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To Be *Lifestreamed*

The Subjectivity, Politics, and Literacy of Digital-Networked Media

Abstract

The paper investigates the possibilities and problems of the (new) media political theory. The new media paradigm is defined by the Network as a distributive diagram (that allows direct peer-to-peer *communication between two computers without intermediation of the central hub) and a digital sign as the flexible (manipulative, variable, programmable, "flickering") sign. Nevertheless, the design of the technology is a subject of public dispute. For that reason the paper proposes a cultural and material analysis that would discard technological determinism and domesticating metaphors in order to describe the material ground for digital network society. The paper derives Deleuze/Guattari's machinic "productivity" as a basic modus for the political actions of network subjects accustomed to* lifestream.

Key words

digital network paradigm, lifestream, technological determinism, otherness, political theory, flexibility, distributivity

Introduction

Do new media have the power to democratise our society? Can they bring us into the state of "universal without totality", as Pierre Lévy announced? Or can we discard the network and digital media as a space of rigid techno-liberalism and a polygon of perverse identity games? Pierre Lévy claimed the Net to be a place in which totality could not survive. The Net includes all people with their differences, and even with differences within themselves (Lévy, 2001). But then again – there is no better place to express hatred or anger than the Internet. The Internet is a space for racists, groups for suicide support, homophobes, neo-Nazis and chauvinists. All of them find a place for narration in the space of an endless "universality". The digital network, or virtual communities have democratised our way of understanding a community – disembodiment and de-territorialisation are crucial moments of the new media self and social behaviour. And yet at the same time virtual communities are places of common prejudice concerning gender, class, race, etc. Often-glorified netiquette, while defining the rules of conduct in cyberspace, concurrently creates a hostile environment for marginalized cultures which frequently misunderstand communication codes such as acronyms and the semantics of capital letters or which have a poor knowledge of a language. The

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father of the "virtual community" concept, Howard Rheingold, claims that a virtual community emerges "when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (Rheingold, 1993). But many on-line responses are purely "flaming", hostile and insulting reactions of people who do not want to interact with "human feeling". Is this "right to narrate" as a basis of "universality without totality" only a substitution for the "universal truth" of the network paradigm? This is the question addressed to global post-modern inclusive politics of difference and plural identities that include gender, race, etc. If the Other gets a possibility to narrate, Slavoj Žižek claims, that does not mean the gap between persons, ideologies, or cultures will disappear. Often, to know the Other's story will only deepen the confrontation (Žižek, 2008). The universal truth of "empowering a user" through new media tools must have undergone similar questioning since the digital distributive media offer new tools for the quest of *otherness*. The new media or the digital distributive paradigm has gone even further in discovering otherness. The *Facebook* stream is understood as "a testament to the wasted effort in discovering [our] monstrous brother", claims Luis de Miranda. Therefore, de Miranda invites us to undertake an absurd experiment – to "post only videos that we dislike, or to write status-updates that are the opposite of what we are feeling" (de Miranda, 2009). As psychology warns us – we all dissociate to some extent; multiplication of normal people and people with multiple personality disorder is a matter of a degree since multiplication protects us from pain and depression. The new media society brings this multiplication to extremes – the usage of new media tools is banal and simple, and network tools are globally available.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari warned us that desire could not be defined without production. We are not defined subjects, but always in a process of an endless desiring-production. By relating the production with the mechanisms of desire (the ideas of Karl Marx with the ideas of Sigmund Freud), they offered a possibility to accent processes instead of defined representations (Deleuze/Guattari, 1983, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari offered a preface for the description of the Net user. The Net is a channel for the transmission of a digitally produced artefact (DIY) and a place for permanent nomadism. In the core of "digital network pleasure" and development of the Net, we find global and extensive production. The Net textuality, subjectivity and design always include consummation, production and distribution. We are always involved in some (intellectual, emotive, ludic) production on the Net, whether we participate in a forum or *Second Life*, or produce texts, pictures or video, or design an environment. The term *lifestream* describes a regular activity of the Net user which includes blogging, twittering, facebooking, flickering, youtubing, etc. *Lifestream* is a set of tools that helps aggregate our extensive network activity. At the same time, it is a sort of a post-modern proof of being: I have a *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *FriendFeed* channel, therefore I am. As a global consummation and distributive channel, *lifestream* works through the concept of flow (physical, intellectual, emotional or other type of flow). It is a "productive desire" that stands in the foundations of a machinic way of making the world turn.

As the Internet became the ground for our contemporary subjectivity and society, we can explore this multiplication closer as universal challenges for otherness is not an exclusive new media demand, but a new way to handle old tasks. It seems that the mechanisms of desire have only gained new tools; nevertheless, these new tools are the product of and not the cause for new sub-

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jectivities. The information technology shows that fundamental changes of the relationship between the signifier and the signified have occurred. New media created flickering signifiers "characterized by their tendency toward unexpected metamorphoses, attenuations, and dispersions" (Hayles, 1999: 30). Flexibility of the flickering signifiers, promiscuity is a result of the dematerialization of the "digital object" that Lev Manovich described as the numerical representation of the sign that is manipulative and *programmable* (Manovich, 2001). During the end of the eighties the digital network paradigm would be fully formed – the rise of the Net transformed the sign from a *flickering*, digital and dematerialised one into what can be described as a "distributive sign". With the network, digital production gains extra value by abandoning the traditional centralized channels of distribution. Having productivity of network subjects in mind, de Miranda's offer sounds almost reasonable. But there are other voices as well. As de Miranda's proposition is absurdly optimistic towards multiplication and openness to otherness, the gesture of Carmen Joy King presents a real challenge for social networks. Instead of the multiplication of subjectivities, the users decide to shut down the channel for constitution and distribution. As an obsessive *Facebook* user, King decided to "destroy her carefully built-up virtual image" because she simply felt like an egoist constantly spending time changing her profile and updating her status. The spectre of exhibitionism is haunting the Net. A recent study of Twitter characterised 40% of messages as "pointless babble", although this micro blogging site has a history of social and political activities (twittering the earthquake in China, Iran's Twitter revolution, American elections, etc.).

Domestication and technological determinism

There are two major problems with the dominant technological discourse which tend to disqualify the politics of the new media. The first problem is domestication of social networks which are often described by using the criteria of print media. To accuse one (or oneself) of babbling or exhibitionism is to misunderstand the structure of the digital network paradigm. Symptomatic reading of the digital distributive media as the print media can be found in defining blogs as "online diaries". Blogs are often perceived as digital versions of the well-known Gutenberg genre. This definition created reasonable opinion that "bloggers are either naive or crazy" because they "let 900 million people read their diary". As Danah Boyd suggested, annalists use old metaphors which do not work in the new context (Boyd, 2006). It is a common approach to the new media. We necessarily grasp the new through metaphors, as Michael Heim noted in his analysis of word processing.[1] But this hermeneutic process sometimes does exactly the opposite of its intention. Instead of elaborating what is happening in the process of reading an electronic text, the scrolling metaphor hides the fact that "the calculation capacity of computers makes it possible to assign pages to the text in an infinite variety of formats". That way digital and network literacy remain permanent servants of print culture (Heim, 1987:130).

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[1]
"The electronic environment re-calls the older print technology by invoking its language. We assimilate the new electronic element of language through the older technology of print-on-paper writing, end even through technologies far older than print. This falls under the general cultural imperative to understand things by interpreting them; cultural life is inherently hermeneutical, a process of renewed interpretation." (Heim, 1987: 130).

The strategy of domestication, and with it associated accusations of exhibitionism, emerge from misunderstanding the digital network media. The digital network literacy is a *lifestream* process of constantly formatting and creating content. As well as being a process of formatting artefacts, it is also a space for the formation of identities. It is a common habit of print culture to treat written utterance as Arnoldian Culture "the best that has been thought and written in the world". The paradigm has changed – the Internet is not a traditional medium like a book or television. The Net is a channel for diffusion, like the air (or telephone) that allows diffusion of a speech. Therefore, *Twitter* is not used to publish closed and fixed statements, it is not a collection of headlines in dally papers. Lifestream media do not offer a presentation of ourselves, or a community, or a virtual world, as the diary metaphor suggests. The Net is a place where self, communities or virtual worlds arise and are constantly and repeatedly formatted and interconnected. To tweet and re-tweet means to connect to community *lifestream* – a global publishing stream that offers collective authorship in exchange for possible originality. Whenever one consumer shows up, we get one producer as well, as consumers are armed with the tools of production (Shirky, 2009). On the Net we are constantly producing, consuming and digesting. It is not only a matter of creating our own identity, or designing our avatar or environment, or producing a "text". Instead, all mentioned productions are part of a distributional occupation of the Net space, part of a broader *lifestream* process. In that sense, the virtual world is not a supplement to the real world, but it produces new entities, relations, social spaces, etc. The Web 2.0 "machine" is not representing us; it is us, subjectivity is created through a digital, distributive machine. DIY practices and peer-to-peer networks are responsible for hyper-production and adaptation of electronic "texts". Network pages are oriented towards sharing different media. In the Web 2.0 era, *Flicker* (photo sharing), *Last.FM* (music), *YouTube* (video) etc. are implementing digestive and consummative practices.[2]

A blogger creates not only an imaginary public sphere, but every persisting blogging implies sending a "postcard to God".[3] A blog is at the same time a message to the world ("Hello, World") and a note to self. Often there is no answer, but the lack of communication does not mean there are no listeners on the channel. On the contrary, popular blogs are considered to be even the ones everybody reads but no one comments. (The scientific community, including scientific blogs, insists on meaningful replicas and closely structured replies). "In the digital world, we use search to seek out strangers with similar conceptions of the world", Boyd warns. Besides searching for similarities in the equation of communication we must also calculate this fascination with writing itself. Texts/nomadic subjects communicate not only with an imaginary audience, but also with the channel itself. Different from "stable" private media (a handwritten notice, a video cassette that can be held in a drawer), digital channels offer exciting insecurity of a call addressed to an unknown person.[4] A persistent blogger does not expect to communicate all the time. We have witnessed appeals and cries for replies, and also giving up on writing because of a silence in the communication channel. But readers' comments are not central for a blog. The leading motivation is to leave messages to oneself, to leave notes that lead us to a personal analysis of recent events, characters or persons (social, cultural, psychoanalysis, etc.). Blogs can be a medium of communication as well as a medium for archiving, collection, auto-analysis, etc.[5]

Instead of analysing *Facebook*, *Twitter* or *FriendFeed* as the presentational media – as the culture of print media tends to, these tools must be analysed as

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mechanisms of "productive desire". The aim of public announcements of our birthdays, or concerts or protests we are attending, by the *Facebook Events* application, is not to represent ourselves but to provoke us to publish, create and produce content and our "network selves". Allegedly self-oriented and exhibitionistic subjects that produce new identities, texts, design life spaces, etc., are actually related with a stream of production and productive desire that is universal. Digital network tools must be seen as consummation-production-distribution software that could be related to a liberal economy as well as liberal subjectivities. But dematerialisation and networking are accompanied by devaluation of materiality and distributiveness in the realm of economy, culture, education, etc.

Here we are facing the second problem which could be overcome with material and cultural analyses – the problem of technological determinism. What troubles many political evaluations of the contemporary media is the fact that final political results – totalitarianism or democratisation of the media – are exclusively understood as outcomes of the dominant technology. Magazine *Wired*, the most influential manufacturer of contemporary technological discourse, summarised what could be understood as contemporary understanding of technology, "Join or be crushed by the wheels of history."[6] Picturing the victims of an unstoppable techno-machine of history is a basic picture of technological progress for luddites, anarcho-primitivists, anti-modernists, transhumanists, futurists, digerati, and techno-romantics. Whether science and technology are understood as something positive, as the only way to a better and more democratic society, freed from the burden of nature, or negatively as something alien to humankind and necessarily opposed to its natural development, it is a concept that implies some form of hidden ideology. Techno-pessimists as well as techno-optimists study the society as a Matrix imposed

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[2]
Finally, can we really generalise over the value of new media products? The emergence of *YouTube* parodies and *machinima* movies prove that digital-network do-it-yourself artefacts can be innovative. Machinima or "machine cinema" refers to a video that is created as a derivation of a popular computer game. Machinima author records her playing, montages frames from that gaming and records her voices and music. Machinima stands in dadaistic relation towards original game which comments, paraphrases or ironies. *YouTube* parodies like *Blaire and Bush endless love* are innovative cut-up collages. Those practices are offset of the digital-network productivity and those new genres forms that can be defined as production-consummation economy of digital literacy.

[3]
Hakim Bey warns that "certainly the Net is by now completely penetrated by surveillance… every bit of e-mail is a postcard to God…" (Bey, Hakim (1997), "Seduction of the Cyber Zombies", NYC, http://www.t0.or.at/hakim-bey/seduct.html.) Nevertheless, Big Brother is not interested in every message. Some messages stay unnoticed. It was not only surveillance factors which had not noticed them, but also the audience.

[4]
Of course, a channel can be open and closed at will, but there are some insecurities to which Michael Heim was referring.

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Although the system of "stars" is deconstructed, there are still popular blogs and blog writers. Nevertheless, the popularity of one encryption is opening the possibility for others as well. On *YouTube* we can find many movies that are quotations and interpretations of mass-media artefacts (like popular patchworks of Madonna videos), but *YouTube* is a place for re-working DIY movies (like *Numa Numa* funy video). Michael Wesch, an anthropologist of social networks who himself became popular after releasing his video study "Web 2.0… The Machine is Us/ing Us" (2007) on *YouTube*, illustrated the differences between the traditional and the new media. The success of becoming the author of the most popular video during the American Superbowl itself shows the power of DIY practices over the mass-media.

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The sentence is typical for Alvin Toffler and the rest digerati from *Wired*, as Michael Heim noticed in his study *Virtual Realism* (2000).

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to us. The idea of progress as an unstoppable machine in itself implies some form of a blueprint according to which science and technology act, a blueprint independent from nature and humans. Philosophical and sociological literature of 60's and 70's inaugurated this specific seeing of techno-science as a project developing apart from the society. It is an answer to the global idea of progress (that Adorno and Horkheimer located in the time of Enlightenment), an understanding of rationality as acting according to the principles of "technological mind". As the central idea of a capitalist economy, the technological mind is hiding behind the "rational" acting, showing itself as politically neutral.[7] "The liberating force of technology – the instrumentalisation of things – turns into a fetter of liberation: the instrumentalisation of men", concludes Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse, 1964:163). Technology in itself becomes an ideology that skews the primary aim of the technological mind ("the abolition of work" as liberation of man). Techno-science is a social and historical project which, under the agenda of instrumentalisation of nature, actually instrumentalises the man.

A common belief among techno-determinists is that media cause self-amputation. Marshall McLuhan concluded that man becomes "a sexual organ of the world machine" (McLuhan, 1964:56). Jean Baudrillard interpreted instrumentalisation as the power of an "object" to seduce, an ability of an object to "stand for" and simulate reality through "fatal strategies" (Baudrillard, 1983:10–33). The hidden aim of an object (the term that also stands for technology and media) is the disappearance of the subject and subjectivity and inauguration of the object. The stream of information that generates "the ecstasy of communication" (1988), the same one which thrilled McLuhan, is the cause for Baudrillard's techno-pessimism. The erosion of meaning caused by the availability of communication technologies, media and information are also responsible for the disappearance of the real. It is the fact, claims Baudrillard, that there is nothing to communicate about, except about the communication itself (like communication on the mobile phone when we are discussing that we are communicating on the mobile phone); an obsession with the communication itself ruins a message; the ecstasy means that all functions have merged into one dimension, a dimension of communication. Whether instrumentalisation happens as a result of structural influence of a technology on a subject (changing of the subject through a technological model) or an insufficiency the subject experiences by relating to the concrete technology (as in the case of Virilio's visual machine), in techno-pessimistic scenarios the whole human society subjects, subordinates itself to the power of objects. In techno-pessimistic visions humans become instruments of technology.

But are we truly witnessing the instrumentalisation of humanity? More than ever, technology and media are today mobilised as instruments and tools in the quest of individualisation, "empowering users", opening towards otherness even inside the subject (de Miranda's proposition fully revealed this fact). As Manuel Castells described in detail, information society brings "triumph of networked individualism" (Castells, 2005). *Posthumanism*, empowered by digital tools and networks, positions the individual at the centre of the digital network society. The progress of technology and science in the new media society is not a deviation but a continuation of politics of liberal humanism that highly values individual freedom. Extreme futurisms (Raymond Kurtzweil's or extropian's mythology of newly and improved human) is not, as N. Katherine Hayles suggested, a deviation (Hayles, 1999) but a continuation of the project of liberal humanism. Posthumanity or a digital networked post-modern condition is the product and not the cause of the "economy of

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subjectivity" of late capitalism (of, as Hakim Bay would name it, 'too-late capitalism'). In that state "we all hysterically suspect, we are all bisexual", as Žižek concluded (Žižek, 2008). The cultural and technological state reflects that bisexuality, that deep insecurity of digital network subjects, but at the same time these insecurities are made possible by the political situation in which subject is interpolated as insecure and multiple.

Therefore, to understand the contemporary situation and new media politics it is important to discard the dominant discourse limited by technological determinism which understands media and technology as a missile launched to destroy or to improve our culture. If we are witnessing some democratisation of media as well as media totalitarianisation, that process must be the product of Culture as well as the product of Technology. Insecure and multiple subjects did not emerge from technological possibility (that instrumentalised humanity); rather that technological possibility was invoked by a cultural need, by historical conditions that must be analysed. Culture demanded new, flexible and *distributive* forms of subjectivity. Therefore, to understand the contemporary digital network paradigm, it is equally important to "read" social conditions as well as to closely analyse the form, the structure of the media. A lesson that can be learned from influential techno-determinists as well (firstly Marshall McLuhan) is to understand the structure and not the media content. The structure must be analysed in order to understand the "political" layer of technology. The content, as an object of a critique, is often irrelevant while materiality of distributive media carries the political message. Instead of technological reductionism equalling every technological newness and imposing fruitless futurism, one of the most important tasks of contemporary humanistic disciplines should be to describe digital network media. We cannot analyse the state of late capitalism without a detailed structural or "material" analysis of the digital network paradigm. The digital network paradigm constitutes a portion of the state of economy, politics, or subjectivity but it is also an outcome of the same society since the same rules apply to technology and the society. The main shifts changed the whole paradigm, the status of literacy, knowledge and understanding of identity.

Cultural and material analyses

In *The German Ideology* Karl Marx concluded: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas". But we cannot easily read the ruling ideas out of *Facebook* content. In 2009 *Facebook* censored pictures of breastfeeding as obscene. Traditional Marxist economism cannot explain the character of this political gesture. Manipulation is not taking the form of imposing ideology on users, as the incident with censoring breastfeeding pictures would suggest. The incident is remarkably similar to the one that can be made by content filtering software. The mistake is not ideological (although an ideo-

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The similar understanding of the instrumentalised man is pictured in the Bible of 1960's, *Technological society* (1964) by Jacques Ellul, in which he demonised the technological monster that emerged from the technological-industrial system. Into humans, but in which we nevertheless live. In his *Myth of the Machine* Lewis Mumford condemned "technological imperative" as the most primi- tive taboo that induced the time of blind devotion to progress. The whole interpretation of history unnecessary accents uses of tools in human progress, while human mind is far more important than his hands. In confronting the mind with the material history, Mumford criticises the historians who are incapable of studying any evidence that is not material (Mumford, 1986).

logy is at work) but contextual. When *Facebook* censored the pictures of breastfeeding as obscene, it became obvious it was not a free network but a centralised medium with the power to edit its content. Instead of "empowering users" by giving them a valid channel for consummation and production, the media simply offer network tools under specified conditions. But even then *lifestreamers* can (and do) divert flows towards utopian forms of non-alienated social life. Forming a *Facebook* group "Hey *Facebook*, breastfeeding is not obscene!" is at least an illustration of a possible subversion. It is a process of re-articulation described by neo-gramscian cultural studies – not only a passive use of an application but a misuse of tools in creatively resisting the order. Social networks are a field of incorporation, but at the same time also a field of social negotiation. Weather it is the subversion of structure – usage of peer-to-peer networks, or the subversion of re-articulation, a simple *manipulation of the media* type of criticism cannot explain the problem. Dominant discourse often pictures "empty" technology that is absolute and omnipotent but without concrete elements, architecture, form or structure causing those changes. The critique of social networks often depicts their content. A crucial remedy for domestication and techno-determinism is a twofold analysis. The precondition for an analysis of social conditions elaborating the context for emerging technologies (cultural analysis) is a close analysis of technological structure (material analysis).

The digital network paradigm emerged from a process of digitalisation which transformed the sign from material into non-material, numerical and flexible ("flickering sign" as Katherine Hayles proposed); and from transformation of the sign according to architecture of the Net that has been taking place for the last fifteen years. Alexander Galloway precisely described the architecture of the paradigm. The Net is a rhizome, or a distributed diagram in which "each node… may establish communication with another node, without having to appeal to a hierarchical intermediary" (Galloway, 2006: 15). The foundations of the distributive structure are network protocols, the primary TCP/IP protocol that allows direct peer-to-peer communication between computers. Peer-to-peer technology (or "economy") challenged old norms introducing a practice that Richard Barbrook named "gift economy" (Barbrook, 2000). The paradigm allows constant exchange, sharing, consummation, and production of virtual goods. The prosecution of *The Pirate Bay* led by entertainment companies illustrates the gap between what a non-digital economy expects and a digital distributive network vision of the Net. While PEER-TO-PEER networks are fighting for the redefinition of economics laws, entities of the twentieth century capitalism are fighting for the world as it was at the moment of their rise. For Alexander Galloway, protocols as standardised rules of the Net are responsible for politics of the Net (Galloway, 2006). The character of the Net is defined by standardisation, agreements, organised implementation – processes invisible to an average user. Although the structure of the Net seems unchangeable, its political character is subjected to social consensus. The primary TCP/IP protocol defined the Net as a medium for direct peer-to-peer communication. The Web 2.0 platform simplified the uses of software but at the same time centralised the power. Lev Manovich proposed a similar analysis – the political theory should be dealing with "software".

"If we don't address software itself, there is the danger of always dealing only with its effects rather than the causes: the output that appears on a computer screen rather than the programs and social cultures that produce these outputs." (Manovich, 2008:5)

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Galloway is more focused on the Net while Manovich accents the digital layer. Obviously, one cannot exist without the other. (*Facebook* offered a platform which profits from the content provided by its users, while globalisation of social networks is dependent on the protocol structure of the Internet.) Whether it is software or protocol we are dealing with in a material analysis, the political battle is waged in the realm of production. The *Facebook* case is a fight for open standards; for freeing the social tools for production. A crucial political battle is being waged for unlimited access to content, not for ideologies or political parties.

One of the most severe cases of limiting access to and implementing surveillance over the Internet content is the proposition of the Communications Decency Act in USA from 1996. In his text *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace* Richard Barlow pronounced the Act an aggression on independence and sovereignty of cyberspace. The Act suggested regulation of porn and "obscene" pages. The aim of this Act was to proclaim service providers responsible for the content. Internet pages should be treated as any other informative medium with an editor. Concrete persons should be responsible for the content, and access to pages containing "obscene content" would be restricted for visitors under eighteen. Finally, this Act would mean obligatory registration through the Net since the definition of what should be restricted as obscene is wide. The Communications Decency Act limits access, and at the same time insists on identification that could bring global surveillance. According to Thomas Pynchon, paranoia is the realization "that everything is connected". In many ways digital network media act paranoid – subjectivities, texts and designs are in the process of constant re-contextualisation. To remain open and global, the Net must be tolerant of all content regardless of the social status of that content (the fruitful ground for paranoid conclusions). More than a fight for an ideology (neo-liberal, neo-conservative, or other), it is a political fight for the diagram, for the rhizomatic and flexible structure. "Contemporary techniques of control, communication, representation, simulation, analysis, decision-making, memory, vision, writing, and interaction", as Manovich warned us, depend on this structure (Manovich, 2008:7).

Centralisation is the most severe political problem of the digital network paradigm. A decentralised or distributed Net is in danger of becoming centralised in the manner of print media. The gift economy of peer-to-peer networking is being replaced more and more with centralised forms. Software is no longer stored locally on the user's hard drive but accessed through the browser interface. As users are no longer controlling software, they lack access to the means of production, which becomes a pressing issue of "amateur production", as Geoff Cox noticed. It is a scenario which we could have foreseen had we had in mind that the key role in forming the Net (after initial enthusiasm) was the one of "cybernetic libertarianism" or "Californian ideology", as Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron defined a bizarre mix of hippy anarchism and economic liberalism (1995). The control over the means of production is accompanied with commercialisation, surveillance, and censorship which raise scepticism towards the politics of the Net. In the way free sharing of information initially originates from a utopian project of scientific and hacker communities,[8] the limitation of network distributivity is an outcome of a liber-

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ARPANET was for the first time installed in the year 1969 in UCLA. The first BBSs were installed in universities, etc. The scientific community has always implied free sharing of information.

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tarian project which caused the "digital divide". The early adopters are disappointed. Geert Lovink recently described Web 2.0 social networks as pure "network nihilism" (referring to what Richard Barbrook in the early Net days named "network communism").[9] The appropriation of means for production – software, as well as the accompanying centralisation of network protocols is causing the final capitulation of the network's democratic potential. Social networks serve as a place for exchanging ridiculous virtual gifts. (The estimate is that *Facebook* sells digital gifts in the value of 15 million dollars per year.) Digital network media seem to be another channel of neo-liberal capitalism.

However, the paradox is that the same digital distributive structure responsible for the democratisation of the media space – information sharing, virtual gifts of peer-to-peer networks, is at the same time a tool of post-industrial capitalism. Flexible and distributive (digital and networked), media are at the same time subversive and controllable. In describing what he calls "control societies", Deleuze finds out that the same semiotic constructs are responsible for surveillance and subversion (Deleuze, 1992). New perspectives, new subjectivities, new communities are outcomes of major de-territorialisation that Deleuze and Guattari described as *schizophrenic* practices of capitalism. Capitalism is interested in the individual and the prosperity of the individual. That is why it de-territorialises all territorial groupings (church, family) and every social contract. But since it has to deal with groups to survive, capitalism allows re-territorialisation and new social groupings. Every de-territorialisation is accompanied by re-territorialisation, redefining old structures: state, fatherland, modified family, etc., forms that are equally repressive (Deleuze/Guattari, 1983).

Lifestream is politically a twofold process. The democratising potential of the production and consummation process is at the same time a ground for totalitarianisms, surveillance and limitation of private time. What Deleuze and Guattari defined by the term de-territorialisation (or what N. Katherine Hayles described as "devaluation of materiality and embodiment") is an implementation of the business model which makes surveillance an integral part of life and imposes rules which were previously limited to office hours. Mobile phones, laptops and telecommunication services at the same time allow new autonomy for the individual and limit the private time of persons who are no longer able to step outside the office. The invitation to be "in love with movement" – to start an office on a glade of a mountain or by the sea is a typical schizophrenic practice of (too) late capitalism which democratises only to totalitarise. The digital network paradigm is twofold – economy of digital network time is at the same time liberating and captivating. Disembodiment and de-materialisation that allowed new possibilities for multiple subjectivities, exploring otherness and multiplicity, are accompanied with re-territorialisation – new possibilities for discrimination. The subject constantly playing with her identity is at the same time a free subject confronted with possibilities of discovering the otherness, and a "raw material" of what is called "immaterial labour" (Geoff Cox, 2008). Users willingly share their data in exchange for software tools. That way the user's subjectivity became a product. According to New Terms of Service, anything uploaded to *Facebook* can be used by the company. So when you close an account, they claim all the rights to the original content you uploaded. (For that reason the act of Carmen Joy King is fruitless). Identification is a form of totality of marketing industries. The so-called "direct" or "viral" marketing develops methods of numeric identification that allow "personal" or "direct" approach to a customer. The same tool

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used to "lifestream" ourselves transforms us into subjects that can be easily controlled and open to marketing attacks. Virality is at the same time a characteristic of marketing and of DIY products. The *Numa Numa*[10] amateur video that has been re-worked a thousand times is a viral just like the *Will It Blend?* commercial.[11] At the end there is no difference between the root practice and the marketing which aims to become user-generated. Also, viral DIY practices are at the same time tools of hatred and anger. The fact is that openness to otherness can lead us to discover our really monstrous brother and push online paranoia to its extreme. Significantly, analysts who praise the viral character of the digital network paradigm always depict funny or humorous examples. In the same way *Numa Numa* YouTube video remakes were viral, so were "3 guys and hammer reaction" which were showing faces of (mostly young) people watching the Dnepropetrovsk maniacs snuff video (video of real killing). Virality is a characteristic of the structure, not of the content. In that sense, a political battle can be realised not only in the realm of the content but (mostly) in the realm of the media structure. Whether the structure is defined as a protocol or software, media are not yet defined. To defend the (often banal) content means to defend the politically open structure of the Net. The potentials of virtual agora can be used for amusement or for serious political debates. Whether it is network nihilism, exhibitionism, or pornography we are talking about – the structure is crucial. Gilles Deleuze envisioned radical politics as an "ultimate hack" – "Computer piracy and viruses", claims Deleuze, "will replace strikes and what the nineteenth century called 'sabotage'" (1990). Although the development of software systems limited the destructive potential of viruses, piracy still carries a political message, since it is essentially a fight for open standards. The fight for standards and appropriation of software can be described as two most important moments in politics of the digital and distributive media.

As long as the digital network tools are in the hands of users, we can describe the new media paradigm as democratic. By dismissing the Net as the place of meaningless nihilism or exhibitionism, we are missing the real fight for digital network standards. One day the Net could be confronted with the same mentality of "gate keeping" which Paul Levinson attributed to print media (Levinson, 2001). The consummation, production and distribution cycle is running without surveillance or gate keeping, since everybody can publish. But the distributive structure of the new media is not fixed and determined. New media culture, just as any other culture, is a battlefield. The media structure is subverted to negotiations. In that way we must acknowledge censorship or editing of *Facebook* content, and the proposed laws as serious threats of centralisation of social networks. The main mission of the new media theory, as a continuation as well as a disruption of the existing media theories, is to

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9

"Blogging did not emerge out of a movement or an event", concludes Lovink (2007).

10

Numa Numa is an amateur video from 2004 that has been viewed more than two million times and has spawned many parodies (http://www.youtube.com/user/mwesch#p/c/D3D9C7D4F13D2442/0/KmtzQCSh6xk).

11

Will It Blend? is a *YouTube* commercial series demonstrating blenders in which the demonstrator blend various items in order to show the power of the machine. The campaign which has started with the blending of a box of matches, expanded with blending almost everything – from action figures to credit cards (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVAaz9vFdSo).

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decipher that structure in order to describe the new society as a cause as well as an outcome of technological changes.

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Katarina Peović Vuković

Biti *lifestreaman*

Subjektivnost, politika i pismenost digitalno-mrežnih medija

Sažetak

Rad ispituje mogućnosti i probleme (novo)medijske političke teorije. Novomedijska paradigma je definirana Mrežom kao distributivnim dijagramom (koji omogućuje izravnu peer-to-peer *komunikaciju između računala bez posredništva centralnog čvorišta) i digitalnim znakom kao fleksibilnim (manipulativnim, varijabilnim, programibilnim, »treperavim«) znakom. No, izgled tehnologije je predmet javne rasprave. Zbog toga rad predlaže kulturalnu i materijalnu analizu koja bi odbacila tehnološki determinizam i pripitomljavajuće metafore kako bi se opisali materijalni temelji digitalno-umreženog društva. Rad izvodi Deleuze/Guattarijevu strojnu »produktivnost« kao temeljni modus političkih akcija umreženih subjekata naviknutih na* lifestream.

Ključne riječi

digitalno-mrežna paradigma, *lifestream*, tehnološki determinizam, drugost, politička teorija, fleksibilnost, distributivnost

Katarina Peović Vuković

Lifegestreamt sein

Subjektivität, Politik und Alphabetentum der digital-vernetzten Medien

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit ermittelt die Möglichkeiten sowie Probleme der (neu)medialen politischen Theorie. Das neumediale Paradigma wird durch das Netzwerk als distributives Diagramm definiert (welches eine unmittelbare Peer-to-Peer-*Kommunikation zwischen zwei Rechnern ohne die Mediation des Zentralhubs zulässt), wie auch durch das digitale Zeichen als flexibles (manipulatives, variables, programmierbares, „flackerndes") Zeichen. Nichtsdestoweniger ist die Technologiegestaltung Gegenstand der öffentlichen Auseinandersetzung. Aus diesem Grund schlägt die Arbeit eine kulturelle und materiale Analyse vor, die den technologischen Determinismus mitsamt den domestizierenden Metaphern wegwerfen würde, um den materiellen Boden einer digitalen Netzwerkgesellschaft zu veranschaulichen. Das Paper leitet die Deleuze/Gu-*

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attaris maschinelle „Produktivität" her als den Basismodus für politische Aktionen der an den Lifestream *gewöhnten Netzwerksubjekte.*

Schlüsselwörter

digitales Netzwerkparadigma, *Lifestream*, technologischer Determinismus, Andersein, politische Theorie, Flexibilität, Distributivität

Katarina Peović Vuković

Etre *lifestreamé*

Subjectivité, politique et littératie des médias numériques en réseau

Résumé

Cet article examine les possibilités et les problèmes de la théorie politique des (nouveaux) médias. Le paradigme des nouveaux médias est défini par le Web comme diagramme de distribution (qui permet une communication directe peer-to-peer *entre ordinateurs sans l'intermédiaire de plate-forme centrale) et par le signe numérique comme signe flexible (manipulable, variable, programmable, « clignotant »). Néanmoins, le design de la technologie fait l'objet de controverse publique. C'est pourquoi, cet article propose une analyse culturelle et matérielle qui écarterait le déterminisme technologique et les métaphores apprivoisantes pour décrire les bases matérielles de la société numérique en réseau. L'article conclut à la « productivité » machinique de Deleuze/Guattari comme mode fondamental des actions politiques des sujets en réseau habitués au* lifestream.

Mots-clés

paradigme des réseaux numériques, *lifestream*, déterminisme technologique, altérité, théorie politique, flexibilité, distributivité