

EDITORIAL

EXCESSIVE RESEARCH

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EXCESSIVE RESEARCH relates to the announcement of transmediale 2016, *Conversation Piece* which highlights the compulsive actions of digital culture, and how we are constantly encouraged to stay active, to make, to share and to secure. Following a research workshop in Liverpool, organised in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University and the Liverpool Biennial, this issue of *APRJA* delves into the nature of these actions and their limits. It asks: What happens when research is less about exchange and more about excess?

The compulsory actions of a networked society are paradoxical. While idealised by hackers, the actions are at the same time the conveyors of new agile innovation strategies, and modes of economic and symbolic exchange. They are constitutive for our cultural being, and at the same time they can be a threat. A culture of sharing, for instance, is evidently one of the most fetishised activities of the network and describes how value is now created. 'Sharing is caring', goes the catchphrase, but by its inclination of excess, loss and indebtedness, sharing also challenges the very logic of accumulation, and hence it must be domesticated and normalised. Through corporate social network platforms that promise to deliver a coherent neoliberal subject (through sharing, making, acting, securing), we are not just carrying out social activities but also social reproduction. In other words, 'info liberalism' conceals a simple process of exchange behind a façade of compulsory actions that all seem to be for the social good.

What is excess?

In order to expand our understanding of these actions, and how we create communities of action, we need to look beyond our

existing terms of exchange to the realm of excess; embracing anti-economic, political and existential meanings. Making reference to the French writer Georges Bataille, media theorist Wolfgang Sützl has argued in the recent article "On Sharing", that expanded possibilities (i.e. also the possibility of acting, sharing, making, differently) relates to an inclusion of the visceral, the erotic, and the primeval.

Excess is not simply a description of an amount beyond what is considered normal, sufficient or permitted (as with insurance or business), but in its etymological link to ecstasy, it is linked to the realm of pleasure, Bataille argues. The notion of excess is elementary to Bataille's view of a 'general economy' based upon the intentional production of non-utilitarian goods such as luxuries or spectacular displays of wealth and weapons systems. The general economy is where expenditure (waste, sacrifice, or destruction) is considered more fundamental than the restricted economies of production and utilities that are based on scarcity. He describes, for instance, how the sun freely expands energy without receiving anything in return. If people intend to be free (from the imperatives of capitalism, for instance) he recommends they should pursue a general economy of expenditure (giving, sacrifice or destruction). Only then will they escape the determination of existing imperatives of utility and normative production. For Bataille, people are necessarily beings of excess; full of exorbitant energy, fantasies, need, drives, and heterogeneous desires.

The notion of 'excess' energy is central to Bataille's thinking. He takes the superabundance of energy, beginning from the infinite outpouring of solar energy or the surpluses produced by life's basic chemical reactions, as the norm for organisms. In other words, an organism in Bataille's general economy, unlike the rational actors

of classical economy (Capitalist and Marxist alike) who are motivated by scarcity, normally has an excess of energy available to it. This extra energy can be used productively for the organism's growth or it can be lavishly expended. Bataille insists that an organism's growth or expansion always runs up against limits and becomes impossible. The wasting of this energy is a 'luxury' characteristic of any society. 'The accursed share' refers to this excess, destined for waste.

Researching excess

Given how institutionalised research itself is bound to artificial scarcity (of funding, positions, etc.) and its own brand of compulsory actions (the requirement to produce articles, to network, to cite, to secure patents and copyright, and so on), we ask how research might embrace this realm of excess? How might research go beyond itself and its own systems of exchange that are ever more economised, ever more efficient, and that also make researchers ever more redundant? The journal is a call to identify the primeval pleasures and excess energies of research itself to the extent that it becomes a spectacular expression of luxury that also challenges the regulation of academia.

Through highlighting excess in research, we address what is otherwise destined for waste, and the potential transgression of economised exchange. In terms of the presentation of research into excesses energies – such as radical boredom, block-chains, honey trading, menstruation, or poetry – the journal issue addresses the limits of digital culture's compulsory actions themselves, and also how these limits can be understood more philosophically. In other words, the authors seek to reconfigure understandings of media technologies, use and

practices, and in various ways explore how the benevolent confines of info liberalism can be transgressed, shared differently, and where excess energy can be identified and other fantasies activated.

Writing excess

How do we address excess in research writing? In an essay on Bataille and his notions of restricted and general economies, Jacques Derrida highlights how a general economy of excess relates to the production of meaning; or, of a potential 'sovereign silence' which interrupts articulated language. "The writings of sovereignty conforms to general economy [...] it relates its objects to the destruction, without reserve, of meaning." (342) Insofar as the language of research (of scientific form), encountered in this journal, envisages a general economy, it is not sovereign in itself (indeed, there is no sovereignty in itself, as it by its reference to loss, is not). However, if writing also defines certain formal limits of understandability, then how might we similarly look for means of escape from its determining effects?

We are inspired by the way Franco 'Bifo' Berardi identifies poetry as a means of exceeding the established meaning of words and the reduction of language to information (in *The Uprising: Poetry and Finance*). To him, "poetry is the excess of language", disentangled from the actions and limits of symbolic debt and financialisation. When it comes to research writing, we similarly hope for alternative scientific forms where the research object and method take on a different character. Although all articles in the journal issue undergo rigorous peer-review, they also – in their use of language and artistic practices – evoke the desire for different kinds of research work. In other words, if

research is to escape the imperatives of a restricted economy of production and utility then let us begin to explore the creative and critical energies of excess.

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