

**London Conference in Critical Thought (LCCT)  
Friday & Saturday, 8-9 July, 2022  
School of Law, Birkbeck College, University of London**

**Call for Presentations**

**Deadline for abstracts: March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

The Call for Presentations is now open for the 9<sup>th</sup> annual London Conference in Critical Thought (LCCT), hosted and supported by the School of Law at Birkbeck College, University of London.

The LCCT is a free, inter-institutional, interdisciplinary conference in critical thought that takes place annually in different institutions across London. LCCT follows a non-hierarchical, decentralised model of organisation that undoes conventional academic distinctions between plenary lectures and break-out sessions, aiming instead to create opportunities for intellectual critical exchange regardless of participants' disciplinary field, institutional affiliation, or seniority. LCCT has no overarching or predetermined theme. The conference's intellectual content and academic tone are set anew each year, stemming from thematic streams that are conceived, proposed and curated by a group of stream organisers.

The streams for #LCCT2022 are:

- **Art Practice and Critical Pedagogy**
- **Autotheory: Criticism and Practice**
- **Common Ground: Between Geology & Art**
- **Counter- and Critical-Infrastructures**
- **The 'Employability' Agenda in Higher Education**
- **The End of Biopolitics?**
- **Extra-Institutionality and the Political**
- **From Socially Engaged Art to Socially Engaged Humanities?**
- **Hair Salon**
- **The Measurement and Surveillance of Practice**
- **Misunderstandings and In/Justice**
- **Modelled Worlds**
- **Negativity in Contemporary Continental Thought**
- **Social Media Empires**
- **Sticky Matters**
- **To be Monstrous**

Please send abstracts for proposed presentations to [paper-subs@londoncritical.org](mailto:paper-subs@londoncritical.org) with the relevant stream title indicated in the subject line. Abstracts should be **no more than 250 words** and must be received by **Friday, 18 March 2022**. We aim to make the LCCT open and accessible to all. For any queries about accessibility requirements, please get in touch with us at: [access@londoncritical.org](mailto:access@londoncritical.org).

*LCCT is free to all speakers and attendees but registration is required.*

## Guidance on Presentation Formats

The LCCT welcomes both abstracts for traditional paper presentations as well as alternative forms of presentation. As the composition of the sessions are not decided until the 'big meeting' – that is, where stream organisers and the LCCT organising collective meet to collaboratively decide the final acceptances and session formats – stream organisers will liaise with those who have had proposals accepted to discuss the final 'form' of participation in each session. While a majority of presentations will be for 20-minute delivery time as part of a panel, stream organisers may propose alternative arrangements to those who have had submissions accepted. This can sometimes be shortened presentation times, participation in a round table discussion, etc.

## Proposing an Alternative Form of Presentation

Where an abstract directly proposes an alternative form of presentation, such as an art installation, a workshop, an activity, a performance, etc., we ask that in addition to an abstract you provide details of the 'mechanics' of your proposal. This could include (but is not limited to) details concerning:

- The general 'form' (eg. art installation; workshop; performance, activity, etc.)
- The number of people involved in delivery
- Space and/or logistical requirements
- Time requirements (we are generally limited to 1 – 1.5 hrs per 'session', but an alternative form of presentation could also be something shorter that is integrated into a larger session.)
- If it is interactive, how it is interactive and an indication of the rationale or purpose of the interaction.
- If it involves a particular method, some details of what that is and an indication of the reasons for proposing it.

We also ask that alternative proposals consider how space is provide for (critical) reflection and discussion as part of the participation of the audience members/participants. With conventional paper presentations this occurs as part of the panel session where time is given for general questions and discussion, and we consider this space for discussion and reflection a central feature of the LCCT ethos.

# Art Practice and Critical Pedagogy: Knowledge, Ownership and Actions

Stream Organiser: Paul Stewart

The stream invites proposals to offer a re-examination of art production in terms that understand the process of learning as the production of art itself. This could be through participatory art, Instruction based art, text, live action role play, performance, video, installation, sound, voice, curatorial and learning programming, the key is seeing the process of learning or making as the work. Through a re-evaluation of the relationships between process, arts production and pedagogy within accelerated developments of neoliberalism, what can be uncovered and speculated through these methods concerning different approaches to democratic politics, in galleries, classrooms, institutions and political structures. This stream is also built upon and acknowledges the work of multiple alternatives to arts education and higher education such as Tent City University, School of the Damned, Open School East, The Silent University, Copenhagen Free University, Liverpool Free University, Really Open Uni, Alternative Art College, AltMFA, BFAMFAPHD to name a few from the past 15 years. Each of these also can be seen as a continuation of a radical legacy of alternative methods, practices and schools across the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

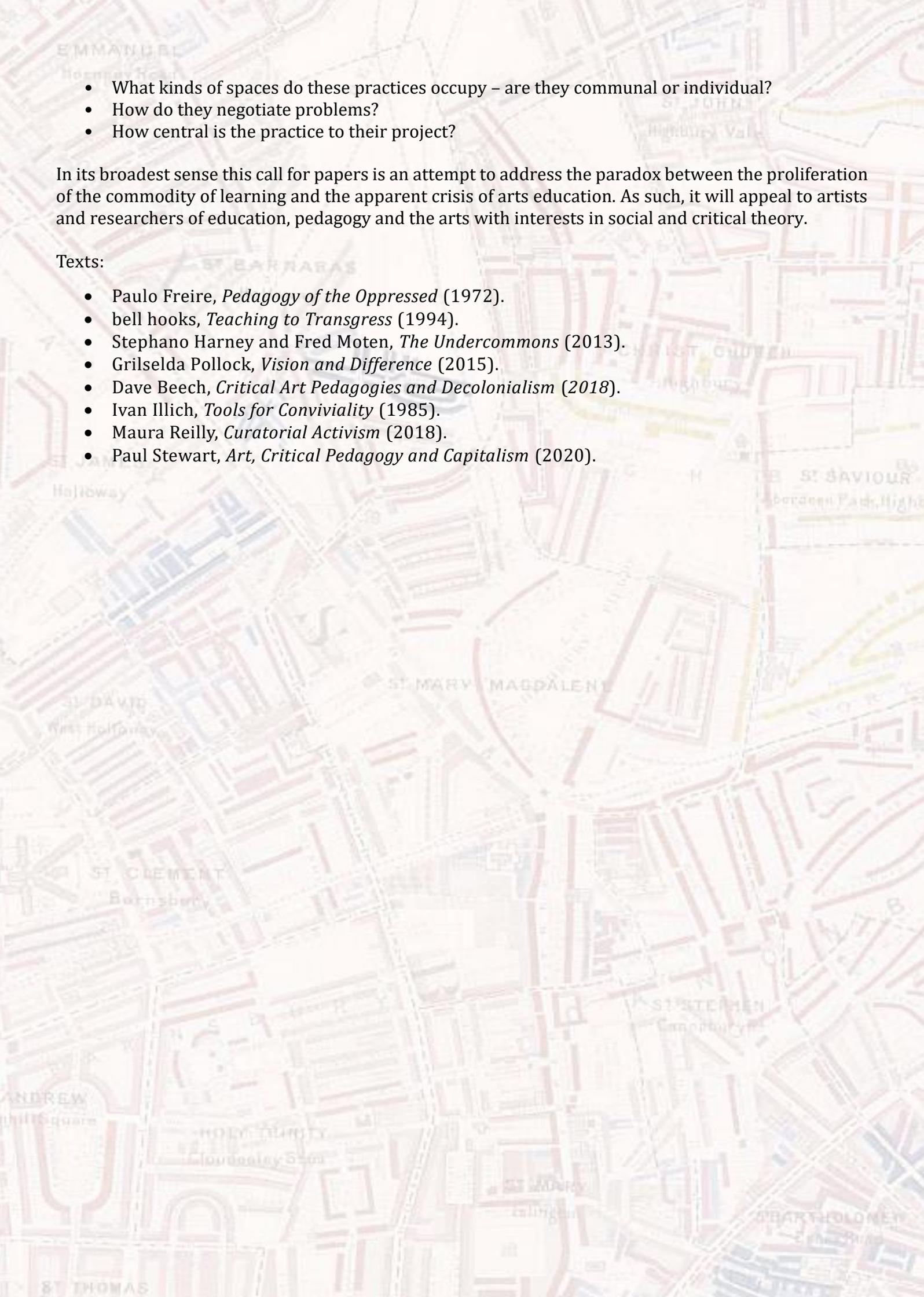
The presentations and performances will hopefully provoke and propose ways in which art practice can be used to engage with critical pedagogy (hooks, Freire, Giroux) in relation to the continued commodification of education and learning within our institutions and create dialogue that offers space for varying investigations towards new models, conception and practices that explore learning as a social action. Where does learning happen? Where can knowledge be seen, shared, and democratized through art practice?

The stream welcomes a range of submissions from traditional paper/panel presentations, round tables, assembly's, art experiences, workshops, performances, critical reflections and case studies of practice. For examples, proposals could be around:

- Alternative art school approaches to higher education
- Art and Commitment
- Mediums and materials
- Methods of pedagogical art making
- Social engaged practices, ethics of collaboration and learning,
- Non-hierarchical approaches to knowledge exchange
- Galleries as sites for learning / Institutional critique, diversity of practice and ways inequalities are reproduced.
- Critical pedagogical methods
- Material and context – artist led-initiatives
- Representation and identity
- Methodologies and tactics of radical practice
- Voice and sound
- Temporary zones and spaces
- Non-traditional pedagogies

Some starting questions that may help form proposals:

- How understandings of critical pedagogy shape efforts to rethink art making and learning?
- What theories of radical pedagogy inform current art practices?

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- What kinds of spaces do these practices occupy – are they communal or individual?
  - How do they negotiate problems?
  - How central is the practice to their project?

In its broadest sense this call for papers is an attempt to address the paradox between the proliferation of the commodity of learning and the apparent crisis of arts education. As such, it will appeal to artists and researchers of education, pedagogy and the arts with interests in social and critical theory.

Texts:

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972).
- bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (1994).
- Stephano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons* (2013).
- Grilselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference* (2015).
- Dave Beech, *Critical Art Pedagogies and Decolonialism* (2018).
- Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (1985).
- Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism* (2018).
- Paul Stewart, *Art, Critical Pedagogy and Capitalism* (2020).

## Autotheory: Criticism and Practice

Stream Organisers: Eric Daffron and Becky R. McLaughlin

In *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, Lauren Fournier defines *autotheory* as “a self-conscious way of engaging with theory—as a discourse, frame, or mode of thinking and practice—alongside lived experience and subjective embodiment . . .” (7). In the spirit of that definition, this stream invites the participation of theorists, critics, life-writers, musicians, filmmakers, and other scholars and artists working in the emergent field of autotheory. It seeks traditional papers and non-traditional presentations that foreground the integration of the personal with the theoretical. By bringing together both critics and practitioners, this stream aspires to stage wide-ranging conversations, including ones that address how we can use theory to reflect critically on the self, why autotheory has emerged as a popular discourse and practice over the last couple of decades, and what institutional and marginal practices can best advance the field. We are especially interested in traditional papers that wax personal, performances that turn scholarly, and hybrid presentations that traverse multiple media and modalities.

Possible topics for traditional papers include but are not limited to the following:

- precursors to the current field of autotheory
- origins and definitions of the term *autotheory*
- historical and emergent trends and themes in the field
- the place of autotheory in publishing and the academy
- the pervasiveness in autotheoretical writing of the fragment and citation
- the emergence of a canon of autotheoretical work
- autotheory as research or critical practice
- the relationship between the autotheoretical and the confessional, the confessional and the political
- relationships between autotheory, on the one hand, and life-writing, affect theory, psychoanalysis, queer theory, feminism, and other genres and theories, on the other hand

Possible genres and media for non-traditional presentations include but are not limited to any combination of the following:

- skits
- poems
- personal and critical essays
- autofiction
- dance
- video and film
- vocal and instrumental music
- collage, painting, and photography

## Common Ground: Between Geology & Art

Stream organisers: Sarah Strachan and Kelcy Davenport (with Nawrast Sabah Abd Alwahab, Shaima al-Sitrawi and Sally Stenton)

“The simplest form of a small scale cyclicity are herringbone structures, cross-bedded units with opposite directions of forest laminae in adjacent directions. They are formed under the influence of reversing tides. Although it is repeated in nature in the same pattern, it is an evolutionary repetition due to time. Not just a simple cycle, but a pattern of cyclicity which is evolving everything, the organism, the system.”

Nawrast Sabah Abd Alwahab, Sedimentologist, Basrah

What can explorations between geology and art tell us about the dynamic processes at work in the earth's landforms and surfaces and how they continue to shape our world today? What stands to be gained through an arts approach to geological study? How may geological concepts be useful as metaphors for arts practices, for social and political organisation? What possibilities to eschew futurism are prompted by a conversation between geology and art, in the adjoined concerns of social justice and environmental sustainability?

The geologic, both as a material dynamic and as a cultural preoccupation, shapes the “now” in ever more direct ways. As such, some contemporary philosophers are experimenting with concepts that take up the geologic as metaphor and model. It seems that the understanding of earth processes can offer inspiration for how we might think about the qualitatively different ways we are sharing planet earth. For example, in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Jane Bennett offers compelling arguments for why and how we might approach and understand things geologic as vital forces and active agents in daily life.

This stream encourages critical discussion and creative exploration of the intersections of geology and art from scientific, artistic, and transdisciplinary practitioners and perspectives. In doing so, drawing together geology-art research enquiries that are asking novel questions, making connections between ideas that seemed previously unrelated, and becoming familiar with knowledge in other fields. Contributions are particularly welcome from research practitioners working together to inspire one another through their different experiences, languages and stories - in the process forging new alliances and perhaps even new horizons of common possibility and shared understanding.

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# Counter- and Critical-Infrastructures

Stream Organiser: Luke Collison

“Power now resides in the infrastructures of this world.”

- The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends* (MIT, 2015)

The political popularity of a “green new deal” demands a fundamental investigation of the category of infrastructure itself. Can the existing physical and institutional structures (energy and water supplies, transport systems, digital and formal networks), that form the “second nature” of society today, simply be replaced with “green” alternatives?<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, if we face a crisis of infrastructure it is multi-faceted and structured by antagonisms: alongside its double-role in the climate emergency (as both cause and possible saviour), we witness the slow degradation, through the neglect and privatisation of post-war public works; and the continued global injustice and failed promise of infrastructure felt throughout the post-colony.

This stream aims to bring together two discourses aiming to address this situation: (i) critical infrastructure studies — the transdisciplinary theory drawing from anthropology, ethnology, STS, cultural theory, that aims to critically document the contradictions and injustices that characterise “large socio-technical systems” such as logistics, energy or digital technologies;<sup>2</sup> (ii) a counter-infrastructural discourse emerging from anarchistic theoretical tendencies in and around anthropology and cultural and political theory. If the military origins of logistics and infrastructure continue to haunt its contemporary forms, then perhaps, only a radical counter-infrastructure would break with this legacy.<sup>3</sup>

Bringing together researchers from a range of fields, a stream on infrastructure would aim to confront the present failings of real-world infrastructure, and “rethink” the category in a manner commensurate with the crises threatening human and non-human life on earth today. Despite its claims to a technological and scientific a-politicality, the current crises reinforce the inherent political stakes in infrastructural struggles around the world today, from opposition to oil pipelines, coal mines or nuclear power, to advocacy for a pre-political “social infrastructure” like Moten & Harney’s “surround”.

The stream welcomes contributions, with theoretical, speculative or empirical bases, aiming to address contemporary concerns with infrastructure, its history, its failures, its promise, its injustices, its alternatives or its future. Possible themes include but are not limited to:

- Histories of particular infrastructures (Hughes)
- Philosophies and theories of infrastructure (Star, Bowker, Edwards)

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey C. Bowker, ‘Second Nature Once Removed: Time, Space and Representations’, *Time & Society* 4, no. 1 (1 February 1995): 47–66.

<sup>2</sup> Deborah Cowen, *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade* (U of Minnesota Press, 2014); Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (Verso Books, 2014); Martin Kornberger et al., *Thinking Infrastructures* (Emerald Group Publishing, 2019); Michael Truscello, *Infrastructural Brutalism: Art and the Necropolitics of Infrastructure* (MIT Press, 2020); Anand, Gupta, and Appel, *The Promise of Infrastructure*; Steffen Richter, ‘Infrastruktur’, *Ein Schlüsselkonzept Der Moderne Und Die Deutsche Literatur 1914 (1848)*: 200–204; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* (Duke University Press, 2010), accessed 14 December 2021.

<sup>3</sup> David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004); Pierre Clastres, *Archeology of Violence*, trans. Jeanine Herman and Ashley Lebner, Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents (Brooklyn, NY: Semiotext (E), 2010), accessed 17 December 2021; The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends* (MIT Press, 2015); The Invisible Committee, *Now* (MIT Press, 2017); Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, ‘The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study’, 2013, accessed [http://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6024&context=lkcsb\\_research](http://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6024&context=lkcsb_research).

- ANT and infrastructure: actants and quasi-objects (Latour, Bennet)
- The “surround” as/counter infrastructure (Moten & Harney)
- Infrastructure and the state apparatus (Graeber, Clastres, Scott, Invisible Committee)
- Infrastructure and global justice
- The mixed legacies of infrastructure in the post-colony (Mbembe, Mignolo, Spivak)
- Infrastructure in culture
- Politics, legitimacy and the promise of infrastructure



# The 'Employability' Agenda in Higher Education: Dangers and Opportunities for Critical Pedagogy Today

Stream Organiser: Ricky Gee

The continual post-industrialisation of 'western' societies has seen the massification and marketisation of higher education, influenced by the Bologna process (1999 in Kroher et al, 2021), where the academy has found itself positioned at the heart of the 'entrepreneurial' endeavours of the knowledge economy. The recent Augar review of post-18 education in England (Augar, 2019) has provided the 'Office for Students' powers to determine the value of degree programs with the threat of closure for degrees that are of 'low value'. Echoing this demand is the current UK Universities Minister asserting that universities are required to improve student 'progression to graduate employment' (Donelan, 2021). Employability and the 'Graduate Outcomes Survey' have become an increasingly important metric for Higher Education Institutions to confirm the status of their market position and the 'value' of the degrees they provide. Such a policy focus is likely to influence the direction and purpose of higher education courses, with those assessed to be of 'low value' from the social sciences, arts and humanities deemed especially vulnerable.

Within this setting come questions as to the purpose of a university education and the role that critical pedagogy can play. Do critical forms of inquiry benefit employability outcomes, or do they seek to question and challenge the narrow vista of neo-liberal metrics such as the Graduate Outcome Survey? How do academics and researchers navigate such a terrain? How much is employability within the gift of the academy to influence? How might graduate outcomes be shaped by wider systemic structures? In what ways might the academy explore the parameters of the labour market to aid 'career development' both individually and collectively? Can the employability imperative be a potential moment of critical learning?

The stream welcomes both theoretical and empirically based research papers to address these questions and related topics such as:

- The effect of 'graduate outcomes' and 'employability' on how critical pedagogy is produced and valued in and outside the academy
- 'Critical' work in the academy engaging with 'employability'
- How critical research can inform pedagogy that is deemed, or coerced to be part of the 'employability' agenda
- Promotion of alternative pathways, of a critical disposition, after graduation
- How critical aspects of a discipline can make a useful contribution or challenge to employability

## References

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# The End of Biopolitics? Health Security, Body, and Immunity

Stream Organiser: Hye Yun Kang

Is biopolitics that focuses on sovereign power still relevant in understanding the society that COVID-19 enforces to shape? COVID-19 has raised an old question of freedom vs. security. The cases of government-led preventive measures in most countries draw public concerns of surveillance society for using expansive data to trace private lives to prevent the spread of infections. However, the simple binary of surveillance society vs. libertarian conspiracy does not capture the emergence of health security embraced as civil liberty during the pandemic. Unlike other security concerns, health security or security of the body erodes the binary of freedom and security that is established as a dilemma in democratic societies. On the one hand, it looks like a biopolitical moment in that the sovereign power disciplines, administers, and manages the life of the population through surveillance and policing. However, what is unsatisfying in the Foucauldian picture of biopolitical society is that it does not reflect how the people during the COVID-19 pandemic engage in security practices fully embracing them as the condition of survival, life, and liberty. The mass support for state power in controlling the disease may function as a factor that even though vaccination policy along with other expansive controlling measures (of global movement, for example) poses controversial questions on civil liberty, it is hard to find serious debate on this issue other than ridiculous or ridiculed reactions from libertarians, or conspiracy theories, or anti-science and anti-intelligence groups.

This stream also raises a question of the body that is situated in the place of object in the discourse of health security. The discourse of health security and immunity of the body resonates with Roberto Esposito's insight that the object of biopolitics is no longer a "life form," but rather life itself. In this politics, the body emerges as the privileged locus for the unfolding of life and functions as both the "instrument and terrain of the battle" against death. If we see that the focus of government measures is centralized on protecting the bodies of populations during the pandemic, where does it take us to think about political subjectivity, rights, and freedom? Also, how does this life-politics engage or juxtapose with the politics of the body that has been explored in various traditions of critical theory?

This stream welcomes papers that explore the threads including but not limited to biopolitics, body, security, and freedom.

# Extra-Institutionality and the Political

Stream Organisers: Rosie Woodhouse, George Lynch and Hatty Nestor

In the face of widespread disaffection from existing institutions of sociality, borne both of direct experience of structural violence and structural analysis of the inescapability of logics of domination and discipline, political hope is magnetised by fantasies of an 'outside' where alternatives might be possible. This can be seen in disaffection from institutions of democracy such as the party form or grassroots alternatives to the university, museum and archive. It might also entail a desire to abolish social institutions such as the family form or the gender binary. Contemporary abolitionism engages practices of restorative justice outside of existing judicial mechanisms of the state. Anarchist practices of mutual aid likewise seek to bypass infrastructures of state-instituted social welfare.

To act extra-institutionally has been implicitly valorised as innately political, yet there remains a lack of engagement with what 'acting politically' means. Without this engagement the question of politics becomes an aesthetic one, where the sense of being 'outside' of what is deemed irreparable becomes a placeholder for or, at worst, a block to the activity of politics. Acting politically requires being in the social; those who seek to find an outside to capitalism risk finding themselves outside of the social instead. Aestheticization conjures form, style or feeling as a political end in itself. The aesthetic configuration of politics, particularly of visioning a possible 'outside' as a site where doing politics is no longer futile, can lead to a retreat from the social and, in some instances, bar a return to the social itself.

This stream is interested in how theories of the minority or Other can contribute to this impasse, as in the queer studies focus on intimate encounters which inverts into practices of asociality (Bersani, 1990; Edelman, 2004). If we take politics to be necessarily social, then this becomes an urgent intellectual and practical limitation. What seems impervious to the structures which 'the institution' represents gets fetishised as that which can release us from what we appear not sovereign to, e.g. state violence, carcerality, capitalist social abstractions and new modes of value-extraction which permeate everyday life. This tendency manifests in the fetishisation of the 'community' in community-led political organising (Rose 1996; Kaba 2021); the personal in the feminist idiom of 'the personal is political' (Dean 2018); 'the ordinary' as an aesthetic ideal in activism (Berlant 2011); or the pseudo-concreteness of materiality, affect or bodies (Vishmidt 2017).

This stream seeks cross-disciplinary submissions which critically engage with the desires and/or anxieties which uphold attachment to these fantasies despite the political impasses they produce. We are particularly interested in contributions that expound these tendencies within Black studies and postcolonial theory. We welcome submissions that engage with, but are not limited to:

- Anxieties over the 'right' versions of political subjectivity; fetish of the other
- Idioms of 'community' in politically-engaged practices
- Chaotic abstractions
- The antisocial thesis in queer theory
- Abolitionism and questions of exodus
- Extra-institutionality and the state
- Antagonism and/or agonism
- Everyday life and the ordinary
- Fetishism in Marxian and psychoanalytic terms

## **From Socially Engaged Art to Socially Engaged Humanities?: Art, Research, and Social Engagement**

Stream Organiser: Ewelina Chwiejda

Socially engaged art practices are now an inherent part of art history. Their evolution has been accompanied by a theoretical reflection on the role of the artists and their engagement led by researchers representing different branches of the humanities such as Claire Bishop, Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, Ariella Azoulay. Today, the link between socially engaged art practice, research, and art theory seems to become even stronger and more visible. The artist's desire to engage goes hand in hand with a deep need to collaborate with knowledge producers and thus contribute to a more complete depiction of the world. As a result, artists collaborate with researchers or become researchers themselves, often by joining research institutions directly. At the same time, many researchers in the social sciences and humanities are working on the elaboration of new interdisciplinary perspectives and methods of analysis to make their research less theoretical and more engaged with society. A growing number of researchers are engaging in artistic projects beyond the theoretical contribution or critical commentary that usually accompanies a work. They make art, conduct research through art, or openly support the defenders of great common causes because they feel an urgency to act. This very natural and fluid process results in, among other things, the emergence of new statuses such as 'artist-researcher' or 'researcher-artist,' as well as in the gradual blurring of the boundaries between scientific work, art, and social or political engagement.

While this type of engagement is not particularly new to sociology or political sciences—where the participation of researchers in public or even political life has a longer tradition (Sapiro et al., 2020)—it is only starting to be formulated and discussed in the field of art history and related disciplines. A very recent example of this type of initiative is the idea of conceptualizing socially engaged art history, put forward by a group of American researchers in *Socially Engaged Art History and Beyond: Alternative Approaches to the Theory and Practice of Art History* (Persinger & Rejaie, 2021).

This stream proposes to prompt a critical debate on forms of engagement in the humanities. We welcome contributions in a variety of forms (including papers, artworks, performances, and artistic presentations) which explore the complex relationship between academic research and artistic practice, interdisciplinarity and its methodological or ethical challenges, and the researcher's professional ethics and personal engagement. The question of the ethical responsibility of an artist and/or a researcher is today at the heart of the debate about engagement and will also be discussed in this stream.

Contributions which bring together multiple perspectives or alternative methodologies are particularly encouraged. We invite participants from a broad range of disciplines not necessarily related to art, but who are working on the social engagement of academics or willing to share/theorize their own experience or thoughts on it.

Topics for discussion may include, but are not limited to:

- Forms of collaboration between researchers and artists, as well as art-based methods of academic research
- Socially engaged art and socially engaged research practice
- The ethics of engagement
- Academic neutrality and social/political engagement
- Interdisciplinary research and engagement
- Professional ethics vs/and personal engagement

EMMANUEL

- The ongoing crisis in academia and scholarly engagement
- Tools and methodologies for socially engaged art and research



## Hair Salon

Stream Organisers: Kelly Lloyd, Suzanne Gold & Michal Lynn Shumate

HAIR CLUB is an interdisciplinary research-based art collective whose work is centered around the multivalent topic of HAIR. Co-founded in 2014 by Suzanne Gold, Kelly Lloyd, and Michal Lynn Shumate, HAIR CLUB operates as a platform for discussion, dialogue, research, exhibition, and publication. The founders of HAIR CLUB are artists, scholars, and educators committed to generative, associative academic inquiry in concert with the indelible mark of the anecdotal. Featured as a case study for public-facing research practice in the recent volume *Socially Engaged Art History and Beyond: Alternative Approaches to the Theory and Practice of Art History* (ed. Cindy Persinger and Azar Rejaye, Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), HAIR CLUB has cultivated a methodology that grows out of the visual arts and works across traditional disciplinary boundaries to advance Feminist and anti-racist perspectives in approach and process.

HAIR CLUB seeks proposals for HAIR SALON from artists, scientists, scholars, and practitioners; we welcome rigorous inquiries in any form on the topic of HAIR as material, tool, subject, object, or theme. From devotional images of saints to satirical fashion plates, HAIR is a potent signifier for vanity, sexuality, and power. HAIR might moonlight as embroidery floss, as a drawn line, as texture, but it remains inextricably linked to its own materiality – as personal as it is universal, as specific as DNA and as generic as dust. It sprouts directly from the body itself and comprises the floating debris of our hallways; HAIR is an organic substance that is central to the rituals of daily life across centuries, cultures, and continents. As the inescapable embodiment of the personal as political, HAIR connects directly to issues of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and politics; it speaks to themes of loss and death, of beauty expectations, of body, illness, and health. We welcome work on HAIR that intersects with, resonates with, or expands on any of the above.

# **The Measurement and Surveillance of Practice: Critical Conversations and Possibilities for Resistance**

Stream Organiser: Tania de St Croix

Impact measurement, outcomes-based performance management, target and audit cultures, social value, datafication... These distinct yet overlapping concepts have a growing significance for workers in public, voluntary, community and arts sectors, both in the UK and internationally. Shaped by a political and economic context characterised by neoliberalism, conservatism, white supremacy and environmental devastation, practitioners and communities are experiencing increasingly managerial governance alongside the effects of austerity and the pandemic.

The measurement of work and community activity can be reductive and unethical, distorting practice, undermining professional judgement and artistic expression, and enabling the surveillance of workers and community members (Incite!, 2007; Ball, 2003; Lowe, 2013). Such practices of surveillance, othering and measurement are rooted in histories of oppression, eugenics, colonialism and social control; thus, their effects are felt disproportionately by oppressed and minoritized groups (Khan, 2013; Merry, 2011; Baldrige, 2019).

This stream aims to bring together researchers, practitioners, professionals, volunteers, activists and members of communities affected by what has been identified as 'the tyranny of metrics' (Muller, 2018). It aims to identify and share common challenges, how we respond, and how we might resist. It is an opportunity to think together beyond the boundaries of professions, research disciplines and the academic-public divide. Ideas on any of the following questions, or other relevant themes (including progressive critiques of the above analysis), are warmly welcomed:

- What does 'datafication' look like in settings you are familiar with? (E.g. education, health, social care, social work, youth and community work, the arts, activism, others?)
- How does measurement shape or restrict work, practice, artistic expression, volunteering and activism?
- Which groups or populations are most affected by datafication?
- How does measurement reinforce / disrupt persistent issues such as paternalism, deficit models, 'child saving' and do-gooder complexes?
- What are the consequences of measurement or datafication e.g. in terms of who takes part and who is excluded; who and what is legitimised as professional; data burden and bureaucratisation; which practices are funded or not?
- What kinds of gaming and fabrication are used to meet targets or evidence outcomes?
- What forms of resistance and rebellion exist, or might exist, in relation to these issues?
- How do or can metrics reproduce or disrupt oppressive practices?
- What are the implications of econometric evaluation of services ('social return on investment', 'social value')?
- What are the issues around measuring previously 'un-measurable' concepts such as happiness and wellbeing?
- What is the role of technology?
- What are the surveillance implications of measurement and why does it matter?

Proposals are welcome from practitioners, artists, activists, evaluators and impact measurement specialists, academic and non-academic researchers, and anyone else with an interest in these issues. We welcome contributions drawing on personal experience, theoretical / philosophical analysis,



## Misunderstandings and In/Justice

Stream Organisers: Kate Astall, Shailesh Kumar, Marigó Oulis and Anna Waldenström

A misunderstanding can be an act, an omission, a fact, a fiction, a perception, or a perspective, which surrounds us in our everyday lives. It plays a pivotal role in constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing our experiences. This notion can generate behaviours and feelings of alienation, anger, assertion, bias, conflict, hate, injustice, and perhaps even care, love, and justice. It can be produced consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously by belief, truth, lie, miscommunication, linguistic and cultural differences, by following certain social and legal norms, or even by rigid classification in law. By a misunderstanding, we mean a mismatch, or a lack of correspondence, in relation to the reference or meaning between interlocutors or discourses. Examples of literature theorising misunderstandings is J-F. Lyotard's *The Differend* and S. Schane's *Ambiguity and Misunderstanding in the Law*. In this stream, we invite participants to explore and examine this proposed complex multifaceted image of 'misunderstanding' vis-à-vis in/justice.

Misunderstanding is a term that frequently slips into the writings of scholars cutting across different disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. Even in the legal and juridical spheres, the debates and discussions on misunderstandings have been the basis of private and public law in both the common law and continental law jurisdictions. There is no single definition of what a legal 'misunderstanding' constitutes but Schane (2002) helpfully suggests that it can encompass the misinterpretation of words found in documents, the use of language and the interpretation of legal phraseology. Many contract law provisions rest on the meanings and implications of mistake and their solutions. Similarly, misunderstanding is also explored in criminal law in the form of mistakes of facts and interpretation of law which may or may not form a defence, all of which can effect whether an individual is found guilty (or not). The impact of a legal misunderstanding within a society is not to be underestimated; the notion of how guilt and innocence is perceived can result in stigma and misinformation which can have a devastating impact on an individual's life.

This stream invites papers that address any of these (or other) questions related to the notion of misunderstanding vis-à-vis in/justice, and/or the possible applications of this notion in any disciplinary field. Submissions for this stream should focus on this broad notion of misunderstanding in law, legal practice, and other areas of society from an interdisciplinary perspective. Participants would be encouraged to disrupt, distort and create the boundaries and expose the intricacies of the notion of 'misunderstanding' in the context of in/justice. The following are examples of questions that we would like to invite participants in this stream to discuss.

- How can misunderstanding(s) be conceptualized?
- How can the concept of misunderstanding be connected to the question and problematic of truth?
- What are the consequences of misunderstandings to people's lives, the community, the society, the state, and the justice system?
- How do legal and other social norms create and perpetuate misunderstandings?
- How do different state & non-state systems and traditions attempt to tackle misunderstanding?
- How can we understand the influence of the print, electronic and social media on information, when the media itself has 'misunderstood' the sources of knowledge?
- How, in this globalised and mediated world, might misunderstanding act as a barrier to community and access to justice?

# Modelled Worlds: Critical Approaches to Climate Models

Stream Organiser: Mariska Versantvoort

There is a growing interest in climate models, most notably from the perspectives of science and technology studies and the history/ philosophy/ geography of science. Climate models are powerful, widespread scientific technologies that shape our understanding of climate (change) in science, politics, and everyday life. At the same time, these models are highly complex technical and cultural artefacts, which are not easily accessible to a non-specialist. Research centres often operate multiple types of interrelated weather, climate, and Earth system models, with elements running on different configurations. And each climate model is composed of various elements: components, modules, parameterisation schemes, and datasets, representing diverse physical, biological, chemical, and socio-economical processes and geographies. These models are written down in more than a million of lines of code and are accompanied by numerous scientific papers, diagrams, and technical notes, detailing the philosophy, scope, developmental process, mathematical and scientific justification, results, etc. of the climate model. Every model element, mode of representation, and aspect of the modelling process emerged from its own disciplinary, technological, and conceptual context. 'As such [climate models] are worlds unto themselves and studying the Earth through these models can sometimes blur into studying just the models themselves' (Jeevanjee et al. 2017: 1760) – which is exactly what this stream aims to focus on.

The goal of this stream is to bring together a diverse group of scholars and practitioners with an interest in climate models in order to explore interdisciplinary methodological, conceptual, and theoretical approaches to the critical analysis and making of models. The stream centres on the question: How is the climate model situated in the world and how is the world situated in the climate model? (Dumit 2014: 350). Contributors are invited to reflect on climate models in all their scientific, conceptual, and technical complexity, as well as their historical and geographical particularity. Proposals may engage with, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Concepts of geography, ecology, materiality, technology, economy, etc. as written into the conceptual framework, mathematical abstraction, code, and/ or datasets of climate models.
- The geography of climate models.
- The histories and genealogies of climate models.
- Aspects of the modelling process and/ or modelling strategies (e.g., the seamless approach).
- System thinking and computation.
- The visualisation of climate models and model results: diagrams, maps, fictions, etc. –
- Practices in/ towards the representation of 'cartographies of science' beyond the West (Naylor 2005: 11).

Contributors are encouraged to reflect on specific models rather than models in general. In the context of climate science, types of models may include numerical weather prediction models (NWP), general circulation models (GCMs), Earth system models (ESMs), and integrated assessment models (IAMs); global model components, such as NEMO, MEDUSA, or JULES; as well as individual parameterisation schemes and/ or toy models. In addition, more speculative examples might be drawn from videogames and animation, for instance, Journey's sand shader, Splash (Moana), or Matterhorn (Frozen).

## References

Dumit, Joseph (2014), 'Writing the implosion: teaching the world one thing at a time', *Cultural Anthropology*, 29 (2), 344-62.



## **Negativity in Contemporary Continental Thought: Rethinking Life Amidst the Dark Turn**

Stream Organiser: Evrim Bayindir

For several decades now, post-Nietzschean philosophies of life have received a great deal of attention, perhaps best encapsulated by the every-increasing influence of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of vital 'affirmation'. However, there have also been several important reactions against this trend — 'negativist' critiques of the affirmationist tendency. The aim of this stream is to reflect on the reasons, currency, and the future of the negativist orientation in contemporary continental thought and intersecting fields. The stream hopes to attract both advocates and detractors of this negativist orientation, in order to contribute to a rethinking of life amidst, and potentially after, the 'dark turn'.

The negativist orientation in contemporary continental thought has appeared in many different forms. Philosophers such as Nick Land, Ray Brassier and Eugene Thacker have, from different perspectives, contested vitalism for its tendency to reproduce anthropocentrism and proposed negativities that claim to be superior to affirmation. Quentin Meillassoux restricted life to an *ex nihilo* emergence whose radical contingency is liable to arbitrary disappearance. Graham Harman's idea of the "withdrawal" of objects designates a form of negation by which even the most trivial objects escape not only being as an overarching identity but also life as creative difference. From a Marxist point of view, Benjamin Noys denounced the relevance of affirmationist politics by arguing that it is only through developing an advanced form of negation after and against Deleuze that we can counter the real abstractions of the capital. Reza Negarestani defines the task of philosophy as the production of an intelligence that frees thought from the immanence of life by providing an "outside view of ourselves". It is also notable that, both the literature in Afro-pessimism, with its call for the destruction of the earth, and also the growing body of work in non-philosophy, with its stance against vitalism, can be said to take part in the same critical divergence from the prioritization of life.

Furthermore, not all tendency towards negativity is determined by anti-Deleuzian or anti-Nietzschean dispositions. Contrary to the mainstream affirmationist path, Deleuze scholarship has also produced an alternative Deleuzianism that trace in Deleuze an undiscovered world of negativity. Among others, Eleanor Kaufmann's development of Deleuze's unfinished "dark ontology", Joshua Ramey's search for the dark hermeticism of Deleuze, and Andrew Culp's provocative call for "cultivating a hatred for this world", provide examples of subversive readings of Deleuze that respond to the impasses of affirmationism. However, the question concerning why has there been a need to either challenge Deleuze with superior negativities or to create darker images of Deleuze seems to remain obscure.

This stream invites participants with an interest in exploring the above negativist and affirmationist movements in contemporary continental thought and related fields. We are especially keen on attracting presenters that can develop dialogue between protagonists and offer new perspectives on the negativist/affirmationist debate, ideally leading to new ways forward.

# Social Media Empires

Stream Organiser: Christine Goding-Doty

As so many of our interactions during the pandemic turned increasingly digital, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Zoom, TikTok, and other digital media companies have come under greater scrutiny for their monopolistic control of markets and outsized influence on users. The questions of how these platforms nest a public sphere within the private control of capital have been posed. However, this line of inquiry is rarely broadened into a critique of digital racial capitalism. Or, in other words, the critique could be posed as a question of how digital media companies participate in and perpetuate power relations which emerged from the colonial relationships between Global North and South. There is certainly an urgent need to theorize the intersection between digital media companies, digital culture, and coloniality. Coloniality, first articulated by Aníbal Quijano and expanded upon by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, describes the modes by which infrastructures and relationships of power born out of colonialism survive the moment of formal decolonization. This includes the political and economic policies of globalization, as well as “liberal initiatives of inclusion, among other forms of social, economic, and political control” (Maldonado-Torres). From the mining of rare earth minerals to power digital hardware and the ongoing occupation of territory by digital infrastructure, to the role of Facebook’s Free Basics program in the Rohingya genocide (and Rohingya refugees’ \$15 billion counter suit), to the digital scramble for the metaverse as several companies attempt to establish dominance in of that new digital frontier, questions of empire are pressing in a digital world.

This stream seeks to theorize the intersection between social and digital media companies and the logics of empire and colonialism. How have notions of empire been updated to operate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How have these questions remained obscured? And what vocabulary is needed to name the new mechanisms of empire which have emerged? Indeed, the dominance of techno-utopian characterizations of the internet have flooded our lexicon with a set of values that present connectivity itself as a human right. This stream is interested in challenging this reading of the internet from an anti-colonial perspective. Papers might consider, among other topics:

- The environmental impact of concerns around mining, the toxicity of digital infrastructure, NFTs, or blockchain
- Racial violence, islamophobia, and far right extremism on social networking sites
- Racial capitalism and labor in the digital age
- Algorithmic bias and discrimination
- The production of digital frontier
- Digital culture, care, and community
- Coloniality, anticolonial resistance, and indigeneity

A possible bibliography of recent literature this stream engages can be found in texts such as: Benjamin, Ruha, et al. *Captivating technology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.  
Couldry, Nick, and Ulises A. Mejias. *The costs of connection*. Stanford University Press, 2019.  
Hu, Tung-Hui. *A Prehistory of the Cloud*. MIT press, 2015.  
Starosielski, Nicole. *The undersea network*. Duke University Press, 2015.

# Sticky Matters

Stream Organisers: Rowan Lear and Harshavardhan Bhat

“Anxiety is sticky: rather like Velcro, it tends to pick up whatever comes near. Or we could say that anxiety gives us a certain kind of angle on what comes near.” (Ahmed, 2010)

What makes things sticky, why do bodies get stuck, and how might we imagine stickiness itself as a form of worlding – an active, embodied praxis of constituting a world? What do qualities of stickiness, moisture, viscosity, residue, grease and slime offer in the excavation of bodies, technologies, temporalities, ecologies, imperial and colonial mechanisms, sensual and affective realities, and Anthropocen(e)tric thinking? Following Lethabo King (2019), how might the sediment slow the navigation of the vessel? This stream is concerned with materialities, philosophies and narratives of interconnection, emergence, resistance and becoming.

Our digital devices are polished smooth, their residue clings to the lungs of factory workers, while our eyes and fingers and attention adhere ever more firmly to screens. Plantations globalise and extend a sticky logic of biomes and extractive economics. Toxic airs and polluted waters flood endocrine systems with leaky, mucal and disruptive effects. As Murphy (2017) writes “With each inhalation, the extensive relations of finance capital are pulled into your lungs, passing through membranes, attaching to receptors, rearranging metabolism, altering gene expression.”

Affective atmospheres are heavy, viscous: the residue of encounters with racism, sexism and class violence bind unevenly to certain bodies. Fieldwork reminds us that situated living is situated resistance – the labour of research and art production is ripe with the vulnerability of becoming-sticky: gathering information, telling stories, asking questions, getting stuck. What does stickiness have to do with consistency? The textures of our knowledge? The materials of our fabrications? The financing of our movements? The complicity of our becoming?

Our invitation is to think, breathe, make and sense with stickiness. It is a call to attend to the changing textures of our naturecultures and/or mingle with the milieu of matter and life. How do we stay with the slimy, the viscous, the mucal and the murky?

We invite papers, provocations, artistic interventions, performance lectures, video works and readings that are attentive and sensitive to various forms of stickiness. Proposals may emerge from one or many or between disciplines. Potential subjects could include (but are not limited to):

- Bodies of water, sediment and hydrofeminist politics
- Climatic, weather and monsoonal worldings
- Air particulate, breath and breaches of the body
- Affective atmospheres and the stickiness of emotion
- Technological habits, addiction and attachments
- Allergy, inflammation, sweat, discharge and mucus
- Bacterial, fungal and animal entanglements
- Contamination and the politics of purity
- Slime, swamps, mud, honey, tree sap and other sticky situations
- Thick, folding and non-linear notions of time
- Hormonal and liquid regimes governing sexuality, reproduction and gender
- Viscosity of hyperobjects, capital and the technosphere
- The sludge of agricultural, manufacturing and energy industries
- Class, caste, gender and other tenacious social stratifications

EMMANUEL

- The stuckness of loops, cycles and repetition



# To be Monstrous

Stream Organiser: Katharina Donn

What does it mean to be human in a world that is both viral and vulnerable? The current pandemic has tumbled our porous beings into a seething world of bacteria, microbes, viruses, organic and non-organic matter. We are resurfacing with interbleeding, vulnerable and toxic bodies, and these will need to somehow carry us further into the 21st century. Yet how can a body be vulnerable, grieving, and future-bound all in one?

This stream explores an othered and abject figure to think such a haunted future with – the monster. It understands the monstrous not as a metaphor for the kind of psychotic or sociopathic violence that is all too human, but instead delves into the unbound corporeality of its original form: a hybrid, stitched-together and shapeshifting body. The monstrous has a lot to offer to a human species that finds itself fragile, limping, virus-infected and chased by extreme weather. Monsters are survivors. They know that being vulnerable does not mean that there cannot be a future, as chimeras are not afraid of change. They might be silenced and exiled, but this does not mean that they do not carry meaning. They frolic when their bodies entangle and interbleed with others into unpredictably hybrid shapes. It is all these qualities which seem so opposed to the premise of rational (hu)manity, set apart and above the wilderness of nature, which makes them evocative amidst our current condition. Embracing the monstrous leads to a risky kind of thinking, not a blueprint solution for the human of the future. But dangerous times require a risky imagination. After all, the monster does not just say no. It says yes to becoming-with and becoming-different, even if this entails a death of sorts and always carries menace. Its vitality might hatch from breakage, but it is there.

This stream invites theorists and practitioners to explore what such monstrosities might offer us in exploring the human condition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Proposals can take the form of performances, artistic artefacts or papers, and might consider questions including the following:

- Does the human need to be monstrous in order to survive? Can the monstrous de-monstrate a future vision for the human in a biopolitical sense?
- How do feminist and queer practices re-claim and re-define the monstrous?
- A century and a half after Karl Marx' vampiric capitalism, does the monstrous still offer provocative figurations in economic or political thought?
- What ethical challenges can the idea of the monstrous expose in the field of AI or genetic engineering?
- Can the hybridity and multi-species minglings of the monstrous help negotiate the relation between culture ecology and environmentalism?
- How have literary and aesthetic figurations of the monstrous transformed and transgressed generic boundaries?