WAYS OF BEING BEYOND THE PERPETUATING
INEQUALITIES OF THE TECHNOSPHERE:
TEXTUAL ARTISTIC INTERVENTION AS A VITAL
STRATEGY IN ENABLING RESISTANT AGENCY

OR,

EMBODYING A PRACTICE OF RADICAL CARE

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PhD Research Project

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DECLARATION

This research project represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the research project.

During the period of registered study in which this research project was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this research project has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

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ABSTRACT

This research project comprises an interwoven, overlapping body of artistic interventions and multiple forms of writing. Drawing on Virno and others, it addresses and theorises the 'technosphere': a would-be totalising, statically reproducing structure of perpetuating inequality, through which contemporary existence occurs.[1] Pivotal within the technosphere are textualised processes of proprietorial individuation and de-humanising abstraction.

In response to this, I propose an original concept of 'radical care'. Augmenting the established discourse of 'critical care' introduced by Puig de la Bellacasa and others, radical care is developed as an ethical-methodological framework by which resistance within the immediate, visceral conditions of 'being' is connected with the speculative, forward-flung possibility of holding thinkable foreclosed futures.[2] This is the principal original contribution to knowledge made by this research project. Combining a careful considered-ness and self-reflexivity with the intermittent need to act unknowingly and 'carelessly', radical care holds these facets together as mutually essential to one another, rather than opposing them.

Radical care is both manifested and articulated through practice. In a further original contribution, as a method by which it might do so through *artistic* practice, I propose 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' (a development of Buchloh's concept of 'allegorical montage').[3] In seeking and then seeking to practice radical care, 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' emphasises a holding together of site, context, affect, situated economies of circulation, process, dissemination and potential encounter with audience as a fragmentary, de-centred, fluid, porous artistic intervention. It does this following Barthes' argument to shift our thinking of the 'artwork' from work to text, and in so doing reopen playfulness and process.[4] These texts are subversively and disruptively intersected into the technosphere's own. Radical care has been refined, conceptualised and made disseminable through the process of these artistic interventions in which it is practiced.

In reflection of the inescapability of the technosphere, my 'being' (in its specific positionality, vulnerability and agency) is entangled through the entirety of this project. 'Being', in reflexive parallel with practice and theorising, is acknowledged as a vital co-equal strand of research. The articulation and practicing of 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being' forms the third thread of this project's enmeshed core contributions. Asserting a value in 'being' contests its technospheric exploitation. Ultimately, through the embodiment of a practice of radical care, this project opens a path whereby more equal ways of being become, momentarily at least, possible.

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[1] Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For An Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. by Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito and Andrea Casson (Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e), 2004).

[2] Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

[3] Benjamin Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', *Artforum,* 21:1 (1982), 43-56.

[4] Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' [1971], in *Image Music Text,* trans. by Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), pp. 155-164.

LEXIS

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CONTENTS

<u>Notes for the reader</u>

There is a significant degree of reflexive circularity to this research project. In addition to the 'content' of the arguments presented, this includes a reflexive engagement within itself with the project's form of presentation, the encounter with a reader which is initiated, and with its own, and its author's, positionality.

One result of this reflexivity is that there are extensive meta-commentaries upon the text itself. The text is tended, re-visited, cared for. Some of these attendings and attentions have manifested as footnotes, though should not be viewed as 'lesser' or 'secondary' owing to this positioning. Such positioning is, rather, a means of holding legible the central thread of argument, while not falsely erasing these notes of care. The text and its arguments continue to shift through these marks of event-encounter. It is not static.

The word count of this PhD (77,475 words across *Lexis* and *Praxis*) has not been discretely segmented out into 'thesis', 'appendices and footnotes' and 'practice'.[5] This conscious choice reflects the co-equal positioning and vital interrelating of differing forms of text, be they arttexts of varyingly literal textual form, or theorising and reflection conveyed through more conventional academic writing. To segment these apart would reassert the divisions and hierarchies I will go on to refute, and would echo the technosphere's own premise of a singular abstract textual totality, to which any other forms are rendered subject. More generally, text can be an artistic medium, while writing a theoretical text involves artistry. As will become apparent in this

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[5] However, in line with regulations, the *Bibliography* and front matter are excluded from this figure.

research project, there is a blurred distinction. To oppose the two, *in authorship or readership*, limits the potential of their productive, co-equal interweaving.

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I have not included a *List of figures* here within *Lexis*, as there is only one diagram.[6] The accompanying *Praxis*, in contrast, contains extensive visual documentation of the eight artworks which sit within this research project, and therefore a full *List of figures* can be found in its opening pages.[7] The relationship between *Lexis* and *Praxis*, and a suggestion of how and when to co-read them, will be presented in the *Introduction*.

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[6] Figure 1: Adam Walker, *Diagram showing original contributions within this research project*, 2020 (p. 14).

[7] A formal specification of accompanying material, listing the eight artworks which comprise part of this PhD research project, is also included in *Praxis*.

INTRODUCTION

Our world is becoming increasingly unequal through increasingly unseeable processes. In my mind's eye my mouth gurns into a silent scream; a momentary release of pent-up _____.

Vocabulary fails, only the scream.[8]

(No release.)

What can we do? Countless insecurities in our own contexts continuously deflect our attention inward towards our individuated selves. A stream of images of greater precarity elsewhere stokes our self-interest, our fear.

That the world (including ourselves within it) is such demands that productivist art challenge, critique and proffer speculative alternatives to it.[9] The growing abstract opacity of processes comprising our world (and within which we are bound) makes contestation increasingly difficult, and yet not to do so is _____.

A perpetual scream.

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[8] This scream, or its silent absence, recalls Holloway's.

John Holloway, 'In the Beginning Was the Scream', *Common Sense*, 11 (1991), 69-77.

[9] I use the term 'productivist' in alignment with Benjamin, who argues that the first concern of the artwork should be a reflexive consideration of its own position within the contemporary relations of production.

Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer' [1934], in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 2, Part 2 1931-34*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, trans. by Rodney Livingstone and others (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 768-782 (p. 770).

Meanwhile, the escalating, unequal precarity of 'being' serves to materially exhaust and endanger, perhaps necessitating moments of acceptance of acceptance.

To care: to accept.

To care: to not accept.

That art is by definition within the world requires that it must also critique itself, something it frequently does not sufficiently do. A reflexive self-care is needed.

This research project seeks to address these nested problems: to provide a framework by which art might self-reflexively operate critically to some progressive affect, inseparably tethered but nevertheless dynamic within the material conditions of collective human being.

<u>Title</u>

The first of the paired titles of this research project, *Ways of being beyond the perpetuating*

inequalities of the technosphere: textual artistic intervention as a vital strategy in enabling

resistant agency, purposefully acknowledges the myriad layered, reflexive and

enmeshed aspects of the research it encompasses. A brief examination will begin to

establish the terrain, and intent, of this.

'Beyond' highlights a desire for a future-facing shift out of our current situation;

'perpetuating' is suggestive of the ongoing extended present-ness and self-reproduction

of that situation; and *'inequalities'* are foregrounded as the material, ethical and political

problem addressed. It is important to emphasise that inequalities are plural, often

compounded and mutually reinforcing. I will postpone an explication of my use of the

term '*technosphere'* for *Part 1*: it suffices to say here that it denotes the un-fully-

conceivable global context of the perpetuation of these inequalities, and foreclosing of

alternative futures.[10]

'Artistic intervention' places focus on the practice-methodology of research, and

emphasises a productivist position, seeking affect within the world. *'Textual'* denotes

both the necessary terrain of intervention as the technosphere renders ever more of our

lived experience into forms of text, and also the ensuing approaches of artistic

intervention taken, via multiple variable aspects of 'textual'. *'Vital'* proclaims the

urgency of our present situation, but also holds an important biological, bodily

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[10] The term is borrowed from Haus de Kulturen der Welt's *Technosphere Magazine* project.

Technosphere Magazine [website/research project initiated by Haus der Kulturen der Welt] (2015-19) <https://technosphere-magazine.hkw.de> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

connotation. This somatic sense, in direct relation to the preceding '*textual*', is a key pivot upon which inequality directly manifests in certain bodies.

'*Strategy*' situates the research at a disseminable meta-level.[11] While several of the specific artistic interventions undertaken operate, in part, with a localised specificity to their contingent context, the research project as a whole makes a strategic, transferrable contribution to consideration of ways of resistant being and critical practice. '*Enabling resistant agency*' further emphasises this, as well as pointing towards a de-privileging of individuated authorship and affect. '*Resistant*', in contrast to 'resilient', refuses an acceptance of the way things are. This includes refusal of the systemic reduction of human '*agency*' within the technosphere.

Returning to the start of the title, '*Ways of being*' invokes a celebration of plurality within our increasingly confining and prescriptive context, but also emphasises the necessary multiplicity of fluid resistant approaches. That these ways of being need seeking, rather than being something which can be presumed, indicates the urgency of intervention. However, in being asserted in the title as a statement rather than question, a hopefulness is upheld.

The second of the paired titles, *Embodying a practice of radical care*, points towards where this research project locates that hope.

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[11] As will be discussed, to operate solely at an abstract level could result in an echo of the violence of abstraction of the technosphere. A key aspect of the strategies proposed will be a co-equal acknowledgement and integration of immediate material and bodily concerns.
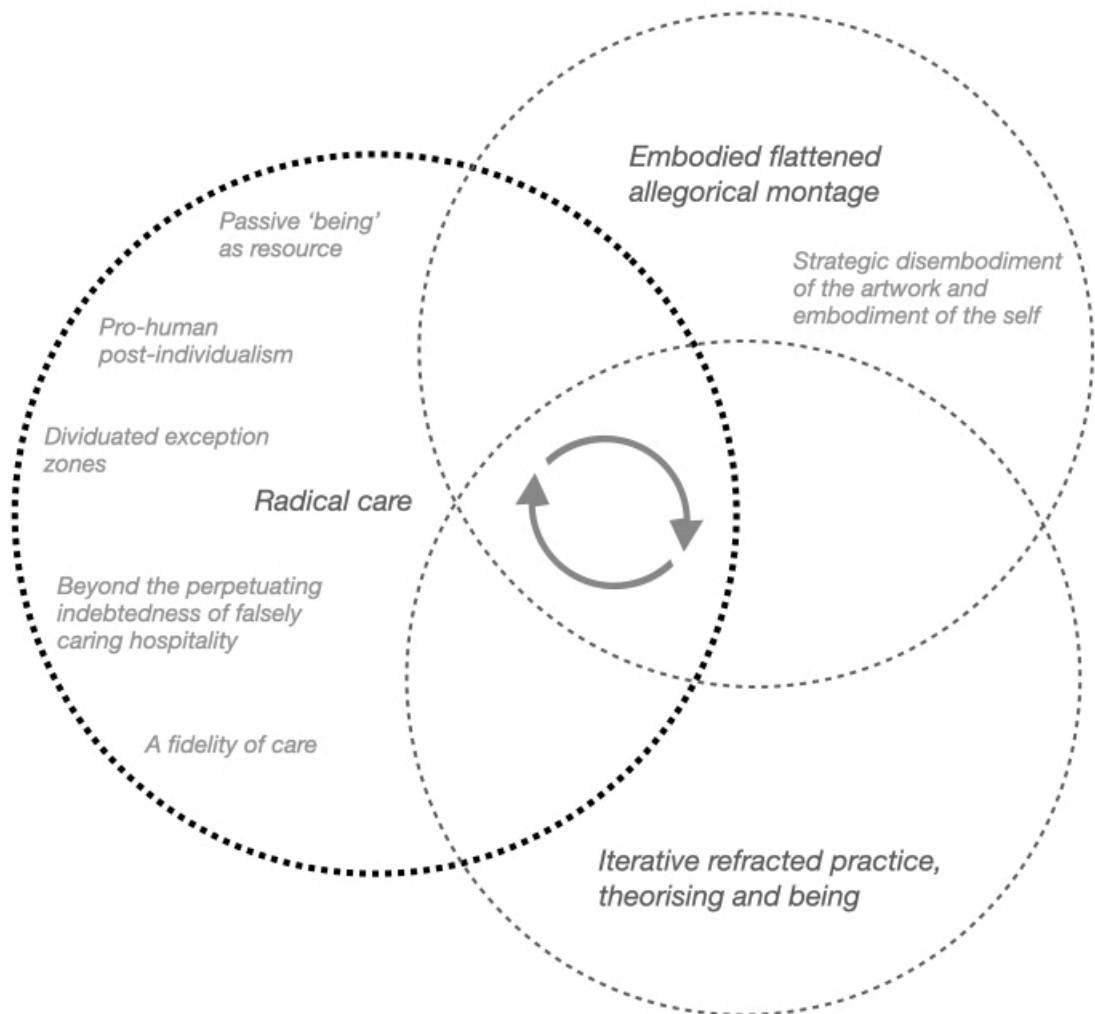
Figure 1: Adam Walker, *Diagram showing original contributions within this research project*, 2020. A simplified schematic representation of the interrelationships between original contributions and key sub-points (which include both identified problems and possible routes beyond these) is shown. By necessity, this is an artificially frozen approximation: the enmeshed interweaving of contributions and sub-points has shifted and fluxed through the research process, and continues to do so in relation to the dynamic world of which all are part

This project makes three contributions to knowledge which interweave and overlap but hold differing emphases. Two of these, 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being' and 'embodied flattened allegorical montage', are principally methodological contributions and are discussed in the *Research questions and methods* section which follows. The third, 'radical care', is the primary contribution of this project. It is proposed as a framing of 'ways of being' which reclaims agency and is resistant, resilient, subversive and disruptive towards the violence of abstraction within the technosphere. An original conception of radical care is gradually developed through *Lexis's* three *parts*, built up via a number of key sub-points (as noted in the diagram above) through which its need and potential efficacy are argued.[12] These sub-points, and radical care itself, are fully introduced in the sequence they will be developed within the *Section overview* below.

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[12] While there are extensive lineages of thought which inform my conception of radical care, and which will be discussed, the specific term itself was not in academic use until very recently. Notably, in 2020, a special issue of the journal *Social Text* entitled 'Radical Care' was published.

Hiʻilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese, eds., 'Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times' [special issue], Social Text, 38:1 (2020).

Hobart and Kneese present radical care as 'a set of vital but underappreciated strategies for enduring precarious worlds'.

Hiʻilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese, 'Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times', *Social Text*, 38:1 (2020), 1-16 (p. 2).

My development of the concept will go somewhat beyond this in attempting to further emphasise the radical aspect of the term in potentially instigating systemic change.

Aside from this, somewhat surprisingly, (apart from the two words chancing to come together occasionally in e.g. medical journals) the only other instance of 'radical care' being used as a term comes in Dowler and others' essay calling for a 'Manifesto of Radical Care' in Geography.

Lorraine Dowler and others, 'Care', in *Keywords in Radical Geography: Antipode at 50*, ed. by Antipode Editorial Collective (Hoboken NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), pp. 35-29.

Though written within a different discipline and context (and specifically addressing the workings of the academic institution), Dowler and others' use of the term does loosely align with my own in its linkage between attention to the immediate position of the 'other', and the need for systemic change.

Research questions and methods

This project is structured around the following research questions. While demarcating a specific (though porous) nexus of focus, they have not been static. Due to the reflexive approach by which the project has proceeded, far from a fixed starting point initiating a linear progression, these questions have shifted and changed through their partial answering and the sometimes unanticipated realisations they have prompted. The methods presented below have formed and reformed these questions as much as they have sought to answer them. This ongoing reformulation is itself a research method.[13]

Research questions:

1: *How does the technosphere use de-humanising abstraction to subsume labour, the body, the artist and the future?*

2: *How does technospheric abstraction manifest in differentiated inequalities at the pivotal sites of the collective political body and individuated human body?*

3: *How might artistic use of (dis)embodiment enable critical affect at these sites?*

4: *How can we imagine critical agency within a would-be totalising hegemony?*

5: *What could constitute a way of being through which sustainable resistant equality might form?*

While each of the three *parts* within *Lexis* specifically addresses one or two of these research questions (as will be introduced in the *Section overview* below), they inevitably

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[13] (It is an element of 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being'.)

bleed into one another, reflecting the overlaid interwoven complexities of the research process and terrain, and the subjective position of researcher within these.

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'Ways of being' are sought as the project's outcome, but equally, ways of being in myriad forms (on and off the page, within delineations of 'art' and not, actual and imagined), contribute to the porous, interwoven and reflexive means of thinking by which this research is undertaken. The two methods below begin as approaches to research: *incorporating* artistic practice and *through* artistic practice respectively. They eventually proceed, through an enfolding of radical care back into themselves, to be proposed as means whereby an expanded understanding of practice (the practice of being) might be more radically caringly undertaken. That these methods develop into means by which radical care might eventually be lived, performed and disseminated underpins their importance as contributions, in addition to functioning as research methods within the project.

Iterative refracted practice, theorising and being

 The more overarching of the two methods, 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being' could be argued as being intuitive within 'artistic research'.[14] Nevertheless, its articulation and examination constitutes a contribution. Practice, theorising and being

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[14] As will be discussed, the reflexive methodological approaches within this project align with 'artistic research' within Teikmanis's schema.

Andris Teikmanis, 'Typologies of Research', in *SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education*, ed. by Mick Wilson and Schelte van Ruiten (Amsterdam: ELIA, 2013), pp. 162-169 (p. 164).

feed back and forth into one another, variously responding to, embodying and articulating the research activities of each other, iteratively edging further.[15]

In the application of this triangulation to this research project, practice operates through 'embodied flattened allegorical montage', which will be specifically addressed below. Practice enables momentary escape beyond the confines of the logic of language which can fall into alignment with the structures of the technosphere when not used self-critically. Without care, text can replicate the textual domination of the technosphere within which other forms of knowledge or meaning are rendered subject: having to translate themselves into its terms. Though passages of 'conventional' academic writing will follow, I do not want these to assume the role of an interpretive or defining frame through which 'other' elements are considered. The premise of a PhD 'by project', incorporating various practices (including writing), is that different forms of knowledge production have a vital role to play, beyond the mediated logics and rationalities of academic text alone.

I have not entirely avoided following academic convention, and nor would I wish to. In part, this stems from a desire for this project to have potential affect beyond the discipline of art. In form as well as content (where an argument mirroring this will

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[15] By 'theorising' I mean the textual argumentation comprising the critical and analytical sections of writing which are furthest from artistic practice. This form of writing sits at one end of a spectrum with textual forms of practice at the other. There are also frequent occurrences of writing sitting somewhere between, blurring this distinction. For this reason, I speak of theorising rather than text or writing in designating this methodology: to denote a specific form and function of text.

Writing is as much a 'practice' as any other form. I use the term practice here to indicate artistic production, including frequent use of multiple forms of text where it itself as object is more central than a critical, analytical function.

A single piece of text might operate simultaneously as both practice and theorising.

develop), a balancing act of complicity is required, operating within a structure while also pushing, critiquing, disrupting and challenging it. Here then, a meta-care for the project itself (as attention, thoughtfulness and commitment) is needed in holding it sufficiently together while varying intents and requirements diverge from one another.

Theorising (continuous consideration and reflection upon existent discourses of our world in both its actualities and potentialities, and attempts to develop and connect these further) holds open a bridge whereby those other potentially more radical forms of knowledge production might enter back into codes of language and text, the hegemonic context in which they might have most (and most urgent) affect. In so doing, practice and being have informed the development of my research questions. If 'other' research cannot avoid such translation (or otherwise accept being rendered 'incompatible' or 'irrelevant'), it is key to hold onto an authorship in this translating; else the 'other' knowledge or process risks being neutered, aestheticised or confined inside a box of affectless permissibility. I seek for this research project to contribute to discourses beyond art, within broader political, material and ethical realms, through its dissemination and the encounters which may ensue. Unfortunately, asserting art's (or more broadly, 'other' forms of knowledge's) validity and ability to speak into these discourses is a prerequisite within the technosphere.

This is not to position written, 'academic' theorising as 'negative' or 'unfortunately' necessary. It is frequently generative of practice: the direction of translation is not one way. And crucially, it also needs emphasising that theorising can occur through practice. Within the concept of radical care which will be developed, a committed undertaking to think through the context of another, while acknowledging

understanding will only ever be partial (in other words, to theorise), is often a key first step.

'Being' is held alongside practice and theorising, following Michel Foucault's assertion that 'There is no experience that is not a way of thinking'.[16] With the terrain of research, the technosphere, becoming increasingly inescapably lived within, the direct experience of being (in daily subjectification, surveillance and individuation, as well as in attempted means to resist or simply continue within these relations) becomes especially relevant.[17] This lived experience continuously informs and periodically intersects other research elements. For example, signing up to work for Deliveroo is an element of being which intersects with, informs and enriches writing around platform capitalism (while the writing and theoretical research correspondingly provide conceptual frameworks for reflecting upon it).[18] More than a temporary embodiment as

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[16] Michel Foucault, 'Preface to the History of Sexuality, Volume Two', in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth,* ed. by Paul Rabinow, trans. by Robert Hurley and others (New York NY: The New Press, 1994), p. 201.

Foucault wrote this in his originally unused and only subsequently published preface to *The History of Sexuality, Volume Two*. This research project, both that which follows on these pages and those equally vital components of research practice which cannot be bound, follows this approach.

[17] Thinking around 'being' is developed through *Lexis*, generally aligning with Heidegger's concept of 'Dasein'. The (human) being is within, and constituent of, the world but retains distinction; there is a tension between subject-ness and object-ness.

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* [1953], trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

This 'being' within the contemporary technosphere, and its reflexive consideration, works in enmeshed parallel with academic literature-based research to address research question 1: *How does the technosphere use de-humanising abstraction to subsume labour, the body, the artist and the future?*

[18] My personal experience of signing up to work for Deliveroo is described and reflected upon in the *Dark kitchens and desert cities* section of *Part 2*. It bore particular relevance, in focussing attention to my own body and its vulnerability, to addressing research question 2: *How does technospheric abstraction manifest in differentiated inequalities at the pivotal sites of the collective political body and individuated human body?*

artistic method, this example of being as research emerges from, and as, the necessity

of subsistence within the technosphere. Being does incorporate bodily-ness, but in its

contextual situating within the world. Similarly, undertaking artist residencies has

provided a context-event for the consideration of geographical (and other) differentials

operating across the technosphere, entwined with my own subjective position as an

artist co-constituting my own site; ideas engaged with in both writing and artistic

practice.[19] Yet these residencies, along with the exhibiting opportunities that ensue, are

also a reflection of my need (or desire) to gain the exposure and cultural capital

required of the artist within neoliberalism. A critical (self-)awareness is essential to this

'being' strand of research: only in continual, critical self-reflection can it be brought into

artistic practice and writing where it might be made public. My artwork *Sequestered*,

documented and reflected upon in *Praxis*, offers a clear example of a manifestation of

critical reflection upon being.[20] The work constitutes a montage of elements of variable

agency, embodiment and privilege brought together in a specific contingent event-

encounter of my being, and my being *there*.

There is also a politics to this assertion of being as constituting research. In doing so, a

significance is asserted for the bodily materiality of the human: a key (though often

obfuscated) site of technospheric subsumption, violence and exploitation. Furthermore,

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[19] These residency experiences, and reflection upon them, have been particularly important in addressing research questions 2: *How does technospheric abstraction manifest in differentiated inequalities at the pivotal sites of the collective political body and individuated human body?* and 3: *How might artistic use of (dis)embodiment enable critical affect at these sites?*

Repeat visits to Kyiv, Ukraine, for example, have produced a context in which to consider differing positionalities within global economic, political and technological networks, and related differentials of bodily violence. I have developed, and subsequently reflected upon, a number of artworks produced during or in later response to these visits. (These are documented in *Praxis*.)

[20] Adam Walker, *Sequestered* (2018), documentation available at <http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/sequestered.htm> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

being (as a state of *ongoing* existence) remains in tethered connection to the technospherically subjectified and individuated 'self'. A focus on being with a critical awareness of this tether (as opposed to a perhaps more transient 'embodiment') is key to my emphasising of positionality (a core aspect of 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' as a methodology of artistic practice, as discussed below).

As will be introduced, *Part 1* identifies a shift towards effectively unavoidable exploitation of our passive being as a paradigmatic mechanism of subjectification within the technosphere. An asserting of being as an element of a methodology which enables a human agency and criticality is especially important in focusing attention to, and generating resistance at, this fundamental site of our bare existence as it is becoming appropriated.

Incorporating being (including, to the extent it is possible, a consideration of others' as well as one's own experience), implicitly builds care into the research methodology. This recognition and valuing of the fundamental importance of care for, and care in, being (for others and oneself) as part of the research then frees and supports the practice and theorising elements in doing the forward flung work of potential radicality.[21] An equal focus on being alongside the other two strands within 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being' contests the abstraction of the technosphere, while also acknowledging the (unequally distributed) bodily, material effects of it. Practising and theorising through, and from, this position asserts an ethics of human equality, not through a transcendental reification of 'the human', but through a

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[21] This connected, but flexible, bond between a resilient care in the present and a more speculative care for the future will emerge as a central tenet of radical care.

continual critical reflection upon *being human* (not individual) in the face of the

apparently incontestable textualised abstractions of the technosphere.[22]

A methodology of 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being' is reflected in the

disseminable presentation of this research project. In becoming public, it takes the form

of two texts: *Lexis* (which you are currently reading) and *Praxis.* These names,

borrowed from Jurgen Habermas (and having a much longer history of use), have been

chosen to reflect the mutual inter-reliance of a site for the exchange, contestation and

development of thoughts and ideas ('lexis'), and a site for affective action and agency

wherein those thoughts and ideas might be materialised, but also where the

development of those thoughts and ideas might be held possible in the first place

('praxis').[23] In offering *Praxis* and *Lexis* as a pair of texts, the hope is that rather than

implicitly framing artistic practice as a methodology from which theoretical findings

are derived (the textual translation described above), or conversely as an illustrative

afterthought or appendix, practice and theorising can be encountered in parallel. The

two texts are intended to be read in tandem. As a gesture towards the impossibility of a

truly simultaneous reading, it is suggested to keep *Praxis* (perhaps turned to a page in

Artistic interventions) open alongside *Lexis*. This might at least suggest the possibility of

a live back and forth interplay between theorising and practice for the reader, echoing

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[22] *Parts 1* and *3* will respectively draw upon Campbell (reflecting on Heidegger) and Arendt to emphasise the need for an imminent, rather than transcendental, conception of 'the human'.

Timothy C. Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics From Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 26-27.

Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* [1929], ed. by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[23] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* [1962], trans. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), p. 3.

my own process of research. The reader is invited to fully read *Praxis* at a point of their choosing after *Part 1* but prior to the *Ana-conclusion*.

Being is woven through *Lexis* and *Praxis* in interplay with theorising and practice. It is also continuously re-presented in ourselves as author and reader.

Embodied flattened allegorical montage

'Embodied flattened allegorical montage', a modified form of Benjamin Buchloh's 'allegorical montage', is the approach taken to artistic interventions (e.g. the methodology of artistic practice) within this project.[24] In reflection of the iterative meta-method of research just outlined, as an approach it has also been refined, conceptualised and made disseminable through the process of the artistic interventions in which it is practiced, and reflection upon them.

In summary, 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' is a practice-methodology emphasising a holding together of site, context, affect, situated economies of circulation, process, dissemination and potential encounter with audience as a fragmentary, de-centred, fluid, porous artistic intervention. As an artistic approach, it moves beyond representation to fully recognise the significance of labour processes and economic, linguistic and power circulations within and adjacent to the artwork, but also holds open the potential for allegorical affect upon the image-surface of the work. A full elucidation, including how it diverges from Buchloh's formulation and its

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[24] Benjamin Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', *Artforum,* 21:1 (1982), 43-56.

relation to plural forms of 'text', is offered in *Praxis,* alongside documentation of and reflection upon the artworks which work through it.[25]

The term 'embodied' in this methodology reflects a focus on a self-reflexive recognition of the positionality of the artist. The embodied aspect of 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' relates to the artist rather than artwork: a disembodiment of the latter is more usually advocated.[26] It needs emphasising that this embodiment, while relating to 'being' as discussed above, is not the same as being. On the one hand, the embodiment of an element of being within the artwork reflects the aforementioned political importance of acknowledging and reflecting upon being. On the other though, the premise of translating one's being out of direct alignment with one's situated, material body reflects both a certain capacity of art and privilege of artist-hood.[27] Thus, the potential of embodiment loops back around to one's positionality of being (which must, in turn, be considered in embodiment within the artwork, and so forth as a continual process).

However, bringing care into this inwardly focussed spiral opens it out again. Care brings to embodiment an always partial and speculative, but nevertheless vital, attempt to consider the position of a never fully-known 'other' in relation to the artistic

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[25] Ibid.

The textual emphasis of artistic practice within this project has followed from a gradual recognising (through addressing research question 1: *How does the technosphere use de-humanising abstraction to subsume labour, the body, the artist and the future?*) that textualisation forms an effectively inescapable process of abstraction within the technosphere, and thus text must be contested and engaged with if resistance within this is to be possible. This is more fully discussed in *Praxis.*

[26] (This is discussed in *Part 2.*)

[27] A positionally of being 'artist' can be overridden within a given context by other technospheric subjectifications (property ownership, class, nationality, etc.).

intervention.[28] Thus, as radical care is developed as a concept, 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' opens out to become an advocated method by which radical care might be practiced through the artistic intervention, within its context.

'Embodied flattened allegorical montage' thus operates as a double contribution: it is both a means by which practice-research might proceed to attempt to develop reflexive, non-hierarchical, context-specific affect within a given site; and it becomes a specific approach by which radical care might be manifested through and beyond an artistic practice.

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Radical care is not a research method. However, from being something loosely speculative it has proceeded, through the above research questions and methods, to become an articulated ethical-methodological milieu to *be within*. As specific, contingent research realisations are re-reflected upon and held alongside one another (in an attempt to present this milieu beyond the solely personal), so the methodological relations within the project shift. My focus moves from an emphasis on understanding specificities of existence within the technosphere to theorising a way to be through

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[28] This argument is developed further in the *Ways of being: friendship* section of *Part 3,* drawing on writings by Webb and Foucault.

David Webb, 'On Friendship: Derrida, Foucault and the Practice of Becoming' *Research in Phenomenology*, 33 (2003), 119-140.

Foucault.

their continuum of connection.[29] Thus, radical care's more developed relation to my methodology of artistic practice is not a direct one of creating artwork which in some way 'seeks to articulate' or 'performs' radical care. Instead, there emerges a more blurred, continuous ethical and political emphasis upon *being* radically caring, with practice's specific relationship to this in the site-moment not delineated.[30]

In accordance with this, 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being' shifts in function within the project. Moving away from being a means of realisation and articulation, the interrelationship between the three elements proceeds to become the potential affect within an expanded, more human way of being according to an ethics of radical care. With 'being radically caring' then framed as a practice in itself, within a broader conception of artistic practice which refutes a disconnection of art and life, the project becomes practice-advocating. In seeking pro-equal affect and contesting individuation, it becomes a practice of radical care to disseminate an advocation of radical care.

The fluid but inseparable relations between methods, questions, practices, theorisations and contexts which this segment has sought to present situates the methodology of this research project as a whole firmly within the reflexively enmeshed 'artistic research' category, as described by Andris Teikmanis.[31] Furthermore, owing to the would-be

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[29] It is with this shift, and the seeking of and then gradual emergence and incorporation of a concept of radical care, that my methodological approach addresses research questions 4: *How can we imagine critical agency within a would-be totalising hegemony?* and 5: *What could constitute a way of being through which sustainable resistant equality might form?*

[30] This is an act of extending radically caring trust to oneself.

[31] Teikmanis, p. 164.

Teikmanis distinguishes 'artistic research' from the more linear forms of 'practice-led research', 'research-led practice' and 'art-based research'. In these alternative models there is a single directionality between 'practice' and 'research', one way or the other.

totalising nature of the object of research (the technosphere), this reflexive artistic

research is inseparable from the whole breadth of being.

<u>Section overview</u> *(a sequence of arguments leading to a concept of radical care)*

In outlining the sequence of *Lexis* which follows, the structure of my arguments for radical care, including the key sub-points which support it, is set out. In place of a discrete literature review, relevant discourses are inter-woven throughout the text in dialogue with developing arguments.

Part 1: Work

How does the technosphere use de-humanising abstraction to subsume labour, the body, the artist and the future?[32]

In addressing the above question, *Part 1* begins by considering this fluid superstructure I am terming 'technosphere'. The centrality of text (inclusive of data, code and algorithm) and global interconnectedness is emphasised alongside the ongoing, though changing, relevance of physical materialities and sites.

I argue that Nick Srnicek's concept of 'platform capitalism', in which private companies operate as platforms of exchange vital to increasing aspects of everyday contemporary life and through which data (or profit) can be extracted, is the emergent dominant economic model of the technosphere.[33] This is an important starting point, as

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[32] Though beginning with this question, *Part 1* also starts to unfold the concerns of all of the other research questions, and the project as a whole.

[33] Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

labour continues to hold a preeminent position within the technosphere as a key basis of our construction as subjects.

Platform capitalism is considered through post-Fordist discourses, especially the virtuosic, performative nature of work that ensues. I particularly explore Paolo Virno's argument that in centring upon linguistic-relational capabilities, capitalism is specifically seeking profit in those aspects of us which are most 'human'.[34] This contestation of the same sites of being by both hegemonic subjectification and, by necessity, resistance towards this is a theme which will develop.

Considering the paradigm's emergence, Pascal Gielen's argument that artists can be considered a vanguard of post-Fordist workers is covered, but critiqued for its decontextualising of the person of the artist (in other words, for overlooking their being).[35] The importance Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello place on artistic rather than social critique in dismantling Fordism is also examined.[36] This evaluation of post-Fordism also considers Silvia Federici's critique of the under-recognition of inequality being perpetuated in gendered and racialised affective and reproductive labour in post-Fordist (and by extension platform capitalist) and post-work discourses.[37]

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[34] Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For An Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. by Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito and Andrea Casson (Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 98.

[35] Pascal Gielen, *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Politics and Post-Fordism* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2009).

[36] Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, 'The New Spirit of Capitalism', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society,* 18 (2005), 161-188.

[37] Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland CA: PM Press, 2012).

I argue that a notable acceleration in data collection and use constitutes a signifiant

shift, distinguishing platform capitalism from broader post-Fordism through an

unprecedented surveillance capability and the ensuing emphasis on prediction, control

and conformity, alongside productivity. Proceeding from Virno's positioning of

linguistic-relational capability as the principal producer of value, I argue that platform

capitalism can be considered a new paradigm.[38] Within it, our surveilled linguistic-

relational basic existence is being rendered unknowing labour; a permanently available

resource to be exploited through the data-secretions of our existence as contemporary

beings, rather than a capacity we actively perform.[39] This argument, whereby the

means by which we are exploited is tilted towards our bare existence (via big data,

automation, artificial intelligence and proprietorial monopolistic appropriation of

increasing aspects of life) constitutes a key sub-point. It renders ineffective a regressive

return to some previous modes of contestation. The possibility of resisting through

denying one's exploitability via means such as striking is foreclosed: simply in being,

in a form which is not exhaustingly contrarian, we are rendered a resource.[40] This

necessitates a search for possible new forms of resistance, from which radical care will

coalesce.

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[38] Virno.

[39] While it might be hypothetically possible to exist as a non-data-producing being, this would entail a tremendous effort to actively disconnect from the contemporary world: eschewing all forms of digital connectivity for information, communication, sociability, leisure, monetary exchange, and more. An even more extreme effort would be needed to avoid contributing more basic exploitable data such as official state and medical records.

[40] Strikes and other long-used tactics of resistance might still be effective within specific contexts. The argument is not against this, but rather that at a structural level these means *alone* will be ineffective.

This attempted technospheric appropriation of 'being' makes all the more crucial the holding onto of being as a site of agency, creativity, reflection, criticality and resistance within 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being'.

Underpinning the hegemonic contemporary way of being is a continuing reliance on overlooked and devalued previous regimes of labour: neo-colonial asymmetries of hardware and infrastructure manufacture and maintenance, call-centre operation, and gig economy delivery work, for example, are all essential to it. And supporting all of this is a heavily gendered, under-valued and unremunerated expanse of ongoing reproductive and affective labour.[41]

Part 1 proceeds to examine the means by which the technosphere pulls back the possibilities of the future into a collapsed present denying agency or potential change. For example, I explore high frequency trading within derivates markets as a concrete means by which potential future variation is financially captured into the present. Mirroring this, I set out how at a systemic level the past is similarly destroyed and only reconstructed as desired, but is inescapably archived onto the individual via our inescapable data-self.

Having outlined this set of inequality escalating technologies of contemporary dehumanising abstraction, *Part 1* proceeds to consider possible resistant responses. In a further key sub-point, I introduce 'pro-human post-individualism' as a stance of resistance contesting the hyper-individuated, indebted isolation we are pushed towards. In proposing this position, I critique calls for a post-humanism which advocate an under-critically open embrace of the technological. While I equally reject a backward looking blanket rejection of new technologies, implicit ideologies of inequality are coded into their orthodox deployment, as *Part 1* sets out. Pro-human

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[41] Federici.

post-individualism engages with new technologies but centres on the human.[42] It is open to the positive potential of technology, but with a constantly reflexive criticality in looking to centre *all* humans as co-equal. The neoliberal individual conversely, re-presented at an ever increasing speed through the technosphere, is premised precisely upon perpetuating inequality. This nascent idea of pro-human post-individualism is the starting point out of which radical care is developed.

Ensuing positions for would-be productivist artistic interventions are then considered, centring on the disobedient, anarchic and playful as those potentially disruptive human qualities hardest to surveille and exploit. I emphasise that the infrastructures and networks themselves are not inherently unequal (though their deployment certainly is), and working in such disruptive ways through them holds the potential to put them to work as positive vectors in contesting inequalities.

Connecting this strategy to the advocating of a post-individual pro-human positioning, *Part 1* ends by arguing for a radical, perpetual destruction of the individuated artist self into fluid multitudes of undefinable creative self-hoods, a position formed through and looping back into practice as 'embodied flattened allegorical montage'. However, I acknowledge the unequally distributed vulnerability of de-individuating oneself in such a way, and emphasise the need for its pro-human corollary, centred on trust and

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[42] Though I fully recognise the contemporary urgency of thinking in terms of ecologies beyond the human, an explicit focus on this is outside the scope of this project. The escalation of human inequalities makes clear there is still much urgent work to be done at an inter-human level.

care. This begins to draw the connection between a critically caring basis and the radically caring act that might project forward from it.[43]

Scene A

The two *scenes,* of which this is the first, are arttexts taking the form of screenplays which creatively, critically and reflexively seek to engage with the themes and questions opened up in the *parts* which precede and follow them.

The inclusion of the two *scenes* within *Lexis*, along with written theorising upon text and 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' within *Praxis*, reflects the back and forth interplay of practice and theorising enfolded within one another. Such a blurring refutes the false suggestion of a discrete division.

Scene A imagines a conversation with the narrating voice in the English-language version of Harun Farocki's 1995 work *Arbeiter Verlassen di Fabrik* [Workers Leaving the

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[43] A discourse of 'critical care', as developed by Puig de la Bellacasa and the responding special issue of *Social Studies of Science*, is key to the concept of radical care I develop. (This will be fully introduced along with *Part 3*.)

Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, 'Matters of care in technoscience: Assembling neglected things', *Social Studies of Science*, 41:1 (2011), 85-106.

Ana Viseu and others, eds., 'The Politics of Care in Technoscience' [special issue], *Social Studies of Science*, 45:5 (2015).

Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

Factory].[44] The text operates as a close-reading of Farocki's script to provide an alternate route into some of the consideration of labour addressed in *Part 1*. Additionally, in reflecting upon the cinema screen (the co-focus, alongside the factory, of Farocki's work) and the television screen (through which the work was broadcast in 1995, around the time of television's limited-channel apex within the mass-cultural landscape), the text opens up questions of the public sphere as a site of individuation or collectivisation and normatisation or contestation. These questions foreshadow the focus of *Part 2*, which will proceed further into the ramifications of contemporary technologies upon the public sphere.

Both *scenes* actively engage in text as an affective matter, paralleling but not replicating the affective function it holds within the technosphere. Their suggestion of a dramatic form, that these words could be voiced, serves as an implicit reminder of the human and attempts to reconnect this back into the text. Simultaneously, it reminds us of human absence. The texts presented become almost-human characters in an inversion of the way the technosphere forces us to render ourselves text.

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[44] Harun Farocki, *Arbeiter Verlassen di Fabrik* [Workers Leaving the Factory] (1995) <https://vimeo.com/59338090> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

This is a single-screen moving-image work, broadcast on terrestrial German television in its original language. A similarly titled multi-screen gallery variant of the work was subsequently produced which includes much of the same material, but incorporates some changes (e.g. the inclusion of factories outside of Europe or North America, which are notably absent in the original). However, this multi-screen version breaks up the singular narrational flow upon which *Scene A* is built.

Part 2: Bodies

How does technospheric abstraction manifest in differentiated inequalities at the pivotal sites of the collective political body and individuated human body?

How might artistic use of (dis)embodiment enable critical affect at these sites?

Part 2 examines the material repercussions of technospheric abstraction within the somatic and political, acknowledging that rights, opportunities, equalities and such forth hold a much diminished meaning (if any) 'without the ability to concretize them in absolute space and time'.[45] I argue that these are key sites at which power within the technosphere fixes and seeks to self-legitimise, in order to continue its perpetuation of inequalities.

Drawing on Miwon Kwon, 'site' itself is first turned to, with the technosphere's presented image of immaterial ephemerality being scrutinised, and its underpinning overlooked structures of situated materiality (infrastructure, labour and violence) addressed.[46] Establishing a 'territory' to be defended, in varying degrees of materiality, is considered as a situated strategy to contest the technosphere. In an art context, I consider how the artwork and artist are constituent of, and constituted by, their own contingent siting, building an argument for continuous self-reflexivity in relation to site.

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[45] David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 129.

[46] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004).

The *part* then moves on to focus on the 'political body'.[47] This, I argue, is a pivotal site

for the continuation of, and 'legitimisation' of, inequality. Drawing on Habermas,

Hannah Arendt and Ed Finn, I examine the historical emergence of the public sphere,

focussing especially on the key idea of 'bracketing out' various elements of life

(including numerous inequalities of 'being') beyond discussion.[48] The fallibility of

dialectically focussing on a single public sphere (or single counter public) to 'correct'

inequality is countered by emphasising the need for dynamic continual contestation

through emergent counter publics, counter-counter publics and beyond.[49]

I expand on Finn's argument that we presently have an inversion of the public sphere

which forecloses 'legitimate' contestation of itself.[50] Within the inverted public sphere,

the formerly bracketed out realms of firstly the social and subsequently the economic

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[47] I use this term in recognition of the body being both, in biopolitics, the base unit of the foreclosed political, as well as holding in assembly, as Butler argues, the capacity to reopen a space of politics. (This is expanded on in *Part 2*.)

Judith Butler, 'Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street', *transversal texts* (2011) <https://transversal.at/transversal/1011/butler/en> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Theory of Performative Assembly* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

Relating the literal body back to this meta-body also reduces the risk of an overly empirical consideration of the body as a theoretical device, which Vishmidt warns against.

Marina Vishmidt, 'Bodies in space: On the ends of vulnerability', *Radical Philosophy*, 2:8 (2020), 33-46 <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/bodies-in-space> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[48] Habermas.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [1958], 2nd edn (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

Ed Finn, *What Algorithms Want: Imagination in the Age of Computing* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2017).

[49] Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), 56-80.

[50] Finn, pp. 172-179.

enter into and come to dominate the space of politics. Such an inverted form denies contestation within its structures and logics, which are presented as all-encompassing. This foreshadows a requirement for the radicality within radical care, which might momentarily brace open a potentiality of change within this structure.

Part 2 then revisits Karl Marx's notion of a 'general intellect' (briefly discussed in *Part 1*) as suggestive of the positive potential of new technologies.[51] I argue that while these technologies might potentially be made use of, they are ideologically inscribed in their initiating. Any egalitarian general intellect will only be possible with a functioning (e.g. continually contesting and self-contesting) public sphere proactively *preceding* rather than *following* technology. That being a seemingly impossible reversal of present realities though, I advocate a viral, disruptive misuse of technological structures.

The *part* proceeds to more closely examine two specific technologies of the technosphere: Keller Easterling's 'zone', a spatialisation of the notion of bracketing out; and precarious 'freelance' labour for lean platforms, which I propose is an equivalent technology to the zone only brought to bear upon individuated bodies at the metropolitan core.[52] I argue that the spatial zone of exception has been encoded onto the 'dividual' workers within a society of control operating in an equivalent way, through micro-targeting of specified bodies, as is elsewhere enforced through geographical boundaries.[53] This framing of 'dividuated exception zones' constitutes a

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[51] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* [1857-61], trans. by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 690-712.

[52] Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London: Verso, 2016).

[53] 'Dividual' is Deleuze's term.

Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, 59 (1992), 3-7.

key sub-point: an articulation of the lineage of this attempt to foreclose the possibility of human care at the site of the individuated body.

This section (*Dark kitchens and desert cities*) includes first-hand recollection of engaging with lean platforms as a Deliveroo worker, an example of 'being' functioning as research. The section ends with a cautious, qualified note of optimism, observing the irresolvable tension coming with the reemergence of the relevance and potential affect of physical site behind the technosphere's presented ephemerality, when for example economic logics bring gig economy workers together in congregation.

Part 2 concludes by turning attention back explicitly to the artwork and artist. 'Social engagement' and 'participation' models for artistic relationship with site are critiqued, and an approach of considering the artistic intervention as a shifting assemblage is proposed. The need for open co-vulnerable human-to-human encounter is returned to and developed, with the centrality of agency being emphasised. In so doing, the entwined nature of radical care as an emerging concept and 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' as a methodological contribution is further examined and articulated. In ending, *Part 1*'s call for radical, perpetual destruction of the individuated artist self into fluid multitudes of undefinable creative self-hoods is revisited. A strategy of embodiment in the personhood of the artist alongside disembodiment in the artwork is developed. This positioning constitutes a key methodological sub-point. It is a means of attempting to hold the artistic intervention away from individuation, while recognising the strategic need to possibly put oneself at stake, especially when one's body and being are not those most typically subject to the greatest vulnerability within the technosphere.

Scene B

Scene B presents four 'characters', all of which are fragments of texts I had previously written in varying contexts for different purposes. The four text-characters do, however, share a connection to a series of residencies and research visits I undertook to Ukraine, and the artworks which ensued. These text-characters are pulled out of their initial context to intersect one another and form potential new retrospective meta-authorial understandings. They are brought into a new site, where their differing initial purposes reveal a web of complicit entanglement within interwoven networks of history, politics, and economics, and the material inequities which follow. The tether these text-characters retain to their initial context (and authorship) refracts the positionality of my being into these interwoven networks.

As with the previous, this *scene* offers an alternate route into some of the concepts theorised in the *part* which precedes it: in this case the political body and the corporeal body. It also again foreshadows the *part* which follows through its documenting of an emergent condition of embodied critical care (in commitment, concern, affection and attention), which will become a core element of radical care.[54]

In its addressing of these key concepts from the preceding and succeeding *parts*, *Scene B* does so through practice, and recalls an ongoing experience of having done so and continuing to do so within being. The scene thus constitutes a clear distillation of 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being'. The dates of the texts, within the

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[54] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics,* p. 5.

PhD period, further emphasise this: placing the times of writing, and times of events recalled, within the iterative feedback loop in complete enmeshment with theorising.

It is important that *Scene B* is an arttext. In being presented and denoted as such (as opposed to e.g. the un-reconfigured texts simply being included as an appendix), its production through a methodology of 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' is emphasised. Whereas most typically throughout the research project 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' sits as one element *within* the meta-method of 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being', *Scene B's* position *as an arttext* within *Lexis* reverses this. Here, instead, the surrounding context of the production of a disseminable research project through a process of 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being' is reflexively considered as part of the context for this arttext. This serves to emphasise the continuous reflexive consideration of the relationship between self and context that is at the core of both methodological contributions (and which is, by extension, a key aspect of radical care when considering how it might be practised).

Even more so than for *Scene A*, in their meta-textual forms the 'characters' in *Scene B* attempt to articulate a text as a living thing, in a continuous process of contestation, appropriation and re-presentation as it shifts through different contexts of encounter with plural readers. In differing ways, each of the two *scenes* pulls apart a teleological premise of forward progression. This breaking with a-critical 'progress' emphasises reflexivity and ongoing reconsideration, important aspects of critical care which will be brought into radical care.

Within the technospheric context, this holding open of the textual record or archive might function as a never-closing-down contestation of the incontestable, proprietorial textual structures we are subject to.

Part 3: Care

How can we imagine critical agency within a would-be totalising hegemony?

What could constitute a way of being through which sustainable resistant equality might form?

Building on the preceding arguments, *Part 3* fully articulates radical care as a way of being enabling resistant agency in relation to the technosphere. In forming a framework within which change might be imaginable (wherein the co-caring human might reclaim agency), this *part* focusses upon the encounters between entities, such as unequal individuals or a human and a system. I examine what the qualities of these encounters are and how they are affected by, and affect, the relations between the encountering entities before and after. These encounters can be both discursive and material.

Part 3 begins by considering 'computational thinking' as a means by which the technosphere, itself contingently produced, acts to foreclose the potential for subsequent change, for example towards greater equality (thus requiring the radical intervention as a disruptive promulgator of encounter within but not determined by the system).[55]

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[55] James Bridle, *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future* (London: Verso, 2018), p. 4.

The socio-political ramifications of a world premised on aleatory event-encounters are explored through a detailed examination of a Lucretian ontology (and writings upon this by Louis Althusser, Alain Badiou and others).[56] The event-encounter is proposed as a site within which the artistic intervention should focus the potential affect it might have, as a destabilised moment where agency can be enacted to disrupt stasis. Aleatory materialism, within which motion is primary, implicitly asserts change, a future, and agency.[57]

Part 3 proceeds to examine Jacques Derrida's notion of hospitality, premised on a situated perpetual indebtedness of guest to host.[58] I argue that there is an equivalence between the guest in actuality being permanently upon the threshold, subject to the host's power, and the technosphere's control over us at the perpetual point of evental threshold. Considered in such a way, hospitality is a materially inscribed and embodied manifestation of indebtedness within which life must occur, which presents itself as a false form of care. Rather than being a specific financial-capitalist form, I

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[56] Thomas Nail, *Lucretius I: An Ontology of Motion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings 1978-87*, ed. by François Matheron and Oliver Corpet, trans. by G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006).

Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* [1988], trans. by Oliver Feltham (New York, NY: Continuum, 2005).

[57] Althusser.

[58] Jacques Derrida, 'Hostipitality', trans. by Barry Stocker, *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 5:3 (2000), 3-18.

Jacques Derrida, 'The Principle of Hospitality', trans. by Ashley Thompson, *Parallax*, 11:1 (2005), 6-9.

Anne Dufourmantelle and Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, trans. by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

consider debt (introduced in *Part 1* as a key mechanism in technospheric abstraction of the human into individuated subject-resource) as a broader manifestation of a power relationship: an inequality of which the specific mechanics can transform through multiple different technologies of power.[59] Via hospitality, a contingently arrived at indebtedness is inscribed upon the vast majority of humans, and is subsequently presented as inevitable. Using the Lucretian discourse to emphasise its aleatory contingency though, we might remind ourselves that this hospitality-stasis is transient and contestable. Connecting together indebtedness, Derrida's writing on hospitality, and a Lucretian ontology in this way is a key original sub-point which elucidates a present logic of proprietorial stasis requiring a radicality to de-stabilise.

Having thus established the urgent need for the radical act, *Part 3* considers ideas of love and friendship as means of producing a pro-human equality, addressing Arendt's, Badiou's and Derrida's writings on these subjects.[60] Though each holds helpful aspects, their respective grounding in the sovereign individual and tendency towards connections premised on proximity lead me to turn, in preference, to care.

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[59] This broader understanding of debt follows Lazzaretto, Virno and Graeber.

Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. by Joshua David Jordan (Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e), 2012).

Virno.

David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York NY: Melville House, 2011).

[60] Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*.

Alain Badiou with Nicolas Truong, *In Praise of Love* [2009], trans. by Peter Bush (New York NY: The New Press, 2012).

Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. by George Collins (London: Verso, 1997).

A multifaceted understanding of care, and its urgency, is built up through considering

the advocated de-individuation and relations of embodiment and disembodiment

developed through the preceding *parts*. At a meta-level, care for the concept and text in

all of its complexity, contextuality, potentiality and affect is held alongside critical care's

equal focus on the material.[61] The material, corporeal implications of textual violence

(and resulting urgency of multifaceted care) are emphasised, drawing on Anne Boyer's

and Christina Sharpe's visceral depictions, in the contexts of pharma-capitalism and

the wake of transatlantic slavery respectively.[62]

Care is developed as a 'fidelity' according to Badiou's use of the term, wherein it can

pass through the ([in]hospitable, appropriated) threshold to the future.[63] This is a key

sub-point, which enables inter-human care to operate in relation to, as well as with

autonomy from, the technosphere.

Part 3 concludes by offering a cohesive articulation of radical care. A simultaneous bi-

directionality between the caring and the radical is emphasised: only through one

another can they be sustainably held thinkable, and thought hope-able. With the

contributions of the research project iteratively refolding through one another, the

introduction to radical care which follows below will frame the reader's encounter

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[61] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics.*

Michelle Murphy, 'Unsettling care: Transnational itineraries of care in feminist health practices', *Social Studies of Science*, 45:5 (2015), 717-737.

[62] Anne Boyer, *The Undying: Pain, Vulnerability, Mortality, Medicine, Art, Time, Dreams, Data, Exhaustion, Cancer, and Care* (London: Allen Lane, 2019).

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

[63] Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 232-237.

with both *Praxis* and the *parts* and *scenes* to come within *Lexis*, which will themselves feed into the full conceptualisation of radical care offered in *Part 3*.

The interconnected elements of individuating, dehumanising processes within the technosphere, and the self-perpetuation of this profoundly unequal structure as framed in the preceding *parts,* form the context radical care is a response to.

Radical care closely connects with 'critical care' as developed by Maria Puig de la Bellacasa; Aryn Martin, Natasha Myers and Ana Viseu; Michelle Murphy; and others.[64] Critical care emphasises a self-reflexivity and continuous reconsideration and contestation of what it itself is: care for the concept itself. As part of this, Puig de la Bellacasa especially emphasises a need to care for the existent discourse; to see the new contribution not as a superseding replacement, but instead as a further supplementary perspective to be weighed by others alongside what is already there, taking care to acknowledge those whose work one is building upon.[65] Thus I do not propose radical care as a 'development' of critical care, but as an augmenting difference of focus.

Critical care incorporates a slowing down and acknowledgement of complexity, an emotional co-investiture over sustained time, material acts of labour and provision for, attention and concern for something (something which one may not be the principal

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[64] Puig de la Bellacasa, 'Matters of care in technoscience: Assembling neglected things'.

Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics.*

Aryn Martin, Natasha Myers and Ana Viseu, 'The politics of care in technoscience', *Social Studies of Science*, 45:5 (2015), 625-641.

Murphy.

[65] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics.*

affectee of), a troubled-ness with the current state of things, and both affect and affection.[66] It sets out a need for these forms of care in response to the escalating inequality continuing through accelerating forms of proprietorial dehumanisation.

I argue that while critical care offers an absolutely vital way of being in response to technospheric inequalities, it risks being too slow at times and thus falling into a responsive, reactive position in relation to the ever faster abstract systems affecting our lives. Radical care (which can only come out of an established, nurtured, reflexive basis in critical care) is thus proposed as a means of having proactive, disruptive affect within this context. The radically caring act (which might be an artistic intervention) is paradoxically carelessly flung forward into and ahead of the paths accelerating out from the systems and structures constituting and reproducing our world. In anarchic, playful, wild uncontrolled-ness, might the carefree act (nevertheless rooted in care) disrupt and diverge (im)possible futures?

The majority of these radically caring careless acts will inevitably be ineffective, or worse: harmful. However, the need for systemic change, which I establish, nevertheless necessitates the attempt, with the current state of being increasingly exploitative and unequal, and permitted modes of critique or challenge foreclosed or ineffective. Here though, critical care again becomes integral to radical care. Not only does the extensive work of critical care affect that which might be thought in the moment as being the urgent act, but critical care must be cast forward into the future along with the act, by both actor and potential affectee. That an expansion of critical care might be intuitively intended to be the future result of the immediate, radical act by the actor is premised

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[66] Murphy, p. 721.

Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics*, p. 5.

on their preceding commitment to critical care. This is vital in holding the intent of the act away from either self-interest or nihilism. The potential affectee's casting forward of critical care is harder due to the potential for unintended harm. A pre-commitment to an acceptance of the unintentionality of this eventuality, and a pre-forgiveness is needed here. This is the hardest part of radical care, and can only be realised through the mutual ongoing commitment to critical care. It is vital though, in order to act and instigate possible change, in a proactively disruptive, resistant way, towards the accelerating systems and structures affecting us all and extending inequalities.

Radical care is thus an ethics: rather than being a rigid moralistic imposition, it is self-reflexively developed through networks of encounter-events.

It is also a politics: it is promulgated through the social and necessarily full of discussion, compromise, and ongoing re-consideration. It is worked out, and worked on, together.

Through this ethical and political basis, a set of advocated methodologies of both art and 'being' emerge. These include, but are not limited to: a commitment to the other, an investment of time in their life and their concerns, an ongoing attempt to further one's understanding of their context; an acknowledging of the importance of affection and emotive bond; a recognising and discussing of difference and inequality. And through a committed critically caring basis, a permission to act with proactive immediacy into, and in instigation of, unknown futures.

PART 1: WORK

How does the technosphere use de-humanising abstraction to subsume labour, the body, the artist and the future?[67]

Part 1 begins by introducing the concept of the 'technosphere', and the economic logics which underpin it. An abstracting reduction of agency is identified as running through the technosphere, manifested in textual forms. Of these manifestations, the unavoidable imposition of indebtedness upon the subject is particularly notable.

Focus then shifts to art's enmeshment and complicity within currently dominant structures. This becomes clear in tracing its entwined history within them, necessitating a critical self-reflexivity which art has frequently insufficiently held. *Part 1* ends in considering how, through an acknowledgment of this and an emphasis on 'pro-human' qualities, artistic interventions might conceivably enable resistance.

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[67] As noted in the *Introduction*, though *Part 1* begins with this question, it goes on to start to further unfold the concerns and questions of the research project as a whole.

<u>The technosphere: an all-encompassing textual context</u>

I use the term 'technosphere' as a placeholder to stand in for the fluidly indefinable, un-fully knowable, entangled global system of capitalism, technology, economy and socio-cultural relations within which we by definition exist. I use this term following on from the *Technosphere Magazine* research project convened by Haus der Kulturen der Welt, exploring the ecologically affecting and creating implications (in the broadest supra-biological sense) of our current and future technological context.[68]

Text and language are central to the technosphere, thus at the outset I want to briefly divert into etymology. The technosphere is a structural entity formed with and through the period frequently termed the anthropocene.[69] However, whereas the suffix '-cene' evokes a temporal epoch (holocene, pleistocene, etc.), '-sphere' is suggestive of a complex self-perpetuating system, possibly somewhat spatially situated (hydrosphere, biosphere, etc.). In the discussion which follows, I explore a temporal compression into only the present, negating the relevance of -'cene'. '-Sphere', on the other hand, does accurately reflect the tendency towards a totality implicit within our current technological neoliberal hegemony. Turning to the prefixes, while the 'techno-' is (thus far at least) human made, it has become a structure which subsumes and, I will argue, diminishes the human (or at least the majority of us). Thus a focus on 'techno-' is more

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[68] *Technosphere Magazine* [website/research project initiated by Haus der Kulturen der Welt] (2015-19) <https://technosphere-magazine.hkw.de> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[69] While alternative designations such as the 'capitalocene' can be argued as being more accurate, 'anthropocene' is the most prevalent of such terms within the general discourse.

applicable than the now somewhat nostalgic 'anthropo-'.[70] If a temporal designation is to be used, 'post-human' seems more apt. However, I do not accept this term of self-extinction: ways of reasserting the human, ways of *being* human, will be a central thread running throughout this text. This seeking of ways of being *for all*, as indicated in its title, is the fundamental spine of this research project.

The technosphere as a concept describes our increasingly networked and digitised ecology, but also increasingly determines it. Like any ecosystem, it feeds back into the actions and thinking of the organisms within it: us. The matter forming the technosphere is text, and especially the vast and exponentially increasing subset of it which we call data. A constellation of key technologies have matured in the fields of communications and computation with the effect that the means by which we experience the world around us, and are experienced (and recorded) by it, are increasingly written. Written in hypertext, in algorithm, and in quantified data-sets. The digital, textual world is no longer something we opt into through sitting down at the computer terminal, but is something we are continuously part of: through the cloud, the mobile phone recording and broadcasting data from our pocket, the voice assistant devices listening in at home, the cameras recording ever more of our activity, and the abstracted (and increasingly automated) global financial flows affecting funds available for everything from the local school to the next war. Our communications and relationships increasingly pass through digital channels, and even the most 'human' areas of activity; imagination, love and death; become digital through virtual reality

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[70] Tsing also argues that 'anthropo-' prevents useful attention from being given to the non-human elements (technological or otherwise) of the assemblages within which we live. And additionally, typical use of the prefix exclusively connects the notion of the human to the effects of capitalism, overlooking other facets.

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 19-20.

and 3D rendering, artificial intelligence and robotics, and killing by drone strike from a computer-game interface in a bunker on the other side of the planet.

Benjamin Bratton uses a different term, 'the stack', but in exploring this he outlines a multilayered architecture of the technosphere: an overlapping sequence of interdependent layers of earth, cloud, city, interface, address, and user.[71] He emphasises, importantly, that while the technosphere becomes all-encompassing as a contemporary context, it is not a singular totality (and certainly not a singularly authored or designed one). Rather, it is a meta-network of entwined pseudo-totalities and would-be totalities overlaying one another, operating through different vertically stacked levels, sometimes incongruous to one another. The cumulative effect though, is to build up this experienced meta-structure of contemporary life rendered in code, algorithm and text. Also importantly, Bratton observes that rather than heralding the end of physical geographies (or nation states and other entities conceived in such terms), the technosphere is witnessing a rapidly shifting still-in-flux set of possible relations to these.[72] How these settle will be key to our collective future. Dematerialised digitalisation of life and work does remove some of the historic centralities of geography, but national and supra-national boundaries, digital citizenships, variable

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[71] Benjamin Bratton, *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2015), p. 11.

The un-fully-graspable nature of the entity under consideration results in a range of terms which variously centre attention upon different aspects of it. Guattari's concept of 'Integrated World Capitalism' is another overlapping label, in this case particularly emphasising the reflexive affect of the structure within the individual's mind.

Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London: Continuum, 2008).

[72] Bratton.

tax regimes, and territorially determined legislation around data have never been more important.[73]

A multifaceted context, the technosphere describes and (re)produces our current experience, but is comprised of an agglomeration of elements that have coalesced over time. Key underpinnings include, on the economic side, the emergence of a singular interconnected global hegemony of neoliberal capital; and on the political side, the unquestionable authority of the state and security apparatus to conduct surveillance and collect data, with the continuously reiterated threat of the terrorist acting as a kind of trump card, as brought to prominent attention by Edward Snowden.

In its networked decentralisation, the technosphere in some respects might resemble Karl Marx's foresighted notion of the general intellect.[74] However, as Paolo Virno argues, if publicness of the intellect does not yield to the realm of the public sphere (e.g. is not considered in a public political space) then rather than proving liberatory, this false 'general intellect' drastically increases forms of unequal submission and exploitation.[75] As I will go on to explore, despite the utopian potential sometimes claimed for it, the technosphere carries through itself all of the structures of privilege, inequality and exploitation which precede it, and more.

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[73] Sites, material or otherwise, and our location in relation to them, are a key subject which will be specifically addressed in *Part 2*.

[74] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* [1857-61], trans. by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 690-712.

Part 2 returns to address this idea in greater depth.

[75] Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For An Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. by Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito and Andrea Casson (Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 39.

Platform capitalism: economic driver of accelerating inequality

With technologies and data becoming increasingly pivotal within our context, platform capitalism can be considered the technosphere's currently hegemonic, data-centric economic logic. Platform capitalism is key in expanding the technosphere into the rapidly shrinking spaces in which it is not yet dominant, and at the same time diminishing agency for the majority of subjected individuals.

It is important to explore this economic context. Work, debt and value are ingrained into us from an early age as intricately connected to identity, esteem and agency: both the neoliberal capitalist and the Marxist acknowledge this.

Nick Srnicek argues for the adoption of the term 'platform capitalism' to describe the current economic and by extension social, political and cultural hegemony emanating out of Silicon Valley ideology.[76] The institutions and activities underpinning it, and best exemplifying it, tend to emerge from, or are most developed in, high-income North America and Europe (as borne out by Srnicek's case studies), but integral to the form is that it can rapidly spread across the globe, operating primarily in ephemeral, digital space.[77] Platform capitalism can be considered a specifically current new form within post-Fordism, and as was the case within labour structures expressive of that paradigm

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[76] Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

(*Part 2* examines how the economic has subsumed the social, political and cultural.)

[77] This is a generalisation. Other high-income countries such as Israel or Australia also fit the pattern.

China, with its largely distinct internet ecology, could well be another core site of platform capitalism. However, the country's semi-separation from the 'global' internet has (until recently at least) acted as a partial brake on the broader spread of platforms originating from China.

as they became increasingly hegemonic from around 1970, while it tends towards totality or at least preeminence, it does not exclude the possibility of localised pockets of previous structures. In fact, it relies upon them, an irony which I will return to. As a presently dominant logic, it is important here to outline platform capitalism and assess how it might be differentiated from broader post-Fordist structures, forming a related but new paradigm.

Key to Srnicek's conception of platform capitalism is an emphasis on data and information, principally recording human characteristics, activities and relationships.[78] The collection and deployment of this data, he argues, is key to the emerging economic regime, with control of information beginning to supersede ownership of (other) means of production. This centrality of data will be returned to and explored in depth.

As suggested by the name, the key institution within platform capitalism is the platform. These are private companies, or parts within companies, which position themselves at the point of exchange between two or more other parties making use of exponentially increasing networked technology. Nothing material is produced, and frequently a service is not directly provided; rather, the platform facilitates the exchange between the party that wants and the party that offers. An example such as Uber or Air BnB is very clear in this regard: the platform simply connects together drivers and lift-seekers, or hosts and accommodation-hunters. In these two cases an immediate profit in the form of a financial cut is instantly taken from the transaction, however an additional profit is the data extracted. It is this data (on location, on time, on willingness to pay, on congestion, on frequency, on popularity and so forth, as well

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[78] Ibid.

as identity characteristics of the users at both sides of the exchange) that is continuously collected and analysed, which allows these platforms to increase scale and efficiencies and out-compete would-be rivals (operating temporarily at a loss, when necessary, to do so). Thus, a tendency towards monopolisation is a characteristic of platform capitalism.

I will not go into detail regarding the financial conditions enabling the burgeoning of platform capitalism here, other than to note that the extreme concentration of capital at present, combined with (by 1945 to 2008 standards) low growth rates, means speculative investments in new tech start-ups are frequent (fitting the financialised trend of speculation on risk being a chief economic characteristic of neoliberalism).[79] The sector acts as a repository of surplus capital as well as a generator of it.

Uber and Air BnB are examples of what Srnicek labels 'lean platforms', the functioning of which is relatively simple, as outlined above.[80] In other forms of platform, the data-extracting underpinnings of the company can be somewhat more hidden, or interwoven with preceding forms of profit generation.

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[79] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century,* trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

[80] Srnicek, p. 49.

It is worth noting that the micro-targeted extraction and exploitation of bodily labour around which other lean platforms are built (detailed examination and first-hand recollection of which is included in *Part 2*) is not so directly the case for Air BnB. However, while property acts as a distancing layer, Air BnB makes a significant contribution to the ongoing translation of 'dwelling' towards becoming a potentially profitable (and thus exploitable) asset. At a structural level, it is thus no less complicit in bodily violence through the resultant inadequacy and un-affordability of urgently needed homes in many locations around the world.

Furthermore, opportunistic 'sub-platforms' directly exploiting bodily labour, of cleaners or launderers for example, are usually part of the Air BnB ecology in cities where it has a large presence.

The 'advertising platform' category is dominated by two companies: Facebook and Google (accruing 12.3% and 55.2% of 2016 global online advertising revenue respectively).[81] Each generates a financial profit through adverting. Each offers various financially free services to users (who number in their billions) such as access to information, or social interaction. Data is collected on all aspects of each user's every engagement with the platform.[82] This data enables a constantly improving micro-targeted product to be offered (warding off competition), but also enables highly segmented and specified advertising to be sold on an enormous scale. These advertising platforms indisputably operate within Herbert Simon's concept of the 'attention economy', as Claudio Celis Bueno explores.[83] However, whereas the 'attention economy' is still rooted in labour time (albeit in relatively non-strenuous activity), I will argue that the key distinguishing factor of platform capitalism is an extraction of value from individuals' 'being', irrespective of time or attention.

'Cloud platforms' and 'industrial platforms', as Srnicek labels them, are less well known as they do not primarily orientate themselves towards the general public.[84] Amazon Web Services (AWS) is an until recently little known but increasingly

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[81] Ibid.

Christian Fuchs, 'Towards the Public Service Internet as Alternative to the Commercial Internet', *ORF Texte*, 20 (2017), 43-50.

[82] Through apps on our phones, the browser we use, and dowloaded cookies, along with conveniently being able to log-in to other sites using our Facebook or Google identity (not to mention numerous corporate acquisitions), interaction with these platforms now expands far beyond what might immediately spring to mind.

[83] Claudio Celis Bueno, *The Attention Economy: Labour, Time and Power in Cognitive Capitalism* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), p. 10.

[84] Srnicek.

Though I follow Srnicek's five platform taxonomy here, it is arguable that his cloud platforms are a (particularly important) sub-type of 'product platform', with rental within the cloud replacing capital investment in e.g. a server.

profitable part of Amazon. It is a cloud platform: flexibly renting remote server space and associated services to whoever wants them. (And many of those who want them are themselves platforms using the service to enable extremely rapid scaling up, Uber being a notable example.) Amazon can then extract vast amounts of useable data from the raw information stored on its servers. This not only enables the continuing market dominance of AWS, but also feeds into myriad other aspects of Amazon's business (many parts of which also function as types of platform). Platforms on the scale of Amazon, Google and Facebook, with vast capital reserves, are complex multifaceted businesses, veering far away from the strip-back-to-the-core emphasis of the preceding generation of business orthodoxy. A wide variety of new services can be developed, all ultimately connected to the exploitation or collection of data. Different services can cross-fertilise data with others, with some at times being subsidised in order to further facilitate this.

The principal 'industrial platforms' are highly funded projects within companies which would not immediately be thought of as platforms. Siemens and General Electric continue to be manufacturers, but in addition to this they are both competing with their own versions of a universal standard for an intelligent production process.[85] Both are investing heavily to become the adopted standard, but whichever platform comes to dominate will be able to collect huge amounts of information on industrial processes (including competitors'), all the more so as automation increases. Being less directly connected to individuals, some of the discussion that follows is less relevant to industrial platforms.

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[85] Ibid.

Srnicek's final platform type are 'product platforms', employing a model where something that would once have been a one-off capital investment is instead sold as an ongoing rental agreement, with the behaviour of the renter then providing ongoing usable data.[86] Spotify would be a familiar example of this type of platform. As with the lean platforms, there is a direct financial profit extracted in this type, however, it is the harvesting and deploying of data that enables established companies to deter would-be competitors. It should though be noted that for lean and product platforms this deterrence is imperfect: much more so than for Google, Amazon or Facebook; Spotify, Uber and their like do face realistic competitors. They do not have the same scale and breadth of means of collecting data to completely lock others out.

In concluding his overview of platform capitalism, Srnicek notes its colonialist impulse: seeking new areas of human (inter-)activity as terrains to be colonised for the extraction of data.[87] As I will address, this colonising impulse also has a strong temporal element, seeking to control and own individuals' futures and deny their agency over them. Puncturing the liberating, non-hierarchical rhetoric the platforms employ, Srnicek observes 'this is not the end of ownership, but rather the concentration of ownership', and within this we can expand the meaning of ownership out from the financial or commodified to incorporate body, agency, time and future.[88] At present, Srnicek's call for not-for-profit collective or publicly owned platforms seems unachievable given the general public's apparent willingness to give over their data. The entrenched positions of the big platforms means legislation rather than competition would seem to be the only way to challenge their position, but despite

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., p. 98.

[88] Ibid., p. 92.

attempted European Union regulation, this seems unlikely in the current neoliberal

context.[89]

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[89] 'European Commission Antitrust: Commission fines Google €1.49 billion for abusive practices in online advertising', *European Commission website* (20 March 2019) <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_1770> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Foo Yun Chi, 'Facebook in EU antitrust crosshairs over data collection', *Reuters website* (2 December 2019) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-facebook-antitrust/facebook-in-eu-antitrust-crosshairs-over-data-collection-idUSKBN1Y625J> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

<u>The emergence of post-Fordism</u>

To more fully contextualise platform capitalism, it is important to address some of the key underpinning elements of post-Fordism which have carried through into it, sometimes becoming further exacerbated.

A concept originally introduced by Baruch Spinoza, Virno presents the 'multitude' as the resulting social organisation under current neoliberal conditions of labour and capital.[90] For Virno, the multitude is statically reproduced through economic conditions, a differing emphasis from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's view that it holds the potential of liberation from current capitalism.[91] Virno's multitude stands in place of 'the people', existing in a continual state of displacement and isolated anguish. The multitude are reliant on their cognitive and linguistic capability to seek connection where there are no longer communities, and work is rendered more and more 'virtuosic'.[92] Even when an individual's formal employment might include the production of something, Virno argues that they are subject to a dominant regime of virtuosic labour, where both in and out of nominal work they must linguistically perform merely to survive. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer set out an argument that the culture industries did in fact still conform to the Fordist criteria of serialisation, parcelization, and so forth.[93] However, for Virno it was the performance or creation rendered at those sites, rather than their economic or

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[90] Virno.

[91] Pascal Gielen, *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Politics and Post-Fordism* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2009), p. 24.

[92] Virno, p. 56.

[93] Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1944], trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 94-136.

institutional underpinnings, which has borne more relevance in subsequent post-Fordism.[94] That virtuosity has unfolded across all sectors of labour.

Whereas for the Frankfurt School unhappiness was derived from separation from society, Virno argues it is the opposite, the absolute interweaving, which creates perpetual pathological crisis as any distinct sense of self is lost and linguistic reassertion must be continually performed.[95] In concluding, he notes that in rendering linguistic-relational capabilities its primary productive resource, contemporary capitalism has shifted to seek profit in precisely what makes us human.[96] Virno was writing before the large-scale uptake of social media, and network and data storage capacities have increased vastly since; platform capitalism can be viewed as a more coordinated attempt to directly monetise and exploit those linguistic-relational capabilities being used outside of the formal workplace.

Looking to the emergence of a post-Fordist labour context (coming about with and through the '68 revolutions, Fiat strikes, oil shocks, fragmenting of the Bretton Woods system in 1971, and myriad other related events), Pascal Gielen offers a hypothesis that the early modern art world had long foreshadowed this new model, being rooted in the very same labour characteristics which came to define post-Fordism.[97] He argues artists had functioned as a vanguard for the new regime, with their work being rooted in communication, virtuosity, informality, mobility and opportunism long before 1968. This positioning of artists as hyper-flexible is rather romantic and can certainly be

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[94] Virno, p. 58.

[95] Ibid., p. 79.

[96] Ibid., p. 98.

[97] Gielen.

questioned, ignoring as it does the messy complexity of any individual artist's social, familial, economic and legal context, and their varying need for stability and security. Art fairs and biennials (and in some cases residencies) often function as abstracted spaces without commitment to the reality of their site, and presume a similarly abstracted disembodiment of the artist: without commitments or responsibilities. The model presumed is one of a modernist engagement of abstract surface to abstract surface, ignoring the complexities of politics, production, labour and life that lie behind: 'being' is erased.[98]

Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello also see an important role played by art in the shift to post-Fordism.[99] However, whereas Gielen emphasises forms of labour undertaken by the artist, they focus on the role of artistic critique of the preceding Fordist regime. While a simultaneous social critique coming from the political left and rooted in equality was defeated, it was in accepting and incorporating (or coopting) the artistic critique rooted in freedom and liberation from constraints (including the constraints of Fordist work) that Boltanski and Chiapello see Fordism shifting into post-Fordism.[100]

Silvia Federici's critique of Hardt and Negri's use of the term 'affective labour' offers an alternative starting point for the emergence of post-Fordism.[101] In arguing that the

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[98] These are key ideas expanded on in *Parts 2* and *3*.

As discussed in *Praxis*, 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' as a methodology of artistic practice explicitly looks to move beyond these abstractions of both artist and site within the encounter.

[99] Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, 'The New Spirit of Capitalism', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 18 (2005), 161-188.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Silvia Federici, 'On Affective Labour', in *Cognitive Capitalism, Education and Digital Labour* ed. by Michael Peters and Ergin Bulut (New York NY: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 57-73.

unacknowledged core of the term is (typically female) reproductive labour taking place in and around the kitchen, the bedroom and the home, she constructs an argument that Tronti's 'social factory' began in the home and progressed out from there to the acknowledged workplace, rather than vice versa.[102] It was in predominantly female, unvalorised affective labour that the key qualities of post-Fordism (a blurring between work and not-work, 'remote' working, flexibility, informality, communication, etc.) originated. Despite these characteristics now being highly valued in nominally productive and financially remunerated labour, they are still completely overlooked in their domestic and reproductive contexts. Where reproductive labour does on occasion cross over into the financial economy (in the form of outsourced childcare, cleaning, care work, etc.), it is almost always low-paid (and devalorised) and disproportionately conducted by (typically female) immigrants and/or 'people of colour'. Fraser notes that within certain strands of feminism an overemphasis on 'emancipation' from previous social control, allied with marketisation and neoliberalism, has led to a new triangulation where social reproduction is increasingly re-externalised onto those who face compound inequalities of race, class, nationality and so forth.[103] This mirrors the

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[102] Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland CA: PM Press, 2012).

Mario Tronti, *Workers and Capital* [1966], trans. by David Broder (London: Verso, 2019), pp. 12-35.

[103] Nancy Fraser, 'Contradictions of Capital and Care', *New Left Review*, 100 (2016), 99-117.

disjuncture opened up between 'freedom' and equality which Boltanski and Chiapello articulate.[104]

As Helen Hester observes, current discourses of post-work and automation, predominantly coming from men, too often overlook the potential for furthering equality that well-considered application of technology to reproductive labour could bring.[105] We should perhaps not be surprised to find platform capitalism and the technosphere it inhabits to be premised on a profound inequality, when the post-Fordist context out of which it has emerged was similarly premised on structurally embedded hierarchies from its very beginnings. Alongside limitless natural resources, a second false premise of capitalism is a limitless supply of unpaid care, and this is not changing in the emergence of platform capitalism.[106] In being unpaid, this care, while relied upon, is accorded no value according to the logic of the technospheric structure.

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[104] Boltanski and Chiapello.

Srnicek and Williams' concept of 'synthetic freedom' offers a means of addressing this disjuncture; arguing that any freedom is synthetic, e.g. produced, and the conditions of that production (which affect it) are formed within a context of (in)equality. Thus freedom cannot be considered independently of equality.

Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 78-83.

[105] Helen Hester, *After Work: What's left and Who Cares?*, presentation at Goldsmiths College, University of London, 22 February 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynnGV3RHy2c> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[106] Sarah Leonard and Nancy Fraser, 'Capitalism's Crisis of Care', *Dissent,* 63:4 (2016) <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/nancy-fraser-interview-capitalism-crisis-of-care> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

<u>A new paradigm centred on data</u>

Certainly technological development and the further prevailing global dominance of neoliberal structures mean that there has been a quantitative acceleration of tendencies already present within post-Fordism. Whether platform capitalism marks a qualitative shift to a wholly new paradigm will likely only be able to be authoritatively argued in looking back with greater hindsight. However, I hold that its particular basis in data acquisition and exploitation sets it apart.

A blurring of the boundary between work and not-work, an ever-increasing emphasis on affective and immaterial labour more and more rooted in linguistic-relational capability as the source of value, and a convergence of consumption and production. All of these elements, notable within post-Fordism, can be seen reaching a further extreme, simultaneously both cause and effect, within platform capitalism. Gielen argues that it is speed and acceleration in these areas which distinguishes the current state of post-Fordist work from previous iterations.[107] The argument I make here goes further, tallying with Matteo Pasquinelli's assertion that the emergence of 'big data' is the centre point making platform capitalism qualitatively different, with individuals now economically functioning as infinite *sources* of data, rather than predominantly being recipients of it.[108]

Datafication and the computational potential for ever more sophisticated real-time analysis has two particularly concerning implications. A de-humanised, algorithmic

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[107] Gielen, p. 13.

[108] Matteo Pasquinelli, 'Italian Operaismo and the Information Machine', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 32:3 (2015), 49-68.

real-time presumption of what is 'likely' or 'normal' is only a very short step away

from 'anomalies' then being flagged-up or automatically permitted or disallowed.[109]

With all aspects of our lives being ever increasingly trackable and traceable in such a

way, datafication as a process (irrespective of the use that data is then put to) seems to

promote conformity (in line with Michel Foucault's understanding of governmentality

being constituted in the practices of control, more so than their necessarily intended

use).[110] Secondly, David Lyon notes that the surveillance tendency of big data acts to

tilt emphases all across consideration of events, behaviour and activity towards the

future.[111] The potential to predict, manage and ultimately perhaps control the future

shifts the gaze away from attempting to understand or question complexities of history

or context preceding or surrounding the present point. Control over what *will* happen

negates the need for exploring how, or why, or what might have been.[112]

It is also interesting to note the continual use of security and safety as a justification for

our data being collected. Lyon observes that the familiarity with, and general

acceptance of, the need for data surveillance as a state security measure primes the

digital public for giving over their data.[113] If it is already out there, being recorded for

security purposes, it is an easy slippage to then accept its economic use as well. There

is an echo here of Guy Debord's exploration of the terrorist figure as a returned to

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[109] David Lyon, 'Surveillance, Snowden and Big Data: Capacities, Consequences, Critique', *Big Data & Society*, 1:2 (2014) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2053951714541861> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[110] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, ed. by Michel Senellart, trans. by Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2009).

[111] Lyon.

[112] Looking forward to the discussion of care in *Part 3*, this can be considered an 'uncaring' engagement with context.

[113] Ibid.

device presented as justifying general paternalistic surveillance and control.[114]

However, the technological advances made in the decades that have passed since its

writing mean Debord's caveat that 'the quantity of data demands constant

summarising: much of it will be lost, and what remains is still too long to read' now

only serves to remind us that the opposite has become the case.[115]

It is worth reemphasising that new labour paradigms do not immediately completely

replace the previous. Preceding forms continue to exist, often indefinitely, subsumed as

anachronisms within the new hegemony. Though they may be devalued, they are often

in fact crucial foundations; consider for example the vast manufacture of hardware and

infrastructure that underpins the supposedly dematerialised businesses of platform

capitalism.

Federici makes the important point that this persistence of previous regimes is not

neutral.[116] In an echo of unacknowledged reproductive labour being chiefly put upon

women outside of the acknowledged (and paid) sphere of production, a (neo-)colonial

structure pushes and off-shores these preceding forms of labour (chiefly primary and

secondary sectors) to lower-income regions of the world. Simultaneously with being

pushed away, these forms of labour are also devalued under a dominant discourse

further and further privileging linguistic-relational and immaterial labour, though not

when these labour types fall within the reproductive sphere. That Apple products

display their 'designed in California' (not even the USA) status ahead of their

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[114] Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* [1988], trans. by Malcolm Imrie (London: Verso, 1998), p. 24.

[115] Ibid., p. 81.

[116] Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero.*

'assembled (not even made) in China' materiality is succinctly illustrative of this. As a broader evocation of the aforementioned abstracted surface non-realities of the biennial or art-fair, platform capitalism likewise presents itself as a free-floating shimmer, not acknowledging its hidden roots connecting deeply back into the devalorised physical and material. The continuous global (re)presentation of such a steep differentiation of value (and thus aspiration) presents profound ethical questions around e.g. immigration and deportation when we acknowledge that it is in fact rooted in an ongoing implicit colonial geography of enforcement and exploitation.[117]

One of the most devalorised categories of labour by necessity remaining physically proximate to privileged individuals and societies is material care work, particularly that which involves direct engagement with bodily matter. That this work exists (and as populations age it increases, e.g. in caring for the elderly) directly contradicts the Silicon Valley drive towards superseding the body. There is a devalorising of the work as it sits low down on the virtuosic labour ladder, but there is simultaneously an intentionally stubborn overlooking and under-recognising of it as it forces us to confront our own messy bodily-ness. This most material of cares is vital to recognise. Capitalist technologies of automation, scaling-up and commoditisation are frequently less applicable to care work like this, thus there is a rational capitalist incentive to maintain a pool of un- or under-paid workers as a means of providing this essential labour while limiting its relative 'expense', so long as the presently hegemonic logic of capital is accepted as an inevitability.[118] *Part 3* will develop a multifaceted notion of

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[117] I explore this spatiality further in *Part 2*, including how processes of micro-targeted, individuated subjectification produce a 'proximate periphery' of devalorised labour, in addition to a remote one.

[118] Micki McGee, 'Capitalism's Care Problem: Some Traces, Fixes and Patches', *Social Text*, 38:1 (2020), 39-66 (p. 42).

care incorporating political, textual and self-reflexive aspects, but this material care is essential to acknowledge as an element amidst these which is co-equal. Only in so doing can the critical and radical conceptions of care which are developed be held away from hypocrisy in their abstracting theorisations.

A point of departure for an argument that platform capitalism does constitute a qualitative shift from post-Fordism might be Virno's summation that 'the primary productive resource of contemporary capitalism lies in the linguistic-relational capabilities of humans'.[119] Virno's argument emphasises the means by which actively engaged linguistic-relational capability is now the primary producer of value both within the nominal workplace and also in the 'social factory'.[120] However, that capability must be actively performed by the subjects: as Virno writes, it operates as a flow or methodology of production of value. I propose that under platform capitalism (sixteen years after Virno's writing), linguistic-relational capability ('the very thing which makes us human') is, furthermore, a more static (or at least automatic) resource from which value and potential profit can be extracted even when that capability is not made manifest in actual productive enactment.[121] We exist as exploitable agglomerations of data even when we do not enact ourselves. As we allow platforms to intercept and mediate our interrelations, as data storage capacity means everything is recorded and available, as algorithms enable automated and immediate analysis and deployment of findings from that data, and as we are ever more permanently and deeply physiologically and psychologically connected into the network, that linguistic-

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[119] Virno, p. 98.

[120] Tronti, pp. 12-35.

[121] Virno, p. 98.

relational capability increasingly does not need to be actively performed by us.[122] It is becoming something which is more passively always available to be mined and extracted from, rather than something actively done: our agency is diminished. It moves from functioning primarily in a verb-like way in Virno's writing to additionally hold increasing noun-like qualities.[123]

This passive subjectification might at first seem to contradict the speed and activity popularly associated with contemporary life. However, Gilles Deleuze provides a route through this apparent paradox.[124] Following his argument, all this busy-ness, necessary to render ourselves perceptible as subjects within our context, is a simulacrum from the perspective of the structure we inhabit. It holds no affect or potentiality, serving solely as the necessary requirement to be rendered sensible to the enveloping structure as a subject. From the perspective of that structure (the technosphere) however, this mass of activity, read in aggregate, is passivity. It is the exhausting de-facto activity of base-line technospheric being.[125]

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[122] There is an irony in our word 'data' originating as the Latin plural of 'datum', meaning 'that is given'. The active, conscious act of giving is becoming increasingly irrelevant to data in the contemporary context.

[123] Similarly, Boltanski and Chiapello's 'project-orientated cité', rooted in activity (e.g. Virno's linguistic-relational virtuosity), can be seen as already being joined, if not surpassed, by a new cité where passivity (from the majority) suffices.

Boltanski and Chiapello.

[124] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* [1969], ed. by Constantin V. Boundas, trans. by Mark Lester (New York NY: Continuum, 2004), p. 310-313.

[125] Another way of articulating this (which *Part 2* will address in depth), is to consider the political, while framed as being a site of dynamism, as becoming a subsumed, 'bracketed-in' space of inactivity within a broader conforming to the presumed busy-ness of the economic realm.

This transfer to effective passivity is a gradual process, not a sudden change, but it is

where I identify the paradigm shift into platform capitalism. To be clear, the active

verb-like qualities of linguistic-relational capability are still very significant; the noun-

like qualities are emerging as an addition, not a replacement, for the moment at least.

Quantified, datafied, abstracted human existence is becoming a resource, outstripping

the need for human agency and creativity, especially given the parallel rapid

developments of artificial intelligence and automation.[126]

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[126] For the foreseeable future the technosphere will find some need for (i.e. profitability within) human agency and creativity. As developed below though, the minority segment of society of whom these attributes are desired is becoming increasingly discrete from the remainder.

Extending biopower

For Foucault, 'life' (in its modern, scientific conception) and labour as a recognised source of value emerged in tandem.[127] The mid-twentieth century welfare state can be viewed instrumentally as being the most effective form of biopolitical governance to ensure some kind of control over the labour force, combined with reproduction of a future labour force. The trend towards data as pivotal resource, combined with the decline of the welfare state, allows and necessitates new forms of biopolitical control. However, the private ownership of our data upon which platform capitalism is premised means companies and other capitalist entities beyond the state are increasingly seeking to exert biopower upon us.[128]

Linguistic-relational capability becoming a deployable data-set has profound implications for biopolitics. An immanent future of massive extracted knowledge of this key aspect of our contemporary selves being instantly available and exploitable is emerging. It is becoming exponentially more feasible to influence desired patterns of action or thought at scale through the selective re-presentation back to us of that which we are algorithmically deemed susceptible to, whether for economic, political or other

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[127] Melinda Cooper, *Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era* (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 2008), p. 5.

That life and labour are thus entwined makes overt the connection between the emphasis on labour in this *part* (and *Scene A* which follows it) and the 'ways of being' of the project title.

[128] Though the terms 'biopower' and 'biopolitics' have been deployed with various meanings and emphases, I use them here as established by Foucault. Biopolitics is a political logic which assumes the life of its subject population as its sphere, while biopower is the affect with relation to life which can be brought to bear upon that population.

Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: I*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1998).

purposes.[129] Hardt and Negri emphasise the bi-directionality of the affective

relationship between individuals and data through the technological interface: as well

as collecting vast data-sets which can be subsequently deployed, the technologies, and

our panopticon-esque awareness of them, (both now much advanced from when Hardt

and Negri wrote) can feed back into our brains and bodies to reciprocally affect our

thinking and acting.[130] There is an easy slippage between selective use of data (which is

presented as representing 'reality'), and an overlooking of the ensuing affect of the

choices made in that data selection and representation *within the reality that ensues*

following that event of re-presentation. Our world, including ourselves within it, cannot

remain unaffected by these encounters with its purportedly 'accurate' representation.

Gielen writes that the immaterial labour orientated working contexts of post-Fordism

might offer opportunities for less traceable forms of unproductive resistance than was

the case under previous regimes.[131] However, this argument under-reflects the

capability of surveillance and control. Furthermore, even if we do for the moment

accept that resistance of some type can occur through unproductivity, that resistance is

then premised on some form of active-ness to be unproductive within. If, as argued

above, linguistic-relational capability is shifting to have a noun-like passive quality

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[129] Though perhaps atypical in being initiated with such clear specific intent, the recent Cambridge Analytica/Facebook scandal in which tens of millions of Facebook users unwittingly had their data 'harvested' such that they (and others assessed as having similar attributes and inclinations) could be targeted for electoral manipulation is a prominent recent example. This was a disturbing demonstration of how collected data can be, and will continue to be, used for much more significant psychologically embedded activity-determining purposes than targeted consumer advertising alone.

'The Cambridge Analytica Files', Guardian website (2018-) <https://www.theguardian.com/news/series/cambridge-analytica-files> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[130] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 23.

[131] Gielen, p. 28.

under platform capitalism as well as an active verb one, then that route of resistance is

shrinking as we no longer need necessarily be active to be productive; simply being is

enough. The frequent use of the term 'harvesting' when describing the collection of our

data is reflective of this: emphasising the passive, resource like positioning of the

individual. (Even if it were possible to remove oneself and cease being within the

world through total disconnection, this would entail alienating oneself from

everything. Despite any proclaimed symbolic value, this abandonment of society

would almost certainly be politically meaningless.)

Maurizio Lazzarato writes of how through indebtedness (either in immediate personal

form, or through living within a socio-economic logic permeated with debt) labour

goes hand in hand with work on the self.[132] Our engagement with society becomes one

of continual promising, while at the same time working on our ability to meet those

promises, and projecting an image of being able to do so. For Lazzarato, debt (rather

than 'neutral' exchange) is the archetype of social relations and thus an asymmetry and

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[132] Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. by Joshua David Jordan (Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e), 2012), p. 42.

Lazzarato emphasises, for example, how the unchosen act of being born connects one to the public debt of the state of which one is automatically rendered a citizen.

inequality modelled on that of debtor and creditor is the basis of society.[133] Virno writes

similarly of the post-Fordist worker being employed on the basis of their potential

virtuosic labour: their promise to deliver.[134] In projecting forward through demanding

continual promises of the worker, capitalism operates control over the future. However,

as linguistic-relational capability gains its noun-like role and active-ness becomes less

required under platform capitalism, with simply 'being' becoming increasingly

sufficient (mediated via platforms extracting value), it is less labour that goes hand in

hand with work on the self, and instead bare existence. Capitalism's forward-projected

control of the future is enacted through our simply continuing to exist in any at all

socialised form.

'Self-care' is interesting to briefly consider in these terms. In principal, caring for the

self in the sense of granting oneself respite from the continual emphasis placed on

being productive under neoliberalism makes sense, albeit with this self-care effectively

being synonymous with the 'work on the self' discussed above (in preparing oneself

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[133] Ibid., p. 33.

This point echoes Holloway, and Graeber also makes a similar argument: that debt is in origin an asymmetric power relationship stemming from property. Finance is merely a technology of encoding and enforcing this inequality and has, Graeber argues, in part developed specifically to serve this function.

John Holloway, 'In the Beginning Was the Scream', *Common Sense,* 11 (1991), 69-77.

David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York NY: Melville House, 2011) pp. 21-22.

This dystopian debt is very different to the positively framed positioning of debt as a basis for society and community which Foucault argues for. Whereas Foucault focusses on a reciprocal debt of care functioning as a premise for an ethical community, Lazarrato is writing in a more structurally and contextually grounded sense of an individuated debt of (potential) production, including of the future self.

Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, ed. by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. by David Macey (New York NY: Picador, 2003).

[134] Virno.

for future productivity). However, the increasing circulation of representations of self-care through channels such as Instagram over the past decade is indicative of self-care becoming fetishised as a commodity connected to an aspirationally envisaged form of being, alongside its established function in enabling the promise of future productivity. Echoing the means by which we passively produce value within platform capitalism, self-care is also shifting to having a 'passive' commodified value through its circulated representation, in addition to its function in preparing bodies for future work. In other words, it too is acquiring a noun-like, as well as verb-like, function and the *image* of self-care gradually supersedes any actuality of the process of self-care in economic importance (all the more as passive being increasingly becomes the required role of the majority). The individualism at the centre of a contemporary neoliberal understanding of self-care makes it very different from the forms of care which will be developed in *Part 3*.[135]

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[135] Foucault's writing on care for the self (which is returned to in *Part 3*) is, crucially, care for the self *and the other*. In contrast to this neoliberal self-care, it is premised on committed, active participation in *one another's* mutual self-examination.

Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality Volume 3*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York NY: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 53.

<u>Subsumption of the future</u>

A number of ways by which platform capitalism and the technosphere more broadly are exerting control over the future have been touched upon already, such as datafication tilting emphasis towards prediction (and through it control).[136] Going further though, the technosphere is premised not only on predicting and controlling the future, but on collapsing the infinite possibilities inherent in 'future' and pulling and constraining them into the present. A belief in an open future, and a restating of that which is utopian, is pivotal to any real egalitarian agency: a holding out that things might be better is a key first step in actually achieving any element of that. A completely collapsed future denies any possibility of change, and thus any possibility of agency or autonomy.

The technosphere's drive to control the future can be likened to an attempt to reduce the Husserlian thickness of the present. Edmund Husserl theorised the moment as having a 'thickness', with the past and future present within it, holding an uncertainty within itself for a brief window before being inscribed into memory or history with attributed meaning.[137] Inherent to that thickened moment is a contestability and plurality of agency to affect that inscribing, and the forming of future history. The accelerating foreclosing of this uncertainty, and increasingly singular logic of control over it, reduces this window of agency and instead supports the continued reproduction of an ossified future-present. This research project sets out to 'enable resistant agency' but here this is reversed. Contestation is needed to prevent the total

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[136] Lyon.

[137] Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. by John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

appropriation of this space of possibility, through which potentially resistant acts might be manifested.[138]

That finance and data are collapsing together is a premise of the technosphere. As has been discussed, data is becoming an increasingly valued, monetised commodity; but equally, financial activity is increasingly being undertaken in datafied terms, whether in the literal coding of the blockchain basis of digital 'currencies', or the algorithmic, quantified trading of more traditional financial instruments. And increasingly, this trading is being automated. Gerald Nestler describes the resulting 'derivative condition', whereby real-time data analysis in futures markets and other financial derivative products means the current price increasingly already factors in, with greater and greater rational accuracy, diverging paths and variations that might take place in the future.[139] The future is pulled back into the present moment and subsumed to the speculative interests of capital, with the anarchy of the unknown annihilated before it has a chance to exist.[140] Human affect over what may or may not play out is priced into a tradable asset. An arms race of technologies of automation seeks to find a market edge in trimming-off the future closer and closer to the present. At the forefront is 'high frequency trading', where fully automated systems take advantage of being able to respond to real-time data with buy and sell orders between different markets more quickly than those markets are able to correct themselves. However, technologies are not infallible and contain risk of encoded error causing exponential disruption. A

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[138] This points towards the need for the radical within radical care, which will be explored in *Part 3*.

[139] Gerald Nestler, 'The Derivative Condition: A Present Inquiry into the History of Futures' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths College, University of London, 2016) <http://research.gold.ac.uk/20534/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[140] This is then an opposite holding of the future in the present to Husserl's conception. Husserl.

rapidly escalating feedback loop resulting from a glitch in a particular high frequency

trading algorithm resulted in the 'flash crash' of 2010, when the Dow Jones Industrial

Average dropped 9% within a few minutes, only to almost fully recover after just over

half an hour.[141] Such glitches contain a hint of the potential to resistantly misuse the

technosphere's own structures.

This structural, systematic subsumption of the future complements the indebted basis

and promising of the future self Lazzarato outlines, to reduce the individual to passive

acceptance and a lack of forward looking imagination from both *within* and *without*.[142]

It is important to emphasise that this debt, a debt in the present moment to the

abstracted speculative interests of capital, is very different to the intergenerational debt

(placing the cost of one's future care when elderly onto future workers) that formed the

basis of social welfare systems in the twentieth century. Unlike the subsumption of the

future, this forward passed debt of care was premised on envisioning a good future,

not on collapsing it into the present.[143] Mark Fisher's call for an emancipatory politics

rooted in envisaging that which is systematically being rendered unimaginable behind

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[141] Gerald Nestler, 'A-Symmetry - Algorithmic Finance and the Dark Side of the Efficient Market', *Technosphere Magazine website* (2015) <https://technosphere-magazine.hkw.de/p/A-Symmetry-Algorithmic-Finance-and-the-Dark-Side-of-the-Efficient-Market-Ung2aMUKzh2Qk5eVRvT4W> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[142] Lazzarato.

[143] Envisioning a good future is to hold thinkable the 'ways of being' of this project's title: a vital precursor to any materialisation. This collective social welfare form of debt, holding open a good future, is much closer to that discussed by Foucault.

Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended.*

a fait accompli of 'capitalist reality' is vital here, and is a space in which artistic activity holds affective political potential.[144]

Marina Vishmidt speaks of an overemphasis on 'resilience' when it comes to conceiving of a global future.[145] She argues this resilience is typically framed as one of managing continual shocks (perhaps even hedging against and profiting from them) rather than bringing about a better world. While this is a valid point, the perpetuating embodied and experienced material inequalities of our world must be acknowledged, and for those whose day-to-day human needs are not being met, a degree of resilience might be an understandable precursor to envisaging a better world.

All discussion of the future in our present global context sits in the shadow of imminent climate catastrophe. A humanity predominantly bereft of meaningful agency, with any radical envisaging of the future rendered unimaginable, seems particularly ill-suited to any kind of collective action in the face of this that is not extremely negatively affecting of all but the most advantaged few. The annihilation of the future at the heart of the technosphere serves the interests of the few, embedding and accelerating an inertia of inequality and cutting off all other possibilities.

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[144] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (London: Zero Books, 2009).

This need to envisage the unimaginable is core to why diverse, creative practices are needed in holding open the possibility of new futures, and thus why artistic practice is integral to this research project.

[145] Marina Vishmidt, 'Figure Eight is Half of 4', presentation at *After Work* symposium, University of West London, 27 January 2018 <https://autonomy.work/portfolio/work-life-labour-automation-conference-photos-recordings/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Edelman makes the same point: that resilience alone does not address structural inequalities.

Elijah Adiv Edelman, 'Beyond Resilience: Trans Coalitional Activism as Radical Self-Care', *Social Text*, 38:1 (2020), 109-130 (p. 112).

It is worth briefly touching on the past. At a systemic level, the past seems increasingly

destroyed: like the future, subsumed into the present and only reconstructed as often-

kitschy narratives in the service of capital. Francis Fukuyama's premature 'end of

history', only manifested through neoliberal platform capitalism in place of liberal

democracy.[146] For the individual though, the past is paradoxically inescapable, a

perfectly archived data ghost to which they can be held to account at any moment.

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[146] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* [1992] (London: Penguin, 2012).

<u>Seeking the human</u>

The implications of the exploitation of data and resulting biopolitical control, and subsumption of the future through platform capitalism and within the technosphere, point towards fissures of entrenched inequality opening increasingly widely within society.

 In combination with the emerging condition of platform capitalism whereby simply being (as opposed to acting) suffices to enter us into those relations, we are placed perpetually and unavoidably in the anguish and isolation of Virno's multitude, without having had any agency in arriving there.[147] Not needing to work has a long history in utopian thought, but a social and political structure rooted in and perpetuating of inequality is currently overriding any post-work liberatory potential technological advance might hold, and subsuming it to its own ends in reducing agency.

The isolated, anguished individual sits at the centre of the capitalist system, the debtor relationship, and productive labour. Platform capitalism seems to be micro-targeting this and locking us into our increasingly individuated selves. From our genetic code to our digital avatars, our data-selves are increasingly inescapable shadows. This is not the sovereign individual of Weberian Christianity (though that lineage is at times drawn upon, as will be addressed in *Part 3)* but instead the individual as an economically rational, instrumental segmentation of the multitude. In universal digital storage and instantaneous analysis and prediction, this hyper-individuation is also

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[147] Virno.

carried backward and forward in our permanently recorded pasts and increasingly accurately priced-in futures.

In zooming in on each of us in ever greater detail, platform capitalism looks to record, analyse and ultimately profit from precisely what constitutes us as human; moulding the human into the passively productive individuated subject.[148] It points towards a form of post-humanism where the human is lost in a fractal of ever more fine detail or abstracted feature, only to be reconstructed as ability sets or consumption masses at will, when suiting the purposes of capital. What if, instead of this dystopian vision, we were to envisage not an inevitable post-humanism, but a pro-human post-individualism? In other words, might there not be a path forward in eschewing our individuation while at the same time, to return to Foucault's optimistic premise of a debt of care to one another, accentuating our mutual human-ness?[149] Could we use the hyper-networked infrastructures of the technosphere to emphasise reciprocal caring connection, while reducing or short-circuiting data-harvestable individuated segmentation? These questions are central to the concept of radical care as it looks to leap ahead of the technospheric encoding of the subject.

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[148] (As I have argued, exploitation of linguistic-relational capability, which Virno describes as 'the very thing which makes us human', underpins platform capitalism.)

Ibid., p. 98.

[149] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*.

I use the term 'human-ness' rather than 'humanity' when referring to the qualities of being human in an attempt to avoid the transcendental, idealist associations use of the latter term can carry.

Layered on top of the inbuilt inequality of capitalism, Virno identifies opportunism as an opening fissure between strata within society.[150] As he and Gielen note, opportunism is a highly valued characteristic to possess under post-Fordism, expected of knowledge workers in the workplace.[151] However, Virno observes that for those in a more precarious position, opportunism is less something desired in the workplace than something required simply to proceed in living: to meet basic needs for oneself and any dependents as the welfare state is dismantled. Far more often than would be proportional, as Federici draws attention to, it is women (and other historically disadvantaged groups) engaging in un- or under-acknowledged reproductive labour, and workers in lower income countries to which subsumed and devalorized (but required and persistent) labour fitting previous regimes has been outsourced, who must most frequently engage opportunism in simply being.[152] This serves to compound already present inequalities and widen the fissure.

Kerstin Stakemeier and Marina Vishmidt evoke Marx's position that we as humans need some form of autonomy to be happy.[153] However, as linguistic-relational value production becomes a more potentially passive activity under platform capitalism, less and less agency is required of, or available to, the majority. Simply in being, via our data, value is produced. *How* that value is produced is the terrain in which Virno's fortunate upper strata will increasingly engage their opportunism within work. Thus, unchecked, platform capitalism points towards a dystopian, atomised way of being where a small minority opportunistically engage autonomous agency in extracting

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[150] Virno, p. 106.

[151] Gielen, p. 32.

[152] Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero*.

[153] Kerstin Stakemeier and Marina Vishmidt, *Reproducing Autonomy: Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art* (Berlin: Mute, 2016).

value from the passive mass of the majority. (To some extent, this is the case under any form of capitalism, but the data extracting potential of platform capitalism is substantially further removing agency from the majority, and is shifting what is being exploited from labour to existence.) This serves to alienate the majority from their autonomy, and thus happiness. It constitutes a form of abstracting, de-humanising anti-care. Some of the libertarian and right-accelerationist discourse emanating from Silicon Valley seems to actively advocate for such a disturbing future.[154]

Fisher emphasises the increasing importance of nominal work being targeted towards producing the *representation* of work, and portraying the self as productive.[155] While this clearly follows from the discussions of biopolitics and surveillance above, it can also be seen as a mechanic in relation to the fissure of opportunism. We must enact a perpetual performance of taking opportunity, or displaying agency. Those who do not do so are read as accepting their fate as part of the struggling mass from which data is

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[154] Mark O'Connell, 'Why Silicon Valley Billionaires are Prepping for the Apocalypse in New Zealand', *Guardian*, 15 February 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/15/why-silicon-valley-billionaires-are-prepping-for-the-apocalypse-in-new-zealand> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Quinn Slobodian, 'How the libertarian right plans to profit from the pandemic', *Guardian*, 1 June 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/01/coronavirus-libertarian-right-profit-coronavirus-pandemic?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[155] Fisher, p. 53.

Recalling Deleuze, one needs to articulate oneself as active in terms translatable to the technosphere; unreadable forms of activity are discounted and processed as passivity.

Deleuze, pp. 310-313.

extracted.[156] Fear of slipping out of the 'upper' strata, and notionally claiming some sense of autonomy, is yet another bond holding us firmly in the perpetual anguish Virno notes as a chief characteristic of the multitude, *even if we are lucky enough to be one of the few on the fortunate side of the fissure of opportunism*.[157] The remote, digital technological basis of platform capitalism has radically 'democratised' the dissemination of image and representation, furthering and accelerating this process. Images and representations spread seamlessly and instantaneously around the digitised world, yet the surveilled individuals remain fixed by rigid boundaries and apparatuses of control.[158] This fault line between projected desirability and inequitable distribution of agency is extremely socially and politically divisive on a global scale.[159]

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Virno sees a potential for optimism in 'idle talk': untethered from reference, an opportunity for endless discursive invention, experimentation and play.[160] Perhaps

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[156] A small (though inherently visible) exception to this are the celebrities, influencers, Instagrammers, etc. who have managed to exploit and render fungible the representation of their own leisured 'fulfilment' through 'self-care'. Here, conversely, the underpinning entrepreneurial labour is purposefully hidden. There is a mirroring of work and this type of self-care underway, with each increasingly becoming an image-representation of itself. This group perform a role of rendering the debt to future self apparently fulfillable, which in turn keeps the performance of work towards repaying that debt desirable.

While valorised within the technosphere, this is a form of self-exploitation: a leaning-in to individuation, and willing acceptance of alienation from one's own (and others') human-ness.

[157] Virno.

This point is particularly important in countering any argument that critique of the fissure of opportunism stems from envy.

[158] The extent of this fixing is heavily dependent on racialised and gendered logics, along with other unequal means of subjectification.

[159] This spatialised inequality is further explored in *Part 2*.

[160] Ibid., p. 90.

even a reassertion of agency. Idle talk overlaps with Roland Barthes' understanding of the text as a playful, fluid actor.[161] However, idle talk, in implying the act of speech, brings the body of the speaker to more immediate consideration. Text holds a certain implication of 'writer', but the expanded textual context of the technosphere incorporates exponential reams of text which are not humanly authored. In re-centring a bodily materiality amidst these, idle talk holds a potential to reassert the human.

Care needs to be taken though: if we consider idle talk in conjunction with the fissure of opportunism, as well as the emergent emphasis on the noun-like function of linguistic-relational capability coming about through platform capitalism, then idle talk risks itself being exploited. For those who need to be opportunistic simply to survive, idle talk becomes a moment of relief and respite, but in exhaustion is understandably unlikely to reach any heights of invention or experimentation.

Where something approaching idle talk is achieved, it will frequently occur across the channels requiring least effort, and these will increasingly be platform interfaces where that idle talk becomes another data-set to be exploited. And yet while acknowledging this, as I will explore, I hold that there is scope for reinvigorating idle talk as a site of agency and potential disruption through artistic intervention, particularly through asserting the human who may or may not be bodily present.[162]

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[161] Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' [1971], in *Image Music Text,* trans. by Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), pp. 155-164.

[162] *Part 2* explores the possibilities of embodiment and disembodiment in both the artistic intervention and personhood of the artist.

Whereas Virno's idle talk takes place out in the open, murmuring, as discussed by Gielen, is, publicly at least, an almost inaudible conversation amidst the dark matter.[163] However, without as yet any realistic likelihood of the publicly owned or collectivised platforms Srnicek advocates, the unavoidability of the private platform in our hyper-networked world means the murmur too, in almost-inevitably taking place across platforms, becomes in itself exploitable: audible to the algorithms if not humans.[164] Despite this challenge though, idle talk, murmured or otherwise, is a site at which textual artistic intervention embracing subversion, irony and play, and exploiting the presumption of its own exploitability, could hold potential as a graspable corner of the textual core matter of the technosphere.

A brief comparison of Twitter and Facebook might bear some relevance on the potential of idle talk. Whereas the latter, hugely profitable, seems to epitomise the individuation and data harvesting I have been discussing, Twitter, in its conversationality (as opposed to a digital projection of a more static self), seems perhaps least problematic of the mainstream social media platforms and most facilitating of this idea of idle talk.[165] It is far from without legitimate criticisms and

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[163] Gielen.

Sholette introduces the term 'dark matter' to describe the unrecognised mass of artistic and art-adjacent activity which enables the visible apex.

Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).

[164] Srnicek, p. 128.

[165] The features which Facebook offers, and use to which it is put, have shifted over time. The presentation of an on-screen self, which was the central premise of Facebook in its early years, has been diluted (and for many, superseded) by its use as a facilitator of business or project information pages, event promotion, local neighbourhood or specific interest groups, etc.

It could be argued that the prime position of epitomising individuation amongst social media platforms has now been taken by Instagram. However, as of 2012, Instagram is owned by Facebook.

certainly contains aspects of individuation, but it at least suggests the possibility to operate through looser, more playful connections and ripples. With this in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising both that it only in 2018 posted a quarterly profit for the first time, and also that it is a site of much more creative and playful experimentation (through Twitter bots, artistic projects, streams of consciousness and other varyingly playful or absurd forms) than Facebook.[166] Some of these do evoke Virno's optimistic description of idle talk as free of referential paradigm or burden of correspondence to the non-linguistic world, and enabling of invention, experimentation, and endless new discourses.[167] In this playfulness, there is a key potential to imagine, even if through random generation, more egalitarian futures which might otherwise be erased. As the following section will explore, moving beyond the strict confines of platforms themselves, artistic (mis)use of idle talk can take on much broader potential forms.

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[166] See for example *Empathy Deck*.

Erica Scourti, 'Empathy Deck', *Twitter* [artwork / bot] (2016-2018) <https://twitter.com/empathydeck?lang=en> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[167] Virno. p. 90.

<u>Artistic possibilites</u>

This *part* has thus far set out the key processes of abstraction by which the technosphere is denying our agency and diminishing our human-ness. This is the urgent contemporary context within which any artistic intervention comes into being.

As discussed above, Boltanski and Chiapello observe that it was in the failure of social critique and appropriation of artistic critique that post-Fordism emerged.[168] However, the extending inequality of platform capitalism demands an urgent social critique, including through (but not limited to) artistic critique. A re-connection between these two critiques is required.[169]

There has been a degree of re-orientating towards engagement with the political, social and economic within artistic practice.[170] As *Praxis* emphasises, I advocate this. Especially given the vanguard or blueprint role Gielen argues it played in the emergence of the post-Fordist labour model, it is vital that art reflects on the positions being taken with regard to both itself and society as a whole, and the complexity of the contexts in which they function.[171] In doing this, art might be able to co-support a

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[168] Boltanski and Chiapello.

[169] It is important not to mistakenly fall into a reactionary jettisoning of freedom-emphasising artistic critique in pursuit of the social. Rolnik emphasises the positive role played by desires for freedom in challenging totalitarian regimes, arguing that the freedom (e.g. resistance to co-option and instrumentalisation) of art is essential in order to produce the egalitarian imaginaries that are so vital to social critique. In short, the two critiques must operate together.

Suely Rolnik, 'The Geopolitics of Pimping', trans. by Brian Holmes, *transversal texts* (2006) <https://transversal.at/transversal/1106/rolnik/en> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[170] Sabeth Buchmann, 'Under the Sign of Labour', in *Art After Conceptual Art*, ed. by Alexander Alberro and Sabeth Buchmann (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 179-196 (p. 181).

[171] Gielen.

social critique of platform capitalism, rather than allowing itself to be subsumed by it.

A self-reflexivity and recognition of positionality is vital: only in continually

reconsidering its own enmeshment within the logics of platform capitalism might art

generate resistances to it. Stakemeier and Vishmidt support this position, calling for art

to address the conditions of its own production if it wants to claim any autonomy, and

to acknowledge and confront how those conditions of production intersect with, and

are reliant upon, un- and under-acknowledged forms of reproductive and other

material/female/immigrant/bodily labour.[172] Much supposedly self-critical artwork

operating within the market-institutional paradigm happily fits within the alleged

pluralism of contemporary art, but it is only when it engages politically that important

questions are raised.[173] All of this is to reiterate the contemporary need for a

productivist positioning of art: only in confronting and addressing the politics and

processes of (re)production of the context in which it resides (and not shying away

from inevitable complexity and likely complicity) can art establish any real autonomy

in its own terms.[174]

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The 'new aesthetic' has emerged in recent years as, in some senses, an aesthetic

response to the technospheric condition.[175] However, as Bruce Sterling argues, much of

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[172] Stakemeier and Vishmidt, p. 46.

[173] Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 4-6.

[174] This 'productivist' positioning for art is articulated by Benjamin.

Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer' [1934], in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 2, Part 2 1931-34,* ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, trans. by Rodney Livingstone and others (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 768-782 (p. 770).

[175] James Bridle, '#sxaesthetic', *booktwo* [personal blog] *(*15 March 2012) <http://booktwo.org/ notebook/sxaesthetic/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

the artwork to which the label is applied is overly caught up in the uncritical use of a set of visual tropes, and is overly focused on representation and the image.[176] This is not necessarily without any value, but much of the artwork labelled new aesthetic (sometimes, arguably, inaccurately) sits a little too comfortably within the market-institutional paradigm. Glitches and oversized pixels recur, but too often go no further than attempts to seduce. A subset of artworks associated with the new aesthetic label, for example, seem to commodify the 'poor image' as an artefact which might be owned. This is a capitalist inversion of the freely circulated and exchanged poor image as resistant and subversive towards repressive structures which Hito Steyerl explored when introducing the term.[177] Those new aesthetic artworks which do go further than a surface engagement, such as Steyerl's *How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, reflexively engage in, and beyond, their own social, economic and political positionalities as much as, if not more than, their formal-technological presentation.[178]

Returning to Srnicek, his hope is that artists might play a role in rendering comprehensible the 'technical sublime'; that artworks might enable a greater revealing of the escalating complexities of data and network that underpin platform capitalism.[179] While this revealing of 'cognitive maps' he advocates certainly could play

176 Bruce Sterling, 'An Essay on the New Aesthetic', *Wired website* (4 February 2012) <https://www.wired.com/2012/04/an-essay-on-the-new-aesthetic/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

177 Hito Steyerl, 'In Defense of the Poor Image', *e-flux journal*, 10 (2009) <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

178 Hito Steyerl, *How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (2013), available at <https://www.artforum.com/video/hito-steyerl-how-not-to-be-seen-a-fucking-didactic-educational-mov-file-2013-51651> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

179 Nick Srnicek, 'Navigating Neoliberalism: Political Aesthetics After the Crisis' presentation at *The Matter of Contradiction*, Treignac, France, 1-7 September 2012 <https://vimeo.com/52434614> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

a critical role, some interpretations can lean towards the problematically instrumental and/or illustrative, if not a-critically sycophantic.[180] In attempting to avoid this, 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' (my methodology of artistic practice-research, elucidated in *Praxis*) specifically seeks to acknowledge and interrogate the positionality of the self and co-production of the encounter (which could be with the 'technical sublime'), fully acknowledging the broader contextual siting within multiple unequal contexts.

Both the new aesthetic and cognitive mapping are overly focused on the representational, and an uncritical presumption of the possibility of some kind of artistic objectivity. It is vital that there is an artistic engagement with the technosphere and platform capitalism, but to become enraptured in the visual languages and technological potentials themselves is to miss the critical point. Aesthetics are bound up in politics, ethics, process and production, and a real critical engagement with the technosphere necessitates a meaningful, considered engagement with all of these in fluxing combination, acknowledging where the artist themselft sits. Artistic processes, labour-forms and visual manifestations are much more deeply embedded into platform capitalism than solely at the aesthetic level (as has been explored through discussion of Gielen and Boltanski and Chiappello's arguments for art's role in pre-figuring post-Fordism).[181] What are urgently needed are artistic interventions engaging in and critiquing the problematic social, economic and political shifts (and accompanying de-

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[180] Cognitive mapping, which will be briefly revisited in *Parts 2* and *3*, is proposed by Jameson.

Fredric Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 347-358.

[181] Gielen.

Boltanski and Chiapello.

humanising abstraction) that are occurring in and through the technosphere: new

forms of data-enabled biopolitical control, a subsumption of the future, and escalating

inequality. Digital technologies themselves are ultimately built upon neutral

mathematics: it is their embedding within the social and ideological that politicises

them.[182] Thus for an artwork to substantially critically engage with the technosphere it

must confront and question the full context of its own production, its own exploitation,

and its own complicity.

I do not mean to place art in a position of overly instrumentalised duress though, even

with resistant counter-hegemonic intent. Playfulness, anarchy, absurdity: these all have

a role to play. A form of acceleration, but not accelertionism by and for the structure

potentially leading to its supposed self-inflicted demise. (History shows this to be an

unlikely outcome, as capitalism demonstrates a recurring ability to reconstitute itself in

a new form, whether mercantilism, imperialism, industrial capitalism… or platform

capitalism.) Instead, an acceleration of playful human-ness: absurd and anarchic and,

above all, rendered with care. An artistic approach centred on making ourselves too

human, too irrational, to be quantified and harvested. An assertion of bodily-ness.

The networks and infrastructures of the technosphere can be made use of to

disseminate and expand these activities, but in so doing radically undermining and

subverting their neoliberal underpinnings. Virno presents the political options for the

multitude as being disobedience or exit.[183] If we discount a hypothetical complete exit

as an ultimately selfish giving up on of society, the very site I am arguing art must

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[182] This is not to assert that there has necessarily ever been any representation of mathematics that it not in some way contextually inflected.

[183] Virno, p. 70.

engage with, then we are left with disobedience as the only possibility, and a form of disobedience is what I here seek to articulate: to disobediently care. For Virno, disobedience holds much more disruptive potential than protest. Protest, in the act of challenging it, implicitly supports the logic and coherence of the opposed structure, whereas disobedience goes further, undermining that presumption.[184]

Rather than a reactive dialectical response, this disobedience is the beginning of an alternate logic. Perhaps a logic of imagination or care in a context which pushes us to act without. It *is* an exit, an exit from the biopolitical governmentality of the technosphere, but a firm remaining within the actual and potential human-relational social arena. A turning in on of the connective potential of the repressive structure upon its own presumptions of rational, productive, useful data-producing activity. To illustrate with a prosaic example, it is not necessary to completely eschew social media. It is, however, necessary to enter into engagement with it in informed awareness of its data harvesting, platform capitalist functioning. Disrupt this, play with it: engage in the entangled and complicit space being a twenty-first century human entails, but subvert and question its assumptions.

The technological infrastructures themselves need not necessarily be accepted as repressive. They do hold the potential to move closer to something resembling an equitable general intellect, and the artistic approach suggested here seeks to support this while, and through, subverting the passing of 'surplus' value upward to capitalist interests.[185] Indeed, working and disseminating through the technosphere's established networks offers a potential route to reducing the fissure of opportunism. Just as there is

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[184] Ibid., p. 70.

[185] Marx, pp. 690-712.

a split within platform capitalism between those in a position to act opportunistically within work and those who must do so in order to simply survive; taking opportunities for disobedience likewise presumes the individual has the capacity and resources remaining to do so beyond bare existence. Artists' privileged position here must be acknowledged.[186] (Mis)using the textual networks of the technosphere holds the potential that artistic interventions might be less exclusive and more democratically accessible. For while the use to which technospheric infrastructures have been put and their underlying ideologies are exacerbating of inequalities, a positive within them is that they have enabled a degree of democratisation of connectedness (in potentiality at least, if not always actuality).

The differentiated position of the artist also necessitates a further clarification: this positioning of art in such a way that it might undermine, subvert and critique the technosphere is not being presented as a single solution to its observed problems: other forms of contestation are vital. I have argued against art as protest, and have noted Vishmidt's argument against resilience.[187] However, these and other forms of, or supports to, resistance are in fact vital, especially in contexts of platform capitalism's most ruthless exploitation. My argument, however, is that into this resistant mix the most important function art can play in challenging the inherent structural inequalities of the technosphere is to be anarchically and playfully disobedient through the structure's own networks, architectures and languages: to textually subvert.

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[186] This privilege should not be mis-interpreted as a solely socio-economic one, which many artists do not significantly have. It is a more complex privilege of possibly holding the potential to act. There will also be numerous other aspects to any person's positionality in a given context, some of which may reduce or remove this potential.

[187] Vishmidt.

In such a way, a disruptive idle talk might spread. With value being ever increasingly linguistically and relationally produced, significant resistance can be found in redirecting that linguistic-relational capability elsewhere (though following the shift from active to passive value production, this needs to be a reorientation of ongoing being as well as discrete actions). Platform capitalism presumes that conversations taking place through its channels can be harvested as data, but in parallel with the argument to (mis-)use the networks of the technosphere with informed awareness of their intent, might we not similarly be able to knowingly disrupt the surveillance of our chatter? The most playfully human tools of irony, absurdity, pretence, persona and secret languages are at the same time those which might be least intelligible to and exploitable by surveillance, datafication and algorithmic real-time analysis.

I have already introduced the liberatory possibility of a post-individual, pro-human stance, and it is in combination with this that these disruptions hold the greatest potential. It should be emphasised, though, that the pro-human side of this stance is not a metaphysical celebration of 'the human'.[188] The pro-human-ness called for is both a materiality with the body, and a rejection of the neoliberal individual, but is not essentialist. The human is an imminent being, continually reasserted through a mutual process of care.

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[188] Campbell views Heidegger a succumbing to this.

Timothy C. Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics From Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 26-27.

In an expansion of Fordist and Taylorist approaches, platform capitalism seeks to segment and parcelise all aspects of our lives into individuated sources of data.[189] The dominant emphasis on provenance and (singular) authorship within the commercial-institutional contemporary art market is a direct echo of this. Effective resistance could be found in the radical, perpetual destruction of the individuated artist self; in a celebrating, enabling and valuing of more human, more fluid, more potent multitudes of creative self-hoods. Technospheric infrastructures might be partly co-optable into enabling a more post-individual future, but careful critical consideration and mutual care for one another will be essential in so doing.

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The Japanese word for 'human being' consists of the characters meaning 'person' and 'in-between', thus 'human being' is literally 'between person'.[190] Though 'merely' semantic, if for a moment we substitute the Japanese characters into this project's titular seeking of 'ways of [human] being', the title is already inscribed with dissolving individualism. This post-individual must come with pro-human. In fragmenting ourselves out of technospheric surveillance we make ourselves vulnerable, and it is here that Foucault's reciprocal debt of care is vital.[191] As we de-centre ourselves into a greater focus on the relationships, the encounters and the collaborations between and amidst us, we have to come with trust that we will not be exploited, and likewise

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[189] Thus, while our labour becomes increasingly virtuosic, when we turn attention to the datafication of our being, where value is increasingly produced, key Fordist premises still hold sway.

[190] Yoko Akama, Penny Hagen and Desna Whaanga-Schollum, 'Problematising Replicable Design to Practice Respectful Reciprocal and Relational Co-designing with Indigenous People', *Design and Culture*, 11:1 (2019), 59-84 (p. 67).

[191] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended.*

demonstrate trustworthiness. Care is not only an outcome, but a vital initiator of, and thread within, the process which might lead to this point. Our containing skins constrain us as controllable discrete units, but in embracing their porosity we can seep out into a caring disobedient human-ness rooted in the spaces in-between, the connections. As part of this challenge to the technosphere, it is important to address the somatic, embodied forms these connections might take through and around artistic interventions. This is a focus of *Part 2*.

To return to Virno, he observes that the experience of the fragmented multitude is one of isolated dread and terror.[192] This *part* has developed and expanded on this, examining mechanisms of de-humanising technospheric abstraction through shifting economic and technological contexts, and the present centrality of indebtedness. The responses to this urgent context which have begun to form will be considered and progressed further through the *parts* to come. I argue for a flipping of the technologies rooted in the individuating structures perpetuating technospheric dread. Instead, a reclaiming of them to produce a synthesised *more* human voice comprised of continually connecting fragments: the singing of the multitude coming through the vocoder.

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[192] Virno.

[Please read *Praxis* at any break between *parts* and *scenes* prior to the *Ana-conclusion*]

SCENE A: A CONVERSATION WITH AN ACCURATE TRANSCRIPTION OF THE VOICEOVER FROM THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE VERSION OF HARUN FAROCKI'S *ARBEITER VERLASSEN DI FABRIK* [WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY], 1995[193]

Cast of characters:

- VOICEOVER (monotone and unexpressive, unnamed and uncredited)

- RESPONDENT (unspecified)

VOICEOVER:
The first film ever brought to the screen is referred to under the title *Workers Leaving the Factory.*

It shows men and women employed by the Lumière company in Lyon leaving the factory through two exits, in the film image to the right and left.

RESPONDENT:
Thus, in its very initiating, the new medium emerges into a context of preformed labour relations.

The image, in its movement, is bound up in those relations: what sits behind the workers streaming out, both in the projected image on screen and in the rationale (economic and perhaps other) of the entire enterprise, is a factory producing photographic equipment.

Or rather, a building to structure, organise and control

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[193] Harun Farocki, *Arbeiter Verlassen di Fabrik* [Workers Leaving the Factory] (1995) <https://vimeo.com/59338090> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

the actions of these exiting
people into labour which
collectively produces these
goods.

The owner of the factory has
already shifted to occupy an
adjacent space as the owner of
the image.

       VOICEOVER:
These images were supposed,
above all, to show that it is
possible to render movement in
images.

The remaining impression from
this first screening is of
people hurrying away as if
impelled by an invisible force.

No one remains behind.

1975 in Emden: the Volkswagen
factory.

       RESPONDENT:
The technological means of
representing movement and the
desire to do so have hardly
changed in eighty years, and
barely more so another two
decades later when Farocki
makes this work.

In 1975, the workers are still
leaving the factory.

The stasis of the
representation of movement.

       VOICEOVER:
The workers are running as if
something were drawing them
away.

1926 in Detroit: the workers
are running as if they had
already lost too much time.

Again in Lyon, in 1957: they
are running as if they knew
somewhere better to be.

Again in Detroit, in 1926: the
Ford workers leaving the
factory, their numbers prove
the size of the enterprise
which can feed this multitude.

Never can one better perceive
the numbers of workers than
when they are leaving the
factory. The management
dismisses the multitude at the
same moment. The exits compress
them, making out of male and
female workers a workforce.

                RESPONDENT:
Does this multitude live in
perpetual anguish and fear?

Detroit. Ford. The very name of
an era.

From 1926 to the multitude of
the post-war welfare state.
Perhaps a feeling of
suffocation by the state, by
society.

But at least something.
Something to occasionally
deflect some of economy's
logic.

Romantic nostalgia distorts our
rearward gaze.

                VOICEOVER:
An image like an expression…
which can be suited to many
statements.

An image like an expression. So often used that it can be understood blindly, and thus not have to be seen.

A song to glorify work, so the music already suggests, but the workers turn their backs on work when leaving the factory.

Workers and employees from the Siemens factory in Berlin, in 1934. They are grouped into military formation and leave the factory to join a Nazi rally.

Here are the block of the war victims.

Marching in white coats, a symbol of militarised science and technology: a preview of the worst.

                    RESPONDENT:
Soon Farocki will take our attention towards unions. A territory, an important one, an understandably defended one when the terms of any engagement in a public discourse affecting oneself are rendered through one's labour. But an exclusionary one too, a bounded one. The workers we see leaving the factory are white, predominantly male, in Europe, North America.

The union functions as a territory of resilience, but one mapped onto the permitted space of the factory. Labour comes first and the hard-fought loosenings of life (of the 'family wage', of sick pay, of time off) are permitted into the space of discussion upon acceptance of those terms.

Siemens provided vital war materiel to the Nazi state, and exploited concentration camp labour, in part to produce the infrastructures of industrial extermination. It is quite feasible some of these imprisoned workers produced the very machines of their own death.

Do we judge the Siemens employees as they fall into rank? Their position within the bounded security of employment, steady wage and union is predicated upon acceptance of a set of terms which in this case includes the boundaries of a horrific ethno-nationalism.

Siemens now, amongst other things, produces high-speed trains to ever more quickly and seamlessly spirit those within fortress Europe between cities, as national boundaries dissolve in material significance.

Boundaries are not dissolving for those excluded on the outside. And meanwhile, the descendent technologies of film project the life lived within ever more comparatively desirably.

Siemens is also staking out its own platform; invisible proprietorial boundaries around potential data.

The workers are dead. Long live the workers.

        VOICEOVER:
Workers changing shifts in the film *Metropolis*. Uniform dress and equal step.

This vision of the future has not been fulfilled. Nowadays one cannot tell with a glance whether a passerby is coming from work, sports or the welfare office.

Workers Leaving the Factory, that was the title of the first film ever made. It was the first time that pictures of people in motion could be seen. It was as if, with film, the world would become visible for the first time.

RESPONDENT:
In rendering visible, for the first time, there was a hope for a new democracy, a new politics of transparency and participation. But a logic of economy, of capital, of vested interest had always been there for film. This remained hidden. The flickering image projected was rarely one of factory gates. It was one of action progressing through a narrative arc, of new human achievements, of the American dream. We were shown a whirl of change and progress, masking an ossified stasis of real power.

VOICEOVER:
The factory out of which the workers are streaming is austere and has no company sign. There is no indication of industrial power or importance.

Nor is there any indication of the workers' power. After all, when this material was filmed the European governments still feared a workers' uprising in

the event of war, as in Paris in 1871.

> *RESPONDENT:*
> There is a recognition of the potential power of the conceptual-discursive promulgated through these moving images. Then though, the material was not yet so beaten down, so devalorised. The factory, though gradually diminishing, still operated as a site of politics of some equivalency to film. For a while.
>
> What terrain are we fighting on?

Pause

> *VOICEOVER:*
> Picketers in the portrayal of a dockers strike in Hamburg, a Soviet film completed in 1933. The industrial disputes turn the area outside the factory into a dramatic scene of events.
>
> The picketer.
>
> Unemployed, waiting for an opportunity.
>
> The strikebreakers, one of whom cannot take the strain.
>
> The picketer takes a closer look at the collapsed betrayer of the working class.
>
> The unemployed push forward to occupy the empty space.
>
> The picketer looks into the face of this old man. A face

which stands for millions of
undernourished and destitute
people obliged to take on any
job and unable to preserve any
honour. He turns away.

       RESPONDENT:
The crowd at the dockyard
gates. In this particular
instance they are shut out from
the work they desire due to
strike. But this insecurity and
instability, placing all risk
upon the would-be workers, was
standard day-to-day practice
for casual dockyard labourers
(who performed the majority of
the work).

The unexceptional state of
exception.

As they look through the gate,
these men's bodies are doubly
present. They are a site of
hunger, fatigue, cold, no doubt
viscerally felt after a few
days not picked for work: their
bodies serving as physical
fixing points for the risk to
abstract capital that would
otherwise have to circulate.

But their bodies are also
performatively presented. A
virtuosic show of strength and
good health the darkly ironic
pre-labour necessary to secure
the labour. The crowd at the
dockyard gates.

Pause

       VOICEOVER:
In this German film about a
strike in the Hamburg harbour,
the battle between the strikers

and the strikebreakers
resembles a playground fight.

The big wars and civil wars in
this century, prisons, camps,
dictatorships. So many are
caused by exploitation and
underproduction, but the
industrial disputes themselves
are not particularly violent.

RESPONDENT:
This is a narrow definition of
'industrial dispute'. Are not
all of these counter-examples
forms of industrial dispute
themselves?

The sanctioned, permitted
industrial action is by
definition an action which will
have no structural consequence,
the vapid representation of
dispute. Sit back and watch
from a cinema seat for all it
matters.

Where to draw a bounding line
between industrial dispute and
civil war? Were the 'gilets
jaunes' categorically engaged
in one and not the other? Were
the Communards, the striking
miners? Too narrow an
understanding of 'industrial
dispute' closes down our
ability to stand alongside an
'other' in a positionality we
are not, but for whom we care.
It permits power to segment and
fracture our bonds.

In the post-Fordist social
factory, this fragmentary
denying of the right to stand
alongside becomes more acute as
we are pushed to proceed
towards ever more individuated
factories of the self.

The reinforced aspiration to be
one's own boss.

Pause

>   *VOICEOVER:*
> A strike by English car workers
> in 1956. The workers' disputes
> are far less violent than those
> carried out in the name of the
> workers.
>
> Once again, the industrial
> reserve army.
>
> In this film by the American,
> Griffith, the industrial
> dispute resembles a civil war.

>   *RESPONDENT:*
> The civil wars inscribed in my
> mind (the Spanish -, the
> American -) were fought between
> forces, if not equal, then at
> least of roughly similar orders
> of magnitude of capability.
>
> This resemblance of civil war
> is not that. The workers have
> nothing to lose. The workers
> have nothing to be taken but
> their labour. The workers do
> not even fight, they simply
> refuse to fulfil their
> prescribed role.

>   *VOICEOVER:*
> This is probably the largest
> shootout in front of a factory
> gate in one hundred years of
> film history.

>   *RESPONDENT:*
> Asymmetric civil war.

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Uncivilised war.

War.

        VOICEOVER:
A quieter horror comes from
these images, from the faces of
these men who don't have any
workplace and therefore no
place in working society.

        RESPONDENT:
The factory enfleshes beyond
its gates. It constitutes and
deconstitutes the individual.

        VOICEOVER:
Behind the bars of the factory
gates, the people look as if
they were already locked up in
a camp.

Pause

        Workers are leaving the factory
        here because the police are
        clearing the grounds and
        locking them out. Among the
        workers is one particularly
        concerned about his personal
        honour.

Pause

        This film shows workers
        evicting the police from the
        factory. A film made in 1948 in
        the Soviet occupied zone in
        Germany.

        The workers move like an opera
        chorus on stage.

        This is sufficient to drive
        away the police. The police

fear the significance of the
workers more than a beating.

RESPONDENT:
The asymmetrical reverse.

The police - agents of the
state, of the current order, of
incumbent power - are in the
secure position of their bodily
materialisation being
vulnerable to a mere beating.
It is the privilege of power to
concern itself chiefly with the
disembodied fluctuations of
discourse which may circulate
through the disseminated images
which might subsequently
manifest.

For those risking death, one
imagines their involuntarily
situated bodily vulnerability
would be a chief concern.

The agency to be presently
embodied or disembodied, or to
render others such, is not
equitably distributed.

The drone strike, determined by
an operator a hemisphere away,
kills the forcibly returned,
visa-denied migrant.

The police officer, granted the
cloak of state-uniform
collective anonymity, kills
another black person who is
inescapably present in the
bullet's path.

VOICEOVER:
Workers in uniform.

In the GDR, a workers' militia
in military vehicles. They are
going out on an exercise.

113

Workers leaving the factory as soldiers.

Pause

1975. The Federal Republic of Germany. The VW factory in Emden.

Outside the factory, the trade union is playing songs by Mayakovsky sung by Ernst Busch.

Through this invocation, historical importance is conferred upon the location.

The management is of the opinion that the square in front of the gate is not a public space but rather private property, and threatens to call the police.

            RESPONDENT:
The boundaries are creeping outside the factory.

The idea that there could be an alternative public sphere outside the confines of the factory is unthinkable. And yet, it's 1975: fewer and fewer of us are working in the factory.

The factory is itself leaving the factory.

            VOICEOVER:
Some workers remain, but most have moved on.

Protection of property. Equipment to fortify the factory.

Here the resistance of a road
block is tested and
demonstrated. A truck is driven
into the road block at eighty
kilometres per hour and
shredded into pieces.

Also this fantasy of violence
gives the square in front of
the factory historical
importance.

Memories of strikes and strike
breaking, factory sit-ins and
closures, struggles for wages
and justice, and the
accompanying hope.

          RESPONDENT:
Memories of strategies of
resistance from a time when we
possessed something to
withhold.

Memories we might reenact to
momentarily feel better.

          VOICEOVER:
The road block remains
undamaged from the collision.

          RESPONDENT:
This text denies you the ocular
image of the truck hitting the
road block. In interceding, in
abstracting, it cushions the
impact. A cushioning not
available to those whose bodies
are shredded like the truck.

It also obfuscates the material
reality. A textual hiding of
the power of that image, an
image which in turn hides the
bodily siting of violence by
using an empty truck as
placeholder.

An acknowledgement that *that* image, the one we're not shown, might have some power.

> *VOICEOVER:*
> The factory as a scene of crime. Not workers but gangsters are leaving the factory. They have stolen wages.
>
> Protection of property. The gangsters entered the factory disguised as workers.
>
> The false workers are to be feared more than the real ones.

> *RESPONDENT:*
> Living in the aftermath-of-the-2008-financial-crash-as-justification crisis we know well that when the system fails it isn't the abstract structures which bear the pain.
>
> The worker has everything to lose in the chaos of systemic collapse. The criminal plays a role not unlike the terrorist. External to the system we inescapably find ourselves within, they are an imagined threat which justifies countless injustices. We watch, and alongside the brief escapism of seeing our fantasies enacted safely on screen, find our thoughts nudged into alignment with those of our momentarily more apparently comfortable system.

Pause

VOICEOVER:
Where the first camera once
stood, there are now hundreds
of thousands of surveillance
cameras.

                    RESPONDENT:
They point both outward at
those who would enter and
inward at those who would
escape. No longer an image on
film.

Analogue, chemical, organic,
decaying, bodily.

Instead, a representation of
text, itself a translation of
ones and zeros. We increasingly
cannot read these texts, even
when they are renderings of
ourselves, full of
incontestable consequence,
other than when they are
purposefully presented back to
us.

Away from the boundary, each
self-factory is all-but-
continuously watched.

We watch one another.
We watch ourselves.

                    VOICEOVER:
This camera has spotted a woman
who tugs at another woman's
skirt before they separate.

She tugs at the woman's skirt.
The other woman does not dare
to retaliate under the watchful
eye of the camera.

This game is an action which
has found no reaction, thus a
discrepancy is caused.

Disequilibrium and balance,
this is the law of cinema
narration.

        RESPONDENT:
A disequilibrium within the
representation masking the
closed loop behind.

Could the film, the artwork,
ever produce a disequilibrium
within the material? The
material that matters?

The (art)worker has everything
to lose in the chaos of
systemic collapse.

The (art)worker has everything
to lose in the stasis of
systemic continuation.

Pause

        VOICEOVER:
A woman waiting for a man.

A rubbish dump. Marginal work.
Badly paid and done by women. A
pimp is waiting at the exit.

        RESPONDENT:
Women's work. Unacknowledged
reproductive, domestic and
affective labour, until a state
of exception permits entry to
the factory.

The work within the factory was
always reliant on the work
without the factory.

There is no without the self-
factory.

Do it yourself. Self-initiated.
Project spaces marginal to

markets and institutions are
applauded.

Pause

What else could we do?

       VOICEOVER:
A man waiting for a woman.

The workers disperse. The lives
of the solitary individuals can
begin.

Most narrative films begin
after work is over.

       RESPONDENT:
Self-care very easily slips
into work on the self, which in
turn segues into reproduction
of the self better able to
promise more. To further indebt
oneself to the abstractions
enclosing the self-factory.

We make time for self-care when
the work is over.

When the work is over.

Pause

       VOICEOVER:
A woman leaving the factory, a
man is waiting for her.

The lives of the solitary
individuals can begin.

The two solitary individuals
move away from the factory and
the camera is only too happy to
follow them.

The camera accompanies them as
they move further and further
away from the factory and
detach themselves increasingly
from this background.

                RESPONDENT:
The idea of a background that
one can detach oneself from is
a common cinematic technique.
We cut in to the close up,
follow the tracking shot. Or
ignore the multitude of others
alongside ourselves in the
auditorium.

There is a singular focus which
we are drawn into to feel an
intimate proximity, a short
focal length.

Pretending the surrounding
context isn't there doesn't
diminish its reality. That
intimate, private moment is
fully social. We look to the
screen to do, to feel, what we
no longer can in life.

Pause

                VOICEOVER:
The workers are leaving the
factory, a woman is waiting for
her man.

The piece rates have been
raised to increase the absolute
surplus value.

They walk together slowly as if
following a coffin.

They do not look at each other,
absorbed in another image.

Death seems a relief to them.

Working in the factory is hell.

          RESPONDENT:
The humanity of hell appears
almost heavenly from the
factory floor.

Pause

          VOICEOVER:
This truck brings the woman
back into prison with the
others.

The woman has committed a crime
out of false love.

In one hundred years of film
there have probably been more
prison gates than factory
gates.

          RESPONDENT:
The prison is a much simpler
site of enclosure than the
factory.

In the prison the human, the
individual and the body stay as
one. Physically incarcerated,
disciplined.

In the factory the coalescing
together is much looser. The
individual floats into an
imagined future of aspiration,
a recorded past of
employability. They remain
tethered to the factory
irrespective of where the body
is when outside the gates.

This single axis is now more
complicated. There were other
tethers then, but the factory
was principal, through which

the political and social were
controlled.

Now we float 'free', multi-
tethered as multiple non-
presences. Multiple pullings
down. The human used to conjoin
with the individual in the
sacramental factory on a daily
basis.

Where does the human sit?

Pause

                    VOICEOVER:
The truck brings the women from
the prison to the factory. The
factory is a kind of house of
correction.

In one hundred years of film we
can see more prisons and houses
of correction than factories
and factory gates.

Whenever possible, film has
moved hastily away from
factories.

                    RESPONDENT:
Film seeks to obscure itself.

The culture industries brought
about a new means of organising
society.

The Lumière brothers' film
functions as a bridge from the
old to the new, connecting the
soon to be antiquated economies
of labour (through which
society was structured), via
their representation, to the
emergent new form of
dissemination of ideologies of
ways of being.

VOICEOVER:
Factories have not attracted
film. Rather, they have
repelled it.

If we line up one hundred years
of scenes of people leaving
factories we can imagine that
the same shot had been taken
over and over.

Like a child who repeats its
first word for one hundred
years to immortalise its
pleasure in that first spoken
word.

Or like far-eastern artists,
who repeatedly paint the same
picture until it is perfect,
and the artist can enter the
picture.

RESPONDENT:
We used to see static when we
turned on a television screen.
A stasis of infinite activity.
Molecular workers engaged in an
arduous simulacrum of sameness.

Farocki's film montage was
broadcast on television in
Germany. The workers left the
factory and gathered in the
auditorium. Then, they watched
themselves from the comfort of
their own homes.

VOICEOVER:
When we could no longer believe
in such perfection, film was
invented.

RESPONDENT:
Striving to hold up pictures
around ourselves.

PART 2: BODIES

How does technospheric abstraction manifest in differentiated inequalities at the pivotal sites of the collective political body and individuated human body?

How might artistic use of (dis)embodiment enable critical affect at these sites?

Having outlined the historical development of the technosphere and processes by which we are de-humanised and abstracted through it in *Part 1*, focus in *Part 2* turns to the locating of the unequal effects of this abstraction. 'Site', as the situated event-encounter at which abstract violence can be materialised, is explored. In looking to assert and enable a human-ness, the body is crucial as such a site. Prior to focusing on the physical human body though, I examine the collective political body as a site within which technospheric ideology seeks to foreclose the possibility of contesting its logic of abstraction and ensuing materialisation of inequalities.

I use the term 'political body' (in addition to e.g. discussing the public sphere) in order to draw specific attention to the biopolitical framing of bodies as the base unit of a foreclosed political space. However, as Judith Butler argues, in addition to bodies being a vector of this subjectification, in coming together in public an assembling of physical bodies also holds the potential to reassert a space of politics.[194] At the same time, the nominative claiming of the link to the discursive and conceptual in my use of the term political body also seeks to expand the body out from the confined, overly literal and

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[194] Judith Butler, 'Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street', *transversal texts* (2011) <https://transversal.at/transversal/1011/butler/en> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Theory of Performative Assembly* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

empirical use to which Marina Vishmidt observes it is too frequently put as a

theoretical device.[195]

In its latter stages, this *part* considers the interweaving of these differing but related

senses of 'body' through the 'zone' and precarious labour within the gig economy. In

ending, specific focus is returned to would-be resistant, critical artistic practice,

considering strategies of embodiment and disembodiment.[196]

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[195] Marina Vishmidt, 'Bodies in space: On the ends of vulnerability', *Radical Philosophy*, 2:8 (2020), 33-46 <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/bodies-in-space> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[196] Embodiment and disembodiment are central to *Part 2*, which considers how varying structures differentially embody and disembody (and, relatedly, subjectify and desubjectify) us, and how agency might be asserted at this crucial site. 'Embodiment' is addressed from different angles throughout this *part* but in foundation my use of the term draws upon that of Deleuze and Guattari (which will be further discussed).

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1980], trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

Embodiment as a concept bears a strong relation to the corporeal human body in all its enfleshed, sensory and variably vulnerable forms. Despite increasingly projected post-somatic imaginaries, we are all subject to this embodiment, though in vastly unequally different ways. However, my use of the term embodiment extends beyond the enfleshed body. An artwork or text might embody a concept or idea, holding it within itself in a more inherent way than description or representation. This is not simply a second parallel uses of the term; the two senses need to be held in intrinsic interconnection. One's enfleshed embodiment, in its infinitely complex connection to context (one's being), needs to be held in continuous reflexive co-consideration in any attempt to extend a creative act of embodiment, bringing a critical awareness of positionality to the artwork or text. This reflexivity is especially vital as the capacity to produce such extra-somatic embodiment is highly unequally distributed.

The disembodiment of the artwork which this *part* will go on to advocate is paradoxically a partial return back, in negation, to the corporeal aspect of embodiment. The artwork, unlike the enfleshed human body, does have the capacity to be dispersed in space and time as a means of evading subsumption, while nevertheless holding a coherence through its disparate elements.

That the term embodiment can weave in interrelationship between these aspects is what makes it such a vital theoretical device for this *part*, and for the research project as a whole.

Embodiment within site

The projected image of the technosphere is one where location and sited-ness cease to matter, with subject, action and object floating in a de-spatialised network of instantaneous connection. However, this is to consider the technosphere only as a surface: in the terms in which it projects itself and in the interests of the dominant hegemonies operating through it. It is to deny the complexities and histories of context.[197]

As Benjamin Bratton observes, there is clearly a reformulating taking place in the relationship of geography to structures of power, with the technosphere having a different relationship to space to previous dominant structures.[198] The Westphalian nation-state premise is collapsing: certainly through sub-nationalisms and the offshoring of wealth outside of state oversight, but perhaps more urgently and immediately in the growing migrations towards the technospheric core that can be viscerally seen. Whether it be Mexico or the Mediterranean, the escalating concentrations of wealth, agency, prestige and security in specific locations are having urgent corporeal affect. A new paradigm of globalised bodily violence stemming from this is being normalised.[199]

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[197] Furthermore, it also dismisses differentials of sticky positions on that networked surface which cannot be easily untethered from. Opaque means of surveillance and identification are increasingly inescapably archived onto us, fixing us in place, as was discussed in *Part 1*.

[198] Benjamin Bratton, *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2015).

[199] As, for example, made powerfully apparent in Forensic Oceanography's work on the Mediterranean 'migrant crisis'.

Forensic Oceanography [part of Forensic Architecture], *Death By Rescue* [project website] (2016) <https://deathbyrescue.org> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

The interfaces and information of the technosphere might occur in dispersed, ephemeral encounters, but this is built upon an under-recognised continuing materiality. A surface ephemerality is hugely reliant on unseen hardware which must be manufactured and maintained, and the emplaced infrastructures of network connectivity are also particularly relevant to consideration of site. As Alberto Toscano outlines in his discussion of financial markets, the 'overcoming' and 'surpassing' of questions of space and geography has paradoxically led to a reassertion of the importance of spatial infrastructure.[200] However, where previously what mattered was the siting in proximity to one another of human individuals who carried relevant embodied knowledge and skill, we now observe an abstraction where it is the siting of infrastructure which is significant. Machinic algorithms trade with one another, but with trades occurring in nano-seconds (far swifter than the human brain can conceive), being marginally closer to the market's server and having a fractionally shorter connection time to it can give the competitive edge and enable the capturing of the profit. Toscano explores an interesting repercussion of this: that in chasing ever increasing speeds of connection, we have now arrived at a place of Einsteinian relativity in financial markets, where there is no longer a 'universal truth' for the best price of an asset, but instead this is dependant on location.[201] A spatial variability is

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[200] Alberto Toscano, 'Gaming the Plumbing: High-Frequency Trading and the Spaces of Capital', *Mute*, 3:4 (2013) <https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/gaming-plumbing-high-frequency-trading-and-spaces-capital> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[201] Ibid.

thus realised which can be exploited by existent power and capital.[202] We have moved

through centralised certainty back to something more akin to 'local time' before

railways made it uniform; a set of infrastructural connections which acted to align is

being superseded by another reopening difference. Toscano concludes his argument by

noting that there has historically been an oscillation in capitalism between periods of

spatial and technological strategies to accrue excess profits. The former would include

building colonial monopolies or offshoring labour to cheaper locations while the latter

can be seen in the industrial revolution, through the Fordist production line, and on

into automation. However, Toscano notes, this current re-spatialisation of financial

speculation could mark a paradigm shift into an aligning between spatial and

technological strategies.[203]

Site, in a very physical sense, thus continues to hold relevance within the structures of

the technosphere. In the sense of a 'territory', it also has importance in resisting the

technosphere. Kristin Ross observes that defending a territory holds the potential to be

much more generative of solidarity than a position of resistance or protest which does

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[202] By way of example, Toscano describes private fibre-optic cables built through the Allegheny mountains, to cut the time of transaction between New York and Chicago by three milliseconds, at a cost of $300 million. Such infrastructural investment is only possible with existent capital.

Ibid.

Bridle describes proprietorial microwave relays being used similarly between data centres across London.

James Bridle, *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future* (London: Verso, 2018) pp. 103-112.

[203] Toscano.

Conversely, it is possible to argue that this has always been the case, and that despite different emphases these preceding forms and developments of capitalism were all premised on entwined spatial and technological exploitation.

not have a site which can be claimed.[204] Whereas the latter accepts a coherent logic of

complete hegemony of the repressive system; a territory, somewhere to be defended

through dwelling within, proposes a more potent counter-power. 'Defending', as Ross

uses it, is evocative of 'dual power': an alternate way of being within and alongside the

dominant structure, but something which persists and has potency.[205] Where

hegemony forecloses the possibility of an outside, the territory of resistance might need

to be asserted within, but not according to, the repressive system. A site which can be

resided in and returned to, rather than the possibly much more fleeting and

insubstantial moments of contestation created in non-territorial resistance.[206]

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[204] Kristin Ross, 'Making a Territory', in *The Zad and NoTAV: Territorial Struggles and the Making of a New Political Intelligence*, by Mauvaise Troupe Collective and Kristin Ross (London: Verso, 2018), also available at *Mauvaise Troupe Collective website* <https://mauvaisetroupe.org/spip.php?article229> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[205] Lenin made use of the term 'dual power' to describe a counter apparatus of power operating alongside, but distinct from, the state; in contestation with it.

Vladimir Lenin, 'The Dual Power', *Pravda,* 9 April 1917, trans. by Isaacs Bernard, available at *Marxists Internet Archive* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/09.htm> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[206] Ross's argument pertains to the specific context of the *ZAD (Zone a Défendre)* movement occupying land demarcated to become a new airport. However, it holds more general validity if we take site in a less physical sense, as a way or place of being in relation to the world.

Ross.

The *ZAD* movement began in western France with the long-term occupation of the site of a proposed new airport. Beginning in 2009 and still ongoing, this initial occupation has expanded out to many others elsewhere in France and beyond.

The site of the artistic intervention is complex. It is continually shifting and formed in relation to the (non-) presence of artist and artwork as well as all other contextual elements. Jean-Luc Nancy's suggestion that we consider artistic engagement with site-context as 'being in common' rather than 'common being' is important, recognising the subjectivity and plurality that is carried into any experience of site.[207] The site is an assemblage with diverse components, including the artist and artwork. Affinities within this can be found and emphasised or amplified: being attracted together but at the same time being held open as distinct, *in relation to* rather than *part of*. Miwon Kwon views recent efforts (including her own) to rethink the specificity of the art-site relationship as being symptomatic of the post-modern condition of trying to find specificity and location within a sea of abstracted, homogenised fragmentation: site has shifted from being principally a location, to becoming a discursive vector or methodology.[208] This chimes with Ross's argument: critical, resistant art is seeking site, foregrounding the context of this, and acknowledging the simultaneous cause-effect nature of the artist in relation to it, as a means of trying to establish a sustainable territory out of which to challenge the presumptions of the technosphere.[209]

Site is a slippery thing. It has shifted from being something principally structured spatially to being formed (inter-)textually, as we navigate the world and our engagement with it through interwoven and networked codes, languages and packets of information. Sites are continually forming and dissolving as these come together and

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[207] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Of Being-in-Common', trans. by James Creech, in *Community at Loose Ends*, ed. by Miami Theory Collective (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 1-12 (p. 4).

[208] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004) pp. 3-8.

[209] Ross.

pull apart. Where our bodies materially reside is no longer so central to our siting as it historically might have been. And yet, recalling Bratton and Toscano, these (inter-)textual engagements with site do still have to take place *somewhere*.[210] Considering this, Kwon's title *One Place After Another* evokes the argument she makes: that site might best be thought of as fragments occurring one after another, through spaces.[211] However, this is to under acknowledge the plurality: that each site-event of encounter might be simultaneously different for each subject, as we each bring our own contexts to our encounter.[212]

One of the key differentials of these subjectively variable site-events is the physicality and materiality we are told we have overcome. Not only are sites themselves variably material, but the very same site (to the always impossible extent we can ever be at the exact same site as another who is not ourselves) is encountered with differing degrees of materiality. This is a political, unequal element of the experience of site. As Silvia Federici reminds us, there is devalorised material labour occurring at both distant and near peripheries, and the technosphere instigates countless exhausting migratory journeys, and tragic deaths.[213] This is the dialectical tension within site (but not an abstracted one, one rooted in visceral embodiment): while we may have something of a shared conceptual understanding of (un)sited-ness, a deep fissure of inequality persists

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[210] Bratton.

Toscano.

[211] Kwon.

[212] Within the book, Kwon does acknowledge a vast difference of experience, and thus a need to consider *fragments next to* one another, rather than invoking *equivalences after* one another. However, as the choice of title indicates, this is a side point to her main argument.

Ibid., p. 166.

[213] Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland CA: PM Press, 2012).

in the physicality of the experience of site. The artist and artwork must thus engage not in the specificities of site, but in the specificities of plural encounters with site, and the politics which ensue.

Artist residencies are problematic. The term has expanded to encompass a wide range of variations, but I principally refer here to the 'traditional' model of an artist spending a period of time in a site other than their own. This already contradicts the above: an artist cannot be within an 'other-site'; they are part of the continual constructing of it while being in continual encounter with it ('it' being differently experienced by them to anyone else). The premise of moving into a generalised 'other' site is a false one, and yet, paradoxically, in seeking to counter the inequalities of the technosphere, we need to at least seek to understand the situations of others. An important potential of the artwork within site could be in trying to connect or bridge a gap between different encounters, recognising their plurality: to create an encounter between encounters so to speak.

Embodiment and disembodiment are key in bridging this gap between individual experiences of site. The body itself constitutes a site, and we have vastly different degrees of embodied-ness in our engagements with site, depending on our position within the hierarchies of the technosphere. *Part 1* called for a post-individual pro-humanism and it is important to clarify a distinction of embodiment with regard to this. The technosphere seeks to embody us as individuals: entities of data, productivity, linguistic-relational capability and capitalist consumption. A falsely clean embodiment, an inescapably encapsulated archive of past activities and a controlled and surveilled (non-)future. This 'embodiment' ignores the sensual, the visceral and the painful: the

body that bleeds and seeps and desires.[214] The body upon which hugely unequal violence is enacted, but still the body which we all inhabit.

If an embodied engagement with site premised on positive agency rather than technospheric control is to be found, this will be in a human rather than individual embodiment. This entails making ourselves vulnerable alongside one another across the breadth of our being; sharing vulnerabilities and frailties, and mutually caring. Acknowledging, in the residency context for example, that I am not an abstracted virtuosic individual come to reflect on and engage with site, but rather, that I am another messy human in need of care, tethered in infinite complexity to the world around me.

The body itself can also be a territory of resistance: an unquantifiable site of human-ness.[215] To fulfil this though, it needs to care and to be cared for, be cared about. The human-ness of the body is manifested in these caring relationships: in the connected, co-constituted sites of encounter beyond our non-discrete selves.

Strategically then, what is needed is a parallel embodiment and disembodiment: always seeking to place ourselves in co-vulnerable and co-caring embodied-ness in human-to-human encounter, while at the same time always seeking to disembody

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[214] Where somatic materialities are permitted within the technosphere, it is only in highly commodified exploitable forms, such as pornography or the ill body as a site for invasive pharma-capitalism as explored by Boyer.

Anne Boyer, *The Undying: Pain, Vulnerability, Mortality, Medicine, Art, Time, Dreams, Data, Exhaustion, Cancer, and Care* (London: Allen Lane, 2019).

[215] Strategies of playfulness and irrationality, as discussed in *Part 1*, might be part of this unquantifiable human-ness.

ourselves, or enable the disembodiment of others, out of the individuation and

corporeal violence of the technosphere.[216]

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[216] It is important to emphasise that the embodied human-to-human encounters I advocate placing ourselves within should be *co*-caring. This includes making a judgement of when the other human is not caring for us (perhaps acting as an agent of technospheric violence or exploitation) and choosing, if possible, to remove ourselves from that vulnerable encounter.

Subsumption of the public sphere

At the other end of the scale, though built upon our embodied selves, is the public

sphere: our collective political body. This is a key site in the perpetuation and

'legitimisation' of inequality within the technosphere, and it is thus relevant to examine

its emergence and contemporary functioning in order to explore in what ways it might

be possible to operate critically, or present counter narratives, within it.

The relations of public to private (be it in material assets, rights, or information) have

been at the core of the discussion of inequalities since at least the 1700s when Jean-

Jacques Rousseau located the origins of inequality as having occurred in the

privatisation of property.[217] The public sphere is where those relations are formed.

Jurgen Habermas presents a comprehensive exploration of the development of the

liberal public sphere, in relation to which our contemporary context emerges.[218] What

he charts developing in the eighteenth century, he links back to Greek antiquity: the

'bios politikos' constituted in both discussion ('lexis') and common action ('praxis').

However, underpinning this bios politikos, and similarly reestablished in the bourgeois

society Habermas describes, is an absolute separation of public and private.[219] The

freedom and autonomy of equal participation within a dynamic public sphere of

political life is premised upon absolute mastery and control of a household private

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[217] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men, or, Second Discourse' [1755], in *Rousseau: The Discourses and other early political writings,* ed. by Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 111-231.

[218] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* [1962], trans. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1992).

[219] Ibid., p. 3-4.

sphere. The head of the household exercises complete authority over this private

sphere, within which is held all 'menial' and reproductive labour, and furthermore all

economic activity. On this basis, the bios politikos was only ever accessible to a

minority (excluding the vast majority of women, the poor, etc.); and similarly the

bourgeois public sphere presents access barriers almost as unsurpassable, premised on

exclusionary discourses such as those around class, gender and race.

This strict separation of public and private then shifts with the emergence of the

modern state and development of the category of the social.[220] The public sphere

maintains its original meaning of being 'public', but comes to paradoxically be at least

in part defined by its private (or 'civil') ownership, in contrast to the state. Habermas

describes this as the authentic public sphere, residing in the private realm.[221] However,

the inequality of this bourgeois public sphere is significant: not only through the

discursively constructed identity barriers to access mentioned above, but also in the

extending of their underpinning material and economic inequalities. The bourgeois

elite are the beneficiaries of this material divergence as capitalism proceeds, and

correspondingly secure their dominance over access to, and influence within, the

public sphere. This creates a closed loop of foreclosed critique of the structures which

enable that foreclosing of critique.[222]

Discourses of unequal identity categorisation continue to affect our relations to the

public sphere as both subject and object in the present: our access to active

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[220] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [1958], 2nd edn (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 28.

[221] Habermas, p. 30.

[222] The implications of this stasis, and possible responses to it, will be developed in *Part 3*.

participation within it, and how those aspects of perceived identity contributing to our social configuration are discussed in our absence. Moreover, material ownership, while increasingly opaquely hidden in tax havens, 'dark pools' and privatised data, only grows in dominance over the public sphere.[223] Where once a flawed public sphere was a much needed counterweight to state power, we now find ourselves looking to underpowered states as checks on what has become of it, a role they are manifestly unable to fulfil. The mutated public sphere, now dominated by the formerly not even acknowledged economic, consumes and directs the state out of which it originally emerged.

Nancy Fraser's critique of Habermas's conception of the bourgeois public sphere centres on his lack of recognition of a plurality of public spheres, or 'counter publics'.[224] These are clearly visible in the likes of working class unionisation and feminist movements but, Fraser argues, have emergent precedents going right back to the eighteenth century. There was never a singular uncontested public sphere without counter publics already present. These counter publics are vital in contesting the 'bracketing out' of material status differences that Habermas's public sphere is premised upon.[225] That social inequalities are merely overlooked rather than addressed and engaged with is to ignore the necessity of questioning what constitutes the public sphere.[226] Counter publics are vital in questioning the acceptance of these bracketings,

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[223] 'Dark pools' are discussed by Bridle: they are private trading forums existing beyond mainstream financial markets, outside regulation.

Bridle, pp.108-109.

[224] Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), 56-80.

[225] Habermas, pp. 36-38.

[226] In an art context, this underpins the need for art to acknowledge and address the conditions of its own production.

which we might more descriptively name 'exclusionary structural legitimisations of inequality foreclosing the discourses they claim to facilitate'.

This is a recurring fallibility of liberalism. There can be no true tabula rasa of a singular universally equal public sphere: the necessary barriers between the space of public discourse and the deep inequalities of culture and economy within society can never be made fully impermeable. Making such a claim only further entrenches the inequality.[227]

Counter publics are vital in two simultaneous ways. They are both a site to withdraw to and recuperate, and also bases or training grounds out of which broader public engagement, disruptive of the hegemonic public sphere, can be initiated.[228] As such, we can think of them as in some ways corresponding to Ross's territory which can be defended.[229] A place to be defended and dwelt within, but the counter public is a useful concept in helping us escape the literal spatial sense that frequently seeps into 'territory'. It also, in emphasising the meeting of ideas and voices that constitutes the public sphere, reasserts the dynamic agency and connection of (potentially embodied, human-to-human) discursive encounters. The counter public launch point for critique, subversion and disruption of the hegemonic public sphere, better than 'defence', reflects the active, invasive agency required in contesting inequality.

Counter publics can themselves fall foul of the same bracketing out and excluding as the hegemonic public sphere. They must not be allowed to ossify, and need a continual

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[227] However, making such a claim *speculatively*, with explicit or implicit acknowledgement that it is not the present reality, might serve a purpose. This is very different to claiming it to be the case.

[228] Fraser, p. 68.

[229] Ross.

process of 'counter counter publics' and beyond, fractalling out, to emerge in connected contestation with them and each other.

Fraser writes that we are all situated in relation to these multiple public spheres with differing enmeshments amidst them; we cannot neutrally observe them.[230] Rosalyn Deutsche builds on this argument: while there may be occasional need to aesthetically reveal or represent, to singularly emphasise this is to ignore the site from which we inescapably speak and view; our own positionality of subjectivity, context, territory and (counter) public.[231] Deutsche uses this argument to contest Fredric Jameson's call for cognitive maps, which *Part 1* previously critiqued for their lack of acknowledgement of an underpinning structure.[232] Bringing in Deutsche's argument, we can add to this that the strategy insufficiently addresses our own subjectivity and positionality.[233] This acknowledgement of both the 'self-to-world' aspects of our embodied positionality (the manner in which we encounter the world) as well as our 'world-to-self' structural and contextual reading and encoding (the manner in which the world encounters us) is central to the methodological approach of 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' as set out in *Praxis*.

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[230] Fraser.

[231] Rosalyn Deutsche, 'Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy', *Social Text*, 33 (1992), 34-53.

[232] Fredric Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 347-358.

[233] Deutsche.

Ed Finn outlines what we might consider the 'inversion' of our current public sphere as it has become further debased through the trajectory of liberalism. With our access to, and participation within, public discourses and the political and journalistic arenas becoming increasingly dominated by the internet, actors within this space which claim relied upon de facto public service roles, but are in truth private capitalist interests (often forms of platform), occupy key positions of power.[234] Facebook's functioning as an echo chamber of aligned opinions and susceptibility to manipulation has been well documented, but Finn turns attention towards a site widely perceived to be much more neutral and objective: Google search. Pagerank is the opaque algorithm by which Google determines what we are presented with when we search, and its ordering: essentially it is a tool for creating a hierarchy determined through an unknown, shifting set of criteria.[235] Habermas's idealised public sphere was premised on every opinion or argument standing or falling based on its own discursive merit (a utopian ideal which was never possible), but now access to, and dissemination of, the material of discourse is largely beholden to a single dominant corporation using proprietary algorithms and bearing specific vested interests.[236]

For Finn, Bitcoin is the mirror image of Pagerank. Where the latter provides us with access to content, knowledge, news and information, but determined through an opaque algorithmic structure; the former renders the content (what is exchanged and

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[234] Ed Finn, *What Algorithms Want: Imagination in the Age of Computing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017).

[235] Ibid., p. 157.

[236] Habermas.

who owns it) invisible, but makes the anonymous record and network completely visible in the form of the publicly accessible blockchain.[237]

In considering blockchain, the event of exchange and its map and subsequent trace are all meshed into one in the ever-increasing record of transactions that constitutes the chain. It is its own algorithm. With Pagerank on the other hand, we still generally hold onto a presumed separation between the two: a belief that a 'neutral' algorithm is somehow enabling us to access something objective, or truthful, rather than being similarly bound up in and entwined with that which it delivers to our screens.

As exemplars of broader contemporary shifts (of ownership and profit being abstracted into a computational arms race, and of algorithmic mediation of access to discourse), Finn argues that Bitcoin and Pagerank taken together point towards a public sphere increasingly inverted from that which Habermas describes.[238] Whereas previously the private and economic realm was (problematically) bracketed out leaving only the 'content', we now appear to be coming full circle with the financial exchange being publicly accessible and the content being 'bracketed in' to an opaque algorithmic structure.

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[237] Finn, p. 169.

A misplaced utopian streak sometimes enters into the discourse around blockchain algorithms, largely premised on an idea that human labour (Marx's source of all value) can be transcended by machinic labour. In the example of Bitcoin mining though, the 'machinic labour' is purely a game: an abstracted race to see who can claim ownership of appropriated value premised on out of sight human labour. In this sense, it is a clear example of those who can disembody themselves within the technosphere exploiting those for whom that option is denied.

[238] Ibid., p. 173.

The economic thus becomes dominant as the new pseudo-public sphere, and becomes gatekeeper to any 'public' discourse. It is the record and the network. Journalism is increasingly quantitatively valued, in terms of views and clicks, irrespective of what is said. The old enlightenment values were themselves flawed in many ways, but did at least operate as a counterweight to market forces, albeit unequally and partially. They are losing relevance.[239] A similar shift can be observed taking place within art, with financial market-value feeding back into perceived 'artistic quality' through mechanisms such as Frieze Tate Fund, creating a self-perpetuating loop of an under-critiqued and under-critical market-orientated institutional canon.[240]

This subsumption of the political by the economic proceeds in parallel with the subsumption of the social, the private and the intimate by the economic; as our conversations, desires, identities and relationships are rendered fungible data through the likes of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tinder.

The coming to dominance of the economic echoes Hannah Arendt's earlier theorising of the social's rise to preeminence.[241] The bios politikos had been premised on a form of highly exclusionary 'equality' rooted not in a notion of justice but in 'collectively'

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[239] Ibid., p. 174.

[240] And beyond this, there is a wholesale neoliberalisation of art institutions, increasingly operating according to populist and/or marketised logics. This entails reduced funding for, or other forms of enabling of, the critical or controversial (other than when safe performances of such can be commodified).

[241] Arendt.

agreed upon freedom of public debate.[242] However the private sphere, a negative space of privation upon which it materially relied, was completely authoritarian: the realm of necessity devoid of either freedom or equality.[243]

The social as a realm rises with modernity between these spaces of the public and the private. The social sees the state become manager, developing governmentality in seeking to maximise the bio-economic efficiency of the population.[244] The hierarchical family model is generalised across society, with (so long as the social held sway over the economic) a false sense of equality, or at least security, under hierarchical power.[245] By the twentieth century, a developed apparatus of governmentality means conformity is effectively fully internalised amongst the population and the visible authority figure at the hierarchical apex is no longer required.[246] In place of the dynamism of the debate and action of the polis, Arendt argues, once the social begins to dominate and subsume the political, conformist behaviour rather than dynamic action becomes the expected role of the individual.[247] Instead of accepting flux and shift, an ossified stasis thus

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[242] As discussed, there was huge exclusivity in the group amongst whom this 'collective' agreement was made.

Furthermore, this understanding of freedom as being akin to a void ignores the histories and contexts, inscribed with inequality, within which life occurs. As noted in *Part 1*, a strong argument for considering freedom as 'synthetic' (something actively constructed) instead of considering it as passive absence is made by Srnicek and Williams.

Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 78-83.

[243] This negative privation of the private applies to those held *within* it, not the individual held aloft (within the public) by it.

[244] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, ed. by Michel Senellart, trans. by Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2009).

[245] Arendt, p. 40.

[246] Foucault.

[247] Arendt, pp. 40-41.

becomes the encoded logic, with significant change rendered increasingly unimaginable. It corresponds then that in the post-Fordist social factory, the language and interrelations of the old public sphere have (for the large majority) been coopted into labour, and bracketed away from any political affect. Proceeding further, passive 'being' then replaces action as the principally required function of the individuated human within platform capitalism, as discussed in *Part 1*. Within a logic of stasis, the value created through linguistic-relational capability is extracted simply through the basic requirements of existing. That capability, which Paolo Virno considers the centre of our human-ness, becomes affectless object.[248] Despite a mirage of ever-increasing activity, an immobility pervades at both the personal and systemic scale.

Arendt's preeminent social is a space in which the continuation of life and labour becomes the collective focus. Where the bourgeois public sphere was centred on the idea or concept, supposedly evaluated irrespective of the body voicing it; under the hegemony of the social it is the maintenance and maximising of that body (both individual and collective) which is primary.[249] Mutual dependence for the sake of the continuation of this way of being (encoded with not only established inequalities, but also tendencies toward further exacerbation of these) assumes public significance, and everything else is gradually erased form the public sphere.[250] Arendt's articulation of this argument clearly strongly foreshadows Michel Foucault's conception of biopolitics, which was discussed in *Part 1*. In the social, the vital link between the physical

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[248] Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For An Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. by Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito and Andrea Casson (Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 98.

[249] Arendt.

This is only a very specific body: normalised, rationalised, abstracted and instrumentalised.

[250] Ibid., p. 46.

corporeal body and the political body, around which this *part* is structured, becomes emphatic.

The liberal public sphere was dynamic, but hugely flawed in ignoring and excluding the vast majority of people. Its succession by the social inverts it a first time, subsuming the public into the concerns of the social, itself a massively expanded hierarchy of control derived from the old private. (And the old private likewise becomes a space of social concern and control.) While significantly flawed, this socially dominated era did at least contain elements of some notion of equality, and a concern for life. Our present context, where the economic has followed the social out of the private to claim dominance over the other spheres, jettisons these mediating factors. We now inhabit the anguish of the multitude, with concern for life giving way to a primary concern for profit, growth, capital and other textual abstractions of property.[251]

Arendt argues that anything approaching 'objectivity' in the public sphere can only be achieved through the simultaneous presence of (and hearing of) innumerable perspectives contesting discourse and action.[252] In other words: counter publics. The social dispenses with this democratic plural subjectivity through contestation and debate of ideas, replacing it with a false objectivity based on the decreed fulfilment of needs.

To contest an often violent structure which denies its own contestability is one thing when that structure at least places some importance on a flawed understanding of human equality and life. It is altogether more risky and potentially harmful when that

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[251] Virno.

[252] Arendt, p. 57.

structure, as at present, has jettisoned those concerns. Under such conditions, the counter public or territory is indispensable as a form of refuge or protection. When the hegemonic structure pertains to be a totality, as with the technosphere, it continually attempts to subsume anything beyond it.[253] Any possibility of resistance might therefore rely upon somehow rupturing from within and recuperating amidst, when the denied outside is foreclosed. Thus considerable effort, attention and care is required to hold open the space or idea of the territory or counter public as distinct amidst the dominant structure, even before any contestation of the structure itself can be imagined. Often not discrete, these vital sites might be found as alternate codes or textures of being, or logics of acting, enmeshed within the technosphere.

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[253] As has been discussed (and as *Part 3* will further explore), this is not to present the technosphere as an entirely coherent, discrete, reified entity. Its fuzzy, de-centred contingency does not prevent it from having extensive affect though.

<u>Public and civil</u>

Philip Dietachmair and Pascal Gielen make a distinction between civil and public spheres, with the latter being the realm of words and ideas in circulation which has been explored thus far. The civil sphere (not to be confused with the state-orientated 'civic') is, they argue, the space of action that is mutually interdependent with the public sphere.[254] If they are to foster resistance, actions in the civil sphere require collective reflection, consideration and coordination emergent through discussion in a (counter) public sphere. In order to have a civil sphere resistant to, and critical of, the state and/or the categories of the 'economic' and 'social' through which power operates, a public sphere of active discourse out of which those generative reflections and coordinations can emerge is needed. At the same time though, in the face of the technological, economic and social means of control (as well as physical violence) which the dominant regime can exert upon a critical (counter) public sphere, civil action is equally needed to hold open that space of discourse.

Art can play a key role here, through operating at the intersection of the public and the civil, as Dietachmair and Gielen distinguish them. In reflexively acknowledging its own context, the artwork can simultaneously work within the civil and the public, operating as a generative text connecting together (or perhaps focusing attention upon existing connections between) content, site, context, event and subject. The artwork that can do this effectively can insulate and protect itself from hegemonic subsumption in both directions: what it articulates in the public sphere giving directionality to its

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[254] Philip Dietachmair and Pascal Gielen, eds., *The Art of Civil Action: Political Space and Cultural Dissent* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2018), pp. 14-18.

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action, and its qualities as an action or event within the civil sphere making public that discursive positioning.[255]

Art acting in this way is all the more vital when we see increasingly brutal, violent repression of protest and direct action. The artwork enables a disembodied form of affect to occur, which avoids the vulnerability that comes with embodied human presence in the face of corporeal violence on the part of the dominant regime. This is not to say direct civil action does not have a role to play: history shows it to be crucial in overcoming repressive structures.[256] However, art as a vector of connecting the action directly to the weak points of power, or as a means of (re)presenting the distilled idea precisely at the point of action, can play a vital role. It might be a catalyst or multiplier for more direct action, but equally it can be a means of disembodied counter-action: of continuing to actively resist, perhaps to defend a territory, while giving vulnerable human bodies some respite.[257]

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[255] This mutual support between public and civil (in some ways akin to lexis and praxis) underpins the importance of practice as an element of research within a project, such as this, which seeks to have affect within the public sphere.

[256] As *Part 1* emphasised, various strategies of resistance can be most effective when working in some form of coordination.

[257] Care must be taken with this line of thought. Especially when combined with an individualism, it can lead to an elitist hypocrisy within art, with the artist coming to view themself as exceptional. It is imperative this is self-reflexively critiqued. In addition to the arguments made against an individualism in *Part 1*, it might be necessary at times for artists to put themselves (their bodies and their being) at the site of contestation. This will be further discussed in the *Embodiment within artistic practice* section below.

<u>Privation in the society of control</u>

In considering site, and especially the public sphere as a site, it is important to draw connections back to work and labour. As discussed, the economic, following the social, has come to dominate the political within the public sphere; and furthermore, embodied labour is a site at which violence (or its threat) is routinely enacted upon humans.

Gilles Deleuze presciently described the 'society of control' we now inhabit as 'dividuals': a context wherein we are subject to ultra-responsive, free-floating management; neither as discrete, enfleshed beings, nor as a collective mass.[258] Rather, we are maximised as units of production on the one hand, while being analysed and collated in fragmented disembodied sets of data on the other. Deleuze views the corporation's succession of the factory as the archetypal structure of production as key to this: an abstract entity to work for, seeping into the internal identification of the worker, replacing a simpler site at which work was conducted (and at which resistance could be orchestrated).[259]

Opaque, graded pay scales and bonus systems are a key technology of this. Each dividual can be specifically targeted, managed and manipulated to maximise their productivity through personalised inducements, within a broader culture of both implicit and explicit fear and competition.[260] This technology serves to fragment the Fordist counter public of the factory floor: the contestation with managers and owners

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[258] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, 59 (1992), 3-7.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid.

in unionisation, collective action and the withholding of labour. To echo some of *Part 1*'s discussions, the dividual is no longer enclosed within the factory site, but is instead indebted, including within their own minds.

The privateness of the multitude Virno explores this dividual as inhabiting is one where privateness is viewed very much in the negative terms of 'privation' which Arendt described.[261] To speak, without choice, in private is to be denied the notional freedom of the public sphere; to have to operate precariously without a voice to contest either that condition or any other thing.

What might a strategy of reappropriation of the private look like though? Might there not be potential in the overlooked privacy of the multitude to act to subvert or undermine the dominant regime? It is here that it might be possible to find ways of being which emphasise the overlooked, human positives which privacy might offer, while minimising the negative aspects of privation. Importantly though, technospheric privacy (which will tend towards ever more isolated anguished individuation) is not the aim. Instead, a fifth column privacy which loops around and uses the overlooked-ness and invisibility of the private to surreptitiously reopen a collective, functioning (counter) public sphere can be sought.

This reappropriation is already taking place within the technologies of the technosphere. VPNs, mirror sites, BitTorrent, the TOR network (despite its military origins), end-to-end encrypted messages and so forth are all being used around the world as means of reclaiming privacy and avoiding surveillance, be it in China, Turkey

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[261] Virno, p. 24.

Arendt, p. 38.

or London.[262] However, it is not the infrastructures themselves (a set of era-specific

terms that will be replaced by others as technologies develop) but, rather, how they are

used to bring counter hegemonic discourses into public that is key. The technologies

themselves offer no resistance without counter publics which might work through

them, and counter publics have always, by necessity, found ways to operate through

the technologies, systems and structures they sit within and against. Older, off-line

networks persist alongside the new, and these can also be useful in avoiding

surveillance.

Karl Marx's conception of a general intellect holds some liberatory potential for the

dividual, but it is vital that whatever constitutes the general intellect is brought about

in parallel with some kind of functioning critical, progressive public sphere (including

counter publics).[263] The linguistic-capitalist networks of Facebook, Google and the

'legitimate' internet in general have been argued to be enabling of a general intellect.[264]

And just as these can be harboured to private gain (while being relied upon as de facto

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[262] VPNs are 'virtual private networks' which, amongst other things, allow connection to the internet as if elsewhere, thus avoiding some spatially determined means of surveillance or control.

Mirror sites are replicas of websites hosted elsewhere, which might be accessible when the original is not.

BitTorrent is a protocol for peer-to-peer (and thus unmediated, and largely unregulated) file transfer.

TOR is an acronym of 'The Onion Router' and is a means of connecting to the internet (including, notably, the 'dark web') anonymously.

End-to-end encryption enables communication where, in principle, only the parties sending and receiving can access the content.

These technologies, and others, can be used in various combinations.

[263] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* [1857-61], trans. by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 690-712.

[264] Paul Mason, *PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (London: Allen Lane, 2015) p. 135.

public services), so can VPNs, TOR and so forth; whether through data theft, spam, pornography, drug selling or other exploitative uses. Virno describes the general intellect as something formed in the discursive relations between individuals, producing a social knowledge.[265] Either the 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' means of enabling those relations can further that. TOR isn't 'good' because it inherently opposes surveillance, just as, conversely, *Part 1* argued that Facebook and its like need not necessarily be completely disengaged with.[266] These are tools formed through, often in inversion or replication of, a dominant technospheric structure and thus inevitably reflect and refract some of its inequalities in their socio-economic use. However, this does not preclude their (mis)use in pursuing this idea of a general intellect alongside, and as part of, a functioning public sphere. Where Marx saw the potential of a general intellect as residing in the machines themselves, Virno contrastingly views it as existing in the intra-human capacity of linguistic communications.[267] As the two collapse together within the technosphere (as argued in *Part 1*), it is vital to hold onto and prioritise the human in a plural, co-relational, co-affective and co-vulnerable sense, not an individuated one.

Echoing the previously described role art might play in simultaneously bringing about a functioning, critical public sphere and civil sphere through the mutual enabling of one through the other, here what is needed is a simultaneous support for one another between the technological possibility of a general intellect and a politics premised on

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[265] Virno, pp. 42, 106.

[266] To offer a specific example, according to friends' first-hand experience Facebook Messenger served as a vital means of communication during the Maidan occupation in Kyiv, Ukraine in 2013-14. It was a quick, simple and accessible means of exchanging information and disseminating it to a wider audience, when many other channels were liable to surveillance by the very state which was seeking, with increasing violence, to repress the occupation.

[267] Ibid., p. 106.

equality and care. A functioning public sphere cannot really emerge without this: the bios politikos was premised on a supposed freedom of pure discourse which bracketed out anything bodily, social or laborious. Our contemporary context though, is one within which these are the very sites at which exploitative inequality is most powerfully and directly (re)produced. Thus something new, emphasising equality and care, is needed. This must be worked out in mutual parallel with the technological possibilities, not regressively turning away from them but iteratively edging and being edged forward in reflexive criticality.[268] The interrelationship between the (mis)functioning of our collective political body and the material relations of our corporeal human bodies is vital to this.

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[268] Within the technospheric context, these technologies increasingly affect, or even determine, life. To not engage with them and their surrounding contexts is to slip into inaffective irrelevance.

<u>Enmeshed positionalities</u>

When considering a public sphere premised on discourse and idea, it is essential to recognise the embodied inequality of agency in affecting it. Virtuosic work has come to dominate, and as Guy Debord noted, communication itself is increasingly rendered a commodity.[269] The spectacle, as Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer observed, has taken on a dual nature: being both the product of the culture industries but increasingly also, as *Part 1* explored, the dominant vector of our positioning and functioning within the socio-economic structure as a whole.[270] Those in the advantaged position of being able to affect public discourse need to be hyper-vigilant not to perform a spectacle of criticality which in fact only serves to accrue further capital (perhaps not financial, immediately at least), but which does not in fact meaningfully address that which it professes to critique. That inequality of linguistic-relational agency is distributed highly unequally according to embedded structures (of class, race, gender, nationality, language, etc.) means that an accrual of capital through a false spectacle of critically and progressively contributing to a new public sphere only reinforces entrenched inequalities. Furthermore, it appropriates the precise sites at which counter publics could otherwise develop. To deploy one's agency in such a way is to be complicit in the aforementioned inverting and hollowing out of the public sphere.

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[269] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* [1967], trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York NY: Zone Books, 1994).

(For Debord, human communication becoming a commodity is central to the society of the spectacle.)

[270] Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1944], trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 94-136.

Of course, human fallibility is inevitable and the political is messy. There will be events when spectacle and entrenched privilege permeate a net-positive act; when doing nothing would be worse. This needs to be critiqued, but should not dissuade us from action in what will otherwise continue to be an exploitative stasis of profound inequality. In such a position, the disembodiment away from singular attributable authorship that the technologies of the technosphere can help enable might be a desirable, viable strategy in seeking to avoid reproducing inequality.[271] The radical, perpetual destruction of the individuated self advocated in *Part 1* again becomes relevant, both in terms of mitigating self-interested capital accumulation (conscious or otherwise) and, through co-equal inter-relation and collaboration, as a creative manifestation of a counter public of critical self-reflexive co-consideration.[272] The ossified stasis of the present structure, while familiar, might be worth greater concern than the potential political act which contains unknown risk.[273]

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe a reality of 'bodies without organs' wherein the centrality of the atomised body is dispersed across a shifting plane of assemblages of intensities of substance.[274] While vividly predicting much of the fluid, networked experience of the technospheric reality we now inhabit in their conceptual rendering (with the 'bodies' in question encompassing a wide range of agglomerations which might previously have been uncritically accepted as distinct, cohesive entities), Deleuze

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[271] As will be explored, this technological enabling of disembodiment is highly unequally distributed.

[272] To be specific, *Part 1* proposed the destruction of the individuated *artist* self; the point made here is more general. A return to specific focus on the artist will come in the *Embodiment within artistic practice* section at the end of this *part*.

[273] This need to speculatively act into the unknown, with the risk implicit in that, is a key consideration of radical care as it will be developed in *Part 3*.

[274] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 153.

and Guattari's writing also places an intentional emphasis on the corporeal human body, in its somatic vulnerability. The black body, the female body, the migrant body: the bodies which do the under-valorised but essential labour of the technosphere and upon which its violence is routinely enacted, while being excluded from the hegemonic public sphere. The inequality of embodiment must be recognised in any discussion of it: there is a dealignment of agency between those bodies which are vulnerable, those who can proactively enunciate their vulnerability, and those who can enunciate a vulnerability upon others. (Such enunciation operates on complex, multifaceted, intersecting spectrums between intent and unintentionality, and between benefit and harm.) Furthermore, there is an inequality of access to the sites and technologies of desirable disembodiment (largely privileging those whose embodied selves are least likely to suffer violence).

For Deleuze and Guattari, we are bound by three things which prevent us from fully becoming bodies without organs: the state of being an organism, the notion of significance, and subjection (or subjectification).[275] However, they argue, while we can to unequal extents seek to disembody ourselves out of these confines, it can be strategically beneficial to, to some small extent, remain connected and tethered via each in order to be able to operate and subvert through the systems of the dominant reality.[276] To undermine through its own languages and structures, pulling it down from within, but not in such a way as to destroy ourselves, the rogue agent, in the process (which would almost always leave the vastly larger dominant reality effectively unaffected, with the pulled down part so minuscule as to be virtually imperceptible). To operate like a successful virus: spreading an alternate way of being

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[275] Ibid., p. 159.

[276] Ibid., p. 160.

but not being so alien as to kill the host organism and in so doing the nascent idea too.[277]

There is thus a strategic benefit in maintaining a reflexive relation to the fixing points preventing us from fully becoming bodies without organs. Conversely, as dividuals within the society of control, now formed through apparatuses of desubjectification as much as subjectifiation (which will be addressed below), it is similarly strategic to maintain a reflexive relation to those processes of becoming a body without organs, even if we now wish to contest this through asserting an embodiment.[278] An approach of total embodiment in a wholly disembodied context cannot engage with it, while full disembodiment merely conforms. And in the inverted scenario, complete disembodiment or embodiment in a wholly embodied context is equally inaffective. Rather, a more nuanced strategy of resistance-resilience premised on entering into site and shifting tactically, unpredictably and uncontrollably, between embodied and disembodied states and events is called for, with the repressive structures and processes themselves becoming the vectors of their own undermining.[279] A keen awareness of the apparatuses within which we exist and our (de)subjectification through them is essential in doing this.

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[277] This strategy is premised on contesting a totalising hegemonic context, as at present. At a certain point, to fully supersede it, it does become necessary to fundamentally undermine the dominant reality. And prior to this point, it can be crucial to do so in delineated territories as a means of establishing the aforementioned counter publics. The argument made here does not contradict this, but rather relates to the macro-contextual scale where a dialectical direct confrontation will presently prove ineffective and damaging.

[278] Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control'.

[279] This discussion of embodiment is a broader, more general one than that of within the context of would-be critical artistic practice (which will be specifically returned to at the end of this *part*).

Dark kitchens and desert cities

The designated, demarcated zone within or adjacent to a city, or even the new city itself as a zone, is a chief spatial technology of the technosphere.[280] While sovereignties are still enforced spatially, in part at least, the zone provides a means to effectively bracket out within space. Just as within the bourgeois public sphere the economic and domestic were bracketed out of the supposedly free and equal exchange of words and ideas, so within the spatial zone the very notion of public and civil spheres, or any kind of political contestation, are bracketed out through authoritarian legislation underpinned by imprisonment and violence. These zones, be they focused on trade, finance or manufacturing, become spaces where politics and critique are ruthlessly silenced in the face of economic hegemony.

There are paradoxes, such as Dubai Media City, where the zone, though highly regulated in other ways, allows a greater degree of 'free speech' within its boundaries than is permitted outside.[281] However, this leniency derives from seeking an economic edge, not out of any desire for situated public discourse.

Keller Easterling describes the zone technology as being increasingly rendered via active, rather than object, form.[282] By this, she means that it has been abstracted away from a specific design for a spatial environment. Instead, the zone is perpetuated and multiplied through a set of approaches and ideologies (which can be tailored where

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[280] Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London: Verso, 2016), pp. 25-69.

[281] Ibid., p. 45.

[282] Ibid.

necessary to local conditions). So the zone is not spread around the world in architectural plans, but instead in doctrines of free trade, tax exemption and digital connectivity, as well as the premise itself of managing a population through constructed spatial boundaries. Thus, from a spatial, physical origin, the zone becomes something encoded and perpetuated chiefly through text: the text of the legal clause and policy document, and the text of the algorithmic coding of its automated systems and telecommunications.

The desert, perhaps in Saudi Arabia or on the China-Kazakstan border, is the preferred (non-)site for the zone.[283] Sparsely populated and 'empty', it enables the imposition of this textual active-form in its purest way, least tempered by context: a real-world tabula rasa. Neoliberal presumptions can be writ large, neither hypothetical urban renderings in virtual reality nor economic ideologies need be much modified to the realities of site.

While current legal frameworks do still require the zone to be physically situated, the valorised, opportunistic linguistic-relational workers who can do their job from anywhere, whom the zone seeks to attract, are beginning to be freed from this tiresome necessity. E-residency, for example, enables the juridical siting of oneself within a certain legislative environment without the need to be physically present (or ever have

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[283] NEOM, a new-city project in north-western Saudi Arabia, will have a juridical and tax regime completely independent of the rest of the country.

Reuters with CNBC.com, 'Saudis set $500 billion plan to develop zone linked with Jordan and Egypt', *CNBC website* (24 October 2017) <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/10/24/saudis-500-billion-plan-to-neom-business-city.html> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Khorgas (sometimes spelled Khorgos), on the China-Kazakhstan border, will soon be the world's largest dry port.

'Khorgos: the biggest dry port in the world: A visual explainer', *South China Morning Post website* <https://multimedia.scmp.com/news/china/article/One-Belt-One-Road/khorgos.html> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

been), enabling further disembodiment of the dividual.[284] And the global network of

offshore tax havens is already well established in providing this opaque service for

assets (not least those of platform capitalist giants such as Apple and Amazon).[285]

The zone is one of the most striking manifestations of the inequality of

(dis)embodiment. While the valorised linguistic-relational worker is seamlessly sped in

and out in constant connectivity and productivity, enabled in a disembodied

performance of advanced global capitalism, the labourers who undertake the

devalorised, physical work which underpins the zone find themselves forced into

embodied subjection through the threat of violence, and kept hidden, out of view.

Where the former is sped through automated immigration channels, the latter have

their passports withheld until they have repaid the cost of their transportation from

their home country to the zone, and live in segregated, cramped dormitories.[286]

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[284] See, for example, Estonia's e-residency programme.

Republic of Estonia, *E-Residency application website* <https://e-resident.gov.ee> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[285] Nick Hopkins and Simon Bowers, 'Apple secretly moved parts of empire to Jersey after row over tax affairs', *Guardian,* 6 November 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/nov/06/apple-secretly-moved-jersey-ireland-tax-row-paradise-papers> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[286] Richard Morin, 'Indentured Servitude in the Persian Gulf', *New York Times,* 12 April 2013 <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/sunday-review/indentured-servitude-in-the-persian-gulf.html> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

David Batty, 'Conditions for Abu Dhabi's migrant workers "shame the west"', *Guardian*, 22 December 2013 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/22/abu-dhabi-migrant-workers-conditions-shame-west> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Camplus 'camp management software' promotes 'total control on [sic] labour camp activities' as one of its key features.

Adept Business Solutions, *Camplus - Camp Management Software* <http://adeptsol.com/products/camp-management-software-dubai-sharjah-abudhabi-soudi-bahrain-middle-east-qatar-kuwait-ksa-oman-uae/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

The zone is effectively a site which is de-situated and decontextualised; the political nullified and efficient socio-economic management its raison d'être. This has been variously achieved in disparate locations around the world away and out of site of the technospheric core, within boundaries setting it apart from the 'real' and supposedly containing it. However, we can now witness the technology of the zone being applied within the core, within the metropolis. Whereas the spatially demarcated zone reflects a socio-industrial context of modernity, Deleuze's 'disciplinary society', the much more individually focused and responsive 'society of control' now enables an individuated targeting and segregating within the core.[287] Out of sight need no longer be far away, and the technology targets the dividual subject rather than the grouped, constructed mass.

Platform capitalist companies such as Uber and Deliveroo ('lean platforms' according to Nick Srnicek's definition) have been at the forefront of pushing this potential.[288] Just as the zone provides a slick surface for the sought after linguistic-relational worker to maximise their profitability upon, so the consumer-facing interface of these companies is premised on frictionless, disembodied speed and ease. A few swipes of the smartphone screen and a taxi appears or meal arrives. But the embodied labourer at the other side of the platform has a hugely different experience. Established civil-societal checks and numerous other differences of context mean that the embodied physical experience of being an Uber or Deliveroo worker in a city such as London is not equivalent to being an indentured labourer at a labour camp in a traditional zone. However, the same strategy is at play: individuals in a relatively precarious position are forced to embody themselves in increasingly harsh conditions through misleading

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[287] Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control'.

[288] Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

economic inducements. So Uber drivers will sleep in their cars, unpaid, to be available

for the next higher-rate nighttime job, and Deliveroo riders will go out in the worst

(most dangerous) weather because there is a fee incentive to do so.[289] And both will

work through tiredness and ill health, because their supposed freelance status means

there is no job security or sick pay.[290] All of this keeps costs to a minimum for the

consumer, while the platform is able to keep taking its cut from every transaction.

Contrary to the arduous physical embodiment enforced on the worker, the techniques

by which their labour is extracted are as automated and disembodied as the

consumer's experience, except for a few key moments when human-to-human contact

is either deemed potentially economically beneficial or is legally or functionally

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[289] Eric Newcomer and Olivia Zaleski, 'When Their Shifts End, Uber Drivers Set Up Camp in Parking Lots Across the U.S.' *Bloomberg website* (23 January 2017) <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-23/when-their-shifts-end-uber-drivers-set-up-camp-in-parking-lots-across-the-u-s> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Gwyn Topham, 'Uber drivers waiting in villages near Heathrow cause "huge distress"', *Guardian,* 11 May 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/may/11/uber-drivers-villages-heathrow-huge-distress> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Sabrina Barr, 'UK Weather: Deliveroo Faces Criticism Over Driver Safety In Heavy Snow', *Independent*, 2 March 2018 <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-and-drink/deliveroo-driver-safety-uk-weather-snow-criticism-extra-charge-delivery-a8236966.html> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Echoing the re-spatialised strategies now used to gain an edge in financial markets (physical proximity to servers and private fibre optic cables or microwave relays), an equivalent shadow phenomenon can be seen in the recent appearance of mobile phones hanging from trees outside Amazon delivery stations. Placed in precarious competition with one another, the would-be delivery workers tether together the phone in their hand with that in the tree, which is strategically positioned so as to gain a split-second earlier notification of work becoming available, thus giving them a better chance of claiming it.

Spencer Soper, 'Amazon Drivers Are Hanging Smartphones in Trees to Get More Work', *Bloomberg website* (1 September 2020) <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-01/amazon-drivers-are-hanging-smartphones-in-trees-to-get-more-work> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[290] Naaman Zhou, 'Accidents, stress and uncertainty: food delivery riders lift lid on work conditions', *Guardian,* 30 April 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/may/01/accidents-stress-and-uncertainty-food-delivery-riders-lift-lid-on-work-conditions> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

unavoidable. A few clicks through an easily navigable website allow you to select an appointment to become a Deliveroo worker. Numerous blog posts praising the flexibility, extra-income, and even health and social benefits of the work induce you to do so.[291] At the time I signed up, there was a 'special offer' whereby the jacket, helmet and food-carrying rucksack were offered for free. As a 'freelance contractor' you would normally be expected to either pay £50 for this equipment, deductible from future earnings, or show that your own alternatives meet the stringent requirements (which mean the vast majority must purchase at least the Deliveroo-branded rucksack).

In an inconspicuous small office in South London, I join a group of people who have evidently signed up for this slot. Far from an interview as suggested, this is a production line. We wait while the group ahead of us progress through the stages and then start the process ourselves. Buttressed by a legally required human-to-human interaction at the start, where ID and right-to-work are visually verified, and another at the end, where kit is checked and the rider app is dowloaded to our phone and its functioning is explained to us, the remainder of the 'training' and induction involves digitally signing documents, inputting information, and clicking links to watch instructional videos, preferably through our own phones.

I suffered an injury shortly after going through the induction process so was unable to begin taking on work. I received periodic phone calls: a friendly voice at the end of the line 'just checking in' and encouraging me to 'get going'. Text messages and emails began to offer a

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[291] Aoife Geary, 'A Day in the Life of Deliveroo Rider Sean O'Farrell Power', *blog run by Jobbio* [employment platform] (20 February 2017) <https://blog.jobbio.com/2017/02/20/day-life-deliveroo-rider-sean-ofarrell-power/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Carlton Reid, 'Confessions of a Deliveroo rider: get fit by delivering fast food', *Bike blog on Guardian website* (8 January 2018) <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2018/jan/08/confessions-of-a-deliveroo-rider-get-fit-by-delivering-fast-food> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

starting bonus. Many months later I continue to receive regular push notifications from the rider app, and text messages informing me of incentivising increased rates in certain areas, often coinciding with bad weather.

The rider app manages the workers. Barring an emergency number, it is their point of contact with Deliveroo. The system flows in complete automation: directions to make a pick-up, directions to deliver it to. No need for verbal communication, monetary exchange all handled automatically. Except, of course, it is your legs pedalling through the rain and traffic, you who has to knock on that unknown door, you who is legally responsible, for example, for challenging their age if the order contains alcohol. All the while, building up and maintaining good standing through regular, frequent and efficient work unlocks early access to booking the best slots.

Somewhat paradoxically, Uber and Deliveroo's systems of economic exploitation are now starting to re-create sites of potential resistance. The precarious and structurally unequal broader economic context within which these companies operate, and the supposedly freelance, isolated, algorithmically managed means by which they exploit their workers, means these workers are now pushed to congregate and wait, unpaid, for the work to arrive. Deliveroo actively instructs riders to go to these congregation points, and Uber drivers join virtual queues at airports and major train stations.[292] A twenty-first century equivalent of workers congregating at the factory gates this may be, but, as then, it does bring people together in a site of shared experience of exploitation and possible connection; a site out of which organisation and contestation might emerge. This has happened in the form of collective actions and protests to

[292] Newcomer and Zaleski.

Topham.

somewhat improve working conditions for Deliveroo riders in the UK.[293] The

companies are pulled in two competing strategic directions: their economic

ruthlessness, putting all unproductive time back onto the worker, causes those workers

to congregate in potential contestation.

Inflicting sheer exhaustion is an effective strategy in preventing this contestation. This

may be functional in repressing embodied, exploited labour in distant spatially

demarcated zones, where high-density cost-efficient dormitories serve to further

exhaust the workers after extremely long hours in arduous conditions. For the lean

platforms though, the economic premise of having a perpetual immediate excess of

potential workers precludes this. Instead, they rely on the broader neoliberal socio-

economic structure to exhaust, and to constrain any contestation.

Deliveroo has in recent years gone a step further, constructing 'dark kitchens' to further

disembody the labour behind its business.[294] The ironic success of the disembodied,

dematerialised delivery of food created a problem. While the bodies that work were

invisible to those placing orders, they became more visible to those same consumers

when eating-in at the restaurants from which food was being collected. To maintain the

segregation and illusion, Deliveroo has set up a strategically located network of

functional, windowless kitchens in boxes in which meals, notionally from those

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[293] Sam Shead, 'The Deliveroo strike is over as the company abandons plans to force couriers into signing new contracts', *Business Insider website* (17 August 2016) <https:// www.businessinsider.com/the-deliveroo-strike-is-over-as-the-company-abandons-plans-to-force-couriers-into-signing-new-contracts-2016-8?r=USandIR=T> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[294] This is a very one-sided disembodiment, only such from the perspective of the platform and their consumer.

restaurants, can be cooked.[295] The restaurant chain disembodies its own labour away from itself. These dark kitchens are often co-located with the designated rider congregation points, multiplying both the economic efficiency but also the potential for counter-organisation and contestation.

Dark kitchens are triply dark. Literally, they are dark windowless boxes: utilitarian, unpleasant environments in which to work. Conceptually they remain in the dark: the consumer willing to engage in the conceit of this disembodiment and slick digitisation of the outsourcing of their own bodily needs. And racially they are dark: the structurally embedded and perpetuated inequalities of wealth and economic opportunity, along with the complicit racist hypocrisy of economic reliance on migration, mean proportionally more black and brown bodies work in the dark kitchens while more white bodies order via the app.[296]

The zone, in its modern form, was originally conceived as being a stepping stone. A temporary prioritising of the economic over the political in order to jump start development. It was believed wealth would trickle down and out, and the zone might eventually cease to be needed, or at least would not spread. This has not occurred. Instead, under a neoliberal hegemony and conditions of increasingly frictionless global capital, zones have multiplied exponentially.[297] Rather than being a temporary measure, the zone has become the default. The conditions of the 'freelance' lean

[295] Sarah Butler, 'How Deliveroo's "dark kitchens" are catering from car parks', *Guardian,* 28 October 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/oct/28/deliveroo-dark-kitchens-pop-up-feeding-the-city-london> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[296] Zubaida Haque, 'How the gig economy is widening racial inequality', *New Statesman*, 8 February 2018 <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/economy/2018/02/how-gig-economy-widening-racial-inequality> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[297] Easterling, pp. 33-41.

platform worker mirror this. Promoted as something temporary and offering flexibility, an economic stopgap before embarking on a career, the precarity and insecurity have instead spread out as the permanent 'new normal' for the unvalorised, embodied worker within the technosphere. Where a territory as a spatialised site of resistance, as Ross advocates, might be a suitable strategy within the peripheral zone, the individuated post-spatial control within the technospheric metropolis necessitates strategies of forming resistant and resilient networks subversively entangled within this hegemony.[298] The paradoxical moments of embodied spatial connection the lean platforms' structure is now creating can certainly be made use of, but within a broader strategy of a despatialised, disembodied contestation, in fluid evasion of the sites of violence being enacted upon vulnerable bodies. This research project does not presume to suggest specific forms of direct action, but sets this out as the terrain in which the would-be affective artist and artistic intervention are enmeshed.

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[298] Ross.

<u>Embodiment within artistic practice</u>

Notionally critical artistic engagements with sites of inequality are frequently problematic. In their process, or in their acceptance of implicit meta-structures (of charitability, paternalism, [post-]colonialism and so forth), they are often accepting of the logic of, and sometimes actively complicit within, the very inequalities which they present themselves as seeking to challenge.[299] As Kwon observes of 'community-orientated' site specific practice, the presumptions of the majority of projects are underpinned by a successful assimilation of neoliberal arguments: that through self-improvement and self-realisation the individual, enabled by the artist, can overcome conditions of poverty, disenfranchisement or discrimination.[300] Meanwhile, the larger structures of inequality are ignored, and the transference of responsibility, through work, onto the indebted individual is perpetuated.

Beyond site specific practice, Josephine Berry critiques the premise of participation as an artistic aim more broadly, observing it to be in keeping with the fetishisation of action and productivity within modernity's generalisation of labour.[301] Under conditions of the need for a perpetual performance of productive labour (a continual demonstration of being on the desirable side of the fissure of opportunism explored in

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[299] The operation of such complicity is developed in the discussion of hospitality in the *The threshold* section of *Part 3*.

[300] Kwon, pp. 138-142.

The premise of 'community-orientated' practice itself can be critiqued for making many of the same presumptions of the artist as being outside of site and context as were discussed with regard to residencies.

[301] Josephine Berry Slater, 'The Ghosts of Participation Past', *Mute*, 3:4 (2012) <https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/ghosts-participation-past> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

(While citing this text with the author's name as published, with permission I have opted to refer to Josephine, whom I know in-person, by the surname she now uses within my writing.)

Part 1) active participation's perception within hierarchies of human practice has been

reversed.[302] From being something ideally avoided; activity, busy-ness and visible

participation have become the dominant aspiration within the social factory as well as

formal workplace, and also, through these discourses of participation, within the

cultural arena.[303] This is another example of the social and economic (in the form of

activity) coming to precedence over a public discourse of reflected-upon ideas, though

as Berry notes, we should not revert to too dualistic a reading whereby the exteriority

is social and the interiority is not.[304]

How then, is an artistic practice to critically engage in sites of inequality, in a

materialised political sense rather than an oversimplified representational or

unreflexive manner? The artistic intervention and the artist need to recognise their own

partial constituting of the site they exist within, and the unequal functioning of

embodiment that might take place there. One possible strategy might be to

purposefully disembody not the artist but the artwork: fragmenting out the

individuated, demarcated art object into a much more porous, shifting assemblage of

encounters and events which remain fluid into the future, untethered from finite

capitalisation (either financial or cultural).[305]

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[302] As Berry describes, unlike our present context, classical philosophy (and society) celebrated the contemplation permitted by *in*activity.

Ibid.

[303] This is the internalised position of the vast majority, though there are a tiny (disproportionately visible) number of individuals for whom the performance of leisure becomes part of the leveraging of their capital (e.g. certain Instagrammers and influencers). Linking back to the fungible representation of 'self-care' discussed in *Part 1*, this performance of leisure is in fact a disguised form of activity and busy-ness.

[304] Ibid.

[305] *Praxis* considers such a strategy of artistic intervention.

In considering the artistic intervention as an actively contextually enmeshed fluid assemblage like this, it can confront and engage with its site and sociality in a manner which recognises its own subjectivity and relativity within these. A shifting network of points of significance is created through multiple encounters, to which the artistic intervention must retain responsiveness. A fluxing set of relationships, conversations, moments and material objects can function as potential catalysts to affectively initiate critiques and counter narratives to the technosphere. They might also manifest, or speculatively invoke, potential resilient networks of care. Like the zone, this is an active rather than object form, able to multiply out in affect.

This shifting, fluid networked-ness can camouflage easily within the systems and patterns of the technosphere. An appearance of assimilation might function as a vector, an ability to 'pass' within the hegemonic structure, and yet still hold the potential to coalesce as moments of direct articulation and embodiment when likely to be affective, and when any possible repercussions are known, so far as they can be, to be worth the risk. Many of these coalescences and embodiments will be brief flashes, petering out with no consequence, but as counter public networks, inclusive of artworks, shift and re-orientate and re-articulate themselves, some moments of critical resistance and contestation may gain traction, and feed into or even initiate new discourses or practices of other ways of being.[306]

Giorgio Agamben writes of apparatuses (Foucault's 'dispositifs') being something between network and assemblage, and describes their operation, as the chief technologies of power, as being through constructing and subjecting the (human) being

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[306] How these moments of event-encounter might 'take hold' and come to matter will be explored in depth in *Part 3*.

into relationship with themself, as subject.[307] (Within the technosphere, this is the productive neoliberal subject.) However, the contemporary apparatus now operates through desubjectification as much as subjectification, creating a spectral idea of the subject divorced from the embodied human, but inescapably linked in surveillance, biometrics and data trails. There is both a danger and a potential for subversion here. The artwork being imagined, if carelessly manifested, could slip into echoing and evoking this desubjectification: unknowingly creating paths back to vulnerable bodies while holding no real affective potential.

Agency is pivotal in avoiding this. The econocentric (de)subjectification apparatuses of the technosphere work through effectively displacing and emplacing, disembodying and embodying us beyond our will. We are coalesced into exploitable data-sets and isolated into quantified (in)dividuals as and when it suits. The value of our labour is variously displaced to the hidden technospheric periphery or emplaced within our psyches as something valorised, something we have to perform. We are embodied at sites of corporeal discipline and control, largely carried out through an unconfrontable disembodied structure. What unites these fluid, complex structures of repression, of de-humanisation, is the appropriation of agency. A key role the artist or artwork can perform is in initiating events where agency is reclaimed: where thought and action counter to, or outside of, the productive, efficient presumptions of the technosphere might emerge. This is the enabling of resistant agency which this project's title seeks.

The dispersed nature of the structurally embedded inequality we face means there is a need to connect differing parts of multiple spectrums. There is the spectrum of agency

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[307] Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, trans. by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp.1-24.

(including the agency to disembody), and there is the spectrum of vulnerability to embodied violence and exploitation. These two spectrums are distinct, but are also closely interlinked. A connection is needed whereby the agency at one end of the former can be positively brought to bear at the site of embodied violence in the latter, where it is often 'other' bodies which are at stake. There are, as already mentioned, clear potential issues to navigate here in terms of problematic tropes of 'giving voice to', 'speaking on behalf of' and so forth, but the visceral urgency of the present context means disengaging and taking an ethically 'pure' but affectively impotent position is insufficient. There is a political need to act, to engage, to navigate these potentially problematic pitfalls. Beyond the need to contest immediate embodied violence occurring unto others, there is a broader aspect to this. Those who can, need not solely to enact agency in contestation of specific violence, but also to enact agency in the ongoing enablement of *others' agency* at myriad potential sites of violence. As well as contesting violence, this fractures the fissures which serve to concentrate it.

What is needed is not the closed, delineated participatory project placed upon a site conceived as 'other'. Nor is it the potentially exploitative designation of acknowledged situated activity as 'research', 'workshopping' or similar which always presumes within itself a subsidiary position to some subsequent, or possibly already envisaged,

exclusionary artwork.[308] Instead, what is needed is an embodied co-affect and co-vulnerability, and a building up of mutual human-to-human connectedness premised on care between all parties in the encounter. The artwork becomes a site not only of conversation but a site of care, of 'caring with', including the active dissemination of agency. It does not close in on itself and consolidate value, capital and affect to the singular artist-author, but opens out in generosity, an economically irrational sharing running counter to the presumptions of the technosphere. Time, openness and honesty are required. Even when one party cannot truly place themselves in the embodied position of the other (perhaps through gender, or passport, or skin colour, or (dis)ability) they must invest in an ongoing process of genuine care for one another. Only then is a sharing of potential agency possible: otherwise, whatever we might tell ourselves, we are complicit in exploitation and/or problematic paternalism.

Expanding out from this, recognition of the contingency of the art-site is essential. Potential counter-narratives and contestations spill over from the artistic intervention into other related sites, and can certainly be learnt from. However, to draw generalised conclusions and attempt to universalise is to impose the same problematic paternalism

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[308] Kearney argues that Quinlan and Hastings' recent work *In My Room* (the primary element of an exhibition of the same name) operated in such a way, making selective use of 'Birmingham's Gay Village' in a manner which suited, but which produced an exclusionary work, unaffected by the actually encountered complexities of that context.

Ryan Kearney, 'Can Film Assist in the Fight Against Gentrification?', *frieze website* (1 October 2020) <https://www.frieze.com/article/can-film-assist-fight-against-gentrification> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *In My Room*, exhibition at Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea, 2020 <http://www.fpg.org.uk/exhibition/rosie-hastings-and-hannah-quinlan/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

only one level abstracted. Relationships and connections should absolutely be drawn upon, but each site needs exploration in itself.[309]

Strategies of embodiment and disembodiment within artistic practice are multifaceted. They entail moving with and through the technosphere and its structures and networks, but doing so one step ahead, with agency, finding the cracks in its control. Though there is contingent variability, when considering the artwork, disembodiment is most frequently advocated. The fluid arttext, taking such a (non)form, is often best able to remain outside the appropriative, coopting grasp of the technosphere and sustain a position critical and counter to it.[310] Conversely, for the personhood (or 'being') of the artist, strategic moments of embodiment will likely be required. Vitally though, this is a human embodiment, not an individuated one. In so doing, the artist places themself in co-vulnerability, putting themself at stake in the shifting network of art-site of which they are irremovably part. Only in such placing of oneself on the line can a Foucauldian parrhesiac truth, fostered in the between-space of the encounter of beings coming together, be enabled.[311] In place of an abstracted logic, this is a truth operating through an embodied sensuousness where the other human is distinct but is

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[309] The setting out of original contributions within this research project seeks to reflect this. Specific art-sites are examined in and of themselves within *Praxis*. While fully acknowledging these, 'radical care' and 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' are developed as approaches (to being and to artistic intervention respectively) which hold open extensive space for specificity, particularity, unknowability and agency within any singular event-encounter.

[310] Considering art as 'text' as opposed to 'work', as proposed by Barthes, aligns with this and is extensively considered in *Praxis*.

Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' [1971], in *Image Music Text,* trans. by Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), pp. 155-164.

[311] Michel Foucault, *The Courage of the Truth: The Government of Self and Others II; Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-84*, ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2011).

in the perpetual process of becoming known. *Part 3* will develop care as an articulation of this 'truth'.

A fine balance is required: a commitment to *being there* at the pivotal moment when the presence of the embodied self at the point of contestation is vital, but also an awareness of when to attempt to fragment away, if possible. A commitment to being there at the pivotal moment, and making this judgement, entails a commitment to doing the work needed to recognise such a moment. There are occasions when a strategic disembodiment is almost always to be advocated. Such occasions might include when our embodied presence at a site would likely subject us, or others, to corporeal violence, or when we find ourselves utterly exhausted by the conditions of attempted resistant being within the technosphere.

There may be specific instances when someone, operating with awareness and agency, does opt to put their corporeal self in harms' way, having weighed up the risk and benefit of their embodied presence (and any subsequent dissemination of images or accounts of this) against the violence or harm they may be subjected to. A good example of this balancing act of body, risk, affect and site, where the artist does place themself at potential risk, can be found in Sanja Ivekovic's 1979 work *Trokut* [Triangle].[312] Through a performance of sipping whiskey and apparent masturbation on her own balcony (only visible to a single state-security agent on the rooftop opposite, as crowds line the street below to glimpse Tito's entourage passing by), she uses her bodily-ness and presence to interrupt a set of relations of power, surveillance, conformity, sexuality and gender. The performance for the rooftop-viewer, who is not

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[312] Sanja Ivekovic, *Trokut* [Triangle] (1979), documentation available at <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/trokut-triangle> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

watching her but is watching her, is shortly followed by police knocking at her door. The titular triangle of street, rooftop and balcony, and the bodies at those sites, are set within a mesh of hierarchical and potentially violent power relationships. Ivekovic's intervention does not directly confront this, but more subtly undermines it. It does so in part through calling attention to the structurally undesired embodied human-ness of her watcher, as well as of herself. As already discussed, there is profound inequality around who can opt out of embodiment at the site of violence, necessitating extreme care in any consideration of placing bodies there. For those who have the relative privilege of being able to strategically use their embodiment and disembodiment to challenge and seek to affect this inequality of corporeal violence at the core of the technosphere, there is a political urgency to do so.

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The artist could learn from the cyborg Donna Haraway envisaged. Both are the offspring of the capitalist system (the modern figure of the artist emerging in parallel with the bourgeoisie, and the cyborg being the ultimate fusing of the technosphere and biopolitics), but can take a position of reflexive criticality, unfaithful to these origins.[313] The cyborg transgresses boundaries and holds and fuses dangerous potentials. The (dis)embodied practice described above seeks to likewise subvert the structure and logic of the technosphere. Haraway describes the unfaithful cyborg as not being subject to biopolitical structures, having superseded them in invulnerability.[314] Instead, it can

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[313] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York NY: Routledge, 1991) p. 151.

[314] Ibid., p. 163.

As discussed in *Part 1*, biopolitics is the politically neutered socio-economic management of life and labour; the 'politics' part of the term is misleading.

engage in simulating a more potent field of actual politics: a reincarnated, Frankensteinian collective political body, but one which still bleeds, acknowledges this, and cares for and about this. Likewise artistic intervention, as proposed, can step outside the hegemonic socio-economic sphere and provide catalytic events for the reopening of a new public sphere of more egalitarian discourse and action.

This unfaithful misappropriation is apparent in the strategies being advocated for the artistic intervention throughout this *part* disobediently echoing the structures of the technosphere itself: the fluidity between embodiment and disembodiment, the operating as a shifting assemblage, the fluxing in and out of spatial considerations of site or territory. The critical work is close to that which it critiques, but like a virus, can be more politically potent as a result.

SCENE B: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN RECOMPOSED FRAGMENTS OF FOUR PREVIOUS TEXTS[315]

Cast of characters:

- *Email* sent on 25 July 2019 to one of the curators of the NEoN Digital Arts Festival where *6 Weeks in Kyiv* was to be performed[316]

- *Transcription* of a recorded conversation between Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, who frequently collaborate, which took place in January 2019

- *Report* for funders detailing activities undertaken during a research trip to Kyiv, Ukraine in June 2019

- *Answers* to questions sent by the funding organisation, who wished to write up a case study of Adam's research activities (sent on 2 October 2019)

EMAIL:
Kyiv was a chance encounter at first. As the title of the work alludes to, it's not so much about Kyiv in any 'objective' sense, so much as with the specifics of that situation I found myself within, partially constituted by my being there.[317] My being there, on a residency, was a contingent result of opportunism. I took the chance to go, certainly out of interest, but also for the sake of the cultural capital it would entail, the funding

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[315] These texts are transcribed as originally written, including any grammatical errors or inconsistencies. In their writing there was no anticipation of the texts being made public like this: they contain ideas in progress, occasional misunderstandings and misrepresentations, and numerous other aspects reflective of their initial contexts.

[316] Adam Walker, *6 Weeks in Kyiv* (2018), documentation available at <http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/6weeksinkyiv.htm> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Documentation of this and the other artworks mentioned in *Scene B* can be found in *Praxis*.

[317] The work being discussed is *6 Weeks in Kyiv*.

provided, and such forth. If the residency had been elsewhere, I would perhaps never have gone.

The ability to take this opportunity throws up certain problematic questions of complicity that carry through into the work. The journeys listed, and recited, occur most frequently between art institutions and studios. Close inspection would make it clear that I am in Kyiv as a type of 'linguistic-relational' worker – a highly valued form of labour within our present post-Fordist context. My flexibility is presumed, able to take advantage and swiftly react to conditions of opportunity. This presumption, which I am pulled to conform to, ignores the material and social ties and responsibilities I have: a note on the table for example makes reference to my partner and then-five-month-old child coming to join me in Kyiv for a week.

REPORT:
On Wednesday 5 June I interviewed Oleksiy Radynski, a film-maker and contributor to the Visual Culture Research Centre. Meeting Oleksiy was a priority, as he had produced the Hito Steyerl artwork *The Tower* which I had seen in Kyiv (at VCRC) in 2017, and which I

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            plan to write about.318 Our
            conversation was focused on
            this artwork: how Hito had
            wanted to do something on
            economic chains of outsourcing
            emanating from warfare and had
            initially been looking in South
            East Asia. The technocratic
            Soviet history of Ukraine means
            it is a centre for this type of
            work though, so focus switched
            to here. Hito found Oleg, the
            main protagonist, and Oleksiy
            went to interview him. He owns
            and operates a company
            specialising in VR and AR
            rendering, and is one of the
            final graduates from the
            Soviet-period scientific/
            technical institute in Kharkiv.
            Oleg's company themselves
            produced the video, using
            adapted pre-existing material.
            The company became both the
            subject and object of the work,
            where the relations transpire.
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318 Hito Steyerl, *The Tower* (2015-16), documentation available at <https://www.kow-berlin.com/artists/hito-steyerl/the-tower-2015-2016> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

The Tower, a three-screen video installation with voiceover, tells the story of a 3D VR and AR video production company based in Kharkiv, Ukraine. The narrator acknowledges the present war and Kharkiv's proximity to Russia, as well as its past renown for producing tanks and such forth. He then recalls the company's past emphasis on producing military simulations which, he explains, has given way to predominantly producing 3D renderings and 'fly-throughs' of speculative projects for architecture firms and property developers. The narrator notes that most of these firms are located in western Europe or other places with time zones close to Ukraine, taking advantage of 'near shore' labour. The narrator reflects on this economic context, also noting the preponderance of 'body leasing'. Though not a practice his company employs, he explains it is common, with the 'near shore' employee coming under direct management of a physically remote client company. In our later interview, Oleg Fonarov explained to me it is typical to have rows of cubicles of workers side by side, notionally employed by the same (local) company, but in fact all working in the direct employment of different remote companies.

The Tower concludes with the narrator recounting a commission they received from Iraq to produce a simulation of a new 'Tower of Babylon', accompanied by images of a super-tall luxury skyscraper in the desert.

I saw *The Tower* exhibited as part of *Gray Cube: Art on Corruption.*

Gray Cube: Art on Corruption, exhibition at Visual Culture Research Centre, Kyiv, Ukraine, 2017 <http://vcrc.org.ua/en/сірий-куб-виставка-про-корупцію/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Although I wasn't able to travel to Kharkiv in person, on Thursday 6 June I Skyped with Oleg. He preferred to speak via text chat. We discussed in greater detail his personal history Oleksiy had alluded to, and things he mentions in the artwork *The Tower* including ideas of 'near shore' and 'body leasing'. We also discussed in detail the process by which the artwork had been produced.

TRANSCRIPTION:

Adam: I think if I do have a basis in anything it's a basis in text. Which is interesting vis-a-vis the relationship between practice and writing because sometimes the practice is writing and they slip into each other. […] I think because my work's always been really bound up in the context and the process and there's not a boundary. It's like what is the work is porously entwined with the production of the work and the reception of the work and the context or contexts of encounter with the work. […] Like a bringing together of site and event and action and presence in a sort of moment, but not like any sort of allegorical montage, like a montage of elements that are coalesced. But within the material reality […] trying to be affective.

Vicki: Well, now you're making me think about the flag.[319] So correct me if I'm wrong, but with this piece there's a kind

[319] Adam Walker, *The Return Beyond Which There Is No Point* (2017-18), documentation available at <http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/thereturn.htm> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

of process whereby you engage local economy to get that flag made and you go to this place that does the embroidery for you. But you are also reliant on Anna to mediate that or gate-keep that […]. But then there's that whole back-and-forth part of it being too expensive to embroider. And you decide to drop some bits of the design. And then the flag is delivered to you in a bag at our *TOMBOLA!* event.[320] And then there's the next stage which is you taking off that Ukrainian flag of Taras's that was found up the chimney or wherever it was and putting your flag back on. Then there is the process of the procession through the tram lines and that encounter with those guys at the tram stop (on Defender of Ukraine Day), and the climbing up to the roof and so declaring this kind of 'Republic of Soshenko'. Then there is the removal of that and taking it to Kharkiv and neatening it up then Olena's dad finding a stick for it….

[…]

Then it came back via Kyiv. So, it wasn't the end in Kharkiv. It then travelled back with me…. With the Ukrainian flag also. And then it's probably in a cupboard somewhere now. And that's the end for now? So that's the story of the flag…? But actually, in that whole story, you could take that story that I've just described - we both just described - and you could transcribe that story

[320] Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, *TOMBOLA!* (2017-18), documentation available at <http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/tombola.htm> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

and you've got an arc, a
narrative arc of this thing and
you've got all these different
interactions within that thing…
whether it's you dealing with
Anna at the beginning, to the
negotiation of the price, to it
arriving in *TOMBOLA!*, to it
being walked around the forest,
to the Ukrainian flag being
taken down and the other one
being put on…. So which part of
that is the work? Which part of
that is the methodology or is
all of it, and is that story
that I've just told now of that
piece of work important?

Adam: But then there might be
more fragments - there always
might be another fragment
further out from the edge. And
there are fragments that are
quite near the centre like the
flag itself, probably. But then
a lot of these other things
like you just telling that
story is kind of another
fragment that sits somewhere
beyond some of these other
elements….

          ANSWERS:
So I think the interesting
thing about *The Tower* is how it
shifts in relation between very
bodily things and very abstract
things.

It starts with wanting to
create a work about chains of
outsourced labour emanating
from warfare - warfare clearly
being potentially directly,
painfully affecting of bodies.

This is then translated through
these global systems of
technology and capital. Because
of our instant global

interconnectedness, western
European companies can easily
have their architectural
renderings drawn up in
Ukraine.

EMAIL:
And, because of the global
system of finance/capital/
labour, it's cheaper to do so.

But this abstraction then comes
back to bodies, the bodies of
coders sat working long hours
at their terminals to realise
these renderings on time. I
found the use of the term 'body
leasing' in my interview with
Oleg very interesting in this
regard. While developing *6
Weeks in Kyiv*, and through
conversations had there, I was
particularly interested in how
the legacy of the Soviet
techno-scientific state has
left an extensive culture of
technical knowledge and skill,
particularly in computer
programming and coding. This
would seem to be an
advantageous position in the
emergent global economic
context. However, in the case
of Uber and its local Ukrainian
equivalent and competitor,
Uklon, the former's established
structural superiority of
capital (financial and
cultural) is allowing it to
outcompete the latter. Global
capital's acceleration towards
further inequality producing
concentration (and the massive
already established structural
inequalities) means the 'talent
pool' in a place like Kyiv
becomes a site for 'near shore'
outsourcing, rather than a
place of potential competition.
Several of the drivers listed

in *6 Weeks in Kyiv* had left
jobs in the technology sector
because they could earn more
(or at least at the time
thought they could earn more)
as Uber drivers.

              ANSWERS:
What I find so interesting
about *The Tower* though, as an
artwork, is that while the
above is what the work is
'about', it is also in a sense
what the work 'is'. We have a
western Europe-based artist
similarly outsourcing the
production of this work to the
company who themselves are the
focus of the work they are
producing.

In so doing the work is brought
back into real world proximity
with warfare, and frames the
reality of coding/programming
expertise in contemporary
Ukraine (as part of globalised
labour markets) in relation to
the main protagonist's (Oleg's)
training in the last years of
the Soviet military-scientific-
industrial complex.

Pause

I stumbled into a chance
encounter with a community of
people in Kyiv, and later
Kharkiv, through being selected
for a residency there. That
experience though, led me to
become really fascinated by
aspects of Ukraine as a context
in a really key position at the
nexus of multiple complex flows
of power, affect, capital and
vulnerability within global
networks generally, and also
within global networks of art.
My positionality is of course

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completely rooted within these, and acknowledging that is the first step in being able to engage in them critically.

[…] *The Tower* enters into exploration of a number of the same interests in Ukraine's position within a layering up upon layering up of abstracted systems of power, capital and technology, but ultimately how these might directly affect specific bodies. […] at the same time [I am] reflecting upon my own ongoing relationship with this place I've somehow become entangled with.

TRANSCRIPTION:
Adam: What *TOMBOLA!* did was… we sort of reconstituted a community. Of people all linked through us. Whereas with *undertitled*, we rocked up in a different space, a different city hundreds of miles away.[321] And did this thing.

Vicki: Yes. And it's different isn't it? And I think it's something to think about if we make another piece, it's like how we circumvent that or navigate that or use it or utilise it within the piece. Because for me, I still think *TOMBOLA!* is a better piece. But then also that's maybe because I have got these fond memories of it. Also, this very involved… a kind of party vibe…. But then it was also strange and dry and awkward and…

321 Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, *undertitled* (2019), composite video available at <http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/undertitled.htm> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Adam: But then it's been
mediated through the editing of
it into this second thing as
well….

Vicki: Which has removed that
layer of dryness and
awkwardness and strangeness
hasn't it somehow?

Adam: Totally. I remember the
edited version of it in a sense
more than I remember the
reality.

REPORT:
Beneath one of the pavilions is
a fake mine shaft. It wasn't
open, but the caretaker there
was able to let us in. The
basement had the feel of a
squat party space, which
continued into the mine which
is apparently regularly used
for parties, events and
filming. It was cold and dark,
but not as cramped as a real
mine; apparently made slightly
larger so as to be more
comfortable for visitors.

TRANSCRIPTION:
Vicki: So then this
fragmentation clearly relates
to this idea about different
incarnations and different
versions of the work. Like
versioning. So, I guess that's
quite a clear answer to what
can an artwork do or practice
do that the text can't. It's
about fixing. The text has a
lot of similarities to the
film. In that it goes through
the draft stage, then the
editing stage and then it gets
polished, footnotes added, and
illustrations.

Adam: Yeah. And it has a linearity. Ultimately, it's always going to be read like that.

Vicki: And it's also time-based, from beginning to end, and the artistic practice is not. And maybe that is what is the difference? The thing that artistic practice does is about the encounter. Social interaction.

REPORT:
I went to Anna and Taras's flat for dinner (okroshka made with kefir). We discussed this notion of the 'new east': how it can be viewed as an opportunistic, cynical packaging of an aesthetic that is 'other' but is also a globally interconnected thing, e.g. how art-school kids in London now take on a fashion aesthetic echoing the Kyiv rave scene.

[…]

Taras sometimes wonders if he should just emigrate and get work as a builder in Barcelona. Many do apparently. And Anna would enjoy being by the sea; going back to Crimea is increasingly difficult, both practically and emotionally.

ANSWERS:
Vulnerability is deeply unequal. As noted, it affected certain parts of the country much more than others.[322] And those who were most vulnerable were those without wealth, of

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[322] (Thatcherite Britain.)

working class background, without education….

What has happened in Ukraine in recent years is of course not the same as this, but I think there is a parallel in the economic shocks to the country that have occurred after Maidan and the invasion. Fear and vulnerability are similarly produced.

It goes without saying that the rave/youth/drug culture is of course in part a response to the difficult situation, to try and escape out of it for a few hours at least.

TRANSCRIPTION:

Adam: Well I think a text, in a very confined way, in a very constrained way of being an academic text or a linear text, has confines but then how about text moving into the digital? I think it starts to have more possibilities of overcoming some of those problems. Some of those confines. Sometimes I feel envious of the pure academics. Sometimes I think 'you're so lucky that all you have to do every day is just sit in the library, read books and write and turn it into a text'. I mean it's obviously not easy but… well, you don't continually have to figure out what you're doing.

Vicki: That's true. You just do the thing you said you were going to do. And you don't have to be in Donbas being escorted off a mine by a guy with a gun or have all these kind of encounters and interactions.

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Pause

> Vicki: But then even with the
> flag, it's the same isn't it?
> It's your work but it is also
> not. Because all these other
> things happened within it that
> relied on other people. There
> are so many layers. And that's
> maybe also the difference
> between practice-based
> methodologies and written ones.
> It's just that in the written
> one, there is no collaboration.
> It is a singular pursuit. I
> mean you're drawing in other
> voices but they're all being
> funnelled through your
> interpretation and you're
> gearing them towards something
> which, yes, art also does…

PART 3: CARE

How can we imagine critical agency within a would-be totalising hegemony?

What could constitute a way of being through which sustainable resistant equality might form?

Part 3 brings together the contributing economic, historical, technological and political processes set out thus far and considers them from a Lucretian ontological perspective, as a contingent present produced through event-encounters. It considers the qualities of these event-encounters, and how the relations of the entities encountering one another might remain static, or potentially shift.

Proceeding from this Lucretian ontology, care is developed as a 'fidelity' (according to Alain Badiou's use of the term) which can be sustained through the event into an unknown future, and which might enable resistant, resilient more equitable ways of being.[323] I conclude by proposing radical care as a methodological, ethical and political position which might hold some potentially destabilising and subversive potential towards, in addition to resilience within, the structures and logics of the technosphere.

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[323] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* [1988], trans. by Oliver Feltham (New York, NY: Continuum, 2005), pp. 232-237.

From artwork to arttext inside the black box

Roland Barthes argues for the consideration not of art as work, as in 'artwork', but instead as text.[324] Positioning art in such a way, it becomes possible to hold it open in an exploded dissemination of overlapping potential meaning. Unlike the defined, bounded 'work', the text out of which any particular meaning is formed operates intertextually and in continual interplay with both its historical and contemporary cultural contexts. The meaning is not innate, but is instead formed (and continuously reformed) contingently in the encounter of audience, author, context, and text itself, only existent through the discourse. There is a free interplay of relations in the construction of meaning between elements which operate playfully and in continual process. The notional author is shorn of supposed sole authority over meaning, and there is more equality in the construction and contestation of it. However, it is important to emphasise that this is not the transference of meaning away from author to the meaningless relativism of every individual's personal truth being equally valid (a common criticism erroneously made of postmodernism), but rather that meaning is entirely contingent, produced in the encounter (through reading, re-playing and re-forming).[325] That this production of meaning is co-performed, beyond the construct of the individual, is key to the arguments that I will make in this *part*. As with Michel Foucault's parrhesiac truth, meaning cannot be determined or presupposed, but is

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[324] This argument is further discussed in *Praxis*.

Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' [1971], in *Image Music Text,* trans. by Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), pp. 155-164.

[325] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' [1968], in *Image Music Text,* trans. by Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), pp. 142-148.

nevertheless vitally meaningful.[326] It is in the continual process of formation in the momentary infinitude of the event-encounter. As a singular agency we cannot ourselves alone produce meaning, but may be able to be one side of a productive encounter.

Stepping back from abstraction, there then come a whole set of deeply unequal socio-political relations which determine whether and how this meaning is nominatively claimed, articulated, recorded and disseminated, or not.[327] A related but distinct form of text and language affects these processes too. While Barthes echoes Jurgen Habermas in noting an equality of free play and circulation within the text, it is to fall into politically problematic artificial separations to set this apart from the societal inequalities affecting the embodied humans articulating and being articulated by and through these texts.[328] As *Part 1* explored (and as *Praxis* further addresses), the world we inhabit is increasingly one formed textually, and one in which we increasingly operate as textualised individuals, but the form that text takes is far from that of the space of free play to which Barthes alludes.

Walter Benjamin articulates the writer as the collector who cannot find the text they desire amongst those already in existence, and pulls it back into present being from the

[326] Michel Foucault, *The Courage of the Truth: The Government of Self and Others II; Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-84*, ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2011), pp. 18-19.

[327] These inequalities of the public sphere were discussed in depth in *Part 2*.

[328] Barthes, 'From Work to Text'.

Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* [1962], trans. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), p. 36.

potential future archive.[329] In contrast to the capitalist mode of production's directionality from communal towards private (e.g. property ownership), Benjamin's writer is motivated by an opposite directionality, from private to communal (e.g. the story, both within and around the text).[330] However, there are two complications to this line of thought in the contemporary context. Firstly, Benjamin under-acknowledges the individualist proprietorial relation to a text (rendered increasingly primary though the inverted public sphere), with author not as creator but as owner, and beneficiary of cultural as well as possibly financial capital. Perhaps more fundamentally though, the possibility of pulling a text back from a potential future archive becomes increasingly impossible as the technosphere forecloses any potential futures closer and closer to the present, as well as subjectifying us as individuals in its own textual codes. As possible writers, we are produced through text at least as much as we might produce text, and the encoded grammar of this becomes increasingly hard to think or create outside of.

'Computational thinking' is the term James Bridle uses to describe this supra-textual box which, while often unrecognised, constrains and restricts the free production of meaning in the encounter within the technosphere.[331] This is more than the surveillance induced reduction of possible futures and emphasis on prediction that was discussed in *Part 1*. A foreclosed present public sphere, it is an unacknowledged a-criticality which is self-obscuring and impeding our collective ability to ask important questions:

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[329] Walter Benjamin, 'Unpacking My Library: A Talk About Book Collecting' [1931], in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 61-69 (p. 63).

[330] Pil and Galia Kollectiv note that the collected book operates as the synthesis of these two dialectical positions brought together.

Pil and Galia Kollectiv, 'Archiving the Future: Unpacking Benjamin's Collection', *Coelacanth,* 1 (2008), also available at *Pil and Galia Kollectiv website* <http://www.kollectiv.co.uk/Benjamin%20Collecting.html> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[331] James Bridle, *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future* (London: Verso, 2018), p. 4.

to be critical either of the curtailment of the free production of meaning, or of the social exclusions denying participation in such a discussion. Just as the 'black box' of proprietary algorithms and data grows in dominance over increasing sectors of our bio-social life (from work, to health, to daily household tasks), we can think of the technosphere as a whole as being a black box; one we all find ourselves inescapably inside as subjectified individuals.

This technospheric black box is not something authored or designed, and not a teleological inevitability. To think in such terms is to fall into the terrain of conspiracy theory: as Bridle argues, a completely understandable alternative to 'cognitive mapping' from a position of vulnerability without agency.[332] Rather, it is a 'de-totalised totality': a contingent, aleatory present we find ourselves within, but nevertheless one premised on an infinitude of self-interested micro-events perpetuating inequalities.[333] Paradoxically, while computational thinking is itself the result of an infinite chain of interconnected chance event-encounters, it now functions to dictate and constrain the potentiality of all event-encounters, all being, occurring within it.

Translating Lucretius's argument, Gilles Deleuze writes that while there is a pull towards heterogeneity of the event because of the infinite diversity of its potential constituent internal elements; there is, simultaneously, a tendency towards evental

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[332] Ibid., p. 205.

Jameson's concept of 'cognitive mapping' was addressed in *Parts 1* and *2*.

Fredric Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 347-358.

[333] Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 29.

resemblance within a given context resulting from shared external factors.[334]

Computational thinking can be thought of as a growing planetary imposition of resemblance to the techno-capitalist orthodoxy. This not only affects and overrides much present internal heterogeneity, but also increasingly infects and pre-encodes into that which can be thought. Barthes' author figure has been disembodied and disseminated, but not into the plural, equitable multitude of voices hoped for.[335] Instead, agency has been subsumed by a textual superstructure which prioritises its own continuation above the human.

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[334] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* [1969], ed. by Constantin V. Boundas, trans. by Mark Lester (New York NY: Continuum, 2004), p. 308.

[335] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author'.

Mechanics of the event-encounter

In order to critique the (re)production of both the subjectified individual and the technospheric black box, I now turn to the mechanics of the event-encounter itself, out of the perpetual chain of which both are (re)produced.[336]

Louis Althusser proposes a theory of what he calls 'aleatory materialism' through the essay *The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter*.[337] His aim is to offer a schema for how the existence of our present proceeds (and has proceeded), via a perpetual sequence of encounters, which, when there is affinity, 'stick' and create a new reality that cannot be reversed upon which subsequent encounters might occur. For Althusser, this continuous process informs our world both at the level of ontology proceeding through reproduction or alteration of itself (he uses the example of the irreversible meeting of egg and oil forming mayonnaise), but also at the historical or political level, where for every revolution where there is affinity which sticks and produces lasting change, there are countless others where there is not and which thus peter out, often vanishing from history.

Aleatory materialism is developed from the ontology of Lucretius and Epicurus. Movement and the instigation of change, in the form of the 'clinamen' are the basis of this: they are inherent within all matter.[338] As Deleuze emphasises, matter in and of

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[336] While there is a distinction between my use of the terms 'event' and 'encounter', with the former leaning more towards the ontological and the latter more towards a social, historical and political inter-human context, I purposefully make frequent use of the compound term to emphasise the interconnectedness of these realms.

[337] Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings 1978-87,* ed. by François Matheron and Oliver Corpet, trans. by G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 163-207.

[338] Thomas Nail, *Lucretius I: An Ontology of Motion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 11-12.

itself is continuous, but it is this motion which is always already present within it which produces folds offering the semblance of discreteness and difference.[339] Thus, while adhering to Baruch Spinoza's emphasis on a single consistent matter (to challenge this is in effect to push back and not engage with the question of how difference originates), the fold produces a plurality from which event, change, and the diversity of our world can ensue.[340] The recognition of motion is only possible where a semblance of discreteness occurs though. Segments or markers upon the plane are needed to see movement occurring, and they in turn can only be formed in the folds produced through motion: as Thomas Nail states, 'discreteness is a product of continuous, uncut, undivided motion and not the other way around'.[341] Furthermore, the matter, while infinitely foldable, must be to some extent finite within an infinitude. Only with the presence of a void beyond matter is there space to move.[342] This space is vital: it is the space in which matter can fold, and the space within the fold which prevents it from merely being a non-shift in a consistent continuum. It is the space of the possibility of a future shifting from the present; it is the space of potential affect whereby agency becomes possible.

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[339] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 305.

[340] Baruch Spinoza, 'Ethics', in *Complete Works,* ed. by Michael L. Morgan, trans. by Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 2002), pp. 213-382 (p. 224).

Nail.

Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense.*

[341] Nail, p. 11.

This is to say the motion is primary and an appearance of discreteness follows in having chanced to make it perceptible; in contrast to the erroneous but perhaps more intuitive image of separate parts moving.

[342] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 305.

Holding onto the continuity of matter then, and also seeking to avoid the modern

scientific associations which depart from Lucretius's conceptual usage, I do not use the

term 'atom'. Instead, we can envisage the clinamen with segments, which though we

cannot see it, are in fact part of the same infinitely folded plane. The clinamen is

inherent in all segments: it is the motion or swerve away from the parallel

directionality of matter within an infinitude which would otherwise instigate nothing

but stasis.[343] The swerve is what produces the fold, thus it is always already there in the

segment caused through the fold, but in so doing it also creates encounter, as segments,

no longer moving in parallel, collide.[344] Many times this collision is a non-event, but as

they infinitely occur, enough do take hold. This causes infinite chains of knock-on

effects of altered directionality and new encounter; thus our world, in all its complexity,

can ultimately be.

Matter is that which is, but matter is also movement. As Nail observes, an idealism has

at times slipped into readings of Lucretius, arguing for an external force to initiate the

motion.[345] This separating of motion out of matter, and granting it to some

transcendental external initiator, is an argument that stems from fear of the chaos

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[343] Althusser, p. 169.

Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* p. 306.

[344] Lyotard, in a similar vein, writes that it is not only that the encounter occurs in the labyrinth, but that the labyrinth is brought into being through the encounter.

Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* [1974], trans. by Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 36.

[345] Nail, p. 8.

implicit in a truly aleatory materiality.[346] The implications of this primacy of motion *as* and *in* being are pertinent to the technosphere. As it increasingly proceeds towards hegemony over being, an external initiator of motion could be severed or pushed aside, but if the potential for change is always already present within the fundamentals of being, then that potential for change, for rupture, for agency and contestation of technospheric stasis, can never be completely erased.

This is the vital importance of an ontology accounting for movement: it underpins the possibility to think a politics enabling of change, and a fracturing of the technosphere.

Lucretius emphasises that the clinamen does not create reality, but rather, confers it on the segments themselves. They always held that reality as a potentiality, and the swerve simply acts to shift a certain reality out of phantom abstraction into our ontology, or history.[347] The accomplished fact is purely a result of contingency; we are able to reflect upon it simply because it chanced to happen. And yet, as the matter we inhabit, it absolutely matters.[348] As such, this is an ontology which Althusser develops as a historical materialism which is neither metaphysical nor dialectical. There is no thesis and antithesis coming together as a new surface. There is no surface, and equally

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[346] Ibid., p. 8.

In noting this, Nail answers his own questioning (p. 10) of why Althusser emphasises the aleatory over motion. While motion is key at the ontological level, it is the aleatory potential of change, rupture and revolution in the socio-historical which most interests Althusser.

[347] Althusser, p. 169.

[348] Turning to perpetuated structural inequalities between human bodies, this axiom can be taken further to assert, as Woodly does, that 'being matter is enough to matter'.

Deva Woodly, 'The Politics of Care', online presentation as part of *In The Current Moment: Perspectives from the Social Sciences and Humanities*, The New School, 18 June 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ih6F6N9pg-A> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

there is only surface, but it is a thick one-sided möbius strip of a surface which we can only ever be subjectively within, never upon, even less progressing from.[349]

Badiou's concept of event-encounter, drawing heavily on the Lucretian, is built on a grounding that mathematics, rather than being a model or representation of anything, simply *is*.[350] The code and algorithmic text, out of which our computational thinking pseudo-world is built, is itself premised on mathematics. It is important here to remember that a code, language or text is not innately premised on inequality, but can become such through the unequal social relations refracted though it (and can go on to disseminate, reproduce and exacerbate these inequalities).

Badiou's event occurs at the cusp between the state (the world) and the void of unknowability. In his conception, which renders more comprehensible the simultaneity of the event-encounter and the being of the segments in encounter, an intervention 'first' occurs which acts to bring undecidability into the contingent situation. The event, potentially initiated in the intervention, is then completed and given meaning by 'retroactively' and nominatively claiming it as such, generating a new state now

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[349] Lyotard, pp. 4-17.

[350] Badiou, p. 7.

inclusive of that event.[351] And that new state then itself constitutes the matter for infinite further potential situations of intervention.[352]

The conceptual splitting out of the intervention from the event presents the possibility of a circularity whereby the event becomes the intervention for its own perpetual reproduction. A statically flickering ossified folding. This is the means by which the technosphere, through computational thinking, continually reproduces itself. To move beyond this though, Badiou emphasises the need to split the point of rejoining the circle and think more of loops spilling out in multiple dimensions, with each intervention not being the consequence of its own event, but instead, of a preceding one, derived from a different intervention.[353]

Beyond his conception of the mechanics of the event, an important concept which Badiou introduces is 'fidelity'.[354] Whereas Althusser's 'affinity' is a relation between world and event-encounter to produce something lasting and meaningful (or, in Badiou's terms, for state and situation-intervention to produce something that might retrospectively be nominated evental), in other words a relationship *across* the horizon between world and unknown future, fidelity instead relates to relations within the

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[351] Terms such as 'first' and 'retroactively' initially seem to contradict simultaneity. However, recalling Husserl's thick present discussed in *Part 1*, which holds within itself past and future, we can read Badiou's use of these terms as an imperfect but more comprehensible articulation of a logic, rather than being strictly temporal.

Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. by John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

[352] Badiou, pp. 201-203.

This is not a dialectical progression of synthesis forming a new ground. The event is part of the same continuous, thick (non-)surface within which we exist.

[353] Ibid., p. 209.

[354] Ibid., pp. 232-237.

world, as well as pre-inscribed onto things *entirely within* the unknown void, to potentially be brought into being by an event.[355]

As an event occurs, the resultant matter is all contingent to it, including the fidelities between things brought about. The fidelity is particular to the altered present, however, at one level of abstraction there can be an ongoing-ness, through events and across numerous potentialities, of the criterion of connection of the fidelity. We might for example think of the fidelity of love, which is contingent to the chain of event encounters leading to its present, but also holds an abstract quality as something which would continue through numerous potential futures or alternate presents.

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[355] Althusser, p. 191.

<u>Textual fidelities</u>

If we imagine the evental progression of the matter-present through the myriad multiplicities continually opening and erasing around it as a text, we might consider these fidelities as connecting hyperlinks automatically affixed onto dispersed clusters of linked words at the moment of their writing. Though intrinsically embedded within it, these linked words provide an alternative way through the written 'reality', jumping across and fragmenting its ordered progression, offering an alternate logic. Badiou writes that the further the operator of the fidelity is from recent events, the better it is able to discern marks furthest from those events.[356] To stay with our text metaphor (one which is increasingly proceeding beyond metaphor in the technosphere), we can re-articulate this as: when we navigate the text through a set of hyperlinks only minimally altered and affected by most recent events and changes, we might be better able see the alterations that have occurred to the text some distance back, as our counter-network of hyperlinks allows us to leap back to those points. Or alternatively, we are likewise better enabled to jump further forward into the infinite multiplicity of written but as-yet unread futures.[357]

However, Badiou warns of this fidelity-autonomy going too far and becoming dogmatic: when the maintenance of connections of fidelity overrides recognition of the event and resultant reality.[358] In this case, we would find our hyperlinked words becoming fully untethered from the text of reality and operating in their own

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[356] Badiou, p. 237.

[357] This speculative leaping forward according to a counter-hegemonic fidelity is pertinent to radical care as it will be developed below.

[358] Ibid., p. 237.

unconnected self-referential other-text, unable to navigate, discern or potentially affect anything of the text-reality. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write of short-circuiting a language so that it does not reflect a hegemony and in so doing bind us, but nevertheless still using it, in new ways. This, they argue, holds much greater potential for counter-hegemonic rupture than irrelevant disconnected misuses.[359]

For a fidelity to have any meaningful affect then, a continuous self-reflexivity is required: maintaining a connection but also an autonomy, in relation to the hegemonic system, the technosphere. In this way fidelities might offer a means of affective criticality, on the outside while within.

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[359] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* [1975], trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. xvi.

<u>Reasserting the material</u>

As Althusser emphasises, any encounter affective within our experienced reality must take place in order to possibly take hold.[360] While this may sound axiomatic, it is worth briefly considering what it means to 'take place'. To have been inscribed into the retrospective history of nominated events as a marker point passed: certainly; but also to have 'taken place' in a situated, material sense: to have 'taken up a place'. The encounter has both a temporal and a spatio-material located-ness. And for an encounter affected and affective within reality, the only situation available to occur within is within that reality. More precisely, the site, as discussed in *Part 2* is constituted through encounter, but is still where the encounter occurs. This is quite evident when thinking of encounters between bodies or physical entities, but in terms of encounters of thought or ideology, or technological connection, here also there is ultimately some material base for the encounter. It took place, but also, in that moment, took up space, occupied place, was situated. In mattering, it had a materiality: perhaps geographically or corporeally, or perhaps socially, culturally or politically. These are all materially inscribed terrains, as discussed in *Parts 1* and *2*. Silicon Valley narratives would have us erroneously accept a field of pure abstract encounter, and it is important to maintain a criticality to this ideologically derived way of thinking: to remember the rootedness, and unpredictable multi-affective-ness, within the material, of every encounter. The hidden chains of labour overlooked within the technosphere, whether at global 'peripheries' or bracketed out as devalued reproductive labour, or made opaque through micro-targeted individuation (as discussed in *Part 2*), are a key site where this material affect 'takes place'.

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[360] Althusser, p. 172.

The science-fictive terrains of bleeding-edge technology and the most abstractedly conceptual realms of theory both similarly tempt us into a mode of immaterial ephemerality, where a freeing away from bodily-ness, mortality and compromise becomes tantalisingly appealing. It is, though, vital that the devalued 'lumpen-reality' is recognised and acknowledged, all the more as the vulnerability and exploitation occurring within it is so unequal.[361] We do not live in the void, in the nothingness, but rather on the cusp of its materialisation into a collectively experienced reality. This reality produces and reproduces itself premised on a nominated set of events stretching out into history. While we proceed contingently, with no 'meaning' to the history produced, the entirety of what we deem meaningful is produced in that history. We can only grasp ourselves as subjects, within a context at the perpetually proceeding and erasing present, by looking back at that history.[362] We (in any cohesive sense of a 'we') are produced and reproduced through 'our' singular chain of event-encounters, and can thus only 'be' at the present end of this chain: this contingent world is our only world.[363] Thus, it is a world in which we need ways of being.

For Althusser, Thomas Hobbes' individuals can be thought of as segments with a will to continue: a drive to produce and reproduce themselves through encounters to come (and to produce the conditions to further enable this).[364] The full liberty of the individual is premised on the full spectrum of multiplicities of potential within the

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[361] 'Lumpen-reality' is discussed in greater depth in *Praxis*. It is the overlooked, exploited realm of devalued materiality and material labour which continues to underpin the technosphere.

[362] (This logic informs the consideration of the historical avant garde in the *Radical care* section below.)

[363] A vital implication of this, which will be further explored, is that we care for it and do not fall into either a nihilistic or transcendental way of thinking.

[364] Ibid., p. 181.

void being open in front of them (precisely what is closed down and limited in the subsumption of the future discussed in *Part 1*). Hobbes' figure is presumptive of this individually-centred agency, ignoring the synthetic nature of the freedom they enjoy, which is rooted in overlooked, bracketed out inequality.

Althusser goes on to pull his thread of aleatory materialism out of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writing as well. The forest envisaged in *The Social Contract*, the 'state of pure nature', Rousseau argues, is an infinitely expansive one without bounds or constraints, meaning no encounters occur and no reality is formed.[365] Individuals, or segments, never intersect with one another. Only with constraints does the forest acquire a finitude, and the meandering individuals within it begin to meet. This is the state of encounter.[366] For Althusser, Rousseau's individuals equate to folds, and the forest to the plane of matter. Beyond the constraints producing the conditions of encounter, the forest-plane's finitude, within an infinite void, is what allows it to fold, as previously discussed. Thus, to Rousseau's argument that the forest being finite produces the conditions of encounter, we can add that it is also the basis by which the forest itself becomes the elements which encounter one another.[367] Returning to another argument of Rousseau's though, that private property is the origin of inequality, we can think of the present forest as having been enclosed in ownership.[368] The owner is

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[365] Ibid., p. 184.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'The Social Contract' [1762], in *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourses*, ed. by Susan Dunn (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 149-254.

[366] Althusser, p. 185.

[367] This is to say that the individuals within the forest, while appearing discrete through folding, are segments of the continuous matter of the forest.

[368] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men, or, Second Discourse' [1755], in *Rousseau: The Discourses and other early political writings*, ed. by Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 111-231.

erecting fences to cut off access to the edges, and instead of recognising it as finite and thus foldable and changeable, it (our present technospheric context including ourselves) is projected as being infinite, static and 'natural'. Its ability to fold, to become segments of unpredictable encounter, is being hidden.

The threshold

The ontological arguments addressed above, emphasising the possibility of change, are usually brought into historical materialism as a way of exploring what might make a movement take hold and become revolutionary, rupturing a structure.[369] This is certainly important to my argument, but I also wish to develop the less conventional strand centred on the proprietorial hegemony over the plane of being, which is presented as static. The subsumption of the future and position of continual indebtedness discussed in *Part 1* is an element of this, but in expanding out the consideration of what is owned to both the site of *Part 2*, and (falsely, through constraining computational thinking) to 'being' more generally, Jacques Derrida's writing on hospitality becomes relevant.[370] This later writing is more usually considered in ethical discussions of immigration and such forth, but I look to address it to the projected static plane of matter of our technospheric would-be totality, considering the hegemon as a host presenting themself as hospitable. This connection is key to situating radical care as existent within a falsely proclaimed inevitability which rejects a need for any alternative.

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[369] For example, as Althusser does.

Althusser.

[370] Jacques Derrida, 'Hostipitality', trans. by Barry Stocker, *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 5:3 (2000), 3-18.

Jacques Derrida, 'The Principle of Hospitality', trans. by Ashley Thompson, *Parallax*, 11:1 (2005), 6-9.

Anne Dufourmantelle and Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, trans. by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

Acknowledging the above argued importance of recognising the material located-ness of the event-encounter, we might consider 'society' as a key site in relation to equality. There is a profound difference between two possible types of encounter that might take place within society (between which are a spectrum of possible intermediate positions). There is the encounter between two humans, coming together in motion and porosity, open to one another, not with boundaries but, instead, fuzzy gradations of intensity.[371] The contrasting encounter type is far more violent though: where the porous, vulnerable human collides with a structure such as the technosphere which claims to be static; a rigid fold in the plane which presents itself as a totality and thus within which the soft human folds must acquiesce to subjectification.

This rigid fold claims a permanence, and thus determination of its site. It will not budge or flow (at least from the perspective of being within it) and thus claims proprietary control over existence internal to it, which, by virtue of being, must encounter it. Through its ownership of this rigid present, it presents as natural a logic or language of property, which largely determines the hierarchical position of those who seek individual achievement and success (more presumed, 'natural' codes) within this structure. As with the larger ossified fold, this resultant proprietorial constructing of the individuated human is itself rigid. Unlike our porous co-equal selves, it has hard edges. These edges bruise flesh when it encounters them, and form a threshold which cannot be crossed without permission.

Within society we are almost continually crossing a threshold with the other, as diverse agents interrelating within the present-matter, as well as on the event horizon to the

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[371] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1980], trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 153-164.

future.[372] Whenever we encounter a proprietorial other we place ourselves upon their threshold.[373] When we cross the threshold to the other's owned site, we enter into what Derrida terms their 'hostipitality'.[374] This coinage is purposefully suggestive of hospitality, hostility, host and hostage, all of which share an etymological lineage. As Derrida observes, the French term 'hôte' contains a sense of contractual reciprocity absent in its English translation, meaning 'guest' as well as 'host'.[375] Veering away from actual etymologies, I would add to these the slight suggestion of the word 'stipulation' that the middle part of Derrida's coinage holds as a further relevant association: the stipulation placed upon the hôte-guest as they cross the threshold.

When we cross the threshold to the other (or in fact remain upon it, as will be explained), the encounter produced is premised on difference between them and ourselves. (If there were no differentiation, there would be no event-encounter, just a consistent, undifferentiated being.) The centrality of property and ownership within our existent state of encounter, alongside ambition and competition, makes this crossing of thresholds not just a butting together of neutral difference, but one premised on inequalities inscribed into social relations. One side of the encounter holds dominance over the other, and claims the terrain as theirs. They are hôte-host, the other

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[372] As was argued in *Parts 1* and 2, a decentring of the self and encountering of the other in co-equal co-vulnerability is vital in contesting the individuation of the technosphere.

The future being rendered property was addressed in *Part 1*.

[373] It is important to differentiate this threshold, at the encounter between one and another, from the previously mentioned threshold between present reality and future void. Acknowledging that, I consciously opt to use the same term as the emphasis on property inherent in the interpersonal encounter does, when considered alongside the subsumption of the future discussed in *Part 1*, begin to blur the two.

[374] Derrida, 'Hostipitality'.

[375] Ibid.

is hôte-guest, and by their hospitality they maintain their dominance in the encounter.[376]

We proceed within proprietorial folds within folds within folds: moving outward from the immediately present rigid host, through increasing levels of generalised abstraction, to the ossified fold of the technosphere as an overarching context.

There occurs a 'folding [of] the foreign other into the internal law of the host': effectively a textual production, by the dominant hôte-host, of a supra-event-encounter frame to their design (though also partially subject to the set of fidelities culturally-contextually precedent around 'hosting', which it purports to be).[377] Any subsequent event-encounters between the parties must occur within this, unless there is a significant rupturing of this contingently produced pseudo-reality.

We might think of colonialism as a clear example of this asymmetry of hospitality, where material encounter premised upon and perpetuating of inequality is emphasised. However, we might also think of the encounter occurring in the terrain of language and text. To name, to determine the de facto or de jure language, is to effectively conceptually host and own, with translation as the threshold. English language dominance segues on from colonialism, but if we consider our present reality increasingly determined through textual forms of code, algorithm and data, we now increasingly have to cross a threshold into these languages to engage with agency in the world. As subjects, we are the hôtes-guests of a new dominant regime of these textual environments and their owners; our a-textual bodies denied access without

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[376] Ibid.

[377] Ibid., p. 7.

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translation, and once there, only present under stipulation. We might do well to consider the shared etymology with hostage and hostile when we think of where our data, our information and our presented selves are 'hosted'.

The apparent benevolence of the term hospitality is misleading. Intrinsic to it is this asymmetry between host and guest, and equally important is the implicit maintenance of the capacity to repeat.[378] The good host, as distinct perhaps from the good friend, offers hospitality somewhere up to, but not beyond, the point where doing so would diminish their ability to offer further hospitality in the future. They guard their hospitality capital. Through framing the encounter across their threshold, they control the potential event-encounters and hold onto the ability to expel the other back through the door, meanwhile they remain invulnerable. This maintenance of the capacity to be hospitable then, is premised on hegemony over the situation of encounter. Hospitality entails a process of social, material reproduction whereby hosts maintain their capacity to host, which entails guests, having to operate across a threshold which is not theirs to frame, being perpetual guest; always reliant on the hospitality of others, of the technosphere.

The central importance of resistance, including the maintaining of the capacity to resist (a mirror image of hospitality being premised upon maintenance of the capacity to host), was discussed in *Parts 1* and *2*. It is worth returning to here though, to note Howard Caygill's framing of resistance in relation to the threshold.[379] For Caygill, where revolution proceeds across and beyond the threshold without an ongoing

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[378] Ibid.

[379] Howard Caygill, 'Also Sprach Zapata: Philosophy and Resistance', *Radical Philosophy*, 1:171 (2012), 19-25 <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/also-sprach-zapata> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

capacity to resist, to create distance from power, a new threshold elsewhere will form. Resistance is what contests the premise of the threshold: not a direct contestation or overcoming of the barrier, but a hacking of the presumed coherence of the structure.

The parallels with the solidifying and increasingly unbridgeable gap between property owners and renters in a city like London which this discussion of the threshold suggests are clear.[380] And as with that very material manifestation, where every scrap of land or subdivision of building has a legally decreed form of ownership (including now vanishingly rare common land, still defined within a context of property), there is no pure neutral space of event-encounter within our society. This is because the event-encounter cannot take place in the void: as soon as the intervention initiates its possibility, it is pulled into the world, a world framed through static technospheric hegemony and encoded with a logic of property ownership. Even if a particular individual seeks to reject this, it is the larger fold we are within.

It is important to note that if the encounter is occurring between multifaceted agents which have multiple capacities and characteristics (e.g. humans), those same agents can encounter one another in a myriad range of differing situation-folds, simultaneously even. Within each of these, the host-guest relationship, and dominance over the threshold, might vary. Sometimes the dominance can be contested or unrecognised; a mixing of porous skins and thresholds braced against, perhaps overlapping one another. Only in the playing out of the event and inscribing with meaning might the dominance of one over the other become apparent.[381]

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[380] I mention London as it is my own current home city.

[381] Furthermore, fidelities such as love, friendship and care (all of which will be discussed) will frequently be present in various combinations and interrelations.

Hospitality, in its self-interested asymmetry, always holds within itself the capacity of removal: it is a code always implicitly subject to being rescinded. Carl Schmitt writes of a sovereign figure always having the ability to determine a 'state of exception' and thus overrule the code.[382] In our contingently arrived at technospheric context, sovereignty is disseminated through textual structures rather than residing in an individual. Nevertheless, within those textual structures, certain individuals do hold vested interest.[383]

This determining of a state of exception incorporates both an autocratic invocation that a new state is initiated, and also an encoding of what that new state comprises.[384] The state of exception occurs at the outer limits of what is permitted; as Giorgio Agamben writes, it is neither internal nor external to the state of normality (which it is defined in terms of, but specifically in terms of *not* being).[385] At the edge of the ossified plane of stasis, it is a fuzzy boundary where a meta-logic of power which has always underpinned the code of hospitality begins to make itself more visible, and begins to act more directly. For this reason, the proclamation of a state of exception is a powerful move by the hegemon in contesting resistance. The stable, encoded centre of the

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[382] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* [1922], trans. by George Schwabb (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 13.

[383] For Schmitt, there is the sense of a failure of liberal democracy in having to revert back to a preceding structure of power.

From the perspective of the distributed power of the technosphere however, liberal democracy has been 'superseded'. Rather than failing as a contemporary form of governance, it functions as a useful fiction to mask the exploitative violence of power. Accelerationism acknowledges this but, in its right-wing variant, celebrates that power.

[384] Ibid., p. xi.

[385] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 23.

technospheric plane, where productive neoliberal lives are lived within the social factory, having moulded themselves to its logics, assumes an apparently natural stasis. The edge in contrast, where the bend of the fold occurs, is where both resistance and hegemonic power become dynamically active. These fuzzy boundary zones are where the falsity of the ossified plane can be challenged and critiqued, but are also where hegemonic power can arbitrarily cast aside checks on its repressive violence, flowing into a new form.[386] This edge space serves to reemphasise the entire logic of hospitality as one of being perpetually subject to the power of the host, and reminds us of the need for counter-networks of care existing autonomously to that logic, which might persist when hospitality is torn away, as can occur at any moment.

Hôte-guest is the condition of the multitude. Always on the threshold, a threshold controlled by another, having to fight (exhaustingly) for any agency over their own future. Derrida reflects on the two meanings of the French term 'pas': both 'a step', and 'not'.[387] This encapsulates the threshold to the future for the multitude: they cannot but step forward into it, perhaps bringing with them fidelities of ambition, motivation and hope, but that step is always simultaneously a 'not', a step premised on conditionalities imposed and enforced by the current dominant regime which owns the threshold, the technosphere.

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[386] They are the spaces Caygill observes resistance can occur at through fragmenting the coherence of the structure, but they are also where the structure opts to exceed its own logic and act with dynamic violence.

Caygill.

[387] Derrida, 'Hostipitality', p. 11.

Ways of being: love

In this bleak reality then, is there any way of operating, of being, that is critical to the

dominant regime and constitutes a form of existence that is counter to it? Is there a way

to actively find fidelities to carry forward resistantly through the threshold, rupturing

it? Bridle proposes love and unknowing as the routes beyond computational thinking,

and proceeds to develop these into an idea of guardianship, premised on ethical virtue

and thinking clearly and acting 'correctly'.[388] While the term guardianship manages to

engage the important idea of a site or territory developed in *Part 2*, while avoiding the

issues of property and resultant power asymmetry in hospitality, this emphasis on

clarity and correct action seems to fall in line with Fredric Jameson's cognitive

mapping, which *Part 2* critiqued for under-recognising the entanglement of self within

the structure.[389] Bridle's emphasis on acting ethically correctly, rather than engaging

politically in the messy complexity, follows from this. However, the technosphere is a

structure which, as Bridle elsewhere makes powerfully clear, is shifting faster than we

can grasp it clearly, but within and upon which it is nevertheless imperative to act, to

attempt to break the cycle of its reproduction.[390] Setting guardianship aside as

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[388] Bridle, pp. 251-252.

[389] Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping'.

[390] Bridle.

Groys describes this ungraspability of the continuously changing context in which we are
bound as 'bewilderment'.

Boris Groys, *In the Flow* (London: Verso, 2016), pp. 12, 34, 188.

The paradox of this bewilderment is that while it generates alienation, it does also enable
certain forms of connection. In their *sanctioned* use, these connections are premised on an
individuated (de)subjectification though.

Marc James Léger, *Don't Network: The Avant Garde After Networks* (New York NY: Minor
Compositions, 2018), pp. 1-5.

ineffectively cautious and impossibly seeking of objectivity then, does 'love' offer

something important, perhaps chiming with the post-individual pro-human stance *Part*

1 advocated, as we try to develop an enmeshed but autonomous resistance?

Hannah Arendt's analysis of love, drawing on Saint Augustine's writings on the topic,

is as much a reflection on the process of subjectification.[391] She centres human life

around an unknown future anticipated through fear and desire: a reiteration of the

cusp, or threshold, to the unknown now familiar from the discussion of the event

above, but here focused on the individual, or perhaps human.[392] In a faith context, this

future exists outside of our material reality. With the foreclosure of the future described

in *Part 1*, it is unsurprising these transcendentally envisaged futures hold appeal.

There is a paradox inherent within love approached in terms of faith. On the one hand

it pushes a commitment to the abstract, a holding out for the transcendental ('Love

God'); while on the other it commands an embracing of positionality within a specific

context ('Love thy neighbour').[393] The former foregrounds the dogmatic, while the

latter centres on the historical and material. To translate this out of religion into

philosophical terms though, we can see the paradox as being present within

subjectifiation. We are read and read ourselves as autonomous individuals, while

simultaneously being completely entangled in and produced by our context.

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[391] Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* [1929], ed. by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[392] Ibid., p. 13.

[393] Ibid.

In a foreshadowing of the discussion of friendship to come below though, Arendt navigates this paradox by considering the neighbour as a mirror of the self.[394] In their failing to live the 'good' life, and in being castigated for this, they function as a warning against backsliding. Conversely, if they excel, or are at least viewed as such, they become the target to emulate. Thus the relationship to the other, when framed through this paradoxical transcendental gaze, though possibly disguised beneath outward acts of compassion, becomes rooted in self-formation, subjectification and individuation. The more closely just beneath or above ourselves on the ladder we perceive others to be, the more precisely we gauge our own position, and seek to maintain or improve it.[395] This process, in a secular contemporary context, is mirrored in how we are subjectified within neoliberalism.

A further concern in this formulation of love on a transcendental ground, and the resultant individuation, is the rendering of the 'other' human as object that occurs. This is perhaps not surprising, given the primacy of 'Love God' over 'Love thy neighbour'. The position the other is cast into is one without agency or potential to rupture the neat construction of the individuated self that their very presence within the relation is secondary to.[396] The transcendental lover does not enter into a mutual bond of care with the other, because their historically and contextually rooted pain, vulnerability and human-ness are all ultimately reduced to inconsequentiality in relation to the

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[394] Ibid., p. 105.

[395] Christians might argue that grace, with its universalising non-comparative emphasis, overcomes this issue. This is not the place for a theological discussion of grace, but rather the point made is how this rooting of love/care on a transcendental ground becomes a site of individuation *within the present worldly reality*.

[396] This rendering of the other human as object was central to both platform capitalism as discussed in *Part 1* and, arguably, certain models of socially engaged practice as discussed in *Part 2*.

ahistorical perfection the individuated self will proceed into. Love remains abstract: constituting the subject, but in separation from their political context.

There is a circularity in the way these religious premises of faith, which were transposed wholesale via the 'protestant work ethic' into capitalism, and placed further upon and within the individual in post-Fordism, now reacquire a more explicit transcendentalism in some of the accelerationist discourses emanating from Silicon Valley.[397]

What is needed is not this centripetal model of relationship, of love or care as spokes coming out from a single subject (who, to continue the metaphor, is actually more interested in the axle). What is required is a de-centred network or web of care, where the bonds of relationship are, or at least seek to become, pluri-directionally equal in terms of affect and agency, and themselves become the focus rather than the individuals linking them. In removing the existential relief of a transcendentalism to fall back upon, the inequalities of vulnerability within our world become all the more starkly experienced, and the urgent need for these bonds of care, for everyone, become all the more apparent.

Abandoning transcendentalism, or any supposedly fixed ground for that matter, is necessary though. Capitalism has proven able to subsume any would-be ground. Only in untethering from a co-optable fixedness might we form capacities of resistance that can remain outside of it. In this free-floating groundlessness, the bonds of relationship

[397] Adam Gabbatt, 'Is Silicon Valley's quest for immortality a fate worse than death?', *Guardian*, 23 February 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/feb/22/silicon-valley-immortality-blood-infusion-gene-therapy> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

are all the more vital if we are not to lose ourselves within an unnavigable expanse of desubjectification.

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Like Arendt, Badiou is critical of a transcendental framing of love, and instead proposes considering it as an imminent fidelity which opens up a 'two scene' (or perhaps better, 'plurality') of interconnected positionality.[398]

In Badiou's schema, the event-encounter of 'falling in love' is the intervention which is retroactively inscribed as evental through the ensuing commitment to the work of love.[399] The co-vulnerable, co-committed relationality of love as a fidelity, which he outlines, seemingly holds some of the same resiliences and potential resistances towards the technospheric stasis as friendship and care which will be discussed below.

A particular quality which Badiou develops is the corporeality of love.[400] This bodily-ness (which he contrasts against friendship) emerges in his rejection of the transcendental. However, in seeking another initiator for (or enactment of) love, he seems to dialectically reify sex (or at least sexual desire) as the sine qua non of pro-

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[398] Alain Badiou with Nicolas Truong, *In Praise of Love* [2009], trans. by Peter Bush (New York NY: The New Press, 2012).

For example, Badiou is critical of Kierkegaard's setting out of a hierarchy of forms of love culminating in the religious.

Ibid., p. 14.

I suggest 'plurality' rather than 'two scene' in attempting to move beyond the binary exclusivity of the formulation of love Badiou proposes.

[399] Ibid., pp. 28, 41-44.

[400] Ibid., pp. 34-37.

human relationality. This becomes somewhat exclusionary and problematic in seeking collective resistant ways of being, especially as (even accepting a subjective personal position) there is an under-questioned monogamous, binary hetero-normativity to his framing of sex.[401] More fundamentally, Badiou's intrinsically sexual love ultimately falls back on the self-interested individualism of sexual pleasure, via the same logic by which Badiou himself observes Lacan denied the possibility of a sexual relationship.[402] I am inclined to agree, within the urgency of the technospheric present, with Maggie Nelson, who writes 'there is some evil shit in this world that needs fucking up, and the time for blithely asserting that sleeping with whomever you want however you want is going to jam its machinery is long past'.[403] Whether framed theologically or sexually, love as a resistant fidelity too easily slips into an individuated transcendentalism.

While I gratefully borrow Badiou's concept of fidelity, I will shift away from love to consider some alternative operators. Friendship and, especially, care offer more fluid multifaceted capacities of resistance towards, and resilience within, the technosphere.

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[401] This exclusionary position is later extended further through consideration of love within the reproductive family, where it becomes bound up in questions of bio-genealogical lineages of social reproduction which sit uneasily with a desire for equality for all.

Making explicit reference to 'the couple', Badiou proposes a possible definition of his conception of love as 'minimal communism'. In its implicit boundaries and exclusivity, this is a questionable concept more akin to an expanded individualism, and antithetical to a collective, pro-human, equitable way of being *for all*.

Ibid., p. 90.

[402] Ibid., pp.18-19.

[403] Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (New York NY: Melville House, 2016) p. 27.

Pro-human practices, undertaken with care, could at times include 'sleeping with whomever you want however you want' (if there were mutual consent); this is to be advocated. My argument is that this is not *on its own* enough, even less so if conforming to an encoded normativity.

Ways of being: friendship

If not love then, might friendship operate as a fidelity enabling a resistant, resilient network of relations? In building a viable concept of radical care, theorisations of friendship offer some important points of consideration.

In *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida explores the paradoxical 'contretemps' he sees at the centre of the friend relation.[404] He uses this term to encapsulate, as the French suggests, two contrasting senses of time. On the one hand, there is a duration: a shared history and reality that underpins the friendship, which (to use Badiou's terms) forms a fidelity that, barring an extreme event, the friends can reasonably expect to carry forward through the event into the future. The other aspect of the contretemps though, is the potential for shift or change as the two friends, rather than allowing their self-subjectification to proceed as a relatively discrete and un-interfered with loop, open themselves up to one another in co-affect and co-vulnerability. This potentially destabilises the two selves, opening unpredictable aleatory futures out of the event-encounter.

Badiou's terminology continues to map closely onto Derrida's conception of friendship. For Badiou, the event-intervention loop was prevented from becoming a closed circle reproducing itself by instead spiralling it out in a fractal of other potential dimensions, with a separate event creating the context for the next intervention.[405] Similarly, in this friendship dynamic, the opening up of the circle of self to the other produces the external impetus to destabilise the self.

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[404] Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship,* trans. by George Collins (London: Verso, 1997).

[405] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 209.

A further aspect of the contretemps is that friendship is not just a model that might be applicable to care, but itself needs care.[406] For the durational fidelity to be sustainable through the instability, it needs to be committed to. This is where an element of radicality starts to enter, because a friendship that is only committed to *so far* echoes back to hospitality, and is ultimately premised on the self and self-interest. A radical friendship has to commit to the challenge, rupture or even potential destruction of the present self; only with this is the fidelity meaningful. Another way to put this is that the fidelity has to have already passed through the event, whatever the event. This is friendship, but also, to go back to Badiou, this is fidelity.[407] Such commitment also fragments the threshold, which is constructed in terms of conditionality. Without this opening up of oneself to the unknown, both friendship and fidelity sit within the present reality, when they only have any potentially generative meaning beyond this when they transfer themselves across into the void. Committing them into that void is a small way to reclaim the future at a personal level, to hold open that unknown chance, *despite* the risk of potential rational self-disinterest. If we do not do this, are we not simply being opportunistic and entrepreneurial within a virtuosic economy: ideal neoliberal subjects?

Derrida rejects the notion of an 'ideal' friendship, which would simply be a replacement transcendentalism.[408] Instead, each friendship should be recognised as

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[406] This observation prefigures an extensive discussion of care for care itself which will come below.

[407] Derrida, *Politics of Friendship,* pp. 12-17.

Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 232-237.

[408] Derrida, *Politics of Friendship.*

contingent, developed through committed nurturing. It is a human-to-human relationship built not on a transferrable code, but on entangled embodied experience. This contingency, operating outside the code-able and commodifiable, is a characteristic that can hold friendships apart from subsumption into the technosphere: a friendship premised on a genuine co-vulnerability and co-affect can hold the potential to be a resilient site of resistance.

David Webb builds on Derrida's conception, but develops it through Foucault's writing on care for the self and the other, making more explicit the need for unconditional commitment within friendship, to enable radical, unknown new (counter) subjectifications.[409] He develops the two intersecting subjects of the friendship in a way that helpfully takes us beyond two overly simple loops of subjectification colliding and opening one another out. The entanglement of the two co-equal entities is not occurring on a singular axis, but across multiple facets of the intersecting selves (for Foucault, these are our self-relation and relations to forms of knowledge and normativity).[410] There is a deep, unknowable opening up of the self, which entails unanticipated co-realisations, but the process can only occur when both parties commit despite the potential vulnerability.

The friendship relation is non-linear and unpredictable. The multiplicity of axes of intersection and co-affect that are formed, if cared for and sustained, exponentially multiply the complexity and unknowability of potential futures. The encounter is not

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[409] David Webb, 'On Friendship: Derrida, Foucault and the Practice of Becoming' *Research in Phenomenology*, 33 (2003), 119-140.

[410] Michel Foucault, 'Preface to the History of Sexuality, Volume Two', in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, trans. by Robert Hurley and others (New York NY: The New Press, 1994), pp. 199-205 (p. 201).

one of outward-facing skin touching on outward-facing skin, producing one or two new future-voids, but instead a deep porous overlap of each self into the other, creating multi-dimensional voids of potential futures (and selves within them), in continuous formation and reformation.

The form of profound friendship being described here is very distant from the notional, mediated, textual friendships leveraged by Facebook and other social media, and the investment of committed time and effort (to produce care) needed from each human means there is some limit to the number of friends any single person might have.[411] However, that it is more than one further multiplies the potentially opening futures of each friend, and also enables the building of chains of linkage, the formation of a mesh across which affective encounters might pass through multiple persons in committed relationship with one another.[412] Here, there is a glimpse of a de-individuated pro-human network operating to a logic autonomous from the technosphere.

Deleuze describes the potential of flow through affective encounter within and between enmeshed spirals of interconnected subjectification as 'turbulent flow'.[413] It is important to acknowledge that this turbulent flow, in as much as it does enable the aleatory production of unpredictable contexts, selves and voids, is still presently existent within a sub- and supra- structural matter of the totalising hegemonic context

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[411] Facebook 'friendships' are centred on commodification and individuated subjectification, as examined in detail by Bucher.

Taina Bucher, 'The Friendship Assemblage: Investigating Programmed Sociality on Facebook', *Television & New Media*, 14:6 (2012), 479-493.

[412] This greater and more open interconnectivity is a facet through which fidelities such as friendship can offer more resistant and resilient potentialities than (often comparatively exclusive) love.

[413] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* [1986], trans. by Seán Hand (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 99.

of the technosphere. Friendships exist in an exhausting context of being and surviving, and an equally exhausting effort of self-reflection is continuously needed to guard against our thinking and acting within them becoming technospherically inflected, echoing the psychological feedback loops discussed in *Part 1*. In its would-be totality, the technosphere is impossible to view or grasp from outside and it is thus not helpful to think of it as a ground tethering the otherwise free-floating multi-dimensional mesh of friendship interconnections, but instead as a matter or substance through which the bonds of friendship must burrow and push. These bonds are not materially other, but can be thought of as a different texture of that same material. The dominant technospheric texture constantly seeps into the bonds, and encourages them back to the default state: constant care is needed to hold open the channels of this atypical intra-material mesh. It is not just at the textural boundary, where the dominant texture encroaches, that the alternate is pulled back to the norm (though this may be where the pull is strongest); it is as if the matter of the atypically textured filaments itself is subject to a gravitational pull (though this is not a natural gravity). If not actively maintained and cared for in their alternate texture, bonds of friendship revert back to the technospheric standard.

As *Part 2* explored, in our contemporary reality we are *de*subjectified as much as we are subjectified, in the interests of new forms of capitalism circulating around (and within) us.[414] The process described above, of making oneself vulnerable and porous and opening out potential future self-hoods in entangled encounter with others, could be framed as an a-critical replication of processes of desubjectification, echoing the value

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[414] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, 59 (1992), 3-7.

Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, trans. by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

now placed on teamwork, networking and collaboration. As previously argued, the centring on human-to-human, as opposed to individuated, relations is key in avoiding slipping into this. In maintaining an apart-ness while being within, we tread a finely balanced path: contestation of an assumed discrete autonomy is required, as is resistance to collapse into complicity within the hegemonic structure. This is exhausting, making a committed care for one another all the more vital.

We need to move beyond a narrow single-axis similarity-difference understanding of the friendship relation.[415] However, without care, this expanding out of the complexity of the relationship will not remove the risk of overlooking the deeply ingrained inequalities inscribed in material, cultural and social positions built though shared historical reality. Proximities (of all types, not just spatial) mean there are affinities for friendship between those who are similar. The risk in this is that rather than friendship becoming a counter-mesh of co-equality, it instead breaks down into un- or under-connected sub-networks reinforcing positions of *in*equality, with little intersection between these. Thus, while we do need to think of friendship as a co-entangled navigation through an aleatory durational set of encounters, we also need to acknowledge that we are situated with differing degrees of difference to one another, as read through technospheric subjectification, and these differences are material. Our positionality must be reflected upon. To ignore this is to claim the modernist-liberal tabula rasa which whitewashes past exploitations and their ongoing effects. Friendship needs to be cared for, and treated with care.

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[415] Webb.

<u>Ways of being: care</u>

Care seems to offer a glimmer of a fidelity which might critically and resistantly destabilise the threshold. It sits beyond a concept of static hospitality (implicitly premised on inequality, property and power): the person who cares must be willing to be moved by the other, to take on 'response-ability'.[416] This is a mutually fluid basis in equality at odds with the proprietorial dominance of hospitality. Care must be performed with care: it is a self-reflexively contingent process, very different from either the rigid, abstract transcendentalism or exclusionary, implicitly sexual framing of love. There is an ongoing committed laborious materiality to care, whereas it is possible to 'love' without wishing to do the work of love.[417] A bodily-ness of care goes beyond that of sexually framed love to incorporate the erotic, but also myriad other forms of embodied contact. While friendship is perhaps the closest of the related fidelities discussed, care might be distinguished from it by a greater capacity to move beyond falling into relations of proximity and similarity. Additionally, care better holds open the possibility of relations without an assumption of reciprocality based on a-critically assumed equality of agency (which, in failing to consider structural inequalities, denies the possibility of many friendships).[418]

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[416] Aryn Martin, Natasha Myers and Ana Viseu, 'The politics of care in technoscience', *Social Studies of Science*, 45:5 (2015), 625-641 (p. 635).

The concept of 'response-ability' was notably developed by Barad.

Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[417] Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), p. 5.

[418] (While I am differentiating care from love and friendship, relations framed in terms of love and friendship can be, and often are, also relations of care.)

Care, in contrast to friendship, can also more easily be extended to the non-human.[419]

And while this is not the focus of this project, it is clearly of urgency at a time of

environmental and ecological crisis. I do not shy away from the human-centricity of the

term 'non-human' though, precisely because, in this important extension of care

beyond the human, it is nevertheless vital to hold onto care for the human,

acknowledging the massive disparities of human vulnerability to the effects of

immanent threats such as the climate crisis. Centring on the human also resists the

capitalist conception of care for goods and property (or even of humans as property, as

discussed below).

Care cannot be thought in abstraction, outside the structures within which we think it.

Before considering it as a basis for contesting the technosphere, it must be

acknowledged that for many, care, particularly in its material bodily aspects, occurs

within capitalism, serving as a contributor towards rigidly stratified social

reproduction.[420] In *The Undying*, Anne Boyer describes the medicalised body within

pharma-capitalism as a key site at which multiple forms of care within capitalism

intersect in unequal social stratification. Those materially providing for the basic needs

of her ill body, and undertaking the discomfortingly invasive sustaining of it in its

vulnerability, and also those who carefully and methodically extract, record and input

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[419] In this, care holds a similar capacity to Haraway's concept of kinship. Haraway's emphasis on 'kin' (as a means of shifting away from connections premised exclusively on bio-genealogy) also aligns with a centring on care in preference to love (which, in Badiou's conception at least, is restrictively premised on a reproductive hetero-normativity).

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

Badiou with Truong.

[420] Shannon Mattern, 'Maintenance and Care', *Places Journal* (2018) <https://placesjournal.org/article/maintenance-and-care/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

the data underpinning her treatment, are all disproportionately female and people of colour; in contrast to the doctors, who interpret and decide but do not actually touch.[421] Hegemonic structures can also appropriate care through romanticising it, in terms of repair, or 'make do and mend'. Without criticality, these narratives can become complicit within austerity capitalism which appropriates a frugal human resilience in the interests of an extractive system.[422]

Discourses of 'positive discrimination' and 'diversity' can on the surface appear to align with care's emphasis on equality and connection beyond the similar or proximate. However, these invitations to a web of relations are framed as a means of better enabling integration into an established structure premised on the neoliberal individual. This is very different to a counter-network of care existing autonomously to the hegemonic structure.

Exploitative, capitalist appropriation of care has a long history. Christina Sharpe sets out the interwoven productions of racist discourses and modern capitalism through and in horrific acts of dehumanising violence upon the black body.[423] Transatlantic slavery coincided with a set of technologies of financialization and abstraction which have expanded exponentially since to produce our present context.[424] The Africans in

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[421] Anne Boyer, *The Undying: Pain, Vulnerability, Mortality, Medicine, Art, Time, Dreams, Data, Exhaustion, Cancer, and Care* (London: Allen Lane, 2019), pp. 61-62.

[422] Mattern.

[423] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

[424] Ibid.

Ramon Amaro, 'Machine Learning, Black Labour and Bio-Epistemic Resistance', presentation at *After Work* symposium, University of West London, 27 January 2018 <https://autonomy.work/portfolio/work-life-labour-automation-conference-photos-recordings/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

the hold on the middle passage were translated across a threshold into becoming

financial instruments; whether as dehumanised labour, or beyond this into a distant,

largely invisible, fixing point for financial speculation.

Sharpe recounts the story of the slave transport ship the Zong, infamous for the

murdering by throwing overboard of over one hundred humans in order to claim their

'insurance value'. The ship had previously been named the Zorgue, and operated out

of Dutch-speaking Middelburg, with 'zorgue' meaning 'care' in Dutch.[425] That a slave

ship could be called 'care' underlines how, in this earlier sub-type of capitalism, a logic

of profit and property operated upon a substrate of violence. In the terms of the

hegemonic structure, the captain was acting with great care, only his care was for his

profit and a return to investors. In a brutal foreshadowing of the way we are abstracted

into textual forms within the technosphere, the Zong murders demonstrate an

uncritical adherence to a logic that even other humans might be considered solely as

property, potential extractable labour, and textualised financial value. In slavery,

Rousseau's argument that private property is the origin of inequality reaches its

nadir.[426]

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[425] Sharpe, pp. 34-35, 45.

This renaming, or slippage of name, succinctly reflects the remote, abstracted, textualised
processes of capitalism of which it was part.

[426] Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality'.

We can think of transatlantic slavery as a highly specific and horrifically violent foreshadowing
of the passivity and denial of agency discussed in *Part 1*, whereby the technosphere exploits our
bare existence, our 'being'. Slavery operated on an inverse of this, with 'being' annihilated into
labour, and brutal systemic violence removing the capacity of resistance from the subject
humans whom it sought to dehumanise.

The legacy of the black Atlantic has continuing affect, which will be further discussed

below. While we can recognise some aspects of the abstracting violence manifested in

the Zong murders as now being a dispersed logic affecting a broader range of humans,

it is especially important at the same time to again emphasise that exploitation and

violence within the technosphere are not equally distributed, and compounded

exploitations and exclusions continue through it, not least of black people and people

of colour. [427]

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[427] Cameron Rowland's 2020 exhibition *3 & 4 Will. IV c. 73* was focused on the violent abstraction of black bodies within the entwined histories of transatlantic slavery and capitalism discussed here.

Cameron Rowland, *3 & 4 Will. IV c. 73*, exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 2020 <https://www.ica.art/exhibitions/cameron-rowland> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Rowland's exhibition, as well as reflexively turning attention to the ICA's own material entanglement with slavery (e.g. as manifested in its mahogany doors and handrails), also included an 'officer monitor': a device to enable the remote tracking and monitoring of individuals as an alternative to traditional incarceration. This brought the exhibition's historical focus to direct consideration within the technospheric present. Black people and people of colour are disproportionately overrepresented in the prison populations of both the US and UK, and both systems incorporate significant private enterprise, including the operation of 'for-profit' prisons.

'Criminal Justice Fact Sheet', *NAACP website* (2020) <https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

'Race', *Prison Reform Trust website* <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/WhatWeDo/Projectsresearch/Race> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Clyde Haberman, 'For Private Prisons, Detaining Immigrants Is Big Business', *New York Times*, 1 October 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/01/us/prisons-immigration-detention.html> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Prison Reform Trust, *Private Punishment: Who Profits?* (London: Prison Reform Trust, 2005), available at <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/portals/0/documents/private%20punishment%20who%20profits.pdf> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

A pro-human care, contesting power, will mostly not emanate from power, since that would usually be illogical to the operating of that power within a proprietorial and acquisitive world.[428] This care must operate within a world it finds objectionable, and thus has a resistance implicit within it.[429] There is a performed disconnection within a pro-human care: in seeking a caring way of being, one frequently has to ironically *not* care about the individuating logics of the technospheric world around us.[430]

What might an equitable re-finding of, reasserting of, the human within this counter-logic of care look like? The co-equal human must be plural, must be relational, in acknowledgement of the notion of selfness being irremovably formed in a fluxing intermeshing with context, not least other human selves. The very notion of 'human'

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[428] Martin, Myers and Viseu, p. 628.

[429] To continue the discussion of 'self-care' from *Parts 1* and *2*, we can consider self-care in its capitalist forms as not operating within a world it finds objectionable, but instead (re)producing a subject better able to converge with that world. Self-care, as commonly presented on Instagram and similar platforms, considers the human as property (even if the owner might be the associated individual). This self-care is performed/re-presented in the capitalist care terms of repairing or maximising the efficiency and exploitability of this piece of property.

As Hobart and Kneese note, contemporary self-care techniques enabling maintenance of productivity are a form of 'New Age salve in a fresh iteration of the Weberian Protestant work ethic'.

Hi'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese, 'Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times', *Social Text*, 38:1 (2020), 1-16 (p. 4).

Published in March 2020, the 'Radical Care' themed issue of *Social Text*, edited by Hobart and Kneese, was the first serious piece of scholarship I encountered specifically using the term 'radical care', around which I myself was already thinking.

Hi'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese, eds., 'Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times' [special issue], *Social Text*, 38:1 (2020).

Hobart and Kneese's definition of radical care as 'a set of vital but underappreciated strategies for enduring precarious worlds' does not articulate the radical in potentially instigating systemic change in the way I develop the term, and is thus more akin to a form of resilience within my lexicon.

Hobart and Kneese, p. 2.

[430] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics,* p. 78.

needs to be acknowledged as extended beyond a discrete bounding skin: stretched outward, and indeed inward, in messy interplays. In place of a textual code of property-inequality as our basis of relating, how can this co-equal human plurality move forward as a counter-way of being, of co-being, or perhaps inter-being?

A pro-human care centres upon the relation rather than the individual at either end, emphasising their bound up-ness within one another, and thus the need to continually reflect upon the bond as pivotal to a way of being rooted in equality.

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The 2015 themed issue of *Social Studies of Science* responded to Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's earlier paper in the same journal which advocated a shift from concern to care, to develop a discourse of 'critical care'.[431] For care to be critical it needs to be perpetually unsettled, in continual contestation with itself and the contexts within which it sits; it is a fluid, political thing. In so being, care functions as an active form of counter public as developed in *Part 2*. It opens itself up in continual dimensions of further countering, refusing to ossify. Michelle Murphy writes that there are at least four meanings to care: it is emotional attachment and fondness; it means to provide for, sustain, and look after; it is attention and concern, watchfulness and caution; and it is a

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[431] Ana Viseu and others, eds., 'The Politics of Care in Technoscience' [special issue], *Social Studies of Science*, 45:5 (2015).

Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, 'Matters of care in technoscience: Assembling neglected things', *Social Studies of Science*, 41:1 (2011), 85-106.

Puig de Bellacasa describes technoscience as a 'world' in which socio-political processes and imaginaries are unavoidably bound up with scientific knowledge and material production.

Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics,* p. 17.

troubled, worried, unsettledness.[432] A more condensed setting out of these multiple

aspects inherent within care is subsequently offered by Puig de la Bellacasa who

identifies three principle dimensions within it.[433] There is material care as labour and

work, either for other humans in variably direct, proximate forms, or for some other

object or process. There is care as affect and affection, in the forming and nurturing of

the inter-human bonds between us. Often ephemeral, this aspect of care frequently falls

outside of designated remunerated labour, though mirrors many of the skills which are

elsewhere economically valued.[434]

While these two dimensions to care align with writing on social reproduction,

Bellacasa's third aspect, ethical and political care, is an important extension beyond this

within critical care.[435] A more abstract engagement with the injustice and inequality of

the world within which more material and affective forms of care are desperately

needed, it is a slowing down and acknowledging of complexity and a refusal to

presume, and it is a critical attention and concern for something (something which one

may not be the principal affectee of). It is a troubled-ness with the current state of

things; an ethics and politics of refusing to accept the stasis of the technosphere.

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[432] Michelle Murphy, 'Unsettling care: Transnational itineraries of care in feminist health practices', *Social Studies of Science*, 45:5 (2015), 717-737 (p. 721).

[433] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics*, p. 5.

Other overlapping articulations of the complexity of care include, from a design perspective, that proposed in *The Lancaster Care Charter*. Here, for an open-futured design approach, the authors advocate a simultaneous holding onto of 'care of complexity', 'care of the project' and 'care of relations'.

Paul Rodgers and others, 'The Lancaster Care Charter', *Design Issues*, 35:1 (2019), 73-77.

[434] This irony within post-Fordism was discussed in *Part 1*.

[435] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics*, p. 5.

There is a positionality to any discourse, which it is important to consider. For example, Murphy notes that some of the discourse of care emerging from feminism in the 1970s presumed and accepted a site of capitalism, whiteness and (post-)coloniality.[436] A vital aspect of critical care, in avoiding a similar subsumption by broader existent hierarchies, is to be continually self-reflexive: to bring its acknowledgement of complexity and troubled-ness with the current state of things to itself. It needs to remain fluid, continually contesting itself. Care must be reclaimed, not from impurities, but from attempts to simplify it.[437]

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In working with this multi-dimensional, self-reflexive concept of care, it is vital that the hierarchies of the technosphere are not allowed to develop within it. Care needs to be taken, for example, to avoid a valorising of the conceptual and discursive dimensions of multifaceted care as being in any way superior to, precedent to, or determining of the material aspects of care. To fall into this is to a-critically replicate the hierarchy of labour types in the technosphere as set out in *Part 1.*

The *Pirate Care conference,* hosted by the Centre for Postdigital Cultures at Coventry University in June 2019, coalesced in a related way to this project, around care as resilient resistance to property. A number of presentations focused on piratically misusing the technosphere's own infrastructures to enable pockets of equality within highly unequally structured systems such as pharma-capitalism or financialised

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[436] Murphy, p. 721.

[437] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics,* p. 11.

intellectual property.[438] Others approached care from a political standpoint, addressing

sites of particular vulnerability.[439] Amidst these though, one speaker shared an example

of a collective model of nursery care developed where state provision was lacking.[440] I

draw attention to this to emphasise how mutually vital to one another Puig de la

Bellacasa's three dimensions of care are.[441] Thought through these dimensions, the

development of a collective, equitable nursery model can be a precursor to parents or

guardians, sharing the labour of childcare, being enabled to consider contingent ethical

and political complexities of care (including the lack of state-provided care producing

the need for such a nursery in the first pace). At the same time, the politics implicit

[438] John Willbanks, 'Open Science, DIY Bio, and Cheap Data', presentation at *Pirate Care conference*, Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University, 19 June 2019 <https://pirate.care/pages/abstracts/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Nick Titus, 'I'm My Own Primary Care Provider: Taking Back Control with DIY Medicine in the 21st Century', presentation at *Pirate Care conference*, Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University, 19 June 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgMPGOw3Flg&list=PLX-N8krB2JMcVktrreeqLJAKTYqNoiSnO&index=18> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Gilbert Rodman, 'Whose Culture? Our Culture!: Pirates as Cultural Care/Takers', presentation at *Pirate Care conference*, Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University, 20 June 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDPP-detx5A&list=PLX-N8krB2JMcVktrreeqLJAKTYqNoiSnO&index=2> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Agustina Andreoletti, 'Shadow Libraries: Using Art to Resist', presentation at *Pirate Care conference*, Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University, 20 June 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9J9CfTYHBk&list=PLX-N8krB2JMcVktrreeqLJAKTYqNoiSnO&index=5> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[439] Taraneh Fazeli, 'Sick Time, Sleepy Time, Crip Time: Against Capitalism's Temporal Bullying', presentation at *Pirate Care conference*, Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University, 20 June 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckCkTszuXpk&list=PLX-N8krB2JMcVktrreeqLJAKTYqNoiSnO&index=17> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Kirsten Forkert, Janna Graham and Victoria Mponda, 'Social Media and Refugee Solidarity Networks in the Face of State Failures', presentation at *Pirate Care conference*, Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University, 19 June 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IW-aGqfClIg&list=PLX-N8krB2JMcVktrreeqLJAKTYqNoiSnO&index=14> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[440] Maddalena Fragnito, 'Soprasotto, a Pirate Kindergarten', presentation at *Pirate Care conference*, Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University, 19 June 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n98GxL0OIms&list=PLX-N8krB2JMcVktrreeqLJAKTYqNoiSnO&index=11> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[441] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics,* p.5.

within the nursery can be framed and practised with care at their centre owing in part

to the reflexive consideration which the nursery has enabled. And furthermore, the

collective nursery, almost like a site of (artistic) practice inseparable from its

surrounding social, political and economic contexts, alongside being a practical

enabler, might itself be precisely where those contingent ethical and political

complexities of care can be most fruitfully developed.[442]

To offer another example, The Black Panther Party's 'Free Breakfast for School

Children' programme can somewhat similarly be seen as a site where these different

aspects of care mutually interrelated. The breakfast programme was materially much

needed in the US at the time, with 12.6 million children living in households

experiencing food poverty.[443] The programme thus provided vital immediate material

care in the meeting of a need perpetuated by structures the Panthers opposed (and this

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[442] Following this conference, *Pirate Care* has developed into an ongoing project centred around an online syllabus.

Pirate Care, *Pirate Care* [project website] (2020) <https://pirate.care> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

The project operates to share information and strategies between instances of specific piratical (e.g. anti-proprietorial) care practice, including those presented at the conference.

The principal organisers of *Pirate Care* state that it is seeking to operate in the grey zones between institutions and on the fringes of legality, premised on solidarity (as opposed to generosity) in taking on risks placed upon others. They refuse a dichotomy between technology and care, actively making (mis)use of contemporary technologies. They state that the project is not one of moving outside law, but of undermining, shifting and disturbing the law where it is not premised on human well-being.

Valeria Graziano, Marcell Mars and Tomislav Medak, 'Pirate Care', online presentation as part of *Kunsthalle Wien X Pirate Care,* 14 May 2020 <https://kunsthallewien.at/en/event/pirate-care-ein-talk-mit-valeria-graziano-marcell-mars-and-tomislav-medak/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

In many ways then, *Pirate Care* as a project operates as an example of radically caring practice as proposed by this research project, within an activist context.

[443] Nik Heynen, 'Bending the Bars of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival: The Black Panther Party's Radical Antihunger Politics of Social Reproduction and Scale', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 99:2 (2009), 406-422 (p. 419).

food provision was therefore required of all chapters of the party). At the same time,

the programme also acted as a vector disseminating the Panthers' broader political

project and granting it greater positive publicity.[444] Recognition of this significance of

the breakfast programme was made clear in an internal memo written by FBI Director J

Edgar Hoover in 1969 which stated 'The [programme] represents the best and most

influential activity going for the [Black Panther Party] and, as such, is potentially the

greatest threat to efforts by authorities to neutralize the [Black Panther Party] and

destroy what it stands for'.[445]

Beyond this dialectical relationship between overarching political aims and immediate

material actions though, as with the nursery above, the breakfast programme enabled a

vital reflexivity of care within the party's internal structure. In prioritising the assertion

of racial equality, many women in the party had accepted a degree of gender inequality

in its workings.[446] However, the breakfast programme's centring of material care

created a site at which greater gender equality could be fostered through the bodily

practice of working hard alongside one another, in combination, crucially, with

recognition of the vital importance of this as a vector in furthering the Black Panther

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[444] Ibid., p. 407.

[445] Ruth Gebreyesus, '"One of the biggest, baddest things we did": Black Panthers' free breakfasts, 50 years on', *Guardian,* 18 October 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/oct/17/black-panther-party-oakland-free-breakfast-50th-anniversary> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[446] Heynen, p. 413.

This occasional placing 'on hold' of gender equality by some black women parallels the aforementioned problematic presumptions of whiteness running through much feminist discourse at the time which Murphy observes.

Murphy, p. 721.

Party's broader aims.[447] Asserting gender inequalities was incompatible with the urgently needed material care of the busy and extremely effective breakfast kitchens.

This looping together of the diverse aspects of critical care as they feed into one another is vital. Within the mix, all facets of care are equally key. *This* is a text though, and in and of itself falls toward the discursive. I have sought to acknowledge and discuss the more directly material aspects of care, and have attempted to carry some into textual form, as well as emphasising their absolute centrality within artistic interventions and within arttexts' subsequent consideration. This text affirmatively states its co-equal consideration of all aspects of care, and recognises its author's reliance and responsibilities in enmeshments of material and affective care, but is of itself principally discursive and theoretical. I do not apologise for this: while any construction of a hierarchy of elements within care needs to be contested, at the same time the discursive, theoretical site needs to be addressed, not least so that it is not subsumed by uncaring structures.

Sharpe frames care as a project of thought, writing 'thinking needs care […] and that thinking and care need to stay in the wake' (of continual contextual reflexive consideration).[448] This includes writing about it; there is a need to acknowledge the material affect of the act of writing, and a need to write carefully, caring-ly, about care. As her title *In the Wake* asserts, not to mention recent lived experience in Minneapolis, Tottenham and elsewhere, the past does not go away. It folds onto the present and

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[447] This was a gradual, complex and incomplete process. As Heynen notes, men frequently received disproportionate credit, while women undertook the majority of the work.

Heynen, p. 412.

[448] Sharpe, p. 5.

informs the future, as the structure reproduces itself. There is a double meaning to 'wake', both sides of which Sharpe elucidates: that of the wake of a ship, the ripples of the event moving ever further out from it in space and time; and the wake of a funeral, the time of grieving, of recognising that which has occurred and continues to do so.[449] Part of care as a project of thought is to hold these open, to refuse to close them down as resolved and to look only forward, but to recognise them and care about the ongoing affect, and ongoing grief. 'Coming to terms with', a borrowing from law into everyday speech, still entails a freezing out of the fluidity of the human into a contractual text: it is not the aim.

Care can be extended adjectivally into 'caring', but equally important to critical care is that it can become 'careful'. The words care and accurate have a related derivation.[450] More than etymologically interesting though, this highlights that the encoded presumptions of 'accuracy' within the technosphere might themselves need to be contested and have care brought back into them. As Puig de la Bellacasa writes, 'a politics of care goes against the bifurcation of consciousness that would keep our knowledge untouched by anxiety and inaccurateness': care entails thinking beyond a dialectical model whereby the textual, data-orientated, scientistic understanding of accuracy is held up against meaningless, irrelevant inaccuracy.[451] Instead, inaccuracy and accuracy need to be recognised as a fluid, porous mesh, often ethically and politically charged. As a binary division between accuracy and inaccuracy needs breaking down, so a singular notion of accuracy also requires fragmenting. Sensuous and apparently irrational aspects of our human-ness need to be recognised as

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[449] Ibid.

[450] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics*, p. 91.

[451] Ibid., p. 93.

important in themselves, perhaps as means of moving beyond the strictures of computational thinking.

Critical care, in its complexifying of accuracy, also helps to reassert a self-reflexive consideration of positionality. Puig de la Bellacasa's arguing for a movement from 'matters of fact', through 'matters of concern', to 'matters of care' is in the first shift a rejection of the stasis of the ossified fold and an asserting of affect, and then in the second, a centring on inequitably dispersed agency and vulnerability across a co-humanity.[452] In recognising our positionality within this, what was presented as an objective, neutral stasis becomes apparent as a contingently produced, ethically and politically charged, present. It is worth recalling Jean-François Lyotard's thick surface of being and Edmund Husserl's related idea of the moment which contains past and future within it here, both of which can help us envisage such a present.[453] There is far greater complexity, contingently but nevertheless meaningfully formed and forming, than the flatness the technosphere presents. Critical care is a very useful framework in helping us navigate this.

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Joan C. Tronto and Berenice Fisher set out the foundational definition of care upon which critical care builds as being 'everything that we do to maintain, continue and

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[452] Puig de la Bellacasa, 'Matters of care in technoscience', p. 87.

[453] Lyotard.

Husserl.

Both of these ways of conceptualising our present reality (in line with Puig de la Bellacasa's progression from fact, through concern, to care) emphasise a fluidity and interrelatedness, but also, vitally, hold open a possibility of agency.

repair "our world" so that we can live in it as well as possible'.[454] However, the digital

networks and automated systems and structures mediating and increasingly

constituting our world (not to mention feeding back into our conceptions and

materialisations of 'self') are moving ever faster. A way of being solely based on critical

care may unfortunately find itself continuously left behind and addressing that which

has been deemed to have been progressed beyond; accelerated past through new

automated technologies operating both within proprietorial black boxes and at speeds

beyond comprehension, self-justified and self-reproduced as the necessary condition of

the technosphere. Critical care is crucial, but unto the discourse I want to contribute

'radical care'.

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[454] Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York NY: Routledge, 1993), p. 103.

Radical care

Critical care offers a vital counter-logic to that of technospheric hegemony, producing material resilience which might at specific sites coalesce into instances of resistance. It does this with continual care for itself, avoiding ossifying into another rigid structure. However, in order to contest strategically at a systemic level, on the event-horizon of the present as it is occurring, something more speculative can be added to it, entering into the unknown spaces of the void without the ethical certainties of having carefully considered care at that specific event. As described, aspects of care are vulnerable to neoliberal subsumption, and the radical form of care can offer some protection against this in leaping away from the expected course, acting to shock and surprise the hegemonic structure.[455] Radical care cannot be based around any false assumption of equality: it has to recognise the variabilities of position, and instead has to carry within its own make-up the *construction* of equality. It can only do so, as will be discussed, by being fully enmeshed with critical care. Far from being a departure or progression from critical care, it is a *dimension of* critical care which I seek to tease out, but which not only remains attached to it but in turn fully holds critical care *within* itself.

Considering care as an ethics-methodology (of resistant, resilient practice-being), to broadly generalise: we might identify critical care as the facet which places slightly greater emphasis on ethics, while radical care opens more space for action. The

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[455] Spade gives a specific example of unpredictable surprise acting as a means of pulling care away from hegemonic appropriation, in the context of disaster relief following the 2018 Puerto Rico hurricane. Mutual aid relief organisers used subterfuge, surprise and audacity to disrupt state inaction: falsely claiming permission to distribute stockpiled supplies from a government warehouse, and producing false documents to enable others to do likewise.

Dean Spade, 'Solidarity Not Charity: Mutual Aid for Mobilization and Survival', *Social Text*, 38:1 (2020), 131-151 (p. 138).

complexity in each of these slight prioritisations is formed through having the other also already fully there within. The ethical and methodological, and critical and radical, all ultimately coalesce in the political: a politics of care as a way of being beyond the perpetuating inequalities of the technosphere.

There will be periodic moments where a paradoxically careless act needs to be flung forward as an immediate intervention into the public sphere. By necessity, this act will be unconsidered, carefree, careless. Only in so doing can it hold within itself a fragment of potential to rupture the perpetuating course of uncaring inequality into which it is directed. The fluxing, shifting network of power moves so swiftly to suppress or appropriate critique that radical, careless, anarchic potential underminings of it are vital.

There is a profound care in the nurturing of the co-equal networks out of which this radical act is initiated. There is great care in the reflexive development of the lexis and praxis it proceeds as and from. But it itself is necessarily carelessly carefree and immediate. Radical care as a counter way of being operates in continual reflexive contestation of itself, but nevertheless coheres as a fidelity which can pass through the threshold of the present, acknowledging the present's deeply flawed material and discursive realities, and offers a glimmer of a possibility of reopening diverse futures through a rejection of the primacy of property in thinking life, labour, object and subject.

The work of care stands in opposition to the violence of stating 'I just don't care', and refusing connection to the human-ness of the other. All of the multiple aspects of critical care constitute the essential work of care which must be always already present

at the point of the radically caring unpredictable act. This enfolding of, and enfolding within, critical care is what holds radical care away from accelerationist positions. Whereas a (right) accelerationist view advocates speculative acts according to an individualist logic which willingly dehumanises, the speculative acts of radical care are founded conversely in an ethics centred in co-equal care for the human.

The critical is not just a check or brake on the radical, restraining the act that looks to leap forward into the unknown. Without enfolding the critical within itself, radical care could become entirely negative: operating solely as attempts to subvert and disrupt the technosphere. In Althusser's terminology though, these interventions would be less likely to 'take hold' as meaningful events without some affirmative, positive element: a narrative of another way of being, much more graspable than a purely negative critique.[456] That positive element is critical care. One manifestation of the critical-radical relationship is thus the radically caring act as a vessel to deliver critical care to a site of potential fracture within the apparently ossified totality of the technosphere. If we take the exposition of invisible labours of care as being a critique of the technosphere (through interrogation of the inequalities of forms of labour within it), this aligns with Puig de la Bellacasa's view that 'the point is not only to expose or reveal invisible labours of care, but also to generate care'.[457] We can go further than this though: it is not only that we might go beyond critique with the proposing of a new

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[456] Althusser, p, 172.

[457] Puig de la Bellacasa, 'Matters of care in technoscience', p. 94.

way being, but in radical care enfolding critical care, that the speculative throwing forward of new ways of being might itself be the most affective form of critique.[458]

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As Puig de la Bellacasa emphasises in *Matters of Care*, a caring approach to thinking-writing entails both an acknowledgement of the multiplicities of authorship, present and historic, that go into any concept, and also an acknowledgement that any new contribution is not some teleological advancement, superseding and overwriting that which came before.[459] I have sought to emphasise radical care's inseparability from critical care, and in so doing acknowledge the lineage of careful authorships it emerges from, in addition to being more widely formed through the whole breadth of lines of research (themselves all building upon others') within this project.

Considering the disruptive affect of radical-critical care, I want to acknowledge a further lineage which is specifically relevant to the artistic intervention as a potential manifestation of the radically caring act: the historical avant garde. As Marc James Léger argues, avant garde art must draw on its previous selves as a way of holding onto enmeshed autonomy within its context.[460] In the shifting, dematerialised, post-truth cultural space of the technosphere, an artistic (or radical) engagement which does not critically reflect on its genealogy risks losing whatever tenuous positions of

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[458] Simultaneously, as Spade notes, new ways of being must themselves be held accountable to ongoing radical critique in order that they do not themselves become exclusionary.

Spade, p. 135.

[459] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics*.

[460] Léger, p. 28.

autonomy or critique might still remain. As we generate speculative forward-looking acts, if they are to resist hegemony, we can use this history of creative resistance as a navigation aid to better ascertain the potential fractures within the technosphere.

Moreover, holding onto historical counter narratives outside of the present defends alternate ways of being, and resists the subsumption of their archive. In reflecting back upon a set of potential imaginings of diverse futures as themselves being of value, if mainly unrealised, the importance of imagining collective futures beyond the present threshold is affirmed. This valuing and sustaining of other ways of being, echoing the proactive reaching out to the other human in care, is essential in holding onto a complexity in the face of populist and fascist binaries, and techno- and econo-centric claims of indisputable faits accomplis. This is to say that there is no good way of being in the singular. The proposing of the radical continually comes from the outside which must always be kept open (through reflexive counter publics), thus serving to help prevent a centralised ossifying of care too closely related to power. An aspect of caring for care then, is this holding open of the space of the radical. This aligns with an 'anti-anti-art' position, arguing against the absence or foreclosure of speculative, critical, creative acts that might disrupt the proceeding of the status quo.[461] In carefully looking to the future, the radically caring artistic intervention acts to avoid alignment with any potentially hegemonic emergent vanguard. The radical act must take care: as the analysis of the relations of art within post-Fordism in *Part 1* outlined, being in the vanguard or centre of either art or capitalism can swiftly, without care, become one and the same.

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[461] Ibid., pp. 15-20.

Husserl's thick present is vital to radical care.[462] It enables us to think the radical at the speculative leading edge, while still being fully connected to all the essential aspects of critical care in the present reality. Acknowledging the need for paradoxically careless acts, radical care must hold within itself a trust of intent and pre-forgiveness, which this complete mutuality with critical care enables of it. Care itself, like the act, needs to be already flung forward into the unknown, as a fidelity able to cross the threshold into uncertain futures.[463] Care must be trusted as being there in the future-present, it must have already been inscribed, embodied. It must be a way of being out of which the intervention can be trusted to carelessly go, and within which the event might be carefully, caring-ly written. Almost all of the radical acts will be ineffective, and some will unfortunately be harmful. A caring acceptance of this reality must already be there though, only in so doing can we hold open the potential for the radically caring, careless act to affectively instigate possibilities of new ways of being. This might at times come with great difficulty, not least for the affectee of an unforeseen consequence. This is why the radical must *always* come with (critical) care, but some risk unfortunately remains. The alternative though, is submitting to the foreclosed static present of the technosphere in all its perpetuating inequality, exploitation and violence.

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[462] Husserl.

[463] Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 232-237.

[If you have not already done so, please read *Praxis* before the *Ana-conclusion* which follows]

ANA-CONCLUSION

This project operates across a range of textual strata and shifts between these, occasionally pausing in the interstices or operating in multiple registers simultaneously. Sometimes this fluidity between different encounters with, and positionalities with regard to, texts falls in alignment. At other times there is tension. This shifting form has attempted to embody an enmeshment within (con)textualities, refusing the presumption of a singularly authoritative text.

I have offered narratives: historical, speculative, theoretical, and, at times, personal. But the text has also, in the form and structure in which it has been presented and in its shifts of style, taken on a critical embodiment of that which it extra-textually addresses. This is reflective of the continuously circulating methodological trio of 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being' translating onto the page. In addressing the rigid textual abstraction of the technosphere this has been essential: to hold the textual outcome within the process and vice versa, as much as possible in connection to the body, the human, the position, the contingency, the event, the ethics, and the politics.

Thus, the three principal contributions of this project are not discrete. Radical care as a way of being and 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' as a method of practice have only become further entwined within one another. Each respectively places greater emphasis on de-individuated inter-relationality (in the case of radical care), or the would-be affective act (in the case of 'embodied flattened allegorical montage'), though even this gentle teasing apart proves contestable once stated; connecting tendrils refuse the distinction. Both are premised on a continuous reflexive criticality towards totalising structures, acknowledgement of unavoidable positionality within

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unequal systems, the contingent mattering of the present-reality, and the multiplicities of potentiality made possible by affect. As the concepts have developed, each has become integral to the other, while not collapsing into it.

Radical care, as developed, enables a way to be within site and potentially act, affect or interrupt. This 'being there' is not predicated on individuated subject-hood: it contests a presumption of individuated being as resource. It allows one not to be paralysed by one's own context. It does this through proffering a pro-human egalitarian position based in care in the immediate present, while connecting this to the possibility of radically shifting the stasis. Radical care is within the world, but can be a counter-way of being, holding an autonomy from abstracting structures of violence and exploitation. At the same time, it is a fidelity: an inclusive egalitarian inter-human mesh which might pass through the threshold to the future.[464] Prior to that though, the articulation of these futures *in the present* acts to hold open a plurality of more caring potential collective being.

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[464] As *Part 3* explored, Badiou positions fidelities as interrelational operators preceding the event, which while being subject to the possibility of change as they pass into the unknown void of the future, nevertheless hold a committed-ness into that future.

Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* [1988], trans. by Oliver Feltham (New York, NY: Continuum, 2005), pp. 232-237.

Ana-

'Ana' is a Greek prefix which, amongst other things, etymologically points to 'again' or 'throughout'. I use it for these associations: the arguments of this research project are rooted in an ongoing process of self-reflexivity and are positioned against rigidity and stasis.[465] To 'conclude' would be antithetical to this. Thus, this is not a conclusion but an 'ana-conclusion'. I refuse the premise of shifting from process to outcome: the invitation to fix, make concrete, pull together, and state conclusively. I refuse the supra-human hegemony of the final, abstracted text, severed from its ongoing (human) relationships and authorships.[466]

Having said that, this *is* a pause. A moment to take care: for myself, for others, and for the ideas developed through this project. A moment to share these research findings with a world in urgent need of radically caring ways of being.

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The research questions offered in the *introduction*, while fluid, have been addressed in their present states.

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[465] An additional etymological link is with 'upon'. This recalls the need to take care to acknowledge the contributions of the collectivity of others whose present or prior work supports any research. This moment of ana-concluding is enabled by all of their work, as well as my own.

[466] In line with this, I do not provide a neat summation of either radical care or 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' here. Full explorations of each, *in their complexity*, can be found in *Part 3* and *Praxis* respectively. (The third of the entwined original contributions, 'iterative refracted practice theorising and being', was elucidated in the *Introduction*.)

In considering *how the technosphere uses de-humanising abstraction to subsume labour, the body, the artist and the future,* an abstracting of our 'being' into resource has been theorised; a de-humanising logic of indebtedness has been considered (perhaps masquerading as hospitality); the erasure of complexity through data-centricity has been shown; the foreclosing of futures through algorithmic speculation has been examined; and art and artists' under-criticality towards their own subsumed complicity in the socio-economic processes by which the technosphere has emerged has been established.

Approaching *how technospheric abstraction manifests in differentiated inequalities at the pivotal sites of the collective political body and individuated human body,* variabilities of agency and vulnerability have been shown to be key, with the exploitation of those in a position of relative vulnerability being obfuscated and bracketed out. The entwined, non-discrete interrelationship of material and discursive elements in the perpetuation of these inequalities has become clear, notably through the inverted public sphere; and the means by which power operates directly upon the body through both embodiment and disembodiment has been elucidated.[467]

Reflexive consideration of a series of artistic interventions, by myself and others, has addressed *how artistic use of (dis)embodiment might enable critical affect.* I have proposed (with certain exceptions) an approach of disembodiment of the artwork in parallel with embodiment of the artist, as a means of critically addressing and contesting disparities

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[467] Specifically, identified processes of disembodiment include fragmenting the human into e.g. linguistic-relational capability, material care provision, participation, etc. These fragments might then be massed as attention, financialised value, data, and so forth.

Embodiment occurs through data trails, surveillance and rigid emplacement. It also occurs through acts or conditions of physical violence.

of agency and vulnerability at the sites of the collective political body and individuated human body. *Part 2* formulated a viral approach to misuse of the technologies and logics of power, and *Praxis* located fissures between different realms within the technosphere where disruptive affect might be directed.

Part 3 proffered a set of connected theoretical arguments by which *we can imagine critical agency within a would-be totalising hegemony*. This is centred on a Lucretian ontology wherein motion is primary, and through this, change and agency are held irremovably possible.

And finally, in addressing *what could constitute a way of being through which sustainable resistant equality might form,* radical care is proposed, as an addition to the existent discourse of critical care.

<u>Practice</u>

Radical care is a methodology-ethics which can function as a means of practice, but not discretely from being. Practice cannot be separated from being: to argue otherwise is to deny both the positionality and subjectivity of the artist, as well as their materiality and human-ness. Radical care can function as a fidelity by which a proactive act of practice, art perhaps, can speculatively press out from the coherence of the present 'practice of being' to hold broader affect. It is a framework to work through which actively holds any practice in a continual process of ongoing mutual connectivity with being.

To overlook being in the undertaking of this research project (essentially to bracket it out) would entail my rendering of my own being into a resource. I would be complicit in the same extractive, exploitative relationship to being as the hegemonic structures within the technosphere. As a porous entity in continuous interrelationship with the world around me, this has inevitably, to some extent, happened. Rather than undermining the upholding of being within the research though, this makes the messy, un-fully-achievable process of seeking to acknowledge it all the more vital.

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Where then do the arttexts discussed in *Praxis* (and those bound within *Lexis*, and those which will be created in future) sit in relation to this expanded milieu of radical care?[468] They are not enactments, expressions, articulations or representations of it, yet they are formed in relation to it. In an echo of *Part 3*'s Lucretian assertion of a primacy of

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[468] This question is not to under-acknowledge their contribution to the research process, but to *additionally* reflect back on them as research manifestations from this altered perspective.

contiguous motion while that motion is rendered visible only through an artificial semblance of discreteness, we can think of the arttexts as apparently discrete segments which now, having helped us recognise the continuity of radical care as a possible way of being, we can reconsider as being part of that continuity.[469]

Practice is the means by which the continual reassertion and reproduction of radical care can be enabled.[470] The arttexts are no longer steps towards a realisation of radical care, and nor should they be thought of as expressions 'beyond'. They are contingently situated embodiments of a way of being inflected through radical care.[471] They are both formed through it and form it, but are not expressions of it: they are integral to a way of being within it. As 'art', they are able to operate with a degree of potentially disruptive autonomy, and as 'text', to do so transgressively within the logics of the technosphere. This is practice's strategic role: to continue and expand the sites of possible radical care within an uncaring world.[472]

The artistic intervention aspires to function as a radically caring apparatus, bringing together the bodily, textual, and situational. As Giorgio Agamben writes, we are subject to an escalating, overlapping mesh of apparatuses, often now operating as much

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[469] This reflexive realisation was perhaps most clearly expressed in *Scene B*.

[470] Alongside art-making, this practice might manifest in a wide range of potential means of claiming or creating a site in the world. Activism, politics, writing, forms of radical sociality or communality are all possible examples.

[471] They may on occasion 'fail' in their relation to radical care, as discussed below.

[472] To be clear, I am not instrumentally proposing a single function for practice. This is *a* role practice *could* strategically fulfil, as part of an attempt to bring about a more radically caring world, according to the purposefully open framework established in this research project. Within this, specific forms or methods of practice are not pre-determined.

through desubjectification as subjectficiation.[473] The radically caring art apparatus though, holds the potential to instigate the encounter which might, even if only briefly, produce the radically caring subject. Whether artist, participant, viewer or part of the encounter in some other way, this subject, even if only momentarily, can have agency and autonomy. They are a wholly different being from their individuated, technospheric shadow.

The caveat that must accompany all of this is that other integral aspect of human-ness: our messy fallibility. As *Part 3* ended in emphasising, to hold open the space of the radical within care, this unknowable risk must be accepted. Radical care is a continuous process founded in its material existence in an 'imperfect' world, which is inclusive of 'imperfect' humans who are interrelated in their co-caring and co-cares. There is no such thing as 'perfect' radical care; to argue otherwise re-opens all the problems of a transcendental idealism. All of the arttexts, theorisations and arguments contributing to this project can be critiqued, and should be. They assert the need for speculative action operating into the unknown, but that very space becomes foreclosed and as static as the technosphere itself if radical care, in all its critique, care and forgiveness, is not already thrown across that threshold. And there, it must be addressed as much to the reflexive theorising and practicing of itself as to anything else.

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[473] Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, trans. by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

Addendum: Covid-19

In the later stages of undertaking this research project, Covid-19 was declared a global pandemic and has had considerable impact upon life around the world. As I write, I like many am still in 'lockdown' and have only seen friends and family outside of my immediate household through a screen for several months.[474] It is too soon to say anything about the pandemic, though a cacophony of more and less helpful information and opinion is being produced every day.

At the same time, it is essential to say something about the pandemic, or to be more specific, to say something about the biopolitics around the pandemic, which relate considerably to this project.

There has been a governmental scramble to respond, or to *appear* to be responding.[475] Much of this crisis response has been extremely badly managed, especially in the

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[474] It is worth noting that there is variability in what is termed 'lockdown'. As will be discussed, an individual's life circumstances and socio-economic positionality has significant impact upon this. Differing political and historical contexts across states mean that what lockdown juridically constitutes can also vary greatly. Lockdown in the UK is relatively lenient compared to some other European countries.

[475] In the UK for example, a number of rapidly set-up, temporary 'Nightingale' hospitals were publicised as being a strong, proactive response. However, to-date they remain a largely empty misallocation of resources.

Sarah Neville and others, 'Nightingale hospitals largely empty as NHS weathers the storm', *Financial Times,* 24 April 2020 <https://www.ft.com/content/09897050-13bc-4ebe-99af-25b8d2ab5781> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

UK.[476] This is not the place for a detailed examination of this mismanagement,

however Covid-19 and the responses to it have brought long perpetuated structural

inequalities and their related ideologies into stark visibility. Much of what the

pandemic has brought wider attention to is in fact the well-established perpetuating

basis of the technosphere.

Covid-19 has made brutally apparent a neoliberal ideology of human life as something

fungible, to be valued according to its labour productivity. Underpinning strategies

such as 'herd immunity' and an emphasis on the importance of reinvigorating the

economy even if it means deaths, pushing those with increased caring responsibilities

back towards work, and an eagerness to end furloughing, has been an assumption that

the human loses systemic worth if they are not fulfilling a role as an exploitable

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[476] The three articles below, which are critical of the UK government response, were widely circulated on social media in April 2020. (The *Reuters* article is badly headlined. The headline seems to exonerate the Prime Minister, which is contrary to the argument the article in fact makes.)

Stephen Grey and Andrew MacAskill, 'Special Report: Johnson listened to his scientists about coronavirus - but they were slow to sound the alarm', *Reuters website* (7 April 2020) <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-path-speci/special-report-johnson-listened-to-his-scientists-about-coronavirus-but-they-were-slow-to-sound-the-alarm-idUKKBN21P1X8> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Jonathan Calvert, George Arbuthnott and Jonathan Leake, 'Coronavirus: 38 days when Britain sleepwalked into disaster', *Sunday Times,* 19 April 2020 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-38-days-when-britain-sleepwalked-into-disaster-hq3b9tlgh> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Toby Helm, Emma Graham-Harrison and Robin McKie, 'How did Britain get its coronavirus response so wrong?', *Guardian,* 19 April 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/18/how-did-britain-get-its-response-to-coronavirus-so-wrong> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

individual, or are at least enabling others to fulfil this role.[477] Furthermore, it is

presumed that the human must seek to find worth within this system and no other. If

the pandemic has made anything clear it is this: that we are held within an increasingly

rigid fold of subjectification through neoliberal economic productivity alone.

Within this equation of life as labour, the pandemic has also served to make a fissure

starkly apparent. As *Part 1* examined, virtuosic labour premised on linguistic-relational

capability has come to be highly valued, while physical, material, bodily labour is

devalorised. Covid-19 has brought about a situation where typically better

remunerated linguistic-relational workers can perform their jobs in relative safety at

home, while material workers must continue to expose themselves to the virus (and by

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[477] Though a strategy of 'herd immunity' was officially jettisoned, a logic akin to it arguably
continued to implicitly inform government decision making.

Anthony Costello, 'Despite what Matt Hancock says, the government's policy is still herd
immunity', *Guardian,* 3 April 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/
03/matt-hancock-government-policy-herd-immunity-community-surveillance-covid-19>
[Accessed 2 January 2021].

On 10 May, Prime Minister Boris Johnson made a televised statement emphasising the need for
the UK to 'get back to work'. A shift from the previous instruction to only work outside one's
home if performing an 'essential' service, this new government line was that all should be
working (ideally from home, but elsewhere if necessary).

Angela Dewan and Nada Bashir, 'Boris Johnson calls on UK to go back to work in plan to ease
lockdown', *CNN website* (11 May 2020) <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/10/uk/uk-
coronavirus-lockdown-boris-johnson-gbr-intl/index.html> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

The government released further details of Johnson's announcement the following day. This,
along with surrounding debate, made clear that in-home contact framed economically (such as
a cleaner or nanny working within an employer's residence) was now permitted, while 'non-
economic' domestic visits from non-co-resident family and friends remained prohibited.

The Cabinet Office, 'Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery
strategy', *.gov.uk* [official UK government website] (12 May 2020) <https://www.gov.uk/
government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-
strategy/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy> [Accessed 2
January 2021].

extension, also expose those directly around themselves).[478] The perpetuating

inequalities of capitalism not only mean that discriminated against groups (women,

people of colour, trans people, those without formal qualifications, immigrants, etc.)

are over-represented in this latter category, but also that these groups of people are

more likely to be living with existent health and social conditions that make them more

vulnerable to Covid-19.

The dark paradox, as *Parts 1* and *2* examined, is that the supposed immateriality of the

technosphere remains entirely dependent upon this material labour. Thus, while those

on the privileged side of the labour-fissure endure the relatively mild inconvenience of

having to work from home, they do so while entirely reliant upon the material workers

going out to work.[479] Those in the positions of power to encourage, enforce and deny

alternatives to this, as well as framing the discourse, are themselves typically linguistic-

relational workers.[480] A profound inequality in embodiment and its enforcing, and in

agency and vulnerability, is brought to the surface. In the UK, a lack of criticality

towards this structural inequality has been accompanied by a popular narrative of 'care

workers' as heroes. Framing them as such, while not contesting their conditions of low

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[478] This is a false binary which many jobs blur. However, this does not negate the core point of unequal social, familial and architectural vulnerability.

Jason DeParle, 'The Coronavirus Class Divide: Space and Privacy', *New York Times,* 12 April 2020 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/12/us/politics/coronavirus-poverty-privacy.html> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[479] Labelling these inconveniences 'mild' is only meant within subjectification through economic productivity. This is not a belittling of the broader psycho-social effects of the pandemic and lockdown.

[480] Some of the discourse circulating on social media has even carried an implicit blaming of material workers for coming into close contact as they travel to their place of work. For example, the video footage below was extensively retweeted.

Sky News tweet, *Twitter* (13 May 2020) <https://twitter.com/SkyNews/status/1260465038881685505> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

pay and, in many cases, precarious work creates conditions for an implicit expectation of martyrdom. The virus is presented as an enemy with whom we are 'at war', all behind the 'heroic' 'front-line' workers. The reality is that these care workers conduct devalorised labour, and thus, in a neoliberal system which puts profit first, must repeatedly put themselves at risk with wholly inadequate protection. The fleeting heroic label attached to the care-home worker or bus driver is only loosely affixed: it implicitly applies primarily to NHS staff, and even there only really to doctors and nurses, who carry a professional (effectively linguistic-relational) status. After the pandemic, many care-home workers and bus drivers will have died, and the working conditions and remuneration of those who have not will in no meaningful way have improved.

The pandemic has made the lumpen-reality unavoidably present to those who do not live within it, when the technosphere usually looks to obfuscate it. It is present in the cellular material vulnerability of our bodies. It is re-presented in weekly claps for those temporarily celebrated as heroes. And it has been made unavoidably present in our domestic lives as we cannot outsource childcare, cleaning, cooking and other daily tasks.

At the same time, the pandemic raises questions about the core mechanisms by which humans are abstracted in the technosphere. *Part 1* examined debt as a key means of subjectification. However, Covid-19 has seen the 'unavoidable', 'necessary' indebted logic of a decade of austerity almost instantly replaced with vast (though not necessarily well directed) government expenditure.[481] Structures which determine life,

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[481] Heather Stewart, '"Whatever it takes": chancellor announces £350bn aid for UK businesses', *Guardian,* 17 March 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/mar/17/rishi-sunak-pledges-350bn-to-tackle-coronavirus-impact> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

and which are presented as 'natural' and unchanging, are being shown in a new light as ideologically reproduced in the interests of power.

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Within this macroscopic coming to prominence of profoundly unequal labour-life-vulnerability which Covid-19 has instigated, there are a number of more specific areas of significant relevance to this research project.

Our ambivalent relationship with Silicon Valley techno-capitalism has been foregrounded. Video calls and next-day Amazon deliveries were often unthinkingly enjoyed as entirely positive conveniences. In lockdown though, the exhaustion of a video-conferencing platform such as Zoom has become apparent when it is the only way to either work or socialise. Its data security and surveillance implications, as well as its vulnerability to hacking, have also received justified criticism.[482] And while the majority might still not immediately give much thought to the other humans' vulnerable working conditions which their Amazon or Deliveroo order might perpetuate, there may at least be a growing awareness of the vulnerable embodiment of a human at your door. For many, the convenient services offered by these and other platform capitalist companies have been invaluable in living as comfortable a life as possible through lockdown. The companies are more than happy to emphasise this line: Zoom's share price has ballooned as it has become the default means of group communication, and it has hurriedly looked to shore up its technical defects and

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[482] Kari Paul, '"Zoom is malware": why experts worry about the video conferencing platform', *Guardian,* 2 April 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/apr/02/zoom-technology-security-coronavirus-video-conferencing> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

vulnerabilities to secure this position.[483] Amazon is making unprecedented profits.[484]

Deliveroo sent marketing emails at the start of the lockdown positioning itself as a key

public service, detailing a new policy of 'contact-free delivery' whereby customers now

no longer need to have any interaction at all with the delivery rider (who continues to

be exploited as detailed in *Part 2*).[485]

For platform capitalism, Covid-19 is an opportunity. It is presenting new territories of

previously un- or under- commodified aspects of human life which can be colonised.

Technology, data, and its analysis are being held up as a talismanic panacea by

companies and the panicking governments who rush to seek their assistance. These are

viewed as the solutions that will return us as quickly as possible to 'normal' life, or

even better, a new even more proprietorially profitable, productive and de-humanised

form of it.[486] Care is largely absent in this profit-seeking rush. There is no care for the

workers, and there is no pause to carefully, caring-ly consider what the world and

ways of being within it might be.

[483] Rupert Neate, 'Zoom booms as demand for video-conferencing tech grows', *Guardian*, 31 March 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/mar/31/zoom-booms-as-demand-for-video-conferencing-tech-grows-in-coronavirus-outbreak> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Kate O'Flaherty, 'Zoom Security: Here's What Zoom Is Doing To Make Its Service Safer', *Forbes website* (10 April 2020) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kateoflahertyuk/2020/04/10/zoom-security-heres-what-zoom-is-doing-to-make-its-service-safer/#3221d10930fc> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[484] Rupert Neate, 'Amazon reaps $11,000-a-second coronavirus lockdown bonanza', *Guardian*, 15 April 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/apr/15/amazon-lockdown-bonanza-jeff-bezos-fortune-109bn-coronavirus> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[485] Prad Nathan, 'You can now get contact-free deliveries', *Deliveroo Foodscene* [Deliveroo operated blog/website] (15 March 2020) <https://foodscene.deliveroo.co.uk/restaurant-profiles/introducing-contact-free-delivery.html> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

[486] Casey Newton, 'Why countries keep bowing to Apple and Google's contact tracing app requirements', *The Verge website* (8 May 2020) <https://www.theverge.com/interface/2020/5/8/21250744/apple-google-contact-tracing-england-germany-exposure-notification-india-privacy> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

The state's relation to the pandemic is complex and varied. It still largely holds the position of sovereign entity to which worried populations look for authority and guidance. At the same time though, a state such as the UK is utterly beholden to private interests (e.g. the technology, pharmaceutical and financial industries, to specify just three of the most immediate examples). Covid-19 makes clear how the neoliberal state is completely entwined with these interests, and yet, at the same time, how these companies still need to operate through the state for the most part in order to access the human en masse, outside of acts of individual consumerism. Cracks are emerging in the already archaic state-centric model though: within the turbulence of Covid-19, cities, hospitals, employers, communities and individuals have sought both information and material goods as independent actors in the world.[487] They do so out of necessity as the inability of the state to offer what it claims is exposed, but also do so in an extremely precarious position as their own vulnerability and desperation become profitably exploitable abstractions, without even a fictive veneer of the social to soften an economic logic.

There is little new in the post-truth fake news environment generated by the pandemic; this was an information-scape which was already well established. However, the global panic surrounding Covid-19 has both exacerbated and been exacerbated by it. As *Part 2* detailed, we now live with a largely inverted public sphere in which the notion of a truth or meaningfulness to any argument or piece of information has been superseded by a value premised on clicks, shares and visibility. 'Authoritative' voices operate on the same fluid plane as anarchic voices, critical voices, subversive voices, exploitative

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[487] Samanth Subramanian, 'How the face mask became the world's most coveted commodity', *Guardian,* 28 April 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/28/face-masks-coveted-commodity-coronavirus-pandemic> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

voices, fascist voices and more. As many are finding, this can be a dislocating experience (and thus, many panickingly seek perceived authorities). However, if one very small, heavily caveated positive can be taken from the ongoing pandemic experience in relation to the themes of this research project, it might be this: that while this fluxing fluid plane is easy to lose oneself within, it is preferable to one under the total domination of inescapable technospheric power. It thus offers a glimmer of space into which radically caring ways of being might be proposed, enacted, explored and embodied.

The great challenge is that while some structures *within* the technospheric fold might be crumbling, the abstracted, textualised, econocentric logics of the fold itself remain. Within this future-present though, radical care does, at least speculatively, provide a framework for more equitable, plural, generous, relational, subversive, speculative, anarchic, playful, resistant, resilient, reflexive and open ways of being.

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Bibliographic materials are sorted into the following categories: *Books, chapters, papers and other 'non-journalistic' texts*; *Presentations and lectures*; *Artworks, exhibitions and projects*; *Journalistic texts*; and *Miscellaneous items*.

This taxonomy is intended to present the material in the most useful way: neither cluttering the key literature with journalistic articles cited once by way of example, nor unhelpfully dispersing related texts by the same author into an excess of separate lists.

Inevitably, there are a few instances where an item's classification is not clear-cut.

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☆ **RCA Ethics**   📁 Inbox...rk.rca.ac.uk   10 June 2019 at 14:30

Re: ethics form   **Details**

To: Adam Walker,   **Cc:** Pil Kollectiv

Dear Adam,

Many thanks for submitting your revised Participant Information and Consent Form.

We are pleased to inform you that, based upon the information supplied, we can approve your application and you can progress with your research.

Please note that should you make any changes to this research project, you may need to apply for further ethics approval.

Please contact us at ethics@rca.ac.uk if you have any questions about the ethics process.

Kind regards,

Research Ethics Team