



## ATTENTION, ALGORITHMS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE (with Stefanie Hessler – reporting on her new curatorial project) 6 January 2023

14:18:26 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:

Greetings! Those microdocs are here:

14:18:30 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/9518475>

14:21:46 From Justin Ginsberg to Everyone:

Can you throw your email in the chat?

14:22:38 From David Landes to Everyone:

DavidBLandes@gmail.com. Send contributions to our attention reading/media list!

14:22:46 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

My email is peter@sustainedattention.net

14:23:26 From Justin Ginsberg to Everyone:

thanks

14:23:26 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

^ Reach out to join the team!

14:25:36 From David Landes to Everyone:

send your syllabi too!

14:43:41 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:

[Re: Ruha B.] Now headed to Harvard, as it happens...

14:45:36 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:

We have some folks on the call who work on some of this stuff — shout out here to Lachie Kermode (who is mebbe in New Zealand?); programmer, critical media theory person...

14:48:57 From Stefanie Hessler (she/her) to Everyone:

This is a project that centers on "attention, algorithms, and social justice"; are there particular forms of resistance to the commodification of attention that can be conceived at this nexus? Brainstorm!

15:11:36 From amanda donnan (she/her) to Everyone:

Moscow conceptualists and collaborative work and new systems of knowledge that arose in resistance to surveillance; what other case studies could we look to?

Artists can break away from platforms like Instagram that amplify focus on maximum visibility

Resist self-commodification by keeping your practice open and changing so less quantifiable algorithmically

Forming emergent ways of knowing rather than using existing categories, art school words that get used over and over

Criticality as about directing attention, look at it like this—these become attentional shortcuts that then become limiting factors

15:12:07 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:

I was much taken by the session I was in with Jesse Prinz, who pulled in the work on Epistemic Injustice (Miranda Fricker) ...

15:12:11 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

1. Marcus: act of making art itself. It's an interesting rabbit hole to think about the biography of each artist. How does their process of making art inform their works at the exhibition? How do we create a curriculum or Lab that is tailored to the artist's biography?

Akua: I think of more recent iterations of social justice movements and how they tend to go hand in hand with commodification, ie protest apparel lines... The algorithm dictates what is visible! What becomes visible over time? Does that qualify as resistance?

15:12:22 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

2. Bia: I'm more inclined toward community-based processes than toward protests on the streets. I've seen many protest movements in Brazil that don't feel the need to be popular outside of their community - perhaps because there's so much violence against protesters. I follow artists who work on the "invisibility of powers." Resistance is a perpetual game between visibility and invisibility in order to avoid falling into these commodity traps... Visibility / invisibility equilibrium. Some resistance requires a certain degree of skepticism - to external audiences I say one thing, to my community I say another.

Alyssa: The challenge of avoiding ruts in the algorithm. Resisting the canalization of attention. I searched if any asian women have won the Oscar, and when I googled it, all I saw was results for "asian women stabbed." The response that comes to mind is creating alternative narratives of asian women.

15:12:30 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

3. Akua: I hear Alyssa's question of how algorithms see, or what it is they see. I was thinking about, and Bia was referring to, what social justice looks like at a local level. When I think of social justice, I think of the pressures of doing work that is grounded in community and the need to scale up (as well as the tensions and pressures that come with that). The slogans we see merchandised now were, thirty years ago, community practices. One big problem: the pace we move at makes people feel it's impossible to slow down. So maybe the answer is not to have people slow down but to speed up representation so that people can see it.

Marcus: I take Akua's "seeing" idea to think about how communities see. How do communities see short term tactics vs. longer term gains? How does what communities see serve as a stepping stone toward practices of resistance/

15:12:39 From Peter Schmidt to Everyone:

4. Peter: The prompt raises the question: what is the site of resistance? And Marcus's point, combined with Alyssa's story, suggests that communities can create power by resisting algorithmically determined representations of what a community is / means. One practice involves communities \*deciding\* who they comprise and what they stand for in a way that resists and contradicts algorithmic representations of that community.

Akua: Why do we give technology so much power?

15:12:48 From Katrine Elise Agpalza Pedersen to Everyone:

-still kinds of commodification but forms of resistance: resurgence of interest in old media, independent book stores proliferating, using flip phones

-slowing down of bodies in urban space in defiance of immediate legibility for surveillance, e.g. Occupy

-artists creating online spaces that center attention on social justice themes and queer black bodies, e.g. Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley

-effort to discover the boundaries of AI through interactions to discern what they've been programmed not to do as resistance / the fear that they will do something that hurts their economical value (hate speech), brand value declines, give attention to these boundaries

-opting out

-extrasensory experiences that focus on taste and touch, not seeing e.g. dining in the dark

-discussions in robotics and intelligence (and science fiction): will robots get to a point where they can reproduce themselves?

15:13:25 From D. Graham Burnett to Everyone:

And also Lachie K. — who talked about the use of machine learning techniques for social justice “ends” (limits and possibilities). We had to stop before we could really dig in on ALGORITHMS per se, and what it means the way the term gets used in conversations like ours...

15:14:00 From Stefanie Hessler (she/her) to Everyone:

ask apps not to track on phone

people painting their faces not to be tracked, dazzle patterns

visibility vs invisibility, who is surveilled and hyper visible and who is invisibilized, written out

Kodak film technology developed for white not black skin, bias in technology itself in history

TikTok video guy asks AI question

exclusionary algorithms, programs that have our attention captured, our connection to one another and responsiveness in real world

solidarity, care

resistance, offline practices of attention. How to disconnect

Estar(Ser) session with Yves Citton, think of your phone the way that a cat would think of a phone

exercise of looking at camera but screens darkened so that others can see us but we can't see themselves

mirror, black box, tunnel

use technology against itself

our attention captured and simultaneously we are surveilled

15:14:10 From Liz Dom to Everyone:

Things we spoke about:

- Campaigning & protest, is a way to resist, but also to place ourselves into conversations
- Data, how are these machines trained, what data do they have access to?
- Human workforce is still tasked with categorising data, largely situated in the South, a type of exploitation

- The ways our brains are being stormed, resist the notion of the nexus, fighting for declaration by the mere sense of its being

- Rest as resistance

- Training datasets, hidden labour, how can we work towards different kind of resistance, invisible AI systems that is not understood by all, monopolies, I'm thinking of the part of body, addiction to the algorithm

- There's been talk in South Africa, about race and gender and in terms of rest, interesting how this is overlapping with globalised theory and talks

- How do we make it more public? Because it is so hidden and obscure

15:14:55 From Liz Dom to Everyone:

More things:

- Queering data: How can we create datasets that encompass the full spectrum of human existence and ways of being? Could this be a start for resisting? A messier, more human representation

- Maybe more DIY? Working in non-professional/non-commercialised spaces

- Resistance of the terms? Question the terms themselves, the proliferation of seeing things through an algorithmic logic

- How might we ask a question back? What is the frame of this question? Who is included, who is excluded

15:17:09 From Justin Ginsberg to Everyone:

Our group notes: Software level

Counter algorithm

A toggle that allows info through or not – like swiss cheese. There was a chrome extension that points out possible biases within sites and searches. Some of us don't really understand how coding or algorithms are used...does this matter? We don't really understand what is happening when we are using an app. In early 2000's there was a plugin supposed to reveal all the transactions of attention which are initiated (freedom of attention movement) making an attempt to show you your cookies, your digital trail and path. If you can all of this

information can we think about our time, attention and commodification of it? Artists who are being lured into the NFT world and how that somehow maybe diminishes the work- Rafael Rosenthal? We have fears seeing artists working NFT's

15:17:26 From Justin Ginsberg to Everyone:

Brave private web app blocks all pop-up ads, but will pay you if you decide to watch an add. Paying you directly, and it is maybe an honest attentional transaction?

More fundamental level

collection Infrastructure revolutions every single level of technology has built in data

Web browser

Webpage level

TCP-ISP level. Every layer has its own collections

There is a chart digital information produced outside or proprietary commodified – communal produced “The wealth of networks”

Movie: Neptune Frost – Afrofuturist story – neo slavery WATCH IT

power Symbol of the eye historic and contemporary : now surveillance and personal

What does it look like when it goes well: data utopia, data collection for good, that serves the public. Googles algorithm that could predict the flu before CDC

element The most beloved parallel is retrograde technology – keeps the communal

15:18:33 From Jesse Prinz to Everyone:

Gotta run. Great to see you all!

15:19:42 From Jessica Gallucci to Everyone:

Clocking back in at work. Thanks Graham & all!!