Ecologies of Existence - Art and Media beyond the Anthropocene

International Symposium at Kunstraum, Leuphana University Luneburg

June 30 - July 2, 2016
Organizers: Christoph Brunner (Archipelago Lab) and Yvonne Volkart

The planetary situation, as it may be, is perceived as one of crisis; ecologically, economically, and mentally. While the impact and destructive force of environmental change receive new attention in the discourse on the anthropocene, crisis, on the other hand, becomes the justification for extended mechanisms of control. We find ourselves in a tightly woven narrative of a networked all encompassing (human) condition permeated by operations management of complexities and their preemptive harnessing of affect. Against a mere surrender in the face of these paralyzing processes, but also dismissing a form of capitalist subsumption of the ecological as a label on everything, we want to insist on the notion of ecology as concept and practice that refuses any form of universality. Resisting this totality of crisis and control as well as adaptation and (non)sustainability we wonder how ecology as ecosophic praxis becomes a constructivist and transversal "relational generativity" along heterogeneous modes of existence and their ecologies.

Bringing together protagonists from media ecology, biological ecology, and eco-media discourses, we ask: What kinds of practices and aesthetic strategies might provide us with a transversal ecology? What does ecological existence mean and how do ecologies of existence evolve? In a world, in which both concepts like nature or environment are under constant revision, and taking care for our companion species seems too complicated and exhausting, we want to find out how art and media technologies might co-compose more relational modes of existence and their ecologies.

During the three days of the symposium we focus on four dimensions in close resonance with each other:

1. How can we think the notion of ecology more "environmentally?" If we consider the interlacing between social, mental, and environmental ecology, the notions of the environment and the environmental require a reconsideration as the material ground of planetary existence.

2. What is the impact of collecting, monitoring, and interpreting (curating) data in relation to ecological conditions? How can we overcome the bifurcation between interpretative knowledges and the actual processes of exploitation?

3. How do modes of ecological practicing occur between different sets of knowledge and making? What are the conditions of emergence for such interstitial practices? What is the function of art and aesthetics for such ecological modes of practicing?

4. How can we generate ecological practices with and through different modes of existence, capable of accounting for relational states of co-emergence?

PROGRAM

Thursday, June 30, 2016 – Mondbasis Luneburg

21.00 - Screening & Discussion
Elke Marhöfer & Mikhail Lylov (Berlin)

Friday, July 1, 2016 – Kunstraum, University of Luneburg

9.00 - Coffee & Tea

9.15 - Introduction
Christoph Brunner (Leuphana U.) & Yvonne Volkart (FHNW Basel)

9.45 - Ethico-Aesthetics and Applicational Ecologies
Matthew Fuller (Goldsmiths, U. of London): *An Aesthetics of Roots and Branch*
Stamatia Portanova (Orientale U. of Naples): *Applicational Ecologics*

11.15 - Coffee Break

11.30 - Technological and Biological Environmentality
Jennifer Gabrys (Goldsmiths, U. of London): *The Becoming Environmental of Computing*
Vicky Temperton (Leuphana U.): *Deciding who belongs and who does not in the field of plant ecology*

13.00 - Lunch Break

14.15 - Data and Technoecologies
Rasa Smite (Rix-C, Riga): *Techno-Ecological Data Interpretations in artistic research practices*

15.00 - Coffee Break

15.30
Working Session 1 (Fuller, Portanova)
Working Session 2 (Gabrys, Temperton, Smite)

16.45 - Plenary Discussion

18.15 – End

Saturday, July 2, 2016 – Kunstraum, University of Luneburg

9.00 - Coffee & Tea

9:15 - Wrap Up from last day and introduction
Christoph Brunner & Yvonne Volkart

9.30 - Ecologies of Making and Animal
Erich Hörl (Leuphana U.): *Ecologies of Making. Tim Ingold's Genera-Ecological Critique of Worldmaking and the Fascination with Non-Modernity*
Alanna Thain (McGill U., Montreal): *Experimental Ecologies of Intensity: The Bestiality of Time Travel*

11.00 - Coffee Break

11.15 - Oikos between Ecology and Economy
Baruch Gottlieb (Berlin): *Concatenated oikoi. Human Nature and Counter-politics in the Anthropocene*

12.30 - Lunch Break

13.15 - Epistemic Disobedience and Algorithmic Plants
knowbotiq (Zurich U. of the Arts): *moving through the vegetal as if there is no resistance*

14.00 - Coffee Break

14.15
Working Session 1 (Hörl, Thain)
Working Session 2 (Gottlieb, knowbotiq)

15.30 - Plenary Discussion and Wrap-up

16.30 - End

Addresses:
Mondbasis, Lünertorstraße 20, 21335 Lüneburg
Kunstraum, Scharnhorststraße 1, 21335 Lüneburg

Partner:
Digital Cultures Research Lab (DCRL), Kunstraum Lüneburg, Archipelago Lab

ABSTRACTS & BIOGRAPHIES

Christoph Brunner

Bio

Christoph Brunner is assistant professor in cultural theory at Leuphana University Lüneburg. He works on the intersection between media practices, activism, and aesthetics. His current research aims at developing what he calls a "relational realism" as a way of taking account of cultural practices in their affectively emergent state. Some recent publications: "Affective Politics of Sensation. Anonymity and Transtemporal Activism in Argentina", *Conjunctions* 2:1 (2015); "From Community to the Undercommons: Preindividual – Transindividual – Dividual – Condividual," *Open! Online* (2015 with Gerald Raunig). Christoph recently initiated the *Archipelago Lab* – A Lab for Transversal Practices of Thought in Action at Leuphana University.

Matthew Fuller
An Aesthetics of Root and Branch

How can we develop an ecological aesthetics that is capable of recognising and work within ecologies as a mutual field of co-composition? How in turn do these open up questions about intent, aesthetics, design-process and art that offer new figures of composition? To develop such questions also means to navigate accounts of nature, and of relations between kinds of knowledge. This lecture will draw upon botany and the notion of the ethico-aesthetic proposed by Félix Guattari to discuss the way in which patterns and mechanisms of plant growth may offer a particular set of examples and capacities to guide and query experimental thinking and action in such collaboration.

Bio

Matthew Fuller is the author of the forthcoming How to Sleep, in Art, Biology and Culture (Bloomsbury). Other titles include Media Ecologies, Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture (MIT Press), Behind the Blip, Essays on the Culture of Software and Elephant & Castle (both Autonomedia). With Usman Haque, he is co-author of Urban Versioning System v1.0 (ALNY) and with Andrew Goffey, of Evil Media (MIT). Editor of Software Studies, a Lexicon (MIT Press) and co-editor of the journal Computational Culture, he is involved in a number of projects in art, media and software. He is Professor

of Cultural Studies and Director of the Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Jennifer Gabrys

The Becoming Environmental of Computation

Planetary computerization—and the making of a computational planet—are terms and concepts that now occupy considerable attention in media studies and environmental theory and practice. Yet these developments have been underway since the post-war context, when new ways of rendering planetary systems emerged through technological networks, while also informing the practice and understanding of ecology. This presentation will draw on my recent book, *Program Earth*, to discuss the ways in which the planet has become the object of increasing monitoring and data generation, particularly through environmental sensor networks. In *Program Earth*, I take up considerations about the planetary and its environments by addressing the rise of ubiquitous environmental computing, often in order to address environmental problems and make the planet more sustainable. In current imaginings of ubiquitous environmental sensing, technology companies frequently put forward a vision of the Earth as brimming with sensors, where numerous environmental processes and activities will be monitored for ideal performance and responsiveness. Tens of billion if not hundreds of billion of sensors are proposed to be deployed in order to ensure earthly systems are optimized. At multiple levels, sensors are presented as a solution to the problem of the planet in crisis, from monitoring global systems to enabling citizens to become more effective sensors and participating nodes in these systems. Yet in what ways could citizen sensing potentially rework the environments and entities of environmental monitoring toward other uses beyond efficiency and optimization? And how might these practices be developed? I will then consider specifically how different ways of working with citizen sensing to undertake environmental monitoring could differently express the aesthetic, relational and political capacities of media ecologies.

Bio

Jennifer Gabrys is Reader in the Department of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London, and Principal Investigator on the ERC-funded project, Citizen Sense, which engages with inventive approaches to workshops and walking in order to test and query environmental sensing technology. Gabrys' books include a techno-geographical investigation of environmental sensing, *Program Earth: Environmental Sensing*

Technology and the Making of a Computational Planet (University of Minnesota Press, 2016); and a material-political analysis of electronic waste, *Digital Rubbish: A Natural History of* Electronics (University of Michigan Press, 2011). Her work can be found at citizensense.net and jennifergabrys.net.

Baruch Gottlieb

Concatenated oikoi. Human Nature and Counter-politics in the Anthropocene

A performative interactive lecture unpacking the common root of ecology and economy, the *oikos* or household, with regard to the current ecological and economic crisis.
In a time of already overwhelming and intensify technological advance, the figure of Anthropos is beginning to lose its philosophical centrality. Anthropomorphic semantic systems with terms such as economy, ecology and politics and must be criticized, reviewed and updated. Vilém Flusser suggested that words are not even capable of communicating our perceptions and ideas of the universe any more, and that we should use "technical images" and "synthetic thinking". Extending from Flusser, new materialisms and agential realism, this performance lecture will elaborate the persistent materiality of our shared *oikos* and outline some synthetic methods for orientation.

Bio

Baruch Gottlieb, trained as a filmmaker at Concordia University, has been working in digital art with specialization in public art since 1999. From 2005-2008 he was assistant professor of Media Art at Yonsei University Graduate School for Communication and Arts in Seoul, Korea. He is active member of the Telekommunisten, Arts & Economic Group and laboratoire de déberlinisation artist collectives.

Author of "Gratitude for Technology" (ATROPOS 2009) and "A Political Economy of the Smallest Things" (ATROPOS 2016), he currently lectures in philosophy of digital art at the University of Arts Berlin and is fellow of the Vilém Flusser Archiv. He is curator of the exhibition series "Flusser & the Arts" based on the philosophical writings of Vilém Flusser, which premiered in ZKM, Karlsruhe and has traveled so far to AdK Berlin and West, the Hague. He writes extensively on digital media, digital archiving, generative and interactive processes, digital media for public space and on social and political aspects of networked media.

Erich Hörl

Ecologies of Making.Tim Ingold's General-Ecological Critique of Worldmaking and the Fascination with Non-Modernity

This talk develops Tim Ingold's environmental reformulation of making, and in so doing reconstitutes his fundamental reconception of activity and artefactuality, based on an originary participation of beings and forces, as the core of a relational ecology of life. For Ingold, the elaboration of the latter is a primary task for contemporary thought. The environmental turn of the worlding of world [*das Welten von Welt*], or one might say, the environmenting of world [*das Umwelten von Welt*], which replaces the modern notion of world-making, proves to be the key to a non-modern reconceptualization of all modes of existence. Ingold's radical-environmental thought concentrates the critique of Western hylomorphism which traverses the twentieth century and which arises from a specific sense-historical situation. Thanks to Ingold in particular, it is possible to identify this as the transition from a symbolic to an environmental sense. Ingold emerges as a central protagonist within a history of fascination with non-modernity, which opens up within this transition and penetrates throughout contemporary theory across cultural studies and the humanities.

Bio

Erich Hörl is Professor of Media Culture at the Institute of Culture and Aesthetics of Digital Media (ICAM), Leuphana University of Lüneburg. He is also a member of Leuphana's Digital Culture Research Lab (DCRL). His current research interests concern the development of a general ecology of media and technologies as well as a critique of the process of cyberneticization of all life forms and modes of existence since 19th century. He writes widely on the theoretical challenges and the historical becoming of todays technological condition and has a special expertise in Simondon Studies, Heidegger Studies as well as Guattari Studies.

Mikhail Lylov und Elke Marhöfer

Filmscreening and discussion

Primate Colors (30'57"): This film traces humans and nonhumans joined in the flows of capital. It inquires into the life of Chungking Mansions, shuttle traders and commerce

objects, which connect HongKong and the Pearl River Delta with Nairobi, Djibouti, Rotterdam and Elba. The film pursues and accelerates certain methods of ethnographic and anthropological filmmaking, although not explaining people's actions, beliefs or norms. Instead it chooses to focus on affective components of events and actions. No claims are made about the life of others. To film and to follow affects does not mean to represent an idea or a subject in a narrative of contradictions, it rather asks to be mesmerized by materiality, by the forces of the running camera and the movement of things. When recording the capitalist reality of hyper-exploitation of human and nonhuman resources, one finds one's own conditions not in the relations of production, but in disgraced facts, neglected aspects and ridiculed signs. Therefrom reality is understood as fundamentally strange, and filming becomes a form of assembling the bewildering and the obscure. Such a mode of filmmaking follows different grades of speed, light, temperature, rotation, friction, fall-off. The approach brings forth perceptions that emerge in relation to an environment, a territory or a color. In turn, images cannot be understood as exclusively belonging to human life, or culture, but are seen as produced and perceived constantly and everywhere by nonhumans and humans alike. Akin to crystals or snowflakes, which produce geometric configurations in response and in connection to their surroundings, images have their own experiences.

Shape Shifting, (18'27"): Granting culture to nonhumans the film outlines a cartography of a landscape found in many parts of Asia and in Japan is called satoyama—space between village and mountain. Created by exchanges and encounters between nonhuman and human its agricultural and forestry productivity is based on the increase of biodiversity. The more collaborations between species and cycles of materials are created—the more stable ecosystem and films can be formed.

Bio

Mikhail Lylov is an independent artist and curator, who lives in Berlin. His works establish or discuss the situations in which economic and knowledge models are questioned, renegotiated or rendered useless. Mikhail Lylov's projects were supported by Le Pavillon program at Palais De Tokyo in Paris, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Berlinale Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin, Courtisane Festival Ghent, BFI British Film Festival London.

Elke Marhöfer lives and works in Berlin. She collaborates with dear friends and things, and revises anthropocentric views on animals, vegetables, objects and microorganisms

towards a transversal and relational ecology. She studied Fine Art at the University of the Arts in Berlin, at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, at the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York City and received a PhD from the University of Gothenburg. Her films have been screened at the BFI British Film Festival London, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Berlinale - Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin, Courtisane Festival Ghent, Images Film Festival Toronto, The Showroom London and the Cinematek in Brussels and Stockholm.

knowbotiq

moving through the vegetal as if there is no resistance

The artist group knowbotiq investigates through their artistic practices forms of visibility, opacity and invisibility in relation to political and epistemic strategies. In their recent projects: „kotomisi: un-inform" and „The Secret Life of Algorithmic Plants" they enact epistemic disobedience with post/colonial representations of body, work, non-work, dance and landscape.

In these projects we are scrutinising colonial cultivation in the plantation economies of the 18th and 19th centuries where humans and plants were accessed and dissolved from their living environment. Humans and plants became soluble, exchangeable and fungible as commodities and scientific objects. Workers and slaves were converted to (vegetal) no-bodies and merged with the industrial plants into derivated machinic lifeforms. On the plantations material realities, subjectivities and vegetal aspirations were enlisted as points of access for new levels of conscious and unconscious inscription, attributions and speculative divisions. We are reading these cultivations against the logistics and procedures of access in the algorithmic institutions of cognitive capitalism.

The colonial plantocratic hegemony had been continuosly contested by the workers and slaves through manifold tactics like fugitivity or the denial of reproduction of female workers (enabled through their secret knowledge of medical plants). The plantocratic subsumption was crossed by the contingency of plants and as well as unmindful breedings. Thus different form of resistance and amplifications of entropy were entering these vegetal regimes of governance and control.

In „The Secret Life of Algorithmic Plants" we are experimenting with visual algorithmic fabulations and inscriptions into the neo-colonial, with plastic film covered agricultural

landcapes in Tyrol, Austria. Highly economized and technologized sceneries are opposing the rural imaginations of the tourist industry which still advertises the mountain flora, fauna and the smallholder idyll as a pristine ideal. Precarious workers, mostly from the former under Habsburg rule colonized Eastern European countries, submit themselves symbiotically into agriculture formations and the modulating rhythms of the sowing, planting and harvesting machines. These forms of extractive capitalism are articulated under high tech films, on the textures of the soil or in vertical landscapes and within a still virulent coloniality. knowbotiq had been unfolding huge alternative films on the agricultural fields and enacted parodistic harvest dances on their plastified matrix."

Bio
URL: knowbotiq.net

Stamatia Portanova
Applicational Ecologics

Hypotheses: This paper will adopt two ontological and ethical presuppositions: (1) that events have a privilege over products, subjects and objects, or goods, and (2) that experiential ecosystems have precedence over established economic systems.

Goals: The philosophical project is to think beyond the dialectical union of the world's immediacy and human mediation, conceiving instead the possibility of blending both the rigidity of being and the limits of the human into a 'becoming of the non-human'. This blend will be achieved through a concept of 'immediation'. In order to reach a possible definition of this concept, the paper will let itself be guided by one specific research question: is it possible to think of applications, and of the experiential ecosystems increasingly generated by data collection, tracking and sharing technologies, as an 'immediated' ecology working beyond the interface of human-world, human-algorithm, or world-algorithm mediations?

Method: The production of digital applications is still very much based on notions of 'tracking' and 'sharing' attached to the classical ideas of a human proprietor owning the universal right to a common good, and of a profitable resource such as information. But what if, from a non-human centred point of view, we started thinking that things (technologies, tools, applications, data) can also own things? As a matter of fact, things own and share their properties (in the sense of their qualities). In order to pursue this line

of research with rigour and to be more precise, it will be useful to adopt a philosophical method echoing Alfred N. Whitehead's words, when he spins our minds around and argues that, in fact, it is the properties that own things, bodies, persons of all kinds. This is the concept of 'immediation' this paper would like to propose: as a qualitative rather than quantitative way to live and feel events, not as simply mediated by humans or their material/immaterial tools, but as immediated by qualities (what Whitehead calls 'eternal objects'). As soon as we start to sense that qualities own people and technologies, take decisions and guide processes, an immediated individuation of applicational ecosystems can also emerge, where the notion of information value abandons its financial nature and revolves around its axis. What we are left with is a relational logics of the app (or an applicational ecologics) catalysed by eternal immediations and immediate objects, rather than by economic profit and proprietary interest.

Case Studies: It is anticipated that the case studies to test the notion of an 'applicational ecologics' will be taken from the system of existing, or potentially developable, date tracker apps.

Bio

Stamatia Portanova is a Research Fellow at the Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale' (Naples), where she is also a member of the Technocultures Research Unit. Her research focuses on philosophy, digital culture and the aesthetics of movement. She is the author of Moving without a Body. Digital Philosophy and Choreographic Thoughts (MIT Press, 'Technologies of Lived Abstraction series), and of several articles published in books and journals such as Body and Society, Computational Culture, Space and Culture, Fibreculture, Angelaki and Inflexions. She is a member of the Senselab, a Montrèal-based interdisciplinary laboratory on research-creation directed by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, focusing on intersections between philosophy, technology and art through the sensing body in motion.

Rasa Smite

Techno-Ecological Data Interpretations in artistic research practices

On the one hand, data visualization has become an important bases for contemporary creative practices, it also creates new aesthetics, of its own. on the other hand – it also contains a capability to represent and reveal the invisible processes and complex structures – such as happening in the nature and local ecosystems (e.g. in the bottom of

the pond, when experimenting with "bacteria battery" / mfc), as well as in our communities and societies (such as "technological spheres" of our our everyday lives). How we can use environmental, scientific data as a medium to represent complex structures of big issues, such as climate change, environment, renewable energy quests? How can we interpret data, in order to reveal our relations between nature and technology, ecological systems and electronic networks, human and micro-worlds, rural and urban social environments?

Bio

Rasa Smite is an artist, network researcher and cultural innovator, working with science and emerging media technologies since the mid-90s. Rasa Smite has graduated from the Latvian Arts Academy (MA, 2000), and holds a doctoral degree in sociology from Riga Stradins University (her PhD thesis "Creative Network Communities", 2011). Currently she is associate professor in New Media Art Programme, and a researcher in Art Research Lab at Liepaja University.

Vicky Temperton

Deciding who belongs and who does not in the field of plant ecology

This talk will focus on aspects of the Anthropocene in relation to ecology as a field of research and a field of conservation and ecological restoration practice. I will explore how we in ecology deal with the question of what is natural and authentic especially in relation to wild nature and restored nature. A key component of this is the issue of invasive and exotic species (both plants and animals) and how they are perceived by ecologists and practitioners. The question of how long a species has to have existed in a region before it become seen as naturalised and no longer unwanted will be explored, as well as current state of the art discussions within ecology in relation to invasive species.

Bio

Prof. Vicky Temperton is professor of ecosystem functions and services in the Institute of Ecology at Leuphana University in Lüneburg, where she co-directs the 'Futures of Ecosystem Services' Institute (FuturES). She is an experimental ecologist interested in how plant-plant interactions and the outcome of these interactions affect how ecosystems function and provide services to humanity. One of her key fields of research and teaching is applying ecological knowledge and theory to the restoration of degraded landscapes. Since April 2016 she is research dean of the faculty of sustainability. She is

also interested in the history and philosophy of science.
URL:http://www.leuphana.de/universitaet/personen/vicky-temperton.html; FuturES
http://www.leuphana.de/en/research-centers/futures.html

Alanna Thain

Experimental Ecologies of Intensity: The Bestiality of Time Travel

From *La Jetée's* amourous ecologies of taxidermied animals, to *Jurassic Park's* ambered mosquitos, through the lab rats of mice and men in Alain Resnais' *Je t'aime je t'aime* and David Cronenberg's exploded archive of baboons, scientists and houseflies at the Brundlefly museum, cinematic time travel presents an ecology of existence that we can characterize as machinic. Felix Guattari writes: "Existence, as a mode of deterritorialization, is a specific intermachinic operation which superimposes itself on the promotion of singularized existential intensities. And I repeat, there is no generalized syntax for these deterritorializations. Existence is not dialectical, not representable. It is hardly liveable!" The time machine as imagined by cinema is device of deterritorialization on the intensive edge of liveability. We might speak less then of time machines than a time machinics. Alterrhythms of existence are drawn into a looping that opens again our corporeal habits of temporalocation. Human bodies ping off of animal bodies pinging off metals, minerals and electrical movements in a remixed and relational ecology of time travel. This talk looks at cinematic time travel to ask: what kinds of time machinics might be an open invitation to embodied anotherness, as the differential of a felt futurity? In films, this differential often fails at the level of character body, as so many time travel narratives kill their main characters or recuperate them into cliché, but is affectively felt through the ambiguous embodiments that move transversally across spectatorial cinematic bodies and non-human bodies, our animal and insect unfamiliars, as a sign of the more-to-life. Time machinics is a transversal experimental ecology for rediscovering the heterogeneity of our own existence in time.

Bio
Alanna Thain is associate professor of World Cinemas and Cultural Studies at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. She directs the Moving Image Research Laboratory, dedicated to the study of the body in moving image media, and home to Cinema Out of the Box, a bicycle powered mobile cinema staging guerrilla screenings in the urban ecology of Montreal. She is also director of the Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies. Her research focuses on time and embodiment in cinema, media and

performance. Her book *Bodies in Time: Suspense, Affect and Cinema* is forthcoming from University of Minnesota Press.

Yvonne Volkart

Bio

Yvonne Volkart is instructor in art theory and cultural media studies at the Academy of Art and Design, Basel, and senior researcher of the project "Times of Waste", a follow-up of the project "RhyCycling – Aesthetics of Sustainability in the Basel Border Area". 2003-06, she was project leader of the research project "Cyborg Bodies" at "Mediaartnet", ZKM Karlsruhe. 2009-12, she was curator at Shedhalle Zurich, and edited the book "Subverting Disambiguities" (with Anke Hoffmann). In 2007, she curated the touring exhibition and the book "Ecomedia. Ecological Strategies in Today's Art" (with Sabine Himmelsbach and Karin Ohlenschläger), presented at Edith Russ Site for Media Art, Oldenburg; [plug.in], Basel; Sala Parpallò, Valencia). She writes regularly for *springerin*. URLs: http://www.ixdm.ch/team/yvonne-volkart; http://archiv2012.shedhalle.ch/en/exhibitions/live-wire-art-and-electricity.