, also known as 'commodity fetishism' (the term was first used by Marx), is not new per se in capitalist relations. What is new in the context of Product RED is its employment by celebrities in connecting consumption and aid.

Commodity fetishism describes 'the necessary masking of social relations under which commodities are produced from which capitalist commodity production gains much of its legitimacy'.⁷² In contemporary debates on trade and development issues, the concept of commodity fetishism is used to distinguish between what is hidden and what is communicated about the composition of products and their origins.⁷³ According to these accounts, transparency in trade suffers when there are discontinuities in the distribution of knowledge and creations of mythologies.⁷⁴ Some contributions also highlight, to an extent counter-intuitively, that transparency may also suffer when information on commodity production and circulation is embedded in standardized and externally-verified labels and certifications, such as organic, 'child-labour free' and 'sustainable'. The label may become a global, superficial substitute for local, in-depth knowledge of the commodity and of its producers.⁷⁵

For 'sustainable' products, (i.e. Fair Trade coffee, Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) wood products, and Rainforest Alliance bananas) transparent information about the processes that lie behind the products is communicated by the label. Consumers and trade operators are supplied with much more information on the 'where, when, how, and whys' of the product, production processes and conditions of exchange. This is intended to 'lift the veil' of commodity fetishism by ensuring transparency and traceability. However, critics claim that the increasing codification of social and environmental concerns through these standards, codes of conduct, and labels actually results in a 'double fetishism' – the masking of social relations of production combined with the commoditization of the knowledge about the commodity itself.⁷⁶

Product RED's reliance on the celebrity is fundamentally different from the current spate of certifications, labels, and codes of conduct that characterize 'ethical and sustainable' trade. It is contradictory to the 'audit culture' that underpins these processes⁷⁷ and that aims at 'impersonal' and systemic solutions to problems of quality, food safety,

environmental impact, and social conditions of production.⁷⁸ Product RED, backed by iconic brands, is based on ‘celebrity validation’, which is based on personal capacity. This allows Product RED to both achieve commodity fetishism and to use aid celebrities as a totem. Product RED is fetishist in the sense that it embeds information about the ‘quality’ of the product in the most powerful instrument of codification, branding – without actually releasing significant information on the trade and production relations that are behind these products. Bono explicitly stated at the Product RED launch that labour issues are of secondary importance to people dying with AIDS: ‘We do not think that trade is bad. We are for labour issues. Labour issues are very serious but six and a half thousand Africans dying is more serious.’⁷⁹ At the same time, Bono is the totem of ‘compassionate consumption’, steering away attention from the causes of poverty, such as the inequities of systems of production and trade, by focusing on one of the outcomes, HIV/AIDS. The beauty of this celebrity simplification is that it provides the possibility that everyday people can engage in low-cost heroism.

Better (RED)TM than Dead?

‘In the 21st century, commerce is the catalyst of change, good and bad. Marketing people, marketing brilliance, marketing budgets; we wanted to work with them. We wanted to make the fight against HIV/AIDS sexy and smart.’⁸⁰ If the focus is on solutions – and if one sets aside corporations’ profit-maximizing objectives, the negative externalities of their production processes, and their short-term perspective – then corporations can be seen as efficient and effective problem-solvers. Successful businesses are also good at stimulating consumption. The cultural insecurity of Western consumers *vis à vis* their own standing among their peers paves the way for compassionate consumption as a vector for empowering them within an imagined global community of the needy. If consumption cannot address exploitation and inequality, at least it can do something about tackling disease.

Product RED, as a co-branding exercise involving Apple, American Express, Converse, Dell, Emporio Armani, Gap, Hallmark, Motorola, and Microsoft, focuses on compassionate consumption for financing aid. Aid celebrities guarantee in their personal capacity its management, the seriousness of the target, the feasibility of the solution, and its cool quotient. It has positive spin wrapped all around, and gives the impression that corporations can be major contributors to development aid without suggesting that they pay a larger portion of their profits in taxes. Product RED, a lean network solution to aid financing, takes funds from consumption – not taxation. It is an individual effort, the result of consumer power – not of collective/public will. It can also be tailored to individual significations⁸¹ and co-produced with consumer feedback through blogging⁸² and focus groups. Product RED brings together AIDS activists and businesspeople, rockers and doctors, but its relations to the producers, unless they are Africans smitten by a deadly disease, remain opaque.

‘Shameless exploitation in pursuit of the common good,’ the slogan of ‘Newman’s Own’ company, might apply to Product RED as well.⁸³ But can one benefit from and challenge exploitative relations at the same time? The representative from American Express launched the RED card at Davos, noting: ‘It starts with building a profitable and sustainable product for the consumer, and ultimately that’s where our success will

lie.⁸⁴ Clearly, commercial success will not be lying three in a bed as in the ubiquitous description of the sufferers in the AIDS clinic in Malawi. Product RED's silence about the social relations of production and exchange that are behind the products it endorses helps shift the focus away from the causes of poverty and disease and towards 'solving' their manifestations. In this context, Bono claims that RED is 'reaching parts that traditional activism cannot . . . It takes lobbyists, activists, *and* consumers to make a social movement of the kind we're trying to catalyze.'⁸⁵

Product RED has created imagery of The Global Fund as being substantially funded by private consumers. Between February 2006 and December 2007, RED raised \$50 million, eight times more than The Fund received from companies and individuals between 2002 and 2006, but far less than the largest non-governmental contribution of \$650 million by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It is also less than 0.6 percent of the \$8.9 billion contributions given to The Fund by governments.⁸⁶ The Global Fund officially 'warmly welcomes this important new initiative from the private sector,' but the actual percentage of funding they expect from the private sector is minimal. The Global Fund's statement continues: 'Through RED and other initiatives, the Global Fund hopes to increase the private sector share of Global Fund income from *less than one percent* currently to ten percent or more in the long term.'⁸⁷ Thus, Product RED, together with all other private sector initiatives, is slated to eventually (and perhaps) amount to ten percent of total financial needs of The Global Fund.

Pre-1989 critiques of capitalism from the left were occasionally counter-argued from the right with the catchy proposition of 'Better Dead than Red'. Thereafter, much of the critical argumentation on capitalism has been focused on how to soften its rough edges, rather than on how to get beyond it as a system. In this context, 'Better (RED)TM than Dead' captures the spirit of a moderate project of 'soft capitalism'. Through Product RED branding, something can be done about poverty and against deadly disease without undermining the basic cultural or economic structures of the capitalist system. Consumers can become part of the movement, together with activists and lobbyists – with the implication of politically equal footing.

In this article, we have argued that the Product RED rescues international development assistance from its dour predictive graphs and disappointing 'lessons learnt' and spins it as young, chic and possible. HIV/AIDS in Africa is epitomized as the problem to be solved and The Global Fund is the mechanism in place that can do the job, if enough money is made available. Aid celebrity totems Bono, Sachs, and Farmer mediate the relations between the RED cotton t-shirt made in Africa and the 'women at risk' for HIV/AIDS who make that shirt. The totemic value of Product RED is that it reconfigures the world of possibility in what might otherwise be rationally impossible ways.

The urgency of consumption is an anti-horizon concept: instead of constantly receding into the future, it is re-imagined as emergent and reiteratively re-presenting the present, the 'now.' The logic of the consumer society is asserting itself in the context of aid: the main duty of citizens in this society is to consume, not to produce or defend the country as in the past. The ideal citizen-consumer is never satisfied. To succeed, consumption must be insatiable. That this translates into notions of 'sustainable funding' to combat HIV/AIDS, a disease of global excess, is more than ironic.

Whether Product RED is the precursor of a new generalized mechanism of development financing or simply a parallel option for engaging those who otherwise would not

normally engage with aid – those who care but sublimate – will depend on the usual predictor of development success: sufficient and sustainable financing. So far, Product RED looks sufficiently different from the ‘development business as usual.’ Its ‘hard commerce’ sex appeal approach may engage individuals from previously-untapped constituencies in funding The Global Fund’s work against HIV/AIDS, but in doing so, it will perpetuate the disengagement of ‘needy’ recipients in order for us to become benefactors with bling.

Notes

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3. World Bank, ‘Strengthening Implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility in Global Supply Chains’, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003.
4. L. Boltanski and E. Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Paris: Gallimard, 1999.
5. Global Fund, press release, 26 January 2006, available at: http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/media_center/press/pr_060126.asp.
6. However, RED may be less attributable to celebrity genius and more to advanced international fundraising strategies. The Global Fund’s marketing and media campaign which began in 2004 includes ‘co-branded product tie-ins’ as part of a priority of ‘engaging consumer audiences in key donor markets’ (<http://www.theglobalfund.org>).
7. ‘View from Davos: Bono marketing his red badge of virtue,’ *Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 2006.
8. ‘Bono Bets on Red to Battle Aids,’ *BBC News*, 26 January 2006, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4650024.stm>.
9. ‘View from Davos: Bono Marketing His Red Badge of Virtue,’ *Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 2006.
10. Consumers can use the RED ‘impact calculator’ on the product website to generate the possible impact of their purchases on combating HIV/AIDS in Africa. Seeing, for example, that the purchase of one RED t-shirt generates enough money to cover the cost of a single dose of nevirapine to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV creates the perception of tangible impact. It is not our intention in this article to measure and adjudicate whether RED has a net positive impact on African AIDS. We forgo such an evaluation on the basis that, at this stage, it would reflect more ideology than empirical argumentation. In the popular media, criticisms of RED for having a limited impact on AIDS in Africa, given its great expenditure in product marketing (in ‘Costly RED Campaign Reaps Meager \$18 million’ *Advertising Age*, 4 March 2007) have been quickly and skillfully rebutted by RED supporters (see ‘The Big Question: Does the Red Campaign Help Big Western Brands more than Africa?’ *The Independent*, 9 March 2007; and Bobby Shriver’s rebuttal at <http://www.joinred.com/archive/adage>). The RED argumentation rests on the premise that the initiative mobilizes a previously-untapped constituency to contribute to aid for AIDS. Marketing money would have been spent anyway by major corporations. Thus, any contribution made by RED is better than the contribution that would have been made without it – nothing. But, as we noted, corporate social responsibility is increasingly popular, and there is no reason why one can assume that RED budgets would not have been invested by these companies into other ethically-oriented initiatives. One can not take for granted that consumers’ RED choices simply replace their previously ‘unethical’ ones, thus leading to a more positive outcome. However, we can observe that the framing of the impact of RED as measurable and concrete (comparable only to nothing at all), is part of the construction of the initiative itself.
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12. World Bank, ‘Supporting sound policies with adequate and appropriate financing’, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003, p. 2.
13. UN General Assembly, A/55/L.2, New York, 18 September 2000.
14. S.J. Haakonsson and L.A. Richey, ‘TRIPS and Public Health: The Doha Declaration and Africa’, *Development Policy Review*, 25(1), 2007, pp. 71-90.

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20. *Ibid.*, p. 301. The disease burden of HIV/AIDS is 84.5 million compared to lower respiratory infections at 91.3 million. There is also an extensive overlap between diseases occurring in developing countries (see P. Hotez, D.H. Molyneux, A. Fenwick, E. Ottesen, S. Ehrlich Sachs, and J.D. Sachs, 'Incorporating a Rapid-Impact Package for Neglected Tropical Diseases with Programs for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria', *PLoS Medicine*, 3(5), 2005, pp. 1-9.; see earlier analyses of co-infections of tropical diseases and HIV in E. Stillwaggon, 'HIV/AIDS in Africa: Fertile Terrain', *Journal of Development Studies*, 38(6), 2002, pp. 1-22; and G. Harms and H. Feldmeier, 'Review: HIV Infection and Tropical Parasitic Diseases – Deleterious Interactions in Both Directions?', *Tropical Medicine & International Health*, 7(6), 2002, pp. 479-488.
21. Goldstein and Moss, 2005, p. 1289.
22. MacKellar, 2005, p. 294.
23. S. Huddart, 'Do We Need Another Hero? Understanding Celebrities' Roles in Advancing Social Causes,' Montreal: McGill University, 2005.
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25. Huddart, 2005, p. 37.
26. The marriage of branding and celebrity activism per se is not a new phenomenon. The Newman's Own range of food products has been around for 20 years, and its cumulative profits of \$125 million have been donated to charities.
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28. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
31. Huddart, 2005, p. 54. See also Cooper, 2008.
32. Huddart, 2005, pp. 52-53.
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Online among Us

Experiences of Virtuality in Everyday Life

Kaarina Nikunen

As argued by Joshua Meyrowitz, in his acclaimed book entitled *No sense of place*, media change the situational geographies of social life (Meyrowitz 1985). Meyrowitz claims that social roles and hierarchies are changing because the media provide options to transcend the boundaries of physical settings, thus making these boundaries more permeable. Meyrowitz's discussion (written before and anticipating the emergence of the Internet and mobile technology in people's everyday lives) points out relevant shifts such as the weakening of the relation between social situations and physical places and the blurring of the boundaries between public and private. This argument is illuminated in a discussion by David Morley (2000) on new media technology, namely the Internet, that connects private homes to public worlds and thus transgresses the boundaries of the private. The Internet has moved private activities such as television viewing, gardening, cooking, crafts and art work, which usually take place at home, into public discussion forums and various fan sites. This transformation has enabled people to meet and discuss across distances with others who share their passions, thus illustrating the deterritorialized nature of virtual space (Appadurai 1991, 192).

However, as Meyrowitz (1985, 308) ends up describing our world as relatively placeless, this argument is met with criticism: Instead of weakening the place, scholars such as Couldry (2003), Scannel (1996) and Moores (2004) point out the emergence of media spaces that overlay the physical locations of media users. Thus we should consider place as having been pluralized rather than lost. This does not mean, however, that space becomes less hierarchical or structured. The spatial dimensions of online forums also nurture different mechanisms of distinction, policing the boundaries of communities and people's everyday lives. While the media actively shape the experience of space, they also reorganize the social relations within a space (cf. Moores 2004; Andersson 2008).

Reshaping the Boundaries of Public and Private

What, then, are the implications of such pluralizing or doubling of the place? How does the online world shape our everyday life? What does it mean when we talk about the expansion of the local? I introduce two case studies related to Internet use. First, I

discuss my empirical research on online sex talk to highlight the ways in which virtual realities shape day-to-day lives and relationships (Nikunen 2007).

I have analysed discussions on the Finnish *Cosmopolitan* sex forum and three threads in particular ('Blow job', 'Boyfriend and Pornography' and 'Porn and Effect') consisting of a total of 313 messages selected in June 2006 and September 2009. The members of the forum are presumably young adults: information gathered from questionnaires and discussions indicates that most of them are between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five with sexual identities marked as female. The members present themselves as sexually active, and they are clearly interested in gathering more knowledge on the subject. Their relatively young age may also contribute to their eagerness to learn more, find out about new techniques and gain more experience. An online forum where you may ask almost anything about sex seems to serve such purposes well. Sharing intimate experiences with others and asking straightforward questions about sex are rarely possible in the context of everyday life, family and friends. The possibility and necessity of concealing personal data guarantee the popularity of the forum.

While one might be tempted to regard the words shared in the virtual world as proof of reality, they should be equally regarded as public performances that tell about the ways in which pornography is being discussed (rather than sex and sexuality per se). These discussions illuminate certain practices of everyday life through their rules of discourse and, in doing so, they also point to the cultural norms and definitions that shape the practices in question.

I highlight one particular discussion that concerned mixed feelings about pornography: When introduced as a problem, pornography usually has something to do with a boyfriend. Cosmo users repeatedly describe having caught their boyfriends viewing porn or finding porn on their computer. Members describe their anguish over the 'discovery' and ask for advice on what to do.

One of the problems is my boyfriend watching porn. He watches porn almost daily, on the Internet or on TV. I also know what kind of women he chooses from the selection of the porn sites. What makes things even more complicated, is that I resent the ways in which adult entertainment stereotypes and classifies women (horny stewardesses etc.) and how you can choose women from different nationalities, it's just disgusting. This is exactly what my boyfriend does and I just can't understand it. Posted 24.2. 2006

Internet porn is felt to be a disturbing and uncomfortable essence that enters into and defines the relationship. Women have difficulties understanding the habit of watching porn and feel that categorizations of porn concern them as well. Unable to remove porn from their relationships, women accuse themselves of not having enough self-confidence to accept their partners' hobby.

I know exactly how you feel. I have suffered from low self-esteem and I still don't think of myself as attractive. I myself made the mistake of denying my husband porn. Or I didn't exactly deny him of it, I just told him how I felt about it and that I felt offended by it.

He promised to stop but every now and then I would find something I didn't want to find on the computer. And each time I would just freak out and I felt really 'not

enough' for him. By accident I noticed some time ago that there was some porn again on the computer. Now I try to think that well he can watch it when I'm not at home or if I'm not in the mood. Posted 25.2. 2006

In practice, then, experiences of porn may be awkward and disturbing, yet the women feel the need to accept it despite their discomfort. Some of the discomfort seems to be caused by the knowledge – or assumption – that porn caters to male desires.

Another example illuminates the blurring lines of the virtual and material in everyday life and the ways in which boundaries of intimacy are re-drawn. One of the more recent discussions concerned virtual sex: whether or not it is cheating. Members defined Internet sex (through webcam or chatting) as cheating. Some felt that domestic amateur sites were also disturbing, because they came close to the spaces of everyday life.

I would be offended if my baby would watch amateur videos made by Finnish women, especially since they might include someone I know. For some reason I accept American porn that's made for bigger audiences and watched by everybody. Posted 2.9.2009

The interactive aspect of virtual encounters is regarded as cheating, whereas merely watching images or porn sites is something else. The scale of interactivity and nearness defines the boundaries of the sexual act and whether it is considered 'real'. This illuminates the contextual nature of the Internet. It is a space that is organized according to a complex array of nearness and distance, local and global structures that vary from user to user.

Thus, Internet porn does not merely add spice to one's sex life (although it is introduced as such), but it seems to influence and constitute understandings of sexual practices, their limits and possibilities and, in doing so, contest the boundaries of and power relations within relationships. At the same time, Internet communities, such as the Cosmo forum, offer spaces for sharing experiences and constructing identities beyond local boundaries.

Thus in the example above, online worlds are intertwined and that shape social relationships on various levels. First of all, online pornography enters into the relationship as a problem to be solved. This is the 'outside material' that enters from the public sphere of the Internet into the private realm of the intimate relationship. However, after encountering this problem, women turn to the semi-public realm of virtual communities to discuss their problems and to seek advice from others on how to deal with such a situation. In this case, then, the boundaries of the local are once again exceeded and opened for the virtual community.

Individualization of Public Sphere

The example above highlights profound shifts that shape the boundaries of the public and the private. With the proliferation of various personal websites, the disclosure of personal information in the public sphere is easier than ever before. This means that individual voices in public are more accessible. These shifts call for a reconsideration of the notion of the public sphere, as argued by Youngs (2009). Youngs maintains that the concept of the public sphere has implicitly relied on territorially bounded ideas of space and mirrored the ways in which societies are organized politically and economi-

cally along national and local lines. However, “the inherently anarchic and boundary crossing nature of new media necessitates expanded thinking about the public sphere (Youngs 2009: 129).”

This new individualistic turn of the public sphere (Youngs 2009) is identified also by Lasen and Gomez-Cruz (2009), who approach the question from the private side. Their study on Internet self-portraits reveals how practices and discourses associated with digital images challenge the modern view of sexuality and the body as the ultimate private domain. Thus it points to the transformations of the boundaries of the private and the concept of intimacy. They recognize the emergence of a shared intimacy that changes the relations between privacy and intimacy. Intimacy seems to move from the “passion for privacy” of the nineteenth century to the “empowering exhibitionism” of the Internet (Koskela 2009).

The notion of empowering exhibitionism refers to the political dimensions of sharing intimacy. Intimate stories and self-portraits distributed to global audiences challenge the idea of the power of watching. These performances then push against traditional understanding of the boundaries of public and private (Koskela 2009). While Lasen and Gomez-Cruz (2009) and Koskela (2009) discuss empowerment in the context of digital images and webcams, it can be recognized in the *Cosmopolitan* sex discussions as well. Sharing intimate details of one’s sex life in order to acquire more knowledge or to solve problems in a relationship illuminates the empowering aspect of such practice. This connects with Michael Warner’s discussion of the growing visibility of sexualities that may challenge the notion of normal or ideal sex as private, monogamous and heterosexual (2000: 177). At the same time, however, widely distributed mainstream Internet porn seems to work in the opposite direction. It narrowly defines sexual identities and shapes the understanding of sex in private relationships, causing anxiety rather than a sense of liberty. As Lasen and Gomez-Cruz (2009) point out, sharing intimacy is not boundary-free but defined and bounded by audience expectations and practices as well as technological formats and commercial interests. Mainstream Internet porn is an example of such commodification. Likewise, *Cosmopolitan* forum is very much defined by its framework of *Cosmopolitan* ideology (cf. Machin & Thornborrow 2003; Radner 1993) and the sense of taken-for-granted heterosexuality.

The case of the *Cosmopolitan* website illuminates the numerous ways in which new media engagements challenge the boundaries of public and private and enhance the individualization of the public sphere. I will now turn to another example that demonstrates the way online engagements challenge not only the boundaries of public and private but also the boundaries of local and global and how, in certain contexts, this has important political implications.

Crossing Distances

Being part of Internet communities is an increasingly prominent mode of creating and maintaining social relationships. As there has been concern over these virtual relationships especially with regard to young children and teenagers, it is important to point out that elements of familiarity and locality organize these connections perhaps even more than do elements of unfamiliarity, novelty and distance. To highlight this point, I introduce another case study concerning uses of transnational diasporic websites. This study

relates to my ongoing empirical research among migrant teenagers (Nikunen 2008).

The group of immigrant adolescents under study used the Internet in similar ways as their age group in general does. They chatted with each other everyday after school, thus strengthening existing local social relations. However, because the teenagers in this group had transnational backgrounds, their use of the Internet was also transnational in certain ways. Most of them connected with friends and family living in a different countries everyday through the Internet.

We usually meet once a week on a certain date from seven to nine. There's six of us and we discuss things that have happened during the week. They are all in Turkey and I am the only one here. They can meet at a café but I can't. But they meet me on the net and we talk. We also call our grandparents in Turkey through the Internet because it's so much cheaper. (Female 16 years, Turkish background)

This use of the Internet illustrates the process of deterritorialization, namely the way in which specific territorial boundaries and identities are transcended (Appadurai 1996). Hanafi (2005), among others, points out the separation of social relations from local contexts of interaction in relation to the PALESTA network. According to Hanafi, in the era of globalization and the Internet, geography has not come to an end, rather it has been reshaped by the new media technologies.

It must be noted that the media spaces used by migrant teenagers do not necessarily represent their 'former homelands', instead they draw from the different cultures that form the new multicultural space. Media then offer possibilities to overcome national borders and engage with global and transnational media cultures, while also providing possibilities to maintain and strengthen relations with local, existing communities. These possibilities are important, because due to immigration, young people are often faced with the loss of cultural and social networks. This happens at the age when identity formation is intense and critical (cf. Ajrouch, 2004). As Hanafi aptly argues, new media may broaden the ontological question 'Who am I?' with a kind of topographical identity question: 'Where am I?' (2005: 597).

Many of the informants were part of diasporic or transnational Internet communities reflecting their backgrounds: Ethiopian diasporic groups, Islamic communities, Kurdish communities, etc. One of the informants, an 18-year-old Muslim girl with a Somali background, uses the Internet daily to take part in various discussion forums to discuss issues surrounding Islam. Her favourite site is TurnToIslam.com, which includes focused discussions on Islam ('Islamic discussions'), general discussions on 'anything' (Turntoislam Lounge) as well as discussions on news and politics (News and Current affairs).

Although the informant in question was not the most active discussant on this website due to some language difficulties, she enjoys reading sophisticated arguments and debates. She took part enthusiastically in various international sites, but visited Finnish websites only occasionally, as the level and liveliness of discussion were not as high as on the international sites. To her, participating in and following discussions online was about intellectual challenge and argumentation. It was also about voicing her own opinion and standing up for her own religion. Moreover, the case suggested that instead of seeking a harmonious, unified community that draws on tradition, it was the contested space of conflicting and challenging ideas that articulated her position.

Living in a predominantly Lutheran Christian society, Islamic websites formed a space where she could debate religious issues and define her identity as a Muslim. The political climate after 9/11, and in the case of the Nordic countries after the Mohammed cartoon crisis, has been particularly tense, resulting in increased public debates over Islam (cf. Siaperä 2006; Phillips, Eide & Kunelius 2007). As Peter Mandaville (2003) argues, the Internet provides spaces where Muslims, who find themselves marginalized in Western communities, may share experiences with other Muslims.

In Finland, the right-wing conservative party *Perussuomalaiset* (*True Finns*) gained unexpected support in the 2008 elections with its anti-immigrant agenda. Issues of immigration and Islam are tied together in Finnish public discussion. Thus on many websites concerning Islam, issues related to immigration policy also are raised.

The public discussion is heated at the moment, containing criticism towards multicultural politics, that there is too much or not enough of it. Racist attacks are not uncommon: one blog was closed because the identity of the woman writing it was disclosed and she did not wish to continue. The most aggressive discussions in Finland are going on in the realm of the Internet. Particular discussion forums are known for their anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim agenda. This illuminates the backlash of the individualization of the public sphere. While everyone may be able to voice his/her opinions, it is clear that all of these voices are not necessarily benevolent, rational or constructive. The individualistic turn of the public sphere, then, also challenges the ideal of the public sphere as rational and equal and points to theorizations of the public sphere as plural and polemic (cf. Fraser 1992; 2007).

However, at the same time the Internet offers the possibility to ignore such 'local' forums and to be engaged with those that are more supportive of one's own agenda. This option of virtual choice illuminates another trend, namely the fragmentation of the public sphere in relation to the individualization process.

Through such selective uses of the Internet, then, it is possible to exceed the limits of the local and in some cases exceed the sense of marginalization experienced in local situations. In a similar way, Hamid Naficy (1999: 4) argues that an Internet website can actually be an attractive method for becoming discursively emplaced. This idea of being emplaced is also discussed in terms of being virtually reterritorialized (Shohat, 1999: 227). The desire to find spaces of emplacement and the need to go beyond local sites and situations connect with the sense of non-belonging in everyday life. The experience of non-belonging may be manifold and drawn from institutional address as well as individual notions and everyday encounters. In this respect, the way people are being addressed and invited to be part of the public sphere in their new homelands becomes central. Such invitations are related to media representations of diasporic groups, participation in and access to public discussions and debates as well as a range of issues considered topical within the public sphere of the new homeland (Morley 2000: 118-127; Stevenson 2003: 44-47).

Conclusions

Growing engagements with the Internet in people's everyday lives point to the individualization of the public sphere. This individualization has various implications. First of all it challenges the boundaries of the public and the private and changes the situational

geographies of everyday life. In this process, the national public spheres are being stretched beyond the traditional “geospatial” (territorially bounded) configuration via the “sociospatial” (virtual space online) (Youngs 2009).

The blurring boundaries of the public and the private cause various challenges to relationships and identities, while also offering space to transcend the sometimes confining boundaries of the local and the national. So while individualization of the public sphere entails empowering dimensions, it also points to processes of alienation. However, these aspects are not created in the vacuum by the media, but in congruence with everyday life and its power struggles. In this respect, it might be useful to look at the connections between uses of the Internet and local situations and experiences. As pointed out in previous research, uses of the Internet should not be regarded as separate from the material and local situations, but rather as a continuance of them. The media reorganize social relations in various ways, creating hierarchies and boundaries but also helping to transcend the boundaries of the local. These power relations may be related to gender and sexuality, as in the first case study, or to ethnic identities and nationalities, as in the second case, and extend from the very micro-level of intimate relations to the macro-level of nation-making.

I have tried to point out that uses of the Internet are not distant from or foreign to, but profoundly connected and intertwined with, the everyday life, power relations and hierarchies of everyday lives. Thus, to understand the meanings and workings of online engagements, it is necessary to expand the research standpoint from ‘the wonder of the Internet’ towards more intermedial and intersocial perspectives and to examine the various connections and paths that cross in people’s engagements on- and offline.

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Experimenting with New Media for Journalism

Lars Nyre

New media are maturing, and it is increasingly evident that they wield great influence on traditional journalism as we find it in newspapers, radio and TV news programmes. The present article¹ deals with two strengths of the new media: their affordance of public participation through the aid of two-way interfaces, and their affordance of greater accuracy in news reporting due to computer-assisted information gathering.

We believe that researchers should engage actively with these new potentials for communication. Technologies should be considered to contain an orientation towards change that can be harnessed by academic research teams as well as by industry laboratories (see Nyre 2009 for the complete argument). The tendency to inspire or induce change in society has always been a strong aspect of new technologies (Winston 1998). Although new technological set-ups routinely create new opportunities for (journalistic) action, this does not necessarily mean that they are investigated systematically, with a clear intention to test our specified communicative procedures. During the 40-50 years in which the information society has been a precise label for the Nordic countries, most of the new technical inventions have not been tested systematically by researchers. For every 100 inventions, there are five or ten that become success stories in the marketplace or civil society, and ninety that are never given a real chance.

The present article presents a research project in which the objective is to test some opportunities for two-way interfaces and GPS-assisted information in specifically journalistic genres. The research team organized an editorial exchange of information in two internet-based media and documented the ongoing events for one to three weeks in 2005 and 2009, respectively. The project did not predict a definitive outcome of the experiments, and was as such explorative, inductive and heuristic. *Demostasjon* (2005) combined telephones and the Internet, and we tried to include as many people as possible in a public conversation. *Lokanytt* (2009) was an online newspaper made for mobile phones with GPS, where we tried to be as geographically accurate as possible in our local news reporting.

Both projects acknowledge that the mobile phone will be an increasingly important reception platform, not just for web news, but also for radio, television and other media set-ups. While journalism in radio and television has a tradition of 80-90 years to draw on, journalism for the mobile phone has barely been acknowledged as a topic of research (see Ling (2004) and Katz and Aakhus (eds.) (2002)).

The present article briefly presents the design method we have developed, and we relate to three Nordic research projects that in one way or another resemble ours. Thereafter the Demostasjon (2005) and Lokanytt (2009) experiments are presented, and our procedures for democratic participation and geographical accuracy are described in some detail, and the main findings are presented and discussed.

Combining Information Science and Media Studies

Our method can be described as a form of interaction design in which communicative patterns in sound, pictures and text are tested. Unlike a great deal of media research, this type of approach requires a production and distribution infrastructure, and it is therefore vital to collaborate with more technically minded researchers from the fields of media production and information science. Media researchers are traditionally not prone to getting involved in the practical art of creating infrastructures, procedures and content.

We believe that it is highly fruitful to mix methods from information science with theories from media studies. Information science is a relatively hard science, in some respects resembling engineering and in others resembling quantitative social science. The field has a well-contained object of study (the computer) and efficient methods of investigation (see Nielsen 2000). Relying on databases, interactive functionalities and web designs, this tradition can investigate all kinds of applications, whether they are public institutions or private companies. This constructive contribution to society is a great strength of information science.

Media studies, on the other hand, is a soft science without a well-contained object of study. Its practitioners do not consider it a science at all, and prefer to call it media 'studies'. Media researchers are very good at analysing society in different respects, such as 'the public sphere', 'text', 'democracy' and 'participation'. This kind of humanist and sociological research is fruitful for understanding differences in national identity, language and politics, and aspects of social life that have deep historical and cultural roots in the past. In sum, both traditions have strengths that cancel out the weaknesses in the other. Information science has good design methods and media studies has penetrating social theories.

But two traditions cannot be combined so simply. The fear of technology among media researchers has long been an obstacle. Only in the 2000s has media studies started to acknowledge the great importance of technologies in the cultures of mass media. Marshall McLuhan [1964] (1994) stressed the importance of investigating technologies already in the 1960s, but in the radical mood of the times, he was ridiculed as a technological determinist. Ever since then, media researchers have feared being labelled 'technological determinist' (Smith and Marx (eds.) 1994).

The dominant traditions of media studies, like cultural analysis, public sphere theory, media sociology and journalism research, are almost entirely without substantial theories of the role of technologies, and are completely oblivious to the invention-character that is built into technologies, and the radical material difference between each of them.

In order to succeed with experimental approaches to the media, it is important that Nordic media studies make long-term alliances with information science and learn from its much more solid competence concerning the design of technologies using experimental methods. However, because media studies has little experience of the theories and defi-

nitions of technological designs, it is unlikely that media researchers will have the same way of conceptualizing technology as information scientists do. The vocabulary and ways of speaking about technology must be aligned so that the two fractions can speak to each other (see attempts in Fagerjord 2006; Liestøl and Rasmussen 2003; Engebretsen 2007).

To illustrate the ‘aligned’ type of research we are aiming at, we will present three Nordic research projects. They serve to illustrate the three-pronged method practised in Demostasjon and Lokanytt: building a technical set-up, creating content and monitoring user experience.

First let us consider a project that bears very little resemblance to media studies, but is directed by Norwegian media professor Gunnar Liestøl. *Inventio* consists of several prototypes for augmented reality presentations of ancient infrastructures (a burial mound containing a Viking ship, the first brick building in San Francisco) (Liestøl 2009). Looking at the screen of an Iphone, the user can move around the site and see the original placement of objects, houses, etc. superimposed on the reality that the camera picks up live. It is intended to be a pedagogical way of learning about history. The most interesting feature is that *Inventio* builds its own technological solutions, and as such is highly amenable to improvement (albeit also highly resource intensive). The Demostasjon and Lokanytt projects also build our own technological solutions, and can in this sense at least be compared to the *Inventio* project.

The next project looks a little more like a media studies project, because it deals with the making of textual and graphical content. Jürgen Scheible in Helsinki has run a project called *The Manhattan Story Mashup*. It was an interactive design project that aimed at creating mass participation in a photo art project. During the event, 184 participants walked around in Manhattan taking photos that matched various assignments. The result was 115 illustrated stories that were shown on large public signs in Times Square as the experiment progressed (Scheible, Tuulos and Ojala 2007). This resembles participatory action research (see Fals Borda 2001). Again, our project is inspired by other projects that create real-time media events with specific procedures for presentation of text, sound and video in order test how users react to them.

Third, we have an example that is surely a form of media studies, but not very widespread at Nordic media departments. It deals with the monitoring of real-time user behaviour to gather empirical data about media experience. Lisa Gjedde and Bruno Ingemann (2008) have made a series of usability tests of media set-ups. In the *Mirage Project*, they tested the experience of reading news stories by supplying four different photo designs for the same text content, and interviewing the informants concerning their opinions about the different versions. In the *Museum Inside Project*, they used a method called ‘walk video’ to record the movements and conversations of informants walking around in a picture gallery. All the communicative behaviour in our experiments is recorded in similar ways as Gjedde and Ingemann do, mainly in the form of sound recordings of conversations and questionnaires to test users. We believe that usability testing has great potential in the context of journalism research, and especially in Lokanytt 2009 we applied it carefully.

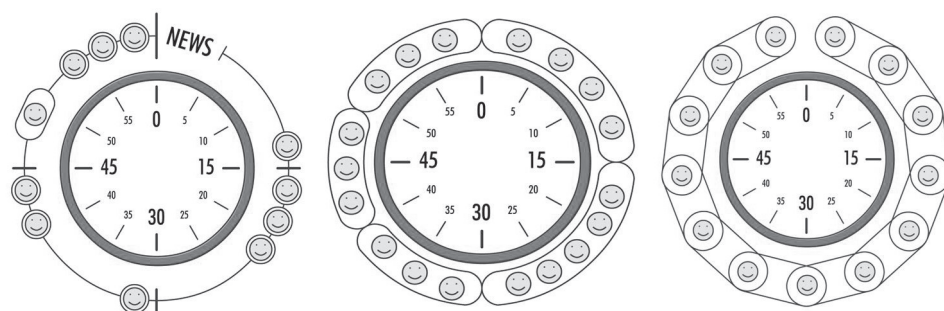
Demostasjon 2005: Democratic Debate on Web Radio

Demostasjon was an experiment with live conversation on a ‘website telephone radio’. The project was an attempt to slow down the pace of public debate in a traditional radio

context. We wanted to have as many people as possible speaking for as long a time as possible about a topic of public interest².

This communication apparatus does not contain any technical novelties, and can be called an ‘architectural innovation’ in that it combines already existing elements in a new way. The combination merits being conceived of as a *prototype* for public speaking, a departure from traditional uses of the three media in isolation. The term prototype means a full-scale and functional design, including technical, journalistic and participatory features. This hybrid configuration of contact was chosen to exploit what we considered the most democratic features of the three already existing media. See Winner (1986) and Feenberg (1999) for further theoretical validation of democratic technology.

Figure 1.



Note: The number of participants is shown by face icons, and the duration of their on-air presence is indicated by the oval encirclements. From left to right: a political phone-in programme on BBC London, the Demostasjon 1 group procedure, and the Demostasjon 2 chain procedure.

Figure 1 displays how many speakers we could accommodate per hour. Because Demostasjon was basically a radio service, Figure 1 contrasts our procedures with a phone-in programme on the BBC. The left-hand illustration shows the pace of BBC London’s debate programme in the run-up to the mayoral election in 2004. It is quite liberal in the time it affords callers, but the host and the incumbent mayor dominate the debate, and furthermore the callers cannot talk to each other (see Ross 2004 for an interesting analysis of political talk radio, and Enli 2007 for participatory formats in general).

The Demostasjon group session shown in the middle illustration was our first original set-up. In this procedure, called the group session, each speaker could be on the air for up to twenty minutes, taking turns speaking, and having the opportunity to speak up at any time during the entire twenty-minute period. Up to ten speakers were on the air at the same time, but the collaboration suffered if there were more than four or five. The topics were highly inclusive, for example “Student life” and “Music”.

The Demostasjon chain session shown in the right-hand illustration was our second procedure. Here each speaker discussed with two other speakers, the first one being taken off air as the second one appears. The topics were all related to the General Election in Norway in 2005. Each speaker was typically on the air for 4-5 minutes. The debate was quite lively, especially if the participants had listened to the discussion before they went on the air – something we encouraged them to do.

What about the communicative behaviour in these programmes? Two distinctly different sets of rules were adopted. In the first format, *topically restricted debate*, participants were obligated to keep rather strictly to the predetermined topic of the programme, and had to defend a position, which was often the reason they were invited to the programme in the first place. Everybody was entitled to a main statement, one or more comments, and a closing argument. This format was used for discussing 'Freedom of speech', 'Democratic radio on the Internet – is it possible?' and 'Media research and societal change', and was clearly the most deliberative format. It soon became clear that this format was easier to relate to for those of our experimental participants who worked in academia, politics or journalism, while students, random family members and other people who did not have a clear position on a topic, and were not used to conflictual debate, felt uncomfortable in this format.

The second format, which we called *everyday open conversation*, was created after noticing the relaxation that four-minute speaking periods inspired. Its purpose was simply to emulate everyday conversations on the air, and to test the extent to which participants were actually able to relax while still talking about substantial issues. The format was used for discussing 'Men and women', 'Student culture', 'Studies abroad' and 'Music'. We learnt that groups of students quickly started talking to each other in ways that were very relaxed, resembling private phone calls more than public speaking (Fagna, Braaten and Brattland 2007). Although several of the participants were already friends, we believe that the four-person group sessions were instrumental in facilitating such seemingly natural conversation. This is a valuable discovery that should be explored further.

We learnt that participants found it quite easy to participate because there were so few listeners. It seems that the smaller the public reach of the programme, the greater the people's interest in participating. But journalists did not like this talk-radio format. The journalists felt marginalized on the air, and this was frustrating. The most demanding editorial job was to recruit and moderate the chain of speakers, and that did not feel like a real journalistic task (Bjerke 2007). Disregarding these misgivings, we formulated a series of four characteristics of democratic phone radio.

1. Produce all programmes live on the air. There should be no preparation of edited journalistic material like reportage, interviews, monologues, etc. Live productions can easily accommodate a communication setting that everybody is familiar with, namely the direct give-and-take of verbal behaviour. Everybody is on the same footing, and what matters is to say the right words at the right time. The less edited and post-produced the presentation is, the less the expertise of media professionals has intervened in the mediation process. Live programmes thus afford a more egalitarian technique for public speaking than recorded programmes, and furthermore this is a simple and inexpensive means of creating media content (see Nyre 2008).
2. Acknowledge the tensions and energies of ordinary talk. The Demostasjon experiment further confirmed that there is great dialogic potential in live speech, and suggests that layperson discussion has qualities of sincerity and authenticity than are often lacking in professional journalistic talk. Everyday speech is the main arena for personal opinion and conflict, arguments and counter arguments. This is a style of speaking that can clearly be cultivated more consciously in the public sphere.

3. Make the hosts inconspicuous. Their work consists of moderating the conversations according to the procedures of a given approach (series, group, chain). The hosts do indeed put restrictions on the behaviour of participants, but they are obliged to let the same restrictions apply equally to everyone. Insulting or defamatory statements must be advised against, and sanctioned by the hosts when they occur. Because everybody is entitled to speak for approximately the same time, this must be cued by the staff accordingly. In performing these chores, the hosts resemble switchboard operators more than traditional hosts. The journalism students who worked as hosts in Demostasjon were frustrated by their very limited freedom of expression.
4. Recruit participants actively. This type of journalism cannot function without a large number of volunteer participants. And in order to make the programmes politically relevant, some variant of socio-demographic representation should be considered. People may be recruited by direct contact from the production staff, or be self-recruited through the website, but in both cases, a great deal of preparatory work is needed to ensure a good selection of speakers.

Summing up the Demostasjon experiment, we found that our technical and procedural set-ups worked fine as mechanisms, but this is not enough to give them a future in the public sphere. From a business perspective, it would be time-consuming and costly to try to run such a station in reality. It could only be launched on a niche station at a public broadcasting service, or as a therapeutic service at a hospital or care facility.

Lokanytt 2009: Local Journalism for the Mobile Phone

Lokanytt³ has the same basic ambition as the previous experiment, namely to enter the control room and organize a media set-up that presumably creates a valuable exchange of information in the public sphere. But this time the focus is on local news.

The mobile media platform is an important arena for design and innovation previously primarily associated with the stationary or laptop computer. Following this line of invention, *Lokanytt* was designed to be a GPS-based public arena for the mobile phone. However, the mobile phone does not yet have an indigenous public space in which the news could appear equally for everyone who has a phone (for recent studies, see Bentley and Metcalf 2008; Westlund 2009; Junglas and Watson 2008). Traditional radio and television stations like the BBC or YLE have just that, of course; they have loyal listeners, a distinctive station identity and a range of established news genres that are tailored to the reception setting in different countries and cities, and the content changes with the time of day.

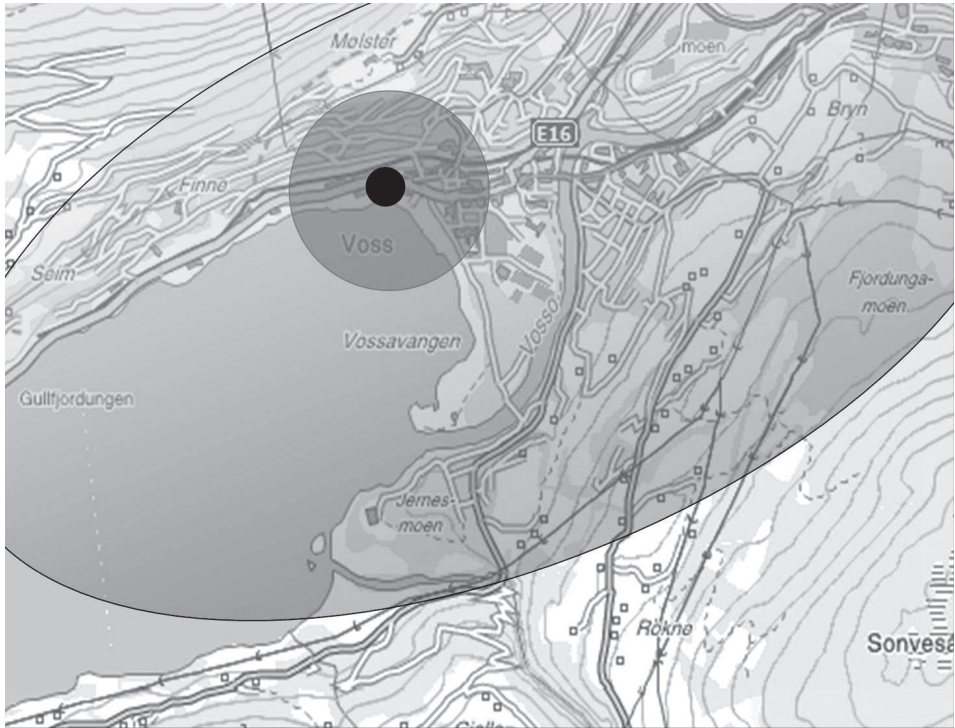
The discussion of what journalism for the mobile phone should consist of is critical for the democratic states of Western Europe and beyond (see Drotner 2005), where the mobile phone has almost reached 100 per cent diffusion in the population. How could the technologies in question be designed so as to make the most of the new information for journalistic purposes?

The ambition is to change the scale and pattern of news journalism by writing it for mobile phones with GPS-functionality. The Lokanytt project is based on two separate pieces of software for journalists and readers, built by two Master's students graduating in information science (Leirvåg 2009; Stavelin 2009).

In Lokanytt, a newsroom staff augments a pre-specified territory with journalistic items about events, activities and localities. They accumulate in the territory in the form of virtual news beacons created using GPS data. When you arrive at a certain location, a certain piece of information becomes available to you. Instead of including as large a space as possible in the communicative process, Lokanytt excludes most parts of the world actively from being part of the content.

We presume that the more local a news item is, the lower its threshold of relevance will be. Almost anything can be of interest if it is right next to you and you can easily read about it.

Figure 2.



Note: We defined three areas of proximity for Lokanytt. The figure shows a typical layout from the town of Voss, where mountain slopes, rivers and lakes create a natural ellipse in which most of the population and its transport structures are contained.

Figure 2 shows our geographical set-up for an experiment that took place in the town of Voss during an extreme sports festival in June 2009. The town of 7,000 inhabitants was filled with from 1000-3000 athletes, volunteer staff, onlookers and ordinary tourists

Our journalism was based on representing three areas of proximity to an event or an object. These areas are represented in the form of self-contained articles with headlines, news writing and photographs. Given our way of using the GPS information from their phones, the readers would only be able to access the article that corresponds with his or her proximity to the chosen locality. Let me explain what I mean.

In the largest perspective, the reader is more than 500 meters away from the locality. The news is written to be interesting for anyone who is in Voss, or is approaching Voss on the roads or the railway. It has a critical perspective and focuses on decision-makers and other powerful persons and organizations.

In the middle-range perspective, the reader is less than 500 but more than 100 meters away from the location. The news story is written to capture the social mood in a given neighbourhood, and we distinguished between three neighbourhoods in the centre of Voss. You can walk to the exact location of the story in a matter of minutes, if the story captures your interest.

In the nearest perspective, the reader is on location, defined as nearer than 100 meters. Interviews and witness reports are written in a personal way, to increase the sense of presence. You are so close that you can touch and handle the news topic, or learn what has happened or will happen right here if the topic is more abstract.

Figure 3. Facsimile of the three versions of the “Cloths Line Saga”



This story trio can be labelled the clothes line saga. The stories are written in the imperative, meaning that they recommend that the reader move to a certain spot in the centre of Voss, because the sight of the giant blankets is presumably quite interesting.

The level-three version of the article describes a clothes line that hangs across a river canyon in Voss. It is more than a kilometre long, and the clothes are 40 to 60 meters long. Readers learn that this is a PR stunt by the Bula sports wear company, and that the company has performed other PR stunts before – always using the natural environment at Voss as the setting. This article contains critical opinions about the spectacle, in that several people voice objections to the ugliness of the spectacle and argue that it should not have been allowed.

The level-two version is located in the neighbourhood where you can best see the clothes line from across the lake. There are interviews with tourists, local people and

café guests, who all have an opinion about the clothes line. The best position for looking at it is described, and the reader is encouraged to go there.

The level-one version contains information on how they have stretched the wire across the canyon, and other facts that presume a detailed interest. It basically confirms that you are in the right place, and can now enjoy the spectacle with maximum effect.

Figure 4. *Summary of the Geographical Perspectives Contained in the “Clothes Line Saga”*



So what are we learning from the Lokanytt experiment? Three findings stand out so far:

1. There is resistance to the proposed procedures in the set-up itself. Our journalists had problems adapting to the news criteria and the three zoom levels, and it was very time-consuming to write three versions of all news topics. There would be a long period of “learning how to do it”, and it would be costly to keep up production.
2. The GPS-based precision is highly engaging for users. Instead of three different versions creating a zoom effect, only one version of the journalistic news item is needed, and it should be placed on a map. A large number of news items can be accumulated on the map, and links to information beyond this exact point can be embedded.
3. The potential for critical journalism was weaker than we had thought. Our informants had difficulty seeing this as true journalism, and recommended that it become a local information service instead – for example for a festival.

Conclusion

The change-orientation of technologies is an important aspect of the media (Winston 1998), and we have described two attempts to tap the strength of new media for journalistic purposes: meaningful public participation through the aid of two-way interfaces, and greater accuracy in news reporting using GPS-assisted information-gathering. We learnt that the procedures we had designed worked well in our protected university settings, but we suspect that they would be very difficult to apply in the real media industry. We learnt that both the *Demostasjon* and *Lokanytt* designs would probably be too costly for real media enterprises. They would require great resources in terms of editorial preparation, and too few users would be attracted to these new media for it to be possible to turn a profit. Notice, however, that our communication procedures would probably be highly beneficial to those who used it.

From this we conclude that the financial models that are widespread today are not conducive to the pursuit of the core ideals of the fourth estate. Our new media journalism is so expensive to produce that we would need something like the business model of the 1950s monopoly public service broadcasting in the Nordic countries to finance it.

We have no illusions that the journalistic procedures presented above will be taken up in the media business, but we still find them worth presenting. They show how particular media set-ups can be tested systematically in the search for journalistic potentials.

Notes

1. This argument was presented as a speech at the 19th Nordic Conference of Media Researchers in Karlstad, Sweden in August 2009. Gratitude is owed to the students and researchers involved in the *Demostasjon* 2005 and *Lokanytt* 2009 projects. Special thanks to Barbara Gentikow, Sverre Liestøl, Reidulf Botn, Egil Skogseth, Paul Bjerke, Bjørnar Tessem, Kjetil Vaage Øie, Solveig Bjørnstad, Pål Aam, Christine Leirvåg and Eirik Stavelin for their important input on this paper during the past few years.
2. *Demostasjon* 2005 consisted of 10 programmes, with over 9 hours of public speaking streamed through the website www.demostasjon.net, 89 laypersons participants, and an editorial staff of 11 people. It consisted of two iterations: *Demostasjon* 1 (three weeks in April 05) and *Demostasjon* 2 (one week in September 05). See www.demostasjon.no. See Nyre (2007) and Skogseth (2006) for presentations of the project.
3. *Lokanytt* (2009) consists of over 100 news stories in three versions, 88 informants, original software for editorial production on the Web at lokanytt.uib.no and audience reception on a Python script for mobile phones. 4 information scientists, 3 media researchers, 5 journalists/photographers. 32 usability tests with test phase and questionnaire. Three iterations: *Lokanytt* 1 in Bergen in February 09 (five days), *Lokanytt* 2 in Volda in May 09 (five days), and *Lokanytt* 3 in Voss in June 09 (eight days). See www.demostasjon.no.

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From the Ecology of Broadcasting to the Ecology of Participation

Critical Reflections¹

Tobias Olsson

More than forty years ago, Marshall McLuhan, among others, famously started theorizing and analysing what will be referred to here as *the ecology of broadcasting* (McLuhan 1964; McLuhan & McLuhan 1988). His analyses hovered above questions such as: What will television mean to the world we once knew? In what ways has radio reshaped our ways of understanding the world and our place within it? His answers to these questions were mainly based on close, formal interpretations of the mediums’ technological possibilities. If they technically allow for instant communication on a global scale (TV), this is also what they will bring about (as in, for instance, his infamous “global village” metaphor). If they – in technical terms – allow for a restructuring of societal organization (radio, TV), this also becomes their most probable social outcome.² Ever since it was presented, McLuhan’s thought-provoking theorizing has inspired numerous studies (cf. Postman 1985; Meyrowitz 1985; Thompson 1995), and it has also become an important part of the intellectual heritage of media analyses.

His ideas have nevertheless also provoked equally numerous – or perhaps even more numerous – critical readings and debates. One of the most frequent lines of criticism has had to do with his style of writing, as it was never academic in the original sense of the word. He used flowery language in his efforts to interpret the ways in which broadcasting media would transform human beings, cultures and societies. But even beyond his aphorisms, “probes”, and speculative formulations, critical readers of his medium theory have also found additional and more substantially problematic dimensions.

Without going into all the details of this criticism, it is important to point out that these numerous critiques have been especially keen on noticing the many ways in which Marshall McLuhan seems to have been blinded by his own close readings of the technological possibilities of new media. His efforts to predict the new media’s potential social, cultural, and political consequences based on interpretations of their formal qualities caused McLuhan to be technologically deterministically insensitive to the ways in which media always develop embedded within a nexus of social, political and economic relations. Media sociologist John B Thompson (Thompson 1995) summarized this criticism quite well, and modestly, when he wrote:

This tradition is less helpful, however, when it comes to thinking about the social organization of the media industries, about the ways in which the media are interwoven with the unequal distribution of power and resources, and about how individuals make sense of media products and incorporate them into their lives (Thompson 1995: 8).

These are fairly well-known deficits in McLuhan's theories, as well as in the theories of many other medium theorists, and for the argumentation I am about to develop here, it is only necessary to comment briefly on parts of this criticism – especially those parts concerning the tradition's lack of applicability when it comes to analysing the media industry, and its tendency to overlook the ways in which individuals understand and make use of media products.

Contrary to what many critiques claim about these analyses of *the ecology of broadcasting*, medium theorists in general – and Marshall McLuhan in particular – did actually analyse the media users and/or audiences, but in their own rather peculiar ways, rarely through the use of empirical data, and always without sociological conceptualizations of the users. Rather than digging into empirical research, or qualifications of the sociological characteristics of the users, McLuhan preferred to analyse users from a theoretical and more speculative point of departure. Hence, his writings actually contained a large number of theoretically well-informed suggestions about the possible consequences of the application of new media.³ These ideas were also rather elaborated, but empirical analyses of users and audiences were deliberately left out.

If the audiences, or the users, were theoretically present but empirically absent in McLuhan's writings, the producers and/or media organizations were more genuinely absent in his efforts to grasp the new ecology brought about by broadcasting media. Simply put, media producers as well as the organizations producing media content were hardly a category of interest to McLuhan, nor was the overall social organization of the media industry. This missing element is also one of those aspects of McLuhan's writings that were most severely criticized in Raymond Williams' (1974) classical, critical reading of McLuhan:

If the effect of the medium is the same, whoever controls or uses it, and whatever apparent content he [*sic!*] may try to insert, then we can forget ordinary political and cultural argument and let the technology run itself. It is hardly surprising that this conclusion has been welcomed by the "media-men" of the existing institutions. It gives the gloss of avant-garde theory to the crudest versions of their existing interests and practices, and assigns all their critics to pre-electronic irrelevance (1974/1990:128).

The Ecology of Interactivity – Theorizing the Web 1.0

Obviously, Marshall McLuhan's writings on the *ecology of broadcasting* were suggestive and inspired a number of media analysts to take on his perspective. Meanwhile, he also provoked an equally large number of media scholars, and during the 1970s and 80s, his position within the research field cannot really be considered to have been strong (Ferguson 1991); media researchers generally looked elsewhere for inspiration and new ideas.

Considering this background, it was somewhat surprising to follow his theoretical comeback by the time of the Internet's big breakthrough into Western societies in the early/mid-1990s, an period that in hindsight can be referred to as the era of *Web 1.0* (compare below). In 1996, the journal *Wired* famously named McLuhan its patron saint, and he was often used as a reference in various popular debates aimed at forecasting the potential social, cultural and political "consequences" of Internet-based communication. A significant proportion of these writings delved into the notion of interactivity, how the Internet's interactive qualities would create an *ecology of interactivity* that would involve – among many other things – turning passive media spectators into active participators, but also potentially including and giving a voice to people who were marginalized in the previous *ecology of broadcasting*.

This was not, however, only a theme within popular debates. During the early years of research into the Internet's social, cultural, political significance, many scholars also started looking in the direction pointed out by McLuhan. One of the most obvious examples in this respect was Mark Poster. His reading of McLuhan inspired him to establish the view of contemporary media ecology as "A Second Media Age" (Poster 1995); at the heart of this notion was the idea that new media – and the ecology brought about by them – would create new, de-centred, and freer human subjects. This change in ecology would then, as a consequence, bring about both a new culture and new political premises. For instance, in a chapter from 1997 dealing with the Internet's (or more exactly cyberspace's) implications for the public sphere, Mark Poster noted:

If the term democracy refers to the sovereignty of embodied individuals and the system of determining office-holders by them, a new term will be required to indicate a relation of leaders and followers that is mediated by cyberspace and constituted in relation to the mobile identities found therein (Poster 1997: 214).

Mark Poster was by no means the only author to point to such inherent possibilities in the *ecology of interactivity*. In a thought-provoking but also rather typical journal article of this time, "Theorizing cyberspace", Ananda Mitra and Erik Watts (Mitra & Watts 2002) called attention to the ways in which the Internet's formal characteristics could increase the possibilities for inclusion and contribute to the levelling of communication power relations. They framed the Internet era in terms of the "resuscitation of voice" (ibid. 486) and pointed to the "liberating and empowering characteristics" of cyberspace (ibid.). They furthermore called attention to how this ecological change could help bring about a change in power relations between the core and the periphery, as the Internet makes it "impossible to locate the centre" (ibid. 487).

Similar accounts of the Internet – and "cyberspace", as it was very often called – were numerous around this time of academic theorizing on the *ecology of interactivity*. They did seem to be especially prevalent, however, in those parts of the literature that overused various constructions of "cyber" in the book titles – *Cyberculture* (cf. Bell & Kennedy 2000), *Cybersociety* (cf. Jones 1994; Jones 1998), and *Communities in cyberspace* (Smith & Kollock 1999). But this was also a reoccurring feature within those parts of the literature that had a preference for combining the words "Internet" and/or "virtual" with various forms of "culture": *Internet culture* (Porter 1997), *cultures of the Internet* (Kiesler 1997; Shields 1996), *virtual culture* (Jones 1997), *virtual politics* (Holmes 1997).

Not all of the above-mentioned publications made very explicit references to the work of Marshall McLuhan. On the other hand, a large number of researchers and authors actually made a particular effort to revive McLuhan's ideas for analysing the emerging *ecology of interactivity*. Gary Genosko's critical and thought-provoking reading of Marshall McLuhan and Jean Baudrillard (Genosko 1999) is one such example. In his book, Genosko mainly addressed the intellectual interconnections between McLuhan and Baudrillard, but he also notes the renaissance of McLuhan's writing and points to his usefulness for understanding the ecology of interactivity: "What I am suggesting is that the McLuhan renaissance is at home in the well-established consonance between postmodernism and late capitalism" (Genosko 1999:9). Another example was Jay Bolter's and Richard Grusin's work on remediation (Bolter & Grusin 1999; Bolter 2000). While aware of the deficits of McLuhan's theories, they clearly pay him homage when they explain their notion of remediation, which certainly echoes of McLuhan's medium theory:

[R]emediation refers to the way in which new digital media refashion prior media forms. Digital media like computer graphics, virtual reality and the web define themselves by borrowing from, paying homage to, critiquing and refashioning their predecessors, principally television, film, photography, and painting, but also print (Grusin 2000:48).

This early theorizing of emerging digital media in general and the Internet (in its Web 1.0 version) in particular was not uncontested at the time (cf. Robins 1996; Robins & Webster 1999). Considering the obvious similarities between this approach, and the medium theoretical ideas that inspired McLuhan's analysis of the *ecology of broadcasting*, it comes as no surprise that the criticism against analyses claiming thorough cultural transformation simply through the application of interactive media was quite similar in nature. Hence, parts of this criticism were aimed at the lack of attention paid to the fact that all media are embedded in and dependent upon "off-line" social, political and economical circumstances. One obvious example was Gerald Sussman's analysis of emerging digital technologies, in which he argued that: "Communication technologies are extensions of opportunity within the rules of the political economy that control the allocation of resources in society. It is naive or worse to believe that computers [...] can bring about new forms of economic, social, or political relationships" (Sussman 1997:285). Other parts of this criticism called attention to the need for additional empirical analyses of users:

Responses to, or consequences of, technological innovation [...] cannot be assumed at an abstract level of analysis. They require close examination at the point of connection with concrete day-to-day situations that social subjects inhabit and make meaningful (Moores 2000: 59).

Despite this incisive criticism, I would argue that it was mainly another factor that contributed to calibrating these early ideas about a new media ecology materializing through the Internet: the fact that the Internet itself, as well as the inflated discourses about its transformative potential, became subject to the critical re-interpretation and questioning of fairly conventional research. I have covered this development elsewhere, with a special emphasis on the parts of the research literature that have focussed on the Internet's political implication (Olsson 2007; Miegel & Olsson 2010), and in this context

it suffices to say that these more conventional studies of the Internet and its potential social, cultural, and political implications moderated the initial, McLuhan-like analyses of the Internet's transformative potential (cf. Meikle 2002; Norris 2002; Warschauer 2003; de Jong et al. 2004; Latham & Sassen 2005).

The Ecology of Participation – Theorizing the Web 2.0

Sometimes history seems to repeat itself surprisingly quickly. Conventional research had hardly managed to start deflating the inflated discourse on the transformative potential of the *ecology of interactivity* (Web 1.0) when a very similar – and equally inflated – discourse was (re-)invented, only this time pointing to the new, “improved” Internet, the *Web 2.0*. Even though I would argue that the buzz about Web 2.0 features started to emerge already in the early 2000s, with the advent of additional networking spaces and the popularization of the weblog (blog), it was not until 2005 that the idea of Web 2.0 was properly formulated in writing (O'Reilly 2005).

Tim O'Reilly's definition of Web 2.0 was mainly a description of the “improved” Web's technical features. His description included ideas about the Web as a technological platform, about lightweight programming models, and thoughts about the end of the software release circle. Nevertheless, he also pointed to social and/or cultural features that were offered by this – seemingly – new and more interactive web. He wrote about it as a “richer user experience”, and, above all, about the fact that Web 2.0 makes us better able to “harness collective intelligence”. It is also this latter aspect that has become the most preeminent basis for the theorizing on what I will refer to here as the *ecology of participation*.

The shift from the notion of *ecology of interactivity* to the notion of *ecology of participation* has been given special attention in theoretical conceptualizations that connect the Internet to concepts such as *participatory culture* (Deuze 2006; Jenkins 2006a; Jenkins & Deuze 2008) and/or *convergence culture* (Jenkins 2006b). Both concepts have in common the fact that they stress the importance of more interactive web technology in creating the cultural infrastructure necessary for users' active participation in various forms of co-production (typically exemplified by applications such as You Tube, Twitter, Blogs) and social networking (through applications such as Facebook) on the Internet.

In order to dig somewhat deeper into the theories of participatory culture and convergence culture, Henry Jenkins' widely read and cited book “Convergence Culture” is a good case in point (Jenkins 2006b).⁴ In his book, Jenkins – who every now and then is popularly referred to as the McLuhan of web-based media – initially states that within most analyses the concept of convergence has become affiliated with “structural features” of the digitalizing media landscape, i.e. it has most often been analysed in terms of its technological (Baldwin *et al.* 1996) and economical (McChesney 1999) dimensions. Departing from this insight, Jenkins goes on to argue for the need to pay further heed to the fact that convergence must also be considered as a cultural shift. In Jenkins' view, the cultural shift taking place within the current participatory media ecology includes a renegotiation of the relationship between producers and consumers. Today, Jenkins argues, processes of media consumption and media production have become intertwined in unprecedented ways. Within this still emerging *convergence culture*, media users (or consumers) become activated. They even become activated to the point that they ap-

pear as prod-users (*sic!*) of media content. Furthermore, the users are no longer making use of media in an isolated manner. Instead, they are perceived as constructive actors involved in collaborative media practices together with other users as well as original producers. This latter idea also paves the way for the concept of *participatory culture* – convergence culture is a culture that is made up of audiences/users participating in communal co-construction of content. Jenkins writes:

Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules [...] (Jenkins 2006b: 3).

This is also intimately connected to the notion of *collective intelligence*, a term that Jenkins borrows from Pierre Levy (1997, cited in Jenkins 2006b), which underscores the power inherent in the fact that a large number of people, each of whom has some specific knowledge, have a large collective body of knowledge when they come together in communal activities.

The three concepts – convergence culture, participatory culture, collective intelligence – are obviously closely connected to one another in terms of content. What is specifically interesting in this context, however, is the fact that they are also theoretically glued together by digital, Internet-based media. The media ecology of participation, as it is analysed by Henry Jenkins and others, is substantiated by the infrastructure offered by digital media, especially as they come in an improved Web 2.0 shape.

Comparing the theorizing of media *ecology of participation* to the theorizing referred to above (*ecology of broadcasting* and *ecology of interactivity*), there are at least two things worth commenting on in this context. First, there are obvious similarities between the ways in which these different notions have been developed. The notion of a convergence/participatory culture is also largely based on formal interpretations of technological capabilities. This is certainly underscored by the fact that one of the key terms, collective intelligence, has been borrowed from cybernetics, but it is also made specifically evident by the way in which the new, emerging culture is considered to be built upon, and dependent on, dominant features in digital media technologies. Second, there is also a difference between them. As part of the efforts to theorize the ecology of participation, the authors seem to be more careful about avoiding obviously deterministic positions. Hence, despite similarities in their overall arguments about the transformative potential of media, the latter authors are less likely to use too overtly generalizing formulations about reconfigurations of users and/or technological impacts on culture.

Conclusion: Producing Participators, or Production of Participation?

Considering the connections between theories aimed at describing the ecology of participation and previous attempts to characterize the ecologies of broadcasting and interactivity, it comes as no surprise that also this latter notion has come to be subject to fairly similar criticism – though only very recently. For instance, concerning the perspective's views on the “user as producer” and/or the user as part of a “participatory culture”, José Van Dijck (Van Dijck 2009; Van Dijck & Nieborg 2009) has elaborated on a number of critical – and well-spotted – weaknesses within this notion:

There are several assumptions implied in the notion of participatory culture [...]. First, the concept of user is often bolstered by a deceptive opposition between the passive recipient, couched in the rhetoric of “old media”, and the active participant cast ideally as someone who is well-versed in the skills of “new” media. Second, participation refers to citizens and community activists as well as to people who deploy their skills and talents towards a common cause. Yet can terms such as “communities” and “(cultural) citizenship” be unequivocally transferred to internet communities? And third, now that citizens have become creators and arbiters of media content, what role do platform providers play in steering the agency of users and communities? (Van Dijck 2009: 43)

Van Dijck’s first point is important in that it points to the fact that a kind of stereotyping of different user generations is taking place. Within the notion of participatory culture (and/or convergence culture), the users of “old media” are stereotyped as a passive audience, as merely consumers of what is on offer. The users of digital, “participatory” media, however, are equally stereotyped, but as hyperactive, reflexive, co-producing users. Meanwhile, it does not demand that much in terms of analytical fantasy to realize that it was perfectly possible to be both active and critical in previous media ecologies, just as much as it is equally possible to be passive in the new, digital one. For instance, despite all the participatory buzz about YouTube, exactly how participatory is it to browse through clips on YouTube on a regular weekday evening? And what about Facebook – another application that is typically connected to various Web 2.0-related notions: What kind of participation is involved in looking for and exchanging short messages with old friends from pre-school? Van Dijck’s second point calls for a more general reflection concerning the fuzzy term “participation” itself. When pondering about a culture of participation, it becomes fairly important to dig deeper into the very notion “participation”: What counts, actually, as participation? What contexts of participation are we talking about? Are all kinds of participation equally good? These questions, and a number of similar ones, are left conspicuously unanswered in the theorizing on the ecology of participation.

Van Dijck’s third point – “now that citizens have become creators and arbiters of media content, what role do platform providers play in steering the agency of users and communities?” – indicates a new direction. It reminds us that, despite the fact that the media ecology of participation offers potential inclusion, participation – and voice – to everyday users acting as *disorganized Internet producers* (or “everyday prod-users”), there are still *organized producers*⁵ out there, who make use of various combinations of, for instance, economic, discursive, and marketing resources in preparing websites, web platforms, or other kinds of venues for everyday users’ supposedly participatory (and more productive) media use. This raises a number of interesting questions: What does it mean for “participation” that the very platforms on which participatory practices are being played out are in fact handed down to “prod-users” by various organized interests? In this context, it is also very useful to allude to an observation by media sociologist Nico Carpentier, when he calls attention to the fact that also “web 2.0 technologies (just like any other technology) can be perfectly used in a top-down non-participatory way” (Carpentier 2010). Or to put it another way: (Organized) Producers, with a capital “P”, are not necessarily that easily overthrown by disorganized everyday bloggers, twitterers, Facebookers, or textual poachers.

This also leads to the tension in the question in this section's heading: Can contemporary media ecology be understood as an ecology that offers unprecedented freedom for producing participants? Or should it rather be understood as an ecology in which various forms of user participation are in fact produced – or even manufactured – by organized interests? In essence, the question points all the way back to classical issues in social science concerning structure vs. agency, individual freedom vs. freedom constraints, the power of producers vs. the power of users, etc. Hence, it is impossible to give a straightforward answer here. But what we do know for sure at this point, not least in light of the theorizing on previous media ecologies (that of broadcasting and that of interactivity), is that it is very important both to ask and to critically discuss such issues in relation to developing ecologies. In any case, this is undoubtedly important if we wish to actually analyse rather than just mythologize their potential implications.

Notes

1. This article is based on the author's presentation at NordMedia09 in Karlstad 13-15 August 2009. The session theme was "Dig IT or Not": Are We Addicted to the Media". The ideas presented in the paper draw on the author's current research activities within the project "Organized Producers of Young Net Cultures: Actors, Practices, Ambitions", which is funded by the Swedish Knowledge Foundation (2009-2013).
2. For example:
Electronic man loses touch with the concept of a ruling centre as well as the restraints of social rules based on interconnection. Hierarchies constantly dissolve and reform (McLuhan & Powers 1989:92).
3. For example:
The immediate prospect for literate, fragmented Western man encountering the electric implosion within his own culture is his steady and rapid transformation into a complex and depth-structured person emotionally aware of his total interdependence with the rest of human society. [...] Fragmented, literate, and visual individualism is not possible in an electrically patterned and imploded society (McLuhan 1964:50-51).
4. In this part of the text, I draw on (and aim at summarizing) Jenkins' main ideas in a short but – hopefully – comprehensible way. I mainly depart from the book *Convergence Culture*, but also use other pieces of his writings. This format means that I cannot refer to specific pages at all times, but Jenkins' own introduction (p. 1-24) and his conclusion (p. 240-260) in *Convergence Culture* (2006) can be considered useful reading for anyone interested in recapturing his main arguments.
5. *Organized producers* is a tentative conceptualization that the research project (Organized Producers of Young Net Cultures: Actors, Practices, Ambitions) upon which this article is based aims at starting to develop through a number of empirical studies of various institutions producing web content for (mainly) young people. Hence, at this early phase of our research, I need to allow myself to be somewhat sketchy in my definition of the very concept itself. It is, in essence, the project's theoretical ambition to further develop this concept. It can initially be interpreted, however, as the opposite of everyday users' producing activities as *disorganized producers*. Thus far, these latter practices have been very much in focus in the discourses on participatory and/or convergence culture.

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The Embodied Self in a Digital Age

Possibilities, Risks, and Prospects for a Pluralistic (democratic/liberal) Future?

Charles Ess

In the following, I seek to address three major but interrelated questions. First, how do emerging information technologies interact with our sense of self/selves, i.e., who we (believe we) are as human beings? Second, what sort of Good Life – including what sort of *polity/polities* – might be possible for these (changing) selves, both individually and collectively? Third, what sorts of choices and decisions will we need to make *regarding the sort of self/selves we will become* through our interactions with new media, in order to realize the better possible futures available to these sorts of selves?

I develop responses to these questions by taking up a well-known communication theory developed by Harold Innis, Elizabeth Eisenstein, Marshall McLuhan, and Walter Ong, and more recently elaborated by Naomi Baron (2008). This framework illuminates important correlations between a particular modality of communication – orality, literacy, print, and/or Ong’s “secondary orality” of electronic media – and *conceptions of self and community*. I then revisit these correlations and conceptions by way of a *philosophical* framework from information ethics, one that foregrounds crucial correlations between conceptions of self and our basic starting points regarding *ethics* and *politics*. This highlights a strong correlation between the sort of individual self *qua* autonomy affiliated with literacy, print, and privacy expectations of citizens in modern liberal democratic polities. At the same time, however, what Ong has called the secondary orality of electronic media (1988) appears as a new form of communication that shifts from an atomic individual to a networked or “smeared-out” self – one whose *political* implications are currently up in the air.

Much appears to depend on how we understand the relationship between secondary orality and the previous stages of literacy and print in terms, i.e., as either (a) a radical dualism, such that secondary orality will extinguish literacy and print – and with it, the individual autonomy that undergirds modern liberal democracies, or (b) a relationship of complementarity, such that secondary orality will supplement rather than replace literacy and print. Should the latter be more true than the former, then there is some hope for preserving the sort of self historically foundational to modern liberal democracies.

To examine these possibilities, I first review the emergence of computer-mediated communication, highlighting a *dualism* characteristic of 1990s’ discourse. This dualism

underlies the presumed opposition between secondary orality, on the one hand, and literacy and print, on the other – along with a correlative insistence on a postmodern, *disembodied* self engaged in cyberspace, i.e., a Cartesian mind radically sundered from the body. More recent research and reflection, however, shifts to *non-dual* understandings of the relationship between our offline and online lives. This shift is further accompanied in information ethics by a (re)turn to *embodiment* as crucial to how we know the world and thereby what sorts of selves we are. These shifts, finally, are promising from a *global* perspective, insofar as they entail a shift to a *relational self* that further requires a *virtue ethics* – thereby resonating with similar understandings of self and ethics in Eastern and Indigenous traditions.

Lastly, I explore the possible futures implied by these developments, with a focus on the central question: will such a networked self – while highly relational, more fully interwoven with a larger, indeed global community – be able to sustain the basic skills and capacities of free rationality, deliberation, etc. required to justify and sustain viable democratic societies?

I argue that an unreflective embrace of secondary orality and its correlative self risks abandoning the skills and habits of literacy, print, and the sort of reflective self they foster, and thus threaten the loss of the liberal state. By contrast, the (re)turn to the body – in conjunction with an emerging global information ethics that brings to the foreground *virtue ethics* – can foster the sorts of self-cultivation required to make careful choices regarding the design and use of new media that might thereby sustain the democratic self and the liberal state.

1. Remember the 1990s?

1. A. Media Theory

The emergence of the Internet and then the World Wide Web inspired what Maria Bakardjieva characterizes as “the early euphoria surrounding everything ‘cyber’ and the effervescent speculations about how the Internet will transform society as we know it” (2010, 59). Stephen D. O’Leary and Brenda Brasher represent this early enthusiasm, as they see the new media ushering in what Walter Ong characterized as the “secondary orality” of electronic media, thereby resulting in a revolutionary *cultural* shift: “The transformation to secondary orality is no less momentous than the shift from primary orality to literacy, and the full implications of this transformation will take centuries to appreciate” (O’Leary & Brasher 1996, 256).

O’Leary and Brasher refer here to the communication theory initially developed in the second half of the 20th ct., by Harold Innis, Elizabeth Eisenstein, and Marshall McLuhan. These highlight how different modalities of communication – orality, literacy, and print – as a communication *technology* correlates with a specific stage of culture. Briefly, orality is the communication technology of pre-agricultural, tribal peoples. Orality relies on repetition, rhyme, and performance as ways of encoding and remembering important cultural information. Literacy emerges with agriculture and is subsequently affiliated with the emergence of critical reflection and logic among the ancient Greeks. The rise of print enables the Protestant Reformation, for example, and with it, “the individual” conceived us as an atomic isolate, one whose identity is unitary, stable, and, most importantly from the standpoint of political philosophy, *free*. Such a free self, as we shall

see in more detail shortly, undergirds and legitimates modern conceptions of democratic, liberal states (see Chesebro and Bertelsen 1996; Baron 2008, 196f.).

This view is further bolstered in the late Foucault, who highlights the role of literacy and specifically, the practices of writing diaries and letters as technologies of the self. As Marika Lüders points out,

... Foucault strongly emphasises the *virtue* of self-development, bringing the Greek philosophical idea of *epimeleia heautou*, or ‘care of oneself’, into the limelight, arguing that *an ethical way of life* concerns a certain, meditative way of considering life, behaving in the world, acting and relating to other people. (2007, 48; emphasis added, CE)

I understand ‘virtue’ here in the sense taken up in virtue ethics. ‘Virtue’ (*arête* – “excellence”) refers to the qualities or capacities (e.g., patience, perseverance – indeed, reason itself) seen to contribute to our living the good life in its broadest sense, i.e., a life of individual well-being (*eudaimonia* or “happiness”) in harmony with the larger community. The central insight of virtue ethics is that these capacities, like those of the skilled athlete, dancer, or musician, are not given, but acquired, and only through a long and often difficult *practice* of cultivating these abilities so as to make them matters of habit and ever more facile or excellent. Virtue ethics thus requires of us the *choice* to develop specific habits and practices that foster excellence in these capacities and abilities as part of an on-going lifetime project of self-cultivation and development. In this light, Foucault’s point is that the *virtue* (or excellence) of a specific kind of self-development seems to depend crucially on the sorts of reflection and self-representation – and thus self-construction – that writing makes possible.

Foucault’s focus on writing as facilitating a specific sort of virtuous self then occasions our central question: *what happens to our sense of self* as we shift – via multiple electronic technologies, but most certainly the internet and world-wide-web – from emphasis on literacy and print to the prevalence of such secondary orality?

1. B. Literacy, print and the modern self: political implications

The force of this question is heightened as we turn to political philosophy – specifically with regard to the kind of *self* that both requires and legitimates the modern liberal democratic state.

Most briefly, such a self is characterized, in Kantian terms, as a rational *autonomy* – i.e., a rationality capable of self-rule (rather than rule by others). Such a self, in part by expressing and reflecting upon itself via the technologies literacy and print, is able to rationally deliberate, posit and critique alternative ends and courses of actions. Thereby, it is enabled to freely choose and *judge* (in the technical senses of *phronesis* [the Socratic/Aristotelian conception of a kind of practical judgment or wisdom] and Kant’s reflective judgment) *what is to be one’s own conception of the good life*, (including political, religious, career, and other personal choices and commitments (in Kantian language, one’s *ends*) and thus the appropriate and necessary *means* for achieving those ends. In this light, it should become clear that the technologies of literacy and print thus facilitate the emergence of a sense of self that is foundational to the justification of modern liberal democracies (cf. Berlin 1969, 131).

Moreover, this self simultaneously funds the modern sense of *privacy*, including in the contemporary world, *information* privacy. Broadly, such a self requires privacy first of all as a freedom *from* the interference and surveillance of others: this private space allows us to freely reflect, express, and revise our thoughts and sensibilities – as part and parcel of a correlative freedom *to* make the foundational choices that define our conception of the good life, how we will pursue it, and thereby the specific sort of *person* that we will seek to become (cf. Johnson 2001, ch. 3; Meeler 2008).

1. C. Media theory

This brief reminder of the sort of self essential to modern liberal democracy sharpens the political significance of the contemporary shift to secondary orality: what happens to such a self in an age of electronic media and the shift towards Ong's secondary orality – and will it remain the kind of self that requires and legitimates modern liberal democracy?

Again, Ong apparently believed that this new sort of communication technology would, as with the previous technologies of orality, literacy, and print, emerge as a supplementary layer (my term) – not as somehow as a displacement and replacement of the previous technologies. Indeed, as Klaus Bruhn Jensen perceptively notes: “Old media rarely die, and humans remain the reference point and prototype for technologically mediated communication” (2010, 44).

By contrast, however, a number of early enthusiasts and proponents of the then-nascent internet and world-wide-web emphasized rather that the secondary orality of cyberspace would issue in a radical overturning of all previous ways of communicating. So John Perry Barlow proclaimed: “With the development of the Internet, and with the increasing pervasiveness of communication between networked computers, ***we are in the middle of the most transforming technological event since the capture of fire.***” (1995, 56, cited in Wellman 2010, 18; emphasis added, CE).

Given the correlations developed in the Innis-Ong schema, this transformation in our primary communication technologies predictably entails a radical change in our sense of self – i.e., the rise of the ‘postmodern’ self. While oceans of ink have been spilt on this notion, here, however, I solely highlight the specifically *Cartesian* character of several characterizations of such a postmodern self made by an extensive range of authors who constitute a kind of canon of literature surrounding emerging CMC technologies, beginning with Donna Haraway (1990) and extending through Howard Rheingold's foundational *Virtual Communities* (1993). This list would further include Sherry Turkle (1997), as well as John Perry Barlow's “Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace” (1996). But even earlier than Haraway, Hans Moravec's *Mind Children* (1988) predicted that human beings would eventually be able to upload their consciousness into ostensibly eternal computing networks and Artificial Intelligence systems, and thereby achieve a sort of eternal life in cyberspace. Moravec's vision makes clear the fundamentally *Cartesian* dualism underlying the more general sense that human beings might achieve some sort of liberation in cyberspace. That is, such liberation would be the liberation of a mind radically separate from a body – what Barlow, following William Gibson in his (equally canonical) novel *Neuromancer*, contemptuously referred to as “meat” (1984, 6; cf. Ess 2004)

1. D. *The body strikes back ...*

Positively, this contempt for the body *qua* meat serves as the occasion for Donna Haraway's highly influential Cyborg Manifesto (1990), in which she argued that women as bodiless in cyberspace would no longer be subject to the male gaze, much less physical violence. But these celebrations of bodiless liberation in cyberspace were soon challenged, beginning with Allucquere Roseanne Stone who pointed out that "... virtual community originates in, and must return to, the physical. . . . Forgetting about the body is an old Cartesian trick" (1991, 113). Stone's insight and critique were eventually reinforced by an emerging body of empirical research in CMC, beginning with Nancy Baym's work on fan communities (1995) that convincingly demonstrated that, *contra* the prevailing Cartesian assumptions, actual human behavior online was inextricably interwoven with our offline practices and identities. Susan Herring further showed through discourse analysis that online communication almost always betrayed gender-specific communication characteristics (1996, 1999). Similarly, emerging research likewise demonstrated that race does not disappear in cyberspace (Kolko, Nakamura, and Rodman 2000). Indeed, by the early part of this century, two of the most prominent and influential voices of the 1990s enthusiasm for a virtual world as radically disconnected from our embodied lives – namely, Jay David Bolter (2001) and Howard Rheingold (2000) – sought to correct their earlier, more dualistically based viewpoints.

1. E. *Empiricism and phenomenology: the (re)turn to embodiment*

In parallel with these transformations in the domain of CMC literature and research, a number of philosophers – all working within the field of phenomenology – developed an extensive series of accounts of human experience and knowledge as inextricably interwoven with our existence as *embodied* beings. The first of these is Albert Borgmann, who emphasizes how our existence as embodied beings ineluctably ties us to the "gravity" of the body, a gravity that is defined by our experiences of *eros* and *thanatos* (death) – *contra*, in particular, the "extropian" hopes of Moravec (2000; see Ess, 2002).

Barbara Becker further develops this turn to embodiment, beginning with an extended phenomenological critique of several postmodernist theories. While acknowledging their importance and insights, Becker argues that these theories overlook the *materiality* of bodies, subjects, and nature (2001, 69). To denote this sense of a material body active in shaping its social existence, Becker uses the neologism *LeibSubject*, "BodySubject," in explicit contrast with a radical split between *Geist* and *Leib*, mind and body. (For further discussion, see Ess 2004.)

Also grounded in the phenomenological tradition, Hubert Dreyfus draws on Nietzsche's critique of dualism in the Western tradition – a critique that explicitly rejects precisely the hope of such dualisms to escape the human realities of finitude and death (2001, 6). Moreover, drawing on Kierkegaard, Dreyfus describes how human beings *learn* as embodied beings in a rich sense, i.e., the mastery at work in the experienced physician, skilled musician, etc. Such learning is inextricably interwoven with our extensive experience *qua* embodied beings – e.g., as apprentices learn from those with greater experience and judgment, precisely in order to acquire *judgment* (in the Aristotelian sense of *phronesis*), one of the most central elements of expertise and ethical/political interaction.

While further examples could be included here, I hope this sketch makes clear that, in parallel with the very strong trend of empirical research within the field of CMC, philosophers in the phenomenological tradition have developed a rich account of our lives as embodied human beings that turns away from 1990s dualisms and correlative hopes for a bodiless liberation and immortality in cyberspace.

2. A Global ‘Web 2.0’ and the (Re)turn to Nondualism and Embodiment

2. A. Media theory and research

Indeed, it appears that these twin turns from 1990s’ dualisms are only accelerated by the advent of the so-called “Web 2.0.” While there is dispute as to how novel “Web 2.0” may be – it is clear that the ever-expanding range of possibilities for communication via ICTs continue to interweave with our offline lives. The result is that the strong polarities undergirding 1990s’ dualisms between the “real” and the “virtual,” the “offline” vs. the “online,” etc., simply don’t hold up. In particular, the forthcoming *Blackwell Handbook of Internet Studies* collects an extensive range of research overviews across much of the spectrum of CMC research. Taken together, these demonstrate “the complex interrelations between online and offline life” – with the result that “...to talk of such distinctions seems almost quaint, and hardly helps us to understand how, for example, individuals relate to others, and how they continually shape and transform ... the tools and messages with which they work” (M. Consalvo & C. Ess 2010, 4).

2. B. the (re)turn to the embodied – and relational self: self, privacy, and community

These developments return us to our key question: what do these imply for our conception of our self/selves, especially as these conceptions appear to correlate with the modalities of communication, i.e., from orality through secondary orality?

From the networked to the smeared-out self. Within CMC research, Barry Wellman and Caroline Haythornthwaite’s “networked individual” denotes the self facilitated by increasing interweaving with communication networks (2002). The network as not only a primary technology but primary metaphor is striking here – in part because it immediately resonates with parallel uses of this conception that are increasingly central in philosophy and information ethics. So Carol Gilligan (1982) introduced the importance of “webs of relationships” in understanding how women tend to make ethical decisions, in contrast with a more individualistic/autonomous approach characteristic of many males. The web of relationships became a guiding motif in subsequent feminist theory – one conjoined in an ecofeminism by Karen Warren with parallel notions from ecology of networked and interwoven ecosystems (1990).

In these ways, these two diverse fields thus converge on a contemporary sense of self as the *relational* self – i.e., a self that defines itself primarily in terms of the relationships it holds both within human communities (of family, friends, and larger groups, including politics) and the larger natural (and for some, supernatural) communities surrounding us. Within Western traditions of philosophy, this emerging understanding of the embodied/relational self is articulated and supported with especial force by Susan Stuart (2008). Stuart’s account, in drawing on contemporary work in neuroscience, demonstrates recent shifts from the cognitivist accounts of mind and knowledge characteristic of “hard” AI in

the last century – including the cognitivism and Cartesian dualism we have seen underlying 1990s’ conceptions of a disembodied liberation in cyberspace. By contrast, what Stuart calls enactivism highlights multiple pre-reflective, non-cognitive ways in which the body is constantly interrogating and attuning itself to its immediate environment. The upshot is again a strong refutation of Cartesian dualism: this account demonstrates instead that “there is an inseparability of mind and world, and it is *embodied practice* rather than *cognitive deliberation* that marks the agent’s *engagement* with its world” (2008, 256).

The “post-postmodern” relational self: resonances with ancient Western / Eastern views

I have argued elsewhere that these turns towards a more relational sense of self (re) turn us to both pre-modern Western conceptions of the self vis-à-vis the larger community (perhaps most famously, Aristotle’s dictum that human beings are naturally social – *Politics*, I.2, 1253a2), as well as towards Eastern conceptions of the self as a relational self, beginning with Confucian thought (Ess 2005, 2006, 2007). Specifically, Plato’s *cybernetes* – the ship’s pilot – exemplifies such a relational, embodied self whose knowledge, *feeling*, and *judgments* about how to navigate in difficult seas as a primary metaphor for *phronesis* and its central role in our ethical lives (*Republic*, 360e-361a; cf. 332e–c, 489c). Similarly, for Confucius, the human being *is* his or her relationships. Henry Rosemont, Jr., offers the useful analogy between such a self and an onion: each of our relationships – as parent, child, friend, lover, sibling, etc. – constitutes a layer of such an “onion self.” If any given relationship is lost or changed, so the self changes. This represents a fundamental contrast with a modern Western self, especially as conceived of as a Cartesian mind radically divorced from its own body (2006).

A more feminist/environmental/global relational self—but what of modern liberal democracy?

A last way of thinking about this networked individual is as the “smeared-out” self. This expression denotes a weak analogy between contemporary senses of self and quantum mechanical descriptions of sub-atomic particles. Somewhat like a quantum particle that, prior to its realization in one specific configuration upon observation or measurement, exists only as a set of potential locations “smeared out” in space – so we are increasingly aware of ourselves as distributed across CMC networks via multiple means of communication (SMS, social networking sites, micro-blogging, email, etc.) that thereby represent hundreds, if not thousands, of simultaneous but potential relationships/engagements that we realize one at a time.

This analogy highlights the stark contrasts between a relational sense of self and the modern (Western) sense of the self as an “atomic” individual – e.g., a Cartesian rationality radically separate from its own body. Again, this atomic sense of self, especially as an essential freedom or autonomy, thereby becomes foundational for the modern liberal and democratic state. And as we have seen, this atomic self is thought to require a distinctive kind of individual *privacy*. By contrast, relational selves focus more on communication and other practices intended to foster a sense of community – what Anders Albrechtslund has helpfully identified as “lateral surveillance” (2008). They thereby de-emphasize the self as an atomic isolate, and thereby individual privacy, in favor of greater interaction and interconnectivity with both Others and others.

2. C. Some immediate (positive) consequences: community, convergence, hybridization

Albrechtslund highlights a positive consequence of such lateral surveillance – namely, the recovery of a sense of community characteristic of earlier times (2008). As well, this shift in contemporary Western conceptions of the self would explain, for example, why younger people *qua* relational selves seem far less worried about losing their privacy by way of online self-revelation, as compared with their elders whose sense of *individual* privacy presumes an atomic conception of the self.

Equally positively, this shift thus brings Western societies closer to our Eastern counterparts. As I have argued elsewhere, these shifts are necessary for the emergence of a global information ethics that will provide us with shared norms while simultaneously protecting and fostering cultural differences in important ways (Ess 2005, 2006, 2009). Indeed, as contemporary Western conceptions of the self apparently shift towards Eastern conceptions pointing eastward – in such Eastern societies as Japan, China, and Thailand, conceptions of the self and affiliated notions of privacy are dramatically shifting in Western directions. To begin with, young people in these societies – in part, under the influence of Western cultural models – are increasingly demanding *individual* privacy for themselves, confounding their elders as wedded to more traditional understandings of the relational self which sees individual ‘privacy’ as threatening the harmony of the community (Ess 2005). More recently, Soraj Hongladarom has articulated a Buddhist conception of the ‘empirical self’, in contrast with the enlightened self that understands individual ‘self’ as a pernicious illusion. In the context of Thailand’s traditionally hierarchical political traditions, Hongladarom’s empirical self – like its modern Western counterpart – justifies individual privacy and other basic rights of citizens in a democratic society (2007). In these two ways, then, we see what were once Eastern conceptions (i.e., conceptions clearly distinct from Western conceptions) mirroring changes in the West – i.e., as they point westward in adopting and adapting what were once exclusively Western conceptions of the self and privacy.

3. Electronic Media as Weapons of Mass Distraction vs. the (Re)turn to Body as Anchor of Identity and Focus of Virtue Ethics

This overview may close with a happy ending. Presuming that the body and embodiment are indeed crucial to knowing ourselves and engaging the world around us – then more contemporary research and philosophical reflection redeem the body and embodiment from their threatened extinction by a 1990s’ endorsement of the virtual as radically disconnected from and opposed to the material and the real.

These developments suggest an optimistic picture of a global society, one that pluralistically preserves conceptions and practices of self *qua* embodied, community, and ontology defining local traditions, conjoined with shared understandings of self, community, and ethics appropriate to the communication networks that increasingly tie us together. In particular, the sense of self and community that emerges in the work of Stuart and Hongladarom is further accompanied by a shared focus on *virtue ethics* as an ethical framework essential to the shaping and development of such networked selves. We have seen this turn to virtue ethics in Foucault’s focus on the virtue of the care of the self made possible by literacy. More recently, Shannon Vallor’s analyses of mobile

technologies foregrounds how these technologies may foster or hinder important virtues (2009). Indeed, one of the most influential information philosophers, Luciano Floridi, has developed an information ontology that entails a “networked morality” directly parallel with contemporary environmental and feminist ethics. Most broadly, Floridi’s ontology resonates with ontologies generally characterized in terms of philosophical naturalism in both Western and Eastern traditions – e.g., in Spinoza, Plato, Buddhism, and Confucian thought (Ess 2009). These traditions and figures again (re)turn us to virtue ethics as necessary for realizing the relational self’s best possibilities.

3. A. Reinscription of gender stereotypes, return of the male gaze, violence

All is not sweetness and light, however. To begin with, the collapse of the 1990s’ Cartesian dualism clearly undermines early feminist hopes (Haraway) of escaping the male gaze and violence against women in a bodiless cyberspace. On the contrary, not only does gender fail to disappear in cyberspace; not only is the internet and the web – and, increasingly, our mobile phones – exquisitely well suited for the production and distribution of pornographies that, with some important exceptions, appear to largely reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and thereby the subordination of women. Finally, even within the more mundane domains of virtual worlds and social networking sites, the blurring of any putative boundary between the offline and the online means that traditional gender stereotypes are easily reinscribed, if not amplified in online domains. A great deal of evidence along these lines can be adduced here, but perhaps most strikingly, Suely Frago and Martinsdo Rosário have documented how participants in *Second Life* literally enhanced their avatars in ways that reiterated and amplified such stereotypes (2008). The (re)turn to embodiment, it seems, inevitably brings the abuses of patriarchy in its wake.

3. B. Secondary orality, the loss of the modern atomic self – the loss of modern liberal democracy?

The shift away from the “classic” modern self, moreover, forces the question: will such a networked, “smeared-out” self – while highly relational, more fully interwoven with a larger, indeed global community, and shaped by an emerging global virtue ethics – be able to acquire and sustain the basic skills and capacities of free rationality, deliberation, and judgment (*phronesis*) required to justify and sustain viable democratic societies?

Some positive responses to this question are possible. Briefly, if we follow Ong’s own view, now as reinforced by contemporary research and reflection that emphasizes the *continuity* between previous forms of communication and the ever-expanding secondary orality of electronic media, then we can perhaps be optimistic that the sort of modern self associated with the technologies of literacy and print will be sustained as part of a more complex sense of self, i.e., one that includes the more relational sense of self described above. Naomi Baron describes this direction in terms of a “*print culture sans print*” which conjoins the “fast text” and ephemeral texts that we produce *en masse*, e.g., via texting and micro-blogging, with the self fostered by literacy and print culture, including careful reflection, logical clarity, etc. (2008). We can extend her suggestion with Lüders’ point from Foucault: as supplemented rather than replaced by secondary orality, the skills and abilities of literacy and print will continue to make possible the

sort of “care of self” apparently needed to foster the emergence and sustained presence of a modern self as moral agent.

This optimism would be reinforced, finally, by the (re)turn to the body we have witnessed. If we do not fall prey to “the old Cartesian trick” of “forgetting the body” (Stone), we thereby always come home, so to speak, to the unitary body, the *LeibSubjekt* that is our own and no one else’s. As our *embodied* experience and interactions with embodied Others constantly remind us of and anchor us in our singular body, such experiences and interactions may reinforce our sense of identity in modern terms, i.e., as a singular individual and moral agent with some coherency and continuity in our identity and experience, not simply a networked self smeared out across a nearly infinite range of relationships made possible by networked communication technologies.

Darker futures, however, also seem possible, if not likely. So Baron describes an alternative future of “Print sans print culture,” referring thereby to early 1990s’ celebrations of secondary orality as a complete replacement of the technologies of literacy and print. On this trajectory, a few people might still cultivate the production and collection of books, dedicating themselves to writing journals, diaries, and letters the old-fashioned way – and thereby, continue to cultivate the self like Foucault’s 1st century Romans and, for Baron, the Renaissance humanists such as Erasmus and the moderns such as Jefferson. But such people will resemble much more a Roman elite or the Confucian literati than a modern democratic citizen as envisioned by Locke, Jefferson, and Berlin.

Indeed, a very unhappy ending to our story is starkly suggested by Neil Postman, who famously worried that Western societies, as increasingly saturated by diverse media, were already on the edge of “amusing ourselves to death” (1984). Postman made his case by contrasting two dystopias, Orwell’s (better known) *1984*, and Huxley’s (lesser known) *Brave New World* (originally published in 1931). Most briefly, Postman characterizes Huxley’s dystopia as one in which “...people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think” (1984, vii).

This observation takes on particular salience in light of the contrasts between the technologies of literacy and print, as these are affiliated with a particular sort of (modern) self that is rational, critical, and reflective in ways crucial for modern liberal democracies, and the sorts of relational selves we may become via secondary orality, especially as these incline us away from the sort of critical rationality affiliated with literacy and print. Crudely put, pre-literate societies are both authoritarian (including the predominance of the community and tradition over the individual and innovation) and more or less patriarchal. Especially in light of increasing evidence that our immersion in the internet, along with affiliated contemporary communication technologies, thereby inclines us in the direction of a secondary orality – and with it, a smeared-out self characterized by shorter attention spans and less capacity to engage with critical argument – it may not be needless handwringing to worry, following Postman, that the communication media of secondary orality indeed threaten to undo our capacity to think in the ways required for the autonomous self and liberal democracies.

Perhaps most seriously, Huxley’s uncanny anticipation of the darker possibilities of contemporary society includes a focus on “...man’s [*sic*] almost infinite appetite for distractions” (*ibid*). If anything, even more perfectly and completely than Huxley’s “feelies” and Postman’s movies and TV, the internet appears to serve as a medium for

controlling us by oversaturation, reduction to passivity – all done by way of largely innocent satiation of our near-infinite appetite for pleasure and distraction. Of course, we are in love with this medium – but thereby, as Postman and Huxley suggest, we risk falling in love with the technologies of our enslavement.

This may sound too dire, too alarmist, too curmudgeonly and too Luddite. But against all the wonderful possibilities and new developments facilitated by contemporary communication technologies – these contemporary shifts and developments argue for me that as we continue to develop and use these technologies, we must pay ever greater attention to how they may influence and reshape our sense of self – along with the correlative social and political possibilities and implications of such selves.

3. C. Happier endings?

If we do so, then I think a happier ending to the emergence of secondary orality and the networked self may well be possible.

To begin with, if I have been successful here in holding together the frameworks of CMC research and philosophy and information ethics – then I hope this suggests the value of continuing along this interdisciplinary path so as to further take advantage of CMC research, philosophy, and information ethics in the service of working toward this happier ending. First of all, these continued efforts will help us better understand and thereby foster greater (self-) awareness of how our various communication technologies interact with our sense of self – thus making possible the *informed* choices necessary (especially within a framework of virtue ethics) regarding which technologies to use under what circumstances.

Second, this would mean further developing within philosophy and information ethics our understanding of this emerging conjunction between *virtue ethics*, *the body*, and *the art of crafting a self*. As we have seen, this conscious cultivation of the self through careful and reflective choices of our communication options is highlighted by literacy and then print. At the same time, the ethical transformations in the West over the past few decades have included a (re)turn to virtue ethics. As a reminder: virtue ethics is a central component of not only ancient (e.g., Socratic and Aristotelian) but also modern Western ethics, including feminist and environmental ethics. At the same time, it is central to such non-Western traditions as Confucian thought, Buddhism, and multiple indigenous traditions – traditions we are increasingly linked to and hybridizing with via our networked communication technologies. Virtue ethics is thus a strong candidate for a *global* information ethics.

Finally, virtue ethics depends centrally on the body. Both Socrates and Aristotle argued that just as we know that we must cultivate and care for the body through appropriate diet, exercise, and related habits oriented towards excellence (e.g., as athletes, musicians, etc.) if we are to enjoy a sense of well-being and contentment – so we must cultivate the capacities and habits of the self in order to achieve the harmony and balance that likewise constitute a sense of “psychic” (from *psyche*, self or soul) well-being and contentment.

Hence, as our (re)turn to the body restores a central focus on the importance of body as core to and anchor of our sense of identity (so Borgmann, among others) – so this (re)turn may further remind us of the central importance of cultivating the virtues or excellences necessary for both physical and psychic health and well-being. This sort

of (re)turn to the body and virtue ethics might then keep in the foreground the sort of self-cultivation fostered by literacy and print – and thereby preserve, if not foster, the sort of self required for modern democracies and liberal states.

Following Ong's original sense that secondary orality will work to supplement rather than exterminate literacy and print, we might anticipate the emergence of a hybrid self, one that conjoins

- a. a modern-style individual self – one we can now call a “virtuous self,” cultivated primarily by the technologies of literacy and print, immersed in the life project of practicing, within some “core space” of privacy, *autonomy*, *phronesis*, the virtues of patience, perseverance, as *communicative* virtues necessary for
- b. the relational self – one widely distributed via network technologies that further entail the pleasures, conveniences, (and: infinite distractions) of secondary orality, as at least frequently open to the (lateral, if not hierarchical) surveillance of others?

I believe that this focus will become an increasingly important project in information ethics, as part of a larger focus on what “the good life” might mean for networked selves inextricably interwoven with others in larger, increasingly more complex and technologically-mediated communities. Such a focus, complemented with parallel work in media studies on how our sense of self is changing vis-à-vis new communication technologies, seems a promising counter to the worst-case scenario – allowing ourselves to be blithely drawn into a web of infinite distractions and falling in love with the technologies of our enslavement.

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The Precarious Citizen

Control and Value in the Digital Age

Katharine Sarikakis

In what follows I aim to highlight the issues of value and control in socialisation processes facilitated by the new social media, by interrogating the nexus of leisure and work, surveillance and privacy policy as core factors in the conceptualisation and application of an extended critical approach to citizenship.

The context of online social networking is an exemplary perhaps metaphor for the connection of the corporeal, emotional and intellectual nodes of human beings, in their forming of a company of a notional ‘we’, a community, a society. Body, soul and society, the theme of this conference, each separately but also as an integrated scheme occupy an interesting position in the debates surrounding online social networking. At a first glance it would appear that all three terms may be conspicuous by their absence – virtuality is less concerned with the physical and corporeal. On the other hand, as far as ‘society’ is concerned, there are views that no society or community can be of real substance in online interactions. Nevertheless, body and society as terms may present us with less difficulty to grasp, or accept. Soul is a different matter: we do not ‘see’ or ‘measure’ it; we cannot ‘observe’ it with the scientific tools – we do not know if one exists! For sure, it is philosophy that has most productively dealt with the question of soul and of course religions that talk most confidently about its existence. Religious teachings and practices are bound with codes of morality that must be acted upon to be of value. For soul is understood as the immaterial breath of life of human beings, indeed, as Plato professed the soul is the essence of a living being. Aristotle rejected the duality of body and soul of Platonian or Pythagorean teachings: for Aristotle, the soul is not something separate from the body but rather an actuality of the living body, related to growth and reaching one’s own potential. The soul is a set of functions that bring the intellect together with intuitive senses about the place of humanity in the natural world and the cosmos. This actuality of personhood has come to pertain to citizenship debates in the context of globalisation, human mobility and informational and technological connection.

Citizenship is the crossroads of the material and symbolic conditions under which we make sense of and further construct the world. These are the conditions under which individuals, cultures and societies are called to exercise their free will, shape their lives, define their identities, occupy spaces with some sense of belonging and find some space within them to dream. Of course, this does not mean that any of these factors are static

– indeed both the conditions, material and symbolic, and the people, as individuals or in communities, are in a constant flux. However it is also neither the case that the directions in which these changes take place are completely unpredictable. Rather, the variety of experience and difference are integral parts of the truth; they manifest the points of departure for personal understanding and evaluation of, and response to the world. Citizenship, entailing political as well as economic, cultural and social dimensions, is the vehicle for the expression of those standpoints through the individual's capacity to 'exercise' it.

Some of the most crucial elements of citizenship are to be found in work as an activity which not only provides structure in human life, or simply exploits human capacity for profit, but also functions as a mechanism for self-realisation, the making of one's identity, sometimes even offers a sense of purpose. Two other crucial elements are the right to property and that of self-governance. For this discussion, the latter two indicate the level of control over one's own destiny and one's own self, including the choice to work and to maintain and protect one's own integrity and dignity.

The present discussion is concerned with these aspects of citizenship in relation to social media. It situates online social networking within a complex web of work, production, consumption and regulation as determining factors of the quality of lived experience.

Work, but not as we know it

Work has been inextricably related to citizenship – and leisure, although often not in neatly defined ways: In traditional forms of work–life relationship, the boundaries between work and leisure time for women and disadvantaged social classes, not to mention the racialised subject, have been less clear, with domesticity, child rearing and the private sphere of the home leaving very little space to true leisure. In the Fordist stage of capitalism, however, recognised forms of work, hence excluding the domestic or child-rearing and other care related tasks, and leisure constitute the interconnected elements of accumulation. Work generates capital through production of goods, and leisure continues this task through their consumption of material and symbolic goods. That work is also a crucial element of citizenship as understood and applied in its Western liberal form can quickly be established when we look at the limiting legal framework of rights that can be enjoyed by recognised i.e. documented citizens in nation states: right to work refers to a citizens' status or legality of migration and is an exclusive right.

In late capitalism however, whereby Fordist and Postfordist forms of production are in operation, the work of those under the approval of a national authority depend on those whose labour supports and maintains them, those outside a nation state. In the affluent pockets of the West the promotion of flexible, choice based work facilitated by information technologies – or at least this is what the rhetoric is about- is realised because of a complex set of labour dynamics where individual choice is far from the definitive factor. To facilitate the production of technologies that are used to enhance individual 'choice' and 'creativity' in the West other mechanisms are involved in the international division of labour: for one, we have the importation of labourers to the silicon valleys of the Global North under questionable legal conditions; or the export of labour to workers without real choices in the Global South. On a macro level, therefore, we have the silent fates of workers and in particular women, whose labour

in sweatshops of technological hardware stock the 'symbolic analysts' and 'knowledge workers' desks.

Let us consider these examples:

A 25 year old worker in Foxconn Technology Group a company producing Apple's iphone committed suicide when one of the 16 iphone prototypes he was responsible for went missing. The company itself searched Sun's apartment (http://www.nzherald.co.nz/mobile-phones/news/article.cfm?c_id=261&objectid=10586119);

In 2008, in a less tragic story, a female factory worker of the same company forgot to delete a test-photograph of herself on a mobile phone, which was sold to a customer in Britain. The worker's first reaction was *fear* that she will be sacked.

In 2005, the UK-based Catholic Agency of Overseas Development published a damning report on the conditions of work in the factories of Dell, Hewlett Packard and IBM in Mexico, China and Thailand. Pregnancy, homosexuality, connection to a labour union or bringing labour claims, are some of the reasons for dismissal or non-hire in the factories. Harassment, physical and psychological abuse, humiliation, discrimination and slave-like working conditions and pay are the norm. All this compounding to the pay gap between a worker making hard drives for Dell who was paid \$2.50 a day, and the CEO of Dell who earned \$13,000 a day.

In the meantime, here in the West, the rhetoric of flexible labour of the symbolic analyst places mothers, young people and the class of the new 'creative' worker on the pedestal of choice over where and when and how to work, with the facilitation of communication technologies and software. Gregg (2008), Mosco (2007) and others have discussed both the media representations of this new format of work, and its realities and consequences for workers and markets in the Global North. The new world of the creative industries consists of workers constantly on-the-go, a demand to be continuously contactable, the crushing down of boundaries between work and life or leisure time, the precarity of labourers and insecurity of jobs, the expectation for continuous work on one's life's story as expressed on a CV; deskilling, casualisation, fractured hours, semi-wages and lack of benefits and of proper social welfare provision for dependents or in times of need. These are the web-designers, computer software programmers and analysts, communication interns and others upon which the operation of internet based companies such as Social Networking Sites (SNS) are based and define the context within which the use of the websites takes place.

On a micro-level, I am interested in exploring the actualisation of another kind of work, which is performed by individual users, but which is understood as leisure time. I am referring to the work of millions of individual users in developing, sustaining SNS and turning them into sites for profit-making. There are several levels on which consumers or users' work is utilised to maintain the functioning of a market circuit arranged around the need for human connection, as well as importantly around the exercise of citizenship through expression and participation in the global public digital sphere.

On one level, the proliferation of SNS such as Facebook requires the time, energy and input of a large number of individuals. Consumers utilise the functions offered by technology, adapt their own ways of expression into the prearranged formats of applications and a particular form of interactivity. Reaching out to friends and acquaintances worldwide is a new and exciting way of socialisation and leisure. As media scholarship has candidly recognised consuming leisure is not necessarily a passive activity in that

it has engrained competences, skills and attention that require a pre-existing cultural capital as well as the capital to invest in communication technologies that enable this form of socialisation and leisure consumption.

New applications and invitations to support new features are promoted regularly through SNS, which in turn generates consumption at the level of PC/computer equipment and peripheral communications devices such as cameras or mobile phones. If the demographics offered by Facebook are accurate, 250 million people around the world are classed as active users, 40% of which reside in the USA, while 2/3 of all users are women (over 63%). This equals an immense source of personal, creative, mental, emotional, leisure work that takes place, and is in many ways typical of the 'creative' economy (Greggs 2008): whereby the creative worker, in this case one where work is not even named as such, not only provides valuable flexible patterns of input in a production line of symbolic or abstract produce but it also maintains the trading of physical produce. In the knowledge economies of the West, information is the raw material.

For SNS accumulation of information is pursued through registration of users; market surveys receive feedback through fans' responses to interestingly presented games or applications. The proliferation of the consumption of ads is achieved via an increased watchers/users base; further utilisation of applications and input of personal information adheres to the monitoring of the self and of the moment and context as well as the personal, one's own appreciation of the context. Consequently, a second order feedback is generated to collected information and the cycle starts again. In the meantime, the user has invited their friends to sign up. The next cycle of content generation grows at an exponential rate, whereby production and consumption are blurred, completing each other (Harvey 1990).

The drive to produce what is to be consumed is embedded in the architecture of the 'code', that is as Lessig argues, the software and hardware that make cyberspace what it is. This code is also what 'regulates' cyberspace (Lessig 2006). The code, I add, brings the idea of separation between work/leisure under question. Andrejevic (2002) has argued that not only watching, i.e. consuming leisure, but also being watched, therefore being monitored in consuming leisure, constitutes not wasteful, but profit generating labour. This is due to making available the *bodies* of consumers in homes and private spaces – as is the case with those in shopping malls or superstores- sourcing from human beings their *physical presence* and *mental focus*. To that I want to add two things: not only the acts of watching and being watched are forms of profit generating labour, but also the very act of socialisation which does not, at first glance, appear to 'consume' anything. Second, the seemingly intangible, yet resourceful 'soul' of the labourer is brought into the labouring process, perhaps more intensely and comprehensively than in any other process of labour, production or even consumption. As per Aristotle's definition, the soul, our intellect coming together with intuitive functions to help us understand our place in the world, is perhaps becoming a driving force in the generation of endless, authentic or spontaneous content for the wheels of SNS to keep moving. Actual, round-the-clock, cross-border, manual, intellectual and emotional labour feeds the code, producing millions of pages, generating an unprecedented amount of personal and social data, which would have been otherwise untappable with the methods and means of market research. Content around this data is perhaps not yet a commodity directly profitable, although this is not necessarily true for the immediate future. Its immediate

sell-and-buy, supply-and-demand capacity is organised momentarily around more familiar forms of commerce, such as advertisements and applications, as add-ons on the sites. Notably, as the Facebook blog itself declares '*we have a small community that provides powerful advice and learnings around product development and marketing*' (<http://blog.facebook.com/> under the name of Shaykat, a fb intern).

Moreover, there is another dimension to the content, that of a self-generating matrix for the constant *updating* on one's and also group's status. This sort of content conveys information on thoughts, moods, location, plans, habits and life experiences. It also demonstrates gaps in knowledge or informational needs. It generates responses to deeply personal and private aspects of the soul, from seemingly banal music preferences to political views and religion or everyday routines. It is of course important to note that the 'seemingly banal' or mandane is that which creates demographics: banal information is that which involves patterns, such as sets of habits, routines, repetition of routes, choices, tastes and all the potential commercial activity and market interaction that goes with that. The generation of endless data, alongside with personalia in digital forms such as photos, videos or poems and 'thoughts' feed the machinery of production, rearticulation and updating of records, marketing, consumption. Facebook based or hosted companies prepare tailor made ads with the photos of ourselves and our friends on items and services of interest to you: the personification of the consumer, much like amazon's message 'welcome Katharine, we have suggestions for you' attains a new meaning: we, ourselves, not only produce what we consume in the most literal sense of the word, not only we consume the technologies that will allow further consumption, not only do we avail ourselves in body and mind to the world of advertising, *we even produce the ads* that sell us products while addressing us with our first names.

Privacy, but not as we know it

This labour however has a further re/generative purpose and next to that of social labour in maintaining the, a, community in some shape and form hence sustaining the base on which further, i.e. future, consumers can be groomed, products can be tailored, market models can be developed. Opening up one's social circle to a computerised system of data retention and monitoring multiplies the system's effectiveness of reach in unprecedented grades. By creating communities or joining existing ones, we translate our friends' contact and personal data into a machine readable format, kept and managed by companies that are effectively unaccountable as to the use of this data. Invitations to friends to join, result in the retention of their data even if individuals decide not to accept this invitation to join facebook. By affiliation – whether sustained or failed- one's personal data become property of third parties. The privacy policies of SNS are at best user-unfriendly, at worst abusive in their power to log information without the explicit consent of the user, as in some cases they leave no possibility to retrieve or claim back information already volunteered. A new enterprise in the making under the auspices of Facebook is now seeking to introduce those declared as 'singles' to each other through various friends' networks. Advertisements are created on the combination of the availability of stored data, aggregated and personalised demographics, while the system of advertising and marketing is based on the specific architecture of privacy policies: not just settings, as individually controlled, but in terms of privacy policy's very code.

Monitoring to produce searchable data will become the default architecture for public space, as standard as street lights. (Lessig 2006: 208)

To some, the very idea of search is an offense to dignity (Lessig 2006: 211), the same way physical search by the police or the worker's apartment by his own employers is an intrusion of private space and the effective cancelation of one essential part of citizenship, the power to have *control over one's own*, such as private personal data.

Individual protection of privacy is incompatible with this market model. There is a paradox here: at the same time States enhance surveillance techniques and scopes under the rubric of terror or security and global alliances demand retention of private data for commerce 'security', individuals are left with little say over what happens to their data. Moreover, even more paradoxically perhaps, consumers volunteer large chunks of personal information in exchange for convenience and market 'offers'. Some allowances are also made by well intended citizens in the name of security and law and order. However, few guarantees are offered to the entrapped or well intended citizen as to what remains of their privacy: once information is passed on to companies, personal data usage is effectively uncontrollable by the citizen. Submission of power takes place through submission of personal information (and its subsequent appropriation of) submission of labour generating consumer time.

There is a regularisation process of a new form of a regime of accumulation, whereby this new production mode is powered through the very code of cyberspace, that is the architecture of software and hardware that prompts specific forms of interaction with others. At the same time it obscures the process through which this market interaction takes place. The space of virtual connection is at odds with the consequences of materiality – though only deceptively. In reality, locality of consumption disguises the globality of transactions under uneven and complex conditions. Overall, as a 'code', the regulation regime on privacy and surveillance is directly linked to the activities of corporate actors, as they interact with the state and their most powerful constellation of states globally and through the withdrawal of the state in enforcing privacy protection. In recent months, the European Commission stated its intention to issue an infringement procedure against the UK government over the case of Phorm. Phorm is an American based company previously involved in ad-and spyware that developed a programme which intercepts internet trafficking on individual users' IPs' analyses the text of websites visited and proceeds with what we call behavioural targeting, with adverts depending on the mood, tastes and interests as derived from personal use. Just days before the beginning of the investigation on Internet privacy by UK MPs and peers of the All Party Parliamentary Communications Group, the main signed up UK ISPs – BT, TalkTalk, and Virgin Media – decided to not proceed with Phorm, due to public outcry and the intervention of the European Commission. The collaboration between ISPs, Phorm and online advertisers, as well as websites, is expected to generate millions in the countries where this will be applied, already counting 15. According to the BBC, documents released under the Freedom of Information Act show frequent dialogue between Phorm and the Home Office which was interested in the technology. The Home Office is quoted in asking Phorm for its opinion of its legal position in relation to the technology and the reaction of its clients. BT and Phorm had run secret tests in 2006 and 2007 (BBC 2008).

Previously an assault against the normative justification of the protection of human rights by UK government in December 2005, on the grounds of anti-terrorism in a speech

given to the European Parliament was empowered by the approval of the retention of telecommunication data on an EU level. Here one of the most powerful groups, the Creative and Media Business Alliance (CMBA), which includes EMI, SonyBMG and TimeWarner, has lobbied the EU to extend data retention to investigate all crimes, not just for crimes such as terrorism (Wearden & Gomm 2005). The concern here is closer to perceived lost profits and a need to control the telecommunications market, but the alliance between state and TNCs leaves citizens' private spaces open to intrusion, control and surveillance. The individual 'disappears...into a probability' and the 'range of types of threats to freedom of speech is expanding' in the modern informational State (Braman 2006).

In the immediate future, control may not occur as an isolated case on the grounds of a 'crisis' ('war on terror' or financial crisis) but of a broadly normalised redefinition of the relationship between State and individual, and the market. On the one hand and on a global level, the State withdraws control over transnational media while *regularising* the sector's *public* activity. Examples include light-touch regulation on production processes, transnational trafficking of private data for e-commerce, international trading allowances (Mosco & McKercher 2007, Sarikakis 2008, Chakravartty & Sarikakis 2006, Braman 2004, Artz & Kamalipour 2003). On the other hand, it focuses on *private* behaviour and individual wrongdoings, such as through copyright policies, privacy, censorship, and leisure (Lyon 2005, Zittrain 2005, Cameron & Palan 2004, Sarikakis 2004, Sidak 2004, Bonetti 2003). Lawrence Lessig's description of the potentiality of 'normalisation' of the population which is being monitored echoes concerns raised by civil rights groups, journalists and ordinary citizens. The argument here is one of the loss of real choice, autonomy and equality.

The observing will affect the observed. The system watches what you do; it fits you into a pattern; the pattern is then fed back to you in the form of options set by the pattern; the options reinforce the pattern; the cycle begins again.(Lessig 2006: 220)

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Appeal August 15, 2009 on the release of Dawit Isaak

Nordic media researchers, gathered at the conference Nord-Media09 "Body, Soul, Society" in Karlstad, Sweden, August 13-15th 2009, demand that the Swedish-Eritrean journalist, Dawit Isaak, jailed without sentence for working as a journalist, be released from prison.

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19th Nordic Conference on Media and Communication Research 13-15 August, 2009, Karlstad, Sweden

Program

Thursday 13 August

- 12 pm–3 Registration
3 pm–3.30 Conference Opening
3.30 pm–5 **Plenary Session 1**
Where is Liberation in Contemporary Media Culture?
Moderator: Christian Christensen

Keynote

- Mission Impossible: Neoliberal Subjectivities and Empowerment*
Mikko Lehtonen, University of Tampere
Not Radical but Critical: Ethical Engagement in the Hollywood War Film
Rikke Schubart, University of Southern Denmark
Media and Society: Some Sad Remarks on a Crippled Body and a Dying Soul with a Special Reference to Science
Sverker Sörlin, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm
6 pm Karlstad City's Reception

Friday 14 August

- 9 am–4 Working Groups
4 pm–5 Meetings with national research organizations
5:30 pm–7 Video Art Installation
Body, Soul and Society
6:30 pm–8 Buffé
8 pm–12 The Media Pub and FSMK DJ-event

Saturday 15 August

- 9 am–12 Working Groups
12 pm–12.30 Evaluation and chair election
1.30 pm–3 **Plenary Session 2A**
What is A Healthy Soul in A Healthy Body?
Ethics, Aesthetics and Sustainability in Media Society
Moderator: André Jansson

Keynote

- The Body as Morph and Questions of Bodily Transformation in Contemporary Visual Culture*
Anner Jerslev, University of Copenhagen

- Makeovermania – A Perfect Body – A Perfect Soul. Techniques of the Self in a Modern World*
Thomas Johansson, University of Gothenburg

- “God-Looking Samaritans” Shop til it Stops: Consumption, Development and African AIDS*
Lisa Ann Richey, Roskilde University

- 1.30 pm–3 **Plenary Session 2B**
“DigIT or Not”: Are We Addicted to the Media?

- Online among Us: Experiences of Virtuality in Everyday Life*
Kaarina Nikunen, The Academy of Finland at the University of Tampere

- Experimental Media Research. Moving from the Ivory Tower to the Control Tower*
Lars Nyre, University of Bergen

- Media Ecology from McLuhan to Jenkins: A Discussion*
Tobias Olsson, Växjö University and Lund University

- 3.30 pm–5 **Plenary Session 3**
New Dynamics in Online Social Networking: Revisiting Communication, Consumption and Division of Labour
Moderator: Miyase Christensen

- The Embodies Self in a Digital Age: Risks, Threats, and Prospects for a Pluralistic Future*
Charles Ess, Drury University, Springfield, Missouri, USA

- The Precarious Citizen: Control and Value in the Digital Age*
Katharine Sarikakis, Gustaf and Anne-Marie Ander Foundation Visiting Professor in Global Media Studies at the Department of Media and Communication Studies, Karlstad University

- 5.15 pm–6 Meeting for division chairs and Nordic conference committee

- 7 pm–11 pm Conference Dinner, Blue moon bar (Sandgrund)

- 11 pm–02 am Nightclub, Blue moon bar (Sandgrund)