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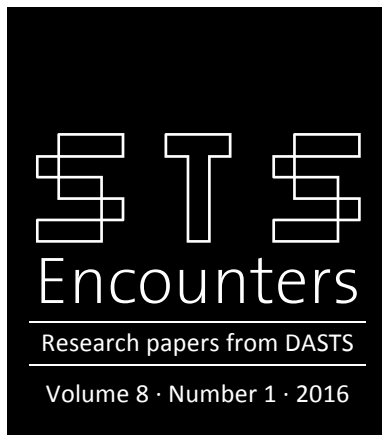
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## **Experimental Capitalism** – A study of Design for ‘Future Digital Manners’ Ann-Christina Lange

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# Experimental Capitalism

## – A study of Design for ‘Future Digital Manners’

Ann-Christina Lange

### Introduction

The question of how aesthetic practices create economic value is a question of the way in which specific artistic and critical practices feed into a capitalistic order of production. In this paper I draw attention to this question within the practice of Critical Design. I study a 4-week design brief that took place at the Royal College of Art in London 2009. More generally, I account for the inclusion of artistic tools in the process of invention as a response to a capitalistic logic of order, where economic value are dependent on the valorisation of affective labour and provocative means of invention. This exploration aims to contribute to a temporal-ontological approach to innovation following the definition by Sanford Kwinter saying that: ‘... no novelty appears without becoming and no becoming without novelty’ (Kwinter 2001 p. 5). From my participation in the brief I consider a specific artistic intervention called the Berlin Street experiment and the way in which the experience of that event co-constitute the experimental setting.

The brief investigated the future of ‘digital manners’, which addresses the emergence of etiquettes modelled around the invention of new digital technologies. Manners and human behaviour is what it aims to test, which is a hint to the journey I will take you on – beginning with the idea of Critical Design to the experience of pain or the affective relationships played out in the brief and, then, concluding on the logic of capitalism and new management techniques. This includes some reflection on ethnomethodology, especially Harold Garfinkel’s (1967) breaching experiments, in order to address how the before mentioned devices of innovation came to breakdown a

common-sense perception of reality. I investigate the devices as *affective* means of innovation, which provoke the performances that enable the students, clients and tutors to theorise pain as a strategy of innovation. However, before explaining the broader perspective and methods of experimentation let me first introduce the brief by referring to my first encounter with this design practice.

### Critical Design

In the fall of 2009, I met with the professor who founded the studio practising Critical Design. The interview mainly took form as an informal discussion of the role of design, its methods of engagement and its public reception. The professor explained the aim of Critical Design to be to provoke debate in order to question how users co-habit with electronic technology by the use of fine-art means. The brief we discussed and that I got access to was set by an international telecommunications company and aimed at a group of masters’ students being taught to practice Critical Design.

During the conversation he handed me a green coloured booklet with a very simplistic and seemingly neutral surface, a front-cover without any title or letters. I skimmed through the pages of the book, which contained illustrations of design objects accompanied by a number of poetic short stories written by a British writer. Each page was dedicated to the work produced by the students and each of the design objects was portrayed on the same green background as the front cover as poetic objects exposed on the green surface.

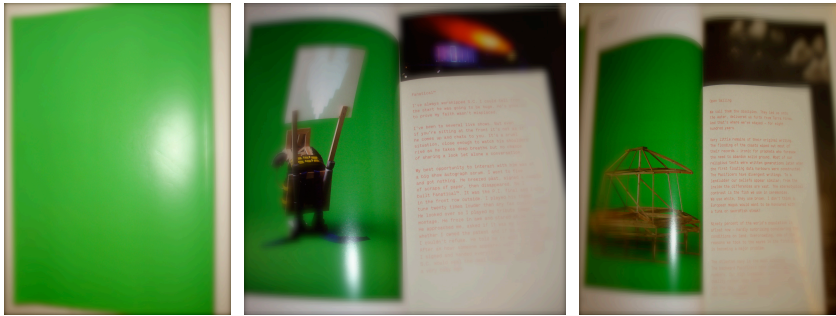


Figure 1. Photographic documentation of the Booklet

By the use of fine-art means the professor attempted to provoke in order to question how people cohabit with new digital technology and to investigate its aesthetic possibilities (Bell, Blythe, Sengers 2005, Maze & Redstrom 2007). That is, to create fictional worlds and not to predict the future, but always ask ‘what if?’ The booklet is based on the idea of the green screen used in film and television to stage a location that is not possible or difficult to represent within the physical settings of a studio. In this way, the coloured front and background used in the booklet signifies the transmission of the objects it presents from one reality to another. As such, the green front serves as an analogy for the ‘what if?’ scenario embraced in this design approach. New technological objects are not invented for an already existing consumer market, but in order to provoke a fictional reality.

The aim of Critical Design is according to Anthony Dunne (2009) to “expand design’s potential beyond narrow commercial concerns, thereby decoupling it from industry and explore how it can be put to other uses” producing objects that belong to the realm of ‘metaphysics, poetry and aesthetics’, thus creating objects that are defined by the experience they produce. Critical Design differentiates from traditional (and industrial) design practices, where the user is regarded a pre-existing subject to be observed external to the methods by which it is studied (such as ethnographic observations, interviews etc). In contrast Critical design is thought as a medium or

practices that seeks to re-think the present and the future before it happens.

On the last page of the booklet serving as the afterword, the manifesto of the design practice entitled ‘a/b’ is presented. The manifesto recast the definition of design from problem solving to intervention, situating design in relation to Andrea Branzi’s announcement of the raise of a ‘permanent-avant-garde’, where corporations work with small experimental design centres to create environments that evoke ‘real’ human needs and desires (cf. Dunne, 2005, p. 92). That is, needs and desires that are not mediated or produced by capitalism. The ‘permanent-avant-garde’ movement aims at clarifying and evoking new desires ‘whose material roots will be precisely the new reality engendered by situationist constructions’ (Debord 1958). It is from this perspective that Critical Design is considered a psycho-social experiment operating by means of provocative techniques closely associated with the artistic movement of the Situationist International rooted in Marxism and the 20th century European avant-gardes.

## Territorialization

It might be argued that Critical Design deterritorializes design from its industrial or commercial context. However, to fully understand this, an introduction to the concept of the territory is required. The etymological meaning of the word originates from Latin ‘territorium’, which stems from terra = “land” meaning the extent of land or geographical area. As such, ‘territory’ expresses space while denoting place. Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the territory is pertinent in this respect, as territory not only refers to a geographical demarcation of land, but also to a domain of action or thought. Bernard Caché defines the territory as a domain that comes ‘before’ the representation of stable objects (Caché 1995), which by the continuation of Deleuze and Guattari’s work means that territory and territo-

rialization can be considered as involving psycho-social processes (Deleuze & Guattari 1983).

In the case of Critical Design, there is a sense of mobilising an existing territory within the field of design by producing a specific social reality by the use of provocative methods of research. Following this analytical trajectory, the booklet can be read as a rhetorical intervention that enables a re-conceptualization of design. More specifically, the booklet seeks together with the design projects it presents, to stimulate discussion and debate amongst designers, industry and the public concerning the emergence of new digital technologies and their role in society. Here, the design object is produced to test an experimental situation: to destroy our common sense experience of reality, enacting a process of deconstruction in order to reconfigure the world differently. In this case, the brief might not only be reduced to a research experiment conducted in order to represent reality, but affectively embody psycho-social processes based on the continuous dynamic of de-territorialization and re-territorialization, argued to be inherent to new forms of capitalism – seen in the writings of mainly Italian political thinkers like Lazzarato, Virno, Negri and Hardt. They argue that new forms of subjectivation feed into processes of capitalistic valorisation as part of what Lazzarato (2008) defines as the aestheticization of the economy.

Here I anticipate the argument to come, namely that what was once excluded from the rational world of capitalism is in the practice of design proposed to be inherent to its mode of operation. That is, the way in which the enactment of pain and artistic suffering perceived as a non-capitalistic response to an industrial-rational world is nonetheless today in the end utilised as resources for the promotion of innovation. This framework allows me, not only to ask what ‘reality’ is constructed, but also what are the processes that contribute to (the pattern of) deterritorialization and reterritorialization? That is to ask: How does the experience of Critical Design relate to

the experimental event and the critical status of this design approach? Or, put simply, what is *critical* of Critical Design?

### **The Berlin Street experiment**

In the middle of the design brief I followed an experiment conducted at the clients’ innovation centre in Berlin. This event consisted of two tasks. Firstly, to invent new research methods to document so called ‘e-behaviour’, which are an advance on current innovative research and that might capture unusual habits of interacting with new technology. Secondly, the students were expected to build on the research findings and stories, by interpreting these to model ‘unconventional products’. The product should construct a narrative, which might engage the consumer or user in ways that allowed them to question future forms of user-interaction with new digital technologies.

The students were expected to set up spaces for investigation and intervention of social behaviour in order to explore etiquettes around digital technologies. The approach for this intervention was characterised as ‘confrontational techniques’, that is, encounters and situations the designer sets in motion that challenge social behaviour and render the practices of everyday life visible much like breaching experiments as conceived by Garfinkel and conducted in ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967). The experiment was to be conducted in the streets of Berlin and the students were cast as artists, designers, thinkers or provocateurs that use the city space to investigate the social construction of etiquettes by provoking norms of social behaviour. One of the tutors explained: “*I am interested in extreme examples of the context in which etiquettes arise rather than defining the etiquette itself... like what leaves us with a turn to create a situation where there will be etiquettes bobbling up*”.

The experiment was conducted as an artistic performance within a shopping mall in the city centre of Berlin by a group of 5 students. First, they performed a social gesture acting out a photo-shooting session done with different probes like a plastic camera, post-it

notes, and then finally the bodily gesture of shooting without a physical camera.

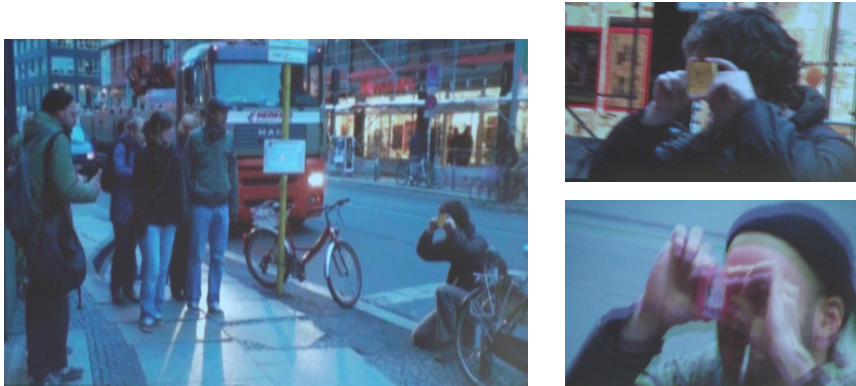


Figure 2. Photographic documentation from fieldwork, the Berlin Street Experiment Oct 2009

Then they tried the same experiment with a verbal conversation, and then a non-verbal text-based conversation on post-it notes. The two students performing the conversation dropped the written post-its on the floor around them. The post-its on the floor created a track of the conversation between the two. While performing the experiment more and more people gathered around them to watch the scene. In the end the crowd of people constituted a circle demarcating a stage for the experiment to take place. The students intentionally played with the situation to test a social line of politeness. That is, how long the distance between the two students having the conversation could be stretched depending on time, distance and the amount of people gathering around them. The visible paper trail and the different colours triggered people's curiosity and worked as visual cues for the audience to reconstruct the conversation by picking up the written post-it's. The content of the conversation was based on the question of what to do with the people watching them. As such, by following the trail of the conversation people would

engage in the performance from a second order perspective by reflecting on their own participatory role in the experiment.

The reactions provoked, such as curious questions, aggressive shouting or anxious avoidance of the situation had to be captured by video or photographic documentation. This documentary evidence was to be presented as an artwork in itself claimed to construct a fictional reality. The assertion being that the documentary evidence was an un-representational construction of 'a' social reality provoking 'real' human needs and desires (Dunne and Raby 2001). That is an attempt to create an imaginary space as an exercise in 'reality suspension' to perceive of the world differently and thereby create what this design practice calls 'alternative futures'.

A tentative analysis of such experiments would be that they constitute processes that resonate with the movement between the process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The professor I interviewed at the beginning of my investigation explained at a later stage the duality of the concept of Critical Design in the following way: *"The critical thinking side is analytical, to break things up, and then there is also the speculative side – to build it back up as alternative visions of how things could be – what we do here is using design to make these two work together."* As such, the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization seem to be translated into a design principle. In a broader perspective that is to break down the order of traditional design in order to reconfigure a reality where other values prevail embodied in a criticism directed towards the corporate world.

## The Studio-Crit: Three Inventions of Poetic Objects

In the experiment the students were cast as providers of new behavioural opportunities and thereby considered 'authors' working in a medium that might provoke experiences rather than representing them. Anthony Dunne states in *Hertzian Tales* that 'In a world ruled

by fictions the writer's task is to invent reality' (1999 p. 63). Underlying this perspective is the assumption that design driven by poetry, imagination and intuition rather than reason and logic constitutes a rationality of its own, that is, an alternative to the 'everyday scientific-industrial rationality' (p. 67). This concept of critique points towards an anti-capitalistic future – a criticism constructed by technologies that invoke a 'noir' vision of the future that might have existential consequences.

Critical Design does not offer a critique of technology or of the consumer culture but offers an approach to design that can devise speculative methods of critical engagement with the future. That is to apply strategies of de-familiarization and estrangement from modernist aesthetics (Bell, Blythe, Sengers 2005, Maze & Redstrom 2007). Critical Design refers to the use of artistic devices and interventions used to construct conflictual social situations. The social and psychological discomfort such a situation provokes is counted as the outcome of the project. It is in this way that Critical Design projects are said to produce psycho-social narratives. However, critique was not only embodied in the design objects, but also used as a tool of creation within the brief itself. The design 'crit' – a shortage of critique (Horton, 2007) – played a crucial role enacting this vision. This is a pedagogical tool used in the studio to make the students communicate their ideas and evaluate the proposals (cf. McCoy, 1993). This method, together with artistic interventions and tutorials, was to be deployed as a 'confrontational technique' meant to provoke a debate by questioning the practices and norms of everyday life.

After conducting the experiment in Berlin the students went back in the studio and had the first crit a couple of days later. The students were expected to relate the findings from the Berlin experiment to social ideals and belief systems and, finally, to synthesise all of these understandings into a design proposal. For the roundtable discussion the students had to make a 10-minute presentation and then get 10 minutes feedback from the tutors. At the roundtable

discussion Tutor O said: '*We will go around and see what everyone is up to and ask general questions to see where you are*'. Tutor M then started the discussion by asking: '*Who would like to speak. To bear witness to the group and report the last four days of striating work*'. No one replied and Tutor M asked one of the students if he would mind telling us about his work. He started to show the design proposal, while tutors M were sketching in a black notebook. The tutors judged whether the students had understood the terms of the project and whether their proposals and ideas aimed to define, create, monitor or apply etiquette.

In order to investigate how the utilization of critique as a method of creation affected the progression of the ideas stemming from the brief, I follow the invention of three design objects. I do so by reporting a few crucial incidents in order to reveal the methods and techniques of innovation applied by this design practice. In this way, the projects represent three fragmented snapshots from the brief, each telling their story of Critical Design.

### **Object 1: Thinking with Others**

The first project I turn to explored issues around public or private digital space as related to the future of MRI scanning technologies. I follow the insight and reflections presented by Student P. In this case, the student translated the insights from the Berlin-experiment into the mobile phone context. The student described his first tutorial in this way:

*"Before the tutorial I had read a lot about genes and cells that respond to light (optic genetics) and how to control the brain with light. Then I got inspired by things happening in my own life, completely separate from the project, like talking to my brothers over Skype for hours while doing other things, so just being in each others' presence."*

In the later interviews, the student explained that he came up with the idea before the experiment in Berlin, as he had always been fascinated by neuroscience. In this way, the experiment served to test that idea and transformed it into something else, which might fit better with the brief set by the client. At this stage of the process, he had a second idea to develop a digital funeral, so that people might acquire a digital presence after their own death. In relation to this idea, the student explained how this second idea was destroyed:

“At the big dinner in Berlin I sat next to [Tutor M] and I presented the idea and he just said ‘Swamp! Don’t go there, it is a swamp, not a useful area to look at’. So I skipped it for a while... it seemed too far and [M] thought it was a bad idea, so I changed from the digital funeral to the neuroscience.”

After this critique, the student went back to the idea of MRI scanning and how it opens up the possibility of understanding and recording brain activity. At the interim crit, he presented a short performance with one of the other students to illustrate a scenario of making a phone call in the mind. This means telecommunicating with other people through the transmission of signals in the brain. The sketch was meant to demonstrate an exaggerated future use of MRI as a new digital technology, raising issues about the control of others.

Fragments of the feedback session sounded as follow:

*The professor:* “Great presentation! By going away from the screen it makes the presentation alive.”

*Tutor M:* “I want to know: how does this work in mundane everyday life? That’s what you have to focus on and find a specific angle to work on for the next week until the final crit.”

*The client:* “I like the acting as a way of representing the technology, but what will the everyday behaviour look like with this, how does it play out?”

In the later interview, the student explained his conversation with the two external tutors after the crit as he asked for more detailed feedback. He explained to me:

“At the interim crit, I presented the general idea and it was too concrete. I have gone beyond an idea to a physical concept that could be materialised without doing much experimentation. So [M] said I had to ‘crank the handle’. I asked if he could explain that in a less metaphorical way. He said it was not a metaphor and that ‘there is a big handle in your head and you have to crank it’.... So I was really confused.... I did not really know what to make of that, but what I decided was that I had to do more work.”

For the final presentation, the student proposed a prototype based on the research and new MRI technologies combined with thoughts on programming the body that the student had raised: *‘How in the future will the mobile phone interact with this device so that we can have conversations in our heads and essentially be able to control and script our behaviour from that?’* The future scenario of this situation was played out in a short film. The film illustrated a scenario where a girl is shopping, having a conversation with her friends and kissing her boyfriend at the same time.

In the feedback session, the tutors emphasised a lack of provocation in the project. In particular, they claimed that he failed to address the consequences for everyday life. Tutor M said:

“The mimic stuff and body inhabiting stuff seem less convincing. I think it was an interesting jump off point with the idea of controlling by others. The project has moved on



nically since the last crit. I thought the way people connected to each other was disappointing, almost a step back from the last time you presented it, as there could be much more interesting ways of exploring this human interaction.”

*Tutor O continued:* “you could have played with more subtle negotiations than what you did show in the scenarios.”

## **Object 2: Etiquette of Pornography**

The second project was called ‘Etiquette of Pornography’ and investigated the interaction between etiquette and pornography. It was carried out by Student J. The goal of her project was to discover the etiquette of pornography and to use that information to propose a future manifestation of pornography by testing the current etiquettes surrounding the use of pornography.

At the interim crit, the student presented the idea for a website that would filter pornography. The student focussed on the semiotics of pornography in relation to gender. The goal was to make a visual representation of Judith Butler’s concept of the ‘performative speech act’ (Butler, 1997). The student explained her view on how the concept of a speech act relates to that of etiquette as it addresses the use of language in relation to behaviour around pornography. She therefore suggested the need to investigate the semiotics of pornography. The aim was to change the notions by which the pornographic discourse constructs the image of gender roles. The student presented a programme where a pornography website is altered by changing words like ‘mummy’ to ‘liberated woman’, ‘teenager’ to ‘young woman’, ‘ass’ to ‘bottom’ etc. The etiquette-filter will then produce a new scene, having changed the narrative in the pornographic story told on the website.

In the feedback session, a general lack of justification for the reason why the project is relevant was addressed. Tutor M said:

“...you have produced a transformation from etiquette to speech act, but where is the design brief in this proposal? ... .. This is too much of an intellectual approach that can be applied to almost everything. It is as if you have moved away from what was interesting about looking at pornography itself, with all the different emotions and discomfort that it produces. The project you present now seemed to have disconnected itself from the project of studying etiquette...”

Tutor O ended the session by commenting:

“You only got to the ‘if’, you should have gone beyond that, you should be generating stuff from your insight, you only have sketches. Taking different audiences to different places... You have to start designing, not thinking. It is interaction design, not interaction thinking.”

For the final crit, she decided to test the idea by making a movie herself. She decided to escape from the studio space and shoot the film off-site, in order to avoid interference from the tutors. However, a few days before the final crit, one of the external tutors asked to meet her for an individual meeting, as he felt she was on the wrong track. After the tutorial, the student entered the studio. She was very upset and had been crying about the direction the tutors wanted her to take with the design project. She stated that she wanted to leave the program. She later explained that she wanted to make a movie but the tutor found that to be a very bad idea. She was advised not to do the movie, as she had no experience within film production. They told her that the risk would be too high, and that the film would be ‘crap’. After this incident, she said in the following interview:

“I avoided tutorials, as the tutors do not believe in the idea if you cannot visualise it properly and then they judge you

on it. They want to bring us into some kind of common denominator of thinking. My idea was destroyed a few days before the final crit – it is about personal taste, who you talk to, it is a bit of a lottery, so it is important who you listen to – you need to listen only to one voice and not take all of it in.”

Another student continued:

“... each tutor says something different and gives different directions, as they all have different perspectives and different backgrounds and that makes you question your own thoughts. I ended up doing one of my initial ideas, which I was most excited about.”

For the final delivery, the student produced a mutated version of the client’s website called ‘T-Porn’, which touched upon issues about making a kind of pornography that is more accessible to women and minorities. She had programmed it to be a pornography-site that would make ‘etiquetted’ pornography. The student presented her prototype as being less of a design project and more of a critical artwork. She explained in the crit that the prototype aims to provoke a debate on what pornography is and how to produce ‘better’ pornography, that is, more ethical, socially acceptable and therefore consumable pornography.

### **Object 3: Fashion and Etiquette**

The last project was called ‘Fashion and Etiquettes’. This time I follow the process and reflections of Student M. She presented the initial idea as focusing on fashion gurus in order to address the idea of fashion as constituting a social order of exclusion. In this way, the idea was to use fashion as a medium to investigate social power relations and how technology might be used to express oneself in

daily life. She suggested, as an example, conducting electricity to garments so that they become a means of interacting. At the crit, she also presented another idea about facial expressions, especially yawning. This idea investigated how to spread facial expressions, or communicate them as a virus through the Internet. She presented drawings and manipulated pictures of situations where yawning was used as a means of communication.

The feedback started with Tutor M commenting on the idea about facial expression, as it was not as well developed as the fashion idea. The feedback was as follows:

*Tutor M:* “...it has not really moved on from our last meeting. The presentation and the idea about yawning do not express the kind of thinking you have gone through. Very quickly you have to go through some specific ideas. The way of expressing and the scenarios turn into a dead end, as it turned into the objects performing more than the people.”

*Tutor O:* “You are projecting conclusions without examining them very well. It is a good set up, but very broad; you are proposing a platform as your solution.”

*Tutor M:* “You ‘platformatise’ by taking sample use cases at the edges of the platform and then you generalise, rather than starting off with a generalisation. So find those use cases at various points and generate from there.”

The student expressed her frustration with the diversity of the tutorial guidance during the brief. In the later interview, she reflected on the feedback in this way:

“After [M]’s criticism, I realised that I had to be honest with myself; I had to stand up for my idea and make it, and

give a surface or platform for discussion. I did not do a problem solution; it is fiction, a theory. He did not get it, and it was too abstract for him. You need to be very self-confident and trust your idea.... “

A few days before the final crit, the two external tutors went to the design studio to have individual tutorials with the students. The tutor asked Student M to completely abandon her idea and again gave her a new direction to follow. Her reaction after the feedback was as follows:

“The weekend before the final crit I almost had a nervous breakdown and I was crying. I felt that the idea was not working and I did not get any support. Monday was the terrible breakdown. [O] made me feel like I was stupid. It was a personal thing. I did not ask him for a tutorial – so he pressed me to talk to him... [M] came to my table and wanted me to tell him my idea – he came to disturb everyone, just in order to question their ideas ... in the end I had to make a decision and not give a shit about the different opinions of the tutors.”

The student explained in a later interview:

“At the interim crit, I needed to have an almost finished idea but I just had the field. I actually did the project in two days and two nights just before the final crit ... it was very stressful for me, the whole project, so in the end I just decided to do something. I was so confused. I learned more about methods, and the way I should be working than I learned about the work itself... “

For the final delivery, the project was re-titled ‘Emotional pop-ups’. The project addressed a way of transmitting emotions through the Internet. The student explained her perspective on the project as being to ‘*take it to the extreme*’ and aimed at a sarcastic approach towards the transmission of emotions through digital communication. Yawning was presented as a physical gesture that spread between people, an observation that she wanted to translate into the digital communication space. The student presented an edited video of a few experiments investigating what makes people yawn. In preparation for the video, she had sent out a YouTube video to some friends asking them to film themselves while watching, and this resulted in everyone yawning in front of the screen.

In the feedback session, Tutor M emphasized the lack of more realistic and subtle aspects of the project, like ‘*how it would work as a small application and not as a full-screen interruption – how it might play out as another socially provoking thing, that is how would it fit with the Facebook context of always having an up-to-date status?*’

As we can see from these incidences that happened during the brief, the ‘crits’ and tutorials were more than just an opportunity for the students to explicate their ideas. They were also tools for the tutors to discuss design issues, check on progress and estimate where the students were in the process, and if they had understood the aims of the project. It seems that the critique enacted the goal of the brief – to impose critique in order to disarticulate traditional design methods. To design for subversion by means of provocation was the main criterion for the evaluation of the design proposals, explained by the tutors, to challenge the assumptions surrounding new digital technologies. The professor said: ‘*We are not only transmitting an unambiguous message of likeliness – it still introduces ambiguity... when adding all these extra layers of emotional detection it will only enrich the process if they are going to be subverted*’. Critical Design then relates to the use of design as a tool for provocation, not only as it relates to the critical distance maintained towards the corporate world but also to the methods used in the process of inno-

vation. The confusion expressed among the students related to the contradictory feedback at the crit and at the individual tutorials, as well as the negative criticism they felt subjected to. In this context, a lot of the students associated the effects from the 'crits' with being judged and evaluated. In order to account for the incidences that happened in the crits, I draw a parallel with the ethnomethodological notion of 'breaching experiment' (Garfinkel, 2002, p. 8). The corresponding definition of ethnomethodology is 'the study of the methods people use for producing recognizable social orders' (Garfinkel, 2002, p. 6). In continuation, Heritage writes: 'to breach reality entails a simultaneously destruction of a common sense of reality' (Heritage, 1984, p. 29).

## Aestheticization of Pain

The 'crits' were not only instances where the tutors, designers and organisers imposed unreasonable critique, but were also used as a way to structure the process of invention. However, the students reported on how they tried to avoid the tutorials by meeting late at the studio or how they were hiding ideas from the tutors in order to be able to show progress between every crit. Apart from the intention of subverting the deadlines, this strategic choice of how to present the idea in relation to the tutor's expectations also suggests that the 'crits' were perceived as potential points of control. The professor further said: *'...this reflects reality, like having a deadline for a client regardless of where the designer is in the mental process – having to quickly formulate and report the work is a good exercise.'* As such, the criticism given in the feedback sessions and the individual tutorials seemed to enable or provoke the students to subvert the structure provided for them in relation to deadlines, tutorials and research methods. The brief was organised so as to imitate the world of the client and thereby challenge the students to orient themselves to a corporate reality. That is, the client, who was said to represent

the commercial world, was by the professor staged as an 'artificial' construct only then for the artificial construct to be subverted.

The experience of this kind of subversion occurs in concert with descriptions of the pain and break-down inflicted after each crit. Student P explained his experience of the confusion and pain he went through during this time of the process: *'... last night I had a total breakdown and I did not sleep at all... I am telling you it is exhausting. I did not sleep for the last days before the crits...'* These statements and the breakdowns illustrated in the above description seem to be an outcome of a process associated with the idea of constructing reality in order to destroy a given idea or perception of the world. It is in this way that I suggest the experiments should be understood; they resulted in what Heritage (1984, p. 81) calls 'interactive breakdowns', as the 'perceived normality' of the events was challenged.

In this case, the students encountered a situation of action that shows the internalization of the enactment of pain. The students' actions in this context are then caused or reflexively constituted by the rules-of-pain, which they have previously acquired (Heritage 1984 p. 105). The professor explained in the follow-up interview that the confusion invoked was both 'intentional' and 'exaggerated', defined as 'the feeling of thinking'. He said: *'...I do think that learning new things is uncomfortable and painful. I think that actually being really original is quite painful too'*. The important point here is that the pain described by the students was not only a sign of inchoate sensations and an un-making of everything stable, but constituted a structure with its own affective logic. The students were meant to suffer in order to create. The pain was inflicted in order to invoke creativity.

From observation of the contradictory feedback and the individual tutorials, it became clear that the accomplishments of success or failure were gained within the events of the brief and not subject to later re-evaluations outside the parameters described by the brief itself or illustrated within the green booklet. The experiment was

based on unspoken consent or a set of normative constraints rather than fully explicated rules to be applied within the brief in order to reach a product solution. This relates to the ethno-methodological notion of reflexivity defined as the 'consideration of the processes by which the participants organize and access the 'rationality' of their own activities' (Pollner 1991 p. 371). In continuation Student M said: *'I totally block off my mind when they criticise my ideas a few days before the final crit. In the end I decide not to care about it anymore and not to take myself too serious.'* This statement illustrates the way in which pain is constructed as a means by which the students are 'making sense' of the event as a part of being inventive, that is the description of pain turns into a performance of a particular experience. This gives an interesting clue about what these experiments do: they demonstrate artistic theories by way of transforming them into operational tools enacted by the participants themselves. Foucault defines such 'techniques of the self' or 'arts of existence' as:

“...those reflective and voluntary practices by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make of their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria.” (Foucault, 2006 p. 10-11).

The temporality that lies beneath the artistic interventions, crits and tutorials is not one of progression, but rather a passage to the outside, a means by which to transgress your-self. As such, the experience of the idea of Critical Design contributes to the enactment of pain instead of providing a 'regulating conduct' imposed upon 'pre-defined scenes of action' (Heritage 1984 p. 109). What we see in the breakdowns and the following descriptions of pain were also expressed by its gestural signs explained by Student J as *'... a very subtle way of gesturing, like lifting his brown eyes, staring at the ceiling...*

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*it is the body language, saying like, "hmm", "yeah", "I don't know"....'*. The gaze, a bodily movement, the tears and the cry following the description of the breakdown signal a moment where the methods of design become a felt-experience of the body.

Through Elaine Scarry's examination of torture, the Jewish-Christian Scriptures and the writings of Marx, she argues that the world-destroying power of pain is to be considered a de-territorializing force. She writes:

Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned (...) pain has no referential content. It is not of or for anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language (Scarry 1985 p. 4).

This implies that creation is essentially an act of hurt, which marks and fragments the human body and from which, one could argue, expression occurs. In this way, innovation is built upon its inverse relation of un-making (Scarry 1985), which the professor described as the ability to always ask *'What if?'* or, in Deleuzian terms, to access the virtual defined by the capability to affect and in turn being affected (Deleuze 1998).

The experience of pain at the same time inhabits a critique of capitalism and its stratification/ or territorialization – not only of the social world – but also of what might be considered an affective emotional force. This incarceration of the person in the body is at the heart of torture. All torture is built on the principle of destroying by eliminating the world through pain. Pain de-territorializes the made world – portrayed in the experiment as an internal fracture of human being.

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Moving from this idea of the aesthetic enactment of innovation to the value of labour power, Scarry writes that Marx ‘throughout his writings assumes that the made world is the human being’s body and that, having projected that body into the made world, men and women are themselves disembodied, spiritualized’ (Scarry 1985 p. 244). This is, the basic idea behind *Das Kapital* arguing that through labour, people invest themselves in the world and make that world human. We create the world by extending ourselves into it, by investing our labour and through our labour a piece of ourselves in the material world. The artistic devices also show a therapeutic relationship with the world and self-management techniques equal to what we see in recent business phenomenon such as human research management and coaching where the human is taken as the object of investigation of modern work (cf. Hjorth, Gudmand-Høyer, Bramming, Pedersen 2011).

What this design project envisions is a critique saying that labour that enters an affective relationship between employees and employers is part of a wider logic of capitalism – rather schizophrenic than psychological. The affective responses to the criticism and feedback given in the crits and tutorials, such as cries, insomnia, anger etc. is not a psychological evidence of creation accessing forces of the unconscious, but rather envisions a psychological collapse – a de-territorializing force. Not only is the reality of norms and behaviour of everyday life in the streets of Berlin subverted, as was the case in the Berlin Experiment, but also the reality of the students, the client and the tutors was, in one way or the other, disturbed. Norms or rules are thus performative resources in the making of poetic objects, which in this case pertain to the enactments of pain.

The becoming through pain provides a temporal definition of innovation – that constantly gives away the fixed and the stable, and is envisioning a truth that is not to be revealed but endlessly produced as we are not to be seduced by an ethnographic representation of reality. The study is based on the assertion that the somewhat nor-

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mative material presented by capitalist critiques (Boltanski & Chiapello 1999) is being absorbed and repeated by art practices as an attempt to situate artistic production in a larger context of capitalist production and market constructions. Critical Design may be regarded as a commentary to our society – arising within a certain order of de-territorialization and re-territorialization. The case presented demonstrates the way in which the critical engagement of this design practice deterritorializes the idea of commercial design through the invention of poetic objects, which simultaneously reterritorialize into a ‘critical-design-principle’ affirming the very logic they oppose. The investigation of this repetition or doubling of the rhetoric of critique poses an interesting challenge to traditional sociological methods. It requires a move from critical sociology focusing on the rationalising and reductionist processes of capitalisation of art to a sociology of critique. As such, critique is not a peripheral activity imposed upon the study as an explanatory frame of reference but immanent to the design practice I studied. The attempt was to develop a framework that makes it possible to reconcile these seemingly antagonistic approaches – the one normative and assigning the critical task to the sociologist, the other concerned with sticking as closely as possible to the actions within the field-site itself. Of all, this is not a story about domination or power struggles in a Bourdieuan sense or about exploitation or alienation in a Marxist sense. Instead, what is at stake here is something much closer to an endless entanglement based upon the enactment and re-enactment of critique.

Scarry argues that a regime by inflicting pain unmake an individual’s world as showed by the political consequences of inflicted pain in war or torture. However, I do not engage directly with critical sociology and its description in terms of power relations, which underscores the potency of mechanisms of oppression, alienation and domination and reduces the act of the sociologist to one of reactive critique. However, my analysis is not suggesting an anti-humanistic philosophy either rather, I have attempted to demon-

strate the 'all-to-human' through empirical description. That is, how an affective relationship enters into the very nature of capitalistic production.

## Conclusion

The performative experiences that I have paid attention to in this article explicate the multiple layers enacted within a design brief where students are taught to breach a fictional reality, in Garfinkel's (2002) sense of the word. A reality affectively enacted by the performance of pain, which makes this design practice 'accountably constituted' as innovative (Garfinkel 1967 p. 15). Drawing on Annelise Riles' terminology, I might say it turns its own reality 'inside-out' (Riles 2001). The effort seems to be to recreate aesthetically the practice of innovation after post-structuralist critiques. The subversive structure of this design practice, in the course of events – the deadlines, the style and character of the feedback constructing the tools and methods used to disorient the students' sense of reality – enacts a criticism that turn the students against the corporate world. This criticism constructs a specific 'design reality'. That is, a social order that operates according to an affective logic that territorializes or infolds its outside to become internal to the construction of its own reality.

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## **Biographical note**

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