Digital Solidarity Networks

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Digital Solidarity Networks

Digital Solidarity Networks[1] is an online shared listing of tools, practices and readings for digital solidarity, conviviality and togetherness. It is a resource for individuals, groups and organisations that want to break out of the suffocating webs of Big Tech in their everyday life and cultural work.

The initiative emerged in March 2020, a moment in which, due to the global pandemic crisis, many of our activities, work and life were suddenly forced into online formats. In response to complex infrastructural dynamics that emerged, Varia started a collective space on an Etherpad, to share materials that we abruptly and urgently wanted to stay close to, even closer than we already were.

The set of gathered materials started with free software tools, such as alternative tools for video conferencing, chat, e-mail, etherpads, VPN's or file sharing, hosting providers, online cultural initiatives, forms of collective self-help and theoretical readings. Over time, more and more individuals, groups and organisations started to use and edit the pad as a resource for digital mutual aid strategies and online social closeness.

Even though this initiative appeared in a particular moment in time, it is important for us to acknowledge that the interest in alternative tools, free software and collective practices is part of multiple, longer timelines which have been shaped by different individuals, groups and organizations, working on ways to be entangled with digital infrastructures under their own terms.

[1] https://pad.vvvvvaria.org/digital-solidarity-networks

More than one year later, Varia decided to carry forward the conversation around non-extractive software and digital infrastructures. In May and June 2021, three public sessions were organised which aimed to create a conversational space in which to collectively relearn how digital tools co-shape our everyday life and cultural events. Collective relearning is a practice that emerges from an interest in shared learning environments with as many teachers as there are students.

Each session consisted of an introductory presentation by an invited guest, a collective relearning exercise, and ended with a collective discussion. The program of the Digital Solidarity Networks series was the following:

-- **How can we reconfigure digital networks across timelines and communities?** Thursday 20 May, with Dušan Barok

-- **What are lessons learned from alternative, decentralised or federated infrastructures?** Thursday 27 May, with LURK

-- **How can we rethink digital infrastructures in terms of capacity and care?** Thursday 10 June, with The Institute for Technology in the Public Interest (TITiPI)

With the Digital Solidarity Networks sessions, we attempted to create a conversational space to collectively reflect how digital tools co-shape our everyday life and cultural events. As such, we invited cultural workers, artists, designers and activists to collectively relearn, think through and begin to understand the politics of the current socio-technological situation.

How can we imagine technological attitudes that don't rely on data extractivist models? How can we generate

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possibilities for technological self-determination? And how can we imagine computational infrastructures differently?

Through the Digital Solidarity Networks sessions, we continued the ongoing conversation about the complex relationship between Big Tech and our everyday digital infrastructures.

About Varia

Varia is a collective-space based in Rotterdam focused on everyday technologies. We use the term everyday technology as a way to break through the vision of old and new technology, or smart and not so smart technology. We instead look more at the appropriateness of what each technology does in a particular situation.

We are also trying to understand whose everyday is meant by the term, to not include one single world view, but to acknowledge that everyone engages with technology in a different way. We start from the premise that technology should not be left only to the experts, but rather that it should be a practice inclusive of different forms of knowledge and which enable multiple kinds of configurations and relations.

This documentation

This publication carries the documentation of the three sessions that took place throughout May and June 2021 in Varia, Rotterdam (NL). Publishing these materials is a next step in this long-term and multi-threaded conversation.
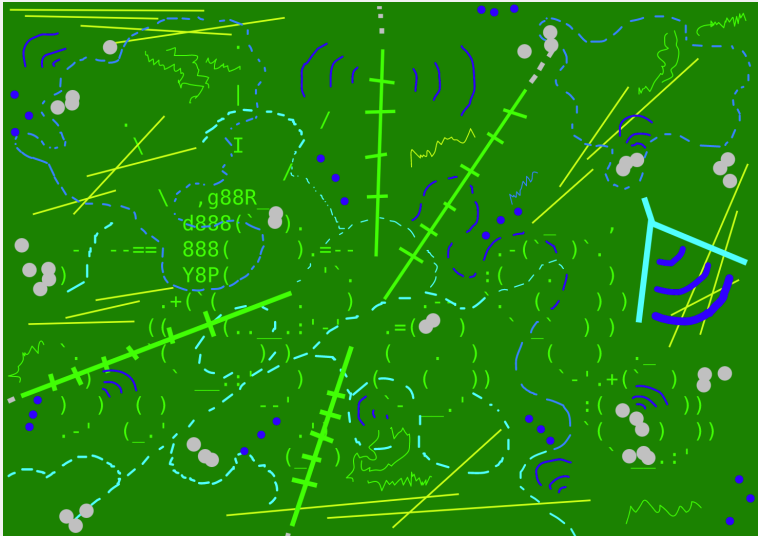
This documentation contains:

-- Introduction to the sessions

-- Methods that were prepared for the collective relearning sessions

Session #1 — How can we reconfigure digital networks across timelines and communities?

For the first event, on Thursday 20 May, we were joined by Dušan Barok who spoke about Artist-Run Digital Networks and Community Work.


The story of artist-run digital networks stretches back to at least the 1990s, when communities in various places began extending the idea of the personal computer to a community resource. These resources provided simple

services for their milieus such as e-mail clients, mailing lists, web hosting, shell access and audiovisual broadcasting, supporting free expression and experimental practices.

Countering the stereotype of a self-contained nerd culture, they were highly localised and embedded in various cultural scenes, often operating out of artist-run spaces. The impetus was not only to confront the environment controlled by commercial providers, but perhaps even more importantly community awareness and the need to maintain common social spaces.

Twenty years later, the centralisation of the internet has brought new dimensions to their continuing relevance. They provide the means to build an autonomous infrastructure operating the nodes of distributed and libre networks. They also provide safer spaces regulated by the communities themselves. In this presentation, Dušan will briefly discuss their genealogies, varieties and dilemmas.

Dušan Barok is a researcher and artist. He graduated in networked media from the Piet Zwart Institute, edits Monoskop and is a co-admin of the Multiplace/Sanchez server.
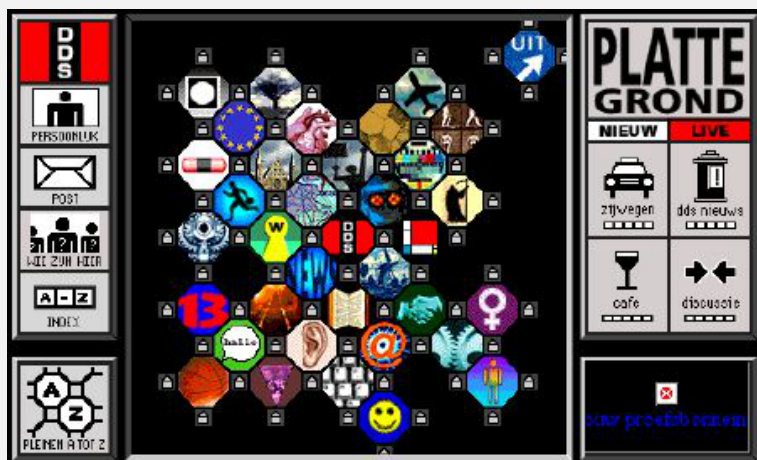
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FMR 21 - Art in digital contexts and public spaces

2021   research & experiment

A FEMINIST SERVER MANIFESTO 0.01

A few months after "Are You Being Served?" some of us met up in the Feminist Server Summit at *Art Meets Radical Openness* (AMRO <http://radical-openness.org>), ESC in Graz. The theme of this edition, Autonomy (im)possible sparked discussions on relationality, dependency and what that would mean for an (imaginary) Feminist Server. The following embryonic manifesto was written in response to these discussions.

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A feminist server…

* Is a situated technology. She has a sense of context and considers herself to
be part of an ecology of practices
* Is run for and by a community that cares enough for her in order to make her
exist
* Builds on the materiality of software, hardware and the bodies gathered around
it
* Opens herself to expose processes, tools, sources, habits, patterns
* Does not strive for seamlessness. Talk of transparency too often signals that
something is being made invisible
* Avoids efficiency, ease-of-use, scalability and immediacy because they can be
traps
* Knows that networking is actually an awkward, promiscuous and parasitic
practice
* Is autonomous in the sense that she decides for her own dependencies
* Radically questions the conditions for serving and service; experiments with
changing client-server relations where she can
* Treats network technology as part of a social reality
* Wants networks to be mutable and read-write accessible
* Does not confuse safety with security
* Takes the risk of exposing her insecurity
* Tries hard not to apologize when she is sometimes not available
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Recap

This summary emerged from a collective note taking process during the presentation.

Dušan's talk started with the question: as cultural organizations, is there a way out of our relations with Big Tech without losing audience? Although we should keep historical differences in mind, alternatives have been around since the 90s: providing and maintaining digital access was a major subject then. Dušan's talk then moved on to focus on the story of artist-run digital networks, which was populated with examples: XS4ALL, internet provider in NL, which was one of the first companies to make it possible for people to connect to the internet from their homes; De Digitale Stad (The Digital City), a project affiliated with XS4All and the first access to internet for many people: city councils, individuals, and others; Netbase, which happened at the same time as digital city, but out of Vienna; servus.at, an Austrian net culture initiative that functions as a co-op since 1996, financed through members fees + local funding; Genderchangers Academy, who started Eclectic Tech Carnival and systerserver as a place to learn sysadmin skills. Dušan's talk underlined that these initiatives understood technological activism and social activism as ONE thing. Dušan finished by asking: "How do we stop reenacting these data extractivist attitudes in the way cultural funds quantify audiences?" and proposing to see the audience as a peer group rather than a target group.

Collective Relearning

> For this collective relearning moment the idea
> was to relearn through time, but also through
> different attitudes: how can we relearn across
> different organisations?

The situation

1. Pick one [EXAMPLE] mentioned by Dušan during
   his presentation or an [EXAMPLE] that you are
   aware of.
2. Describe [EXAMPLE] together, describe what you
   know about it.
3. What is it? Who is behind it? How does it
   operate? (You can use the axes of inquiry
   below to dive further.)

Resetting the situation

-- What structural conditions have changed between
   then and now? or across different attitudes?

-- How did the imaginations shift?

-- What are obstacles that appeared?

-- Which privileges are at play then/now?

-- Who has/d access to [EXAMPLE]?

Past in Present/Crossing between different attitudes

Imagine that [EXAMPLE] writes an announcement message on their website today, sharing the status of the organisation. What would they say? What is the status of the project? Why did they make this decision? How do they greet their readers? You can use the pads below to write your notes. We will be sharing these texts when we come back together for the conversation at the end.

Axes of consideration

Governance:
- Who sets the rules?
- How can the rules be changed?
- Where can complaints be filed?

Pedagogy:
- How can we think together with each other and with tools?
- How can we listen to the machines?
- How can we learn about their impact?

Maintenance:
- Are administrators, moderators and developers volunteers or paid for?
- How do you pay for your infrastructure? (e.g.: donations, academia, state or private funding, subsidies, corporate sponsors, conferences etc.)

Network/interoperability/relations of:
- If we understand "infrastructure" as something that brings things/entities together, what is being

brought together?
- At what scale is the digital infrastructure
operating on? What is lost in the scaling?

Resources:
- To what extent does the infrastructure rely on on
relatively environmental-friendly energy sources
(wind energy, solar power, tidal power, wave power,
geothermal energy, biomass and waste energy)?
- Are you going to buy new hardware or re-
use/recycle old one?
- What will happen with hardware that needs to be
trashed?

:)

intimacy and small spaces
access and large spaces
territory

hello :)

Access for all

Excess for all

Axes for all

exes for all

Session #2 — What are lessons learned from alternative, decentralised or federated infrastructures?

In this talk LURK, Thursday 27 May 2021, (represented by Aymeric Mansoux and Roel Roscam Abbing) talked about LURK and its surroundings. What it is, how we came to be, what it does, why we do it and with who.
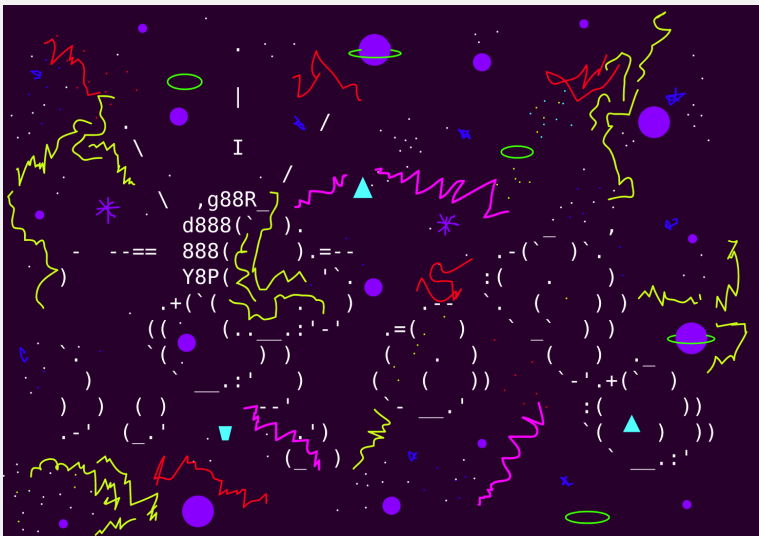
LURK started as a small collective of artists/hackers interested in facilitating and archive discussions around net- and computational culture and politics, proto- and post-free

culture practices, (experimental) (sound) (new media) (software) art, and things like that. We have been active since 2014 and today we offer to like-minded people and peers the possibility to host their email discussion lists, access to instant messaging services and to alternative social media platforms, as well as streaming servers.

Now that COVID19 has reignited conversations about autonomy and sovereignity in relation to digital infrastructures, it is useful to inform these discussions with lived accounts of both the challenges and opportunities of self-managed digital resources and autonomous digital infrastructures. In particular, in this presentation we will discuss the services we run, the infrastructure we use, and the time and energy it takes to support it all. We will also zoom in and out to demonstrate how collectives and organizations are dependent on LURK but also how LURK is in turn itself dependent on other collectives and organizations. After that, we will go through multiple concrete scenarios to imagine how digital resources can be shared across cultural institutions, small organisations and artistic practices. Each of them will ask us to engage with hosting digital services while assuming different scales, needs and knowledge.
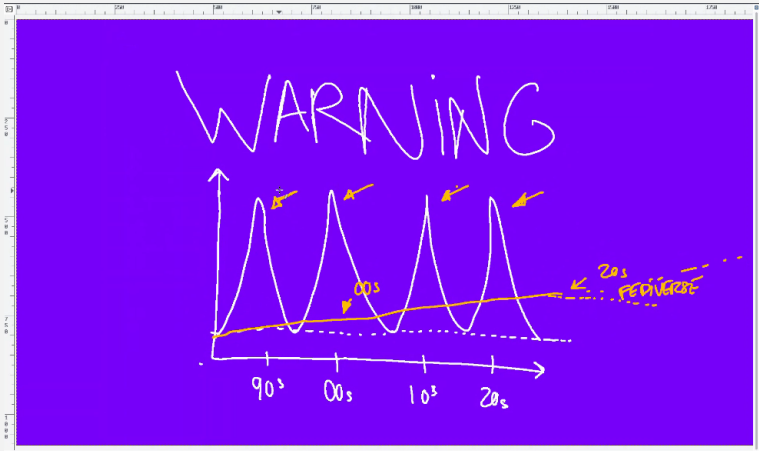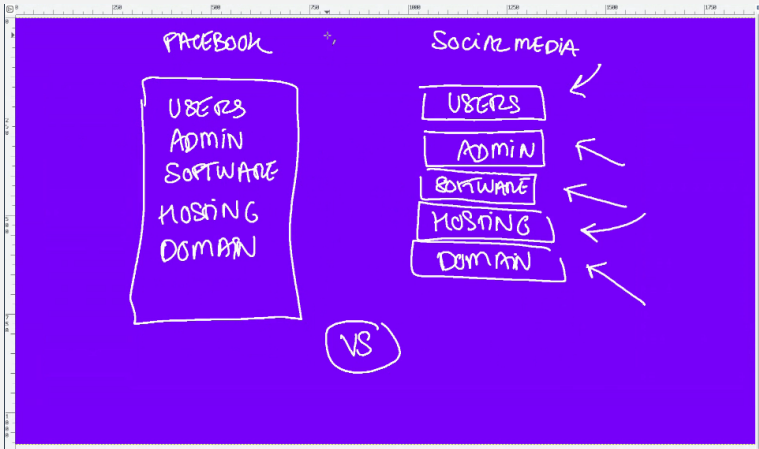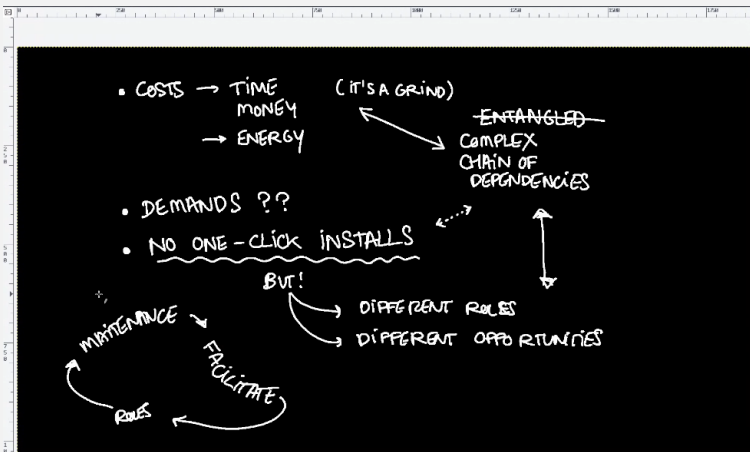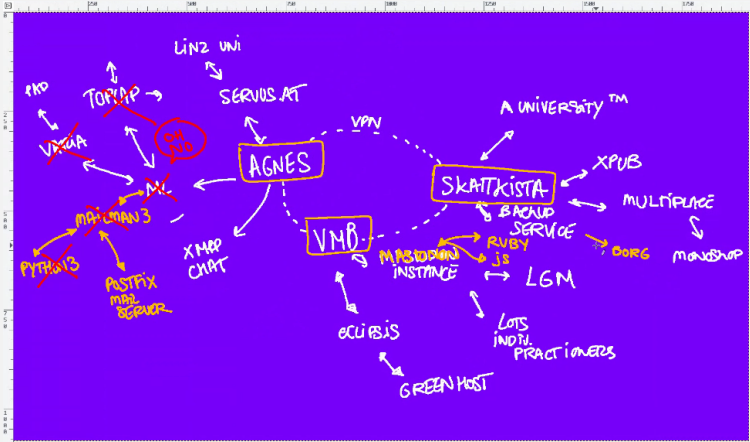
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Recap

LURK's talk highlighted the importance of adopting a modular approach towards digital infrastructure. For example, where social media companies like Facebook adopt a monolithic approach, it is important to deconstruct and unpack levels in terms of users / admin / software / hosting / domain / revenue models. These are all places for experimentation, tryouts, customization, etc. and the discussion of alternatives forces you to look through these different elements and experiment with these things. LURK then forwarded that the range of interventions could be simplified into two approaches:

-- Drop-in replacements, where you have a particular tool, for example Gmail, and you replace it. However, you leave all the relations intact.

-- Alternatives, and here LURK used the metaphor of setting up chairs at an event, and in that sense we can think of alternatives as thinking of different arrangements rather than exchanging one chair for another as it is the case with drop-in replacements, which requires extra facilitation, different moderation strategies, etc; every setup will impact and produce different relations.

However, this was not to say drop-in replacements are necessarily wrong: in fact, a lot of important work starts with identifying what are the issues with the current setup.

Then, LURK moved on to talking about the particulars of how they came to be, from their origins until today. Currently, LURK is hosting among others, a mailing list, an XMPP server and a Mastodon instance on 3 machines. LURK highlighted that this entails complex collective work and a complex chain of dependencies: "There is no autonomy. Autonomy is an illusion."

Collective Relearning

During this collective relearning moment, we tried to understand the practical dimensions of running our own digital infrastructures. Among other considerations, we asked: What are the costs? How is it funded? How to organise this? Which skills are needed?

A Trans-Local Shared Calendar Network

You are part of a trans-local network of (small) cultural organisations that are teaming up their communication efforts. You are tired to be dependent on external social media platforms, for different reasons and want to back control over your events.

You would like to do your communications differently and are sharing strategies for how you would like to move forward and spread the word. The group is not afraid to take a highly experimental approach. Together you decided to work on:

a trans-local shared calendar network, where each organisation in the network advertises each other's events, using a series of small printers that output small flyers throughout the month, but also on each other's website.

Axes of consideration:
- **What** (what are needs/expectations?)

- **What** (what are needs/expectations?)
- **Finance** (what are the costs? who is paying for it?)
- **FTE**
- **costs**
- **sources of income**
- **Upstream** (how to feed back into the free software tools)
- **Network** (questions of collaboration, involvement, togetherness, who can do what, what is already out there?)
- **Organisation** (how to organise this?)
- **Maintenance** (administration, moderation, development, availability, skills)
- **Governance** (decision making, Code of Conduct)
- **Hosting** (who is doing the technical work?)

Strategies:
- **Buying services**
- **Self-organising**

Scenario:

We are ourselves, and together we form a network that shares a calendar.

Different roles (ourselves)

LURK

Nieuwe Vide (finances of Mondriaan, writing for funding, platform and (longterm)network of artists, physical space, too little FTE for tech, developing new work with artists)

Varia (funding application writing, space with big windows)

Amateur Cities: (funding application writing, editing text, providing platform for content, contextualizing and creating connections between topics/events, developing concepts/ideas, production, curation/moderation)

XPUB

Different needs

LURK: a location/platform/system for LURK peers to announce their projects and events

XPUB: announcing public events from the master(s), show to PZI that there's a life after insta

Z: customisation, need for different levels of visibility

Amateur Cities: technical skills, funding capacity, announcing

Customize visibility for the institute as well as for the artist's work/event without 'elite club'but broad audience still

Varia: network reach?, moderation

Ideas HOW we can do this

Have a shared hashtag.

Copy radar.squat? Take copy of mobilizon?

mobilizon

CalDAV/WebDAV

shared IT training among institutions and individuals

have a code of conduct

Ideas HOW <u>not</u> to do this:

- no dependencies to bleading edge technologies
- no to single source of funding/support

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Session #3 — How can we rethink digital infrastructures in terms of capacity and care?

For the third event, on Thursday 10 June 2021, we were joined by The Institute for Technology in the Public Interest (TITiPi) (Miriyam Aouragh, Seda Gürses, Femke Snelting, Helen Pritchard) who spoke about about infrables.
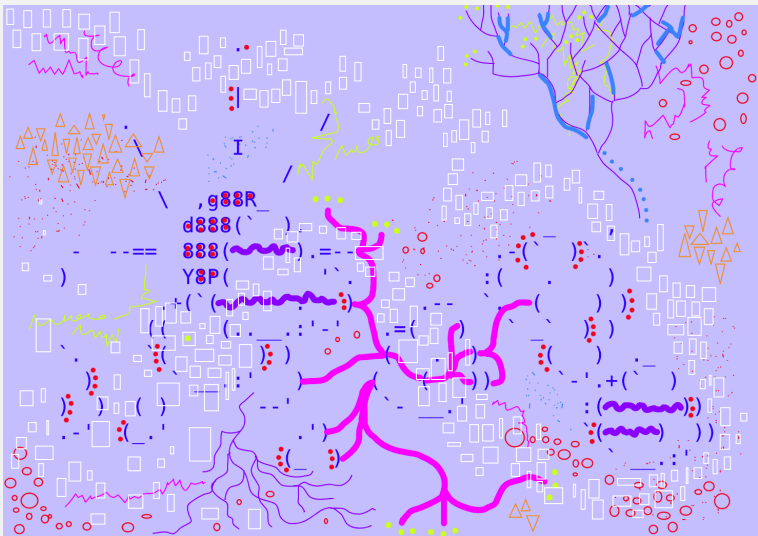
Infrables make negative use-cases and un-fixing bug reports as a solidary praxis. They are articulations of what extractive digital infrastructures are, and what they are doing. What

infrables can we tell to take-down Big Tech narratives and undo their violences? Generated through narrative and extranarrative accounts, infrables identify oppressive infrastructures or tools, but they also make space for other technological attitudes. Over the last months, the emerging Institute for Technology in the Public Institute has been conversing with people experiencing infrastructural shifts, and trying to grasp their implications. Our contribution to the Digital Solidarity Network conversations will be a series of infrabels to be reworked and retold.

The phone I use is quite old and so I could not download the national tracing app. I therefore could not access some locations as I could not "check in" digitally. This was during the first lockdown, but it seems that since then venues have been told they could not discriminate against people without the app and to offer alternative (paper) check-in processes.

Chat 💬 0

In the work that I do the organisation uses Microsoft Teams. In the first meetings we had I didn't want to install the app or program on my laptop, and so I joined straight from browser. It took me some meetings to realize that that was the reason why I couldnt see my colleague's faces, because the software allows you to see other people's faces only if you install the program.

During the pandemic my laptop is suffering so much. It is getting a bit old (not even that old), but videoconfercing is so tough on it. I am not a professional participant in video conferences, not being able to use background images, sometimes accidentally loggin off because my laptop got overheated.

Recap

This summary emerged from a collective note taking process during the presentation.

TITiPI started the talk by introducing their practice: When Covid apps started being introduced, TITiPI tried to understand what the impact would be on people, institutions and communities: through the writing of a bug report, which they published on the git repository of one of these apps, they tried to engage with this. This bug report was half-complaint, half-analysis. Recently, they wrote another bug report in response to the EU digital COVID immunity certificate, which was promptly moved to a discussion because it was not considered a technical issue by the git repository maintainers.

TITiPI's talk centered on understanding digital infrastructures through the lived experiences of those affected by their operations. This focus on lived experiences took the form of sharing of anedoctes, which is politically important as it is producing solidarity by turning personal experiences into collective ones. While telling these stories, TITiPI realised how hard it is to figure out where to act, to intervene, and how to move with things that are in place. To transform these stories into tools, not as something that happened to me but as something that could happen to all of us.

TITiPI start to read out the following anecdotes in turns while being accompanied by piano music played by Seda.

PAYING WITH AMAZON VOUCHERS

When we were setting up a research project 'infrastructural interactions' - I think it matters what it was for - we thought it was really important to pay participants in the conversations we were organising but the project it was administrated between two different universitites so we ran into many different problems with paying participants. Part of the issue was that it was felt as unethical to pay participants I guess becuause of fear that it would influence the research results, but another part was that we were not able to pay participants based in the UK because the university had decided this could only be done by giving them Amazon vouchers, we guess this was because it would not set up a financial relation with them, wouldn't be seen as payment and also would not be showing up as a financial dependency but as a gift. Of course this is also in the interests of the participants; they would not have any registered income which would interfere with their benefits or taxes, but we really did not want to spend any project money that is critical about cloud computing on Amazon vouchers, even if we were sympathetics to people not wanting to mess up their benefits. So what we realised is that because the university using these vouchers, they were siphoning public money into Amazon on the one hand but also using Amazon to in a way support tax evasion, to support creative bookkeeping in an attempt to optimize their financial operations in the sense it was easier for them to give out the vouchers than to actually take care of a proper payment of someone who had contributed to project. The other part we can put in here, is that they clearly assumed that the participants were on benefits. It also has to do with ... a big part of it is because of the Universal Credit system, which is how benefits are organised in the UK at the moment, are designed people from making

claims. It is highly aggressive towards having any additional payment outside your benefits; you will lose your benefits completely if a payment shows up. UC aggressively discourages people from staying on benefits. It is a system that is micromanaged.

VACCINE BROS

So people doing sexwork were saying to me, "do you have the vax badge on your profile", and then others were asking "have you seen the taglines on grindr", people are labelling themselves as big bear Pfizer, as Moderna otters, some said they saw a profile that was labelled, let me check it was ... yes: "Grindr profile of a "vaccinated top" with the foreboding caption, "It has begun." It's inevitable: the antibody bro is about to become the vaccine bro".

CORONA 'HELP'

With the first Corona aid, you could get 5,000 euros and there were people who got that. There were also people who took money fraudulently. That's why people had to give it back. Most of the people I know have actually transferred the money back. Because it is not clear at all. And there is so much stress. It's so unclear. You are being criminalised very quickly. People then immediately make a case of fraud. At the beginning it sounded as if it was available to everyone and you had to apply for it very quickly. You only had a certain amount of time to do it. I think it was 10 minutes or so and then the page closed. But the problem is, only if you received a number, you can get to this page, you've been waiting for days until you can get to the webpage. And I also have to confess, I didn't read the small letters, I just saw "I can get money". So they asked "Do you need more money?" and I of course said "Yes!". I wasn't entitled to that much help, because it was only for operating costs. But I didn't

read the instructions. I was just trying to get my turn before Berlin said they had no more money. Because after that there was a time when it was stopped, because there was no more money. And now it's like this, you need to pay it back in one go. But it's not clear who pays back or not. And every tax advisor says something different about it. It's the same with friends. But then you are criminalised. As if you did it consciously.

I was in such a panic because it was clear that we wouldn't get any money for 4, 5, 6 months, that at first I just clicked, I need money, I need money, I need money. But it's already true, the billions that are paid out to the big companies and what is then made out of these small amounts. It's all pure neoliberalism.

SELF-MANAGING A DEMONSTRATION ON EVENTBRITE

So normally I try to participate in the 8th of March activities either go to march, or join a demonstration but this year it was not allowed to go out onto the street in groups. So I was looking on-line if there were any activities planned and then on one of the websites that normally has calls for the demos, there was an announcement that the organisers had permission for gathering a hundred people and that you would have to sign up on Eventbrite so that the tickets could be distributed. Actually, it wasn't Eventbrite, but I think for the story it doesn't matter. So I clicked on the link and of course all tickets were 'sold out', like already they were 'sold out', of course. So in the end I joined another activity and ended up on the same square on which these 100 ticketed people were suposed to gather. I realised they had blocked off with tape ten areas for 10 people to gather, and had rented metal barricades - the cattle thing, they had a made a circle with these baricades so inside there were these

sections for ten people each so it meant that the organisers of the feminist or women's march had self organised this idea of checking who had signed into the Eventbrite, maybe they would have a barcode scanner at the entrance to this zoned off area. But what had happened is ... I had joined a less official feminist bike ride, we were so many we flooded the square so the whole setup crashed - people were crashing through the gates, broke the tape, there was a mess of bikes and people, it was a mess, there was no way the organisers could have kept with their promise of managing their crowd. So the worry about the barcode scanner being put in place, the fact that everyone participating in the official march had given their name, address and email, is really scary and the fantasy of becoming its own police force that the organisers held was really scary – from the setup you could see they thought they could manage it – and then the white punk girls just crashed it.

SPITTING WITH THE COURIERS

I was traveling - trying to travel to Brussels to see my comtrades and I was very anxious. I had ordered the COVID test and downloaded the app. There was a technological hitch and so it arrived two days late. I was anxious about the test not being testable, that it would be a non-viable sample, so I rang the company and they said "It is good to keep the sample as fresh as possible", and so I could book in a courier between 08:00 and 18:00, that would come and take my sample to the lab. But they could not give an exact time. As fresh as possible! They told me to wait until the courier arrived, knocked at the door and to spit into the tube whilst he waited. He arrived at 13h and knocked on the door and he waited while I watched the video, and spit in the tube. Wait, I had to go through the app stages. Open the tube, scan the barcode, watch the video, whilst he was waiting. I

then sealed the sample and had to put it in a transparent bag that I handed over to him and at that moment we had eyecontact, as I passed him my tube of spit. At that moment I thought: is he my nurse?

Collective Relearning

This collective relearning exercise was a moment of re-writing the anecdotes that hooked into and continued from the presentation of TITiPI.

From anecdote to infrable

How can we follow and understand infrastructural shifts through shared experiences?
How can the anecdotes become fables to understand together what is going on?
To what extent do individual experiences stand for a larger whole?
What happens when you share, retell, adapt, rewrite someone else's experiences?
We need to find methods that step beyond expertise, control and overview; how can we think about infrastructure "from the middle"?

For this exercise:

1. pick an anecdote
2. choose a format
3. choose elements
4. re-write/change/re-tell the anecdote into a infrable together

Formats for passing on the infrables:

  -- shared BBB whiteboard + motto

-- pad writing

-- spoken story

-- …

Elements to form infrables with:

  -- the intention of the story: what is the
   intention for the "public interest"? (connected
   to the line below)

  -- a maxim, saying, concise expression, motto

  -- talking plants

  -- inanimate objects

  -- creatures (e.g.: the tortoise and the hare,
   grasshoper and the ant, etc.)

  -- natural phenomena

  -- infrastromorphising: attributing
   infrastructural characteristics, motivation or
   behavior to inanimate objects, animals, or
   natural phenomena

  -- rhyme and repetition

We took 10 minutes together to collect and write
more anecdotes in addition to those by TitipI
through the following question:

Do you remember any specific situation where a digital service or tool caused a particular kind of stress, moments of exclusion, inaccessiblity, tension?

Then we split into 4 groups and translated one of the anecdotes into an infrable.

```
gray area of who is able to refuse certain policing systems
opting out
"you are already in"
you are in by default

not always having the energy to uncheck all the boxes

- moral, warning, message

old phones
privilege to see opt out
who can even see the fence?
```

straight from browser, the Teams, or Zoom, house party, Jitsy or was I on Tiktok? I dunno... In the first meetings I was just staring at the icons, wondering why everyone was refusing the camera. In the first meetings even the head of the organisation didn't have a camera. In the first meetings I was still working but I gradually just relied on no camera too, taking the meetings from bed, from the floor, from wherever i felt the fuck comfortable. It

fear of opening envelopes
opening envelopes support groups
community as support system

```
+++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

        Melting your CPU, one meeting at a time!

        A stab in the dark at team building
                                     __..--''\
                           __..--''        \
                __..--''              __..--''
       __..--''              __..--''         |
       \ o          __..--''____....----""
        \__..--''\
         |         \
         +----------------------------------+
         +----------------------------------+
         +++++ micro ++ soft ++ protest +++++
         + against the unequal distribution +
         +++++ of terms and conditions ++++++

           Join us in the blackout room!

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Appendix: Digital Solidarity Networks pad — Introduction

The Digital Solidarity pad starts with a collectively written introduction. This text has gone through a situated update in May 2021, which is included below.

This is the start of a listing of resources regarding mutual aid strategies and social closeness through alternative digital infrastructures. This pad contains examples of collective digital reparative practices, in a time where everything points to the further consolidation and accelerated normalization of the Big Tech industry (Zoom, Facebook, Slack, Microsoft Teams, Skype, etc.), a.k.a. GMAFIAZ. Other attitudes are possible!

The Covid-19 pandemic was the main (de)stabilizing force during the period where this pad emerged (physical distancing, remote working and care taking-and-giving), but we also want to account for other temporalities of diverse thicknesses and lengths, which are inextricably embedded in what is shared hereby. For example: the irreversible damage that we are left with in the aftermath of the sneaky moment[1]; the relational precarity provoked by what the Invisible Commitee called the contemporary "crisis of presence"[2] that combines the digitization of the modern subject's experience with the anthropocene; the increasing need and control of migration flows along the Global North-South axis; turbo-capitalism as the computationally

speeded-up financialisation of most socio-economical relations; the establishment of computationalism as the contemporary computational colonial regime[3]; mainstream feminism with a door for TERFs[4]; requiems to late liberalism, new fascisms, mindsets of going back to business as usual; hyper-hygenic "new" normality; rural injustices such as lack of connectivity; and a generalized path towards the 6th mass extinction by means of a provoked climate change against which only partial reparations can now be dreamt of.

Such dreams have affirmative material forms, such as: the abolitionism movements organized around a variety of well established institutions (defund the police and prison complex including tech-to-prison pipelines, intensive farming, border control, ...); the moment of re-politicizing open licenses within F/LOSS communities; shared economies of new unions, co-ops & other solidarities (housing, delivery riders, sex workers, street vendors aka "manteros", gig workers, ...); the potentials that we are left with in the afterglows of the same sneaky moment[1] such as forms of collective (re)engagement with computational infrastructures for the public interest; the back to the countryside effect; and non-western social uprisings.

[1] sneaky moment is a term used by the Darmstadt Delegation to refer to moments of separation
https://twentysix.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-196-lets-first-get-things-done-on-division-of-labour-and-techno-political-practices-of-delegation-in-times-of-crisis/
[2] crisis of presence
http://asounder.org/resources/tiqqun_program.pdf
[3] computationalism
http://oro.open.ac.uk/46718/1/__userdata_documents8_sma78_Desktop_A_Brief_Introduction_to_Decolonial_Compu

[4] TERF = Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists

In such a context, we feel the response-ability to suggest a different approach to technology which does not reinforce capitalist ideals of productivity in situations of crisis (i.e.: "business as usual"). One that promotes collective networks of solidarity that don't rely on data extractivist models, reconsider the figure of the user, and can be adapted to the specificities of each situation. Luckily, there are already plenty of kickass, inspiring initiatives doing great work in this area. With this pad, we hope to share some of them.

At the same time, we cannot ignore that it takes effort, and a great amount of privilege, to walk away from these corporate tech solutions once and for all. Ease-of-use in times of urgency; network effects; family members whose contact is dependent on the usage of mainstream social networking platforms; complicated political situations where these are sadly the most convenient choice; the need for an online presence in times of structural precarity; etc; are all considerations that should not be discarded and are the reality for most of us. In fact, and precisely because of such considerations, we are not advocating a purist approach. We are all entangled with Big Tech, but we would prefer to critique it, put limits and eventually choose all of our dependencies without being forced.

So if you are interested in experimenting with other digital infrastructures, we invite organisations, collectives and individuals to look closer into these alternatives and support them to the best of their abilities, by either hosting their own versions of the software, therefore diminishing the visitor load, or providing financial compensation for

someone else's services. There are many tools and hosting initiatives to start exploring and engaging with.

We have curated this pad from a resonant perspective to those articulated by the tenets of the Feminist Server Manifesto[1]; Dear Cultural Institution, there is an Elephant in the Room[2]; Technological Sovereignty[3]; lists of feminist and autonomous servers[4]; F/LOSS Art and Libre Graphics[5]; community care and mutual aid networks (Global Information Society Watch[6], Allied Media[7], gendersec[8], Critical Design Lab[9], Leeszaal[10] + ...), XPUB[11]; Lurk[12]; pirate.care[13]; ...

[1] https://areyoubeingserved.constantvzw.org/Summit_afterlife.xhtml
[2] https://pad.vvvvvaria.org/elephant +
https://constantvzw.org/wefts/distant-elephant.en.html
[3] https://www.ritimo.org/IMG/pdf/sobtech2-en-with-covers-web-150dpi-2018-01-10.pdf /
http://backbone409.calafou.org/es/node/229.html
[4] https://pad.riseup.net/p/femservers-checklist-security +
https://gendersec.tacticaltech.org/wiki/index.php/Servers:_From_autonomous_servers_to_feminist_servers
[5] https://archive.bleu255.com/bleu255.com-things/floss-art/index.html + https://libregraphicsmeeting.org
[6] https://www.giswatch.org/
[7] https://alliedmedia.org/
[8] https://gendersec.tacticaltech.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page
[9] https://www.mapping-access.com/
[10] https://www.leeszaalrotterdamwest.nl/
[11] https://xpub.nl
[12] https://lurk.org/
[13] https://pirate.care/

These are some of the places/moments where shared intersectional sensibilities have been activated:

- -- [Varia](#)

- -- [Arts Meets Radical Openness (AMRO)](#)

- -- [Iterations](#)

- -- [3rd Obfuscation Workshop](#)

- -- [Relearn Summerschool](#)

- -- [Techno-Galactic Software Observatory](#)

- -- [Networks with an Attitude](#)

- -- [Are You Being Served? + feminist servers summit](#)

- -- [TransHackFeminist Meet-Up](#)

- -- [Reclaiming Digital Infrastructures](#) + https://autonomousdesign.hotglue.me/

- -- [Monday Readings](#)

- -- [CLOG Agency](#)

- -- [Relearning Series](#)

- -- [The Institute for Technology in the Public Interest (TiTiPi)](#)

Being aware that lived experiences still miss embodied perspectives related to computed forms of ageism, ableism, racism, speciesism, ... this pad needs to be read as the snapshot of a very situated community of practices, undoubtedly tainted by the problematics of a particular group of people (and not others), no matter how large it still

is. Yet, we hope that this pad is taken as an invitation to expand, stretch, reshape and carry the conversation further.

The pad will slowly morph and mutate, depending on different forces and energies: new projects and groups are being encountered and micro- and macro-organisms which are responding to each other in different ways. But remember! No pressure, no guilt, no victimhood, no productivity claims. Let's try to not apologize for not being always available.

Acknowledgements

[Varia](#) is a non-hierarchical member-based organisation in the south of Rotterdam consisting of artists and designers that work with the themes of everyday technology and collective self-organisation. Being considerate about the channels that we use to communicate, we negotiate our on-line dependencies by self-hosting our digital infrastructure.

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How can we imagine technological attitudes that don't rely on data extractivist models? How can we generate possibilities for technological self-determination? And how can we imagine computational infrastructures differently?

In May and June 2021, Varia hosted three sessions which aimed to create a conversational space in which to collectively think through these questions. This documentation is a next step in this long-term and multi-threaded conversation.