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DIGITAL CULTURE: CRITICAL THEORY

ESSAY TITLE: If the archive is an image of computational sovereignty today, does it account for the organisation of the market, control and aesthetic production? Illustrate your answer by drawing on one or more of these productions through specific examples.

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Introduction

This essay analyses the dialectic between freedom and sovereignty as qualities of the concept of “archive” today. The first section outlines a general idea about the contemporary application of archive’s recent interdisciplinary character. In addition, the origin of the Greek word *arkeion* (archive) is cited along with elements of works by famous French philosophers Derrida and Foucault on this concept, with the archive forming a framework of interpretation which is related to potentiality and networks.

The connection between archive and network becomes stronger in the second section, with the internet—the ultimate network—as a contemporary application of the archive. In addition, examples of the new condition that personal digital archives and social networks create is discussed and illustrated with science fiction as well as applied examples. An important aspect of these relatively new technological structures raises question concerning the freedom of person, the concepts of private and public but also how the capitalistic system uses these applications so as to benefit the market. Finally, the conclusion presents an example of early protest against the measurements of control that governments impose on networks and the vision that the cyber-residents of the early 90s had for the new virtual world.

Similarly, with the romantic residents of early cyberspace, the artists who try to give back freedom to users (of archives and cyberspace) and the sovereignty governing both the physical and cyber worlds will be discussed. Here, the aesthetic and conceptual outcome of archive is summarised in archival art practices, which notionally create an ideal environment of freedom—a utopia—where control is usually transferred to the person who develops the archive, who is in the position to specify the possible growth of their stories through personal interpretation.

The concept of archive

Introduction to the contemporary archive

Archive episteme and common sense

The archive has become an extremely popular interdisciplinary subject of study over recent decades. *“An intensified discussion on the archive, which takes place not only in archival science, but also in art, philosophy, media archaeology, after the so-called “archival turn” in the human sciences, brings out different dimensions of the archive in its affinities with constructions of memory and knowledge, the system of law, power relations and reproduction technologies (Kouros and Karaba, 2012).”* Archive is a central to both the development of academic research as well as democracy. Political theorist Irving Velody believes that the archive is the background for every field of research (Manoff, 2004). Velody argues that archive *“[a]ppeals to ultimate truth, adequacy and plausibility in the work of the humanities and social sciences rest on archival presuppositions (Manoff, 2004).”*

Sociologist Thomas Osborn describe archive as a *“centre of interpretation”* (Manoff, 2004). Archive offers all previous records of current knowledge and is based on the history of past innovations. Every new element added to the archive is a development, extension or re-interpretation of previous element(s) which the archive has sorted in the past. Thus, the researcher or observer actually takes the information belonging to the archive and combines them with the results of other interpreted collection, either recorded or not. In this way, the assumption is that archive is timeless and is never complete, but rather a living developing organism, a system of collective interaction and re-(in)formation.

However, archives are commonly interpreted today without taking into consideration their openness nor the qualities that intellectuals and researcher give to the archive. In addition, the archive has been cleaved from its original meaning and has a much broader definition

than that found in the dictionary, that is, as a place where records are kept¹; while it is only at the beginning of this century that the term archive refers to museums, libraries and records which are related to the historical record (Manoff, 2004). The evolution of the concept of archive from its origin and definitions to the approach by Derrida and Foucault is discussed below and defines the departure point for illustrating the production of the archive and its qualities today.

The origin of “archive”

The word “archive” comes from the Greek word *arkeion* (*αρχείο*), which originally referred to the residence or office of magistrates or *archon*, similar to the contemporary idea of a city hall. Important documents and records related to the city and its citizens were saved and safeguarded here. More specifically, the word *arkeion* comes from the verb *archo* (*ἀρχω*) which means government or beginning; similarly, the noun *arcke* (*αρχή*), which is interpreted as beginning, origin or authority (among other more specific interpretations) depending on the context (Liddell, 1898).

Derridean and Foucauldian approach to the concept of “archive”

Despite the origin of the word “archive” and its relation to law and authority, Derrida and Foucault create a new archival era which releases the archive from the authority of its creator; on the contrary, the authority (law) which governs the archive exists under conditions which connect the archive’s peculiarities and create unique interpretations.

Derrida begins to develop the context and concept of archive through the word’s origin, with particular focus on *arcke* and its interpretations/meanings. Words like “commencement” and

¹ The Oxford Dictionary describes archive as “a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution or group of people”, “as a place where historical documents or records are kept”. Moreover, the definition of digital era describe archive as a “complete record of the data in part or all of computer system, stored on an infrequently used medium”.

“commandment” summarise the meaning of *arcke*, both its origin and the qualities which it represents. The existential interpretation of the word *arcke* (beginning)—which we can assume means the starting point of everything/anything—implies the “physical, historic, ontological sense” which describes “commencement”, but also the law that the superior, god or authority exercises, which is summarised by the word “commandment” and presents the “nomological principle” that archive implies (the law). (Derrida, 1996, 1) These two aspects combine in the etymological dimension of the archive.

“Archive is the first law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statement as unique events (Foucault, (2008): 136)”.

Foucault uses the word archive to describe the possibilities of discourse to characterise its “unity throughout time (Foucault, 2008:142)”. Foucault uses “positivity” to define those small places that discourse generates, where individual subjectivities meet and communicate. Thus, discourse as a whole does not identify the truth but carries changeable equalities of sub-truths. From this initial approach to discourse as a place/space of relationships between subjectivities and individualities, the topological but also temporal aspect of discourse takes root in positivity or as an historical *a priori*. The individualities are part of a network of discourse and communicate with each other without extending to the discourse as a whole.

The archive seems to be the operating system which leads to the choice of a word or statement which fits a particular way of thinking for a particular story or sentence used by a particular person in a particular moment. According to Foucault, “archive” is never complete. This can be interpreted as the need for participation to have a moment of fulfilment; however, this moment or this fulfilment ends with individual use or reading. Thus, the archive is a living, incomplete organism which depends on a viewer or user and the conditions that historical *a priori* sets, a framework for creation and interpretation. Foucault describe this mechanism as the halfway point between “language” (as system of potential sentence formation or word choice) and the “passive collection of spoken words”, and thus archive is the performativity of discourse (Foucault, (2008)).

“The archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable (Foucault, (2008):147)”.

“Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word “archive” (Derrida, (1996):90)”.

The archive has no specific form and is an abstract concept; it cannot be defined. The archive is the source of evidence, creating probabilities of interpretation which are related to memory and history. However, its relationship with memory and experience is bipolar/dual, since it does not directly relate to these concepts save only through the moments when it is used and with results which are not permanent (but related to individual reading or usage). Thus, a binary pair of meanings emerge as a paradox: *mneme* (memory) and oblivion (as well as *a priori*/experience, as Foucault defines archival discourse not with a pair of words but with the same word that changes meaning depending on the condition of discourse). The archival concepts of both Derrida and Foucault require forgetfulness and oblivion so as to promote the democracy of the archive through temporal law. Memory exists only to develop the archive at the moment when the small places of communication in the network are functional. On the other hand, oblivion take the place of memory when the archive is stable, inactive. Obviously, as much as these concepts seem to be polar opposites, in essence, the archive cannot fulfil its characteristics and create probabilities with only half of this pair of meanings: the interpretation can be functional only if it first has the stability which presupposes oblivion *a priori* (without experience at this moment) in order to develop the interpretation (the memory interprets the non-mnemonic existence of the non-activated archive).

The person who controls the archive has the power to interpret it, thus, the archive confirms and conveys the power of authority. The law and the *topos* (space) are always present at the same time and compile the “toponomology” which governs the archive.

Topo(nomo)logy (the site deterministic character of the archive)

The topology of the archive is an extremely important aspect, since it is within this framework that archive is activated. Derrida uses the word “domiciliation” (Derrida,1996:2) and Foucault describes it as the place of communication defined by “positivity” (Foucault, 2008 :142). Thus, the archive needs a place to thrive; this place can be created by the archive itself and connects the private with the public. This transaction does not mean that something new is revealed in the public sphere, since the private is not equivalent to the secret (Derrida (1996), 2). The place where the archive exists can be also be interpreted as the specific form of its public condition, which is not always interpreted in the same way; on the contrary, except for a superficial first glance it always differs. The topology of the archive is more abstract and does not literally point to a physical place, but rather to a condition, even though some aspects of the archive need a location in order to be displayed. Additionally, this characteristic—of a more abstract rather physical space—makes the psychological, linguistic (see Foucault), and social interpretation possible along with other readings and research of archival activation and sets the archive free in terms of its potentialities and probabilities. The topological aspect of the archive is an “uncommon place”, “a place of election”, that is, a place of interpretation, both “visible and invisible”, as Derrida argues (Derrida, (1996), 3). The visibility or invisibility of its toponomology is related to the concept of private and public and could refer to the paradoxical relationship between memory and experience or the “invisible” process of networking before and during the interpretation; individualities with or without (obvious) links can be classified and unified under this archival “domiciliation”, since the archive is inclusive and does not exclude or discriminate.

The archive and new technologies

In this section, the contemporary application of the archive, such as networks and digital archives/collections and their relationship with control and the market, are drawn. Nowadays, the most common and significant archive of all is the internet, which has its own topological term: cyberspace. The differences between internet and cyberspace are

summarised in their structure: internet is the aggregation of networks and cyberspace the virtual world as the users perceive it. In cyberspace, the balance, or rather imbalance, between freedom and control are present - sometimes perceived but most often well-hidden for the average user.

Digitalisation of archives

The archive, according to Alan Liu, *“has become a metaphor for what we are not yet able to grasp about the nature of digital collection”* (Mannoff, 2004), which means that we cannot yet understand the substance of archive, particularly in this new digital era when everything seems to be sorted publicly or privately in servers and/or hard drivers. Moreover, another issue is raised regarding existence itself, the way that humans perceive the future (and also present life to a degree) and digital archives. As social theorist Adrian Mackenzie claims, *“to die is to be disconnected from access to the archives, not jacked-in or not in real time* (Mannoff, 2004)“.

This approach, in combination with the increasingly more “jacked-in” (computers and internet) condition on which daily life depends, raises questions which also appear in science fiction films and series. Outstanding examples of these questions are the episodes “Be right back” (2013) and “San Junipero” (2016)² of the British series Black Mirror³. These episodes focus on the combination of archival application and new technologies, which overall are not

² Black Mirror is a British television series that was first broadcast in 2011. The series creator is Charlie Booker.

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2085059/?ref_=tt_ov_inf

The episodes mentioned refer to the archives’ personal(ity) storage, which are interpreted again and again by algorithms and are expressed in a mechanic/virtual environment/body. Archives which bring a type of life and relationship/intimacy to a software/hardware framework or which bridge virtual and physical worlds.

In the episode “Be right back”, Martha and Ash are a young couple who move into a new house; Ash dies the day after the move. While Martha is still grieving, she discovers she is pregnant. A close friend recommends a new brand software that she can use to speak to her partner as a way to get over his death easier. Even though she hesitates to use it at first, Marsha eventually enters records related to Ash and gradually upgrades the software: from text and voice communication to a physical cyborg presence. Eventually, the Ash android is allowed to be a father to her (their) daughter one day a year. In addition, “San Junipero” is a virtual reality city where the consciousness of the dead can be uploaded or the consciousness of people living with medical issues can be uploaded in order to visit the city for comfort or as a way to decide if they want to be permanent residents after they die. Kelly, who dies from cancer, and Yorkie, who becomes paralysed in her early 20s, meet there. Kelly has no intention of being part of “San Junipero”; Yorkie, however, wants to live the life that she did not have in her physical life once she dies. The women became romantically involved and marry, and ethical issues arise because Kelly had lost husband and daughter who are not in “San Junipero”.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2290780/>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4538072/>

as fictional as one might think. These episodes raise questions and suggestions about the information gathered over a lifetime and their use in a contemporary grasp of life, to the degree in which concepts like the extended mind (if applicable), time, new potential states of life, cognition and the perception brought about by such innovation. However, such examples are no so far removed from our reality, since applications of these concepts already exist (using artificial intelligent technology to gradually process loss and grief, for example) and applications which focus on extending life in a new form are in development.

An example is the way that Eugenia Kuyda tried to smoothly overcome the death of her friend Roman. Roman Mazzurenko died in a car accident, and after his death his friends tried to find the best way to preserve his memory. The suggestions in the beginning were simpler: a book about his life or a memorial website – an archival application but without the involvement of new technologies and less interactivity. However, the idea for a Roman bot came from his close friend Kuyda, the co-founder of Lyka, an artificial intelligent start-up. Kuyda came up with the idea while she was reading texts from her friend; she had the technical experience to develop an app which everyone (except her) can use to speak to her friend. It seems that she may have drawn inspiration from the “Be right back episode”, since Casey Newton, author of the article “Speak, Memory”, mentioned that she felt awkward after seeing this episode after Roman’s death (Newton, 2016). Today, anyone can have access to this type of memorial/avatar.⁴

Social networks and metadata(life)

Thus, a life recorded and sorted anywhere in cyberspace could be transformed into a future avatar; personal digital archives of data could turn into a metadata ramification of Self and used and treated as an extension of the human being. However, this example does not mean that the digitalisation and computer processing of files exclusively refer to the personal archive; they can also be applied to cultural heritage or any field that we can imagine, any kind of records that can be digitalised by today’s contemporary technologies and means. “The Next Rembrandt” project is a similar example with Roman’s Bot. A “robot” that brings the

⁴ <https://softwareengineeringdaily.com/2016/12/06/bot-memorial-with-eugenia-kuyda/>

great Master to life: a contemporary digital Rembrandt is created from data about the artist's paintings that is gathered and analysed, information that travels notionally to the present from the moment after the painter's last known piece (The Next Rembrandt (2016)). Time becomes confused and the potential for eternity far removed from biological substance sounds friendlier than ever before via such examples. However, the control of creative expression and the questionable use of archives and databases is obvious in both cases. Existence becomes a puppet of the person governing the database; a monarchic law governs this type of application, and the person who governs the archive is like a puppeteer, generating behaviours and pre-existing potentialities out of the basic rules of personal will and freedom of expression. This point raises an ethical question as well as a meta-existential question about the belonging of consciousness or memory in metadata life.

Privacy on cyberspace

But such applications are not only the concern of people who have passed away, our future dead selves or painters that exist as digital artistic ghosts. We can lose control of our archives even when alive. One of the biggest contemporary productions of the archive is the network, since it sorts countless pieces of information from around the globe and produces even more every second. At first glance such applications seem to be promoters of democracy and freedom, but how far is that from reality? The network has the positive aspect of social development, since everyone who has access to it can be and feel part of it; however, cyberspace generally, and social media in particular, are examples that prove that a person has no choices after entering personal information on these applications. Thus, social media acts as a container of our "digital soul", or at least part of it. Before the explosion of social media most—if not all—of our data and information was kept more privately, since the digitalisation of material was rarer. With new technologies, every type of medium is digitalised and computationally proceed; when combined with the rise of social media, communication and memory mostly take the form and status of digital and shared. The real question is if our files, posts, and messages belong to us and if we are truly the ones who control them. The answer is simple: we do not have control of our digital archives nor the way in which they are used. An example which confirms this condition and questions the control

of the archivist or guardian of records (users in case of social media) is the case of Max Schrems. In 2010, Schrems asked Facebook for a digital record of his profile; when he received the archive of his posts and messages he realised that the company had kept all the information about him, not only that information which remained on his profile but also details about communication and messages, which seemed in clear violation of privacy laws and record copyright. Schrems then launched the “Europe versus Facebook” website in an attempt to prove that the company fails to respect its users’ privacy.⁵

Questioning privacy services and terms is becoming increasingly more prevalent. An experiment on social media privacy, the way that we use information about our lives on these networks and the condition and access of sovereignty today was made by Russian photographer Yegor Tsvetkov, creator of the series “Your Face Is Big Data”. Tsvetkov took pictures of random people on the underground in St. Petersburg and used a facial recognition app to track down their digital profile on VKontakte, Russia’s most popular social media site (Cresci, 2016).

This experiment showcased how restricted, if not entirely absent, is the concept of private life. However, this does not seem to concern the founders of the “Find Face” facial recognition app, who only see the app’s positive aspect of convenience, like seeing a potential partner in the street, taking a photo of him/her and then finding their profile (Walker, 2016). In other words, legal cyberstalking. The degree of sovereignty permitted in terms of personal information is becoming less and less restricted and, when paired with less and less protest from humans, could lead to a society similar to the one in the film “Nineteen Eighty-Four” (Nineteen Eighty-Four, (1984))⁶, albeit a more developed and pleasant one.

⁵ Facebook and Twitter Personal Archives:

< <https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/social-media-archives-toolkit/collecting/facebook-and-twitter-personal-archives> > [accessed 27/12/2016]

⁶ “Nineteen Eighty-Four”, also known as “1984”, is a dystopian political fiction film directed and written by Michel Radford, based on the George Orwell novel of the same name. The film features a completely controlled and sovereign society that is under constant surveillance. The degree of control and suppression is embodied by the “Thought Police”, which tries to prevent freedom of thought, which could potentially lead to protests and in turn a revolution. The film also illustrates the binary political identity of the citizens of this world, who are either categorised as fanatic followers or traitors by the governing party. < <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087803/plotsummary> > [accessed 27/12/2016]

Despite their lack of privacy and security, the internet and social media are the most common ways we archive our lives today. Internet and cyberspace are increasingly becoming the places where our public archive is developed.

Network and market

According to Mejias, the network has two aspects: model and episteme. The network episteme “organises knowledge according to reductionist logic and exposes the limits of trying to counter this logic in its own terms (Mejias, 2013:3)”, while the model is a template for organising society (Mejias,2013: 9). Mejias strongly supports the idea that the network is a place of inequality, even though it does not seem so to its satisfied users. The more users on the network the bigger the inequality produced, at least in financial terms. In essence, social life turns into a market in cyberspace. Thus, the public character of the network, where everyone can communicate and store any kind of data, loses the freedom of publicity and turns into a private space because it is used by capitalistic factors; personal data passes to the private sphere of companies and the market as a result. Cookies track and store every move that users make on cyberspace (Chun, 2006: 3) as a result of the overwhelming amount of data and information the user generates, even randomly. Examples of such overwhelming data are Pinterest and Amazon. Individual data and network behaviour becomes data for analysis and turns into profit as a result. Mejias continues by characterising the exploitation of social labour (participation) on networks: the user’s participation is sorted and turned into a commodity that can be sold and used for several purposes as a result of the same factors mentioned above. This information processed and controlled by a capitalistic environment/organisation which could certainly promote inequalities, for instance, in terms of profit from a particular part of the population in specific, already privileged hands (the system/industry). Companies like Google, who claim that their services are provided for free, actually have access to our digital records (e-mail, for example) and sell them to make a profit. The question is then raised: are we indeed so free? Mejias concludes that we, as users, have actually become the products (Mejias, 2013).

Past hope and protest for a better cybercosmos

Thus, instead of having a public archive which can be developed by all, creating a new class of equality and a new common language for the development of our spirituality as a species, we have control and unawareness, with users unwittingly providing labour for companies and capitalism. However, despite the internet's present condition and the way that change seems impossible today, several people tried to avoid such results in the beginning; part of humanity fantasised that cyberspace would be a new place that would give rise to a new order of things. John Perry Barlow was one of them. He disagreed with a law that would restrict certain words—the “bad ones”—on the internet as well as other restrictions demanded by outside forces. This led him to write “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace”.

“Cyberspace, the new home of mind (Barlow, 1996)”.

In his declaration, which seems more like a manifest that distances industry from cyberspace, he declares that *“Governments of Industrial World...You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather (Barlow, 1996)”*. Barlow describe cyberspace as another world that is unrelated to ours (the physical one), a heterotopia.

“Our world is different”, he claims, “our world is a world that is both everywhere and nowhere but it is not where the bodies is live”. For Barstow, this new kind of world is a safe place where no discrimination and inequality of any kind are permitted. In essence, it is a totally different world with new qualities. The internet at the time held the possibility of being developed as an idealistic space/environment or non-space, a heterotopia totally detached from daily physical life. A place of transgression and hope. In different words and terms, this is a demand made by each generation; it is obvious that every generation asks for freedom. Freedom through anarchy (without authorities, without a beginning and end, without ethical questioning), with every member of society as the source of order and law. Thus, in this sense the imaginary, the idealistic cyberspace becomes a topological “an-archival” freedom.

Foucault and Derrida also tried to conceptually create the topology of archive, a peaceful place where everything exists unrestricted by time. An endless circle of collections of subjectivities which peacefully and respectfully co-exist.

In such “locus”, the rationally banal logics of the world of profits, such as capitalistic behaviours, are rejected. Barlow continues: “nor did you create the wealth of our marketplaces”. In this idealistic society the marketplace is opaque; however, with a new behaviour different than that of the marketplace of the physical world as we know it today or as it was back in the early 90s, when governing bodies and its representatives were discouraged from becoming involved with the internet-related issues and from trying to manufacture issues as a way to become involved in cyberspace. This an issue commonly found in the foreign policy of different countries, particularly the USA, with no good results (Mejias, 2013).

Archival practices in art/The art of networks

Archival art: an aesthetical, political and conceptual application

“Archival art is as much pre-generative as it is meta-generative. (Karaba,2011:52)”

The previous section discusses *arcke* in terms of authority and control of contemporary archival application. In this section, the objective is to turn to the power of archive in the centred-subjective narration and interpretation of archival footage with the participation and engagement of an art piece with these characteristics. Archival practices in art are related to Derrida and Foucault’s approach to the concept of the archive, as it attempts to transfer the power of potentialities and probabilities. As mentioned above, contemporary digital archives (databases) such as the internet turn the democratic and liberal characteristics of archive into control and oppression. However, episteme and art will hopefully avoid the obstacles of freedom of speech and expression, even in places of inequality. Archive in art is an example of democracy, since the artist/archivist shares his collection in such a way that the audience takes control, becoming the temporal source of law. The purpose of this law of *arcke*

(authority) is to offer space in which to develop, to build (Foster, 2004). At the same time, archive in art keeps its political role *“as a mechanism of organising knowledge and a communication of power (Kouros and Karaba, 2012)”*.

The archive is a relatively new element in contemporary art. More specifically, the concept of archive in art and curatorial practices has only developed in the last 20 years (Saether, 2010). However, approaches to archival art are found even earlier in the history of art, with examples from both the pre-war and post-war period. Part of archival art deals with the loss of history and strives to represent facts lost in time, a memorial to oblivion which becomes part of history, of records, again though this process (Foster, 2004). Archival practices in art include a number of archival processes such as collection, classification, and documentation, which can be found in pieces in several medium like photography, video, performance and installation art, where archival pieces are most commonly found (Kouros and Karaba (2012)). However, we can assume that photography is one of the first widely known approaches to archival art, with characteristic examples including pieces by Sophie Calle⁷ and Gerhard Richter⁸.

However, with the fast pace of technological development, archival art passed this era, with archival installation evolving in both physical and cyber space. Here, cyberspace does not take accusations of inequality into account and should not be thought of in such terms. Nevertheless, the physical world is not a place of equality and freedom, yet art still strives to be a vehicle of expression free from censorship and control. One of the reason that there are so many contemporary debates about the characteristics of cyberspace is because it *“was sold as a tool of freedom (Chun, 2006:2)”*. Below are three contemporary pieces of art with archival forays, examples of alternative communicative tools which tie together the concept of wholeness—in terms of probabilities/communication—with individualities, and my personal interpretation of them as a common place of reality.⁹

⁷ Suite Venitienne: <http://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/7349/sophie-calle-suite-venitienne>

⁸ Atlas: <https://www.gerhard-richter.com/en/art/atlas>

⁹ I did not find these works in a database/list of archival art. It is my approach to the subject. Some of them are closer than others to the introduction to my thesis on archival art. In I had totally different works to cite as examples in mind at the start of the process, works more closely related to personal interpretation and stories. However, after developing the previous section, I found that these works can present and conclude the aspect of archive discussed in this essay.

Algorithmic search for love

The first choice is Julian Palacz's "algorithmic search for love", since it serves as a bridge between the physical and not physical: a non-materialistic piece made by code and digital data presented in physical space, where even the basic experience won't change a virtual one. The choice is based on the artist's comments on the digitalisation of personal archive collections—mentioned and developed above—and not on its communicative qualities, since the interaction concerns the relationship that the audience develops with the machine rather than another individuality within a wider network. Palacz devised and developed a search engine that is able to enter text to search personal film and video archives for spoken language. By typing a word or phrase, users activate an aggregation of sample mini-clips taken from clips related to the words entered. "Algorithmic search for love creates an algorithm that unfurls for the viewer new possibilities for audiovisual narratives," comments the artist. The work is part of the Ars Electronica archive.

Artist website: <http://julian.palacz.at/en/>

Work page: <http://julian.palacz.at/en/film/algorithmic-search-for-love>

Tracing you

"Tracing you" has a dual character as a piece. On the one hand, it is a confirmation of sovereignty on the internet; on the other, it is a place of meeting/appointment in cyberspace for people from around the globe. Benjamin Grosser built a site through which visitors can see the location of other people who visit the piece/site; the communicative tool among the visitors is the coordinates of their location, traced using the visitors' IP addresses, and the closest image found on Google's database. Benjamin Grosser mentions that the aim of the piece is "to see the world from its visitors' viewpoints". The piece's archival application is based on the collection of the locations of people who visit the site, but also in the "history" of the site, where the visitor-centred subjective narration, or sub-truths (supposition), are generated by visitors. My experience when I first visited the site was to start thinking about the other visitors and inventing my own story about them depending on the image of the

location and country. I realise that my experience was shaped by the images of culture diversity, while my mood was also a filter of the experience.

Artist website: <https://bengrosser.com>

Work page: <http://tracingyou.bengrosser.com>

So like you

“So like you” is an internet- and social-media-based piece (it has been also exhibited). Erica Scourti came up with the idea to digitalise her personal photo archive and upload it to Google image’s search in order to find similar pictures of others. After searching and gathering images similar to her own, she randomly contacted people whose images appeared in the search to ask them for permission to include their images in her project. She also asked them to send her a similar image from their personal archive, which seemed to be the most challenging part: they agreed with her using the picture found online but not with sending another image from their collection, and only 22 agreed with this second condition. Every image is also accompanied by words their owners use to describe it, using social media tags. Scourti mentions that the paradox of the project is that while she actually exhibits the work of others, all of this happened as part of her own project, in which she is the temporal law until somebody else reads and participates in the piece. In my view, this is a very successful archival piece, since it combines the concept of archival art but at the same time uses the network tool against itself.

Artist website: <http://www.ericascourti.com>

Work page: <http://similarselves.tumblr.com>

Conclusion

The archive is one of the most abstract concepts in contemporary episteme, since its shape is open and changeable. The archive's open shape gives the impression that it can be applied everywhere around us, in every sector of real life but also in scientific and academic fields, anywhere, where subjectivities and individualities exist as a way to develop this living organism. In this essay, underscored by the archival concept of Derrida and Foucault, the archive has a sense of freedom because it transforms into law at the moment of interpretation.

However, when archive leaves the secure environment of democracy, its qualities and the law which governs it belong to the financial and political system based on capitalism and investment for profit rather than respect for humanity. In the second section of this essay I discussed this effect by illustrating examples of control and sovereignty in social media and the internet. Moreover, contemporary technological breakthroughs—which are related to the archive as data gathering—avoid the ethical dilemmas within their application.

Last but not least, art offers the archive a place to once again develop its characteristics of freedom but also a place to comment on the negative application of its contemporary productions. In the same way that the archive strengthens user-centred subjective narration, art has characteristics in which imagination and communication endure. The archive has all the qualities for the creation a new common language; this is obvious in art pieces such as "So like you", a piece about communication and identification but also about searching self-identity, qualities in which substantive contact is needed. The archive contains the message: political thinking in an attempt to attain the utopia of equality and communication where control comes from every "Self" and every "Other".

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¹⁰ This is a revised version of the essay in A.-I. D. Metaxas (ed.), *Political Science: An Interdisciplinary and Critical Approach to Political Action*, Athens: Sakkoulas (forthcoming).

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