FCJ–126 The Becoming Environmental of Power: Tactical Media After Control

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There is a last enterprise that might be undertaken. It would be to seek experience at its source, or rather, above that decisive turn where, taking a bias in the direction of our utility, it becomes properly human experience. (Bergson, 1991: 184)

Tactical media (TM) was originally conceived during a period of widespread media diversification, enabled most dramatically through digital and networked technologies (Garcia and Lovink, 1997). In the original account, 'tactics' was used with reference to Michel de Certeau as an explanation for the material diversification and experimentation with media that could challenge and compete with forms of centralised mass concentration. In this respect, while TM was informed by the rise of the Web and a nascent participatory culture, in many ways the concept was still expressed in opposition to older hierarchical formations of congealed hierarchical power (The State, Mass Media). The key theoretical allusion carried along with de Certeau, of course, was the disciplinary dispositif of Michel Foucault, against which TM would be indirectly defined. This article re-examines theoretical legacies of tacticality in light of more recent debates on sustainable and strategic imperatives for politically invested media projects, particularly in the context of a transition to social media and organised networks.

A central underlying claim I make is that such discussions too easily accept the current spatio-temporal functioning of digital and networked technologies as preformed conditions of possibility. My argument works like this: while issues of scale and temporality are important for critical interrogations of media, these dimensions can no longer be anachronistically read through a lens based on disciplinary logics. The intensive and transversal qualities of networked power

that characterise the current socio-political moment have complicated prior distinctions between strategies and tactics. This is not to suggest that uneven formations of power are overcome or displaced; on the contrary, these concentrations persist through radically different registers, settings and modalities. There is a need to grasp the stakes of these conditions. Accordingly, I highlight aspects of a number of familiar narratives to revisit tacticality in some (hopefully) unfamiliar ways.

De Certeau's notion of practices is considered through multiplicity, the control societies of Gilles Deleuze are read against ecological concerns, and the role of levelling is foregrounded within the security dispositif of Foucault. Here, I am interested in the implications of practices in more-than-human registers for each social sketch. Picking up on what Brian Massumi has described as the globally amplifying threats for large-scale disruption characteristic of the becoming environmental of power, attention is given to a different conceptual approach for critical media art projects in terms of ontopolitical problematics. Accordingly, I argue that taking account of changes in power and governance can usefully clarify the work of critical art projects as materially attending to—rather than resisting, opposing or orchestrating— crises over the morphology of the social. I suggest, moreover, that this ontopolitical field escapes dominant understandings of politics, since critical media art aims to directly subvert the conditions through which those definitions are founded.

The Concept of Tactical Media

For some time, TM has been a dominant theoretical framework for defining both politically engaged media art projects and aesthetically challenging modes of political mediation. The term 'tactics', of course, holds militaristic connotations (for better or worse) that refer to manoeuvrability and gaining advantage in warfare or conditions of battle. While Clausewitz famously outlined a distinction from strategy in terms of scale, tactics can be defined in terms of flanking, ambushes, negotiating or creating obstacles, provoking the enemy to make mistakes, and offering reconnaissance (Richardson, 2003: 123-128). The latter, in particular, was traditionally assigned to 'the vanguard' (avant-garde)—high-speed units that would scout out an adversary's movements in advance and secure positions of strategic importance. While such military techniques have been somewhat relegated to the past through the technologisation of war, these implications endure in the context of artistic practice, politics and everyday life in a number of interesting ways (Wilke, 2010: 39-55).

In the following section, I discuss subversive characteristics of TM carried over from these settings, but with an understanding of "the tactical" as multiplicity. Such traits include, for example, investments in critical knowledge work, and modification of standardised technologies and avant-gardism. Through this unpacking, I describe how characteristics of TM have been understood as contributing to the generation of radical political change; traits that have more recently been subject to criticism through new mappings or diagrams of power in network societies (Deleuze, 1999). Indeed, there have been calls to bury the concept, alongside a sense that the idea might simply need updating. To some extent, I move between these inclinations by advocating an emphasis on following errant practices in their complication of diagrammatic formats. This path is taken to argue for the more-than-human scope of intervention, suggesting a turn to working with the problematic complexity of things that should be taken as politics by other means.

Originally formulated during the 1990s, TM has shown remarkable resilience as a concept. In the statement first offered by Geert Lovink and David Garcia for the Amsterdam-based Next Five Minutes (N5M) events, de Certeau's work on everyday life (tactics as 'the art of the weak') was famously linked together with the possibilities of digital consumer culture ('cheap electronics') to capture a sense of an emergent media aesthetic directed toward specific political goals:

> *Tactical media are media of crisis, criticism and opposition. This is both the source their power ('anger is an energy': John Lydon), and also their limitation their typical heroes are: the activist, Nomadic media warriors, the pranxter, the hacker, the street rapper, the camcorder kamikaze, they are the happy negatives, always in search of an enemy. But once the enemy has been named and vanquished it is the tactical practitioner whose turn it is to fall into crisis ... Tactical Media are never perfect, always in becoming, performative and pragmatic, involved in a continual process of questioning the premises of the channels they work with.*
> *(Lovink and Garcia, 1997)*

Now associated with groups like the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE), ®TMark, The Yes Men, the Electronic Disturbance Theatre (EDT), Luther Blissett, UBERMORGEN.COM and the Bureau of Applied Autonomy (among many others), TM projects were originally defined by a shared technique of amplifying 'provisional' and 'temporary' reversals of power through appropriative uses of media technologies. This would operate through fleeting interventions and reflexive targeting of the micropolitical variety, resulting in conditions for agency comparable to the Temporary Autonomous Zone originally described by Hakim Bey (1991). In the orthodox account, this was related to an 'end of history' mindset: a shift from dialectical struggles to molecular events brought about by the general sentiment that strategic organisation only leads to blockages or authoritarian oppression, 'born from a disgust with ideology' (Lovink, 2008: 187).

While there are other non-European and non-Western histories of practice that can be mapped in terms of TM, it's worth stressing the key significance of Garcia and Lovink's framework. Their model suggestively linked together an array of experiments with these technologies into a broadly inclusive schema for widespread socio-political change. At the time, this mode of engagement was also positioned against an opposition to corporate capitalism and excesses of governmental power. As an artistic-activist practice, TM equally corresponded with the multifarious practices of culture jamming or 'subvertising' aligned with anti-corporate movements, although Garcia and Lovink's proposal extended well beyond the semiotics of advertising culture by allowing a broader spectrum of action to be linked by non-commercial socio-political agendas (Klein, 2000: 63-85; Dery, 1993). Reflexively performing the participatory ethos being invoked, the concept itself was offered up for reconfiguration—for Garcia and Lovink, TM would involve a constant relay between theory and practice. In 1999, the organizers of the third N5M event offered a useful summation:

> *The term 'tactical media' refers to a critical usage and theorization of media practices that draw on all forms of old and new, both lucid and sophisticated media, for achieving a variety of specific noncommercial goals and pushing all kinds of potentially subversive political issues. (N5M, 1999)*

Although stressing a non-commitment to any particular technological form (old or new), as mentioned during the introduction, TM was actually first conceived against mass broadcast systems; for instance, with the possibilities of hacking, refiguring and utilising televisual and video technologies inspired by examples like Andrei Ujeika and Harun Faroki's Videograms of a Revolution (1993), or Brian Springer's documentary Spin (1995), and the new possibilities suggested by portable camcorders (van Bergeijk & van Dijk, 1992; Holmes, 2009). Activist AIDS campaigns during the 1980s also formed an important influence on the concept, along with deeper histories of alternative independent publishing, zines, subcultures, pirate radio and television, and feminist media activism. However, during the period of N5M events, the rise of the Web and popular use of the Internet quickly became a significant contributing factor. As Garcia explains, this was a communications revolution which, 'like the music of the 1960s, acted as a universal solvent not only breaking down discipline boundaries but also the boundaries separating long established political formations' (Garcia, 2007: 6). Here, the effectiveness of TM conceptually quickly became obvious by illuminating the makeshift pragmatism that underpinned a great diversity of experimental practices with new media technologies at the time, from hacktivism and electronic civil disobedience to journalistic initiatives like Indymedia (Meikle, 2002).

In this way, the N5M events brought together independent activists, artists, media practitioners, students, scholars and theorists in an attempt to delineate an emerging style of media practice. In a somewhat utopian register, the goal of TM might be favourably compared with

the notion of 'the artist as producer', the assertion famously made by Walter Benjamin that revolutionary change could only be inaugurated by directly altering the means of production or apparatus (Benjamin, 2008: 79-95; Cox and Krysa, 2005). The concept seemed to offer precisely such a flexible program for engineering difference by interrogating the conditions through which political content was materially shaped and distributed, and by pushing modes of work intended to bridge the divide between producers and consumers in the first place.

To a certain extent, by leaving open the specific manifestations through which a TM work could unfold, the malleability of this concept was initially met with widespread support from creative practitioners. As I gradually elaborate here, the ability of TM to encapsulate a wide diversity of projects was consistent with de Certeau's definition of tactics as individuating differences carried along as an immanent manifold. This set the concept in motion as an adaptive and responsive modality of engaging with both artistic and political conceptions of autonomy. While stating that any act of definition was risky since a concept might be easily co-opted through explication, CAE nevertheless described a 'feeling of relief' in both the interpretative and collaborative diversity that TM allowed—'artist, scientist, technician, craftsperson, theorist, activist, etc., could all be mixed together in combinations that had different weights and intensities' (Critical Art Ensemble, 2001: 5). This particular feature, moreover, drove the ongoing influence of the idea. There is a strong sense that TM has persisted since it has become a discursive space or topos—a topic that arranges theoretical and practical engagements with problematic themes of the network condition, including politics, standardisation, economics, agency and aesthetics.

An example can be seen in the 'Virtual Casebook Project at NYU' site, which contains the submission form with the question 'What is Tactical Media for You?'. The range of responses illustrates the multiple interpretations that can emerge around the term (and also potential disagreements): for instance, Garcia argues in favour of the radical variety of practices that should be aligned with TM, including individual projects, as opposed to examples of collective campaigns, but always working against 'legitimate objectives'; David Holmes suggests that TM requires a fundamental consideration of universal rights such as political representation to begin with; while Natalie Jeremijenko simply states 'tactical media is what tactical media artists do' (Virtual Casebook Project, 2002).

Arguably, this range of views is tied up with the conceptual design of TM in the first place. Such radical pluralism could even be seen as the most crucial asset: if anything, TM opens onto multiplicity—that is, conditions that complicate any reliance on an essence or a higher unity: 'multiplicity must not designate a combination of the many and the one, but rather an organisation belonging to the many as such, which has no need whatsoever of unity in order to form a system' (Deleuze, 1994: 182). On the one hand, this invocation can be read

as connecting with the complexities of contemporary network societies; however, it is also sustained through genealogical work. For tactical projects, a sense of multiplicity stems equally from relations forged with prior techniques of artistic, materialist and activist experimentation. This channels concepts of autonomy in labour, nonhuman agencies and avant-gardist institutional critique into specific interrogations of the socio-technical problems of the present. These genealogical sources are approached as virtualities to be actualised over and again as individuated expressions.

TM then draw from the archival past, especially to the extent that the modality of the tactical is tied to lineages associated with the historic avant-garde. Another trajectory can be traced back to Benjamin here; in this case, the argument from his influential essay on technological reproducibility, that artistic works affectively anticipate regimes of experience and hold a capacity to prepare perception for the coming shocks of modernity (Benjamin, 2008: 19-55). With the shift in media technologies during the final decade of last century, TM similarly aimed to construct new ways of working with socio-technological infrastructures on both formal and political levels. Indeed, as Tobias Wilke observes, rather than medium, an important term throughout Benjamin's famous thesis is 'tacticality' (taktisch)—a neologism that combines both the tactile and tactical to describe technological art as an experimental act with futurity (2010: 39-55). This was, significantly, an idea that borrowed from the avant-garde in a reading of aesthetics as a militarised training ground for the senses; but the approach is also aligned with the material tangibility of art as work, a kind of knowledge only achieved by 'touching the world'. The perpetual reorientation and undoing of regulated experience meant that art practice was less concerned with the maintenance of a formal style, than with an ontological confrontation of differences in kind. TM has similarly inherited a tendency to defy being categorically pigeonholed beyond anything other than a differential field, routes that led to the virtual through praxis, what László Moholy-Nagy once described as an aesthetic for 'tireless pioneers' (qtd. in Wilke, 2010: 43).

But there is something more to this: through such mixtures of past practices, TM also highlights the significance of concepts for network societies, especially by elucidating a nascent field, even a set of disregarded prospects. If Lovink's work is familiar, it is for this conceptual approach to socio-technological networks. Think of terms like Data Dandy, Distributed Aesthetics (with Anna Munster), Organised Networks (with Ned Rossiter) and Internet Criticism (in general). That many such concepts are co-created is further evidence of an investment in the connective principles of networking. Lovink's earlier writings with ADILKNO (The Foundation for the Advancement of Illegal Knowledge) similarly took the form of collectively authored small manifesto-like statements described at the time as 'UTOs' or 'unidentified theoretical objects'—Sovereign Media, Total Media, Vague Media and so on— all of which can effectively can be read as precedents for TM (ADILKNO, 1998). While this approach is not easy reduced to a 'method' per se, since concepts emerge through intuitive

inquiries, Lovink has nevertheless consistently placed an emphasis on the importance of this aspect in his writing. For instance, in a short piece with Florian Schneider, 'New Rules for the New Actonomy' (2001), concepts are highlighted as mobilising desire to particular socio-political ends through viral dynamics: 'these days a well-designed content virus can easily reach millions overnight. Invest all your time to research how to design a robust meme which can travel through time and space, capable to operate [sic.] within a variety of cultural contexts' (2001). Similarly, in discussing the failed fortunes of the dotcom era, he writes:

> The crucial step is to shape, armour and then blow up concepts, 'memes' and ideas so that they then become operational entities. A productive discourse is not mere talk. The creation of a compelling ideology is not just a matter of talent. The killer application is not just people but the collective ability to mobilize and direct the Network Spirit.
> (Lovink, 2002)

Striving to pursue change through connectivity—if not with the Network Spirit, than at least it's unconscious—Lovink's program suggests an abstract yet ultimately pragmatic model of cultural activism (2011). The technique might be compared with Scott Lash's assertion that any critique of information can only occur immanently by connecting up with information itself (Lash, 2002: vii, 220). Here, the most crucial aspect is based on distributing critical ideas through viral contamination: a recurring characteristic of the informational aspects of digital networks that evokes properties such as emergence and non-linear causalities (Terranova, 2004; Sampson, 2007). This situation is related to the infrastructural deployment and maintenance of 'panspectric' media that are not concerned with cultural containment per se, but on premediating modes of contagion (Kullenberg and Palmås, 2009). While TM is clearly subject to these contexts, whether the goal should be based on competition—fixated on attempts to outgame Silicon Valley, for instance—is perhaps unclear. There are more productive ways to approach this kind of work than simply going viral.

In general, Lovink tends to avoid the idiosyncratic vocabulary of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Their description of philosophic concepts is, however, helpful for providing some insights into how TM and tacticality might be otherwise conceived. Concepts for them are 'anenergetic' condensations that channel energies into a range of sites and practices (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995). Rather than fixed solutions, concepts are intensities that immanently transform states of affairs (Alliez, 2004: 17-31). They are formed, moreover, in confrontation with badly posed or understood problems. However, this cannot be taken as a subjective projection, since problems 'do not exist only in our heads but occur here and there in the production of an actual historical world' (Deleuze, 1994: 190). They serve a pedagogic function by seeking a resolution through novel re-configurations or modifications to other pre-existing concepts on an immanent plane or network: 'a concept requires not only a

problem through which it recasts or replaces earlier concepts but a junction of problems where it combines with other coexisting concepts' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995: 18). These resolutions, however, are only found at a virtual point; they are set in motion along such dimensions through processes of experimentation and learning.

While Deleuze and Guattari refer strictly to philosophy as operating in this register, their formula ('the concept of the concept') can be usefully translated into the context of TM. More specifically, it can illuminate something of the 'non-philosophical' transversal dynamics brought about at divisions between scientific method, political activism, artistic practice, cultural theory and philosophy (Fuller, 2008). I refer to this transversal tacticality as reticular aesthetics—a transformative practice that engages with problems or topical issues (Dieter, 2009). Drawing from Bergsonian thought, reticular aesthetics can be described as inquiries that counter the tendency to fabricate the world as differences in degree. The role of such approaches, rather, is to intuitively move through cases of solution towards an alternate sense and perception of the problem; as Deleuze puts it, 'only intuition decides between the true and the false in the problems that are stated, even if this means driving intelligence to turn back against itself' (1991: 21). To be clear, problems are multiplicities. Nevertheless, as I go on to discuss, exclusively associating such dynamics with TM has become an increasingly complex exercise today. Critical discussions around 'the tactical' has, accordingly, begun to question how critical media art is tied to problems for politics, including temporal dynamics of appropriative action and a tendency to become easily re-absorbed after execution.

Circuits and Circulations

Despite the resilience of TM, there is no question that changing historical conditions have significantly complicated investments in tacticality. This is most obvious in discussions that have fixated on the sustainability of TM as a viable program for long-term change, or more recently, in a turn to consider durable strategic realities (Becker, 2009). While altering the debate to focus on persistent structures or formats of power might seem like an inevitable case of the pendulum swinging from one extreme to another, there are immediate issues that explain this interest (Krapp, 2005). In particular, certain projects aligned with TM have been perceived as a threat from the perspective of the United States government in the context of a post-9-11 world and the so-called 'war against terror'— notable here is the arrest of Steve Kurtz from CAE (a case that was eventually be dropped after being cleared of all charges) and more recent accusations against Ricardo Dominguez, for instance. While acknowledging the significance of these events, the judico-legal injunctions imposed against critical media art projects need to be interpreted through an analysis of security and control regimes established for managing networked materialities (Munster, 2005). There is a related

concern regarding the presumed natural correlation between the tactical and progressive politics. However, critiques of this sort deliberately confuse 'tactics' with militaristic connotations of violent conflict, rather than 'tactics' taking on a particular mode of inquiry (von Clausewitz, 2003: 132-137).

My interest lies mainly with the relation of these practices to communicative capitalism and the possibilities of reshaping existing patterns of social organisation. Of course, it should be obvious that no technique or technology is ever 'neutral'; approaches are transformed over time, even altered diagrammatically. This section deals with some of those changes by offering a broader understanding of power capable of gauging concerns that inform critical readings of TM. Of particular importance in these settings are the uncertainties of capture and the circulation of content. TM is often criticised for the fleeting eventfulness underpinning its model of intervention; my argument is that this critique is centred on a conception of politics that does not account for the transversal tacticality of these projects, a reticulation of things that works on problems in ontopolitical conditions.

A special issue of Third Text edited by Gene Ray and Gregory Sholette—'Whither Tactical Media?'—is exemplary of the sense of malaise that has gathered around the idea of doing political mediation differently. The issue is premised on a claim that the influence of neo-conservative macro-politics and grand narratives, along with the global consolidation of economic rationalism, has brought about a situation where TM appears as a futile and inhibited gesture. In their editorial, Ray and Sholette view tactics as struggling to perform radical modes of criticality, especially by connecting with conditions of labour and scaling otherwise temporary interventions. Regarding the former, they highlight conditions of global precarity, from maquiladoras and export processing zones to knowledge-intensive or creative sectors of employment. Anything tactical is described as lacking legitimacy by being too far removed from the most brutal politico-economic realities of these almost uninhabitable worlds. While TM demonstrates a capacity to liberate desire by appropriation of the apparatus, precisely in a Benjaminian mode, this characteristic has so far failed to effectively translate into applications or involvement at the level of collective enunciation in conditions of immiseration. This critique is driven by a concern with how tactical practices are vitally connected to socio-political formations; however, it additionally presumes a specific definition of what TM currently is and might become (it would be interesting, for example, to examine such claims against the recent events of WikiLeaks, Take the Square and the Arab Spring). While historically, avant-garde and activist movements might have aligned themselves with subaltern and minoritarian politics, the TM ideal, as Ray and Sholette have it, is now a terminal figure: 'a dissipated and distracted spectator constituted by historically unique sensory experiences made real by the rise of new media technologies' (Ray and Sholette, 2008: 521). This image of the perceptually and sensorially overloaded is a disaster: how do the performative aspects of any project register in the 'creative noise' of informationalism? What is the relationship

between this panic-inducing informational excess and immediate political matters? Even with the possibilities of alternate pathways for distributing content via networked technologies, there is the recurring question of what reconfigurations can be claimed from these projects. Jodi Dean's commentary on the flattened network as ultimately subservient to communicative capitalism is relevant here. This situation, more often than not, undermines the formation of viable solidarities:

> Instead of engaged debates, instead of contestations employing common terms, points of reference, or demarcated frontiers, we confront a multiplication of resistances and assertions so extensive that it hinders the formation of strong counterhegemonies. The proliferation, distribution, acceleration, and intensification of communicative access and opportunity, far from enhancing democratic governance or resistance, results in precisely the opposite, the postpolitical formation of communicative capitalism. (Dean, 2005: 102)

Dominant networked media systems are also configured for exploitation in significant ways (Dean, 2010). Moreover, in relation to political discourse, it is the wrong kind of expression or engagement that pervades: individualising, scattered, consumptive. In this situation, progressive interventions then encounter the dilemma of competing with all manner of sentiments that also feel appropriative. Tactics appear as the norm; perhaps supported by the presence of avant-gardist techniques as presets of the 'meta-medium' of software (Manovich, 2001; 2008). This network is of another cast; inhabited by what Quentin Meillassoux calls the communicator, a persona that embodies 'a certain obstinate silliness, of a frenetic openness to whatever appearances of novelty come along' (2007: 105). Everyday practices are folded into flexible formations governed by logics of possession and profit; niche-orientated Web platforms accept all content, just another segment of the Long Tail.

Excesses of memes, remixes, mash-ups and the churn of Net flotsam are indicative of these accelerated conditions of communicative capitalism (Parikka and Sampson, 2009). But what happens when contagion, creativity and modifiability (some cited goals of TM) have become default settings? Arguably, these circumstances are well beyond what Deleuze and Guattari perceived as the appropriation of conceptual thinking for commerce, that 'most shameful moment' where computer science, marketing, advertising and design come together for 'products to be sold' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 10-12). Here, a representative example of the embedding of tacticality into the flows of participatory network dynamics is The Contagious Media Experiments (2005) initiated by Jonah Peretti, a media project funded partly by the Eyebeam Gallery in New York. Tapping into the possibilities for disseminating content through media convergence, the main goal of this initiative was targeting what Peretti described as 'the Bored at Work Network (BWN)'—a population estimated at hundreds of millions of office workers constantly using social networking sites, instant

messaging, blogging and email:

> *These experiments illustrate the practical application of concepts like emergence, 6-degrees of separation, and tipping points. Each project starts small and spreads virally to millions of people without any promotions, advertisements, or press releases. In the end, the mass media picks up the story as a trend, and the project is able to permeate the culture at multiple levels. This low-budget, bottom-up approach makes it possible to create a global cascade that begins with a small group of friends and extends to the set of CNN or the Today Show. These Contagious Media Experiments suggest new opportunities for artists, activists, companies, and entertainers in the networked age. (Peretti, 2005)*

Recalling Alan Lui's study of informational cool and 'cyber-bad attitude', this audience is potentially analogous to that envisioned by TM with the info-worker enrolled as anticipated 'participant' or witness (Lui, 2004). The Contagious Media Showdown (2005) is one project in this series, which combined the efforts of Peretti, Cory Arcangel, Ze Frank, Ann Poochareon, Paul Berry and Mike Frumin to compete over a period of a month to create content memes. The success of this project led in part to the establishment of BuzzFeed, a website dedicated to tracking all manner of viral and user-generated content, offering tags to further disseminate trends such as 'geeky', 'LOL', 'WTF' and 'OMG'. In this way, the site aims to chart what content is massifying across various network segments; often resulting in a deluge of celebrity scandals, amateur art, viral marketing or YouTube remixes. While electronic civil disobedience might persist in IRC chatrooms and distributed denial-of-service attacks, unruly innovation is here a consumable circuit of vernacular content, what David Berry sees as the riparian user of real-time streams (Berry, 2011: 144). Tacticality is both promoted and tamed by computational devices; an RSS feed, viral dashboard or downloadable app away.

From another perspective, the actual impact of socio-technical activism has been where TM has come under intense scrutiny. Significantly, in their theoretical proposal for the concept of organised networks, Ned Rossiter and Lovink offer an incisive critique of the concept as a pragmatic approach for progressive political change in light of accelerated changes associated with post-Fordism:

> *Tactical media too often assume to reproduce the curious spatio-temporal dynamic and structural logic of the modern state and industrial capital: difference and renewal from the peripheries. But there's a paradox at work here. Disruptive as their actions may often be, tactical media corroborate the temporal mode of post-Fordist capital: short-termism. (Lovink and Rossiter, 2005)*

By highlighting the affinities between this style of working and conditions of flexible capitalist accumulation, they claim that tactics are now politically inadequate as an end in itself. For Lovink and Rossiter, the main challenge is to shift attention towards the strategic dimension of networks in an appeal for new institutional forms of sustainability built on creative labour. As Rossiter states elsewhere, however, tactics are still relevant as a legitimate 'source of renewal' in this theoretical schema—'without the tactical, organised networks collapse into stasis' (2006: 23). Indeed, a number of long-term TM experiments like The Yes Men, Indymedia, Makrolab are seen as viable resources, but they are not seen as relevant examples for the formation of organised networks themselves (2008). The latter are emergent institutions immanent to the socio-technical dynamics of Internet-enabled systems. They are described at times precisely in the language of meta-modelling developed by Guattari (Rossiter, 2006: 17-24). For Lovink and Rossiter, organised networks resemble hybrid arrangements that lie somewhere between tactics and proper institutional structures. The challenge is to scale up otherwise short-lived projects to allow for more long-term alternatives to be established during the period of uncertainty or structural instability marked by neoliberalism.

Whether or not this specific critique of TM that informs the organised networks concept is convincing—and it needs to be acknowledged that critical media art projects are generally not concerned with building institutional formations in any obvious way—I nevertheless draw attention to the conceptual ambiguity of the conjoined aspects of these apparently distinct modes of operation. This can be considered as a result of a framework cast as a flat ontology. However, it additionally refers to a well-known characteristic of networks. They consume difference: even strategic positions cannot be maintained against their purported inverse, but must be rendered as tendencies, scales and gradients. For Rossiter and Lovink, only through the intensification of networking can subsumption be outpaced and alternatives projected as scalar formations. Organised networks, interestingly, can be said to broach upon a missing third military-inspired term between strategies and tactics in this appeal: the role of logistics (Wark, 2003). But here, I should highlight another rather obvious point, that organised networks must additionally 'corroborate' somehow with speculative economics. They are, therefore, forced to confront another quandary raised by following neoliberal conditions, including a struggle to offer differential categories of access, accountability and legitimacy. I would say that the ramifications from such dilemmas, in this respect, are greater than simply speaking in 'the unattractive language typically associated with neoliberalism' (Rossiter, 2006: 14).

Adopting languages involves translation; things necessarily get formatted. I mean this not just abstractly, but concretely, in terms of funding, resources, labour and measures of success. These moments of translation have implications for the constitution of a network, including what actors, agencies and actants benefit from getting organised or not. It has

been a clear tendency of neoliberal governance to exacerbate hierarchies precisely by eroding frameworks for regulated procedures. For organised networks, beyond the continual search for material resources other than free labour and grant funding, learning to deal with these uneven tendencies and inequalities is an additional problem; and perhaps this is also why the question of tactics cannot be so easily done away with.

Elsewhere, Rita Raley has outlined her own interpretation of TM and offered a rejoinder to the organised networks proposal with an analysis of projects that have responded to the global neoliberal order (2009). Raley does so by acknowledging the changes in tactics characterised by increasingly sophisticated yet more dispersed techniques of intervention, and offers readings of border hacks, persuasive gaming and the data visualisation of financial markets. Well-known work by Electronic Disturbance Theatre, John Klima, DoEAT, Joseph DeLappe, Anne-Marie Schleiner and Luis Hernandez, UBERMORGEN.COM, Lise Autogena and Joshua Portway all feature in Raley's discussion of heroic dissent within these transformed conditions of power. She responds directly to the 'radical media pragmatism' of Lovink and Rossiter by stressing the performativity of these works:

> *The right question is not whether tactical media works or not, whether it succeeds or fails in spectacular fashion to effect structural transformation; rather, we should be asking to what extent it strengthens social relations and to what extent its activities are virtuosic. (Raley, 2009: 29)*

Accordingly, Raley's position places an emphasis on the aesthetic dimension of TM and highlights, in particular, the participatory significance of the audience with reference to the concept of relational aesthetics from Nicolas Bourriaud and the performative qualities of virtuosity drawn from Paolo Virno's writings on multitude (Bourriaud, 2002; Virno, 2004). Her argument hinges on the role of spectators as witnesses that complete the 'signifying field' of the piece by 'recording a memory of the performance' (Raley, 2009: 12). Raley suggests that there is no obvious extrinsic product from these events since they are engagements that experientially transform the social or 'general intellect'. This claim is, to a certain extent, congruent with the move towards thinking of how to inhabit the common; it's based on searching for other ways of doing politics since 'there is much in the world to protest' (1). And in this respect, I am in sympathy with her position, even allied. Nevertheless, I phrase my response like this: TM has never been concerned foremost with solutions, but with problems. This has involved a confrontation with differences in kind cast through the artistic, political and everyday notions of autonomy that are made available by existing legacies of institutional critique. Such genealogies are (re)sources for tactics as it becomes an embodied discourse based on imaginative transgressions, refigured modes of knowledge and experimentation with problems for politics. Materialist trajectories increasingly matter in this contract with difference; in other words, the relations that critical media art establishes

by occupying the emergent terrain of environmental power are key. In the next section, I elaborate on this perspective through the becoming environmental of power. Suffice to say, Raley's study mainly leaves questions of anything more-than-human unexamined; or more accurately, she does not deal with how tactical behaviours twist the machine and nonmachine within apparatuses of social reproduction.

Whatever the consequences of social media and the infrastructures of neoliberal capitalism, it has become obvious that the very notion of tactics is now complicated, even confused. Critical media art projects perform some kind of important work. However, the debates outlined above demonstrate the inability of existing frameworks to adequately take their political significance into consideration. In what follows, I reflect on these dilemmas by discussing a number of ambiguities in the notion of the everyday first devised by de Certeau, especially regarding differences along more-than-human registers. Arguably, channels of distribution (circuits and circulation) have not been a concern of TM due to an emphasis on alterity founded on an orientation toward processual politics. Or, perhaps more accurately, it has been because TM has remained antithetical to the particular model of quantification proper to calculative regimes of informationalism. I offer a particular reading, in this respect, of the everyday that argues that an important facet of de Certeau's work is a recurring sense of multiplicity. This term is perhaps often used in a rather straightforward sense as referring to the multiple or numerous, rather than philosophically linked to duration, sense and ontology, the conditions of making and unmaking experience. Acknowledging that political action is forced to reckon with the new diagrams of power, I suggest this concept illuminates an important strand of TM: multiplicity makes 'the tactical' germane as a mode of work for uncertain lives. In this respect, the final section of this article can be read as returning to the question of whether tactics should be taken as an intrinsic 'good' or end in itself. In some ways I question the sovereignty of the actions involved. Here, my argument is that the tactical involves reticulating problems in a confrontation with difference.

From Infopolitics to Ontopolitics

I want to begin this final section with an assertion: critiques of TM tend to reduce their field of operations to the spatio-temporal functioning of digital and networked technologies. Rather than striving to consider the conditions of immiseration and crisis within which these systems are enveloped, too often discussions of new media, networking and politics are refracted through informational media where a kind of 'exaggerated humanity' is expressed (Thrift, 2011). Critical accounts of software can go a long way to address this problem, but I argue they can only be established through a consideration of factors anterior to the regime of computation (sense, attention, memory, perception, maintenance, energy, waste, capital); but just as compositions of human labour are prone to exhaustion, insubordination and

resistance, so too are nonhuman actants driven to breakdown and collapse by exploitative relations. Crucially, my investment in this basic premise is connected to a range of recent inquiries in a long-standing discussions of distributed agencies, these include the Latourian actor-network, assemblage theory, object-orientated philosophy, speculative realism, neo-materialism and vitalist currents of media ecology (Fuller, 2005; Bryant, Srnicek and Harman, 2011). Whether understood as a 'material turn' or not, I interpret these moves as establishing a dialogue with increasingly felt pressures in the lived environment and the anxious need for resources capable of gauging the more-than-human, beyond current diagrammatic modes of organisation. Critical media art contributes to this task by exiting informationalism. It does so by undoing distinctions between the machine and nonmachine in surprising and unexpected ways. These practices can be read through de Certeau, however only with some critical adjustments.

How I read de Certeau's concept of everyday life: the famous distinction between tactics and strategies is the basis for approaching the everyday; it becomes an orientation device for conceiving how oppositional practices can be imagined more specifically. Out of this apparent binary, or asymmetrical dialectic, between tactics and strategies, a series of distinctions then emerge: the everyday as a counterpoint to discipline, the indeterminacy of manifold actions against technocratic rationality, an interest in memory practices and kairos over spatialised temporalities. Strategies, as a central point of contrast, indicate a 'proper place', an institutional form characterised by a calculus or manipulation of relations. The proper is characterised by three major functions: 1) a triumph of space over time in building an autonomous territory, 2) the calculated use of sight or panoptics to draw exterior objects within a scope and range of influence, and finally 3) the constitutive force of power/knowledge as a mode of territorialisation (de Certeau, 1980: 5).

Here, de Certeau's work is most clearly positioned as a response to the disciplinary dispositif of Foucault, especially the kind of modern ordering portrayed throughout the 'Panopticism' section of Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1977: 195-228). In these well-known passages, a detailed reading of the English philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham's proposed ideal prison, the Panopticon, was used to diagnose how a new expansive 'physics' or 'anatomy' of power arose during the 18th century in Europe. To be clear, de Certeau's reading of everyday practices was partly theorised as a rejoinder to Foucault, particularly from the perspective of subjects already caught up in such machinations of power. It was an attempt to invert Foucault's analytic method to arrive at an alternative diagnosis. While still focused at the level of microphysics, the goal shifted from processes of arranging consistencies to the extreme edges of a purported anti-discipline. It is worth noting that the struggle here, additionally, is a reflection of sorts on the relationship of a researcher to a subject of inquiry and, therefore, is also a consideration of the proper place for knowledge (the university).

Defined through the slogan, 'the art of the weak', tactics feature everywhere in the everyday as an undercurrent to the revolutionary upheavals and structural delineations of modernity (systems of 'technocracy'). Practices in general are understood as non-representational actions that flow in 'non-traceable dimensions', or movements that precede the purview of the panoptic. Interpretations of de Certeau often seize upon 'visible cunning' as the fundamental expression of resistance; however, there actually exists a diversity of meanings linked to the concept, including several overlapping categories: hidden, heterogeneous, extensive, devious and stubborn (Highmore, 2006, 108). All these modalities work together to produce a sense of complex qualitative rhythms. Multiplicity in itself, as a result, is a key concern: a constitutive milieu of difference that complicates the diagram of disciplinary consistencies or regularities charted by Foucault.

The language recalls another influential theorist of the everyday, Henri Lefebvre, however, strong continuities also exist with Bergson's concept of duration. Similarly proposing a critical view of models of time based on marking out successive instances, Bergson perceived the type of intelligence based on this delineation as perpetuating 'impure' spatio-temporal compounds that privileged space as a quantitative multiplicity and, therefore, an infinitely divisible plane (Deleuze, 1991). In this way, process as difference in kind was elided: the map displaces the territory. De Certeau also holds a comparable interest in experience, or, at the same time, a sense of things and what disciplinary methodologies are capable of saying about them. However, this specifically took the form of a defence of the everyday against its reduction to 'lateral inspection' (de Certeau, 1980: 10). Storytelling and imaginative facilities could assist with this task of expressing the elusiveness of the tactical, if only to participate in urgently needed therapeutic rectification against the instrumental demands of 'the proper'. On an abstract level, tactics are a kind of conceptual stance toward the problem of asymmetries in power and accounting for difference in the production of knowledge. In this sense, tactics allow an important way of thinking 'culture in the plural', but only to the extent that an expanded field of action and experience is evoked. This suggests, I would add, something like 'nature in the plural', precisely by rejecting an exclusive embrace of modern ordering principles.

As a polyrhythmic multiplicity, de Certeau imagined everyday practices to be a vast oceanic expanse. Indeed, a more profound claim is advanced along these lines: that socio-economic and political institutions are subject to this field of singularities, arising from below as 'ephemeral islands' or temporary archipelagos. Practices are origins or ontologically prior; they move through dimensions of being that exceed the proper, since tactics are emblematic of a prodigious or primordial virtuosity, an immemorial intelligence of coups and tricks, found even in plants and fish (de Certeau, 1980: 9). Tacticality complicates not only the abstract regularities imposed by strategic organisation, but even anthropos and certain conceptions of rational consciousness. Indeed, this layer of activity can only be grasped as a dynamic genesis or inventiveness that 'assures formal continuities and the permanence of a memory

without language, from the ocean's depths all the way to the streets of today's megalopolis' (9). These are strange assertions that seemingly invoke a Universalist pan-nature. Indeed, Nicole Shukin questions precisely such moments by arguing that de Certeau fetishises mimesis. This is problematic, according to Shukin, since it involves privileging analogous relations between human and nonhuman in a way that uncritically reiterates the contemporary machinations of capital, especially within conditions of real subsumption (Shukin, 2009: 54). This is a valid critique, but I have another interpretation in mind. I understand tactics here as involving moments where what might be defined as properly human, where the limits of social life itself, are surpassed as a self-evident representation. This can be conceived through a distinction between analogy and univocity: analogy ushers in a hierarchy of being based on the regulation of life, while univocity refers to a radical pragmatics based on concrete situations. However, as Deleuze would put it, the latter requires a pre-individual set of conditions to be acknowledged, a processual world, a making and remaking of distinctions that is only ever contingent and situated. It is a question of: 'how individuating difference precedes generic, specific and even individual differences within being; how a prior field of individuation within being conditions at once the determination of species of forms, the determination of parts and their individual variations' (Deleuze, 1994: 38).

For media theory, the political implication of individuating difference—in contrast to the possessive majoritarian mode cited by Shukin—runs on communicative univocity. Tacticality, therefore, is further understood, and assisted, via intensities; 'the trees communicate with the sun, the seas with the moon, our eyes with ancient light from dead galaxies, our skins with the cosmic background radiation' (Cubitt, 2006: 36). Practices are antecedent to social diagrams, fluctuating throughout experiential worlds, and more troublingly, set conditions that appear to both challenge and retain divisions of power. The question then becomes, within this field, how can oppositional practices be understood, what would this consist of anyway? For now, my claim for TM specifically is that these approaches attend to problems in a manner antithetical to present cases of solution, drawing from pre-individual relations to do so. Tactical practitioners, in other words, make inquiries into individuating difference in terms other than quantification or a neoliberal economics of disequilibrium. This aspect is crucial for grasping the continuing occupation of TM beyond the conditions of communicative capitalism and the transformations of media ecologies signalled by the critiques outlined above.

Here, it's worth discussing de Certeau's view of digital and networked technologies as a further encroachment onto the everyday; that is, how tactics are imagined as overrun by their incorporation into the flexibility of a computerised megacity. Appearing as a vast homogeneous expanse guided by the techno-scientific rationale of cybernetics, this future system illuminates the 'dark sea' or 'maritime immensity' of life as a continuous patterning or weave of data:

Number has arrived, the time of democracy, of the big city, of bureaucracies, of cybernetics. It is a supple and continuous crowd, woven tightly like a fabric without tear or seam, a multitude of quantified heroes who lose their names and faces while becoming the mobile language of calculations and rationalities which belong to no one. Ciphered currents in the street. (de Certeau, 1980: 3)

In an insightful analysis of this calculative turn, Brian Holmes draws attention to the historic influence of the cybernetic paradigm as a foundation myth for network societies (Holmes, 2008: 525-534). Indeed, Norbert Wiener first conceived of his science of steering precisely in response to the problem of tracking, anticipating and predicting the flow of things in an ongoing stochastic process (originally, enemy aircraft) (Galison, 1994: 228-266). The reliance on statistical probability in cybernetic thought would enable a reflexive responsiveness to the regulation of a system by registering input and calculating adjustments in search of an allusive ideal equilibrium. Cybernetics tethered contingency or movement, thriving on differences in a system, or precisely the kinds of activity that TM might be said to induce. With this in mind, Holmes questions whether tactics remains an effective framework for politics. He notes that the mathematical innovations from cybernetics now underwrite the principal equations for pricing options in financial markets, especially to predict the drift and volatility of equity values through the Black-Scholes model. This is a sort of rhetorical challenge, but is based on serious real-world conditions. As a global socio-technical ensemble, financial systems can arguably be taken as the proper place of the present. Poised as the authentic function of digital and networked media, finance works through a neoliberalism of non-normalisable accidents that requires far-from-equilibrium conditions (Cooper, 2008). Diagrammatic characteristics, therefore, can easily be read off an analysis of the operations of these socio-technical markets.

To this end, the cybernetic society of de Certeau recalls another familiar narrative by Deleuze from the short 'postscript' on societies of control, an important text for new media studies that similarly grapples with the Foucaudian disciplinary dispositif (Deleuze, 1995: 177-182). As is well known, this Deleuzian image of power traces a flexible network that continually responds to, adjusts and modulates variable changes. The result is a highly regulated openness perpetuated by the calculation of aggregate motion and the continual guidance of change. Here, the purported exterior is utilised as the source for further organisational patterns. A kind of binding together or knotting takes hold, a weave aimed at capturing the diverse potentialities traversing an environment. Needless to say, a reading of cybernetics also pervades this brief postscript. Allusions are made to Wiener's narratives of technological periodisation, especially his discussions of utilising Bergsonian ideas of duration to build feedback systems and black boxes, therefore, rendering obsolete apparent oppositions between mechanism and vitalism (Wiener, 1961: 38-39).

The concept of "Control Societies", meanwhile, has become influential in the analysis of organisational principles in new media, such as the logistics of surveillance, flexibility, standardisation of flow (protocol), data aggregation, and predictive tracking, studies often in dialogue with the concept of TM (Elmer, 2004; Galloway, 2004; Galloway and Thacker, 2007). A significant portion of this work can be read as exploring tendencies toward the emergent episteme first identified by Deleuze, but through technical registers. Without going into detail, I refer simply to an important caveat offered by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun for this line of inquiry: 'we need to insist on the failures and the actual operations of technology' (Chun, 2006: 9). While "control societies" as a concept has allowed a consideration of the constitution of new media in ways that reconsider the nonhuman, Chun's turning to limitations and failure also suggests a consideration of care-taking, rather than the pursuit of accidents. This might involve, for instance, questioning the disinvestment of expenditures carried along through the image of software as a vitalist substrate or a medium capable of transcending material limits. It might involve a consideration that up to 50 million tons of e-waste is generated globally each year. This alone should force some acknowledgement of the exteriorities to cybernetic control and informationalism (Feilhauer and Zehle, 2009). The agential weight of lead, cadmium, mercury, brominated flame-retardants and other hazardous components participate in a renewed set of problems for life, not to mention the contingencies of metal resources (especially rare earth elements) that follow intensifications of capitalist development in the shadows of climate-based crises at the limits of the earth.

There is a final connection to be made. As a social diagram, the distributed networks of control societies resemble a set of governmental dynamics analysed in later work by Foucault (2007; 2008). Indeed, the work outlined in his lecture series at the Collège de France during the late 1970's presents a significant challenge to the anti-discipline of de Certeau in a number of ways. While ostensibly aimed at mapping a genealogy of the regulatory apparatuses that operate at population levels ('the biopolitical'), it's worth concluding with a consideration of his account as an explanatory ground for a revised tacticality. Here, Foucault makes important distinctions from 'generalized disciplinary societies' in a genealogy of the welfare state and, eventually, early expressions of neoliberalism. This initially took the form of a new dispositif directed at a 'global mass' of statistical variations that work upon the species-being of the human: birth rates, illnesses, death, productivity, disease. As 'apparatuses of security', these allowed circulations to occur by establishing territories that blur the prior distinctions that characterised disciplinary societies. Security, therefore, depends on spatialising logics aimed at 'a series of possible events; it refers to the temporal and the uncertain, which have to be inserted within a given space' (Foucault, 2007: 35). This is achieved by co-ordinating a resonant milieu, a middling or medium, or 'that which is needed to account for action at a distance of one body on another' (36). Crucially, this was a direction that could already be sensed in aspects of Discipline and Punish, where the swarming of mechanisms arises in the gradual propensity for such devices to become 'de-institutionalised', expanding out of enclosures (molds) in order to circulate in a 'free' or liberated state (modulations): 'the

massive compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted' (Foucault, 1977: 211). For Foucault, security does not supplant discipline, so much as functions with sovereignty and disciplinarily to form an institutional triad geared at the figure of the population. This is known as governmentality.

However, an important distinction is made between 'normalisation' and 'normation': the latter is the capacity for the disciplines to separate so the normal and abnormal are classified against an imposition or structural consistency ('the permitted and forbidden'). This was precisely the dynamic leveraged by de Certeau in the argument for polyrhythmic tactics outside the linear range of the disciplines. Under governmentality, Foucault describes how the imposition of discipline is now annexed to a relational coordination of security mechanisms (Foucault, 2007: 67-69, 85-91). Normalisation, then, comes to refer to modulations that traverse anatomo-politics as a curvature of aggregate metastabilities. The purported aim is the correct distribution of things: equilibrium. This is how the birth of governmentality equates with the rise of economic liberalism to a significant extent, an aspect that distinguishes this diagram of power, for example, from a purely sovereign or disciplinary regime. However, what is interesting is the notion of 'naturalness' that arises from normalisation under this model, a naturalness that is ideally dependent on the insertion of freedoms to generate aleatory movements. This is the ironic basis for the effectiveness of governance. While it might be taken in terms of an opposition to power, the broader goal is to allow for movement as circulation: 'I think it is this freedom of circulation, in the broad sense of the term, it is in terms of this option of circulation, that we should understand the word freedom, and understand it as one of the facets, aspects, or dimensions of the deployment of apparatuses of security' (Foucault, 2007: 71).

Significantly, generative change in this diagrammatic spatialising milieu takes the form of instrumental accidents—the radical exteriority of the contingent is what traverses the mechanisms and interrelated subsystems of security. While the terminus of governmentality is aimed at the population structure, such transformations emerge at once from the aleatory forces involved, as multiplicity. Interestingly, such 'freedoms' apply to the circulation of disease, water, insects, weather patterns, fires and animals. The stakes of biopolitics are based on amalgamations whereby conditions for life are reproduced, or 'the perpetual intrication of a geographical, climatic, and physical milieu with the human species insofar as it has a body and a soul, a physical and a moral existence' (36). Of course, the calculative responsiveness of digital and networked systems also appear to fit lockstep with this binding together of liberalism, security and modulating power. The account offered by Foucault, however, gives a genealogy to these logics that does not concern strictly technical agencies, but resembles an abstract machine. Indeed, the stakes of rethinking the tactical remains highly significant here precisely because of the way in which privileging operates on population levels.

In a recent commentary, Brian Massumi suggests taking Foucault's governmental schema as a theoretical premise for reading political ventures today. Examining recent catastrophic socio-environmental problems—specifically, responses to the aftermath of Hurricane Katerina—Massumi describes a becoming environmental of power, a phrase that I have borrowed for the title of this essay (2009: 153-185). Market-based economic rationalism and speculative finance are read as intensifying the conditions of Foucault's diagram by unleashing an extreme crisis-ridden milieu. For Massumi, the becoming environmental of power resembles a kind of ontopower, since its 'field of application' is now proto-territorial: as opposed to a normalised population, it operates from a deadly landscape across which innumerable problems are encouraged to circulate and reach destructive thresholds to wrest back the conditions for social reproduction. The distinction is important, since his concern lies with the stakes for life to persist through an emergency-prone dynamism that perpetuates extreme inequalities in wealth and poverty. This is notable not simply in the rise of industrial pollution, but implementation of disassociated milieus or spaces of circulation, from the bio-economics of overfishing to urban inner cities scarred by social insurrection. For Massumi, this mode of power attempts to intercept force by distributing disruptive ontogenetic waves toward global flow-on effects. It attempts to induce change as a first responder, or initiates a full-spectrum securitisation by waging total war.

Dominated by a conservative political register, I argue these trajectories of action set the conditions through which critical media art projects gain traction to operate therapeutically. This is based on asymmetrically countering such logics by developing sympathies and connections with entities pressed by crisis, relayed instrumentally or left to suffer. If the nonhuman is turbulently fed-forward to achieve ends for those 'pertinent' levels of the population, this is where projects associated with TM find a role through a reversal marked by intuitive and untimely inquiries. In other words, this work is not aimed at a projective force of global flow-on effects, but implies returning to sources of experience—to riff on Bergson's durational ontology—before bifurcations of human and nonhuman, objects and commodities, production and consumption, creation and waste. In this case, tactics, framed by univocity, refers to differences in kind; they are alter-referenced practices. Systems, meanwhile, contain tendencies toward self-preservation; they become self-referenced (Massumi, 2009: 168-169). TM, in this revised formula, works with problems in a process of learning to live with ontopower differently, in order to make pragmatic contributions on the level of everyday practice and experience. The capacity to touch on these conditions is central to the salience of tacticality. This is not a case of circulating content, but reticulating material circumstances.

Finally, what is useful about this Foucaudian-influenced narrative is that the organisation of digital and networked technologies—among many other agencies, actors and actants—might be considered in terms of a wide array of power relations that concern conditions of possibility. Let us return to discussions of materiality and objects, or the trend of thinking

in terms of radicalising distributed agencies away from exclusive dominion of a perceived anthropocentric bias. I suggested earlier that my approach was related to these conversations by considering how the more-than-human currently is and might be negotiated otherwise by TM. I have been implying, at times insisting, that this is a directly political concern. By contrast, discussing his proposition for an object-orientated philosophy, Graham Harman observes: 'Foucault is not among my philosophical heroes precisely because 'human subject' and 'world' remain two dominant poles of his universe, even if they are now glued together rather than left in lonely Cartesian solitude' (2010: 772). What might be a throwaway remark, this characterisation can nevertheless be taken as highlighting a deliberately misrecognition of Foucault's significance for materialist thought and offers a useful foil through which to reiterate my argument. Here, I argue the significance of his work is not strictly founded through a dualistic ontology of subject and world, or the metaphysics of things, but how such divisions in the world are forged and made powerful as pertinent levers of strategic organisation. Rather than a speculative proposal on the partitions of the world, this is a question regarding the quality of existing relationships. Part of my intention in re-telling this story has been to keep in play a sense of the agency of things without further naturalising a historically specific set of conditions or arrangements. It should not be forgotten that a central component of Foucault's work involves an inquiry into the inversion of sovereignty through biopolitics; a social investment to 'take life' and to 'let die', or what can be understood later as the neoliberal break between two levels: one characterised by 'economic-political action' (population) and the other by a multiplicity of individuals that 'are no longer pertinent as the objective, but simply as the instrument, relay, or condition for obtaining something at the level of the population' (2007: 65). The major challenge, one I have been pursuing conceptually, is to forge new ways of participating in these new processes by attending to how some modes of life are encouraged, while others are curtailed, or willfully wasted under conditions that are subject to speculation and the accumulation of profit. This challenge would involve experiences that are not entirely calculative, but it cannot rely on weird realisms alone (although they also might have an important role). As a consideration of multiplicity pitted against diagrammatic organisation, tacticality contributes to this process of generating alternative relations, within, for example, the exacerbation of inequalities from crisis-ridden dynamics.

Conclusion

If the becoming environmental of power defines networking in our time, then this emergent terrain resonates with an interest in politics through other means. TM works in this context to connect with problems that are poorly understood, that gather up agencies and remain still unsettled. In writing this lengthy article, I have had a number of projects in mind, such as: CAE, Preemptive Media or Natalie Jeremijenko's involvement in scientific practices;

critical inquiries into commercial Web and economics conducted by UBERMORGEN.COM, Alessandro Ludovico and Paolo Cirio; locative practices of Esther Polak or Loca Lab; or the explorations of the materialities of borders pursued by Health Bunting, Electronic Disturbance Theatre and b.a.n.g. lab; among many others. Indeed, such pieces explore the general reticulation of things with differential consequences: their role is based on a confrontation with multiplicity facilitated through alternate political expressions of more-than-human agencies. This involves a question of collaboration in ways that overturn the normalised categories by which entities or visibilities are arranged. Such approaches, in my understanding, are attempts to refigure problems. They are reminders, moreover, of how uncertainties and silenced crises often underpin diagrammatic solutions.

As stated earlier, I insist that frameworks for TM cannot be fixated on informational systems as an exclusive domain of political power. By point of contrast, the alternate sketch provided here of ontopolitics might be interpreted as becoming imperceptible to the extent that tactics as a concept involves an opening onto multiplicity. This is the case given the demands for sympathetic modes of encounter and involvement with problems. TM, as described in this article, might then be read in the terms of Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker's statement that 'future avant-garde practices will be those of non-existence' (Thacker and Galloway, 2007. p. 136). They list sabotaging video cameras or cloaking one's presence on a network server as relevant examples, stating that these modes of subversion are full in their subversive abandonment of informational or strategic representation: 'absence, lack, invisibility, and nonbeing have nothing to do with nonexistence' (136). However, the argument of this article is not nearly as obsessed with models of politics abstracted exclusively from the workings of technical systems. An over-emphasis on exploits and hacking makes the dual mistake of indexing politics exclusively to the (heroic) informational subject, advocating war and taking the technicity of computational regimes as an essential partition for progressive social change. While control systems cast an overbearing influence on the present, other ways of acting are articulated both conceptually and practically in terms of sensing and perceiving things beyond their current organisation. My position is less interested with spectacular mastery, and more concerned with encountering multiplicity as a pedagogical practice or a process of learning. That is, learning to experience differences in kind, to connect with things in ways that complicate formats of catastrophic economics. For Deleuze, the experience of learning was once described as swimming in the open sea or learning a new language, an oceanic expanse as 'composing the singular points of one's own body or one's own language with those of another shape or element, which tears us apart but also propels us into a hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems' (1994: 241). This is the kind of sensory-motivity or tacticality I have in mind as a kind of involvement with the world; it initiates a double becoming by implicating the untimely agencies of nonhuman things. Tacticality, as described throughout this article, expresses an encounter with multiplicity. It complicates existing formats and badly posed problems, grappling with the ontopolitics of environmental power.

Biographical Note.

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