Media and Communication
Open Access Journal | ISSN: 2183-2439
Volume 6, Issue 3 (2018)

The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies

Editors

Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier

COGITATIO

Media and Communication, 2018, Volume 6, Issue 3
The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies

Published by Cogitatio Press
Rua Fialho de Almeida 14, 2º Esq.,
1070-129 Lisbon
Portugal

Available online at: www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication

Table of Contents

COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 3, Pages 1–4
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i3.1732

Editorial

The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies

Margreth Lünenborg * and Tanja Maier

Institute for Media and Communication Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, 14159 Berlin, Germany;
E-Mails: margreth.luenenborg@fu-berlin.de (M.L), tanja.maier@fu-berlin.de (T.M.)

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 3 September 2017 | Published: 11 September 2018

Abstract
This editorial delivers an introduction to the thematic *Media and Communication* issue on "The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies". The social and cultural formation of affect and emotion has been of central interest to social science-based emotion research as well as to affect studies, which are mainly grounded in cultural studies. Media and communication scholars, in turn, have especially focused on how emotion and affect are produced by media, the way they are communicated through media, and the forms of emotion audiences develop during the use of media. Distinguishing theoretical lines of emotion theory in social sciences and diverse traditions of affect theory, we reflect on the need to engage more deeply with affect and emotion as driving forces in contemporary media and society. This thematic issue aims to add to ongoing affect studies research and to existing emotion research within media studies. A special emphasis will be placed on exploring structures of difference and power produced in and by media in relation to affect and emotion.

Keywords
affect; body emotion; communication; media studies; power

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies", edited by Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier (Free University Berlin, Germany).

1. Theoretical Background(s)

The social and cultural formation of affect and emotion has been of central interest to social science-based emotion research as well as to affect studies, which are mainly grounded in cultural studies. The study of emotion and affect has received increasing attention since the shift to affect studies in the 1990s focusing bodies and materiality again. Under the umbrella of affect theory (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), an ensemble of theoretical approaches has emerged in diverse areas, providing new insights into the shaping of social relationships and inequalities. The often-used term "affective turn" (Clough & Halley, 2007) may suggest coherent understanding where, in reality, diverse and thoroughly different conceptions and approaches exist. In examining the notion of a "turn to affect and emotion in media studies", we aim to reflect on the intensified preoccupation with affect and emotion and on new approaches in media research. Media can be understood as "affect generators" (Reckwitz, 2017) and as institutions establishing "feeling rules" (Hochschild, 1979). Current phenomena like hate speech and "shitstorms" via social media are to be understood as explicit public articulations of emotions; at the same time, they produce affective dynamics, which can be described as contagious and viral. Obviously, emotions are used in public communication to gain attention, be it in journalism, advertising, or public diplomacy. Digital communication, in its temporal dynamics and intensities, can especially be understood with regard to "affective flows" (Wetherell, 2012; adapted to social media analysis most recently by Sampson, Maddison, & Ellis, 2018). This thematic issue, beyond offering mere descriptions of these phenomena, is concerned with advancing

the debate on the potentials of different theoretical approaches to analyze affect and emotion as driving forces in contemporary societies and media cultures.

There are no universally shared definitions of the terms "affect" and "emotion" in the fields of social and cultural research. Affect is often described as something that hits and captures us, that moves us and connects us with other bodies (e.g., Clough, 2010). While affect and emotion are often considered synonymous, there have been theoretical efforts to distinguish between them. In such frameworks, affect is described as intensity (Massumi, 2002) or a dynamic, relational occurrence through which bodies are connected to each other (e.g., Röttger-Rössler & Slaby, 2018), while emotion is understood as a complex, socially formed interplay of thoughts and feelings, as outlined over 30 years ago by Hochschild (1983). Critics argue that distinctions between affect and emotion are untenable. At any rate, these questions and disagreements, as well as the conceptual openness and complexity of affect, pose theoretical, analytical and methodological challenges to the studies of media and communication. Therefore, theoretical development, methodological designs and definitions of terms will have to be closely interlinked to increase a consistent body of knowledge.

Before introducing contributions to this thematic issue, we will give a brief overview of the most relevant theoretical approaches to affect and emotion research in media and communication studies. We have classified these theoretical frameworks into distinct categories. Due to the field's complexity and tremendous productivity within recent years, this cannot be comprehensive at all, but the approaches we introduce will be discussed in each of this issue's articles. As social theories, all these approaches go far beyond a mere understanding of media and communication, exploring the ways affect and emotion contribute to social formations, sense of belonging and constitution of identities.

Psychoanalytical approaches are especially established in film studies and gender media analysis. The theoretical inspiration for this approach comes predominantly from the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Psychoanalytical conceptions of affect explain viewers' affects and emotions by means of unconscious psychosexual processes, which influence visual pleasure on a physical level (Stadler, 2014). Some authors of affect studies now reject psychoanalytic theories, ascribing the unconscious parts of affective relationships to media and environment (e.g., Angerer, 2014).

When studied as a connection between *media psychology* and *neuroscience*, affect is mostly defined as an arousal wherein cognitive and physical aspects interact. This perspective shows the kinship of the affective turn concept with biological thinking, following authors like Charles Darwin and Paul Ekman (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Psychological expression research, with its understanding of the physical visibility of basic emotions, is relevant to this model; for example in the field of visual studies, which examines the globalized visual language of affect (e.g., Angel & Gibbs, 2006). This approach considers affect and media on a biological as well as socio-cultural level, often questioning the relationship between culture and nature.

In contrast, critical approaches through the lens of *cultural (media) studies* are based on a fundamentally socially and culturally grounded understanding of affect and emotion (for an overview, see Harding & Pribram, 2009). The current debates in affect studies are shaped by Williams' "structures of feelings" (1977/2015) concept, which describes the relationship of institutional order as structural limitation with emergent forms of social and cultural interaction as lived practice. Subsequently, other studies have investigated specific phenomena, like reality TV, as "technology of intimacy" (Kavka, 2008). This conceptual approach pursues an understanding of affect that seeks to capture circulation, relation and transformation between spectators, media texts and media production. These concepts are closely connected to more philosophical works on affect.

Philosophical approaches have focused on affect as intensity and process (e.g., Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). The work of philosophers Gilles Deleuze (reflecting on Baruch Spinoza) and Brian Massumi seem to be at the forefront of efforts defining the term. This perspective on affect often focuses on (media) technologies (e.g., Coole & Frost, 2010) as significant elements of contemporary human and non-human relationship, and as forms of new materialism (e.g., Angerer, 2017). Such approaches have become popular in philosophical and ontological research on technology and (digital) media studies regarding the independence and unavailability of affect.

Partly following from that, *social-relational* approaches focus on situationally bound, relationally affective occurrences in contemporary societies. Such approaches are represented by the interdisciplinary "Affective Societies" Collaborative Research Center at Freie Universität Berlin (http://www.sfb-affective-societies.de/en), of which the editors of this thematic issue are part of, also, e.g., Röttger-Rössler and Slaby (2018). This institution proposes a new way of thinking about social, technical and cultural processes of mediation and the interferences of affect (e.g., Blackman, 2018; Lünenborg, Maier, & Töpper, in press), providing scholars with a framework focusing on the relational character of affect in contemporary media cultures.

On balance, the overall impression is that affect studies-based approaches can potentially overcome existing dichotomies between culture and nature, between cognition and emotion, between inside and outside, and between the psychological and the social. Here it must be asked how these theoretical concepts can be made productive for future media and communication studies, and moreover, how different approaches with disparate theoretical presuppositions may be integrated. The articles in this thematic issue address these questions in different ways.

2. Contributions

Brigitte Hipfl (2018) opens the thematic issue with the article "Affect in media and communication studies: Potentials and assemblages". Her essay follows traditions of cultural studies and philosophical affect research. Hipfl presents a convincing contribution, discussing what a Deleuze-Guattarian approach to affect can offer to the field of media and communication studies.

Bernd Bösel's (2018) article "Affect disposition(ing): A genealogical approach to the organization and regulation of emotions" provides valuable new insights to the field of digitization and the humanities. Relying on philosophical concepts of affect theory, the author takes a critical and genealogical look at affective technologies like affective computing and social media, then shifts to an exploration of how technologies are used to detect and induce affects in human bodies.

In his contribution "Towards a psychoanalytic concept of affective-digital labour", Jacob Johanssen (2018) starts from the concept of affective work posited by Hardt and Negri, arguing that the Freudian model of affect can contribute to existing philosophical concepts. In doing so, Johannsen turns attention to the unconscious nature of affective work on social media, taking discursive and physical aspects of experience into account.

Laura Sūna (2018) offers an empirical contribution to media-related affect studies with her article "Negotiating belonging as cultural proximity in the process of adapting global reality TV formats". The author draws on approaches from cultural studies, combining them with a social concept of emotion. In interviewing media producers, she focuses on reality TV as a globally marketed television format, revealing modes of mediated belonging that are understood as forms of organized sociality through affective practices.

Yuanchen Zhang (2018) also deals with questions concerning the cultural role of emotions within global reality TV formats. Her article "How culture influences emotion display in transnational television formats: The case of The Voice of China" draws on Ekman's concept of anthropologically universal articulations of emotion. With this framework, Zhang analyzes the global TV format *The Voice* and discusses the presence of universal *and* culturally specific emotions in its Chinese adaptation.

In the final article, "Leak early, leak (more than) often: Outlining the affective politics of data leaks in network ecologies", Alberto Micali (2018) uses a local case study: the 2012 data leak carried out by *Anonymous Italiana*. The author relies on philosophical affect theories to present his argument that contemporary digital data leaking in a networked world can be understood as a form of affective politics.

To sum up, the articles of this thematic issue present empirical, analytical and theoretical investigations, reflecting the importance of affect and/or emotion in research on media and communication. They provide possibilities for further reflections on the significance of affective dynamics within current media-saturated societies. This thematic issue of *Media and Communication* deals with different theoretical concepts of affect and emotion in various media, genres and formats, as well as with media as technological artifact. We hope the contributions provide fresh insights into the politics and intertwining of affect, emotion, belonging and power in media and communication studies.

Acknowledgements

The articles of this thematic issue are based on papers presented at the international "Affects–Media–Power" conference held at Freie Universität Berlin in 2017. This conference was organized by Project B02 ("Transcultural Emotional Repertoires in and through Reality TV") within the "Affective Societies" Collaborative Research Center (CRC 1171) of Freie Universität Berlin and the German Association of Communication Research (DGPuK) "Sociology of Media and Communication" division (in cooperation with the "Media, Gender and Public Sphere" division). We would like to thank Sigrid Kannengießer, Marian Adolf and Claudia Töpper for organizing the conference with us, as well as all the authors, the numerous reviewers, and Rodrigo Gomes and Cátia Simões from the journal's editorial office for their valuable contributions to this issue.

References

Angel, M., & Gibbs, A. (2006). Media, affect and the face: biomediation and the political scene. *Southern Review: Communication, Politics and Culture*, *38*(2), 24–39.

Angerer, M.-L. (2014). *Desire after affect*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Angerer, M.-L. (2017). *Ecology of affect. Intensive milieus and contingent encounters*. Lüneburg: Meson Press. Retrieved from https://meson.press/books/ecology-of-affect

Blackman, L. (2018). Affect and mediation. In B. Röttger-Rössler, & J. Slaby (Eds.), *Affect in relation: families, places, technologies. Essays on affectivity and subject formation in the 21st century* (pp. 221–240). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bösel, B. (2018). Affect disposition(ing): A genealogical approach to the organization and regulation of emotions. *Media and Communication*, *6*(3), 15–21.

Clough, P. T. (2010). The affective turn. Political economy, biomedia, and bodies. In M. Gregg, & G. J. Seigh-worth (Eds.), *The affect theory reader* (pp. 206–225). Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Clough, P. T., & Halley, J. (2007). *The affective turn: Theorizing the social*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Coole, D. H., & Frost, S. (Eds.). (2010). *New materialisms: Ontology, agency, and politics*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Gregg, M., & Seigworth G. J. (2010). *The affect theory reader*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Harding, J., & Pribram, E. D. (Eds.). (2009). *Emotions: A cultural studies reader*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Hipfl, B. (2018). Affect in media and communication studies: Potentials and assemblages. *Media and Communication*, *6*(3), 5–14.

Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, *85*(3), 551–575.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *Managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Johanssen, J. (2018). Towards a psychoanalytic concept of affective-digital labour. *Media and Communication*, *6*(3), 22–29.

Kavka, M. (2008). *Reality television, affect and intimacy: Reality matters*. Houndmills and New York: Palgrave.

Lünenborg, M., Maier, T., & Töpper, C. (in press). Affekte als sozial-relationales phänomen medialer kommunikation. Affekttheorien für die medienforschung nutzbar machen [Affects as social-relational phenomenon of media communication—The adaption of affect theories in media research]. *Studies in Communication and Media*.

Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Micali, A. (2018). Leak early, leak (more than) often: Outlining the affective politics of data leaks in network ecologies. *Media and Communication*, *6*(3), 48–59.

Reckwitz, A. (2017). Practices and their affects. In A. Hui, T. Schatzki, & E. Shove (Eds.), *The nexus of practices* (pp. 114–125). Abingdon: Routledge.

Röttger-Rössler, B., & Slaby, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Affect in relation: Families, places, technologies. Essays on affectivity and subject formation in the 21st century*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Sampson, T., Maddison, S., & Ellis, D. (2018). *Affect and social media. Emotion, mediation, anxiety and contagion*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Seigworth, G. J., & Gregg, M. (2010). An inventory of shimmers. In M. Gregg & G. J. Seigworth (Eds.), *The affect theory reader* (pp. 1–25). Durham: Duke University Press.

Stadler, J. (2014). Affect, film and. In E. Branigan & W. Buckland (Eds.), *The Routledge encyclopedia of film theory* (pp. 1–6). Abingdon: Routledge.

Sūna, L. (2018). Negotiating belonging as cultural proximity in the process of adapting global reality TV formats. *Media and Communication*, *6*(3), 30–39.

Tuschling, A. (2013). Gesichter der Werbung, Gesichter der Wissenschaft [Faces of advertising, faces of science]. *ZFM Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft*, *9*, pp. 31–42.

Wetherell, M. (2012). *Affect and emotion. A new social science understanding*. London: Sage.

Williams, R. (2015). Structures of feeling. In D. Sharma & F. Tygstrup (Eds.), *Structures of feeling. affectivity and the study of culture* (pp. 20–26). Berlin: De Gruyter. (Original work published 1977)

Zhang, Y. (2018). How culture influences emotion display in transnational television formats: The case of "The Voice of China". *Media and Communication*, *6*(3), 40–47.

About the Authors

Margreth Lünenborg is Professor of Media and Communication studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focuses in the field of Journalism Studies, Gender Media Studies, Media and Migration. As a PI in the collaborative research center "Affective Societies" she is currently working on affects and emotion in media communication.

Tanja Maier is a Senior Lecturer for Media and Communication studies and currently working as an associated member at the collaborative research center "Affective Societies" at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research interests include Visual Communication and Culture, Cultural Studies and Digital Media, Affect Studies and Transcultural Communication, Gender Media Studies.

COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 3, Pages 5–14
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i3.1470

Article

Affect in Media and Communication Studies: Potentials and Assemblages

Brigitte Hipfl

Department of Media and Communication Studies, Klagenfurt University, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria;
E-Mail: brigitte.hipfl@aau.at

Submitted: 10 March 2018 | Accepted: 24 May 2018 | Published: 11 September 2018

Abstract
After a general mapping of the different understandings of affect, this article focuses on two aspects of a Deleuze-Guattarian understanding of affect which are of particular relevance for media and communication studies. The first is understanding affect as *potential*. It is through the forces of encounter that bodies are affected and that these affections then can be turned into action, into their capacity to affect. The second is understanding the perpetual *becoming* that takes place through continual encounters between bodies; with each encounter, the body changes, however slightly and subtly. The concept of *assemblage* that allows one to grasp these dynamics and complexities is discussed as an approach towards a much more complex theoretical grounding for processes of agency and power. Working with affect in media and communication studies, a three-fold strategy will be presented: to analyse how media generate affects and capitalise on them; to analyse what media do—in the sense of mobilizing potential; to analyse phenomena of mediated communication as assemblages. The article ends with challenges and new paths for conducting research on affect.

Keywords
affect; affections; assemblage; communication; media; structure of feeling; virtual/actual

Issue
This article is part of the issue "The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies", edited by Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier (Free University Berlin, Germany).

1. Introduction

Jennifer Daryl Slack has already reminded media and communication scholars that we "are living through an extraordinary moment", a moment characterized by major transformations that change the conditions of our existence (Slack, 2012, p. 143). These transformations are produced by new forms of connections between structures, practices, materials, affects, and enunciations; challenging what has become accepted as key questions in communication studies—what Slack summarizes as transmission, modes, and media. For Slack, these conceptualisations are unable to grasp what emerges in these new arrangements of heterogeneous elements. She argues that we "must be willing to respond to changing conditions of existence with theoretical tools that both respond to and constitute communication in new ways, with new ways of conceiving its object(s) of analysis" (Slack, 2012, p. 143). Affect theory is such a theoretical tool. The recent 'turn to affect' in the humanities and social sciences is an attempt to theorize contemporary formations of the social (Clough & Halley, 2007; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). There seems to be broad agreement that one reason for the current turn to affect theory is due to the limitations of cognitive approaches. The 'linguistic turn', as well as the 'discursive' and the 'cultural turn' in the humanities and social sciences, resulted in constructivist and post-structuralist models of the subject. They displaced ideas of the unified, autonomous subject, whose actions are rationally grounded, with a more complex understanding of the contingencies of historic-specific subject positions and the interpellations of dominant discourses. However, anything else that was *not* socially constructed—that is the material, and the affective—had been left out (Bauer, Binswanger, Häberlein, Nay, & Zimmermann, 2014, p. 12; see also Hemmings, 2015, p. 147).

Clare Hemmings (2015, p. 147) sees a second strand of arguments which expresses doubt regarding "the methodological capacity of both quantitative empirical

approaches and textual analysis to account for the fullest resonance of the social word we wish to understand". Eve Sedgwick (2003, p. 17), for example, uses the term "texture" to characterise the embodied experience of the social world. This includes questions such as what moves people and what attracts them. Sedgwick is hesitant of the capacity of critical theory with its focus on structures of truth and knowledge—she characterizes critical theory as "hermeneutic of suspicion" and "paranoid theory"—which makes critical theory uninventive and not equipped for the surprising and enlivening texture of individuality and community (see Hemmings, 2005, p. 553). A third argument, according to Hemmings (2015, p. 148), is the doubt regarding whether or not binaries such as power/resistance or public/private are still appropriate for our understanding of social and political processes; there is a need for increased attention to 'structures of attachment'.

2. The Many Lives of Affect

To fully elucidate the different understandings and uses of affect/emotion, it is helpful to grasp what Clare Hemming calls "[t]he many lives of affect" (Hemmings, 2015, p. 147). The answer to the question "what is affect?" is rather easy in psychology and neurology: affects are about emotional states, sometimes this comprises every aspect of emotion, sometimes it only refers to physiological, bodily activities (such as blushing, arousal level, etc.) as differentiated from "feelings" as subjective experiences (Wetherell, 2012, p. 2). In addition, there is another, 'wilder', broader notion of affect which refers to process and force in a more general sense as Wetherell (2012, p. 2), for example, points out.

Broadly speaking, there are two different approaches to affect. One is based on American psychologist Silvan Tomkins who places affect within the individual; that is embodied affect. The other is grounded in philosopher Baruch Spinoza and the ways in which his concepts have been used by Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and academics who draw on their work. This is a quite different understanding of affect as *apersonal*, as a force. In both approaches, affect is seen as the primary motivator and force in human life—but how this works is theorized and conceptualized differently.

Tomkins, who was strongly influenced by Charles Darwin, turns away from psychoanalytic approaches where affect is understood as acting in the service of drives (for a good overview see Hemmings, 2005, p. 521) and instead proposes "that affect is free from the constraints of both drives and social meanings" (Hemmings, 2005, p. 559). Affects have their own complex, self-referential lives. Affects can be attached to anything (things, people, ideas, relations, activities, other affects) and these attachments cannot be predicted (Hemmings, 2005, p. 559). According to Tomkins, we all develop complex "affect theories", which are the affective experiences that we remember in the moment of responding to a new situation (Hemmings, 2005, p. 552). What is key for Tomkins is that he sees his concept as an alternative to social determinism, so that the individual is not just passively responding to cognitive and learned phenomena (Hemmings, 2005, p. 552).

For Tomkins, affects are innate. He proposes nine genetically programmed, universal affects, thus opposing positions which describe human affects as culturally specific. For the nine affects he used a range name to indicate their different intensities (influenced by system theory; see Angerer, 2014, p. 402). He also groups them in positive, neutral, and negative affects. The positive ones are interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy; neutral is surprise-startle; negative is distress-anguish, anger-rage, fear-terror, shame-humiliation, disgust (reaction to noxious tastes) and dissmell (reaction to noxious odours). In Tomkins' complex theory of the human affect, one of his basic assumptions is: "[a]ffects are the primary motivators of human behaviour. While drives and cognitions both have motivational power, it is only when they are amplified by affect that a human being is moved to act" (Frank & Wilson, 2012, p. 875).

Although Tomkins' approach has been used in different ways, I will just mention two in the context of media and communication studies, both of which strike out in very different directions. One is the reading of his work by Sedgewick. She is interested in the complex ways in which shame operates; this is a question that has become prominent in feminist and queer theory (e.g., Probyn, 2010), but which has also been used in media studies—for example in research on reality TV (e.g., Kavka, 2014).

The second way Tomkins has been used is by his student Paul Ekman, whose research focuses on universal recognition of affects. He developed the "Facial Action Coding System" and presents himself as an expert in "detecting micro expression", selling his tools to institutions such as the CIA, FBI, as well as anybody who is interested in training oneself "to catch the micro facial expressions of others" (Ekman, n.d.). Ekman is particularly interested in detecting lies based on facial expressions and body language. He was, for example, the advisor for the figure of Cal Lightman, who is presented as the world's most famous and successful detector of lies in the US TV-series *Lie to Me* (2009–2011, Fox TV). Ekman's work is also essential for 'affective computing', the creation of 'emphatic machines' that are capable of recognizing and adapting to the feelings and moods of humans (e.g., Picard, 1997).

For the second strand, based on Deleuze's reading of Spinoza (Deleuze, 1988), affect is not "simply a personal feeling" and not "'emotion' in the everyday sense" (Massumi, 2015, p. 3). Following Spinoza, "affect is the power/capacity 'to affect and be affected"' (Massumi, 2015, p. ix). These capacities are not two different capacities, they "always go together" because "when you affect something you are at the same time opening yourself up to being affected in turn" (Massumi, 2015, p. 4).

That means that this always results in a slight transition. This is how Spinoza understands bodies—bodies (not only human bodies but any bodies) are defined by their capacities, by what they can do (and these capacities change). So, affects are, to quote Massumi (2015, p. 6), "ways of connecting, to others and other situations". Affect is here a force, "a force that things exert upon other things" as Matthew Tiessen (2013, p. 13) describes it. We can know them through their effects. As Seigworth and Gregg (2010, p. 2) point out, force does not always mean 'forceful', it also can be very subtle and go almost unnoticed in everyday life. Affect is what is found in the intensities that pass from body to body, in what circulates between bodies (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 1). These are visceral forces that are not conscious; they can drive us towards movement.

So, in that sense, affect is not individual, it is always relational; it is what happens in that in-between, in the event. It is pre-subjective; only retrospectively can it be 'owned' as the content of an individualized experience. It is also transindividual because it happens between individuals (Massumi, 2015, pp. 91, 94). This is more like an atmosphere, a cultural mood, an aura—what it feels like to be in a particular situation or moment. Massumi stresses that the concept of affect is 'transversal' in the sense that it cuts through realms that are usually seen as separate—such as subjective/objective, desire/what is given, freedom/constraint. Affect happens in the middle, the in-between; the two realms are like two facets of the same event (Massumi, 2015, p. 48). Affect is not the opposite of cognition. For Spinoza, body and mind are different attributes of the same substance, an idea that has become very popular with the publications of neuropsychologist Antonio Damasio (1999, 2003) who stresses the entanglement of rationality and emotion.

A Deleuze-Guattarian approach to affect is much more promising for our attempts to get a better understanding of contemporary processes in mediated communication. They offer a different angle that goes beyond the individualistic notion of affect dominating in psychology and neurology.[1] In particular, there are two aspects of this notion of affect which are of relevance when it comes to media and communication studies. The first is the understanding of affect as *potential*. It is through the forces of encounter that bodies are affected and that these affections then can be shifted into action, into the capacity to affect (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 2). This capacity of a body to affect is, as Seigworth and Gregg (2010, p. 3) stress, never defined by a body alone but by the context of its force-relations. However, it is important to point out that affect is not something that is positive or negative per se, rather it is the question of what an affect *does*, if it increases or diminishes the capacities to act, to connect.

The second is the perpetual *becoming* that takes place through the continuous encounters of the bodies: with each encounter the body changes, however slightly and subtly. Here there is a much more complex theoretical grounding for what has now become common sense when talking about identity and subjectivity as always in process.

These dynamics will be elaborated on in the next part by referring to the actual and the virtual as two dimensions of the real, as well as by focusing on the concept of assemblage as an approach to explore and explain formations in the real.

3. Reality as Continuous Processes of Becoming

With an understanding of affect as forces of encounter and of flows, there also comes a specific understanding of the world, of reality. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987),[2] the world is highly complex, defined by its multiplicity, its openness and its being dynamic, with processes of becoming continuously taking place. 'Becoming' does not mean a process of transforming one thing into another (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 9); rather, it is defined by ongoing processes of "becoming otherwise than what it already is" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 3). It is important though, that this does not mean becoming better or progressive in the sense of developmental theories—because we do not know in advance what a body can do. This is a world which is not completely under the control of human beings (see Colebrook, 2011, p. 52; Grossberg, 2014, pp. 19–20).

To better grasp this complexity and dynamics, two Deleuze-Guattarian concepts are helpful: the concept of the virtual and actual and the concept of assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, 1994). These concepts provide a deeper understanding of how particular configurations of reality are produced and how power relations work. But what makes them particularly useful is that they focus on dynamics and flows, on potentialities, the 'not yet', on what is to come. This article will focus on the concept of the assemblage because it offers a way to a more complex analysis of what is going on.

3.1. Virtual and Actual

Deleuze and Guattari speak of the virtual and the actual as two aspects or modalities of reality that co-exist together (Grossberg, 2014, p. 8). The virtual is not 'virtual reality' in the sense of computer-generated worlds; virtual should not be understood as possibility, rather as potentiality. Deleuze and Guattari refuse 'the possible', precisely because 'the possible' is something that is not real, it refers to anything you can dream of, as Grossberg (2014, p. 8) explains; whereas the virtual is reality

[1] Because of my focus on a Deleuze-Guattarian understanding of affect, I will not reference research on emotions, which, using a different methodological and ontological approach, situates affect/emotion in the individual.

[2] In my discussion of key concepts, I do not refer to the original sources in Deleuze and Guattari, but draw on the elucidating work of scholars like Ian Buchanan, Claire Colebrook, Rebecca Coleman, Lawrence Grossberg, Tauel Harper, Jessica Ringrose, David Savat, Gregory Seigworth, Jennifer Slack, and Macgregor Wise, whose attempts in making Deleuze's and Guattari's work approachable I find very stimulating for media and communication studies.

as becoming, as pure capacity, potentiality, as the openness of a non-enumerable multiplicity of actualizations; it can be creatively manifested (actualized) in many different ways. Thus, reality is constantly making itself, actualizing itself, producing particular actual realities out of and alongside the virtual as it were. The concept of the virtual problematizes common-sense notions of imagining what is possible as being based on the actual world, on something that has been actualized, such as, for example, the image of the 'modern man'. Modern man then becomes the basis for thinking about possibilities and differences of human life, thereby being blind to see other not-actualized potentials for becoming as something that is quite different from the actualized world. The virtual gives credit to the potentialities that are not actualized, to what we might become that is entirely unprecedented, including the concept of 'Man' itself (Colebrook, 2002, pp. xxx, xxxiv).

Grossberg (2014, p. 8) compares the virtual/actual with quantum physics: we live in the quantum universe, but we also live in a particular organization/actualization of the quantum universe. The quantum universe can be actualized in many different ways, but it is always actualized. Similarly, the virtual is real (not a fiction) and also always actualized. It continues to exist as real, alongside any actualization. Any actualization can also be described and characterized as an assemblage, which will always contain its virtual potential. In their discussion of the face, which for Deleuze and Guattari plays a key role in organizing our world, Tauel Harper and David Savat (2016, pp. 40–41) refer to the virtual and the actual: the face (the image) is virtual in the sense that it is a particular surface "that opens a particular universe of action" and "enables particular forms of experience to be actualized" (Harper & Savat, 2016, pp. 40–41). Such an understanding does not follow a traditional model of communication which focuses on questions of signifier/signified and representation; rather we are invited to think the other way around, asking what makes certain forms of communication possible. The concept, 'face', is, therefore, a multiplicity of changing surface forms, each with a capacity to be actualized; each with a capacity to affect and be affected by their surrounding environment; each carrying a certain force and intensity.

3.2. Assemblage

An assemblage is an arrangement of heterogeneous elements (such as structures, practices, materials, affects, discourses, ideas, etc.) where the parts are connected and form connections held together by flows of desire (DeLanda, 2011; Harper & Savat, 2016, p. 6; Slack, 2012, p. 144). The parts of such an arrangement do not belong to a pre-established plan (as is the case with elements of flatpack furniture), while at the same time, this is not a totally random collection. It is the contingent intersection of power relations and forces, and the material elements in a historic specific milieu that make an assemblage possible (Nail, 2017, p. 24; Wise, 2005, p. 77). What defines assemblages is the relations between the elements which are the condition of an assemblage; it is the *connections* between the components that constitute any assemblage (Harper & Savat, 2016, p. 23; Nail, 2017, pp. 24–25) or, to quote Ian Buchanan (2017, p. 465), an assemblage "*is* a relation". Harper and Savat (2016, p. 6) use the example of the Internet to illustrate that it is best to look at the Internet's complexity as different assemblages of desire, which can be 'plugged' into, each of which works differently. Take, for example, the internet as part of a pedagogical assemblage where the teacher or the students use the internet for resources. Here the internet functions as a machine to produce information and data. The internet functions completely differently when it is part of an erotic assemblage. Whereas in both cases the internet is used for searching and appraising, its functions and contents are different in these two assemblages. Also, what it produces is different.

Assemblages are dynamic, always in process; the term is the English translation of the French term 'agencement', which refers to the process of arranging, piecing together (Buchanan, 2017, p. 458). What is important, is that the components of an assemblage are not fused together, they can be detached and plugged into other assemblages. So, it is the interaction, the connection between the parts which holds an assemblage together. If these components stop interacting or no longer are connected, the assemblage falls apart (see, for example, the huge investment of corporations in customer loyalty to keep the connections alive).

Assemblages are temporary arrangements, they contain the virtual potential of multiple actualizations. But this does not mean that assemblages can become anything. According to Deleuze and Guattari, there are different ways in which assemblages are arranged, and this is where the politics of assemblages come into play (Nail, 2017, p. 28). There is, on the one hand, society, or more precisely, the symbolic order with dominant formations such as neoliberalism and global capitalism which assign values to certain objects and behaviours (called processes of coding by Deleuze and Guattari) and operate to channel, regulate and control the flows towards certain connections. This can also work by addressing our desires directly through commodity culture and media. And, as we know from Foucault's work on governmentality and self-technologies, we are willing participants. These processes are called processes of *territorialisation*, which try to stabilize the identity of an assemblage (e.g., Colebrook, 2002, p. xxii–xxiii). On the other hand, there are forces from the different components which Deleuze and Guattari call machinic (see Colebrook, 2002, p. xx), and unpredictable connections and events, which sometimes emerge as an effect of processes of territorialisation, which can change an assemblage. Here we speak of processes of *deterritorialization*, which are followed by *reterritorialization*—continuous processes, where forces

allow for change while at the same time assemblages strive to persist (Buchanan, 2017, p. 463).

One dramatic example is the suicide of Mohamad Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, which was seen as the catalyst of the revolution in Tunisia and the Arab spring. Twenty-six-year-old Mouhamed Bouazizi was a street vendor selling fruit and vegetables to support himself and his family, who, after repeated mistreatment and humiliation by local police officers, set fire to himself on December 17, 2010. Bouazizi's suicide sparked and intensified the demonstrations against unemployment, poor living conditions and corruption as well as those for political freedom, which resulted in a change of government. The Tunisian state, a strongly territorialized assemblage, could not function the same way any longer.

When it comes to the energy that holds assemblages together, Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'desire'. However, their understanding of desire differs from the psychoanalytic understanding of desire as libidinal, as defined by lack (as that which I am not or do not have). They speak of a strive for survival that characterizes life in general; desire is "a fundamental force of production—everything that has life energy produces" (Harper & Savat, 2016, p. 8). Another way of characterizing desire is the basic fact of other-directedness (a kind of affective intentionality) of life itself, an energy of connectivity. Desire is productive, it is "something that we *do*" (Buchanan, 2008, p. 48, as cited in Harper & Savat, 2016, p. 27). As Harper and Savat (2016, pp. 8–9) point out: "[o]ur desire flows in an effort to produce and, as it flows, it forms connections, which give rise to assemblages, which distribute its affect". Manuel DeLanda (2011) uses conversation as an example for a strongly structured (territorialized) assemblage (which comprise of embodied persons, discourses, ideas, codes and rules, etc.), where the energy that keeps the assemblage together is attention.

Assemblages can emerge at different scales. We can talk about assemblages on large scales such as epochs or movements—as, for example, the Tunisian revolution, or Zizi Papacharissi's (2015a, 2015b) 'affective publics'. But, also subjectivity "can be viewed…as something that we actively assemble and maintain, as well as being assembled or arranged" (Harper & Savat, 2016, p. 22). As Macgregor Wise (2012, p. 159) stresses: "any assemblage we enter into puts us into a particular relation to the world—promises us particular powers, redefines who we think we are or could be". The concept of assemblages pushes us towards a thinking of relations and towards an understanding of bodies/subjects as no longer being homogenous, unified bodies but as something that is always in the process of becoming a particular body through specific connections. It is an expansion of the idea of 'articulation' (as a way of avoiding causal explanations) in Cultural Studies, as developed by Stuart Hall (e.g., Slack, 1996). Hall talks about discourse as the connection of different elements that *can* make a unity, but which also can be re-articulated in different ways because they do not necessarily belong together. Other connections are always possible.

In media and communication studies, the concept of assemblages includes the materiality of communication and pushes us towards an understanding of media, technologies and users as no longer separate, stable agents and an exploration of how these heterogeneous components are woven together. What does such an assemblage *do*? What is its structure? What is produced or expressed? How does it shape the space around it? How are the flows and relationships regulated? Are certain bodies invested with more power (capacity to act, to affect and be affected) than others? Where are forces and relations at work that produce something new?

Following the concept of assemblage means to study media without being media-centric (Slack, 2012, p. 155). The concept of assemblages also offers a more complex understanding of power and enables us to do both, mapping what becomes stuck or fixed, what is of flux and inflow, and what emerges as new potentials (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 9).

4. Working with Affect in Media and Communication Studies

For media and communication studies, working with affect can take place on different levels. The next section will outline three levels which open up new angles for research.

4.1. Affects Expressed by Media

Firstly, we can focus on affects themselves, as expressed by media. "We appear to consume nothing other than affects", philosopher Claire Colebrook (2011, p. 51) points out. For her, media are prime examples where "affects themselves are marketed" (Colebrook, 2011, p. 45). Similarly, for Steven Shaviro, media are machines for generating affect and for capitalizing upon affect (Shaviro, 2010, p. 3). I call this 'affective work' that media perform (Hipfl, 2014): in a time where, following Deleuze, the modulation of affect has become one of the key means of sustaining power relations in contemporary so-called 'control societies'. Media can touch us, they can move us, they can make us feel. As Shaviro (2010, p. 2) points out, media "can give voice (or better sounds and images) to a kind of ambient, free-floating sensibility that permeates our society".

Another way of describing this is that media can be seen as 'blocs of sensations' that according to Deleuze, consist of affects and percepts (Colebrook, 2002, p. 148). What does this mean? Whereas affections and perceptions are located in perceivers—we can say that one has a 'perception' of red or that one 'feels' fear—art and media create affects and percepts that are not located in a point of view. When we take the photograph *Migrant Crossing* by Vadim Girda (2017) that was awarded the second prize of the World Press Photo Award of 2017 as

an example, we understand that this photo is able to capture a particular quality of social experience and what it feels like to be in a specific situation. The image shows refugees crossing the Mala Reka river, near the Greek border town of Idomeni, expressing their pain and despair. We may not be depressed or terrified when we view this photograph, but it presents the 'affect' of depression or terror. Colebrook (2002, p. xx) uses the example of a novel that describes a certain light; we may not see the light, but we are presented with what it would be to perceive such light or what such a perception is regardless of who perceives it; this is a percept. So, media are expressive of these 'blocs of sensation', which is something Raymond Williams (1978) also discussed with his concept 'structures of feeling'—his name for a collective feeling (not something private or idiosyncratic) that emerges and is being taken up and made palpable first by art and media. Williams illustrates this in his book *The Long Revolution* (1961), where he discusses 'instability and debt' as the collective mood that characterizes the conditions of existence of the middle class in popular fiction of the 1840s. This collective mood goes beyond and cannot be reduced to the ideals and values of that time, which were piety, thrift, and sobriety (Williams, 1961).

Following Williams, we are asked to not only analyze media representations but also what he calls "elements of impulse, restraints, and tone" (Williams, 1978, p. 132), those expressive aspects that reveal a certain collective feeling in media. Martin Barker, for example, discusses the cycle of films from 2003 to 2006 about the Iraq War as responses to the 'Iraq crisis' in the US (Barker, 2011). Deidre Pribram (2013) focuses on TV crime series which express certain structures of feeling that co-exist in the US. While *CSI* expresses a sense of speed, efficacy and rationality that results in a belief in a world we can still control, *Cold Case* produces an overall feeling of loss. Beverly Best makes the argument that reality TV expresses "responsibilization as the neoliberal common sense" and "individuality and self-expression" (Best, 2012, p. 200). In my own analysis of Austrian films focusing on migration, precariousness is one of the central structures of feeling expressed by the figure of the female migrant from Eastern Europe (Hipfl, 2016, 2018). In her research on Twitter as affective publics, Zizi Papacharissi is interested in "how structures of feeling are both rendered and reorganized by the soft and networked architectures of online media" (2015b, p. 5). All these examples illustrate how such media-generated affects can both consolidate and reinforce a particular collective feeling and articulate something new that is emerging.

There is a danger that this approach can result in "reading affect off of texts", an approach Grossberg (2016, p. 1004) problematizes, since structure of feeling is, as he points out, "less a tool of textual analysis than of contextualization" (Grossberg, 2016, p. 1026). This may be an attempt to get an idea of the force of affects, but this does not yet include how affect as intensity impinges on bodies, that is how we are affected. This leads us to the second level of researching affect in media and communication studies.

4.2. Affections: Being Affected and the Capacity to Affect

Everyone is able to recall experiences of having been affected by certain encounters with media (music, novels, films, YouTube videos, hashtags, etc.) which they have found moving, astounding, irritating, or which have created an impulse to do something. What happened then was a transition from one state of the body's capacities to another. As Massumi (2015) points out, this transition is felt on two levels which are connected: the feeling of the quality of the experience and the increased or diminished capacity to act. Massumi (2015, pp. 60–61) also talks about affect as "microshocks", which he describes as small changes in focus or attention (interruptions, ruptures). These 'microshocks' are happening all the time in our life. They can result in 'microperceptions'—when something is perceived as being qualitatively different, but without it being consciously registered. It is the felt interruption, a cut in the continuity of relation that includes the potential of a re-relating with a difference (Massumi, 2015, p. 54). What happens in these 'microshocks' is that past occasions and experiences are fused or contrasted, resulting in certain tendencies of the body towards the future. Depending on these tendencies or habits of the body (when certain processes repeat themselves and function, and we are not very attentive to them) certain movements are "more or less acceptable, more or less ready to go" (Massumi, 2015, p. 50).

This is also an explanation for differences in being affected that exist in people when they are 'shocked' by certain events, encounters. They differ in their attunement, they are affected differently. At the same time, we can witness again and again emerging conformity in the attunements—often as effects of being targeted affectively and strategically (in politics, activism). Here, Sara Ahmed's concept of stickiness (Ahmed, 2004, pp. 11, 13), where different elements (figures) are stuck together, can be employed: when certain emotions are attached to certain bodies, which then circulate in public space, this combination becomes more intense, blocks other connections and can even appear as a stable configuration. One of Ahmed's examples is hate against asylum and migration, where migrants and asylum seekers become perceived as a national threat.

There is a growing body of work on affection in media and communication studies. Besides Papacharissi's (2015a) impressive study on 'affective publics', Danish researchers Carsten Stage and Britta Timm Knudsen have been exploring, in particular, how we are targeted affectively and strategically by mediated bodily vulnerability (e.g., Timm Knudsen & Stage, 2015a, 2015b). In a current project, Margreth Lünenborg and Claudia Töpper (n.d.) analyse the affection potential of reality TV formats.

4.3. Exploring Assemblages

In each assemblage, different elements are brought together in a particular way so that it expresses a character and creates a territory. Macgregor Wise (2012, p. 159) stresses that "any assemblage we enter into puts us into a particular relation to the world—promises us particular powers, redefines who we think we are or could be" (Wise, 2012, p. 159). Wise also points out that we have to ask what an assemblage does: "how it shapes the space around it, transforms behaviour, moulds attention, distracts, focuses" (Wise, 2012, p. 161). Every time, we use a device, such as a cell-phone, we also connect with other assemblages—when we post a tweet we connect with the assemblages of language and technology that make certain statements possible (in the case of Twitter, however, this is restricted to 140 characters).

We can approach, for example, the selfie as an assemblage, as Aaron Hess (2015) suggests. He discusses the selfie as an assemblage as an articulation of at least four elements: the self, the physical space (which can be a public or private space), the device, and the network. Starting with the photograph, Hess points out that selfies "accent the self" (Hess, 2015, p. 1632), they presume a sense of authenticity, even though they are staged performances. Selfies are taken with cell phones, which make use of filters, photo-shop or other digital means to manipulate the image. Selfies are perceived as spontaneously taken, even though they have to be choreographed and performed. Selfies are authenticating, they give a sense of, "this is me, right here, right now" (Hess, 2015, p. 1633). Selfies are also expressive of the relationship to space and place; more precisely, they are about the subject's placement in a certain place at a certain time. According to De Souza e Silva and Sutko, this results in double perception of space, which is an example of what the selfie assemblage *does*: "[u]sers simultaneously see their physical surrounding space, plus a representation of that same space mapped on their mobile phone" (quoted in Hess, 2015, p. 1636). Users are invited to consider their composition in space for sharing in their networks. Taking a selfie also illustrates the connection of body and technology. Holding the device at arm's length brings the material dimension into play: a certain angle and perspective are required to produce a selfie that will be well received by the audience. Another connection made is the articulation with the network: compared to photos taken with digital cameras, selfies are particularly easy to share via social networking sites. As Hess makes the point, when we upload the photo "we express a desire to be recognized at this material moment…and understood as members of a networked community" (Hess, 2015, pp. 1640–1641).

Hess' last argument in his insightful analysis of selfie assemblages can be used to draw attention to the energy that comes from such desires. It is exactly these forces of desire that hold the assemblage together, preventing it from breaking down and dissipating. At the same time, we cannot control what kind of new connections will be made. When selfies are uploaded, they are public and can become subject to appropriation, misinterpretation, and new articulations.

5. Challenges and New Paths for Doing Research on Affect

The overall argument of this article is that a Deleuze-Guattarian understanding of affect is productive for communication and media studies for two reasons: it shifts our thinking from well-trodden paths focusing on representation to a more complex approach that is better suited to grasp contemporary processes and phenomena of media-communication, characterized by connections and relations. It sensitizes us towards what is to come, to new potentials and openings. Notwithstanding, researching affect in media and communication studies certainly has its methodological challenges (e.g., Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Timm Knudsen & Stage, 2015c). However, a Deleuze-Guattarian understanding of affect also leads us towards new paths for research. Here just two aspects are addressed which are of particular relevance. The first is the question regarding the methods that would enable us to grasp affect(ions), whereas the second points towards ethical concerns.

When researching affect(ions), we need methods that are sensitive to the dynamics, flows, and processes of becoming that characterize the world. John Law (2004) speaks of reality as messy and problematizes methodologies which try to convert this messiness into something smooth and coherent. This is, for example, the case with traditional forms of 'coding' in research, which are examples of territorialisation. They make cuts into flows to produce systems of meaning and order. According to MacLure (2013, p. 168), "things are frozen in the places allotted to them" by certain structures. We need to be aware that methods are performative, that they *do* something. Traditional coding does not allow for 'difference' in the sense that something emerges—the difference is only "represented in terms of static relations among already-formed entities that are described as different" (MacLure, 2013, p. 169). But there is always something that escapes and exceeds our coding (see MacLure, 2013, pp. 167, 169).

MacLure (2013, pp. 170–172) suggests one option, which is to follow Kathleen Stewart's approach to pay attention to those phenomena that are often overlooked in qualitative research: the anecdotal, accidental, and contingent. This is a call to focus on those fragments of data that do not fit into neat and succinct codes, and also to listen to our 'gut feelings' and to 'moments of disconcertion'. MacLure's (2013, p. 180) recommendation is to change our understanding of coding towards "an ongoing construction of a cabinet of curiosities or *wunderkammer*". Cabinets of curiosities were collections of all sorts of different things like strange objects, stuffed animals, mechanical toys etc., assembled by princes, scholars, and

merchants during the 16th and 17th century in Europe. As MacLure (2013, p. 180) points out, these cabinets exhibit the logic of an assemblage (the arrangement of heterogeneous elements) and are seen and discussed as a form of inquiry, as a form of 'experiment with order and disorder'. Following MacLure (2013, p. 181), coding could be thought of as such an experiment, where provisional and partial taxonomies are formed but are always subject to change. This would then be an ongoing practice of 'making sense' which would include openings for wonder (as temporary points of indecision).

Such an approach allows us to take into account the actual and the virtual as two modalities of reality that co-exist. We are asked not only to capture what is going on in a specific situation but also what is beyond this situation. This is a requirement that is discussed as 'inventive methods'. Rebecca Coleman and Jessica Ringrose (2013, pp. 7–8) give a good summary of the arguments of Lury and Wakeford, and Massumi, respectively. One of the ways in which social science might expand the actual by including the virtual as the openness towards a multiplicity of actualizations is an "attention to that which has conventionally escaped or troubled social science—the virtual, the affective, the ephemeral" (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 8). Following Massumi, an inventive methodology is to notice and bring about 'more of the world' and not 'more of the same'. This means that we should be sensitive to the contingent openings where one actuality transforms into another. And that we are prompted to create research environments that allow us to explore the "unstableness of everyday life" (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 28), the processes of territorialisation, re- and de-territorialisation which show us how power works by trying to stabilize and fix some assemblages, prevent the plug-ins of different assemblages, but also enable new conditions of possibility and the emergence of new connections.

Last, but not least, the ethical question needs to be addressed. Affect is not something that is positive or negative, per se, rather it is the question of what affects *do*. Do they increase or diminish the capacities to act, or to connect? This is a question which researchers are forced to ask themselves because as researchers we are entangled with the assemblages that we study. We are as researchers "one point of the relations within an assemblage" (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 6). As Karen Barad (quoted in Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 6) stresses, researchers are responsible for the 'cuts' they make in the practice of boundary making. And we need to be aware of what we are *doing* with our research. In which ways are the capacities of bodies that we are engaged with, diminished or enhanced through our research?

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers, jan jagodzinski, and the editors of this thematic issue for their helpful comments and suggestions. I would also like to thank the open access funding by Klagenfurt University.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of emotion*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Angerer, M. L. (2014). Affekt: Scham und Paranoia. In A. Bauer, C. Binswanger, J. Häberlein, Y. E. Nay, & A. Zimmermann, A. (Eds.), *Affekt und Geschlecht. Eine einführende Anthologie* (pp. 401–422). Wien: Zaglossus.

Barker, M. (2011). *A 'toxic genre'. The Iraq war films*. London: Pluto Press.

Bauer, A., Binswanger, C., Häberlein, J., Nay, Y. E., & Zimmermann, A. (Eds.). (2014). *Affekt und Geschlecht. Eine einführende Anthologie*. Wien: Zaglossus.

Best, B. (2012). Raymond Williams and the structure of feeling of reality TV. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *2*(7), 192–201.

Buchanan, I. (2017). Assemblage theory, or, the future of an illusion. *Deleuze Studies*, *11*(3), 457–474.

Clough, P. T., & Halley, J. (Eds.). (2007). *The affective turn: Theorizing the social*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Colebrook, C. (2002). *Understanding Deleuze*. Crows Nest: Allen Unwin.

Colebrook, C. (2011). Earth felt the wound: The affective divide. *Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, *8*(1), 45–58.

Coleman, R., & Ringrose, J. (2013). Introduction: Deleuze and research methodologies. In R. Coleman & J. Ringrose (Eds.), *Deleuze and research methodologies* (pp. 1–22). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Damasio, A. (1999). *The feeling of what happens. Body and emotion in the making of consciousness*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.

Damasio, A. (2003). *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, sorrow, and the feeling brain*. London: Heinemann.

DeLanda, M. (2011). Assemblage theory, society, and Deleuze. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-I5e7ixw78

Deleuze, G. (1988). *Spinoza: Practical philosophy* (R. Hurley trans.). San Francisco, CA: City Lights Book.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Massumi trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1994). *What is philosophy?* (R. Hurley trans). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Ekman, P. (n.d.). Micro expressions matter. *Paul Ekman Group*. Retrieved from www.paulekman.com/?utm_expid=.FaXei86CT8OuihjdCQMvMg.0&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.at%2F

Frank, A., & Wilson, E. A. (2012). Critical response I. Like-minded. *Critical Inquiry*, *38*(Summer), 870–877.

Girda, V. (2017). Migrant crossing. World Press Photo Award, contemporary issues, second prize. Retrieved from www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/2017/contemporary-issues/vadim-ghirda

Gregg, M., & Seigworth, G. J. (Eds.). (2010). *The affect theory reader*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Grossberg, L. (2014). Cultural studies and Deleuze-Guattari, part 1. *Cultural Studies*, *28*(1), 1–28.

Grossberg, L. (2016). Cultural Studies and Deleuze-Guattari, part 2: From affect to conjunctures. *Cultural Studies*, *30*(6), 1001–1028.

Harper, T., & Savat, D. (2016). *Media after Deleuze*. London: Bloomsbury.

Hemmings, C. (2005). Invoking affect. Cultural theory and the ontological turn. *Cultural Studies*, *19*(5), 548–567.

Hemmings, C. (2015). Affect and feminist methodology; Or what does it mean to be moved? In D. Sharam & F. Tygstrup (Eds.), *Structures of feeling. Affectivity and the study of culture* (pp. 147–158). Berlin: De Gruyter.

Hess, A. (2015). The selfie assemblage. *International Journal of Communication*, *9*, 1629–1645.

Hipfl, B. (2014). Zur "affektiven" Arbeit von Medien: Herausforderungen für die Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft. *Medien Journal*, *38*(2), 5–19. https://doi.org/10.24989/medienjournal.v38i2.98

Hipfl, B. (2016). Import Export: Explorations of precarity in European migratory culture. In S. Ponzanesi & G. Colpani (Eds.), *Postcolonial transitions in Europe. Contexts, practices and politics* (pp. 191–208). London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Hipfl, B. (2018). Policing crisis in Austrian crime fiction. In K. Loftsdottir, A. L. Smith, & B. Hipfl (Eds.), *Messy Europe. Crisis, race and nation state in postmodern Europe* (pp. 148–170). New York, NY: Berghahn Press.

Kavka, M. (2014). A matter of feeling: Mediated affect in reality television. In L. Quelette (Ed.), *A companion to reality television* (pp. 437–456). Malden: Wiley Blackwell.

Law, J. (2004). *After method: Mess in social science research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Lünenborg, M., & Töpper, C. (n.d.). Embodied affects. Analyzing affective and embodied dimensions in reality TV. Retrieved from koerperbilderpraktiken.files.wordpress.com/2016/08/boa_koerperbilder16_panel3_toepper-luenenborg.pdf

MacLure, M. (2013). Classification or wonder? Coding as an analytic practice in qualitative research. In R. Coleman & J. Ringrose (Eds.), *Deleuze and research methodologies* (pp. 164–183). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Massumi, B. (2015). *Politics of affect*. Cambridge: Polity.

Nail, T. (2017). What is an assemblage? *SubStance*, *46*(1), 21–37.

Papacharissi, Z. (2015a). *Affective publics. Sentiment, technology, and politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Papacharissi, Z. (2015b). Affective publics and structures of storytelling: Sentiments, events and mediality. *Information, Communication & Society*, *19*(3). https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1109697

Picard, R. W. (1997). *Affective computing*. Boston: MIT-Press.

Pribram, D. (2013). *Emotions, genre, justice in film and television*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Probyn, E. (2010). Writing shame. In M. Gregg & G. J. Seigworth (Eds.), *The affect theory reader* (pp. 71–90). Durham: Duke University Press.

Sedgwick, E. K. (2003). *Touching feeling: Affect, pedagogy, performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Seigworth, G. J., & Gregg, M. (2010). An inventory of shimmers. In M. Gregg & G. J. Seigworth (Eds.), *The affect theory reader* (pp. 1–25). Durham: Duke University Press.

Shaviro, S. (2010). *Post-cinematic affect*. Winchester: Zero Books.

Slack, J. D. (1996). The theory and method of articulation in cultural studies. In D. Morley & K.-H. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall. Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 112–127). New York, NY: Routledge.

Slack, J. D. (2012). Beyond transmission, modes, and media. In J. Packer, W. Crofts, & B. Stephen (Eds.), *Communication matters. Materialist approaches to media, mobility, and networks* (pp. 143–158). New York, NY: Routledge.

Tiessen, M. (2013). Affects. In R. Shields & M. Valley (Eds.), *Demystifying Deleuze. An introductory assemblage of crucial concepts* (pp. 9–10). Ottawa: Quill Books.

Timm Knudsen, B., & Stage, C. (2015a). Sympathetic mobilization. In D. Sharam & F. Tygstrup (Eds.), *Structures of feeling. Affectivity and the study of culture* (pp. 199–215). Berlin: De Gruyter.

Timm Knudsen, B., & Stage, C. (2015b). *Global media, biopolitics and affect. Politicizing bodily vulnerability*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Timm Knudsen, B., & Stage, C. (2015c). *Affective methodologies. Developing cultural research strategies for the study of affect*. New York, NY: Palgrave.

Wetherell, M. (2012). *Affect and emotion: A new social science understanding*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Williams, R. (1961). *The long revolution*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Williams, R. (1978). *Marxism and literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wise, J. M. (2005). Assemblage. In C. J. Stivale (Ed.), *Gilles Deleuze. Key concepts* (pp. 77–87). Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Wise, J. M. (2012). Attention and assemblage in the clickable world. In J. Packer, W. Crofts, & B. Stephen (Eds.), *Communication matters. Materialist approaches to media, mobility, and networks* (pp. 159–172). New York, NY: Routledge.

About the Author

Brigitte Hipfl is Associate Professor of Media Studies at the Department of Media and Communication Studies at Klagenfurt University, Austria. Her research interests are cultural studies, media, gender, subjectivation, affective work of media, memory work, and postcolonial Europe. Currently, she is exploring how migration is addressed in Austrian cinema and TV. Her most recent book is *Messy Europe. Crisis, Race, and Nation-State in a Postcolonial World* (co-edited with Kristín Loftsdóttir and Andrea L. Smith, Berghahn Press, 2018).

COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 3, Pages 15–21
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i3.1460

Article

Affect Disposition(ing): A Genealogical Approach to the Organization and Regulation of Emotions

Bernd Bösel

Institute for Arts and Media, University of Potsdam, 14467 Potsdam, Germany; E-Mail: bernd.boesel@uni-potsdam.de

Submitted: 3 March 2018 | Accepted: 30 July 2018 | Published: 11 September 2018

Abstract
The "affective turn" has been primarily concerned not with what affect *is*, but what it *does*. This article focuses on yet another shift towards how affect gets *organized*, i.e., how it is *produced*, *classified*, and *controlled*. It proposes a genealogical as well as a critical approach to the organization of affect and distinguishes between several "affect disposition(ing) regimes"—meaning paradigms of how to interpret and manage affects, for e.g., encoding them as byproducts of demonic possession, judging them in reference to a moralistic framework, or subsuming them under an industrial regime. Bernard Stiegler's concept of psychopower will be engaged at one point and expanded to include social media and affective technologies, especially Affective Computing. Finally, the industrialization and cybernetization of affect will be contrasted with poststructuralist interpretations of affects as events.

Keywords
affect; Affective Computing; disposition; emotions; event; eventology; genealogy; psychopower; theory

Issue
This article is part of the issue "The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies", edited by Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier (Free University Berlin, Germany).

1. Introduction

The "affective turn" (Clough, 2007) has been primarily concerned not with what affect *is*, but what it *does*. This article will focus on yet another shift towards how affect gets *organized*, meaning how it is *produced*, *classified* and *controlled*. But instead of starting with contemporary developments in the humanities like the widely discussed approach to affects as non-human agencies (as opposed to human-centric emotions), it proposes to embed this contentious interpretation within a historical narrative in order to arrive at a better assessment of what it tries to achieve. Therefore, it will not start with the historically speaking very recent distinction of affect and emotion but will deploy the term "affect" in a deliberately indeterminate way to refer to the upheavals of humans' bodies and minds which need to be dealt with in one way or another. One might think of the Greek term "pathos" as the template for this use of "affect"; as is widely known, the Latin "affectus" was one of the standard translations of "pathos" since Cicero's time (Fitzgerald, 2008, pp. 3–5) and was only much later adopted into modern European languages.

I will propose a genealogical approach to the organization of affect, which has at least two advantages. Firstly, a genealogy is not a proper historical account, which would be impossible to give with such a vast topic. It can thus focus on general shifts and also remain rather schematic. Secondly, the genre of a genealogical account can be seen as a method of critique. Analyzing the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, who famously established such an approach, the German political theorist Martin Saar (2009) has identified three central aspects of their respective genealogies. First, they historicize the "self" or the "subject" and thus oppose all theories that rely on essentialist conceptions; secondly, they describe this process of becoming a self as a result of contingent effects of power dynamics; thirdly, they present these processes in a certain narrative and rhetorical way that involves drama, struggle, and antago-

nism. A genealogical narrative is thus conceptualized as an art of exaggeration. It aims to evoke an awareness of the artificiality of ideas of the self and the world. Saar speaks of an "affective mobilization of doubt" with the ultimate goal of an existential upheaval that might even discharge itself into a desire for transformation (Saar, 2007, 2009, p. 251).

The genealogy that will be proposed in the following pages distinguishes between seven paradigms of affect interpretation and organization, or, to use a tentative phrase, of "affect disposition(ing)". The term "disposition" can take on a more static or a more dynamic meaning. Due to my emphasis on affect organization, I wish to convey the dynamic side of dispositions as processes and even as activities with the goal to arrange things in certain, deliberate ways. Therefore, to counter the risk that "disposition" might be understood as a static state of affairs (comparable to *hexis* in the philosophical tradition), I choose to stress the processual aspect by using the rather experimental expression "disposition(ing)". The reason for sticking with "disposition" altogether (instead of just using "organization", "deployment", or "regulation") is its welcome (and clearly not coincidental) proximity to the term "dispositif", which has encompassed the connotations of power, order, and contingency ever since Foucault adopted it in his later writings.[1]

Whenever one of the paradigms of affect disposition(ing) becomes hegemonic during a certain period, I will call it "affect disposition(ing) regime". But even when and if that happens, the older ones never disappear. They can retain or regain their vigor by either interlinking with more recent paradigms, or by opposing them. Either way, the organization of affects has been increasing in complexity throughout human history. The fastest way to demonstrate this is by taking into account all of the verbs that can be used to address this organization: Affects can be *called*, *invoked* or *summoned*; they can be *generated* or *fabricated*; they can be *mastered*, *controlled* or *extirpated*; they can be *caused* or *triggered*; one can *immunize* oneself against their onset; they can be *produced* and *boosted* regardless of their valence or quality; they can be *modulated* and *optimized*. Each of these terms transports a whole subtext of ideas and practices, as shall now be demonstrated.

2. Classical Paradigms

The supposedly oldest affect disposition(ing) paradigm interprets affects as by-products of being possessed by a god, a demon or another nonhuman, but personal entity.[2] This might be both to the subject's advantage as well as disadvantage. Being possessed can empower a subject to become super-humanly potent, or it can devitalize it to such a degree that intervention by healers, shamans, or exorcists is called for (Dodds, 1951). Homer's *Ilias* is full of episodic possessions of humans by gods, and even in classical times, the work of love is being described by Plato as being effected by Eros, who has at one time been called a god, and at other times a demon in the neutral, pre-Christian sense of the word (Plato, 1993). This paradigm of affect disposition can thus be called the "demonological". It involves certain practices of dealing with non-human entities, such as prayers, invocations, summonings, or exorcisms, expulsions, and execrations—basically the whole range of techniques that are thought to be effective in bringing about either the approach or the retreat of a certain god, demon, or angel.

It is exactly this involvement of techniques and thus of human skills that gave birth to a very different understanding of where affects come from. If humans are able to control the comings and goings of affects in the guise of gods and demons, then the agency of affecting no longer comes from these non-human entities, but from the skillful practitioners. Affects can now be conceptualized in a very different manner: as the outcomes of the execution of skills by specialists who have been trained in certain techniques, such as orators, musicians, actors, playwrights, or writers. This paradigm can be called the "poietological", insofar as "poiesis" means the bringing-about of something. In this paradigm, the focus lies in creating affects in an audience for its own sake. We know from the surviving writings of Aristotle, especially his *Rhetoric* (Aristotle, 1991), how differentiated this poietological knowledge was in the classical period. Also, music theory and the discourse on theatre at that time had reached a highly sophisticated level. Notwithstanding their origins in religious or spiritual practices, these arts had become more or less independent from these enframements. If we believe Plato, practical knowledge of bringing about emotions—these *techniques*, derived from the Greek term *téchne*—had gained such a force that master practitioners could basically mold their audiences in whatever way they desired and thus threatened to destabilize the political order.

Plato's ethical and political thought reacted to this development by juxtaposing arts and rhetoric with his conception of philosophy (Plato, 2008). Regarded from the angle of affect disposition(ing), philosophy can be defined not just as a discipline of thought, but more fundamentally as a form or way of life—in the sense of Pierre Hadot (1995) and Michel Foucault (1988)—that circles around the question of how best to regulate one's affects. Plato's intervention centered on the concept of virtue. It aims first to define what virtue is and then to live up to that ideal standard. Affects now get reconceived as phenomena that should be organized to meet that standard, which means that they are subordinated to ethics

[1] In German, the same can be said of the term "Verfügung": it encompasses command (by legal, military or other other ways of exerting authority), the pure fact of possessing something ("verfügen über"), as well as the technical aspects of both commanding and possessing (via the verb "fügen"). In my German-language research, I thus develop and use the term "Affektverfügung" for my genealogical approach.

[2] This interpretation is partly inspired by Michaela Ott's philosophical history of emotion, or what she more generally calls "affection" (Affizierung); compare Ott (2010).

and politics, as can be best seen in the discussions of music and theatre in the political writings of both Plato and Aristotle. The Greek term for virtue, *arete*, allows this new paradigm of affect disposition to be referred to as the "aretological": its logic pertains to whatever standard of virtues is being set. This can be shown by the classical cardinal virtues: courage, temperance, prudence, and justice (Pieper, 1965). Courage (or fortitude) is the virtue of persevering through affects like fear and suffering; temperance is the virtue of moderating all of one's feelings, thoughts, and actions. Prudence (or wisdom) is the virtue of knowing the ultimate ideal goal of one's actions, which is, of course, felicity or, as it is more commonly known, happiness (the Greek term *eudaimonia*, being comprised of the prefix "eu" and the noun "daimon", refers back to the demonological regime which now gets its aretological treatment). Justice is the virtue of not overreaching in regard to money, goods, fame, or honor and thus involves the tempering of one's desires. In Christianity, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity have an even closer connection to affects, as do the cardinal sins, which are basically emotion terms that get a moralistic, if not repressive, treatment (Brennan, 2004, pp. 98–101). Both in classical ethics and in Christian moral theology, the responsibility now lies solely with the subjects themselves. They have always to be vigilant against the onset of carnal affects, of demons who transfer their own affects onto whomever they possess, and of skillful practitioners who want to entertain or amuse their audience in ways that contradict the moral or religious standards. Once this aretological paradigm became hegemonic, it remained so until the Renaissance, which facilitated a brief, but vigorous comeback of the poietological paradigm (Meek & Sullivan, 2015).

3. Modern Paradigms

I would like to suggest that these three classical paradigms of affect disposition(ing) suffice to describe the organization of affect at least from a genealogical point of view up until the beginning of the modern era. The cultural accelerations that seem to define that period are being mirrored in regard to the question of affect disposition(ing). Within the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, four new regimes of affect disposition(ing) emerged. The first is (unsurprisingly) connected to René Descartes (1649/1989), who in his treatise *The Passions of the Soul* maybe for the first time presented a strictly mechanical theory of how affects are caused by certain movements in the body and especially in the brain. Descartes' mechanical thinking inspired a lot of Baroque theories of affects, not just within philosophy, but also in the arts and music theory. Actually, the so-called "doctrine of affects" (Affektenlehre) that circulated widely in discourses of music, painting, and theatre and was used in the composition of works of art, depends on Cartesian mechanistic thought. In music, the idea was that a certain tune or triad could elicit a very specific affective response (Pischner, 1963, p. 24f.). To be fair, recent scholarship has noted a conspicuous lack of definite conceptualizations of such mechanisms in the music theories of the 17th and 18th centuries (Sparshott, 1998); it now seems that the notion of an Affektenlehre, as alluded to in the writings of Athanasius Kircher (1662/2006) or Johann Mattheson (1739/2008), was never really followed up by a systematic scheme, apart from more or less idiosyncratic suggestions by composers of what musical element has what effect on listeners. But of course, Descartes was just one of many proponents of mechanism, a theory that gained prominence through the writings of Galilei, Newton, Huygens and many others and was also applied to the question of how to successfully elicit the desired affective states by actors, playwrights, and artists. The festivals of Louis XIV at Versailles, which became legendary not just for their splendor, but also for their measured and controlled deployment of all known media of affect elicitation, can be seen as an early epitome of the mechanization of affects and the development of a "machinery of emotions" (Kolesch, 2006). I, therefore, propose to call this new affect disposition(ing) regime the "mechanological": it defines affects *as being mechanically elicited in sequences of cause-and-effect*, regardless of sociocultural influences. The mechanological paradigm thus tends to a reductionism and to blend out social or cultural contexts. Moreover, the means of affect elicitation are thought to transmit affective impulses more or less loss-free. The medial aspect of the cause-and-effect sequence thus gets neglected. The mechanological paradigm's persistence can be seen in the contemporary theory and practice of psychopharmacology (Stein, 2008), but also in advertising, in muzak (the correct term for what more often is derogatorily called "elevator music"; see Lanza, 2004), in the social psychology of influence and persuasion (Levine, 2003) and so on—basically in all disciplines that deploy cues for eliciting certain affects and view the respective media simply as carriers for their transmission.

In the 18th century, affective mechanics gave rise to an even subtler way of supposedly dealing with unwanted emotional states. It is centered on the term "interests" that has now become an anthropological principle, whereas before it had pertained to the financial realm. The desire to gain more money, also called greed (which of course is an aretological term, as it denotes that desire as a vice), was now reconceived as a strong, but calm passion (Hume) that should be regarded as a perfectly natural "self-interest" (Hirschman, 1977/2013). Moreover, it was said that following this self-interest holds all the other passions, especially the more violent ones, at bay, and that self-interest is not just natural, but even rational in the sense that it can be calculated by others. Thus, instead of fighting this affect, it was proposed to follow its command; the promised advantages were not just for individuals, but for society and humanity at large, and paved the way for the idea of the liberal global market. The idea of not eradicating this af-

fect, but using it to hold other, more dangerous affects at bay, has striking similarities to the discovery of the technique of vaccination. During the 18th century, the practice of inoculation was imported to Britain and then the rest of Europe from Turkey, where it had been used for centuries (Bazin, 2003). Its success in fighting the smallpox, one of the most dreaded diseases due to its high number of casualties and disfigurement of survivors, led to further experiments which at the end of the century resulted in the discovery that using a serum from cows affected with cowpox was the ideal solution, because the cowpox-virus (called *vaccinae*) immunized humans to the same extent that the smallpox-virus (called *variolae*) did, but with much less risk. This immunization technique attracted attention from Michel Foucault (2009) and Roberto Esposito (2011) in their respective writings on biopolitics. The radical new idea was not to exclude the danger but to include it in a controlled form. I want to propose that this model of immunization was also at work in the re-conception of the passion of greed as a controllable self-interest. I would also hold that this "immunological" affect disposition(ing) regime does not, and never has worked in the intended way. But it was successful in providing economic thought with an effective fundament, and with the contemporary global dominance of neoliberal thought which is centered on rational choice theory and the figure of the entrepreneurial self (Bröckling, 2015) it continues to be operative, crises notwithstanding (Pixley, 2012, pp. 54–63).[3]

Once the affects became rehabilitated in the Enlightenment era (the mechanological and the immunological regimes did their best to weaken the aretological paradigm), the path was cleared for an unhindered release of affections of every kind. With the 19th century's rise of industrial modes of production, it was only a question of time until the production of affects was fully underway. The emergence of mass media was intrinsically connected to a steep rise in the production and distribution of affects, first via cheaply produced newspapers. The question of affective quality was now set aside by a focus on quantity. The more affects, the better—this credo builds the basis for what later on was called the "cultural industry", a term that fittingly points to the industrial subordination of traditional forms of affect disposition(ing). In this new paradigm, which I call the machinological, affects are *understood as outputs of a machinic system that need to be boosted*. In contrast to the mechanological paradigm, the machinological is no longer based on the conception of closed systems within which the sum of forces equals zero. Industrialization adds to the machinic the idea of an open system that will always provide new forces. Cinema is the foremost medium that executes this logic, with radio, television, video games, and nowadays social media as its companions. The current social media debate points back to this principle: the algorithms used by the platforms that are criticized for their facilitation of hate speech, shit storms, and fake news are designed to evoke as many affects with as many people as possible. The overall effect of this disposition(ing) regime is agitation, if not outright addiction (Alter, 2017). And agitation ends in depletion and exhaustion if it is not countered by some other force.

4. Psychopower

Recently, the concept of cultural industry was updated by philosopher of technology Bernard Stiegler, who in his book *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* linked it to Foucault's genealogy of power, which famously diagnosed the emergence of contemporary biopower. In Stiegler's view though, "biopower is no longer the force of *our* age" (Stiegler, 2010, p. 126), because populations are increasingly being governed by the capturing of their minds through marketing and entertainment technologies; Stiegler therefore also calls it economic psychopower, basically understood as the domination of people's minds and souls by catching their attention and inducing a never-ending chain of affects. As Stiegler conceives this new form of power as being inherently a relationship based on domination, the question is: Who is in charge? Who executes this psychopower? Stiegler's answer is as simple as it is unsatisfactory. It is the "programming industries", which are basically the combination of the cultural industries of Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) and the consciousness industry of Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1974). Like the proponents of the Frankfurt school, Stiegler does not take into account the specific relations that audiences have to those programs that are being provided by those industries. It would seem that cultural studies never existed. He would probably respond to that critique that whatever stance one takes towards the programs of those industries, one is already caught inside the attentional and/or affective loop that was specifically designed for that purpose. But this argument only works if one affirms solely the machinological disposition paradigm, which states that affects are machinic outputs that need to be boosted, regardless of their quality (and the same applies for attention). So what Stiegler describes here is basically the pathology of the machinological disposition regime, which leads in his view to "uncontrollable societies of disaffected individuals" (Stiegler, 2013), who are disaffected precisely because they are subjected to a never-ending stream of affective and attentional modulation by the programming industries following a capitalist logic.

As underdeveloped as this concept of psychopower may be, it might still be useful when applied to the emergence of affect-responsive media. Twenty years ago, Ros-

[3] The rise of behavioral economics directly addresses the shortcomings of the rational choice model, as can be seen in Thaler and Sunstein's (2008, pp. 6–8) opposition of the idealized "Econs" or "economic men" and the more realistic conception of not always rationally acting "Humans". With their metaphor of "nudging", they interestingly resort to a mechanological approach. The (supposedly) better-informed nudger nudges the lesser-informed nudged in order to elicit in him the (supposedly) better behavior and decision-making.

alind Picard (1997) published her seminal book *Affective Computing* which gave a then still futuristic, but now burgeoning, research discipline its lasting name. When the *Oxford Handbook of Affective Computing* was published a few years ago (Calvo, D'Mello, Gratch & Kappas, 2015), it became visible how clearly Picard had outlined the road to make computers able to *detect* human emotions as well as to *simulate* emotions for software agents to induce affective reactions from their human users (Yonck, 2017). Accordingly, Picard was invited by the editors of the *Oxford Handbook* to recount her road to establishing the research group on "Affective Computing" at the MIT and her development of the first steps in theory as well as practice (Picard, 2015). The idea is to close this loop of interaction so perfectly that there can be a fully responsive emotional rapport, or affect attunement, between humans and computer agents or robots. The ways that human affects are quantified, categorized and identified—in one word *decoded*—are for several reasons questionable: for their reliance on contentious psychological theories of basic emotions (Ekman, 1999), for the supposed affective indexicality of the human face and other physiological data, and for the negligence of ambivalence, irony, and humor that so often accompany or even constitute emotional expressions. But even more contentious is the outsourcing of the faculty of affect regulation to automatic systems operating on hidden algorithms. A new paradigm of affect disposition is emerging by *interpreting affects as information that is being used for the modulation and optimization of psychical and social systems* (Angerer & Bösel, 2016). Due to its dependency on the cybernetic ideal of an autonomous system of control, it can be called the cybernetological affect disposition(ing) regime. With the emerging technologies of affect detection, mood tracking (Pritz, 2016), affect generation and synthesis, sentiment analysis (Ahmad, 2011), psycho-informatics (Markowetz, Blaszkiewicz, Montag, Switala, & Schlaepfer, 2014) and automated persuasion (Stock, Guerini, & Pianesi, 2016), the concept of psychopower is becoming more relevant. Future analysis of how affect regulation changes with the implementation of these affective media should, of course, not just look into the technologies themselves, but how they become integrated into habitual forms of affect regulation.

5. Eventology

Concluding this article, I would like to briefly point out a parallel development in regard to the conception of affects, one that is more or less directly opposed to the cybernetic model of control. It originates in poststructuralist and process-philosophical theories of the event. Brian Massumi is probably the most outspoken theorist who considers affects as events, thus pointing to their disruptive force (Massumi, 2002). Taken as events, affects by definition *cannot* be controlled, even when humans and human-made technologies try to capture and master them. Something always escapes such attempts and continues to exert a force of its own. Affect is more than human minds or technical sensors can register and process. By redirecting attention to this surplus force, Massumi and others propose to acknowledge that there is always some differentiating moment at work. One cannot be affected the same way twice. At a very basic level, there is always change and transformation, however slight or negligible such a change may seem. This is also the reason why Massumi puts so much stress on the difference between presubjective affect and the subjective experience of an emotion:

> Because affect concerns the movements of the body it can't be reduced to emotion. It is not subjective in the sense of belonging to a subject to which the body belongs….It is only on the level of emotion that this subjective form *of the affective event* comes to be experienced as belonging to a subject separate from the event. (Massumi, 2015c, p. 105)

This distinction between processual, bodily affect and its capture in the form of a subjective, representable emotion has been adopted by many of the theorists who follow the *affective turn*. Massumi does not, however, assume that affect is opposed to thought, as some commentators seem to believe. On the contrary, thought for Massumi is inseparable from affect, which involves "feeling in thinking, and vice versa" (Massumi, 2015a, p. 91), and inspires the term "affective thinking-feeling" (Massumi, 2015a, p. 94) as a way of saying that the unfolding of an affective event in the body includes a mental pole from the onset (Massumi, 2015a, p. 212). This mental aspect of affective thinking-feeling is not just located in the brain, nor does it necessarily imply reflective thought. But it does involve spontaneity to a certain degree on a level that precedes intentional and representational thinking (Massumi, 2015a, p. 181). All these ideas are employed by Massumi to stress the novelty and creativity that each affective event implicates and that seem to get lost, forgotten, or disavowed when affects get prematurely identified as a certain emotion.

This conception also necessitates addressing power very differently from Stiegler, who only regards it as something that is exerted by humans.[4] Poststructuralist affect theory revolves around a non-human-centric basis: matter (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012). Events are generated by matter which forms the ontological basis in these theories; they may, therefore, be dubbed "eventological". The conception of affects as events can likewise be called the foundation of an eventological affect disposition(ing) regime, which acknowledges that affects cannot simply or fully be controlled or produced, at least not in a deterministic way. For Massumi, they can either be indirectly occasioned by providing event-friendly circum-

[4] Massumi recently proposed to dub this non-human-centric mode of power "ontopower", as the "power through which being becomes" (Massumi, 2015b, p. 71).

stances; or they can be modulated or "tweaked" once they have begun to unfold: "It is the tweaking of an arc of unfolding, on the fly. It is, therefore, more akin to the deflection of inflection of a prescribed intention, or pre-intended prescription" (Massumi, 2015a, p. 96).

6. Conclusion

With this reconception of affects as events, the question of disposition(ing) reaches a turning point. Up until now, the paradigm shifts always extended or claimed to extend the power of disposition(ing). However, on this occasion, with the emergence of eventology, dispositional power is decreased. It is as if the genealogy of affect disposition(ing) now enters a phase of its own decomposition, of its own deconstruction. But whether this new eventological paradigm has the strength to ever become hegemonic and thus to effectively antagonize the cybernetological and machinological regimes, is a question that cannot be answered at this point.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Tahani Nadim and Marie-Luise Angerer.

We acknowledge the support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and Open Access Publishing Fund of University of Potsdam.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Ahmad, K. (Ed.) (2011). *Affective computing and sentiment analysis. Emotion, metaphor, and terminology*. New York, NY: Springer.

Alter, A. (2017). *Irresistible. The rise of addictive technology and the business of keeping us hooked*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Angerer, M.-L., & Bösel, B. (2016). Total affect control. Or: Who's afraid of a pleasing little sister. *Digital Culture & Society*, *2*(1), 41–52.

Aristotle (1991). *The art of rhetoric*. London, UK: Penguin.

Bazin, H. (2003). A brief history of the prevention of infectious diseases by immunisations. *Comparative Immunology, Microbiology & Infectious Disaeases*, *26*, 293–308.

Brennan, T. (2004). *The transmission of affect*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Bröckling, U. (2015). *The entrepreneurial self. Fabricating a new type of subject*. London, UK: Sage.

Calvo, R. A., D'Mello, S. K., Gratch, J., & Kappas, A. (Eds.). (2015). *The Oxford handbook of affective computing*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Clough, P. T. (Ed.). (2007). *The affective turn. Theorizing the social*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Descartes, R. (1989). *The passions of the soul*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett. (Original work published 1649)

Dodds, E. R. (1951). *The Greeks and the irrational*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Dolphijn, R., & van der Tuin, I. (2012). *New materialism: Interviews & cartographies*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Library.

Ekman, P. (1999). Basic emotions. In T. Dalgleish & M. Power (Eds.), *Handbook of emotion and cognition* (pp. 45–60). Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Enzensberger, H. M. (1974). *The consciousness industry. On literature, politics and the media*. New York: Seabury Press.

Esposito, R. (2011). *Immunitas. The protection and negation of life*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Fitzgerald, J. T. (2008). The passions and moral progress: An introduction. In J. T. Fitzgerald (Ed.), *Passions and moral progress in Greco-Roman thought* (pp. 1–25). London, UK: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1988). *The care of the self. The history of sexuality* (Vol. 3). New York, NY: Vintage.

Foucault, M. (2009). *Security, territory, population. Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hadot, P. (1995). *Philosophy as a way of life. Spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Hirschman, A. O. (2013). *The passions and the interests. Political arguments for capitalism before its triumph*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1977)

Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (2002). *Dialectics of enlightenment. Philosophical fragments*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Kircher, A. (2006). *Musurgia universalis*. Kassel: Bärenreiter. (Original work published 1662)

Kolesch, D. (2006). *Theater der Emotionen. Ästhetik und Politik zur Zeit Ludwig XIV*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

Lanza, J. (2004). *Elevator music. A surreal history of muzak, easy-listening, and other moodsong*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Levine, R. (2003). *The power of persuasion. How we're bought and sold*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Markowetz, A., Blaszkiewicz, K., Montag, C., Switala, C., & Schlaepfer, T. (2014). Psycho-informatics: Big data shaping modern psychometrics. *Medical Hypotheses*, *82*(4), 405–407.

Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the virtual. Movement, affect, sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. (2015a). *Politics of affect*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Massumi, B. (2015b). *Ontopower. War, powers, and the state of perception*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. (2015c). *The power at the end of the economy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mattheson, J. (2008). *Der vollkommene Capellmeister. Neusatz des Textes und der Noten*. Kassel: Bärenre-

iter. (Original work published 1739)
Meek, R., & Sullivan, E. (Eds.). (2015). *The renaissance of emotion. Understanding affect in Shakespeare and his contemporaries*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
Ott, M. (2010). *Affizierung. Zu einer ästhetisch-epistemischen Figur*. Munich: Edition text + kritik.
Picard, R. W. (1997). *Affective computing*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Picard, R. W. (2015). The promise of affective computing. In R. A. Calvo, S. D'Mello, J. Gratch, & A. Kappas (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of affective computing* (pp. 11–20). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Pieper, J. (1965). *The four cardinal virtues. Prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
Pischner, H. (1963). *Die Harmonielehre Jean-Philippe Rameaus*. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.
Pixley, J. (2012). *Emotions in finance. Booms, busts, and uncertainty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Plato (1993). *The Symposium and the Phaedrus. Plato's erotic dialogues. Translated with introduction and commentaries by William S. Cobb*. Albana, NY: SUNY Press.
Plato (2008). *Gorgias* (R. Waterfield, Trans.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Pritz, S. M. (2016). Mood tracking. Zur digitalen Selbstvermessung der Gefühle. In S. Selke (Ed.), *Lifelogging. Digitale Selbstvermessung und Lebensprotokollierung* (pp. 127–150). Wiesbaden: Springer.
Saar, M. (2007). *Genealogie als Kritik. Geschichte und Kritik des Subjekts nach Nietzsche und Foucault*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
Saar, M. (2009). Genealogische Kritik. In R. Jaeggi & T. Wesche (Eds.), *Was ist Kritik?* (pp. 247–265). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Sparshott, F. (1998): Reflections on 'Affektenlehre' and dance theory in the eighteenth century. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *56*(1), 21–28.
Stein, D. J. (2008). *Philosophy of psychopharmacology. Smart pills, happy pills, pep pills*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Stiegler, B. (2010). *Taking care of youth and the generations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Stiegler, B. (2013). *Uncontrollable societies of disaffected individuals*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Stock, O., Guerini, M., & Pianesi, F. (2016). Ethical dilemmas for adaptive persuasion systems. In *Proceedings of the Thirtieth AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence*. Retrieved from https://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/AAAI/AAAI16
Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge. Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
Yonck, R. (2017). *Heart of the machine. Our future in a world of artificial emotional intelligence*. New York, NY: Arcade Publishing.

About the Author

Bernd Bösel (Dr. phil., MSc) is an Assistant Professor at the Institute for Arts and Media at the University of Potsdam and teaches in the curriculum "European Media Studies". He studied at the University of Vienna and wrote a dissertation on the entanglement of philosophy and enthusiasm. His current research interests include the philosophy of technology, theories of affects, moods, and atmospheres, as well as the plasticity of the brain and the mind.

COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 3, Pages 22–29
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i3.1424

Article

Towards a Psychoanalytic Concept of Affective-Digital Labour

Jacob Johanssen

Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI), Faculty of Media, Arts and Design, University of Westminster, HA1 3TP Middlesex, UK; E-Mail: j.johanssen@westminster.ac.uk

Submitted: 15 February 2018 | Accepted: 7 May 2018 | Published: 11 September 2018

Abstract
This article draws on the argument that users on corporate social media conduct labour through the sharing of user-generated content. Critical political economists argue that such acts contribute to value creation on social media and are therefore to be seen as labour. Following a brief introduction of this paradigm, I relate it to the notion of affective labour which has been popularised by the Marxist thinkers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. To them, affective labour (as a sub-category of immaterial labour) denotes embodied forms of labour that are about passion, well-being, feelings of ease, immaterial products and generally a kind of communicative relationality between individuals. I point to some problems with a lack of clarity in their conceptualisation of affective labour and argue that the Freudian model of affect can help in theorising affective labour further through a focus on social media. According to Freud, affect can be understood as a subjective, bodily experience which is in tension with the discursive and denotes a momentary feeling of bodily dispossession. In order to illustrate those points, I draw on some data from a research project which featured interviews with social media users who have facial disfigurements about their affective experiences online. The narratives attempt to turn embodied experiences into discourse.

Keywords
affective labour; digital labour; psychoanalysis; social media

Issue
This article is part of the issue "The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies", edited by Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier (Free University Berlin, Germany).

1. Introduction

The field of digital labour studies has seen increasing publications in recent years that focus on framing user activity on social media as labour. Drawing on Marx's labour theory of value, scholars have argued that user-generated content on commercial social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, or Weibo, is commodified and sold to advertisers. Users thus contribute to value being generated without receiving any monetary returns (e.g., Andrejevic, 2011, 2014; Comor, 2010; Dean, 2014; Fisher, 2012; Fuchs, 2012, 2014; Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013; Terranova, 2000). Many have argued that such user labour is also affective labour because it is about communication, relationships, desires, embodiment, or in short about the circulation of affects online (Dean, 2014; Jarrett, 2015; Pybus, 2015). The works of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000, 2004) on immaterial and affective labour have been of particular influence in this regard. This article engages with the above literature and critically discusses the lack of definitions of affective labour. The term affective labour is frequently evoked in the literature without clearly defining what is specifically affective about it. What is the nature of affective labour on social media?

In attempting to answer that question, I offer a psychoanalytic conceptualisation of affective labour by drawing on Freud's works on affect. Freud allows us to regard affective labour as a subjective process that is influenced by unconscious and relational dimensions as well as social forces. On social media, this means that affective labour occurs in relation to individuals' bodies and embodied states which are transformed into content. A psychoanalytic model of affective labour refers to al-

ready embodied, affective bodily states that influence affective labour online. Such states can never be fully translated into user-generated content, because they consist of elements which are beyond the representational and discursive realm (such as bodily experiences). I illustrate this model with some examples from a recent research project on individuals with visible facial differences and their use of social media for raising awareness of their conditions. I discuss selected interview narratives which show attempts at talking about affective-digital labour on social media that are in relation to the individuals' bodies, and the difficulty of representing themselves and engaging with others online. Affect, then, may be seen as an attempt to articulate bodily experiences in user-generated content, but this attempt always remains somewhat incomplete.

2. The Digital and Affective Labour Paradigms

Critical political economy scholars have argued that the user activity on commercial social media platforms constitutes unpaid labour. This argument has been most notably advanced by Christian Fuchs (2010, 2012, 2014) who draws on Karl Marx's labour theory of value and Dallas Smythe's (1981) notion of the audience commodity. For Marx, any activity that generates exchange value is considered labour (1976). Corporate social media companies such as YouTube, Facebook or Twitter (Ekman, 2012; Fisher, 2012) rely on users actively producing content which is then sold to advertisers to enable targeted advertising in return. Users do not receive a remuneration for this labour, but a free platform. As Fuchs elaborates:

> Users spend time on corporate Internet platforms that are funded by targeted advertising capital accumulation models. The time spent on corporate platforms is the value created by their unpaid digital labour. Their digital labour creates social relations, profile data, user-generated content and transaction data (browsing behaviour)—a data commodity that is offered for sale by Internet corporations to advertising clients that can select certain user groups they want to target. The act of exploitation is already created by the circumstance that users create a data commodity, in which their online work time is objectified, and that they do not own this data themselves, but rather corporate Internet platforms with the help of terms of use and privacy policies acquire ownership of this data. Corporate Internet platforms offer the data commodity that is the result of Internet presumption activity for sale to advertisers. The value realization process, the transformation of value into profit, takes place when targeted users view the advertisement (pay per view) or click on it (pay per click). (Fuchs, 2014, pp. 95–96)

In that sense, the time spent producing user-generated content on social media platforms amounts to unpaid labour which contributes towards profit for the social media companies. There has been some critique of this argument and the digital labour debate is still ongoing (see, e.g., Jarrett, 2015, for an overview) but cannot be covered here in greater detail. Related to this notion of digital labour, is the concept of immaterial labour, of which affective labour is a subset, developed by the Marxist philosophers Maurizio Lazzarato (1996) and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000, 2004). They argue that within informational capitalism (Dean, 2014; Fuchs, 2008) there is a transformation in the workplace towards work which does not produce a material, tangible product but immaterial products. For example, call centre work, advertising creation, prostitution, acting, software design. Hardt and Negri define immaterial labour as labour "that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response" (2004 p. 108). They note that there is an increasing drive for the labour process to become immaterial: "today labour and society have to informationalize, become intelligent, become communicative, become affective" (2004 p. 109). For Hardt and Negri, affective labour is a component, or sub-aspect, of immaterial labour. I follow and develop their definition in this article. It involves "the production and manipulation of affect and requires (virtual or actual) human contact, labour in the bodily mode…the labour is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible, a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion" (2000, p. 292).

Examples of affective labour include software designers, web developers, waiters and waitresses, sex workers, academics, and service workers (Hearn, 2010, p. 63). However, Hardt and Negri never clearly define what they mean by affect (Lanoix, 2013) and their use of the term seems to be implicitly more about intellectual-based work rather than fully embodied work. There is a privilege of reason and rationality over the messiness of embodied labour (Ahmed, 2014, p. 206). It is not clear how the term affective labour considerably advances discussions or develops arguments that much earlier concepts, such as Hochschild's emotional labour (1983), could not have articulated already. While certain types of industries have increased significantly over the past decades (information service work, care work, creative industries jobs), the question poses itself: what is distinctly "affective" about such work?

Kylie Jarrett (2015) and others (e.g., Coté & Pybus, 2011) have argued that social media use which is exploited is particularly affective. This affectivity is established through exchanges between a user, the platform interfaces and other users (e.g., in commenting on posts on Facebook, in re-tweeting on Twitter, in engaging in a discussion on Instagram). All of those examples are relational instances of the circulation of content. The more content circulates, the better for social media companies. Jodi Dean's work on communicative capitalism (2014) makes a similar argument. While Dean, who draws on

Lacanian ideas, has made important points about the role of affect in communicative capitalism, she has not explored how it can be studied empirically through a focus on lived experiences of individuals. There is thus scope to develop this critical tradition further. Recently, a number of scholars have specifically connected the notion of affect with social media (Clough, 2013; Garde-Hansen & Gorton, 2013; Johanssen, 2016; Karatzogianni & Kuntsman, 2012; Paasonen, Hillis, & Petit, 2015; Sampson, 2012). Paasonen et al. write that many forms of online user activity are about affect in a broader sense (e.g. reading news online, using Google, posting an update on social media). Such intense "affective investments" (2015, p. 7) show "articulations of desire, seduction, trust, and memory; sharp jolts of anger and interest; political passions; investments of time, labor, and financial capital; and the frictions and pleasures of archival practices" (2015, p. 1). Often, communication on social media is not "merely instrumental" (Paasonen et al., 2015, p. 10) and about goal-directed actions but also beyond rationality and conscious control. It is this idea of an intense form of embodied engagement with the Internet that makes affect a useful concept to work with when it comes to critically analysing social media use. Kylie Jarrett (2015) has similarly described social media use: "Rather than merely a site of disembodied rationality, the Internet is a site for physical arousal, heightened emotion and the cultivation and maintenance of rich social relationships" (p. 121).

However, perhaps due to affect's notorious slipperiness and messiness as a concept, the term is often used vaguely or contradictorily by different scholars. As noted, Paasonen et al. write of "affective attachments" on the Internet (2015, p. 1). Using social media may denote particular affective attachments or experiences, but what is specifically affective about them? In his work on Tumblr and its queer community, Alexander Cho (2015) has called affect "a moment of suspense, a shift, an attunement between entities" (p. 44). Veronika Tzankova (2015) has referred to networked affect, that is affective relationalities and communication online, as "a complex set of intensities associated with rational and nonrational modalities" (p. 62). Affect may "produce meanings that are only implicitly articulated in online discourse and representations" (Tzankova, 2015). The affect theorists Patricia Clough, Greg Goldberg, Rachel Schiff, Aaron Weeks and Craig Willse (2007) have defined affect as something that "is meant to address the becoming abstract, and therefore becoming subject to measure that which is seemingly disparate" (Clough et al., 2007, p. 62). Admittedly, I have taken such definitions out of context here, but they demonstrate the complexity and diversity of affect as a notion and its vagueness. I would like to offer a psychoanalytic, Freudian model of affect that seeks to clarify what affect means from a particular perspective. I would like to take this aspect of social media use as a form of unpaid, affective labour as a starting point in order to theorise it by drawing on Freud. Focussing on the inherent, rather than functional dimensions of affective labour on social media can add complexity to the concepts of affective / digital labour. Feminist scholars have made very important contributions to this debate by inserting care labour, reproductive labour, or feminised work back into the debate (Jarrett, 2015). There is scope to continue this kind of work. There are inherent problems with how Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) use the term affective labour, because they do not really specify what is essentially affective about it or where the affectivity lies (see Johanssen, in press, for an extended discussion of this point), but I would like to focus here on the use of the term in relation to social media.

3. Affect and Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud (1981), in contrast to many affect theories which emphasise the transindividual, non-discursive qualities and floating state of affect, developed a model that regards affect as an embodied, subjective experience. For him, an affective experience is felt through the body by being affected by someone or something. For example, in response to something the subject may see on social media. An affective experience is momentary and transitory and constitutes a movement from the body towards the social, from the internal towards the external. In an affective experience, the affect moves and is, what Freud called, "discharged" (1981a) by the subject. An affective experience can either be pleasurable or unpleasurable. It is not experienced or named as a specific emotion. Instead, it is difficult for the individual to precisely explain how they have felt during an affective experience. Affect, for Freud, always designates a state of momentary bodily dispossession. The psychoanalyst Ruth Stein has offered a useful definition in this context:

> "my body speaks itself to me"; when I am feeling, I possess my body, but at that same moment, the body is also its own speaker, and the three terms join together and link my possession ("my"), the object of this possession ("body"), and that which denies my possession ("it speaks"—and in that it is its own master, or speaker, thereby denying my possession of itself). (Stein, 1999, p. 127)

The body is experienced as "other" in such moments. Affect marks almost a degree of separation between the body and how the subject feels the body speaking itself. Such experiences can be reflected on afterwards. The individual cannot clearly define the affective qualities but tries to make sense of them through language (Johanssen, 2016). There is a sense of tension in trying to describe how an individual was affected by a particular bodily sensation. In that sense, affective experiences are situated in-between the discursive and the non-discursive (Green, 1999). The psychoanalytic conceptualisation of affect is particularly useful because it, in contrast to most affect theories in the humanities, ar-

gues that "affect" designates a subjective, bodily experience that is felt rather than completely known by the individual. The Freudian affect model is beneficial for this project because it places an emphasis on a tension between discursive and bodily aspects of experiences. It therefore allowed to research affective experiences empirically through qualitative interviews. In the next section, I present some examples that assist in sketching out a model of affective labour on social media which is influenced by psychoanalysis.

4. Affective Labour on Social Media: Raising Awareness of Facial Disfigurements

The data presented in this section was gathered as part of a research project on the use of social media by people with facial disfigurements in the UK (https://sites.google.com/view/mediadisfigurement). In the qualitative interviews, individuals were encouraged to speak without too much intervention on the part of the interviewer. While some affect theories tend to move away from discourse-based methods and analyses, this project was specifically interested in giving people with facial disfigurements, who are often misrepresented in the media, a voice so that they could account for their own feelings and embodied experiences of using social media. Participants were also encouraged to talk about their life histories and general life experiences of living with disfigurements. It was thus hoped that through their narratives discursive attempts could emerge that illustrate affective experiences. Seven individuals were interviewed and, coincidentally, all presented a very professional use of social media which was aimed at raising awareness of facial disfigurements, at disrupting stereotypes and engaging with the wider public (Garrisi & Johanssen, 2018; Johanssen & Garrisi, 2017). From the outset, one could describe such forms of social media use as a kind of campaigning, or professionalised labour with specific goals in mind.

4.1. Different Bodies on Social Media

One research participant had sustained burns as a young infant. As she grew up, she was faced with a changing body, like all of us, but her burns would change throughout her life. She explained:

> Like with burns where it doesn't grow, it just pulls and like normal skin grows and stretches, where burns doesn't, so and reconstructive surgery and it is altering an image that you already see in the mirror, so you may get used to a scar, you may get used to a burn but then you're having surgery and it may get altered and then you develop that kind of attachment to your original burns which is weird, so kinda like it's, I don't know how to explain it, it's *kinda* like, it just *kinda* knocks you for six, so it and it just makes you feel like a bit alien having this new burn, or this new scar, or this new skin graft, you're like "Oh what is this?", will that bother *ya*, that little skin graft, but not having burns since you are eighteen months that is really weird erm but like where it doesn't grow or stretch it may like leave, it might make, so for example, I can't explain it, can you see here? [Points to her arm]. (I3)

The quote suggests how her body was affected by a particular experience of living with burns. The narrative can be seen as an attempt to render the affective experiences associated with growing up with a particular bodily condition into language. The interviewee was not quite able to fully describe her embodied state: "I can't explain it", she said. Living with burns and a changing body was described by her in affective terms which stressed bodily functions and an embodied relatedness to being in the world, but she seemed not fully able to turn affective experiences into language. Such states were often described by the interviewees through bodily terms. Another interviewee specifically wondered about her usage of the word "disfigurement" and if it was an appropriate signifier for describing a bodily condition:

> You know, I remember actually, you know, I didn't even really consider myself, or I had, the word disfigured, I didn't even attribute that word to myself until, like, until, I think it was on my last operation, so I would have been about 20-ish. I met my surgeon, and he said, "Oh yes, this…" He said a comment like, "Oh yes, this type of disfigurement blah, bah, blah." I was like, "Ah! I'm disfigured?" I was like, "Oh yes, of course I am." But I just always saw myself as wonky, or you know, I don't know, I just never. (I5)

The term "disfigured" possibly symbolised particular states of being for the participant and she was affected by a surgeon referring to her as having a "disfigurement", thereby attributing a particular discursive construction to her. The woman may have felt labelled by someone else, a doctor with considerable symbolic and actual power, with a medical term. She had not really defined herself and her own bodily experiences through the single term "disfigurement" up until that moment. The term "disfigurement" may have contributed to a feeling of difference from other bodies for the individual. Bodily differences are often recognisable and enforced by others. The surgeon probably needed to use the term to follow medical protocol and appear professional. Being made aware of being different from others was also discussed by many other interviewees in the project. It also showed itself in how they spoke about their use of social media for the purpose of raising awareness of facial disfigurements. "On Instagram, I do more shots of, less shots of, selfies, more shots of my full body" (I5). Another female interviewee spoke about whom she followed on Twitter: "I try and follow as many charities, as many charities, but also ones that are appropriate to me *erm* to support" (I3). Such narratives imply that the individuals' use of so-

cial media was clearly affected by their subjectivities. Interviewees emphasised a connection between how they used social media, who they followed and their bodily differences. Many also spoke of how they handled responses to their bodily differences online. For example, one interviewee described the Facebook page she had set up:

> I made a mistake when I first *erm* started my page…, I remember just taking a picture of my back and that was it, so all you see was burns and it got quite a lot of negative, yeah and a lot of negativity come from, *cos*' I think I had like an open page and I had loads of followers and literally built three and a half thousand friends and fifteen hundred followers but a lot of the followers were literally like from India, from different parts of Asia and they were mainly the ones that they would say, they'd say "pretty" and "slut" so there was kind of, yeah they were putting me down and saying "*Eew* that's disgusting, that's ugly, put it away, cover up", they were not happy with it, another thing that I've learned is that when I've gone abroad to other countries *erm* if I show off my scars, they tend to laugh at me, almost like it's a joke and I get that quite a lot. (I2)

Another person, who had a cleft lip and palate, initially said that they were not a big part of her identity: "the cleft lip and palate is part of my identity, but it's a small part. It's not the first, like, if you were to ask me to write down ten things about myself, it might not even feature on that list" (I5, lines 537–540). However, as the interview went on, she described her use of Instagram:

> I think the biggest thing, so on Instagram, like, occasionally I will see a photo of myself, and I'm like, "Oh that really highlights my cleft." And I'll be like, "Oh, please use the one where it's less visible." Like, or less apparent. So yes, so that's something that Instagram has, kind of, like, the way that I see, the way that I take photos of myself, or that other people take of me, you know, there are angles and there is, but then, again, that's kind of problem that everybody has, I think. Everybody has, like, unflattering photos and angles, and more. So I, yes, like everybody else I'll be, like, "Can you use that one of me please because it looks a bit better than this one?"…So if a photo is taken of me from a, sort of, side angle on this side, my face looks very dented. I'm like, "No!" So yes, so, photos, yes, photo editing and things like that. But, yes, but there are, I think it depends on how you use Instagram as well. Mine is to, kind of, document my life. (I5)

The quotes suggest that affective-digital labour played a key role in the participants' social media use. It showed how they brought particular embodied subjectivities to their self-representation online and were then affected by responses from others. Many participants spoke about a pro-active and agentic approach to negotiating their bodily differences on social media. Both of the above quotes signify a heightened self-surveillance as well. The two interviewees emphasised their own responsibilities of maintaining their social media profiles and online images rather than the negative responses from others. The interviewee spoke of the "mistake" when uploading a particular photo that showed too much of her burns. The other participant similarly spoke about her desire to present herself online in a manner that made her bodily difference less apparent. Going back to Hardt and Negri's (2000) definition of affective labour, we can see how the two users spoke about their affective-digital labour in a way that was about relationalities. It was aimed at other users and it seemed that in order to be able to successfully raise awareness, forms of self-representation needed to be conducted in a nuanced manner so that others were not offended. The two quotes exemplify what it means to manage affect online and attempts to create particular affective atmospheres that were characterised by feelings of ease for all involved. This can be further exemplified through another narrative from a woman who spoke about her efforts of raising awareness on social media:

> I am doing this all on my own, I mean I had, I've got like the little website which *erm* I had help with but I am *gonna* start doing that myself and so a lot of it is done on social media like Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, I've got over 2000 people on my Facebook group and that's still building. I think if it did become a little bit negative I'd definitely look at myself and think what is it I am doing wrong? And I think what I tend to do is just keep it *erm* not too "happy" happy *cos*' otherwise people go "Oh that's crap, it can't be like that all the time" but I just always thank people, I always reply to people as well which they seem to like and then they come back with another reply saying "You're great" and yeah I don't know what I am doing but it seems to be working. (I2)

What is perhaps most striking about those accounts of social media use is that they implicitly frame it as a form of individualised, labour that comes close to the notion of the entrepreneurial self. Rather than emphasising communal and solidary forms of social media use, the people interviewed all spoke of their solitary efforts. The narratives further demonstrate the usefulness of the Freudian model of affect as a subjective experience. The interviewees spoke of their own bodies and how they were being affected and also affecting others through their embodied subjectivities online. At the same time, their bodies were already affected in the wider social world beyond social media through being laughed at by others, stared at, commented on or questioned. For Freud (1981a), affect is situated at the intersection of the discursive and non-discursive. The discursive narratives reproduced here may be seen as attempts to speak about particular

affective experiences and ways of being in the world with specific bodily differences. The specific strategies of using social media, which were akin to producing feelings of ease and wellbeing that Hardt and Negri identify as characteristics of affective labour, may thus be seen as attempts to discharge or pre-empt unpleasurable affective experiences so that the affective labour online may be experienced as pleasurable by the interviewees.

Related to this, one interviewee spoke of the positive affectivity associated with the production of a YouTube video which showed her bodily differences:

> I released so much and I didn't realise that I would and everything that I spoke about, it was just like *erm* I've taken this coat off and I am now free like that's exactly how I felt and I went home and I realised that I was a changed person, just from the video and what made it even better was the fact that people started to see it, they started to comment, put it on YouTube and put it on my Facebook page so all my cousins, family, friends they all see it and everybody was telling me what an amazing woman I was and to hear such good feedback and hear such lovely messages it just made me feel so good, so now I've gone from that negative person into this all positive me. (I2)

The expression "I released so much" may be seen as an attempt to describe her affective, pleasurable discharge that occurred as a result of uploading the video and the responses she received. They resulted in a feeling of ease for her. This is a distinct example of a pleasurable affective moment whereby feelings of solidarity, support and care resulted in an affective experience which the individual described as making her feel "so good".

4.2. The Unpleasures of Affective Experiences

Many participants spoke in detail about the unpleasures and anxieties associated with their labour on social media. Many said they feared being trolled or harassed online, but this only strengthened their goals of raising awareness and making their voices heard. "It [trolling] is at the back of your mind but I try not to think about it too much" (I1). "What's the worst that can happen? Get *memed*, trolled? They are just a random person on a computer at the end of the day" (I3). "There's the kind of tweet where you just want to just reach through the screen and just slap. So, I do find that with social media sometimes that it can be this cycle where you feel like you have to have the last word and that's not very healthy, but for the most part it's great." (I4), as some interviewees remarked. Such narratives can be seen as examples of disaffection (Gibbs, 2002) whereby particular affective experiences are surpassed or left behind through speaking about them and thereby rendering them perhaps less affecting than they may have been in the moment they occurred. Managing this, sometimes tense, relationship of having a disfigurement and being affected by others in a negative way was crucial for the social media labour of the participants. One interviewee, who had missing fingers, also spoke about unpleasurable experiences:

> IE: I do get that on tubes, of people, like, taking photos of my hands.
> IV: Really?
> IE: Yes.
> IV: What do you do when that happens?
> IE: Well, it's really awkward. I always think that I'm going to do something amazing, you know? I'm going to be, you know, I'm going to say something and I'm going, and I just don't because normally they're…
> IV: Well, it's hard to do that.
> IE: Well, also because they could be like, I'm not doing that, you know?
> IV: They could deny it.
> IE: Unless they were right in front of me, like, zooming in, they could pretend they're not doing it. You know, I can see that they're doing it and they're laughing and they're sharing it with their friends online or whatever. (I4)

Those quotes show that social media use is an embodied practice which revolves around affective intensities. Those intensities circulate between social media users and social media interfaces. As discussed, social media may provide spaces for particular, pleasurable affective atmospheres to emerge and be managed, but such atmosphere can also be disrupted by other users. Social media labour was thus an ambivalent affair for the participants and resulted in heightened self-monitoring and care of what and how they posted online. Such practices are acts of affective-digital labour because they ultimately aim to create feelings of ease, wellbeing, passion and relationships online, or in short: the perfect product of a self-commodified user. User labour on corporate social media is thus characterised by a sense of affective fragility which both embraced and feared, managed and disrupted periodically.

5. Conclusion: Towards a Psychoanalytic Theory of Affective-Digital Labour

It was the goal of this article to introduce a model of affective-digital labour based on Sigmund Freud's works on affect. The field of digital labour has predominantly seen studies from political economy which examine the phenomenon from a structural point of view. There are some studies which have begun to theorise such labour as affective and are interested in exploring the inherent dimensions more (Jarrett, 2015; Pybus, 2013, 2015). There is scope to continue such work, as I have done in this article. Freud conceptualised an affective experience as a subjective state where the body becomes its own speaker (Stein, 1999). For him, affect is fleeting and transitory but can have strong and lasting impressions on the

individual. This was demonstrated by the interview narratives in which people with facial disfigurements spoke at length about their experience of using social media. Objectively speaking, their use of social media is a form of labour because it contributes to exchange value being generated by social media companies. There was also another dimension which lent itself to theorising the forms of self-presentation as labour because users spoke of it in an almost business-like, entrepreneurial manner. Their use of social media was goal directed to raise awareness of their own bodies. I discussed various examples that highlight pleasurable or unpleasurable affective experiences of the interviewees. They had difficulties fully translating such embodied experiences into words. There is always a dimension that remains unrepresentable. It cannot be fully described through language. Through their labour, interviewees were keen to create particular affective atmospheres on social media. Atmospheres that were about creating and sustaining feelings of ease, well-being and passion for all involved users. This form of social media engagement shows how users are agentic and empowered as well as attacked and disrupted by others on social media. Their representation gives them some form of power but this power comes at a cost. It is exploited by social media companies and affected by other users when they attack or make fun of them. This results in a form of self-monitoring where users try to navigate between presenting themselves, but doing so in a manner that maintained a pleasurable affective atmosphere.

I have thus put forward a distinct model of affective labour, which enriches the one developed by Hardt and Negri as part of their work on immaterial labour (2000, 2004). A psychoanalytic model of affective-digital labour on social media takes account of embodied forms of use which are contradictory, messy and in tension with discourse. While I have arguably offered an illustration of affective labour through a particular angle (i.e., through a discussion of individuals with visible facial differences), it can nonetheless point to more general dimensions of labour on social media. The professional use in which many individuals use social media platforms today is marked by particular, (un)pleasurable affective experiences in relation to others. It is also about managing affective atmospheres online through maintaining particular relationalities (e.g., through posting in a certain way, liking another's post, etc.). This labour is difficult to fully describe through language alone because it is both based on individuals' particular embodied subjectivities as well as conducted in a bodily manner online. Such a concept allows for inherent, rather than only structural, aspects of affective-digital labour to be theorised and researched.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Ahmed, S. (2014). *Cultural politics of emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Andrejevic, M. (2011). Surveillance and alienation in the online economy. *Surveillance & Society*, *8*(3), 278–287.

Andrejevic, M. (2014). Alienation's returns. In C. Fuchs, & M. Sandoval (Eds.), *Critique, social media and the information society* (pp. 179–190). New York, NY: Routledge.

Cho, A. (2015). Queer reverb: Tumblr, affect, time. In K. Hillis, S. Paasonen, & M. Petit (Eds.), *Networked affect* (pp. 43–58). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Clough, P. T. (2013). The digital, labor, and measure beyond biopolitics. In S. Trebor (Ed.), *Digital labor: The Internet as playground and factory* (pp. 112–126). London: Routledge.

Clough, P. T., Goldberg, G., Schiff, R., Weeks, A., & Willse, C. (2007). Notes towards a theory of affect-itself. *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization*, *7*(1), 60–77.

Comor, E. (2010). Digital prosumption and alienation. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*, *10*(3), 439–454.

Coté, M., & Pybus, J. (2011). Learning to immaterial labour 2.0: Facebook and social networks. M. Peters & E. Bulut (Eds), *Cognitive capitalism, education and digital labor* (pp. 169–194). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Dean, J. (2014). Communicative capitalism and class struggle. *Spheres: Journal for Digital Cultures*, *1*, 1–16. Retrieved from http://spheres-journal.org/communicative-capitalism-and-class-struggle

Ekman, M. (2012). Understanding accumulation: The relevance of Marx's theory of primitive accumulation in media and communication studies. *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique—Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, *10*(2), 156–170.

Fisher, E. (2012). How less alienation creates more exploitation? Audience labour on social network sites. *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique—Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, *10*(2), 171–183.

Freud, S. (1981a). Sketches for the "preliminary communication" of 1893. In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 1) (pp. 147–151). London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.

Freud, S. (1981b). The neuro-psychoses of defence. In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 3) (pp. 43–62). London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.

Freud, S. (1981c). The interpretation of dreams. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 5). London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.

Fuchs, C. (2008). *Internet and society: Social theory in the information age*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Fuchs, C. (2010). Labor in informational capitalism and on the Internet. *The Information Society*, *26*(3), 179–196.

Fuchs, C. (2012). Dallas Smythe today—The audience commodity, the digital labour debate, Marxist political economy and critical theory. Prolegomena to a digital labour theory of value. *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique—Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, *10*(2), 692–740.

Fuchs, C. (2014). *Digital labour and Karl Marx*. London: Routledge.

Fuchs, C., & Sevignani, S. (2013). What is digital labour? What is digital work? What's their difference? And why do these questions matter for understanding social media? *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique—Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, *11*(2), 237–293.

Garde-Hansen, J., & Gorton, K. (2013). *Emotion online: Theorizing affect on the Internet*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Garrisi, D., & Johanssen, J. (2018). Competing narratives in framing disability in the UK media: A comparative analysis of journalistic representations of facial disfigurement versus practices of self-representations online. *JOMEC Journal*, *12*, 128–144. Retrieved from https://jomec.cardiffuniversitypress.org/articles/abstract/10.18573/jomec.172

Gibbs, A. (2002). Disaffected. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, *16*(3), 335–341.

Green, A. (1999). *The fabric of affect in the psychoanalytic discourse*. London: Routledge.

Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Hearn, A. (2010). Reality television, *The Hills* and the limits of the immaterial labour thesis *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique—Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, *8*(1), 60–76.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. London: University of California Press.

Jarrett, K. (2015). *Feminism, labour and digital media: The digital housewife*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Johanssen, J. (2016). Not belonging to one's self: Affect on Facebook's site governance page. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. Doi: 10.1177/1367877916666116

Johanssen, J. (in press). *Psychoanalysis and digital culture: Audiences, social media, and big data*. London: Routledge.

Johanssen, J., & Garrisi, D. (2017). "I am burning, I am burning." Affect, acid attacks and British tabloid newspapers. *Journalism Studies*. Doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2017.1389294

Karatzogianni, A., & Kuntsman, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Digital cultures and the politics of emotions. Feelings, affect and technological change*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lanoix, M. (2013). Labor as embodied practice: The lessons of care work. *Hypatia*, *28*(1), 85–100.

Lazzarato, M. (1996). Immaterial labor. In P. Virno & A. Negri (Eds.), *Radical thought in Italy: A potential politics* (pp. 133–147). Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Marx, K. (1976). *Capital: A critique of political economy* (Volume 1). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Paasonen, S., Hillis, K., & Petit, M. (2015). Introduction: Networks of transmission: Intensity, sensation, value. In: K. Hillis, S. Paasonen, & M. Petit (Eds.), *Networked affect* (pp. 1–24). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Pybus, J. (2013). Social networks and cultural workers: Towards an archive for the prosumer. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, *6*(2), 137–152.

Pybus, J. (2015). Accumulating affect: Social networks and their archives of feelings. K. Hillis, S. Paasonen, & M. Petit (Eds.), *Networked Affect* (pp. 234–249). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Sampson, T. (2012). *Virality: Contagion theory in the age of networks*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Smythe, D. (1981). *Dependency road*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Stein, R. (1999). *Psychoanalytic theories of affect*. London: Karnac.

Terranova, T. (2000). Free labor: Producing culture for the digital economy. *Social Text*, *18*(2), 33–58.

Tzankova, V. (2015). Affective politics or political affection: Online sexuality in Turkey. In K. Hillis, S. Paasonen, & M. Petit (Eds.), *Networked affect* (pp. 59–74). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

About the Author

Jacob Johanssen is Senior Lecturer in the Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI), University of Westminster, UK. His research interests include audience research, social media, digital labour, psychoanalysis and the media, affect theory, psychosocial studies, and critical theory. His monograph Psychoanalysis and Digital Culture: Audiences, Social Media, and Big Data is forthcoming with Routledge.

COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 3, Pages 30–39
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i3.1502

Article

Negotiating Belonging as Cultural Proximity in the Process of Adapting Global Reality TV Formats

Laura Sūna

Institute for Media and Communication Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, 14195 Berlin, Germany;
E-Mail: laura.suna@fu-berlin.de

Submitted: 28 March 2018 | Accepted: 4 June 2018 | Published: 11 September 2018

Abstract
This article focuses on aspects of belonging the producers of reality TV programmes address in the staging of emotions. Based on interview statements by 12 experts from the field of national and international reality TV format production, we argue as follows: on the one hand, producers in reality TV shows address belonging as a perceived cultural proximity to trans-local meta-narratives of a longing for change, romantic love, competition and victory. The producers associate these trans-local meta-narratives with allegedly universal emotions. On the other hand, the producers address belonging as a perceived cultural proximity to local cultural discourses on beauty ideals and combine these with a specific local cultural performance of emotions. The results show that an emotional repertoire is developed and negotiated in the adaptation process of trans-local formats. It refers to universalistic understanding of emotional display and negotiates specific "feeling rules" accordingly.

Keywords
belonging; cultural proximity; emotion repertoires; emotions; feeling rules; format adaptation; reality TV

Issue
This article is part of the issue "The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies", edited by Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier (Free University Berlin, Germany).

1. Introduction

The article's starting point is the assumption that emotions are extensively displayed in reality TV formats and that these emotions represent an essential moment of attraction for the audience. As Jelle Mast (2016) depicts fittingly, a key notion in reality TV is to take the audience on an emotional journey. Reality TV formats are primarily devised with the intent of creating stories and delivering entertainment by dramatic pleasures to the audience (Mast, 2016, p. 905). The format rules of globally traded TV formats encompass diverse narratives, rules of competition and audio-visual display techniques that provoke an affection and emotional response in the participants and audience. Developing an "emotional commitment" in the viewers—according to Henry Jenkins (2009, p. 348)—is one of the main goals of entertainment television. It provides viewer loyalty to the TV format and the products displayed there.

The study's subject is globally traded talent and dating shows. In order for globally traded entertainment formats to be successful in local territories, they are subject to specific cultural adaptations. In this context, we are interested in how allegedly global emotions are adapted to local cultural conditions in format production; i.e., how emotions are produced in the local adaptation of globally circulating reality TV formats. From a cultural studies perspective, we are particularly interested in the aspects of belonging and communitisation the producers of reality TV programmes address by presenting emotions. To what extent do reality TV formats provide proposals of proximity and distance by staging emotions? And how are feeling rules and emotional repertoires negotiated or redefined? Here we connect to the discussion on "affective citizenship" (Fortier, 2010, p. 19), as today the question of how one feels about the other group and its members has become relevant. Policy and media address "the 'affective subject'; that is, a subject whose conduct arises

from desires, fears, anxieties, insecurities, affection, care, dis/trust, un/ease and so on" (Fortier, 2010, p. 19). All in all, the article asks how producers of reality TV formats address the affective citizen in their work.

2. Belonging, Emotions and Cultural Proximity

In order to maximise profits, global television formats try to reach as broad and heterogeneous an audience as possible and offer references for various viewers. Particularly, globally traded reality TV formats use universal topics that can be connected to different cultural contexts (Stehling, 2015, p. 60). In the TV shows, processes of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the creation (or refusal) of *belonging* are made visible by means of different, culturally diverse protagonists and implicitly connected emotional displays. A social distinction of 'us' and 'them' becomes visible; the formats relate to this and simultaneously provoke feelings of belonging in communities beyond the media and TV formats. The forms of communitisation can correspond with real social groups. At the same time, they can also address "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1991). The importance of media products for questions of belonging has so far been rather neglected in communication studies (Lähdesmäki et al., 2016, p. 242). The study presented here is dedicated to the analysis of forms of belonging in and by media products such as reality TV formats and focuses on their emotional and affective dimensions. These are understood with the concept of belonging in the sense of a feeling of affiliation (Lünenborg, Maier, Sūna, & Töpper, 2018).

We define belonging as an "emotionally charged social location" (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2012, p. 11) that is produced in relation to social groups, materialities, geographic spaces or media content. It is negotiated situationally and constituted by feelings of belonging (Röttger-Rössler, 2016, p. 2). We assume that the location is based on affective practices. At the same time, such affective practices and emotions can also be the effect of this location. Individuals can have several affiliations to differently constituted collectives such as gender, ethnicity, nation or also association, family, school or peer group (Anthias, 2006, p. 26).

Furthermore, we explore to what extent producers of reality TV formats rely on an emotional and affective level in the performance and perception of commonality or difference as well as discursive attachments of communitizing meanings.

Emotions are understood here as social and cultural phenomena (von Scheve, 2017, p. 2). They are closely tied to knowledge systems, norms and values, which individuals do not always have to be aware of and are learned during socialisation (Hochschild, 1983). The expression and evaluation of emotions is therefore influenced by social and individual rules; Hochschild (1979) called them "feeling rules". Some of these rules can be (culturally) universal, while others apply only for a limited period or to certain social groups, within which they can also be used to distinguish the members from other collectives (Hochschild, 1979, p. 566). Culture, context and historicity therefore play a role for the specific emotional (expressive and behavioural) rules. Individuals have cultural knowledge about particular forms of expression and behaviour that provides orientation for which emotions are appropriate in which situations. An ensemble of such repetitive, socially rooted and regulated verbal and nonverbal emotional forms of expression and behaviour—on the basis of which emotions are ordered, evaluated and circulated—can be described as an emotional repertoire. Media products can be understood as a repository, carrier, mediator as well as context for producing and negotiating emotional repertoires. Social norms and values regarding the appropriateness of emotions are displayed and performed in audio-visual media. Media also contribute to the circulation of forms and patterns of emotional experience, behaviour and interaction. These rules can be confirmed, imitated, internalized or passed on, but also rejected or renegotiated by the media audience (Lünenborg et al., 2018).

As mentioned above, it is essential for the profit-oriented production of a TV programme to achieve the highest possible audience rating and to bind as many loyal viewers to the programme as possible. Since these are trans-local reality TV formats, i.e., formats dispersed over diverse local contexts (Hepp, 2013) requiring local cultural adaptation, the actors involved in the production process aim to produce a connectivity to the format in the sense of a perceived local cultural proximity on the side of the audience. Such cultural proximity can lead to an identification with or a distinction from forms of belonging and communitisation addressed in the TV programme.

The term cultural proximity was introduced by Straubhaar (later developed further together with La Pastina), initially in the context of the trans-local reception of global media content. The term proximity also includes an allusion to belonging, a feeling of belonging to an imagined community (Straubhaar, 2007). Straubhaar addressed the question of why some international TV series are popular in various countries and others are not. Despite him analysing the TV audience, we see the potential to transfer these ideas to the TV production realm because the producers address an imagined audience and align their work with the anticipated preferences and belonging of this audience. La Pastina and Straubhaar summarise the core idea of the theory of cultural proximity as follows: "audiences will tend to choose to watch television programmes that are closest, most proximate or most directly relevant to them in cultural and linguistic terms" (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005, p. 273).

Cultural proximity is created through historical spaces of common local culture and language, i.e., cultural references in the media text can be easily recognized and appropriated by the audience. The selection of media content can also be influenced by specific group affiliations (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005).

It is the *local culture*, meant as a familiar linguistic space of everyday culture, that shapes the intensity of the audience's perception of cultural proximity to a media text (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005, p. 274). These are local cultural elements such as body language, emotional display, understanding humour, religious elements, etc. In addition, the concept of cultural proximity emphasises a plurality within the national/cultural context. Local culture is not equated with a national culture. In the context of globalisation and hybridisation of culture, viewers access and rely on various cultural contexts simultaneously that are not equal to a nation state. Thus, cultural proximity is also seen as plural. In fact, the audience of a TV programme consists of various sub-audiences. We assume that the producers of reality TV programmes consider these aspects in the adaptation process of the formats. They thus address individual parts of the audience to whom they ascribe specific local cultural interests.

Furthermore, La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005, p. 274) emphasise that cultural proximity can also emerge independently of its local cultural references. They argue that cultural proximity to a media content can emerge on a transnational level as genre proximity, as value proximity and thematic proximity (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005, p. 286). In contrast to La Pastina and Straubhaar, we prefer to use the term *trans-local* instead of transnational. According to Hepp (2013, p. 70), the term "trans-locality" describes cultural spaces beyond national frameworks and cultural phenomena that circulate beyond local cultural contexts. The familiarity with the narrative styles and display techniques of a TV genre such as reality TV is present in various cultural contexts and thus enables trans-local cultural proximity to a TV product. These are cultural *references* that are *compatible trans-locally*; for example, certain universal values, images, archetypes, themes and narrative structures (Grüne, 2016, p. 144). Overall, it should be emphasised that the attractiveness of a trans-local TV programme for viewers lies in a combination of trans-local and local references that they find comprehensible. This means that, for example, the universal images are adapted to the familiar linguistic space of everyday culture.

In their work, producers of reality TV formats draw on the specific (anticipated) expectations of the audience that can be described as the idea of cultural proximity. Having said that, we will analyse the specific discursive references in reality TV that offer a feeling of cultural proximity on both a local cultural and a trans-local level. This proximity can then result in forms of belonging for the anticipated audience. We are particularly interested in emotions addressed in the production of these discursive references.

The production of trans-local television formats is shaped by various actors. Among them are the TV networks, who as programme providers decide on the formats to be procured, produced and broadcasted. However, the production companies are responsible for implementing a program and adapting the trans-locally traded format to local conditions (Grüne, 2016, p. 77). As a rule, the licensor is represented by consultants called 'flying producers' who accompany and control the adaptation process in accordance with the format license (Altmeppen, Lantzsch, & Will, 2007, p. 101). The producers of entertainment formats must be considered as gatekeepers, since they decide which trans-local formats are to be adapted for the local market and also influence the specific local reinterpretation of the original format. Producers use the contractually agreed creative freedom of the format to make it effective and comprehensible in the specific reference area. Grüne (2016, p. 381) describes format adaptation as a hybridisation of strategic, intentional and organisational practices of the actors involved in production; these shape cultural recombination and possible selection of local and trans-local interpretative patterns. Based on such observations, we examine which local and trans-local frames of references producers rely on in their everyday working process of format adaptation.

After a short description of the method, these two levels of production and negotiation of belonging by cultural proximity will be presented along with statements by national and international producers of reality TV. In the following sections we argue as follows: on the one hand, the producers address belonging as a perceived cultural proximity to trans-local meta-narratives in the reality TV programmes. They associate these meta-narratives with allegedly global emotions and emotional repertoires. On the other hand, the producers approach belonging as a perceived cultural proximity to local cultural aspects and relate these with a specific local cultural performance of emotions.

3. Method and Data

Since the production of reality TV shows is a relatively closed area, we rely on statements by people involved in the programmes' production. The best way to gain such knowledge is to perform expert interviews as a method.

According to Blöbaum, Nölleke and Scheu (2016), expert interviews can be defined as guided interviews with role bearers of different social/cultural areas. One of the advantages of expert interviews is that the experts generally have a high level of linguistic and social competence; this allows statements to be made on complex or prelinguistically and unconsciously defined topics such as affects and emotions (Blöbaum et al., 2016, p. 176). We are interested in the explicit knowledge of e.g., production processes and implicit (because often hardly reflected) knowledge about "emotion rules" and emotion concepts. If we focus on the area of emotions from the perspective of experts, it must be noted that they are both involved in shaping the emotional process of programmes and are emotionally involved in the programmes themselves (Kleres, 2015, p. 91). Wolfgang Dunkel and Margit Weihrich (2013, pp. 107-108) distinguish between three

dimensions of emotional labour. Emotions as an object of work, emotions as a means of work and emotions as a condition for the work (work on one's own feelings, for example in the form of feeling rules or professional standards). In the context of our study, this means that the producers work—on the one hand—on emotions and with the emotions of others, and—on the other hand—they must regulate their own emotions. The producers aim to tell the audience an emotional story (emotions as the subject of the work) by using format rules and staging strategies (emotions as a working tool), which should evoke a certain emotional performance of the participants and an emotional and affective attachment of the audience to the programme. At the same time, the producers themselves are emotionally involved in the work (working on their own feelings); for example, if the professional feeling rules do not correspond to the individual rules or the individual feelings take over in the professional context. In the following sections, we will focus on the part of the study that relates to emotions as the subject of the work and as a working tool. These are emotions that should contribute to the financial success of the TV format from the point of view of the producer. These are emotions performed by the contestants and anticipated emotions of the format audience (for an analysis on emotion labour of the producers see Lünenborg et al., 2018).

The experts for the study were recruited with a snowball method, i.e., the experts already interviewed recommended further possible interview partners. All in all, it was important to meet a possible variance of functions and reality TV formats that were of interest to us. In the sense of "theoretical sampling" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), we interviewed various people involved in the production process: this included employees of local production companies that produce talent and dating formats such as Germany's Next Topmodel, The Bachelor, The Voice and Pop Idol. At the same time, we were interested in people who develop, accompany and produce globally traded formats, so-called "flying producers" (Altmeppen et al., 2007, p. 101). We interviewed directors, executive producers, casting agents, people responsible for the development and sales of formats, as well as directors of the editorial offices, who introduce the reality TV shows to TV networks. A theoretical saturation was achieved with a total of 12 experts (see Table 1). The interviews were conducted between January and March 2016 in German and English and had an average length of about 40 minutes.

The transcripts of the interviews were analysed by a coding process oriented to qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2008). After an open coding, sensitizing concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were developed and used for a repeated coding with the software MaxQDA. Five main categories were developed, each (with the exception of one) had several sub-categories. The main categories were: trans-local cultural references; local cultural references; belonging; emotion work; and professionality. The first three main categories were used to explain the overall category of cultural proximity. The category of belonging described passages in the interview material concerning notions of inclusion and exclusion, feelings of affiliation and positioning in relation to social groups and ascriptions in the context of gender, ethnicity, nation, class and others. Trans-local cultural references and local cultural references were described through the statements about the spatiality of cultural meanings. Cultural proximity was then located in the context of emotional and affective positioning to different cultural products, references and discourses. For example, signifiers such as "my/their culture", "our media stars", "comprehensible for us" describe the perceived cultural relevance and closeness to a media text. In the following sections, a part of the analysis from this coding process will be displayed.

4. Production and Negotiation of Perceived Belonging as Cultural Proximity

4.1. Belonging as Cultural Proximity by Trans-Local Cultural References

Since they circulate trans-locally, reality TV formats are based on certain aspects that are trans-locally compatible for viewers. These are integrated in the format structure and rules (Lantzsch, 2008, p. 165). Using empirical material from the expert interviews, we want to show which trans-local themes understood as meta-narratives have, from the point of view of the producers, the potential to create a feeling of proximity in the audience to a reality TV format. The term "narrative" describes an established story that transports values and emotions, is related to a certain cultural context and is subject to change over time (see Seibel, 2009). With the prefix 'meta', we underline the widespread—i.e., trans-local validity—of the narrative.

Reality TV formats are designed to provide an intense emotional experience to the viewers. Several interviewed experts state that this is the programmes' goal and thus also one of the most important themes of audience loyalty to the format and TV show, as it guarantees an "emotional commitment" (Jenkins, 2009) on the side of the audience. The producers use terms such as "strong emotional moment" (12) or the "emotional impact" (01) of a scene in the programme and thus estimate the potential for affection for the programme's audience.[1] This confirms the producers' position among the various players in the format market as described above. The producers are strongly interested in the financial success of their TV program. Among other things, this is their guiding motive during the production or adaptation of trans-local formats.

The producers try to tell "emotional stories" (01) in their programmes so that the viewer can experience an "emotional journey" (Mast, 2016). Typical for reality TV

[1] The numbers in brackets refer to the experts listed in Table 1.

Table 1. List of the interviewees.

	Name	Institution	Position	Format
1	Brauer, Daniel	Masterfilms: Film- und Fernsehproduktion GmbH and Talpa Germany	Producer, Head of Reality, i.e., Field Director & Creative Director	The Voice of Germany, Germany's Next Topmodel
2	Fraser, Shona	RTL II	Director Entertainment & Development	Germany's Next Topmodel, Popstars, Deutschland sucht den Superstar/ Pop Idol, Survivor
3	Fuchs, Oliver	Bavaria Entertainment GmbH	Managing Director	The Bachelor, German Formats
4	James, Dug	FremantleMedia (UK)	Vice President of Global Development	American Idol
5	Jamm, René	Warner Bros. International Television Production Germany GmbH	CEO	The Bachelor, The Bachelorette
6	Ketelaar, Taco	Freelance, previously Sat.1 (Germany); Endemol International (The Netherlands)	Senior Vice President Prime Time Entertainment & Reality	The Voice, The Voice Kids. Utopia, Fear Factor, Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?
7	Küttner, Markus	RTL	Director Comedy & Real Life	The Bachelor/ The Bachelorette
8	Mival, Jennifer	Seapoint Productions GmbH & Co.	Head of Formats & Creative Partnerships	Pop Idol, The Bachelor
9	Rademacher, Asita	Warner Bros. International Television Production Germany GmbH	Head of Casting	The Bachelor/ The Bachelorette
10	Rentmeister, Käthe	Warner Bros. International Television Production Germany GmbH	Head of Development & Sales	The Bachelor, The Bachelorette
11	Winnan, Dave	ITV Studios (UK)	Director of International Production and Development, In-House 'Flying Producer'	Dancing on Ice: Finland. I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here
12	Wood, Gavin	The Producers Ltd. (New Zeeland)	Producer	Indian Idol, New Zealand Idol

formats are emotions like joy, hate and *schadenfreude*. Producers interviewed by us argue that strong emotions performed by protagonists usually lead to a strong emotional attachment by the viewers to the programme. An internationally acting producer describes his opinion about the audience of reality TV shows as follows (12):

> People like to sit up and make decisions. I like you; I don't like you…you know. I better like her. I like him; I want him to win. I always say to people overseas that you know you've done well if you can force a love-hate relationship between the contestants and the viewer. And it is really that strong. Emotionally, the strength of the relationship is what gets you. You want them to say: 'Oh, I love that guy. He's fantastic, I want him to win'. And they watch and they watch....So the trick is always to engage the viewer at home on an emotional level. Keep him entertained, but also: keep him talking. (12)

From the point of view of the producers, the diverse emotional experience in and during the programme is what makes the programmes so appealing to viewers. With this emotional experience, group dynamics are activated—feelings of belonging and efforts of separation can arise. The people involved in the production make every effort to enable the most intense emotional experience possible with the help of various production techniques. This is achieved, as can be seen in the quote, by a polarized representation of allegedly 'universal' emotions such as love and hate. The producers point out that the negotiation of emotions and a perceived

positioning to the represented communities by the audience is social-relational, because they are negotiated during or after the reception of the TV show.

At this point the reliance of the producers on the cultural proximity of the audience on the level of the genre becomes visible. They regard the possibility of having an intense emotional experience, which is realised via proposals of identification with and separation from the protagonists, as is characteristic for the trans-local circulating genre of reality TV. The producers follow an essentialist wold view and argue that the genre of reality TV provides entertainment by dramatic pleasures as it connects positive and negative emotions in one format.

The anticipated emotional experience of the programmes is guaranteed by the meta-narratives built into the formats. Overall, during the production of various reality TV formats, the producers refer to three trans-local meta-narratives, which are associated with specific emotions and could ensure cultural proximity of the audience as *thematic proximity*. These are: a) longing for a "life-changing-moment" that is connected with excitement and compassion; b) the narrative of a fairy-tale romance associated with the longing for true love; c) a longing for competition and victory, which is connected to neoliberal values of success and working on oneself and can activate emotions such as compassion, indulgence of success, envy and *schadenfreude*. These three points will be explained in more detail below.

One of the central narratives upon which, according to the producers' statements, most reality TV formats are based, is the *longing for a life-changing-moment*. The programmes' participants enter TV reality and can change their lives by exhibiting their bodies in public, seeking love and partnership, winning a sum of money or changing their lives in some other way. The producers connect this particular meta-narrative to the arousal of a feeling of involvement, empathy, compassion and voyeurism on the side of the audience. The participants of the programmes undergo a change that makes the programme exciting and, in turn, comprehensible:

> The transformation in reality TV is so good because it changes the person's perception of themselves. A swap from the ugly duckling into the swan. (12)

This metaphor, chosen from the realm of fairy tales, refers to the promise of leaving the rules and conventions of everyday life and crossing borders. In the eyes of the producers, the audience is given the chance to participate without risk in a border-crossing experience. The emotional promise of reality TV is thus aimed at breaking with everyday conventions—a promise of adventure, daring and change. Since the spectators remain safe in their domestic life, it is an issue of participating in an emotional journey. The formats' candidates represent this change in place of the spectators.

This trans-local narrative of change should encourage the audience to position themselves in relation to the programme's protagonists and events. Producers connect this to the idea of a sense of belonging and thus see it as bonding to the format:

> I guess empathy is the big one, because you want to see your hero succeed and your villains fail. And you want to see slightly bad people become good and develop in that way. It's very basic storytelling. It's not complex; it's been going on for thousands of years. These are the kinds of stories that we're telling. (04)

The staging of the programme's story refers to the archaic dual structure of good and evil, which the producers have been regarding as trans-local, 'universal' and valid in the societal storytelling for years. This in turn offers the viewer a simple perceived positioning to the depicted affiliations—an 'us'-and-'them' positioning.

As a second trans-local meta-narrative, *longing for fairy-tale-like romance* is addressed, which the producers depict as a "Cinderella story" (07), "The story with the prince" (05) or as "fairy-tale-like reality dating story" (07). The experts associate this theme of fairy tales with American/Western popular culture. For example, participants in the programme The Bachelor are compared to the American cult dolls Barbie and Ken. The programmes are therefore purposefully produced "a little over the top" (07), in order to provide a clear reference to popular culture for the audience.

> It's a dream world; these are beautiful places we're going to. They're great locations, they're great dates to go. And you want to see great people and experience great kisses and great roses.…It's all beautiful. (09)

The atmosphere of the programme is supposed to trigger an idea of a dream-like love story on the part of the participants and viewers. The idea of a trans-local male and female ideal of beauty is stylized as overstated glamour, allegedly characteristic for American popular culture and displayed as something that feels beautiful. It also should create an atmosphere of a world that is special and almost unattainable.

The third trans-local meta-narrative upon which producers rely in the production process is *longing for competition and victory*. Most reality TV formats are based on the idea of a competition incorporated into the format rules. For example, in dating shows the participants compete for the sympathy of the male contestant. Talent shows such as Germany's Next Topmodel have the character of a beauty contest; the participants battle for the title of the best top model. Due to the competition situation that is inscribed in the format, the protagonists are intensely emotionalised. The producers hope that this in turn can evoke distancing or approving involvement on the part of the spectators.

The competition is also associated with a longing for recognition by reference persons. From the producers' point of view, the audience is fascinated by the excite-

ment for the achievement of the favourites on the one hand and, on the other hand, by connecting with the depicted competitive situation.

> The official confirmation from a jury member. Well, that's competition. How do I behave in a competitive situation? Comparing: am I better than you? Actually, it is the need to say to the assembled team and to the assembled country: I am better than others. They are very universal mechanisms. (08)

In the trans-local narrative of the competition, which underlies most reality TV formats, producers associate with emotions of compassion, the indulgence of success, *schadenfreude* and envy. From the producers' point of view, these emotions ensure a strong emotional connection to the programme and identification or distinction of the viewers towards various social groups. The producers describe the need for comparison and positioning within social groups as a universal narrative that functions similarly for reality TV formats in various countries. Especially *schadenfreude* and the voyeuristic joy of watching protagonists miss their goals is easily activated in the audience through this narrative, the experts state in interviews.

> The best reality television is when you shatter someone's dream who believes that they're going to win....Some of the breakdowns we've had, emotional breakdowns or anger at being kicked out, are quite amazing. In their hearts, they believed that they were going to win. And watching that meltdown, watching them break down, watching that shattering of their dream is the reality goal the viewers hang on for. It certainly is the best to watch. And they will share their emotions. When I see people sitting at home crying about someone being knocked out onscreen that night, then I know I can say that that's good reality TV. Because you actually draw on the viewer. They become part of the programme and you get them engaged. (12)

Viewers' potential empathetic involvement with destinies on a show and the indulgence of success is also seen as important for a show's financial success. The quote aptly describes the strong orientation towards the emotional involvement of the audience.

However, to ensure that the global format functions well and that viewer interest remains equally high, the rather negatively connoted emotions such as *schadenfreude* or envy, to which the producers allude to in the programmes, are simultaneously linked to a positive prevailing mood. From the point of view of the producers, the viewer is interested in an overall positive television reception experience. His or her negative emotions, caused by the social detachment of joy given the failure of others' dreams, need to be balanced by a positive overall mood. Producers state that this allows the viewer to have fun while watching someone's dreams shatter and to not feel guilty in the process.

In the next step, we want to look at the extent to which producers address local cultural aspects in their production work.

4.2. Belonging as Cultural Proximity by Local Cultural References

The extent to which a format must and can be adapted to local conditions is largely determined by the format owner and the format rules. How exactly the adaptation is realised, however, as described earlier, depends mainly on the local production team and the television network that will broadcast the programme. Local producers are mainly responsible for local accessibility for a trans-locally circulating TV format (see Esser, 2010, p. 289). As elaborated, we speak of local cultural references rather than national cultural aspects. This takes account of the fact that cultural spaces do not always coincide with nation-state spaces.

The interview material shows producers' efforts to establish local cultural close coding during production, i.e., the producers integrate various local, regional and national representations into existing trans-local show concepts, which in turn potentially evoke feelings of proximity on the part of the viewers. The necessity of a local cultural adaptation of a trans-local format justifies a 'flying producer' as follows: the TV audience has a need to watch TV programmes produced for their cultural space. The viewer therefore prefers stories and protagonists with local cultural connotations that feel culturally comprehensible and close to him or her. Several producers state: a trans-local format must be able to relate in an affective and emotional way to the viewer's local environment. They are convinced: local culture is located in the affective corporal performance of the participants, programme jury and live audience, which the producers call "the locals": "What they bring with them feels very local" (08).

The locally connected, atmospheric "look and feel" of a programme thus creates local cultural proximity in the audience, several experts state. The audience should thus *feel* the locality or *perceive* the programme as locally appealing. If this feeling of local cultural proximity is established in the audience to the format, a format adaptation can be successful.

A decisive aspect in the adaptation of trans-local TV formats is, according to producers' statements, the positioning of the format in local cultural discourses. Discourses here are seen in a simplified way and based on Foucault (1972) as the understanding of reality in a cultural context, in the framework of which rules of the appropriateness of, for example, language expression or emotional display are defined. Discourses producers rely on strongly intertwine with local popular culture and are reproduced by the media industry. Producers are convinced that if this discursive positioning is successful during adaptation, then there is a high probability that the

programme will activate a feeling of belonging to the local cultural space among the audience and thus also strengthen an identification with the format. Producers connect it to a confirmation of the feeling of a local cultural home: For the audience it should feel familiar and understandable.

Since the formats of talent and dating shows we analyse are strongly oriented towards the physical and aesthetic level, one of the most important discourses to which the producers refer is the local, culturally typical *ideal of beauty*. They take the beauty discourses promoted in local cultural entertainment industries and apply them, for example, to the selection of programme protagonists.

> We look which German type of man is popular now. And he's kind of a muscle guy, who has a nice face, who lisps and squints a little. The last one [bachelor] was rather blonde, and then there was the time when soft guys were popular....You are casting. For The Bachelor, the magazine GQ is relevant; you can see the guys who are popular there. The type of men who are now popular in movies. M'Barek is this muscle guy, a macho type. (05)

The mediatised discourses of beauty are thus further confirmed in reality TV programmes. The same applies to the programmes' hosts and jury; they are local media and show celebrities. Thus, "local" refers to a mediatised cultural proximity that is established within a mediatised reference system.

In addition, the local celebrities are associated with a specific emotional performance that is determined by the media discourse about them. Such local celebrities as Heidi Klum, Dieter Bohlen or Simon Cowell, who act as jurors or moderators of reality TV shows, are presented as expressive and exciting for the audience. At the same time, the cultural industry refers to programme protagonists who have a high affection potential. The media cross-referentiality turns them into new media stars. This in turn increases the visibility and popularity of the format. As a circuit of attention, it can be seen as a part of an "affective economy" (Ahmed, 2004). In addition, various local media products such as women's magazines or movies are seen by the producers as a representation of viewer preferences and their sense of beauty.

The producers locate the local feeling' of a programme in the participants' affective/corporal performance. Purposeful casting estimates a certain potential of performativity of a person's emotions. This assessment is based on local cultural concepts that we classify as "culturalistic". Similarly, they connect what is seen as an appropriate emotional reaction—in the sense of 'feeling rules' and conventions of emotional display—with local cultural differences.

> When I watch it, it feels to me like the reactions are not big enough and you know there is not enough emotion there. But I'm not the viewer in Sweden; I don't have to feel that it works for me. But for Swedish viewers, they enjoy the satiety and they enjoy the fact that the emotion for them is kind of hidden under the surface—you can watch that emotion bubbling up rather than having a situation in which as soon as someone gets angry they shout and have a big argument in the middle of the house. That wouldn't be real, and it wouldn't work, because it's not typical for Swedes. (04)

At the same time, producers assume that the participants will align their emotional and affective performance with local and trans-local popular cultural discourses about the programme. This is connected to the situational reproduction and simulation of emotional repertoires, causing partly conscious regulation and pretending.

The producers associate the temporality or intensity of the participants' emotional display with local cultural characteristics, which can also be described as culturalistic. For example, a 'flying producer' calls it the "equatorial shift" (11) and thus describes the differences in emotional display using a north-south axis as an explanation. According to this idea, the Nordic countries are "less sentimental countries" (11) and more reserved in their emotional expression, whereas the southern countries are strongly expressive. It becomes clear that reality TV formats in which producers refer to such culturalistic concepts actually reproduce them. Reality TV itself generates the rules according to which Swedes must be considered reserved and Germans as slow. Here, the performative production of (national or cultural) feeling rules in and by reality TV becomes visible.

All in all, the local adaptation of trans-local TV formats is based on mediatised popular cultural discourses and thus attempts to evoke a local cultural proximity on the part of the audience via local participants' emotional performance. It becomes clear that the contexts considered by producers as locally cultural are mediatised and shaped by western popular culture. Allegedly local narratives have a connotation of a global economy of prosperity and success; through the mediatisation of everyday life (Hepp, 2013), they have found their way into the local cultural perception of the audience or, from the perspective of the producers, *should have* found their way there.

This description of these two levels—local and trans-local—has an analytical purpose, which should show how the producers build on their stereotypical notion of local and trans-local cultural proximity of the audience while adapting a format. During production, they try to establish strong audience links, both at the level of local and trans-local cultural proximity.

5. Conclusion

Our starting point was the question of the extent to which producers of trans-local reality TV formats ad-

dress viewers' perceived proximity to various communities. The study has shown that in reality TV, displayed emotions can provide the proposals for social location of viewers. The expert interviews revealed producers' efforts at addressing proximity on the part of the audience at a trans-local level of meta-narratives and at a local cultural level of discourses, which in turn were associated with a specific emotional performance. Paradoxically, it becomes clear that these emotions displayed in reality TV formats, which are associated with trans-local meta-narratives and local cultural discourses, address *similar* affiliations and communitisation. These, for example, include: an imagined community of success in the context of a neo-liberal competition; communitisation by means of a middle-class and media-critical discourse, which becomes visible in the form of a perceived cultural distance and distinction from various social groups; belonging to the imagined taste community of local and trans-local popular culture; belonging to an imagined community of values, which is negotiated by specific emotional expressions and "feeling rules". The efforts of the producers to address trans-local and local references in the production of reality TV programmes thus activate a complex structure of emotionally charged social location that display a relation to different social groups.

As we stated earlier, we assume that reality TV formats as popular cultural media products have a considerable role in the regulation, conventionalisation and commodification of emotions. Here we argue that reality TV formats act as emotional repertoire (see Slaby, Mühlhoff, & Wüschner, 2016, p. 82). The power of an emotional repertoire is produced, confirmed and/or challenged in the sense of continuous processes of inclusion and exclusion, especially in the narration of popular media texts. Hickethier (2007) describes television as the industrialisation of emotions. He assumes that, over a certain period of time, expected, genre-constituting emotional repertoires for TV formats are performed in specific scenarios and subjected to a market logic applicable to the TV format. The emotions performed by the candidates become a calculable commodity, which is evaluated and, if necessary, sanctioned or positively emphasised (Lünenborg et al., 2018). Such a commodification of emotions, i.e., the unconditional availability of emotional expressions with a view to their economic viability, fundamentally characterises formats of reality TV. The emotional repertoire of reality TV programmes has to be seen as part of an affective economy (Ahmed, 2004): emotions and associated affective location as perceived cultural proximity or distance are understood, staged and circulated as economically viable. Our study shows that in their work during format adaptation and production, the producers have universalistic and culturalistic ideas about the applicable emotion display and feeling rules, which are bound to a market logic or commodification. They strongly influence the feeling rules and emotional displays that are legitimate in the context of affective economies. Producers hope that the audience confirms, imitates and internalises these rules. But they can also reject and renegotiate them in terms of ironic and critical reception. In any case, these emotional repertoires have a socio-political influence and shape the opinion of the "affective citizen". Here we rely on the perceived cultural proximity and distance that is negotiated in reality TV formats.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Margreth Lünenborg, Claudia Töpper and Marten Brehmer for the helpful support in the writing process of this article. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for important comments and suggestions for the improvement of the paper. The research was funded by the German Research Foundation and is part of the collaborative research centre "Affective Societies" at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. Open Access Funding provided by the Freie Universität Berlin.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Ahmed, S. (2004). Affective economies. *Social Text*, *22*(2), 117–139.

Altmeppen, K.-D., Lantzsch, K., & Will, A. (2007). Flowing networks in the entertainment business: Organizing international Tv format trade. *International Journal on Media Management*, *9*(3), 94–104.

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York, NY: Verso.

Anthias, F. (2006). Belongings in a globalising and unequal world. Rethinking translocations. In N. Yuval-Davis, K. Kannabiran, & U. M. Vieten (Eds.), *The situated politics of belonging* (pp. 17–31). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Blöbaum, B., Nölleke, D., & Scheu, A. (2016). Das Experteninterview in der Kommunikationswissenschaft. In S. Averbeck-Lietz & M. Meyen (Eds.), *Handbuch nichtstandardisierter Methoden in der Kommunikationswissenschaft* (pp. 175–190). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Dunkel, W., & Weihrich, M. (2013). From emotional labor to interactive service work. In G. Koch & S. Everke Buchanan (Eds.), *Pathways to empathy* (pp. 105–122). Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

Esser, A. (2010). Television formats: Primetime staple, global market. *Popular Communication*, *8*(4), 273–292.

Fortier, A.-M. (2010). Proximity by design? Affective citizenship and the management of unease. *Citizenship Studies*, *14*(1), 17–30.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Grüne, A. (2016). *Formatierte Weltkultur?Zur Theorie und Praxis globalen Unterhaltungsfernsehens*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Hepp, A. (2013). *Medienkultur. Die Kultur mediatisierter Welten*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Hickethier, K. (2007). Die kulturelle Bedeutung medialer Emotionserzeugung. In A. Bartsch, J. Eder, & K. Fahlenbrach (Eds.), *Audiovisuelle Emotionen. Emotionsdarstellung und Emotionsvermittlung durch audiovisuelle Medienangebote* (pp. 104–122). Köln: von Halem.

Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, *85*(3), 551–575.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *Managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Jenkins, H. (2009). Buying into American idol. How we are being sold on reality television. In S. Murray & L. Ouelette (Eds.), *Reality TV. Remaking television culture* (pp. 343–362). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Kleres, J. (2015). Emotional expertise. Emotions and the expert interview. In J. Kleres & H. Flam (Eds.), *Methods of exploring emotions* (pp. 90–100). New York, NY: Routledge.

La Pastina, A. C., & Straubhaar, J. D. (2005). Multiple proximities between television genres and audiences: The schism between telenovelas' global distribution and local consumption. *The International Journal for Communication Studies*, *67*(3), 271–288.

Lähdesmäki, T., Saresma, T., Hiltunen, K., Jäntti, S., Sääskilahti, N., Vallius, A., & Ahvenjärvi, K. (2016). Fluidity and flexibility of "belonging": Uses of the concept in contemporary research. *Acta Sociologica*, *59*(3), 233–247.

Lantzsch, K. (2008). *Der internationale Fernsehformathandel: Akteure, Strategien, Strukturen, Organisationsformen*. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwissenschaften.

Lünenborg, M., Maier, T., Sūna, L., & Töpper, C. (2018). *Ordnung durch Affekte: Emotionen, Belonging und Citizenship in Reality TV*. Manuscript in preparation.

Mast, J. (2016). Negotiating the 'real' in 'reality shows': Production side discourses between deconstruction and reconstruction. *Media, Culture & Society*, *38*(6), 901–917.

Mayring, P. (2008). *Die Praxis der qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse*. Weinheim: Beltz.

Pfaff-Czarnecka, J. (2012). *Zugehörigkeit in der mobilen Welt. Politiken der Verortung*. Göttingen: Wallenstein.

Röttger-Rössler, B. (2016). *Multiple Zugehörigkeiten. Eine emotionstheoretische Perspektive auf Migration* (Working Paper SFB 1171). Berlin: Collaborative Research Centre Affective Societies at Freie Universität Berlin.

Seibel, W. (2009). Hegemoniale Semantiken und radikale Gegennarrative. *Center of Excellence Cultural Foundations of Social Integration*. Retrieved from www.exzellenzcluster.uni-konstanz.de

Slaby, J., Mühlhoff, R., & Wüschner, P. (2016). Affektive Relationalität. Umrisse eines philosophischen Forschungsprogramms. In U. Eberlein (ed.), *Zwischenleiblichkeit — Intercorporeity, Movement and Tacit Knowledge*. (S. 69–108). Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Stehling, M. (2015). *Die Aneignung von Fernsehformaten im transkulturellen Vergleich*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Straubhaar, J. (2007). *World television: From global to local*. Newcastle upon Tyne: SAGE.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newcastle upon Tyne: SAGE.

von Scheve, C. (2017). A social relational account of affect. *European Journal of Social Theory*, *21*(1), 39–59.

About the Author

Laura Sūna (PhD) is Postdoctoral Researcher at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. She is currently working in a research project on "Transcultural Emotional Repertoires in and by Reality TV" at the Collaborative Research Centre Affective Societies. Previously, she was a part time Lecturer at the Institute for Media and Communication Studies at Freie Universität Berlin and a Scientific Assistant at the University of Bremen, Germany and the University of Latvia, Latvia. Her research interests focus on emotions, reality TV, youth cultures, migration studies, cultural studies and qualitative research methods.

COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 3, Pages 40–47
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i3.1455

Article

How Culture Influences Emotion Display in Transnational Television Formats: The Case of *The Voice of China*

Yuanchen Zhang

Independent Researcher, Germany; E-Mail: yuanchen.zhang@gmx.de

Submitted: 28 February 2018 | Accepted: 9 May 2018 | Published: 11 September 2018

Abstract
Both television production practice and academic writings indicate the necessity of the localization of TV formats to fit sociocultural circumstances in different countries. This article narrows its focus to the issue of emotion display during localization. Inspired by Paul Ekman's *neurocultural theory of emotion*, which describes human emotion expression in actual social situations, this article attempts to apply Ekman's ideas about relations between culture and emotion to the field of media communication and to build a theoretical framework for the analysis of cultural influence in emotion display during the adaptation of a TV format. Applying the theoretical findings to the case of the singing competition show *The Voice of China* (adapted from *The Voice of Holland*), this article shows how the collectivist nature of Chinese culture influences the aesthetic and dramatic tools used to elicit emotion and to control emotion display in the Chinese version of the show.

Keywords
emotion; emotion display; localization; transnational television format

Issue
This article is part of the issue "The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies", edited by Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier (Free University Berlin, Germany).

1. Introduction

Transnational TV formats are crucial phenomena in global media communication and have received much attention in global media communication research, where many studies have explored how a TV format could be localized in different cultures and countries (e.g., Mikos, 2015; Moran, 2009; Waisbord & Jalfin, 2009). The focus lies on how topics and people could be replaced through local elements in the cultural adaptation of a TV format in order to create relevance for and cultural proximity to the local audience. However, few studies have focused on emotion display during the localization of TV formats.

At the center of this study is the question of how culture influences emotion display in transnational TV formats. Cultural anthropologists were first interested in the relations between culture and emotion. Methods such as direct observation and interviews with members of different cultures were used to explore the cultural origin and specificity of emotion (Mesquita, Frijda, & Scherer, 1997). The anthropological approach stands in contrast with the psychological approach of the 1960s. Departing from Charles Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1974), the American psychologist Silvan S. Tomkins (1962, 1963) demonstrated that emotions are biologically based and thus universal.

Following on from Tomkins' thought, Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen (1969, 1975; Ekman, 1972) conducted a number of studies investigating human facial expression of emotion. Ekman and Friesen (1969, 1975) agreed with Tomkins' idea of universal emotions and proposed a list of basic emotions that minimally include happiness, surprise, fear, sadness, anger, disgust, and interest. The concept of universal emotions demonstrated that each basic emotion links to a number of distinctive movements of the facial muscles—*the affect programs*—and that these movements are universal to mankind (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). In order to respond to criticism of their findings, Ekman and Friesen (1969; Ekman, 1972) developed the concept of "display rules"—norms and values that modify the movements of the facial muscles in different social contexts. According to Ekman and Friesen

(1969), display rules are socially learned and therefore culturally varied, and they define which emotions are shown in a given situation and how they are expressed. Combining both the cultural universality and the cultural specificity of emotional expression, Ekman (1972) named his synthesis the *neurocultural theory of emotion*, which includes not only "the affect programs" and "display rules" but also the emotion elicitors and the consequences of emotional arousal as displayed through the face, the body, the voice, etc.

The concept of display rules prompted plenty of studies that emphasized the cultural development of display rules that regulate emotional expression—for instance, the studies of Matsumoto and his colleagues (Matsumoto, 1990, 1991; Matsumoto, Takeuchi, Andayani, Kouznetsova, & Krupp, 1998; Matsumoto, Yoo, & Fontaine, 2008). Following Hofstede's classification of cultural differences in several important dimensions, such as Individualism–Collectivism and Power Distance (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 2001), Matsumoto's cross-cultural research focused on finding out if, how, and why those dimensions of cultural variability influence display rules. Besides these cultural dimensions, social distinctions of ingroup-outgroup, status, gender, and type of interaction partner were also taken into account in his investigation.

The concepts mentioned above aimed at the investigation of emotion expression in actual social situations. Based on Ekman's *neurocultural theory of emotion* and follow-up studies, this article will attempt to integrate the understanding of emotion described above into the model of media communication. Accepting the hypothesis that emotions circulate globally through the spread of TV formats, this article will focus its examination on the cultural localization of emotion display and will answer the question of where and how cultural influences occur in this process.

The analytical framework created by theoretical concepts taken from both emotion and media communication studies is supported by the case of the Chinese version of *The Voice*, which was originally created in Holland and has been adapted in 56 countries and regions. With more than 500 million viewers around the world, this singing competition show is one of the most successful formats in recent years. It was first adapted for China in 2012. For my analysis, I chose the first season of the Chinese version of the show because the first season was one of the biggest hits in the history of the Chinese entertainment industry and because the emotionality of the show aroused fierce debate.

2. Creating an Analytical Framework for Cultural Influences in Emotion Display in Media Communication

Ekman's *neurocultural theory of emotion* combines both universal and cultural-specific aspects of human emotional expression. *Neuro*, on the one hand, refers to the facial affect program, which describes the universal relationship between basic emotions—happiness, anger, surprise, fear, disgust, sadness, interest—and the distinctive movements of facial muscles in association with these emotions (Ekman, 1972). On the other hand, *cultural* influences may occur, according to Ekman (1972), in the following categories: a) elicitors of emotion—events, expectations, memories, etc., which may vary across cultures, b) display rules—culturally varied norms and values to control (intensify, de-intensify, neutralize, or mask) the facial appearance according to a given social situation, and c) consequences of emotional arousal, such as facial behavior, action patterns of face and/or body, verbal behavior, physiological change, etc.

Ekman (1972) centered his *neurocultural theory* on human facial expressions of emotion in live social situations. The term *display* refers only to appearance, and display rules are rules about the appearance of the face (Ekman, 1972). Inspired by Ekman's theory, I will discuss in this section how to apply Ekman's theory to emotion display in media communication. In this context, emotion display refers to the presentation of emotion on TV or film. In media communication, the TV or film screen stands in for the human face or body and makes the emotion visible to the audience. In order to make this idea more clear, I will follow the German media theorist, Hans J. Wulff's (1994) sociological view on media communication. Extrapolating from Goffman's (1986) frame analysis and from interaction theory, Wulff (1994) indicated the double "situatedness" ("situationalität") of television communication. First, the television text is embedded in a communication situation, with the "speaker"—producers, directors, scriptwriters, editors, etc—on the one side, and the "recipient"—the audience—on the other side. Second, in the television text itself, different social situations, involving different people and relationships, are represented (Wulff, 1994). Taking *The Voice* format as an example, these situations may occur among contestants, or between contestants and coaches, contestants and the audience, contestants and the host, and contestants and their family members, etc. More importantly, these people do not only have functional roles on the show but also social roles determined by age, profession, gender, status, etc.

We can understand the first situation in Wulff's theory as the macro situation and the second as the micro situation. The macro situation is determined by the relationship, the intention, and the interest of the speaker and the recipient. In the most cases, especially in TV shows, the main intention of the speaker is to engage and involve the recipients emotionally. Compared to live social situations, the speaker in the macro situation has much more power to elicit, control, and present emotions. First, the speaker can arrange social situations or micro-interactions involving different social roles within the macro situation. Through casting the speaker can decide which performers present emotions on screen and what kind of relationships they are involved in. Further-

more, unlike in live social situations, the speaker in a macro situation of media communication has powerful aesthetic and dramatic tools, such as narratives, zooming, cuts, visual effects, sound, music, graphics, set design, etc. The speaker can use various tools to filter what kind of emotions will be shown and how they will be presented to the recipient. For example, regarding narrative, the speaker can involve people through their relations, expectations, memories, etc. from a dramaturgical view to elicit different emotions. Regarding aesthetic tools (for example, zooming) the speaker can decide if the camera will zoom in on a crying face to intensify an emotion such as sadness. In media communication, with the help of these aesthetic and dramatic tools, the speaker has more possibilities for emotion display, whereas the human body is limited to facial, body, or verbal behavior to express emotions. In media communication, the face, body, and voice of the performers are only some of the emotive tools available. The power of the speaker to shape emotional performance through their routine production practices has been also described by Wei (2014), who also describes the speakers as "display producers" of emotion.

After clarifying the interpretation of media communication as a macro social situation with regard to emotion display, I return to the three categories in Ekman's theory—emotion elicitors, display rules, and consequences of emotion arousal—where cultural influences may occur. Before proceeding, I want to clarify my understanding of culture. Although in cultural studies a new conceptualization of culture has emerged where culture is a "whole way of life" (Williams, 1971) and is not only operationalized by country and nation, I still stand by the classical concept of culture as defining the main characteristics of a society as being mostly shared "behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and values communicated from generation to generation" in each society (Matsumoto, 1991, p. 130). My approach departs from this understanding of culture and transfers Ekman's three categories to the situation of media communication. An analytical framework for evaluating cultural influences in emotion display in media communication is illustrated in Figure 1.

In this framework we can see that display producers of emotion, television text, and audience are embedded in the same cultural context. This article focuses on the cultural influences on emotion display in television texts. We can predict that culture may influence the use of aesthetic and dramatic elicitors and the arrangement of micro-interactions or situations by display producers to stimulate emotions. Culture may also define display rules that lead display producers or emotion performers to downplay or overplay certain emotions in micro-situations, and, finally, culture may influence emotion elicitors and display rules in ways that impact emotion arousal.

3. The Case of *The Voice of China*

The analytical framework for cultural influences in emotion display in media communication, which was demonstrated in the previous section, will be applied to the case of *The Voice of China*. As mentioned in the introduction, I chose the first season of the show for a textual analysis and reviewed all episodes of the first season. During the review process, I selected the most emotional scenes from the first season and focused on those scenes in the analysis. The scenes are complex excerpts consisting of emotion performers, micro-interactions between emotion performers, narratives running through the scenes, as well as aesthetic tools such as zooming, cuts, and sounds. The scenes feature localized emotion displays which are particular to *The Voice* format in China. Nevertheless, these scenes are embedded into the global

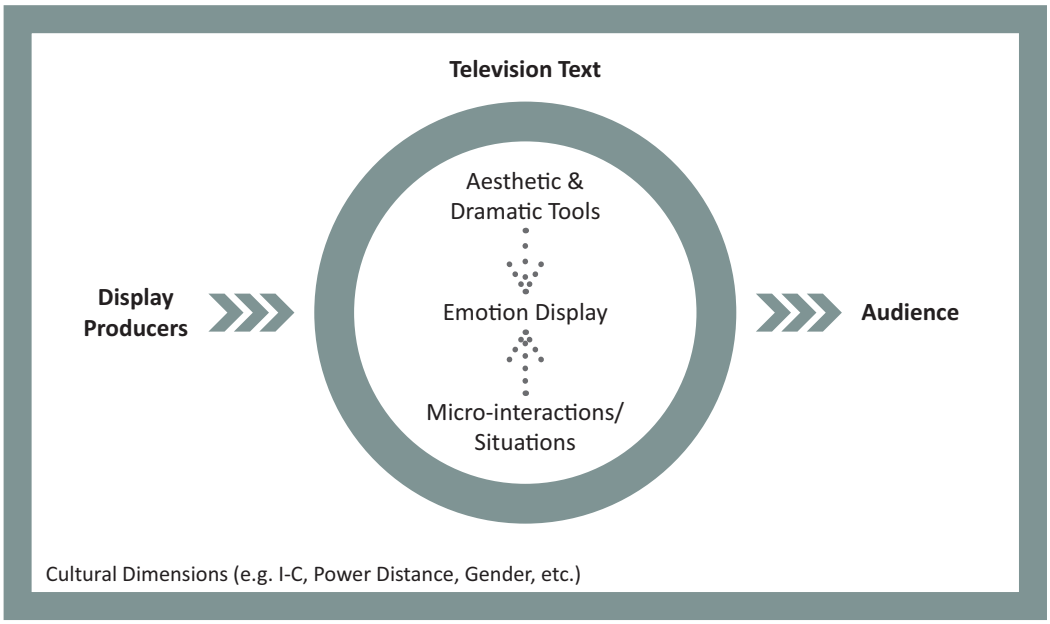

Figure 1. An analytical framework for cultural influences in emotion display in media communication.

formal structure of *The Voice* format and don't destroy the integrity of the format. Now that the methodological approach has been clarified, the first section below will present the general findings corresponding to the analytical framework. In the ensuing sections, this article will illustrate the findings concretely via selected scenes.

3.1. Applying the Analytical Framework to The Voice of China

Formats like *The Voice* are global commercial products in the worldwide television program trade. Rather than trading a finished program, format sellers export a package of ideas, concepts, technical and financial guidelines, production advice, and personnel placement. Due to strict regulation in the television format trade, different adaptations of the same format are obliged to maintain almost the same production rules and aesthetic appearances. For this reason, the Chinese version of *The Voice* follows the same format that is used in other countries, such as Germany or the United States: A contestant presents a song while four coaches listen from chairs facing away from the stage without seeing the performance. If the coaches like the song, they push a button to turn their chairs towards the stage signifying their interest in working with that contestant. If more than one coach pushes their button, the contestants choose the coach they want to work with. After every coach has built his or her team in this so-called "blind audition", the members of each team have to compete in the "battle" and "sing-off" rounds to gain a place in the final show.

The core concept of *The Voice* format is the success formula. In the blind audition, the iconic feature of the show, the success of a contestant is visually symbolized by the turning of chairs. The coach pushing the button is one of the most affective moments of every episode, accompanied by screaming and applause from the studio audience. The camera zooms in on the animated faces of the coaches or cuts to the contestants' family members, showing how they laugh or cry, and how they jump up and down in excitement. The happiness of success is the globally relevant emotion behind the spread of *The Voice* format, including *The Voice of China*.

Despite these commonalities across different national formats, the emotion display in *The Voice of China* has its own cultural specificity. Using the analytical framework shown in Figure 1, and with the support of general findings from the textual analysis, I will draw attention to the following points:

3.1.1. Cultural Dimensions

As mentioned in the introduction, culture could be defined through dimensions such as individualism-collectivism, power distance, gender and so on. In the analysis of *The Voice of China*, "collectivism" emerges as the cultural factor with the most influence on emotion display in the show's Chinese version.

The cultural dimension of individualism–collectivism (I–C) has mainly been discussed in the field of anthropology and cross-cultural psychology (Hofstede, 1980, 1983; Matsumoto, 1991; Triandis, 1972). In those studies, researchers attempted to define individualism and collectivism through the relationship of an individual to collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, and nation), and through the position of individual needs, goals, wishes, desires, and values in relation to those of groups and collectives. In collective cultures, the relationship of an individual to other members and to the collective tends to be tight and interdependent, whereas the members of an individualistic culture are more loosely linked and independent from the collective. Members of an individualistic culture place their own goals over the collective's goals, whereas in collective cultures individual goals are subordinated to group goals, even when they come into conflict.

In plenty of studies focusing on the contrast between individualism and collectivism, China was often taken as a prototype for collectivist cultures with regard to values such as group harmony and solidarity (Ho & Chiu, 1994; Hsu, 1983), filial piety in the Confucian tradition (Hofstede, 1991), and social commitment (Wang, 1994). How the collectivist nature of the Chinese culture influences the emotion display, will be shown later with the support of selected scenes.

3.1.2. "Dream-Fulfillment Concept" as a Major Narrative

In *The Voice of China*, a dream-fulfillment concept has been used as the major narrative tool to elicit emotion from performers and even to bring them to tears. The dream-fulfillment narrative has mostly been used in blind auditions. After their performance, the contestants have the chance to speak to their coaches. In their conversations, the coaches always raise a standard question, "What's your dream?" and thereby prompt the contestants' storytelling.

According to Yang (2014), the Chinese TV industry's convention of a dream-fulfillment narrative has been promoted since 2004 in the Chinese version of the *Pop Idol* format, with the slogan "Sing as you want, let dreams blossom". Also, *China's Got Talent* of 2010 emphasized the word "dream", represented in its slogan "Believe in dreams, believe in miracles". Both programs became the most popular entertainment shows in the country. As a consequence, the central state broadcaster CCTV also named its own reality talent show *Dream China*.

3.1.3. Arrangement of Micro-Interactions and Emotion Performers

In *The Voice of China*, display producers selected ordinary people as emotion performers. Most of the contestants in the show come either from rural areas or from small provincial towns having moved to a big city to work for a better life. They are students, or the owner of a small nail

salon, or the daughter of a small restaurant owner or of a truck driver. In accordance with these identities, the contestants in *The Voice of China* mostly appear as the representatives of ordinary people. In blind auditions, they are dressed in casual clothes, most of them without any make-up and hairstyling.

It seems that it is not important if the contestants are truly ordinary people. After the show, some of the contestants were revealed to be professional musicians or singers who had already recorded their own music album. However, the main point is that the producers of the show portrayed them as ordinary. The power of the dream is stronger when even ordinary people can make their dreams come true.

In the show, the emotion performers were embedded in different micro-interactions that could be easily shaped by the collective nature of Chinese culture. Through the textual analysis, three main types of micro-situations can be identified regarding the relationship of an individual to the collectives of family, group, and country.

3.2. Fulfilling the Dreams of Family

Family plays a crucial role in many societies, including western societies, but in Chinese culture, the Chinese family reflects the collectivistic nature of the Chinese. According to the ideas of anthropologists and cross-cultural psychologists discussed in the previous section, the relation of individuals to their families is tighter in collective cultures than in individualistic ones, and individuals should place the goal of families over their own goals.

In *The Voice of China*, family members have often accompanied contestants. In the program, the close relationship between emotion performers and their families was often used to elicit emotion. The contestants come on the show to fulfill the dreams of certain family members: fathers, mothers, grandmothers, and family members who passed away. Some sing to give their own children a better life. A single mother came onto the show because she thought that her little daughter was too fearful and too dependent on her. With a public performance, she wanted to show her daughter how to be confident and courageous. Another contestant took her mom onto the show. After her successful performance, she expressed her gratefulness to her mother, as her mother had raised her alone and had to give up her own dream of making music to find a secure job and support the dreams of her daughter.

Let us examine a typical example for fulfilling the dreams of family (from the first episode of the first season):

The father of Jin Haixing was a professor of music. After her performance, one coach asks her: "Is your dad here?" She replies: "No, but I think he is here". Her dad has passed away several months ago. She is here to fulfill the dream of her father and sing for her father. She cries, and the coach cries too. In the conversation below, we can see how emotions of the contestants and the coaches are produced through narrative:

> Jin: I am standing here on the stage because I want to sing for Liu Huan because my dad likes you very much. [The camera cuts to her mom and friend who are watching her in the waiting room and going to cry.] So I am here.
> Liu: Thank you. Thank your dad.
> Na: So you were also singing for your dad in your performance.
> Jin: Yes, that's why I am standing on this stage.
> Na: Very powerful voice.
> Yang: Isn't your dad here today?
> Jin: My mom is here. I think my dad is here too.
> Na: "You think?"
> Jin: [Silence for 2 seconds.] My dad died of illness three months ago.
> All: Oh. [The camera focuses on Liu Huan and then zooms to the crying face of Jin's mother.]
> Jin: I said to myself I can't cry, but I can't mention this issue, because it happened like yesterday. I am still not in a good mood; I am sorry. [Crying.]
> [Cut to Liu Huan who is about to cry and then to one woman in the audience who is also going to cry.]
> Yu: So this issue still influences you.
> Jin: Three months ago I thought I would never sing again. My world was destroyed. Then I wanted to make sure my mom wouldn't worry about me. I didn't want them to see me in a bad mood. So I decided to come to a big stage and fulfill the dream of my dad. He wanted me to sing.
> Na: Well done. [Applause, followed by applause from all.]
> Yu: I think you have not only fulfilled the dream of your dad [Liu begins to wipe his tears], but also let us admire you a lot. You are a young and small girl. What would you like to say to your dad?
> Jin: Yes, I have. I talk to him every day. I said to him, please don't worry about mom and me, because I will take care of mom and me very well. [Cut to her mom crying.]
> Na: You know, you fulfill the dream of your dad. You sang a song in front of his favorite singer. Liu Huan is so touched. [Cut to Liu Huan who is crying, taking off his glasses, and wiping his tears.]

In this example, the contestant and the coaches were heavily involved as emotion performers in micro-interactions, shaped by the family values of collective Chinese culture and organized by the dream-fulfillment narrative. Family values—in this case, the loss of a family member and the fulfillment of his wishes—also influence the display rules, which intensifies the emotion of sadness. Aesthetic tools support the display of intensified emotion—for example, as the camera zooms in on crying faces and a montage of different crying faces appears on the screen.

3.3. Group Harmony

The Voice is a singing competition show, and competition and winning the final should be the main and individual goal of the contestants. In cross-cultural research, competition has been mostly linked to individualism (Hsu, 1983; Trandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). How could competition be shaped by collective culture? Competition is downplayed in *The Voice of China*. Instead, the importance of maintaining group harmony influences not only emotion stimulation but also the display rules and thus emotion display.

Competition between the contestants takes place especially in the "battle" round and the "sing-off" in *The Voice* format. In the "battle" round, two contestants from the same team present a song together. Afterwards, the coach of the team decides who has to leave the show. In the "sing-off" session, from the last four contestants on each team, only one person will be chosen to represent the team in the final show. Both sessions are premised on the appeal of direct competition between contestants, but the disharmony that could be caused by such competition conflicts with the value of the group harmony in Chinese culture. Therefore, the show downplays competition and instead highlights emotions aroused from group harmony.

In order to emphasize collectivism, all members in Yang Kun's team wear the same team uniform in the "battle" round. And Na Ying's team is organized like a school class and even elects a class speaker. Some of the team members call each other brother and sister and give gifts on the stage when one person has to leave the show. Sadness is aroused from the farewell. The coach Liu Huan has cried several times when he had to choose one person to stay and to say goodbye to the other person in the "battle" round. In Yang Kun's team, as the contestant Zhang Weiqi was leaving, both the coach and the contestant were crying. Yang said to Zhang: "You are my buddy; you are my brother. I will do my best to give you a good platform to sing". In the "sing-off", when the first contestant in Na Ying's team was leaving, Na Ying could not stop crying. She stepped onto the stage, and all four contestants and Na Ying embraced in a circle for a while. The camera showed the sad face of each person—also one of the contestants who won the session two minutes ago. Group harmony requires the same emotional expression from all team members.

It is impossible to judge the true feeling of the contestants at the moment when they are crying. Perhaps the contestants cry from the sadness of losing the competition and having no chance anymore. But in a public context, crying because of failure is not acceptable. Some of the contestants explain that they are sad because they have to leave the team, not because of their failure in the competition. Some of the contestants try to control their sadness and to neutralize their facial expression. They say to the coach that it does not matter who leaves because all of them belong to the group. Other contestants cry while leaving, but then they try to smile and explain that they are not crying because they have to leave but because they feel lucky or are excited.

3.4. The Chinese Dream

Collective culture emphasizes social commitment (Wang, 1994). An individual in a collective culture would not only ask "What am I expected to do for my family?" but also "What am I expected to do for my country?" (Triandis, 2018, p. 12) In *The Voice of China*, a typical answer to the "What's your dream?" question centers on bringing Chinese music into the world. Some contestants want to prove that as Chinese people they can also make jazz music or sing hip-hop very well. "I want to sing Chinese jazz songs to the world", said jazz singer Wang Yunyi on the show.

When another contestant, Tia, left the show during the eleventh episode of the first season, her coach, Liu Huan, stood up and asked the audience to applaud for her. He said Tia's main direction was soul music and R & B and that he hoped that more Chinese people could get to know this kind of music through Tia's performance. "Chinese music has its own genres—rock, soul, and R & B. We have our own music for those genres. The audience should have the chance to listen to a variety of music genres (huge applause and Tia cries). That is our goal together; it is also the goal of Tia (bowing to the audience and crying)".

Validating moments like this are especially moving for the audience and are normally welcomed with huge applause and the enthusiasm of the studio audience. Interestingly, the Chinese government has explicitly promoted the meaningful relationship of the individuals to the country. "The Chinese Dream" is the official motto of the Communist Party since China's president Xi Jinping took office in November 2012. Xi has elaborated on this concept, saying he believes that "to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream for the Chinese nation in modern history" (Wang, 2013, p. 1). Wang (2013) has discussed the importance of the "rejuvenation concept" in Chinese history and nation-building. Programs of rejuvenation have described China as weak and humiliated by western powers in its recent history. Rejuvenation represents the collective desire of Chinese citizens who want their country to be strong, prosperous, and internationally influential.

The rejuvenation concept turned into a "Chinese Dream" narrative in *The Voice of China*. The collective nature of Chinese culture required individuals to display social commitment and to fulfill the expectations of family and country alike. In this regard, the emotion performers were not simply contestants who wanted to win the show but were members of the group and were responsible for accomplishing great feats. Taking the rejuvenation concept into consideration, we can better understand why so many Chinese contestants want to bring Chinese music to the world or why they want to represent China

on the world stage and why such claims are especially appealing for the studio audience.

4. Conclusion

In this article, I have applied Ekman's concept of a *neurocultural theory of emotion* to media communication. I have understood media communication as a macro social situation in which the speaker or display producers—namely, producers, directors, scriptwriters, editors, etc.—communicate via television text to the recipients. Compared to a live social situation, in media communication display producers can use the power of aesthetic and dramatic tools to elicit emotion and control emotion display on the television screen. The display producers can also arrange specific micro-interactions with specific emotion performers to present emotions onscreen.

Transferring Ekman's work into the context of global television formats, I have discussed the influence of culture on the three categories: 1) the emotion elicitors, 2) the display rules, and 3) the consequences of emotional arousal. I have illustrated the theoretical considerations through the example of *The Voice of China*, the Chinese version of *The Voice* format. Borrowing the anthropological concept of culture, which conceives of culture as an entity of shared beliefs, attitudes, and values communicated from generation to generation in a society, I have found that the norms and values of collectivism in Chinese culture influence emotion elicitors, display rules, and, in the end, emotion display on a large scale. Against the background of a dream-fulfillment concept as the major narrative during the show, emotion performers have been brought into three main relationships in micro-interactions. These relationships are informed 1) by family values, 2) by dynamics promoting group harmony, and 3) by the social commitment required by collective culture. In these relationships the contestants are shown valuing the needs and wishes of other family members and sacrificing self for family; this is used to elicit emotion and to provoke crying during the emotion display. In other relationships, group harmony has been emphasized, whereas competition has been downplayed. Close relations between contestants and coaches have been used as emotion elicitors. Furthermore, when confronting failure contestants have either neutralized their sadness or masked it, articulating the feeling of being lucky. And, finally, in some cases, the social commitment of individuals has been expected to correspond to "The Chinese Dream", promoted by the government.

In contrast to other studies which examine the localization of TV formats in national contexts, this article focused its attention on emotion display through localization. Instead of indicating which concrete local elements have been integrated into the local version of a transnational format, I have tried to uncover the general influence of cultural values and norms in emotion stimulation, control, and presentation. The results of this study could help to understand the localization of a transnational television format in a collectivist culture. For further studies, it would be interesting to carry out cross-cultural comparisons—for instance, taking the contrast of individualism and collectivism and examining their influence on two national versions of the same format.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks the CRC "Affective Societies" at Freie Universität Berlin for supporting the publication.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Darwin, C. (1974). *The expression of the emotions in men and animals*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Ekman, P. (1972). Universals and cultural differences in facial expressions of emotion. In J. Cole (Ed.), *Nebraska symposium of motivation* (pp. 207–283). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (1969). The repertoire of nonverbal behavior: Categories, origins, usage and coding. *Semiotica*, *1*, 49–98.

Ekman, P., & Friesen, W.V. (1975). *Unmasking the face: A guide to recognizing emotions from facial clues*. Englewood Cliffs, NY: Prentice-Hall.

Goffman, E. (1986). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.

Ho, D. Y. F., & Chiu, C-Y. (1994). Component ideas of individualism, collectivism and social organization: An application in the study of Chinese culture. In U. Kim, H. C. Triandis, C. Kagitcibasi, S. C. Choi, & G. Yoon (Eds.), *Individualism and collectivism: theory, method and applications* (pp. 137–156). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Press.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work related values*. London & Beverly Hils: Sage.

Hofstede, G. (1983). Dimensions of national cultures in fifty countries and three regions. In J. Deregowski, S. Dziurawiec, & R. Annis (Eds.), *Expiscations in cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 335–355). Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. London: McGraw-Hill.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hsu, F. L. K. (1983). *Rugged individualism reconsidered*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.

Matsumoto, D. (1990). Cultural similarities and differences in display rules. *Motivation & Emotion*, *14*(3), 195–214.

Matsumoto, D. (1991). Cultural influences on facial ex-

pressions of emotion. *Southern Communication Journal*, *56*, 128–137.

Matsumoto, D., Takeuchi, S., Andayani, S., Kouznetsova, N., & Krupp, D. (1998). The contribution of individualism vs. collectivism to cross-national differences in display rules. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *1*(2), 147–165.

Matsumoto, D., Yoo, S. H., & Fontaine, J. (2008). Mapping expressive differences around the world: The relationship between emotional display rules and individualism versus collectivism. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *39*(1), 55–74.

Mesquita, B., Frijda, N., & Scherer, K. (1997). Culture and emotion. In J. W. Berry, Y. H. Poortinga, & J. Pandey (Eds.), *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology. Basic processes and human development* (2nd ed., pp. 255–291). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Mikos, L. (2015). From The Office to Stromberg: Adaptation strategies in German television. *Continuum. Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, *29*(5), 694–705.

Moran, A. (2009). Wenn TV formats are translated. In A. Moran (Ed.), *TV format worldwide: Localizing global programs* (pp. 39–54). Bristol: Intellect.

Tomkins, S. S. (1962). *Affect, imagery and consciousness. Volume 1: The positive affects*. New York, NY: Springer.

Tomkins, S. S. (1963). *Affect, imagery and consciousness. Volume 2: The negative affects*. New York, NY: Springer.

Triandis, H. C. (Ed.). (1972). *The analysis of subjective culture*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Triandis, H. C. (2018). *Individualism & collectivism*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Triandis, H. C., Bontempo, R., Villareal, M. J., Asai, M., & Lucca, N. (1988). Individualism and collectivism: Cross-cultural perspectives on self-ingroup relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *54*, 323–338.

Waisbord, S., & Jalfin, S. (2009). Imagining the national: Television gatekeepers and the adaptation of global franchises in Argentina. In A. Moran (Ed.), *TV format worldwide: localizing global programs* (pp. 55–74). Bristol: Intellect.

Wang, Z. M. (1994). Culture, economic reform and the role of industrial/organizational psychology in China. In H. C. Triandis, M. Dunnette, & L. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 689–726). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Wang, Z. (2013). The Chinese dream: Concept and context. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, *19*(1), 1–13.

Wei, J. (2014). Mass media and the localization of emotional display: The case of China's Next Top Model. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, *2*(2), 197–220.

Williams, R. (1971). *Culture and society: 1780-1950*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Wulff, H. J. (1994). Situationalität, Spieltheorie, kommunikatives Vertrauen: Bemerkungen zur pragmatischen Fernseh-Analyse. [Situation, game theory, communicative confidence: Comments to pragmatic TV analysis.] In K. Kickethier (Ed.), *Aspekte der Fernsehanalyse. Methoden und Modelle* (pp. 187–203) [Aspects of TV analysis. Methods and modelling.]. Munster and Hamburg: Lit Verlag.

Yang, L. (2014). Reality talent shows in China. Transnational format, affective engagement, and the Chinese dream. In L. Quellette (Ed.), *A companion to reality television* (pp. 516–540). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

About the Author

Dr. Yuanchen Zhang (MA in Media Culture Studies, University Hamburg and PhD in Media Studies, Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF) researches transnational/transcultural media communication with a special focus on China. Her research interests concern localness and national limitations of global media products and phenomena in China, including films, television formats, and online products and services. She is also involved in cross-cultural journalism covering Germany and China.

COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 3, Pages 48–59
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i3.1440

Article

Leak Early, Leak (More Than) Often: Outlining the Affective Politics of Data Leaks in Network Ecologies

Alberto Micali [1,2]

[1] Communications Faculty, John Cabot University, Rome, 00165, Italy; E-Mail: amicali@johncabot.edu
[2] School of Film and Media, University of Lincoln, LN67TS Lincoln, UK; E-Mail: amicali@lincoln.ac.uk

Submitted: 27 February 2018 | Accepted: 10 May 2018 | Published: 11 September 2018

Abstract
Data leaks have become one of the most ubiquitous weapons in the arsenal of digital media dissent. However, often such processes of mediation exceed a rational understanding of the information revealed. Acting in the domain of the accident, the mediations of leaks operate in the dimension of the event: an immanent and particular set of relations that is provoked by the encounter and collision of various forces, virtually becoming their productive potential. This article advances the question of how data leaks—as a form of media dissent—operate beyond representation, touching upon the vital realm of affect. Intensively enabling a transformation in the state of the forces at play, affect generates possibilities within the emergent world that is constantly in creation. In this article, I argue that the politics of leaks in contemporary network ecologies works in such an affective register, possessing the capabilities to trigger and activate subjects differentially. Exploring the 2012 leak by Anonymous Italia, consisting of around 3,500 Italian police documents, mostly concerning the NoTav movement, I propose that the mediations of data leaks need to be studied and apprehended via their inductive capacities, as a question of affective politics, or alter-politics.

Keywords
affect; affective politics; affect theory; Anonymous; data leaks; media theory; nonrepresentational theory; NoTav movement

Issue
This article is part of the issue "The Turn to Affect and Emotion in Media Studies", edited by Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier (Free University Berlin, Germany).

> And there is a youth sleeping in a little park.
> Tío Pepe drops a coin by the boy's head.
> Bending down to pick up the coin he whispers…
> "un joven muerto" ("a dead youth").
> —William S. Burroughs, *1971, 10*

1. Introduction

With the mass commercialisation of the internet, the parallel development of the databasing capacities of digital archives, and the consequential increasing value of stored information, data leaks have come dramatically to the fore of contemporary societies. In recent decades, media organisations such as "WikiLeaks", loose hacktivists networks such as "Anonymous", as well as individual whistle-blowers such as Edward Snowden, have garnered global attention thanks to the public release of massive amounts of classified information. Data leaks have thus risen to prominence and have become a widespread "weapon" of political dissent.[1]

In particular, the politically motivated use of data leaking characterises the politics of media dissent employed by Anonymous. Since the launch of Operation AntiSec (Anti-Security) in 2011, various groups working behind the facemask of Anonymous have exploited digital networks and databases in order to bring to public at-

[1] The use of the word weapon here is not metaphorical. A media object can become a weapon according to the process in which it is caught or, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), to the machine it will concatenate with—in this case a war machine. For details, see Micali (2016).

tention an increasing volume of data and emergent vulnerabilities.[2] This article has a programmatic objective; its aim is to outline the politics of data leaks by advancing a proposal that pivots around developments in affect theory. Rather than offering answers or a comprehensive account of the topic, I instead draft a new possibility to comprehend the "logic"—the way of functioning—of this increasingly widespread form of digital interventionism. The programmatic scope of the article also reflects the style of presentation of the argument, which—instead of applying a definite framework of analysis to a specific case—will offer the latter as a starting point from which to extract, map, and delineate a possible new direction for the understanding of the phenomenon in question.[3]

To begin with, I introduce a specific focus that moves the lens of analysis of the politics of media dissent, and in particular of Anonymous, from an Anglo-American to an Italian context. Emphasis will be given to a data leak that in 2012 exposed the "pre-emptive" strategies (Elmer & Opel, 2006, 2008) that have been applied by Italian police against the NoTav grassroots movement. From an overview of this case, I argue that positing data leaks within a representational-oriented framework largely misses many of the crucial issues at stake in the politics of this contemporary "style" of digital resistance, overlooking the capacities of their mediations.[4] Subsequently, and for this reason, I am going to address the question of virtuality within leaks. Indeed, this virtual element—especially in relation to issues of information overload—emerges as a central problem, one that permits the argument to move towards the consideration of an intensive order: a domain that is centrally implicated within leaking processes of mediation.

Bringing forward this relevance for intensity means that—in the final part of the article—I take a specific position on contemporary debates concerning affect, sustaining the line of thought that from Baruch Spinoza (1667/2013) passes through the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Deleuze, 1992, 2001, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Guattari, 1990, 1995) to the recent proposals of Brian Massumi (2002, 2010, 2015a, 2015b)—specifically his idea of affective politics. The article concludes with some preliminary remarks on the key relationships that connect the AntiSec data leak activated by Anonymous to the NoTav movement, opening as such, the floor for future developments in the understanding of the affective dimensions at stake in digital data leaking.

2. 2011, 2012 Anonymous Operation Antisec: "Is There Any Problem, Officer?"

In the summer of 2011, Anonymous was experiencing a dandelion-like event: the spread of contagious, constitutive diagrams; a network of new relations, of original becoming-Anonymous was forming worldwide.[5] According to Coleman (2014), "where previously a single IRC network (AnonOps) and a breakaway group (LulzSec) dominated the North American and European Scene, an archipelago of hacker islands...emerged from the Anonymous water" (p. 283). Up to this point, the network of AnonOps had led several mass deployments of Anonymous weaponry, whilst LulzSec—a small cell that temporarily surfaced within Anonymous, focusing on exploiting computer systems by leaking and "doxing" large amounts of data—were "the world's leaders in high-quality entertainment at your expense" (as cited in Olson, 2012, p. 248).

On the one hand, leaking had achieved international recognition thanks to WikiLeaks and its publication of considerable amounts of secreted information since 2006. On the other hand, "doxing" is the practice of looking for (mostly by exploiting systems with code) and publishing personal data on the internet. This latter form of digital interventionism may be undertaken for various reasons. However, anti-security movements generally aim to make the public aware of issues of vulnerability, which may exist in private or public computing services.[6]

[2] Operation AntiSec finds its roots in a larger movement that flourished in the period of the mass distribution of the internet among hackers. In particular, so-called "black hat" hackers started to look for and publicise data, opposing the public disclosure of systems' vulnerabilities (especially zero-day exploits; see for instance Jordan, 2008; Thomas, 2002, pp. 42–46). The AntiSec renaissance under the Anonymous facemask also links to the full commercialisation of the internet that have occurred since the turn of the millennium.

[3] The argument does not follow a traditional structural line, attempting to overcome the rigid separation between the subject and object(s) of study, that is by positing a possible theory of the politics of data leaks and the related practices on the same ontological and epistemological level—what Félix Guattari (1995, 2006) defined the "plane of consistency". Two references that make and endeavour to stylistically de-hierarchise the separation in question are here cardinal: first, William S. Burroughs's writings, and in particular the novels of the so-called "Nova Trilogy" (Burroughs, 1961; 1962; 1964); and, second, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaux* (1987). In both cases, the question of style becomes preeminent, being addressed by a particular mode of exposition.

[4] Implicitly, I am assuming here a vitalist and post-anthropocentric perspective on media and mediation. This means that my analysis does not start from a consideration of media as pre-existing, static objects, nor do I presuppose them as mere prostheses useful to represent the political issues of the day. As such, my position distances itself from the emerging framework of data activism that—coming from social movement studies—always presupposes media as prosthetic tools to represent human culture, and thus remains enmeshed in anthropocentrism and representationalism. For details on a vitalist perspective on mediation within a post-Cartesian framework, see for example the work of Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska (2012).

[5] Tatiana Bazzichelli (2013, p. 138) draws attention to the vital and material lines traversing the actualisation of the hacktivism of Anonymous. As such, she offers an anti-metaphorical discussion that aligns the contagious diagrams of Anonymous to dandelions.

[6] Anti security groups reflect the attitude towards knowledge and its application of mastery that is at the core of hacking. A body of literature on anti-security movements does not exist, since the involved groups avoid the representation of institutionalised politics, sharing their issues through digital networks rather than making their issues and claims visible for a mass public. However, from the literature on hacker culture it is easy to sense the relevance of such issues, since these implicate the values of the hacker ethos—particularly, sharing without the limits of authority. Otherwise, the web is the repository from which information about anti-security can be sourced. A wider analysis of anti-security is beyond the scope of this article, and only a broad understanding of it seems necessary here.

Amongst the several "islands" surfacing in Anonymous, the issue of security had begun to occupy an increasingly central position. Cells such as LulzSec converged their efforts on the practice of exploiting systems to cause the continual leaking of data. On the 19th of June 2011, LulzSec posted a call to arms under the flag of "Operation AntiSec".[7] This operation, in contrast to previous LulzSec media actions, was launched as a project directly related to Anonymous (Anonymous, 2011).

The different media actions of political dissent—or *hacktions*, as I described them elsewhere (Micali, 2017a)—deployed as part of the AntiSec campaign were numerous.[8] Two days after the publication of the "call to arms", on the 23rd of June, a series of private intelligence communications, training manuals, private emails, names, phone numbers, and passwords belonging to Arizona law enforcement officials were published under the title "Chinga La Migra" (Arizona Department of Public Safety, 2011; Constantin, 2011).[9] This "data dumping" was part of a campaign to oppose the violent rejection of human migrants through the southern border of the US. In addition, other sheriffs' offices were "doxed," police websites defaced, and personal information—related to New York police chiefs—was leaked (Chapman, 2011). According to previous studies on Anonymous, in the month of July alone, the AntiSec Operation targeted 77 different law enforcement agencies, dumping a considerable amount of their data on the internet (Coleman, 2014; Olson, 2012). Nevertheless, alongside these hacktions, several other Anonymous-becomings were activated worldwide, following the distributed relays of digital media. While the Anglo-American context is widely discussed in literature concerned with Anonymous, the same cannot be said for media actions actualised through other nodes of the distributed hacktivist network. This is the case of Anonymous Italia, whose politics of media dissent has—interestingly—concentrated on data leaks.

On the 22nd October 2012, Anonymous "owned and exposed" the Italian police according to one of the flyers that was distributed to publicise the hacktions (Figure 1). On the webpage of *Anon-News* (one of the leading blogs of Anonymous Italia), a post under the tag "Operation Police" claimed responsibility for the action; this was a leak media action undertaken as part of the AntiSec campaign (Anonymous, 2012). On the banner, a black and white picture shows an Anon wearing a Fawkes mask; this person is strangling a police officer from behind—a police officer who, for the occasion, is portrayed as a pig. Under this central image, the word "outnumbered" stands out, highlighting the idea that a difference in force can be actively defeated by a difference in numbers.

Figure 1. "Operation Police" part of Operation AntiSec. Flyer created and circulated by Anonymous to present the publication of a leak comprising documents of Italian police (Anonymous, 2012).

Together with these visual triggers, details regarding how to be involved and participate in Anonymous's operations make up the rest of the flyer. The blog post introduced the hacktion as follows:

> For several weeks, we have enjoyed browsing your servers, emails, web portals, documents, reports and much more. We are in possession of a remarkable quantity of material: for instance, documents on systems of wiretapping, communication transcripts, new-

[7] One of the salient passages of the call reads as follows: "Top priority is to steal and leak any classified government information, including email spools and documentation. Prime targets are banks and other high-ranking establishments. If they try to censor our progress, we will obliterate the censor with cannonfire anointed with lizard blood. It's now or never. Come aboard, we're expecting you" (Anonymous, 2011).

[8] The term *hacktion* refers here to digital media action of resistance. I developed this concept in order to processually recharge this idea beyond a dualist perspective through a critical post-humanist framework that is capable of stressing the ontological heterogeneity of digital media and network interventionism. For details, see Micali (2017a).

[9] "La Migra" is a slang term for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or other immigration law enforcement agencies. From Spanish, the whole phrase can be translated as "Fuck the Immigration Police".

> generation microphones, undercover activities; files about NoTav and political dissidents; different circular letters, but also emails, some of which demonstrate your dishonesty (for instance, a communication where it is explained how to appropriate a weapon confiscated from a foreigner without facing the offence of handling stolen goods). Contrary to what we imagined, the level of security in your systems is really poor, and we are taking advantage of this to take our revenge...Is there any problem, officer? (Anonymous, 2012)

The hacktion consisted of obtaining and releasing around 3,500 classified documents of the Italian *Polizia di Stato* (state police)—one of the five national police forces in Italy. The release included more than a gigabyte of data, all of which were archived, ordered and published to be available online via the web platform "Paranoia", which was an international whistle-blowing website set up by Anonymous in the summer of 2012. Given that the operation ran under the flag of the AntiSec campaign, the issue of security might at first glance seem central. However, closer examination reveals that this is not the most urgent issue, which is instead related to the cultural specificities of the territories that co-constitute the action in question—in particular the specific local struggles that were, in the meantime, being fought in the north of the Italian peninsula.[10]

According to a public release made by Anonymous, data were gathered directly from the police servers, and their contents were diverse in nature. For instance, in one of the folders made available, it was possible to read a substantial amount of information collected by the Italian police about the NoTav movement. NoTav is a grassroots movement that has, since the end of the 1990s, opposed the construction of a high-speed rail link intended to "accelerate" the connection between the cities of Turin and Lyon.[11] These documents consist of extracts from police investigations into the movement, internal memos of the *Ministero degli Interni* (the Home Office upon which, in Italy, the police are dependent), and the biographies and penal profiles of activists written by police officers. Among the data there is also a long document edited by the police headquarters in Turin, which outlines the supposed "structure" of the grassroots group by analysing the relationships that exist between the various activists.[12] Moreover, the "dumping" also included intelligence manuals on how to conduct undercover operations to destabilise demonstrations through illegal actions; sets of forms for routine operations, such as police verifications and search warrants; database documents detailing the technical specificities for placing wire taps and electronic bugs; guidebooks for tracking mobile phone conversations; details on the relationships between Italian police and Interpol; and, finally, emails, telephone numbers, and names of public officials and police officers (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2012; InfoFreeFlow, 2012). The data dump consisted of information that is of public interest (i.e., how the police are allowed to act beyond the law) and the less relevant one (i.e., simple routine documents), as well as private information concerning police officers.

A public statement by Anonymous completed the leak (as cited in NoTav.info, 2012). This statement claimed responsibility for the hacktion, explaining the motivations behind its deployment. Here, the behaviour of the Italian police is stigmatised by introducing a series of brutal actions that occurred in the past: cases in which police officers were involved and condemned for their violence (particularly during past Italian political demonstrations, and within institutions such as prisons, psychiatric hospitals or immigration detention centres).[13] The behaviour of the police is stigmatised as violent and oppressive, and labelled as "punishment and surveillance", reversing the title of Foucault's well-known work, *Surveiller et Punir*, (1975/1995). The statement also highlighted the relevance of the dumped data, introducing the content of various documents, such as the "colourful" description of NoTav activists provided by the police, as well as the widespread activity of monitoring Facebook profiles, through which the "likes" users placed to express their approval of certain associations were studied to prevent possible forms of dissent.[14] Finally,

[10] My use of the word "territory" aligns with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's conceptualisation. The theme of the territory provides a common thread that is woven through much of their work (see Guareschi, 2001; Parr, 2010). This concept is used in broader terms compared with its usage in ethology and ethnology, and can be thought of as the temporary bordering of a certain set of relations. It is not possible here to provide an in-depth analysis of the concept of the territory. For details, see Guattari (2006).

[11] Details about the NoTav movement can be found online (http://www.notav.info), in Italian. The movement is a reference point for Italian antagonist political movements for many reasons. The NoTav movement first emerged at the end of the 1990s, when the high-speed rail track project was approved. This project has to cross the Occitan valley of "Val Susa" (North West of Italy) by building a new track rather than improving the existing one. The project met with hostility of the people living in the area, who have been actively fighting the project for around 20 years. During these years, the movement supported its actions via documents certifying all the problems regarding the building of the new train track, attracting significant support from other grassroots movements and many political forces. Its struggles are in fact related to the political proposition of the "commons", involving the possibility to autonomously decide about a natural territory in which people live. Without entering into detail, a publication by the Centro Sociale Askatasuna (2012) reorganises their 20 years of struggle through interviews with many of the activists involved. Another very valuable and accurate account of the struggles and main motives of the movement can be found in Wu Ming 1 (2016) while, for a ethnography of the movement, see Aime (2016).

[12] Despite the police's assumptions, this is a "supposed structure" because non-hierarchical movements are not formed in any way by a "structure" (which is a hierarchical definition of the relationships at stake). Regarding the decision-making processes within the NoTav movement, see Centro Sociale Askatasuna (2012).

[13] In order to clarify these claims, particularly regarding detention, it seems relevant to specify that in the Italian context the issue of detention is a well-recognised social problem that pertains to many institutions such as prisons, OPGs (*Ospedali Psichiatrici Giudiziari* [Juridical Psychiatrist Hospitals]), and CIEs (*Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione* [Centres for Identification and Expulsion]).

[14] In this case, a user who "liked" the Facebook page of an association fighting for animal rights was identified by the police as a potential, subversive threat.

the release was a means by which Anonymous could advance legal propositions that may be able to limit the brutality of the police: the legal introduction of the offence of torture; the public availability of live camera footage to "counter-monitor" police during demonstrations; and the introduction of identification numbers on police officers' uniforms to allow their public recognition in the case of violent demonstrations. The Anonymous' declaration ends by poetically dedicating the hacktion to those who had suffered at the hands of the police's illegal behaviour:

> This is for you, workers, who still have the strength to demonstrate in the streets, in spite of the fatigue of work. This is for you, students, who demonstrate for a better future and are brutally hit with truncheons. This is for you, the marginalised, the imprisoned, the maladjusted, who every day suffer the barbarism of these villains. This is for you, who are daily killed by the State, in jails and outside. This is for you, 'bro, our brothers and sisters Anons, who are persecuted and arrested. This is for you, NoTav activists, who with courage for years have conducted your fights, blocked by these infamous and cowardly pseudo-men in uniform. This is for you, mothers, who despite your pain...are still looking for the truth and justice for your sons, savagely torn from you by those who ought to protect them. This is for you, foreign brothers, who escape from desperation to seek safety, and find the welcome of those who humiliate, torture and refuse you, masking racism behind the justification of public order. (as cited in NoTav.info, 2012)

Anonymous connotes the hacktion as existing within a "cyber-vigilant" framework.[15] Indeed, the document ends with the slogan, in Latin, "we control the controllers" (see Figure 2). Here, the obvious significance of the cultural, social, and political milieu is the first aspect that is worth noting. However, this milieu does not merely frame the action, but rather is directly entangled in its actualisation: instead of defining it from the outside, the territory becomes part of the intervention, and the relation with the NoTav movement clearly foregrounds it as decisive. Second, and crucially for the argument, the specific media action at stake—a data leak—seems to act beyond the informative content it conveys, symptomatically signalling the surfacing of an innovative set of relationships between media and politics.

Leaks arise, thus, as innovative "databasing" media interventions; as processes of mediation in which the representational character of information looks like being less relevant, whilst the "quantity" emerges as the crucial element by which it is qualified.[16] Consequently, it is to this point that I turn first, as it brings forward essential questions regarding the virtual character and intensive capacities of leaks. Subsequently, after expanding the argument by introducing the related and key domain of affective order, I proceed to briefly address—as a matter of programmatic conclusion—the significant entanglements that exist between Anonymous's data leak and NoTav.

3. Beyond Representation: Virtuality and the Symptomatic Paradox of Digital Cultures

The disproportionate dimension of dumped data acts by turning against the storage capabilities of databases. This means that leaks, as one of the key styles of contemporary digital media dissent, imply a molecular and material quality of affective order that goes beyond mere issues of the symbolic representation of a certain political cause.

The digital multiplication of media forms, and the perpetual immediacy of their production and consumption, can here be associated with the explosive scenario of the "information bomb". This scenario is the "great accident", the fuse of the electronic bomb, which Virilio (2000) describes by drawing from Einstein's suggestions. Such a bomb is an electronic overload that collides with the speeding up of immediacy, leading not to a temporary blockade (as, for instance, happens with digital swarms; see Micali, 2017b), but to the origination of a never-ending source that inserts itself at the top of a life cycle of perpetual data production.[17] Within this bomb scenario, the augmentation of the "quantity" of information is proportional to the increasing capacity of archiving that has been reached through digital technologies. Furthermore, virtually, this quantitative "quality" does not rely only on this actual, improving storage capacity, but also on the continual and unstoppable elaboration of new data that have yet to be leaked. The affective turbulence of leaks implicates the ceaseless and circular process of producing and archiving data.

For this reason, the leak seems to have virtual capabilities that are able to viscerally affect the media hypertrophy of contemporary network ecologies, and par-

[15] Cyber or internet vigilantism is a label used to describe actions through digital media and networks that are aimed to monitor and intervene against certain behaviours. Amongst journalists, Anonymous is often misread as a cyber-vigilante phenomenon, and examples can be found in Serracino-Inglott (2013). Such a perspective on the hacktivism of Anonymous is directly linked to the emergent discourse of transparency, which is analysed in terms of a radical ideology by Ippolita (2012).

[16] This proposal on the nonrepresentationalist character of data leaks stands in opposition to recent proposals regarding data activism. As explained in footnote 4, by fostering a non-anthropocentric framework of analysis, I do not presuppose media objects as tools for the representation of political dissent, but rather as processes of mediation—as active agents that have the capability of shaping the becoming of contemporary digital media interventionism. For details, see Micali (2016).

[17] Berardi (2004) also bases his argument on cybertime—and the psychopathologies suffered by human bodies in relation to it—on Virilio's suggestions regarding this acceleration towards immediacy. My point here is less centred on the consequences for the human of such an acceleration. Rather, I suggest that leaks need to be considered within such a scenario, but that this is not simply an information overload scenario (which is key in Berardi's argument). Such an overload involves the depletion of life in relation to the virtual and the continual origination and archiving of (big) data (which have material consequences for life—and not merely the human). As such, this is an implicit critique of what I like to call "big data epistemologies".

Figure 2. "Operation Police", part of Operation AntiSec. Flyer created and circulated by Anonymous to present the publication of a leak comprising documents of Italian police (Anonymous, 2012).

ticularly the timeless extraction and archiving of massive amounts of data.[18] Here, the allusion to the scenario of the bomb comprises the perception of the explosion. This surrounds us, and the death and destruction of the nuclear explosion are replaced by a never-ending bombardment of information. The leak of digital cultures produces a gigantic outcome that, because of the ever-growing amount of data storage, is virtually proportional to the same capability that digital archiving will reach in a future that has yet to come. This is the deathly paradox of digital cultures: perpetually increasing the production of data by selecting and extracting life forms provokes their continual depletion, and increases the affective, quantitative "quality" of leaks.[19] This paradox is the symptom of an inherent potentiality; one that overcomes the "informative" content of the leak and displays its ability to affect beyond the narratives that rough documents would ever reveal, being as well the indicator of the emergence of a novel relation between the political sphere and media agential capacities.

Following this line of argument, I propose that the politics of leaks are not simply concerned with representation, but also with material, affective elements. Instead of simply working through the narratives of the disclosed documents that are published, leaks entail a political register that operates in the affective field. When data leaks are approached through the paradigm of representation—concentrating on the secret meanings they might convey—their political capacity to activate certain potentials beyond these narratives is stubbornly dismissed. Representation implies, in fact, an unbridgeable separation that relies on rationality and its superior capacity to comprehend the intelligible via the origination of middle points—as precisely what representations are. In the tradition of communication and cultural studies the conceptualisation of media derives from the identification of societal formations—often posed in oppositional terms—in which "mediation" negotiates among these pre-existing structures (Couldry, 2008; Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2009). In such a view, media are pre-supposed as static, "middle" tools, and scholarly analyses predominantly focus on the effects of the transmitted communications on different social groups.

Within this paradigm, leaks end up being considered as operating on a mere symbolic plane. In the never neutral outputs of representational analyses, leaks become conspiracies: they will unveil hidden secrets, functioning

[18] James Graham Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* (2001/1970) is a speculative theory that anticipates the distributed hypertrophy of contemporary digital media consumption.

[19] Implicit here is an ecological perspective of media that acknowledges the key vital and material qualities of technological mediation (for details, see Fuller, 2005; Guattari, 2000).

in the fiction of a disjunction that creates foes as an opposition of antinomic poles.[20] Here, the "meaning" of every single leak will always take into consideration possible plot scenarios—grey areas in which power is portrayed as a matter of secret summits, invisible intrigues, and top brasses. Such representationalism reflects an illuminating transcendence; an inconvenient truth that only leaks allow to be revealed. As such, leaks symbolically operate through a fascistic logic—that is, by establishing binary oppositions: antinomies that originate enemies as alterities.[21] This is a logic that separates from the continuum, rather than looking at the way power relations can ontologically create both subjects and objects, friends and foes—ultimately downplaying via signification the vital, material, and entangled dimensions of semiotic processes.

Fuller and Goffey (2012) outline a sort of taxonomy of leaks: "Leak early, leak often" is one of the stratagems they ascribe to the "evil" of computational culture and its processes of "grey" mediation (p. 100). Literary criticism has, for many years, contributed to the study and classification of narrative models: this is how stories are told, passing from one generation to another throughout history. The conventional tradition of media and cultural research centres the analytical interest on the meanings and the structures of the narrations that are transmitted. However, to the contrary, according to Fuller and Goffey (2012), the same academic attention has not been dedicated to "the means by which stories become known" (pp. 100–101). Leaks are amongst these means, but they have never been the object of academic interest, even though being a "crucial means for the dissemination of every kind of narrative" (p. 101).

The issue, for Fuller and Goffey (2012), concerns the "kinds of ways" in which leaks emerge and then become available: the middles, the transformative processes or mediations of how this happens (p. 100). "The leak is the emission liberated from its proper place by an act of omission, or neglect of right containment" (Fuller & Goffey, 2012, p. 101). The forms recognised by Fuller and Goffey are numerous: the draft, which outlines its own future disclosure; the offer of an exclusive; the accident, which is "the most propitious form of leak"; the elimination, a trash that is incapable of deleting its own content; as well as the whistle-blower, who aims to reveal an injustice suffered (pp. 101–103). In their account, rather than being an exhaustive classification, this is outlined as a moving set—a "rough diagram" of leaking (p. 101). For this reason, I experimentally take the advantage of this roughness to add to their scattered arrangement also the leaks that originate by forcing containment. These are forms of leaks that arise from hacking media practices such as those undertaken in the action introduced in the previous section.

Activation, by cracking, is another way of stimulating the emergence of leaks: a "kind of way" that takes advantage of the virtuality of system vulnerabilities.[22] It is at this point that chinks open, and leaks appear. After all, codes have always been compiled in order to "securitise" a system, precisely because systems already contain their own exploits. The leak is a consequence, an accident that is already part of the archiving process, of the system fostering such a loss of content: the leak is always already virtually present. This reading of cracking as a matter of processual activation enable a possible politico-vitalist understanding of the set of hacktions at stake here, and in particular of Anonymous's deployment of such media weapons. This vital dimension is central to move the argument towards an affective register.

According to the diagrammatic classification of "evil media", a leak can take different forms, but, as already introduced, its key character is its virtuality:

> The leak can be understood as a speech act with an unwilling speaker, but it can also remain simply as a gray anticipation, a document waiting nowhere for the eyes of no one, held in abeyance by a forensic disinterest. Such a leak is like every other document, an anonymous squirt into the ocean, but one that dreams of becoming the centre of a whirlpool. The leak, then, is an attempt to capture and mobilize the dynamics of unintended consequences, to enter in the domain of the accident, the double agent, confusion, and to render it fruitful. (Fuller & Goffey, 2012, p. 103)

Leaked data can provoke a storm, or rest forever on the seabed without ever being revealed. Nevertheless, it is in the latter eventuality that the politics of data leaks enter the battlefield; media practices such as cracking trigger the virtuality of certain possibilities, and point to the chance for a leak to become a storm. Within contemporary forms of leaking, media codes are part of the "war machinic" deployment of digital media and networks as weapons (Micali, 2016). This intrinsic condition of network ecologies led to the widespread deployments of

[20] On the culture of conspiracy, see Michael Barkun's (2003) influential study which albeit focused only on the American context, reveals certain key connections between conspiracy and the mass distribution of the internet.

[21] The adjective "fascistic" is used here as Guattari employs it in his own work, as well as his collective work with Deleuze. "Fascist" does not exclusively refer here to the historical case of Italian Fascism, but to the modalities of oppression and repression of otherness—for instance as happened (and still happens) in the historical cases of fascisms. Guattari uses both the adjective "fascistic" and "fascist" throughout his writings in order to express the functioning of fascism at the molecular level—that is at the level of the production of subjectivity (e.g., Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 1987; Guattari, 1995, 2006). The best grounding on how fascism is at stake in the work of Guattari (and Deleuze) is to be found in Michel Foucault's (1977) preface to the American translation of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*. Regarding the dualistic creation of foes that is at the basis of right wing politics, see Wu Ming (2013).

[22] The distinction between hacking and cracking comes directly from hackers, and accompanies the development of the whole literature on the hacker culture. Indeed, very often this distinction is presented as a dualistic one. Rather, I do not suppose them as oppositional terms; according to my perspective, cracking is a processual becoming of the hack. A step in this direction can be found in Jordan (2008).

such hacktions, a trend in which it is possible to witness the global phenomenon of mass leaking such as WikiLeaks, as well as minor media actions such as those of the AntiSec campaign.

Rather than being simply a tool with which to transmit secret information, leaks act beyond the representation of their content and the narratives they communicate and disseminate: *they may activate storms that are affective*. In socio-political terms, they do not simply mediate between opaque and authoritarian societal structures in order to render them more transparent and, in accordance with a common rhetoric, more "democratic". Their politics does not directly depend on the actual content of their revelations. For these reasons, I suggest the politics of data leaks has to be considered instead through, and studied in, an affective register.

4. Towards an Affective Politics of Data Leaks

The concept of affect has gained relevance and interest within the field of the Humanities over recent decades. Since the concept has found various applications and approaches within different academic fields, its definition is neither "stable," nor is its understanding, which often overlaps with related—yet different—notions such as feeling or emotion. Therefore, there exists the need to posit a specific way of dealing with this concept.

As clearly emerges from the overview of the processes of mediation that are at stake in data leaks, they entail a key relationship with the virtual: they oscillate in-between an actual that is full of potential and the actualisation of this same potential—the possibilities that might arise by its emergence as a leak. As such, the notion of affect that equates it to intensity is the most productive with which to address the problem of leaking beyond the impasses of representationalism. To begin with, according to Félix Guattari:

> Affect is...a pre-personal category, installed "before" the circumscription of identities, and manifested by unlocatable transferences, unlocatable with regard to their origin as well as with regard to their destination….As the color of the human soul as well as the color of animal becomings and of cosmic magics, affect remains hazy, atmospheric, and nevertheless perfectly apprehensible to the extent that it is characterized by the existence of threshold effects and reversals in polarity. (Guattari, 1990, pp. 66–67)

In his understanding of the affective register, Guattari was inspired by the work of Baruch Spinoza (1667/2013), and Deleuze's influential studies on the Dutch philosopher (Deleuze, 1992, 2001). The Spinozian suppositions on the "transitivist" character of affect are particularly significant. This character is the capacity of intensive interactions between bodies. As specified in the quote, these affective transferences cannot be localised in terms of origins and destinations, lying instead in "the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, affect is traceable within the intensities that circulate and pass through bodies: within encounters between bodies. However, bodies here have a broader sense, one that surely cannot be circumscribed to the human body, and specifically not with its organicistic, static comprehension. These are the result of a material axis (longitude), and are in particular the result of the intensive merging of the affective forces in their actual constitution (the axis of latitude; see Baugh as cited in Parr, 2010; see also Deleuze, 2001; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).[23]

From the above quoted Guattarian description, it is also possible to underline the pre-personal dimension of affect, which regards the pre-rational and pre-constitutional form of individuation. Key references for Guattari here are both the work of Gilbert Simondon (1989) on the ontogenesis of being, and the ethological studies of Daniel Stern (1998). The former regards the continual "meta-stability" of the individual in its becoming from a state of non-existence that does not conclude its pre-individual potential in the actuality of individuation (Simondon, 1989). The latter offers fundamental, direct observations and reflections on the preverbal subjective formation of the infant, showing her/his pre-rational activation through vitality affects (attunement) via the mother (Stern, 1985, 1998).

In his seminal text on the study of affect, Brian Massumi (2002) continues the line of thought that equates intensity with affect by recognising the essential different logics and orders that exist between affect and emotion. He identifies precisely the subjective character of emotion, pertaining to an order of intensity that is already qualified. Emotions, as well as feelings, already involve a rational recognition by the body/brain, and are open to structural-semiotic descriptions. Conversely, affect (as well as its definition) can barely be defined with words, since—put simply—its representation and rational explication constitute that which affect is not. Identifying emotion and/or feeling with affect runs, indeed, the serious risk of re-establishing the superiority of reason that shapes the drama of humanism and its related representationalism. Affect pertains to an a-signifying semiotic order, and must be apprehended as an order of intensive actualisation that exceeds by degree the perceptions of human-animals and their subjective states.

This outline of affect brings to the fore the crucial question of how intensity might be comprehended, particularly regarding the case of data leaks. A possible answer comes from the fact that, occupying the domain of the accident, the mediations of leaks operate in the dimension of the event. According to Deleuze (1990), the

[23] Deleuze's lectures on Spinoza are a key reading with which to gain an understanding of the question of the body from an anti-anthropocentric standpoint, casting equal light on the relationship between embodiment and affect. As far as I know, an English translation of the lectures has not been published, but they can be found on the web. In Italian they have been translated in Deleuze (2013).

event is an immanent and particular set of relations that is provoked by the encounter and collision of various forces—virtually being the productive potential of those same forces (see also Lazzarato, 2004). As such, within the eventfulness of the social, affect is at stake through its intensive "potency"; it is, in fact, a category that operates before the actual individuation of subjective conditions, an intensity that signals the differential of change.

In such a register, leaks possess the affective capacity to trigger and activate subjects differentially, as a political propensity towards initialising and actuating latent tendencies that are already virtually present in the societal field. Data leaks thus present a kind of "affective politics"—one that Massumi (2015b) characterises as an "inductive" form of politics:

> Politics, approached affectively, is an art of emitting the interruptive signs, triggering the cues, that attune bodies while activating their capacities differentially. Affective politics is inductive. Bodies can be induced into, or attuned to, certain regions of tendency, futurity, and potential...There are potential alter-politics at the collectively in-braced heart of every situation, even the most successfully conformist in its mode of attunement. You can return to that reservoir of real but unexpressed potential, and recue it. This would be a politics of microperception: a micropolitics. (Massumi, 2015b, pp. 108–109)

Affect is the power (or *puissance*) to intensively enable a transformation in the state of the forces at play; the possibility of generating novel relations within the emergent world that is constantly in a process of creation. In the case of the politics of data leaks, it has then to be investigated by casting light on some of the tendencies these might be capable of triggering. The affective politics of data leaks, playing within the vital domain of intensity, can—as such—be apprehended via a non-deterministic, intuitive approach.

To conclude this draft of the affective politics of data leaks, and point towards the future steps that need to be conducted in order to more sharply crystallise this emerging field of enquiry, I would like to draw out some final remarks on the key relationships between Anonymous's AntiSec releases of October 2012 and the NoTav movement. Indeed, as clearly emerges from the first section, the political resistances of this movement, and the guiding forces that populated it, were significantly involved in the actualisation of the leak, albeit without having been linearly determined or determined by it as such.

5. Conclusion, or the Alter-Triggering of Anonymous Leaking

The close discussion of the 2012 Anonymous data leak allowed me to glimpse the surfacing of an innovative set of relationships between the agential capacities of media and politics in digital cultures. The increasing quantities of information that can be stored in digital databases are, in fact, the potential of an overload: an informational surplus that—implying a dimension of action that exceeds the content of the revealed narratives—brings attention to the key question of the virtuality of leaks. (Big) data leaks have indeed a potentiality that tends towards the productivity of life itself—an endless cycle that paradoxically plays with the data capture and related depletion of living heterogeneity. As a result of the centrality of this virtual element, I argued that approaching and investigating data leaks as a matter of representation offers a limited understanding of this preeminent style of contemporary digital resistance. Attributing to the digital interventionism of data leaks a mere symbolic value sustains a sort of fascist logic that reads their particular mediations as a process capable of disclosing certain hidden plots: dark conspiracies that, creating a dualistic power ontology, assign to the leaked narrations a transcendental status of truth.

Conversely, to avoid the limits of this representationalist framework, I proposed the centrally of an affective order to non-deterministically apprehend the politics of data leaks; an order that entails the virtuality of leaking processes of mediation via their capacity to intensively activate certain latent tendencies. This means that, rather than merely being a tool to disclose secrets, data leaks operate within an affective register, implying a politics that acts in the eventful co-constitution of the societal field in its diverse gradations.

Given the programmatic objective of this article, I want to conclude with some final remarks on the relationships between the leak of Anonymous and the NoTav movement, highlighting some points that—once fully developed—can lead to further research on the affective politics of data leaks. These concluding remarks treat the ongoing nature of the phenomena that have been taken into consideration; their capacity to activate collective responses; the key indication they might offer in the study of contemporary power apparatuses; and a similar indication concerning resistance to these forms of power—affective alter-politics that can intensively coparticipate in the constitution of collective, resistant subjective formations.

Significantly, the AntiSec campaign is not over: it is still ongoing, and day-by-day involves novel hacktions and targets. This means that the processes that I discuss here are still in motion, even after the repression and arrests that have occurred since 2012. As I write, Anonymous Italia is currently releasing data obtained from the Italian Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministero della Difesa* and *Ministero degli Interni*), the Italian government, and the Navy (*Marina Militare Italiana*)—data that comprise a list of institutional email addresses and scanned copies of the identity cards and passports of functionaries working within state bureaucracies (for details, see Securityinfo, 2017).

Returning now to 2012, on the 23rd of October one of the principal webpages of the NoTav move-

ment (http://www.notav.info) published a post thanking Anonymous for the leak of the previous day. The hacktion was not the first, nor was it to be the last deployed by Anonymous to enter the battlefield in support of the grassroots movement. However, for the first time the movement faced a vast amount of information that was originally produced by the police to directly stop, limit, and criminalise its activities. Together with its gratitude for the diffusion of the documents, the post reports the will of the activists to scrutinise and analyse the data. The point is not then to overlook the informative value these data might have—especially for the movement and its participants—but to recognise the leaking hacktion of Anonymous as a cue that had the potential to activate collective responses: an affective alter-politics, or micropolitics, that can co-determine the emergence of collective and individual subjective formations, flowing towards shared regions of tendency.[24]

The leaked data—before being released—formed part of a repressive machine in which they were extracted, produced, and stored to generate homogeneous spaces that would not manifest any contradiction. Considering the field of affective politics as introduced, many of these data did not have a direct, immediate informative value. Rather they supported a logic of "preemption" (Elmer & Opel, 2006, 2008): a "technology" of control that collects information on the present in order to anticipate the risks of an inevitable future, thus directing the former towards certain regions of secured futurity.[25] Indeed, the choice of the Italian government in 2011 to declare a national strategic interest in part of the construction area, as well as the deployment of the accusation of terrorism against some activists of the movement in 2013, precisely support this preemptive logic. This power strategy works via affective diagrams, preemptively mobilising the responses to any possible form of dissent. These dispositifs implicate data as processes of mediation that, within larger controlling machines, are able to anticipate and address—in this case local—forms of dissent towards secure scenarios.

However, the data leaks of Anonymous worked differently. Virtually escaping such machines of control, they became alter-cues of affective politics; triggers by which to instigate alternative modes of attuning towards a common future. These data leaks have prompted resistant forces that were already dynamically active in the territory, instigating their potential extent. On the 28th of October 2012, more than thousand NoTav activists from all over the country participated in the collective purchase of the terrains on which one of the high-speed train stations had to be built. A couple of days later, on the 3rd of November, the movement re-occupied an area that was under a sequester order of the police because of its proximity to the construction site. The resistant politics of data leaking has surely taken part in the activation of certain novel events within a short interval of time. Nevertheless, more importantly, it contributed to maintain a certain lasting set of relationships, diverting attempts to dissipate their active forces of dissent, instead reinforcing the ranks of the movement and accompanying it towards today's common struggles and those that have yet to come.

In conclusion, the case of the data leak of Anonymous and, especially, its vital entanglements with the NoTav movement, shows the emergence of an innovative style of media dissent that is pre-eminently surfacing in contemporary network cultures. In particular, this emerging form of media interventionism can be addressed and understood as a key configuration of affective politics or, better, as alter-politics. This configuration has, in fact, the capacity to act by exceeding the content of the documents that are released, intensively co-participating in the individuation of certain latent tendencies. This means that the politics of data leaks operates in the domain of affect—a register that, as outlined in this programmatic proposal, pertains to the virtual and potential capacities of triggering and inducting certain active forces of resistance.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Aime, M. (2016). *Fuori dal tunnel: Viaggio antropologico nella Val di Susa* [Outside of the tunnel: Anthropological travel across Val di Susa]. Milan: Meltemi.

Anonymous. (2011, June 19). Operation anti-security. *Pastebin*. Retrieved from http://pastebin.com/9KyA0E5v

Anonymous. (2012, October 22). #AntiSecITA—Polizia Italiana Owned & Exposed. *Anon News*.

Arizona Department of Public Safety. (2011, June 27). DPS victim of cyber attack. *Arizona Department of Public Safety*. Retrieved from https://www.azdps.gov

Ballard, J. G. (2001). *The atrocity exhibition*. London: Harper Collins Publishers. (Original work published 1970)

Barkun, M. (2003). *A culture of conspiracy: Apocalyptic visions in contemporary America*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Bazzichelli, T. (2013). *Networked disruption: Rethinking oppositions in art, hacktivism and the business of social networking*. Aarhus: Digital Aesthetics Research Center.

Berardi, F. (2004). *Il sapiente, il mercante, il guerriero: Dal rifiuto del lavoro all'emergere del cognitariato*

[24] The concept of micropolitics traverses the work of Deleuze and Guattari and can be briefly described as the flowing politics of the production of subjectivity. In particular, see Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 9).

[25] Here, I employ the term "technology" beyond its strict definition as a material artefact, regarding it as a plausible translation of the French word "*dispositif*" (often translated in English as apparatus), which is a key concept for post-structuralist accounts of power; for instance, see Foucault (1995).

[The sage, the merchant, the warrior; From the refusal of work to the emergence of cognitariat]. Rome: Derive Approdi.

Burroughs, W. S. (1961). *The soft machine*. Paris: Olympia Press.

Burroughs, W. S. (1962). *The ticket that exploded*. Paris: Olympia Press.

Burroughs, W. S. (1964). *Nova express*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Burroughs, W. S. (1971). *The wild boys*. New York: Grove Press.

Centro Sociale Askatasuna. (2012). *A sarà düra: Storie di vita e militanza no tav* [A sarà düra; Tales of notav life and militancy]. Rome: Derive Approdi.

Chapman, S. (2011, June 20). Operation Anti-Security: LulzSec and Anonymous target banks and governments. *ZDNet*. Retrieved from https://www.zdnet.com/article/operation-anti-security-lulzsec-and-anonymous-target-banks-and-governments

Coleman, G. (2014). *Hacker, hoaxer, whistleblower, spy: The many faces of Anonymous*. London: Verso.

Constantin, L. (2011, September 2). Anonymous hits Texas law enforcement. *The Inquirer*. Retrieved from https://www.theinquirer.net/inquirer/news/2106267/anonymous-hits-texas-law-enforcement

Couldry, N. (2008). Mediatization or mediation? Alternative understandings of the emergent space of digital storytelling. *New Media & Society*, *10*(3), 373–391.

Deleuze, G. (1990). *The logic of sense*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, G. (1992). *Expressionism in philosophy: Spinoza*. New York, NY: Zone Book.

Deleuze, G. (2001). *Spinoza: Practical philosophy*. San Francisco, CA: City Light Books.

Deleuze, G. (2013). *Cosa può un corpo? Lezioni su Spinoza* [What can a body do? Lessons on Spinoza]. Verona: Ombre Corte.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1977). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. New York, NY: Viking Press.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Elmer, G., & Opel, A. (2006). Surviving the inevitable future. *Cultural Studies*, *20*(4/5), 477–492.

Elmer, G., & Opel, A. (2008). *Preempting dissent: The politics of an inevitable future*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

Foucault, M. (1977). Preface. In G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (pp. xi–xiv). New York, NY: Viking Press.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Fuller, M. (2005). *Media ecologies: Materialist energies in art and technoculture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Fuller, M., & Goffey, A. (2012). *Evil media*. Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press.

Gregg, M., & Seigworth, G. J. (2010). *The affect theory reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Guareschi, M. (2001). *Deleuze popfilosofo* [Deleuze popphilosopher]. Milan: Shake.

Guattari, F. (1990). Ritornellos and existential affects. *Discourse*, *12*(2), 66–81.

Guattari, F. (1995). *Chaosmosis: An ethico-aesthetic paradigm*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.

Guattari, F. (2000). *The three ecologies*. London: The Athlone Press.

Guattari, F. (2006). *The anti-Oedipus papers*. New York, NY: Semiotext(e).

Il Fatto Quotidiano. (2012, October 23). Anonymous viola il sito della Polizia, 3500 documenti finiscono in Rete [Anonymous breaks the Police website, 3500 documents released online]. *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. Retrieved from https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2012/10/23/anonymous-viola-sito-della-polizia-3500-documenti-finiscono-in-rete/390527

InfoFreeFlow. (2012, October 23). AntiSecIta affonda poliziadistato.it [AntiSecIta sinks poliziadistato.it]. *InfoFreeFlow*. Retrieved from https://infofreeflow.noblogs.org/post/2012/10/23/antisecita-affonda-poliziadistato-it

Ippolita. (2012). *Nell'acquario di Facebook* [In the Facebook Aquarium]. Milan: Ledizioni.

Jordan, T. (2008). *Hacking*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Kember, S., & Zylinska, J. (2012). *Life after new media: Mediation as a vital process*. London: MIT Press.

Lazzarato, M. (2004). *La politica dell'evento* [The politics of the event]. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore.

Lister, M., Dovey, J., Giddings, S., Grant, I., & Kelly, K. (2009). *New media: A critical introduction* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. (2010). The future birth of the affective fact: The political ontology of threat. In M. Gregg & G. J. Seigworth (Eds.), *The affect theory reader* (pp. 52–70). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. (2015a). *Politics of affect*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Massumi, B. (2015b). *The power at the end of the economy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Micali, A. (2016). *Hacktivism and the heterogeneity of resistance in digital cultures* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Lincoln, Lincoln, UK.

Micali, A. (2017a). Media actions as hacktions: Rethinking resistance(s) in network ecologies. *Critical Studies*, *3*(1), 3–19.

Micali, A. (2017b). Towards a nonlinear, material history of digital swarms. *Internet Histories: Digital Technology, Culture and Society*, *1*(3), 238–257.

NoTav.info. (2012, October 23). Grazie Anonymous! *NoTav.info*. Retrieved from www.notav.info/post/grazie-anonymous

Olson, P. (2012). *We are Anonymous*. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group.

Parr, A. (Ed.). (2010). *The Deleuze dictionary: Revised edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Securityinfo. (2017, November 14). Torna Anonymous Italia: "Abbiamo i dati del governo" [Anonymous Italia is back: "We have the data of the government"]. *Securityinfo*. Retrieved from https://www.securityinfo.it/2017/11/14/torna-anonymous-italia-dati-del-governo

Serracino-Inglott, P. (2013). Is it OK to be an Anonymous? *Ethics & Global Politics*, *6*(4), 217–244. doi:10.3402/egp.v6i4.22527

Simondon, G. (1989). *L'individuation psychique et collective* [Psychic and collective individuation]. Paris: Editions Aubier.

Spinoza, B. (2013). *Etica e trattato teologico-politico* [Ethics and theological-political treatise]. Novara: De Agostini. (Original work published 1667)

Stern, D. N. (1985). Affect attunement. In J. D. Call, F. Galenson, & R. L. Tyson (Eds.), *Frontiers of infant psychiatry* (Vol. 2) (pp. 3–14). New York, NY: Basic Books.

Stern, D. N. (1998). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. London: Karnac Books.

Thomas, D. (2002). *Hacker culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Virilio, P. (2000). *The information bomb*. London: Verso.

Wu Ming. (2013, February 20). Consigli per riconoscere la destra sotto qualunque maschera [Advices to recognise the right wing under any mask]. *Giap*. Retrieved from www.wumingfoundation.com/giap/?p=11977

Wu Ming 1. (2016). *Un viaggio che non promettiamo breve: Venticinque anni di lotte No Tav* [A travel that we do not promise will be short: Twenty-five years of No Tav struggles]. Turin: Einaudi.

About the Author

Alberto Micali, PhD, is Lecturer in Communications and Media Studies in the Communications Faculty at the John Cabot University, Italy; and Associate Lecturer in the School of Film and Media at the University of Lincoln, UK. His research interests lie in the politics of digital media and network dissent, focussing on the social and political implications of hacking, digital activism, and non-representational theories of media and mediation. His work appeared in journals such as *Internet Histories: Digital Technology, Culture and Society*; *Critical Studies*; and the *Journal of Posthuman Studies*.

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)

Media and Communication is an international open access journal dedicated to a wide variety of basic and applied research in communication and its related fields. It aims at providing a research forum on the social and cultural relevance of media and communication processes.

www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication

COGITATIO