

Research Proposal

Name of Applicant: **Deniz Yenimazman**

Provisional Project Title: *Your objectivity will be televised* – A Case Study of Old and New Media with its Emergent Qualities of a New Ontogeneity in the Context of Socio-Cultural Systems and Networks

Project description:

The proposed research aims to outline the dynamics and intensities in the context of news media and attempts an comparative analysis between so-called new and old media. The specific research question in this context would be: *How exactly does the interaction between old media (print, radio, terrestrial television) and new media (online journals, blogs, streaming content) work and what are its genealogical and cultural implications?*

Rather than pinpointing those layers on a matrix of determinate structures, the research aims to map the dynamics of the topic of news media as an 'abstract machine'¹ The research will then be concerned with the question of how this 'transcendental illusion'² of news media is created, branded, distributed and consumed³ and how it can be re-appropriated by the consumers, attempting to show that the 'need' for an execution of control over information and content stems out of the system-inherent ability of differentiating between self- and extrinsic reference.

Control by itself, on the other hand, cannot be anything but limited, but it is exactly this limit which contributes to enable this kind cultural and commercial communication and its sustainability, relating it to a framework of transactions and markets and the appropriate means of distribution and its context of denotation. It is therefore necessary to address the question of control exertion in the course of this analysis in order to assess the full potential of the interaction between the different media types and their cultural impact.

As a case study, the project aims to apply aforementioned theories onto a particular circumstance in order to prove its analytical validity. The case study will focus on North America, respectively the United States from a time-period ranging from March 2002 on, at which point the first legal and national responses were drafted in reaction to the events of Sep 11 2001. Rather than focusing directly on the news coverage after the event and during the operation in Afghanistan, the research will focus on the legal preparations for a shift in news reporting which became perceivable during the initial phase of the invasion of Iraq.

The research will then analyse how and why institutions are trying to control information access to issues via commercial pressure, legislatures and newly created institutions (such as the Information Awareness Office), employing this strategy within an ontological framework of a dualism in politics, power and control, ranging from the increasing reactionary and populist bias of news networks such as FOX to faked blogs⁴ which were paid for by major corporations and media conglomerates, for example.

Provisional overview

Part 1: Stagnation and Fissure: Aesthetics & Politics

Walter Benjamin was among the first writers of the 20th century to bewail the blurring between the spheres of aesthetics and politics. In the afterword to "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" he claimed in his critique of fascism that all efforts in terms of the aesthetic apotheosis of politics can only culminate in war.⁵

In fact, the process might also be observed the other way round: War in itself can be described as *iconophilic*⁶, bearing in its operations itself the need to produce images and furthermore to assume their actuality as a means of reference for future military planning and strategies. Before von Clausewitz could actually state that the "war is the continuation of politics by other means", one must bear in mind that this statement is a mere antithesis of the claim that politics are the continuation of war by other means, adopting the viewpoint of an overarching paradigm of an eternal war⁷, its heritage being still recognizable in concepts like the friend/enemy distinction in the works of Carl Schmitt⁸, for

¹ The terms *machine* and *machinic* refer to the context in which Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari use them in the "Anti-Oedipus" parts 1&2. Manuel de Landa provides a concise description: "(...)I have borrowed from the philosopher Gilles Deleuze the concept of "machinic phylum", the term coined to refer to the overall set of self-organizing processes in the universe. These include all processes in which a group of previously disconnected elements suddenly reaches a critical point at which they begin to "cooperate" to form a higher level entity. (...) It is as if the principles that guide the self assembly of these "machines" are at some deep level essentially similar." *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, pp.6

² Luhman, Niklas, *Die Realität der Massenmedien*. Opladen, 1996, pp. 13

³ It is interesting, for example how the news media coin terms like "America under Attack" which in turn re-emerge through various distribution channels, such as "viral marketing" (see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viral_marketing)

⁴ The most prominent case being Wal-Mart in 2006. (Barbaro, Michael, Wal-Mart Enlists Bloggers in P.R. Campaign, March 7th, 2006 in: *The New York Times*, available online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/07/technology/07blog.html?amp;amp;en=ae7585374bf280b9&ei=5088&ex=1299387600&adxnml=1&partner=rssnyt&emc=rs&pagewanted=1&adxnmlx=1141881111-szYClIV9TUVFGdYCg24qdw>)

⁵ Benjamin, Walter, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt, 1963, pp. 42

⁶ Boris Groys at a Symposium at the Tate Britain: *The Politics of Equal Aesthetic Rights*. Available online (video): http://www.tate.org.uk/onlineevents/webcasts/spheres_of_action/speed_groys.htm

⁷ De Landa comments on von Clausewitz and the struggle against his contemporaries. *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, pp.87

⁸ Schmitt, C. 1996 *The concept of the political / Carl Schmitt ; translation, introduction, and notes by George Schwab ; with Leo Strauss's*

example. The institutionalization of warfare and therefore the institutionalization of organized violence made the formation of the state possible. One might argue that only by being able to differentiate between war and peace time on an institutional level, it was possible to actually draw a line of distinction between the civil and the military sector.

The difference in the way these sectors utilize the claim of actuality lies within the mode of mass communication, in other words, in how the differentiation between self- and extrinsic reference of mass communication is applied. In the case of the military sector, the emphasis is on the extrinsic reference, with the accumulation of reconnaissance material which accounts for the most immediate *iconophilic* relation of the military sector. On the civil level, the emphasis in the observation is on the side of the self-reference. Being concerned with the question on how to evoke affect in a teleological way, so that it serves towards an affirmation of existing power, for example, the production of political information through the mass media is shaped by this second order observation of mass communication, being able to produce a variety of affects.

Applying the methods outlined above to the time period and cultural space mentioned in the introduction, the imagery and iconography of the Homeland Security Advisory System⁹ may serve as one example. On the level of news-reporting, however, a new technique has been tried out in the military operations by the US during the Iraqi invasion, so-called *embedded journalism*. This technique features journalists who are directly deployed with troops into conflict zones, with the assumption behind it that the footage and the reports gained during that time may help to increase an image of credibility and immediacy while being live broadcasted.

The footage gathered possessed a certain kind of attraction on its own and due to its high compression and low data-rate (for audio and video content), it is comparable to footage taken from mobile phones with video capability and content that one might associate with self-publishing websites such as YouTube. The fact that, by its imagery and content, news reporting moved closer to concepts such as reality TV and webcast, spawned a re-appropriation of people who were not professional journalists in later stages of the conflict, something which will be discussed in the last part.

Part 2: Fissure of Stagnation: Overflow – Interference – Entropy

In the course of transformation of the *iconophilic* mechanisms on the side of the civil sector, the means of information distribution –may they be of political or purely affective nature- have changed with the introduction of technical media.

Although the emergence of the mass media therefore had an economic origin to begin with¹⁰, it is not only that this economic heritage became less recognizable to the consumer with the increasing diversity of content and topics mass media can nowadays convey, the structures of economics themselves have undergone transformations, such as globalization and the increasing virtuality of financial markets.

The models to assess these changes in economics themselves also underwent transformations in order to assess the level of influence over the flows of transactions, investment and its externalities and formulate further strategies for their control and nourishment. Within the concept of an ‘Anthropology of Markets’¹¹, the relation of the act of framing towards the phenomenon of externalities is expressed in a way in which it appears that these externalities and their moment of occurrence -the ‘overflow’¹²- outline the boundaries of an existing system of markets but also possess the ability show up tendencies towards a possible transition of its networks and its effectiveness.¹³ The ways in which networks and agents are able to absorb possible disruptions within the closure and assessment of commercial transactions is based on the condition of their communicative ability. It is by the mechanisms of binary coding (between self- and external reference, for example) that communication creates notions of identity, memory, and therefore culture.

Examples of the complexity of information distribution via an infrastructure which is primarily fuelled by economic interest can be found throughout modern history¹⁴ but in the time-frame outlined above, the focus should lie

notes on Schmitt's essay; translated by J. Harvey Lomax ; foreword by Tracy B. Strong. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

⁹ Since its introduction in on March 12 in 2002, its purpose was thought of indicating the current threat level of terrorist attacks by a colour scheme comprising of five different threat levels. As of yet, no official information has been disclosed what exactly the criteria are for assessing the threat levels, thus the system has been repeatedly criticised by journalists, civil rights activists and security experts. Furthermore, the alert level of the system has never been on the two lowest levels since its introduction, therefore it can be regarded as a three-level system instead of a five-level one, although the psychological effect of these two ‘secure’ levels which are never reached should be taken into account and this should serve as an indicator to analyse the iconographic potential of such a threat indication scheme, one might be led to interpret this scheme as an almost abstract piece of propaganda. http://www.dhs.gov/xinfoshare/programs/Copy_of_press_release_0046.shtml

¹⁰ “From the fourteenth century on, the traditional letter carrying by merchants was for this reason organized into a kind of guild-based system corresponding to their purposes. The merchants organized the first mail routes, the so-called ordinary mail, departing on assigned days.” Habermas, J. 1989 *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence Cambridge: Polity Press, pp.16

¹¹ Callon, Michel, (ed.) *The Laws of the Markets*, Oxford 1998, pp. 1-58

¹² “All the property rights in the world cannot prevent this overflowing, except by eliminating the transaction itself. (...) the simple fact of framing the transaction, because it mobilizes or concerns objects or beings endowed with an irreducible autonomy, is a source of overflowing. Complete framing is a contradiction in terms, whereas complete externalization is possible, as suggested, in the case of pure gifts.” Michel Callon, *The Laws of the Markets*, p. 18

¹³ „The notion of externalities is essential in economic theory because it enables us to emphasize one of the possible shortcomings of the market, one of the limits of its effectiveness. But it is also very useful for understanding the meaning of the expression ‘constructing a market’. (...) What the notion of externality shows, in the negative, is all the work that has to be done, all the investments that have to be made in order to make relations visible and calculable in the network.” Michel Callon, *The Laws of the Markets*, p. 17

¹⁴ such as Lew Wasserman’s period with MCA and later MCA Universal. While working primarily as an agent for the company, he almost single-handedly transformed the company profile and was co-responsible for creating a new business model after the decline and transition of the

on companies which –before, during an after the dot-com crash- managed to establish themselves as global media players. FOX News (which is owned by the News Corp. media conglomerate) may illustrate an example of overtly manufacturing pure opinion into a copyrighted brand which creates substantial consumer demand. By using one of its basic techniques, employing so called “neo-conservative” values and P.R. strategies in almost archetypical perfection, FOX came up with various stratagems to put a certain spin on actual events and issues. The “Fair and Balanced” slogan, which by now is trademarked intellectual property by FOX News, may serve as one of the better known examples in this case. It is necessary to observe what the obstacles of establishing a brand name are or which idea has the potential to establish itself among consumers, and also how big media corporations are still trying to mimic bottom-up or small, independent media.

Part 3: *Dynamic Transition: Ontoevolution*

Having previously outlined the moments of systemic stagnation and their intrinsic tendencies towards collapse in of the abstract machine of news media by combining aesthetics and politics, economics, sociology and information theory, it is now possible to assemble a 'transitional' or 'transductive' machine which does not discard form and content of these systems, but coalesces their partial stoppages towards an ensemble of emergent qualities, offering an dynamic intensity of movement as opposed to the systemic 'heat death' of analytic structural observation.

Aesthetic movements can serve as an indicator for the condition of the culture in which they are situated in, but in order to assess this condition, it is more rewarding, in a Freudian manner, to ask for the things which the aesthetic movement is *repressing* rather than looking for its system of *expression*.¹⁵ The dawning of the predominance of the computer and the internet as cultural artefacts, however, were not only tearing down the pre-established aesthetic notions of duration and affect, but also the notion of the unique. It was now possible to cut, copy and paste any kind of information without any loss of ontological quality or difference between the particular entities.

The same is true for politics, in which reactionary concepts are re-introduced by the means of progression. The need for neo-colonialism and geopolitical warfare and its legitimacy emerges in the form of a global media spectacle. In a globalized world and an era of increasing cultural and aesthetic sameness, both the need for the Other and the Other itself are constructed, being fed in by the communicative networks of the “transcendental illusion” the mass media create for themselves in order to continue to communicate. Enabling these communicative systems with a new and intensive form of self-perception and –awareness, a ‘subjectivity in movement’, the groundwork could be laid for a dynamic emergence of adaptive and responsive qualities.

The last part should exemplify how the strategies employed in the previous parts, either via aesthetical or economical means, are re-appropriated by the consumers and individuals involved. Since the invasion of Iraq, the notion of embedded journalism, which was initially thought of as a journalistic method has been taken on by American soldiers who now publish their own videos, blogs and podcasts online. Although these people are not professional journalists, their content is published as fast as the professional one and is equally accessible¹⁶.

Other methods of re-appropriation are source and image investigation of official news agencies, such as Reuters¹⁷, by private individuals who act as bloggers or are subscribers of a discussion forum. It will be necessary to examine how both old and new media from commercially established and independent sources alike are contributing to the ‘abstract machine’ of global media and how the cross-fertilization, recursion and entropic dissolution of information flows form a global media climate. It is necessary to understand that within this machine, the notion of control and power have to be reassessed to an abstract level which can accommodate the intensities and circumstances of these information flows and how they contribute to our cultural memory.

Methodology and aims:

The analysis of the research is done by the so-called methodological concept of „machinic materialism“¹⁸. At the basis of this methodological assumption lies the idea to formulate some form of constructive criticism in terms of how one should deal with a cultural interpretation of media theory.

The main focus of the critique lies around the often-conflicting premises of essentialist and constructivist concepts respectively. One of the main critical tendencies is the area of content, including terms and concepts like signifiers, ideologies, identities and categories, whereas the second tendency can be outlined as form, including concepts like medium- or information theory, cybernetics and forms of technical determinism. What these two tendencies do have in common, however, is the problem of describing movement and change within the framework of a

Hollywood studio system after WW II.

¹⁵ Peter Weibel at a Symposium at the Tate Britain: *The Political Revolution of the Neo-Avant-garde*. Available online: http://www.tate.org.uk/onlineevents/webcasts/spheres_of_action/speed_weibel.htm

¹⁶ iFilm, a video site very similar to YouTube, has a whole section devoted to unofficial and self-released footage by troops in Iraq: <http://www.ifilm.com/channel/warzone?htv=12>

¹⁷ So happened during the conflict between Israeli and Hezbollah troops in 2006. The best documentation with the original and edited version of the picture by Reuters as well as zoom-ins on specific areas can be found at: ‘Reuters Doctoring Photos from Beirut?’ in: *Little Green Footballs*. Available online: <http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=21956&only>

¹⁸ A concept used by kind permission of Dr. Luciana Parisi, currently convenor at the Centre for Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths College, London. Since this is a work in progress, the reference at hand is a mere lecture script which is not publicly available.

deterministic methodology that works with a static grid to define its components.¹⁹ The traditional definition of *τέχνη* (techne) in the sense of its Aristotelian interpretation assumes identity via difference from nature, a creative action between humans and nature. Heidegger later begs to differ from that position insofar as he attributes techne the ability to unveil the truth, as an ontological basis of Being. He differentiates it from “technology” which for him has enframing or prosthetic characteristics (*Ge-Stell*)²⁰.

In order to account for the processes of individuation out of which determinate bodies emerge since both form and content are emergent qualities of heterogeneous dynamics of change itself. By setting their relation as primary it might be possible to arrive at a method that can accommodate for this individuation.

The term “machinic” as it is used in this context stems from Deleuze's concepts of the term. In that sense, machines are not a mere subset of technology; they are ensembles that serve as the interrelations of their components, but at the same time being different from the components themselves. There are not only material types of machines; the above definition can also be applied to cognitive, affective and social machines. The interconnection of these different machines is achieved by the so-called abstract machines, which are virtual in a Deleuzian/Bergsonian sense. They possess the same qualities of interrelation and their identity as a whole assumes to be more than the mere sum of their components, and although abstract, they link together components that are actual.

If abstract machines themselves enter into mutual assemblages, they create machinic diagrams, each of them being a universe of virtuality that does not need to be actualized in order to exist, or, in other words, an autopoietic machine of mutation as opposed to an identity of structure. In that sense, machinic media can be regarded as a cross-mutation between bodies and media, not creating a mere prosthetic relationship, but from the viewpoint of abstract machines a surplus value of code. Media themselves are also a special type of machine; they can be seen as protomachines in a way, since they possess in themselves the capacity to mutate their composition.²¹

The notion of materialism used in this methodological context takes into account various oppositional observations of the term towards other traditional philosophical concepts, such as Platonism (in which the “ideal” forms shape matter), phenomenology (against the backdrop of the human subject, organic life and living systems mediate the natural world and the world of knowledge as well) and empiricism (the concept of truth being grounded in facts and quantitative results along with observable evidence). In order to tie this notion of materialism into the concepts of anthropology, an observation of the term along with the concept of network theory might prove to be useful. Authors such as Latour and Callon long advocated a network theory of anthropology and applied it to such diverse fields such as modern philosophical thinking and economics.²²

One step beyond this methodological opposition of materialism is the analysis of materialism as opposed to the “transcendental” empirical, which is advocated by authors such as Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Brian Massumi and Manuel DeLanda, but also cybernetic theory such as Gotthard Günther.

In order to develop a machinic diagram which is not prone to repeat the binarism of content and form, it is necessary to map the different layers of composition under the definition of an event rather than a mere sender/receiver model and oppose it to some form of semantic theory. In order to highlight the dynamics of change, it is crucial to first find the moments in the machinic diagram where the dynamic is blocked or constrained. Rather engaging in unveiling the truth in this observation, these stoppages are important to map the “phase space”²³ and re-develop it in order to build a machine of change. In this context, form and content are considered in their partiality as stoppages of emergent qualities of dynamics change which are not inherent to them but encompass different entities of abstract universes which engage in composition or overlapping under certain conditions, calling for an onto-evolutionary interpretation of culture.

Topic-wise, the research focuses on a comparative analysis between so-called ‘old’ and ‘new’ media in the context of political communication. It aims to show that some of the decisions that affect the daily lives of large groups of individuals are in fact based on the information that is available via these channels of information. By focusing on some of the decisive shift in how the information was distributed, first politically, then by the networks (like embedded journalism), the research aims to show that the ‘old’ media are in fact reacting towards the ‘new’. It furthermore tries to ask why that is and what strategies, counterstrategies and re-appropriations are employed in this context.

Relevance for current research:

This research is aiming at an inter-disciplinary approach towards a study and analysis of cultural mechanisms, such as media and news media.

In a day and age of growing interconnectedness of information, communication and interaction, these tendencies clearly

¹⁹ “Where has the potential for change gone? How does a body perform its way out of a definitional framework that is not only responsible for its very “construction”, but seems to prescript every possible signifying and countersignifying move as a selection from a repertoire of possible permutations on a limited set of predetermined terms? (...) How can what the system has pinpointedly determined flip over into a determining role capable of acting on the systemic level?” Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*. p.3

²⁰ Heidegger, Martin, *Die Technik und die Kehre*. Klett-Cotta: Stuttgart 2002

²¹ “This fact, characteristic of all media, means that the “content” of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. If it is asked, “What is the content of speech?” it is necessary to say, “It is an actual process of thought, which is in itself nonverbal.” McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. London: MIT Press, 1964, p. 8

²² Callon, Michel, (ed.) *The Laws of the Markets*, Oxford 1999 and Latour, Bruno, *Wir sind nie modern gewesen*. Fischer: Frankfurt, 2002

²³ Fuller, Matthew, *Media Ecologies*. London: MIT Press, 2005, pp.83

bear an impact to our culture.

The research aims to observe and analyze how exactly we deal with this new kind of information ecology and how it affects not only our everyday lives, but also the cultural and social networks that contribute to our perception of identity, otherness, knowledge and cultural memory. By comparing 'old' media sources such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN and FOX News which have an established top-down infrastructure of sources, distributors, advertisers and focus groups of customers to new media like the Guerrilla News Network²⁴, Editor's blogs of online magazines and journals²⁵ as well as streaming websites which allow the upload of amateur video content²⁶ of political nature. By focusing the content which the research aims to analyze on news and political communication, it attempts to show that the information published and gathered on these different types of media do have an actual impact on important social and political issues.

The proposed objects of this comparative analysis are to show that the differentiation between old and new media is in fact artificial and that these two types of media interact in various ways to form the body of data we gain our daily information from and form our world-views²⁷. It then aims to show that by perceiving the whole body of political communication available as a dynamic and inter-dependent system, new possibilities of perception of the issues involved can emerge, as well as a possibility to change the pre-established notion of news themselves.

Candidate:

Deniz Yenimazman is a graduate of both the University of Cologne and the Goldsmiths College, London. He holds a German *Magister* degree in Philosophy, German and English and a UK *Master's* degree in "Interactive Media: Critical Theory and Practice". His research includes various topics, ranging from the Anthropology of Peter Sloterdijk to a comparative analysis of Carl Schmitt, Friedrich Kittler, Michel Foucault and microchip-architecture. His research focus is on new media and philosophy as well as cybernetics and many-valued logic. He worked on interactive installations during his degree at Goldsmiths which required video capturing and editing as well as graphical programming with MIDI, audio and video. He is currently working in the video games industry as editor and localisation coordinator and has helped to organize and curate several art events, among them the last two graduate shows of the Interactive Media course at Goldsmiths College. He also runs and maintains his own website which entails thorough documentation about his projects as well as a selection of essays available to download²⁸.

Writing Schedule:

10/2007 – 04/2009:	Elaboration of the different parts, i.e. reading up, preparing provisional chapter outlines, writing up the chapters.
	10/2007 – 12/2007: Aesthetics (chapter 1, part 1)
	01/2008 – 03/2008: Politics & Power (chapter 2, part 1)
	04/2008 – 06/2008: Sociology (chapter 1, part 2)
	07/2008 – 10/2008: Information Theory & Economics (chapters 2&3, part 2)
	11/2008 – 04/2009: Philosophy, Logic, Conclusion (chapters 1, 2 &3, part 3)
05/2009 – 07/2009	Structuring of the chapters, editing, correlating, doing further research
07/2009 – 09/2009	Working on the conclusion, provisional outline, verifying, final conclusion
09/2009 – 11/2009	Proofreading, editing, restructuring of arguments, if necessary, last corrections

Provisional References (according to parts):

Part 1:

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²⁴ Which works like a social networking site in terms of subscribers and accrues hundreds of user-owned and user-edited sub-blogs for a large variety of political and social topics to their own meta-body of daily headlines. <http://www.guerrillanews.com/>

²⁵ Like the editor's blog of Foreign Policy.com, for example: <http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/>

²⁶ The iFilm website has a whole section dedicated to videos taken in conflict zones: <http://www.ifilm.com/warzone?htv=12>

²⁷ Even if a network like CNN reaches millions of US households, the same can be said about specific pieces of content on websites like YouTube (like the infamous Saddam execution video, for example).

²⁸ <http://www.pixelkraut.net/deniz/home.html>

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Part 2: Fissure of Stagnation: Overflow – Interference – Entropy

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Part 3: Dynamic Transition: Ontoevolution

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