Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies Post-graduate Event with presentations by MA and PhD students
26 June 2015

Morning schedule

Opening Talk
Venue: **S0.18** – **10:30-10:45**, opening talk delivered by Olga Goriunova

Group 1
Venue: **S0.18** – **10:45-12:15**, each presentation will last 15 minutes with closing responses and Q&A

> Yanchao Qu, *Digital subjectivity, digital marketing.*
> Xueyin Wu, *Digital identity.*
> Lingqing Zhu: *Social media diplomacy.*
> Luchang Sun: *Digital legacy.*

Group 2
Venue: **S1.69** – **10:45-12:00**, each presentation will last 15 minutes with closing responses and Q&A

> Ruiqing Sun: *Challenges and opportunities for public diplomacy in the digital age.*
> Yixin Zhang: *The impacts of metrics on online social networks.*
> Ruosi Ding: *The influence of social media on forming public opinion.*
> Yiwei Cai: *Ludification of Danmaku.*

Lunch break 12:00-13:00

Afternoon schedule

Venue: **S0.18 – 13:00-16:30**, each presentation will last 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes for Q&A

> Craig Gent, *What does the dashboard mean for workers?*
> Esteban Damiani, *Negotiating the value of productive public in political campaigns. Echo chambers and general sentiment as two different models of understanding production of value in political campaigns.*
> Sam Hind, *Prescriptive Cartographies: Metronomes, Splinters, Containments, and Rhizomes.*

Break 14:30-14:45

> Silvia Mollicchi, *From pattern to dynamic mesh: algorithmic-generated camouflage, twisted intimacies and depersonalization.*
> Pablo Velasco Gonzalez, *Sketching Bitcoin topologies: machines and markets.*
> Scott Wark, *The meme is in circulation.*

Closing remarks: 16:30
Professor Celia Lury, Director of the Centre

BBQ 17:30

Abstracts for PhD students' presentations

Craig Gent
What does the dashboard mean for workers?

In this paper I will explore some of the implications of dashboard interfaces for workers through situating this contemporary innovation in relation to historical attempts to rationalize the productive process. When the dashboard becomes our personal control room, how do we reconcile our newly-found ability to self-manage with an overarching sense that work is intensifying beyond our control? I maintain that such innovations cannot be taken as merely benign technical developments, and that instead there is a critical examination to be done around what power relations are being mediated by dashboards and whose interests they serve.

Esteban Damiani
Negotiating the value of productive publics in political campaigns. Echo chambers and general sentiment as two different models of understanding production of value in political campaigns.

The following presentation explores Adam Arvidsson and Nicolai Peitersen's conceptualisation of productive publics and general sentiment as part of a negotiation process between the affordances of social networks sites and the cognitive frameworks of specific users. By reviewing the debates between those who consider online media as a partisan echo chamber or as valid spaces for sensing the public general political sentiment, the presentation considers two alternative forms of understanding values emerging out of social networks sites. The first can be observed in the model based on tweets for predicting electoral results in the US elections. The second one is seen on a specific Facebook group supporting one of the Uruguayan political parties in 2014. The presentation suggests that the possibility of recognising value is not an intrinsic feature of social network site, but the result of a coherent match between the users' cognitive frames and experiences and the online media' analytical tools and agencies.

Sam Hind
Prescriptive Cartographies: Metronomes, Splinters, Containments, and Rhizomes.

This paper presents a typology of spatial activities common to UK protest events, introduced variously as metronomes, splinters, containments and rhizomes. Few are activities we consider 'mappable' phenomena, not least because of their arrhythmic or unpredictable nature. Further still, mapping protests is a risky business: ethically, politically, technically and cartographically. Using data from events in the UK, interviews with activists and tech developers/advocates, this paper will hone in on a peculiar, intractable and so-far still outstanding mapping paradox.

Silvia Mollicchi
From pattern to dynamic mesh: algorithmic-generated camouflage, twisted intimacies and depersonalization.

I propose a reading of algorithmic-generated camouflage patterns for static military gears. Mimesis is a problem articulated along the axes of space and time. When the proxy computation of a set of algorithms is tasked with the production of camouflage patterns, it modulates different temporal dimensions and spatial data. The resulting fabric embodies and flattens anticipatory inputs that pre-empt the incremental operations of visual detection and recognition. The aim of the printed pattern is to constantly keep each soldier in a suspended time-space, always a step a-head and a moment before being recognized, closer to identifying the target and further from being located. Taking as example the Macropattern and Micropattern Algorithms, developed for US4CES by HyperStealth Biotechnology Corporation, I will try to describe the algorithmic family as a connector that holds together disparate elements (a pre-imagined war scenario, its main features, lightening and average weather, the recognition capacities of a potential human target, the limited space of the outfit, the symmetric distribution of human traits, etc.) and weaves a dynamic mesh with a distinctive speculative effect. Such mesh ties target, soldier and surrounding environment and inspires questions of depersonalization and subjectivity. In conclusion, I will try to position this case within the larger frame of the research I am working on.

Pablo Velasco Gonzalez

Sketching Bitcoin topologies: machines and markets.

Cryptocurrencies are a new kind of distributed, peer2peer, open source digital device. Bitcoin is the first and most spread of these devices and it is designed to be public and transparent on its technical functioning. However, social content and data on how this device is used is scarce due to the important role of anonymity for its -unknown-creator and many of its supporters. This makes Bitcoin a resilient object to social research. As part of a broader work seeking to make sense of its geo-political peculiarities considering its own affordances, I will observe, relying on empirical, digital research, geographical co-occurrences and dissimilarities of the Bitcoin topography. Based on how it is demarcated by its own machines, markets and venues, I expect to identify a few indicators of commitment within these assemblages and argue that this commitment appears to be more driven by sympathetic state-enabled politics and market fluidity, than from a defined political ideology.

Scott Wark

The meme is in circulation.

Any attempt to grapple with a theory of the meme has to begin with a seemingly simple fact: the word, "meme", can designate either a meme - an instance - or the meme - a series. The dually singular and collective character of the meme confronts us with a key theoretical aporia, the need to theorise the meme as a series - as both an instance and a collection. This paper will present a preliminary response to this theoretical problem by suggesting that it can be situated within a broader process: circulation. It will argue that the seriality of the meme is a function of the mode of circulation that allows the meme to emerge as an ensemble that is irreducible to its constituent parts. However, circulation is ritually described as something that just happens in media studies, leading to the substitution of technological circuits for processes of circulation — and to the continuing currency of a tacit theoretical tautology, that circulation is what circulates. Once we realise that the problems of the seriality and the circulation of digital cultural products are linked, the meme-series must be understood as existing as circulation. This approach allows us to move beyond the meme for us — a collection of nominal instances — and to understand it as the indifferent, network-native and alien material for a mode, or a practice, of relating to radically indifferent network ensembles. This paper will conclude by suggesting that the meme is not just internet flotsam, but rather provides us with non-representational means of apprehending a network that can only be understood as a real abstraction: a collection of aggregating processes and vectors of distribution that cannot be cognised, but that can be engaged, provisionally, in process. That is: in circulation.