Designing Truth
From Truth(s) Regime(s) to Exosomatization

Symposium at Jacob Institute for Design Innovation
UC Berkeley, 17 July, 2023

Argument

Since the development of digital capitalism within information organs and technologies, it appears that the truth regime upon which our relationship to knowledge was built is now in crisis. The main symptom of this crisis is the increasing number of symposia — often funded by Big Tech — being convened to redress what is called “post-truth,” which encompasses a range of bad political behaviors and their products, including misinformation, disinformation, fake news, conspiracy theories, deepfake, and so on. In general, these research programs only provide additional solutions to control, monitor, moderate, regulate, censor, etc., in order to bring to heel those who would stray from approved political behaviors on social networks. This is a vast techno-political enterprise, in which big-tech platforms act as undemocratic political and economic powers. This is demonstrated by Benjamin Bratton's remarkable analysis in The Stack; Antoinette Rouvroy and Thomas Bern's concept of algorithmic governmentality; Bernard Stiegler’s concept of computational capitalism; and Shoshana Zuboff's concept of surveillance capitalism, to name but a few. The point of their analyses is to show how the infrastructures of Big Tech today produce a number of (geo-)
political, economic and epistemic effects, leading to a number of contradictions, of which "post-truth" becomes an epistemic symptom to be resolved.

The aim of this colloquium is to examine the expression of what is labeled “post-truth” on social networks not as a failure of democracy, but on the contrary, as a failure to recognize localities - something that imperialist technological strategies have been quick to sweep aside. We would also like to reflect on the theoretical and technological alternatives that it is possible to imagine in the wake of mediaactivism and based on the media experiments currently being carried out by grassroot protest movements and marginalized communities.

To do this, we'd like to (re)develop three concepts in particular, to be articulated together: automedia, truth regime and exosomatization.

Autocmedia: whether it is the self-media gesture produced on the fly by a single individual with a smartphone, or the collective automedia enterprise already seen in the field of democratic struggles and experiments which reinvents the forms of tactical media and of mediactivists, automediation refers to the self-production and self-communication of political information through the use or reinvention of digital communication devices and circuits. Automedia and automediation can be understood both as an individual, autonomous and (de-) automatatable power to produce information.

Truth regime: this designates for Michel Foucault “the set of procedures and institutions by which individuals are committed and compelled to perform, under certain conditions and with certain effects, well-defined acts of truth?” These epistemological regimes are established and institutionalized by (political) powers as a mechanism of governmentality – another Foucauldian concept designing the rationality and mode of exercise specific to the government of the population.

Exosomatization: this designates for Alfred Lotka the technical exteriorization of the living — that is to say, the production of exosomatic organs by organisms. Exosomatic organs (usually referred to as technical organs or artificial organs) are organs that grow outside of the body or organism (“exo-” and “soma-” meaning “outside” and “body,” respectively, in Latin).

The exosomatic process thus designates a process which solicits the cognitive functions of imagination and invention, and the technical and technological functions of design and production.

The exosomatic process values subjectivity and singularity, as soon as they express the idiom of a locality. In the context of this symposium, it is a question not only of opening up

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6 *Basically, if you like, a regime of truth is what determines the obligations of individuals with regard to the procedures for manifesting the truth […]. We speak of a political regime […] to designate, in short, the set of procedures and institutions by which individuals find themselves committed, in a more or less pressing way […]. We can [also] speak of the penal system, for example, to designate the set of procedures and institutions by which individuals are committed, determined and forced to submit to laws of general application. So, in these conditions, why not speak of a regime of truth to designate the set of procedures and institutions by which individuals are committed and compelled to perform, under certain conditions and with certain effects, well-defined acts of truth? (The translation from the French is ours). In Michel Foucault, *Du gouvernement des vivants - Cours au Collège de France*, Gallimard, Seuil, 2012, coll. "Hautes études", p. 91-92 and 98-99.

and democratizing political expression, but also of diversifying its truth value — something that a territorial design coupled with anthropology can support. It's about imagining a new type of digital platform that mediates and empowers something of a territorial locality in the production of information, that responds to criteria of truth.

Thus, the objective of this symposium will be to shed light on the enterprise of epistemological-political domination of Big Tech on information production — which is today constituted through the fight against post-truth — to reflect on an epistemological, political, and design alternative through automedia practices and collectives. Indeed, automedia practices and experimentation can give rise to new truth regimes that take locality into account, through exosomatic processes in information design conception. It will be a question of reflecting on the principles of an automedia truth regime — as distinguished from the journalistic truth regime and its pretention to universality, in particular because it does not integrate a complex exosomatic conception of truth criteria.

However, in order to take shape, these alternatives must not only be the subject of conceptual elaboration, but must also feed into the fields of digital design and interaction design, which share political responsibility for their development. Through this symposium, we therefore hope to introduce the idea of a new territorialized information design. This design is not limited to a professional field of design, but embraces both environmental design and UX design, placing it in relation with philosophy, political science and anthropology.

Event description:

- **Title:** Designing Truth
- **Subtitle:** From Truth(s) Regime(s) to Exosomatization
- **Date:** Monday, July 17, 2023
- **Time:** from 9 a.m. to 5.10 p.m
- **Location:** Jacob Institute for Design Innovation at UC Berkeley
- **Access:** UC Berkeley, 2530 Ridge Road Berkeley, CA / Zoom Link
- **Registration:** For the registration form and Zoom link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdU8kPShk4Hh5xcCCHKQ5wMzEVIIKISnPvyJJxeQTblEmSE9g/viewform?usp=pp_url
- The following sentence must also be visible: “This project has received funding from the MSCA-RISE program under grant agreement No 101007915

**Partners**

1. **Organizers:**
   - Automedias.org (http://automedias.org/)
   - Networking Ecologically Smart Territories project (https://www.nestproject.eu/)
   - Université Paris Lumières (https://www.u-plum.fr/)
   - Jacob Institute for Design Innovation (https://jacobsinstitute.berkeley.edu/)
2. **Funding Partners:**
   - Networking Ecologically Smart Territories project ([https://www.nestproject.eu/](https://www.nestproject.eu/))
   - Townsend Center for the Humanities ([https://townsendcenter.berkeley.edu/](https://townsendcenter.berkeley.edu/))

3. **Scientific Partner of UC Berkeley:**
   - Department of Rhetoric ([https://rhetoric.berkeley.edu/](https://rhetoric.berkeley.edu/))

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**Program**

**Monday, July 17**

- Opening 9.am – 9.15am: Igor Galligo (UC Berkeley, NEST, Automedias.org) [https://rhetoric.berkeley.edu/people/igor-galligo/](https://rhetoric.berkeley.edu/people/igor-galligo/)

**First Session: Computational capitalism: a politico-epistemic enterprise?**
- 9.20am – 9.45 am: 1 talk: Antoinette Rouvroy (University of Namur, FNRS) [https://unamur.academia.edu/AntoinetteRouvroy](https://unamur.academia.edu/AntoinetteRouvroy)
- 9.50am – 10.15am: 2nd talk: David Bates (UC Berkeley, NEST) [https://rhetoric.berkeley.edu/people/david-bates/](https://rhetoric.berkeley.edu/people/david-bates/)
- 10.20am – 10.30am: Discussant: Anna Longo (CIPH Paris, Automedias.org) [https://univ-paris1.academia.edu/AnnaLongo](https://univ-paris1.academia.edu/AnnaLongo)
- 10.30am – 10.50am: Collective discussion with the audience

**Break**

**Second Session: How can exosomatization territorialized information design?**
- 11.00 – 11.25: 1 talk: Ludovic Duhem (Higher School of Art and Design of Valenciennes, Automedias.org) [https://valenciennes.academia.edu/DUHEMLudovic](https://valenciennes.academia.edu/DUHEMLudovic)
- 12.00 – 12.10: Discussant: Viviana Lipuma (University Paris 10, Automedias.org) [https://har.parisnanterre.fr/membres/viviana-lipuma/](https://har.parisnanterre.fr/membres/viviana-lipuma/)
- 12.10 – 12.30: Collective discussion with the audience

**Buffet with the public**

**Third Session: Platform, territory and truth problems: what solutions for UX Design?**
- 14.30 – 14.55: 2nd talk: Samriddho Ghosh (UC Berkeley) [https://design.berkeley.edu/profiles/samriddho-ghosh](https://design.berkeley.edu/profiles/samriddho-ghosh)
- 15.00 – 15.30: Collective discussion with the audience

**Break**
Fourth Session: Is computational capitalism part of the "post-truth crisis"?
- 15.40 – 16.05: 1 talk: Nils Gilman (Berggruen Institute)
  https://www.berggruen.org/people/nils-gilman/
- 16.10 – 16.35: 2nd talk: Igor Galligo (UC Berkeley, NEST, Automedias.org)
  https://rhetoric.berkeley.edu/people/igor-galligo/
- 16.40 – 17.10: Collective discussion with the audience

7 Logos: