

## **Offline Networks: Faciality Machine and the Digital Self The Case of PirateBox Offline Network as Art Mediation**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, I will connect the practice of offline networks with art mediation and artistic practices. My main case study will be *Spaces for reflection*, a project that included students, artists and researchers as part of a permanent intervention which explored the perception of visitors and the possibilities of public participation in mega-exhibitions of contemporary art. Their main field of study was *documenta14*, as well as the *10th Berlin Biennale* and the *6th Athens Biennale*, both of which took place in 2018. The group installed an offline network using *PirateBox* code, "an anonymous, DIY offline file sharing and communication system built with free software and inexpensive standard hardware", while using, exploring and discussing its possibilities with the audience. Furthermore, the artist Mattin was invited to discuss the use of offline networks in his performance "*Social Dissonance*" during *documenta14* in Athens and in Kassel. These practices will be connected here with the deleuzian and guattarian thought, exploring how this offline router was able to create anonymous rhizomes of a networking community, how it created smooth spaces between its users, how it embodied the demand for the abolition of organism, of subjectification and signifiante, and ultimately, how it can be used as a war machine in contemporary art.

In this article I will connect the practice of offline networks with the deleuzian thought and concepts. The objective here is to show how our relation to a network by technical means can also create a mixed semiotic, which resembles the system of signifiante and subjectification that Deleuze and Guattari (*Mille Plateaux* 206-207) describe as the white wall-black hole system. The offline nature of these networks, and more specifically *PirateBox*, can result in a significant shift in the positive-negative signs of the lines of flight, thus causing the subversion of the mixed semiotic procedures that

produce organization, signifiante and subjectification. Additionally, I connect offline networks with the notion of the body without organs, assuming that the offline network can be defined as the body without organs of the internet Identity.

My main example will be PirateBox, “a DIY anonymous offline file-sharing and communications system built with free software and inexpensive off-the-shelf hardware”. I will try to demonstrate how PirateBox was used in artistic mediation and practices, treating networking and copyleft questions. I will research how this offline router was able to create anonymous rhizomes of a networking community, how it created smooth spaces between its users, how it embodied the deleuzian and guattarian demand for the abolition of the organism, of subjectification and signifiante, and ultimately, how it can be used as a war machine. In addition, I will describe how such a type of network performs regarding the storage of its users' data and I will discuss security and file-sharing issues, its capabilities and limitations, as well as its potential uses. Finally, I will examine the link that exists between our relation with the internet and the lacanian mirror stage on the one hand and the deleuzian and guattarian faciality machine on the other hand, in order to find similarities and differences between them, and determine the approach that most closely matches this case.

### **History of the web**

The demand for distance communication is a recurring demand found in many societies and periods. Various systems have been used on occasion: smoke signals or sounds, messengers, written notes and letters, designated symbols and colour choices (e.g. on boat sails or flags) allowing to decode the messages before proximity is achieved, so that these symbols can convey the narrative in detail: the peril, the event, the result of the fight. Technological advancements in past centuries have helped to design and implement more general communication systems such as the telegraph and the telephone, as well as mass media such as radio, television and cinema, the latter not recommended for two-way communication.

The idea of a network using a computer was proposed in 1961 by Leonard Kleinrock, in his doctoral thesis proposal on the flow of information to large-scale communication networks. This idea led to Project ARPANET, a larger networking project based on a survey of the U.S. Department of Defense in the 1960s, under the leadership of Robert Taylor and Lawrence Roberts. ARPANET quickly became the starting point for the development of a hypernet, in which individual networks could be

connected to a network of networks. The first message sent by this network, in 1969, was sent from the laboratory of Leonard Kleinrock (UCLA) to the network node of the Stanford Research Institute (SRI). Over the next decade, several countries and educational institutions would put a lot of effort into implementing various communication protocols: packet switches, NPL network, ARPANET, Merit network, CYCLADES and Telenet.

The Internet Protocol suite (TCP/IP) developed by Robert E. Kahn and Vint Cerf in the 1970s combined protocols from ARPANET and from the French CYCLADES project by Louis Pouzin. During the 1980s, many educational and research institutions used interconnectivity nodes with the NSFNET project. The commercial world followed at the end of the decade with various emerging Internet service providers (ISPs), replacing ARPANET in the market and elsewhere. At the same time, research under the direction of Tim Berners-Lee at CERN in Switzerland created and developed the World Wide Web, whose network nodes connected hyperlinks and hypertext documents to a larger information system.

Since the 1990s, the Internet has provided more and more opportunities for social networking, cultural and business activities, and information sharing through electronic mail, interactive video calls, voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone calls, as well as daily print media, blogs, websites, videos, television providers, film productions and file sharing companies of all kinds. Fiber optics and recent 5G technologies have dramatically increased the initial speed of data transmission, as the internet continues to expand and integrate into the day-to-day functioning of contemporary humans, as research into new networks continues with the introduction of increasingly technical objects, new forms of intelligence and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies.

Among the many options, many developers and users resort to connecting to hidden VPNs, onion browsers and other available tools, while the issues of file sharing and data storage are among the most important issues related to networking today. It is also noteworthy that many local networks are emerging, which are at odds with the essence of remote, international sharing. These are the issues that interest us here. PirateBox as an offline network has ceased to exist, although the code remains free. Matthias Strubel started working on PirateBox in 2011 as an open source project, travelling around the globe to promote it. Some PirateBox Camps were organised as well. By 2019 Matthias Strubel had gradually left the program, although the blog had not yet ceased to exist online. The reasons for his decision are many. As he explains: “in the year 2016 FCC

changed the rules about firmware security, resulting in more locked router firmware, HTTPS everywhere is kicking PirateBox' butt with the redirect everywhere, all the technical enhancements for user security made us go one step back [...] the amount of spam increased tremendously". Although the forum is closed and some services will eventually stop, their space in GitHub, "a provider of internet hosting for software development", will stay online and there is also a call for volunteers to take over the project.

### **Internet and the Self**

Through the access media, in distinction from the flow media (Puech 224), we are in a constant reconstruction of our relationship to information, to sharing and to the self. This relationship, like that between flows and accesses, is complex and contributes to the coevolution "for the future of homo sapiens technologicus" (Puech 225). The question is not how we change ourselves because of the means we use, but how we are defined as human beings by the possibilities we conceive for ourselves, entrenched in a distinction between the human subject who invents and the technical object that is invented (Stiegler 134). Apart from this distinction, all human tools, from the first stone to artificial intelligence, are the mirror of the self and all the prerequisites that it produces for the continuation of its life. One could accept that the invention of writing is the point where humans delivers their human nature into a tool which distinguishes them from other natural beings and allows them to name themselves and narrate their story (Derrida 124-125). The technical shapes and invents, in the same way that it is shaped and invented, belonging to a larger history of the technical object, in which the technical and the human are inextricably linked and evolve mutually (Stiegler 137).

When it comes to how we construct the self through the widespread use of technology today, especially our Internet or Online Identity (IID), many theories resort to the lacanian mirror stage (Écrits 93-81) to illustrate how a smartphone, a tablet or other devices can serve as tools to produce an imaginary image, an Ego and an image of the Self functioning as an autopoietic system (Maturana and Varela xii-xxx) with all the characteristics of such a system, even if a variation would cause the system to change its identity and become a unit of various types (Maturana and Varela xx). At the lacanian mirror stage, the I, as an imaginary imprint of the Self, is a process of development rather than a predefined property subjected to a double system of fragmentation and unity:

And the whole dialectic of what I try to make you understand as a model, as an example, under the name of mirror stage, is the relation between a certain immediate and the tendencies of a certain level too, which deserve to be clarified – in truth it's all there – a certain level of tendencies that are experienced, say, for a moment, at some point in life, as disconnected, as discordant, as fragmented – and there's always something left of it! – that this something merges and pairs with a unity which is at the same time, precisely, what the subject for the first time knows himself as a unity, but as an alienated unity, as a virtual unity (Lacan *Les écrits*).

Likewise, in a corresponding polarity, Maturana and Varela (14) refer to organisms which “generate representations of their *own* interactions by specifying entities with which they interact as if these belonged to an independent domain, while as representations they only map their own interactions”. The above paradox regards human beings as engaging in two simultaneous processes: on the one hand, we are the observers of the representations of our interactions, which we repeat in relation to them, always creating a domain of interactions larger than that of the representation. On the other hand, we are agents of self-consciousness and self-observation and “by making descriptions of ourselves (representations), and interacting with our descriptions we can describe ourselves describing ourselves, in an endless recursive process” (Maturana and Varela 14).

From the above, it can be concluded that every interaction, observation, imaginary identification, and organization of the self occurs outside an objective space of the real, in a virtual and through a virtual, even without the use of means or technological tools. In this way, cyberspace could be seen as a “whole realm full of technological mirrors” (Nusselder 83). As the ego develops through the image of the real (Lacan *Les écrits*), technology also creates a virtual reality (Lévy 116-117), overestimating or emphasizing the resemblance of the virtual to the digital. While the human being perceives its form as being constructed by the reflection of oneself outside oneself (Lacan *The seminar* 140), technology notably produces a self-consciousness outside oneself (Nusselder 85). Identity is defined by the digital self image and consolidated during its construction at the same time, be it photographic visualization, the roles we play online, or our reflection through the screen. Or, ultimately, the ego becomes the sum of our choices in terms of the data collected (routes, preferences, advertising algorithm, contacts and friends, pornographic sexual preferences, etc.).

The two most important questions on the issue are, on the one hand, what constitutes the sphere of the real and the virtual in the computer age, and, on the other hand, from what discovery/invention can we then affirm that the technological tool or device becomes embedded in humans and thus an extension of human nature? If each identification with the imaginary self occurs in the reflection of the other, whether the other is the representation of the self, our social and family environment, or the result of our choices in relation to our ideal desire, then why does the mediation of this process by a digital factor come to outbid the virtual instead of weakening it in the realization of this arrangement, thus including everything in the real? And then, what is this element of the internet and of connectivity via the computer that makes this tool more autonomous and more invasive on a daily basis than the first stone or the first iron tool, forged for the purposes of the war industry or agricultural production?

### **Faciality Machine**

By combining the above questions with the thoughts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, I will replace the lacanian mirror stage with the notion of the faciality machine, explained in *Mille Plateaux* (210). The two thinkers explain the transformation of the head into face by various regimes of signs which transform the entire system into an abstract machine, without the signifier and the subject being the only elements:

In the literature of the face, Sartre's text on the look and that of Lacan on the mirror make the mistake of appealing to a form of subjectivity or humanity reflected in a phenomenological field or split in a structural field. But gaze is only second to eyes without gaze, to the black hole of faciality. The gaze is but secondary in relation to the gazeless eyes, to the black hole of faciality. The mirror is but secondary in relation to the white wall of faciality.

Indeed, it is not mandatory that the head, as an organ of the human body, will become a face. It becomes a face through the mixed semiotics of white wall-black hole, because it changes function during the process of subjectification and signification by the decoding and overcoding that occur on its surface (208). While becoming a face, the head-organ is completely deterritorialized and is subjected to other strata. In the particular case it passes from the stratum of organism to the strata of signification and subjectification (214).

At the same time, there is no deterritorialization without a system of at least two conditions having been created: the utilitarian object associated with the hand – in this case, the computer, the tablet, the smartphone associated with the face -, co-creates an arrangement which does not contribute to the “defacialization” (232) of the hand or the face but to the “facialization” of the utilitarian object (214). Once the utilitarian object can pass through the white wall – black hole system, it can then be facialized, embodying the abstract machine during this process, regardless of similarity relations (215).

Indeed, the connectivity obtained through the online machine is not a hyper object, so the system is facialized in many correlative, almost rhizomatic, ways. However, for Deleuze and Guattari, according to information theory, there is a homogeneous set of pre-organized signifying messages, the combinations of which depend on a certain number of subjective binary choices based on binary and bi-univocal relationships under the condition “of a wall or a screen, [of] the installation of a central computing hole without which no message would be discernible, no choice could be implemented” (219). A white wall-black hole system will have to define its space, its arborescences and its dichotomies so that signification and subjectification can begin to define theirs. This system cannot be purely linguistic, because language cannot convey a message without the face (the true megaphone) (220), so that this system, the mixed white wall-black hole semiotics, can protect its expressions and contents with the help of semiological screens and walls which protect the signifying chains (219-221). Without the faciality machine, which will function as a regulator of the eye, “one can make subjective choices between two chains or at each point in a chain only if no outside tempest sweeps away the chains and subjects. One can form a web of subjectivities only if one possesses a central eye, a black hole capturing everything that would exceed or transform either the assigned affects or the dominant signification” (219-220).

Under these conditions, the interface point, which acts as a controller, can be seen in several contexts. In the virtual context, the power arrangements do not exclusively use this mixed semiotics (220-221). The subject itself learns to control and to control itself (161-162), to classify itself socially, morally and politically in order to regulate the interface points of the different virtualities through the intervening interface. In the digital context, the interface functions as a regulator, a device, software, platform, capable of connecting individuals, technical objects and networks of people by facilitating and controlling communication between all parties, not as a means of communication between a human and “a world of computerized, codified objects” (Nusselder 4), but as a

link between technical objects or individuals via the interconnection of networks and social media.

In addition, these interfaces not only increase and highlight the virtual condition in all these imaginary processes, as a digital mediation of the self, but also constitute an enterprise condition in a “corporate” context, where—storage, accumulation and exploitation of user data is a profitable business and thus the user becomes the product. On the one hand, the direct inclusion of advertisements from third parties (companies) and products related to the habits, routes and google searches of users, on the other hand, the use of data in order to influence the election results and disseminating fake news – either because of malicious intent or because of the parameters of the algorithm – are considerations that concern national control mechanisms, against arrangements of power that could potentially play the role of this regulator for their own benefit.<sup>1</sup>

### **Offline**

Offline strategies are not something completely new as a technology and demand. Offline networks have been used for decades alongside the development of global networks. It is something similar to networking but without connection to the World Wide Web. This practice has many applications and the main challenge is to ensure a more secure communication among technical objects and computers against malicious or accidental (random) external interference. Initially, there are gaming networks with user interfaces for entertainment or computer game education. Then we find professional or home networks with a small number of computers, printers, projectors and Bluetooth beacons to facilitate communication between machines. In addition, a home or office may have installed an offline network for the use of machines and their automatic or remote communication, such as opening a household appliance, heating remotely, or controlling movement in the absence of the owner (Internet of Things). In addition, university or corporate campuses use local networks to help individuals, employees, students, visitors or researchers. And finally, infrastructures, dams, bridges, biotechnology and nuclear laboratories or military facilities use personalized networks to ensure maximum security without sharing information with the outside world and to protect themselves against sabotage and other malicious and dangerous activities.

Thus, the practice of local and offline networks can be used for the reasons mentioned above, but it is also quite common to use them in the context of an art exhibition for purely artistic purposes. It is not unusual for an exhibition or even an

academic institution to set up an offline network to promote communication between exhibition visitors or students. Furthermore, this practice is used in the artistic context in educational mediation by teachers or guides when explaining works, during programs with schools, etc. However, in addition to these more functional networking practices, offline networking as an object or practice is also found in works of art as a stand-alone tool.

There are many reasons why the offline network can function and act like a work of art. First of all, the artist might wish to demonstrate that this knowledge – namely to set up and locally control such a network – is useful knowledge in the current era. The use of programming knowledge and communication systems is not only useful for our time: this kind of knowledge is necessary and allows the user to understand and become familiar with monitoring/surveillance methods and data collection widely used by platforms, businesses and governments. These data can be an important tool in the power/knowledge syzygy (Foucault Lectures 3), either in relation to the internet economy, or in order to achieve more comprehensive surveillance of individuals. By offering this knowledge of such a work of art to the public, one also offers the power of consciousness of these arrangements, which follow a centralized strategy of this type. We then offer the awareness that these tools, these data and these crowdsourcing strategies belong to those who produce them and not to those who collect them (Foucault *The birth* 62), in order to serve as information for governance and a more valid and precise authority (286). This awareness is another dimension of our relationship with networking and connectivity.

Moreover, since an offline network is capable of storing files and distributing them among the users of that network freely and at will, questions of information sharing and copyright arise. On the one hand, an offline network can provide free access to copyleft licenced material,<sup>2</sup> i.e. works, books, software etc. with free use of the work itself and all of its modified and extended editions. The material is free and the ideal is for it to remain free, that is, any version of it is released as copyright and copyleft access. On the other hand, an offline network can also include works protected by copyright and whose use is limited by the publisher or creator. In this case, its non-public exchange possibilities raise important questions about the use of the work (for educational purposes, “fair use”), as well as questions about free access to all, in all cases. Peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing platforms already exist internationally, but these user network platforms are widely known to engage in copyright infringement. What is also interesting is that copyright infringement started to spread around the same time that home photocopying and video

recording were introduced to the market, creating controversial court rulings on what is considered personal and appropriate use, as well as coining the generic term “fair use” (Cave and Nakamura 187). In cyberspace, as well as in offline networks, it is impossible to estimate and control the limits of fair use. Nonetheless, the non-profit and open access to all – and in particular to less financially advantaged groups – for educational and informational reasons is invaluable.

Finally, offline networks typically operate through a local router or environment, rather than through a remote server. Therefore, any exchange, communication, sharing and downloading can only take place within the specific range that this device allows. This can be restrictive in terms of the poor access and the territoriality that characterize it. But it frees the networking process from excessive data storage on servers outside the user's control, no agreement is needed for its use, it does not store cookies on the connected device and any interconnection can remain anonymous and spatially unavailable in relation to a panopticon identification system.

### **The case of *Spaces of Reflection with Giannis Sarris and Simon Johnson***

*Spaces for Reflection* was a collective project that included reflective thought and action about artistic mediation. Students, artists and researchers coexisted as part of a permanent intervention that explored “the perception of visitors and the possibilities of public participation in mega-exhibitions of contemporary art”,<sup>3</sup> from Documenta14 to the 10th Berlin Biennale, *We don't need another hero*, and the 6th Athens Biennale, *ANTI*. The group was formed at the initiative of Mona Jas between students from the Kunsthochschule Weißensee and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, artists from Athens and Berlin and researchers from the Documenta14 chorus group. The first meeting took place at Goethe Institut Athen and the group created its own dynamic through networking and various meetings in Athens and Berlin.

The group presented its work at the 10th Berlin Biennale to the KW Institute for Contemporary Art Kunst-Werke studiolo in August 2018 (organized by Mona Jas and the artistic mediation and education department of the 10th Berlin Biennale), as well as at the 6th Athens Biennial at the Esperia Palace (organized by Eva Giannakopoulou in a co-production of the Athens Biennale and the Goethe Institut Athen). Among the various workshops, conferences, discussions and artistic interventions, Spaces for Reflection decided to use and include a detailed discussion on PirateBox during the Berlin and Athens Biennials, by setting up an offline network in the two spaces and engaging in

dialogue with visitors and participants. The group decided to use the PirateBox code, but, instead of buying a ready-made router as suggested on the PirateBox site, a Raspberry Pi was used and coded in the same way. The group was inspired and guided to use PirateBox by artist Giannis Sarris who had also used it as part of Documenta14, curated by Adam Szymczyk, for the performance Social Dissonance by artist Mattin. Raspberry Pi programming was successful with the invaluable help of programmer, game designer and artist Simon Johnson.

The PirateBox code is downloadable and available on the internet, and the community was active until around 2018. Users were advised to configure it as they wished or purchase an affordable, standard router. There was a forum, now inactive, showing which routers work with the code and giving download instructions, as well as the free code for everyone. This code creates an offline network with a ready-made interface, with basic capabilities such as chatting, downloading, viewing, and sharing files. During both of the *Spaces for Reflection* presentations, in Berlin and Athens, an offline network was available to visitors and participants to facilitate connectivity. In addition, the group organized presentations, demonstrations and discussions around the theme of the use of this network and the reason for their choice to set it up and make it available in such a context.



Image 1: Open discussion on PirateBox offline network in the 10<sup>th</sup> Berlin Biennial. Photo: Liz Stumpf

The offline network created was very useful throughout the exhibition as it was used to store images, exchange opinions, and upload an illustrative bibliography which helped all other *Spaces for Reflection* activities. But the most interesting point was the discussions that followed the interventions. Most visitors could not see the usefulness of this network and why it could replace a website or a closed group on a social network. Some believed that a closed group of participants in a communication app like WhatsApp, Messenger or Trello would do the same job. Finally, there was a great deal of suspicion about their data entry when interacting with the network offline. This made them suspicious of what they could write or download on the network chat, as they were worried that their actions would remain stored on the Raspberry Pi.

During the first realization of the project, at the 10th Berlin Biennale, the team left the local network installed on Raspberry Pi, in the KW studiolo, and presented its operation and capabilities. Participants in the discussion seemed suspicious of the usefulness of such a network. The team mentioned some possible uses, such as an educational institution or an art exhibition. Participants were invited to communicate with each other via offline chat. Again, they found that this was not particularly useful if everyone in the conversation was already within a range they could communicate without network mediation. Finally, they were invited to share information via Raspberry Pi, such as photos from the KW site they had visited before. Their response was negative, as they were apprehensive about logging their choices when connecting to the local network, storing their data, as well as about copyright issues for the photos they were asked to upload.

During the second presentation of the project, at the 6th Athens Biennale, the team gathered at the Esperia Palace, a space provided by the Gigi project of Eva Giannakopoulou. This time, two local networks were presented, one with Raspberry Pi and the other with the conventional router by Giannis Sarris, the one also used for the performance *Social Dissonance* by artist Mattin presented at Documenta14 curated by Adam Szymczyk. It should be noted that Mattin was also invited to the discussion. The same questions were raised during the discussion, however with less suspicion about copyright during communication and file sharing. This may be due to the fact that the team's experience gained in the previous discussion helped to explain the potential of the tool in more depth.



Image 2: Open discussion on PirateBox offline network at the 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Athens. Photo: Sofia Grigoriadou

### **Organization, Subjectification, Significance**

Indeed, there are many possible links between the practice of the offline network and the thought of Deleuze and Guattari. As the central theme of any network is connectivity, the most relevant link would be that of the rhizome. It is clear that we can apply the principles of the rhizome to such a project: there is composition and heterogeneity as long as each user can connect to others, there is a multiplicity since the One, the user as a point, creates with the other users a community, a plurality instead of a unity, there is an asignifying rupture because a user can leave the connection yet the connectivity rhizome does not break, but continues to network towards other nodes and, finally, the fundamental principle of cartography is applied, because it is an abstract map and not a tracing (Deleuze and Guattari *Mille Plateaux* 9-37).

In this article, however, I would like to theoretically link the artistic practice of an offline network to a completely different system, while delving into a generalized plan proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Most importantly, I will analyze how an offline network can function as a vehicle for the abolition of subjectification, significance and organization. These three strata, with which we are

directly linked, are used by the power arrangements (Deleuze and Guattari *Mille Plateaux* 197-198) but also by an immanent centre of power (198-199). The objective of the two thinkers is to find ways of ceasing to be organisms, signifiers, subjects (198) and to disarticulate, to designify and to detach ourselves from a dominant reality with "common art of the three", prudence (198). In this way, we will be able to reach the body without organs, the desire and the social. The body without organs is both an egg and a border, to which the organism sticks like a layer (196). The opposite of the body without organs is not the organs; the enemy is the organism and organisation. This is what remains if we remove everything, and when we say everything, we mean the imaginary, all signifiante and subjectification, that is to say, doing the opposite of what psychoanalysis does, which translates everything into fantasies as its currency, and, according to Deleuze and Guattari, misses the real, the body without organs (187-188).

There is also the desiring process, with the example of the breast-mouth desiring machine. There, the subject takes its place as the remainder of the desiring process, the small amount of milk coming out at the child's burp (Deleuze and Guattari *The Anti-Edipe* 49). At the same time, the two thinkers explain how the desiring process works, and especially how it can be used as an explanation in relation to the social. Now it is clear from these references that Deleuze and Guattari think that there is only desire and the social, these two being the fundamental principles of schizoanalysis (416). In short, schizoanalysis is distinguished from psychoanalysis: schizoanalysis touches a non-figurative and non-symbolic unconscious, an abstract representative dimension in the sense that one can speak of abstract paintings, of flows and ruptures, of desire and the Real, under conditions of required identity (421). On the basis of schizoanalytic contemplation, there is similarly the desire and the social. On top of these, there is a continuous production of strata directly linked to spatiality and temporality. From this perpetual stratification, the three largest strata to which we relate are organization, signifiante and subjectification (Deleuze and Guattari *Mille Plateaux* 214-215).

The organization is the enemy of the body without organs (196); not the organs themselves, but their structure leading to becoming an organism: "You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body - otherwise you're just depraved" (197). But simultaneously "you will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted - otherwise you're just a deviant" (197) And "you will be subject, nailed down as one, subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement - otherwise you're just a tramp" (197). Here, the body without organs opposes disarticulation in order to function

better, just as desiring machines function better when out of order (Deleuze and Guattari *L'Anti-Œdipe* 14, 39). Deleuze and Guattari propose experimentation on the signifier (“never interpret!”) and on nomadism as political behavior (“keep moving, even in place, never stop moving, motionless voyage, desubjectification”) (*Mille Plateaux* 197-198). In view of the above, it follows that the central aim of Deleuze and Guattari is to explain the processes by which we can abolish organization, signification and subjectification. Such a task seems difficult, but it is not something that can be done directly: we open the body to new connections, we detach the consciousness from the subject and the unconscious from the interpretation (198), little by little, day after day, as we turn against a process of subjugation passing through these three great stratifications.

Then, while the two thinkers examine and classify different regimes of signs, they distinguish in each a form of expression and a form of content (Deleuze et Guattari *Mille Plateaux* 140) and through this condition they analyse the regimes that are associated to social machines and historical periods. One of these regimes, the post-signifying regime, centralizes subjectification and is qualified as an authoritarian, subjective or passionate regime (149). In this regime, “a sign or a packet of signs detaches from the irradiating circular network” (152) and becomes independent. But unlike other regimes where the line of flight has a negative sign, in the post-signifying regime this detached line of flight has a positive sign. It is a subjectification, such as the flight of the Jews in the desert, Cartesian subjectivity, or 19<sup>th</sup>-century psychoanalysis (160-161). This subjectification is detached to begin a linear trajectory, but with a positive sign (152). In this post-signifying regime of signs that is capitalism, like the semiotics of modern white men (223), signification and subjectification are inseparable, as one enters the other.

As subjectification exists everywhere, from our relationships with other individuals and technical objects to our education (Deleuze et Guattari *Mille Plateaux* 161-162), a point of immanent subjectification is created, increasingly difficult to achieve, “always moving towards a higher, nobler one in closer conformity with a supposed ideal” (162). Thus, a point of subjectification is created and this in turn produces a subject of enunciation and a subject of the statement, “in other words, a subject bound to statements in conformity with a dominant reality” (162). Likewise, the line of deterritorialization, the line of flight with a positive sign, becomes the line of subordination as this configuration reduces all subjectifications in submission. This establishes an immanent power centre, where the more we become masters of ourselves, the more we become slaves, the more

we learn to obey ourselves, to be a slave to ourselves and a slave to the “pure” reason of the cogito (162).

Thus, a white wall-black hole system is created where the signs of significance are inscribed on the white wall, while consciousness and passions live in the black hole as subjectification (205). This system is inscribed on the face which ceases to be an organ of the body, ceases to be the head but becomes a faciality machine, a face on which signifiante and subjectification are inscribed (208-209). However, Deleuze and Guattari (*Mille Plateaux* 221) do not view these semiotics themselves as the enemy, but the enemy is found in the arrangements of power that enforce these semiotics. If these semiotics are destroyed, we will have immediate access, without the intermediation of signifiante and subjectification, to the plane of consistency, to the body without organs and the abstract machine (167). There, there are no more regimes of signs, the line of flight keeps its positive sign and deterritorialization is in full force, thanks to the liberation of the desiring production (167).

The connection of the above reflections on regimes of signs with the artistic practice of the offline network may be valid if we view this network as a line of flight in the World Wide Web, a line of flight from a radial circular network of a rhizomatic type. But what are the semiotics with which one can correspond to the internet and how can one treat and define the offline network as a line of flight? We are aware that lines of flight are treated differently in different sign regimes. Under the pre-signifying regime, each line of flight is authorized and prohibited at the same time through intense fragmentation and plurality, which exist to prevent that which threatens the semiotics itself (147-148). Under the nomadic counter-signifying regime “the imperial despotic line of flight is replaced by a line of abolition that turns back against the great empires, cuts across them and destroys them” (149). Under the signifying regime the line of flight starts from the centre of the signifiante with a clearly negative sign, which functions as a scapegoat in the dominant despotic signifier and is bound to be exiled, expelled, sacrificed (147). On the contrary, under the post-signifying regime, the lines of flight hold a positive sign, which is attributed to them by subjectification. But finally, they are constantly cancelled so that subjectification can each time create new lines of flight, since “it has its own way of repudiating the positivity it frees, or of relativizing the absoluteness it attains” (166).

Not all of the above semiotics are historical periods, nor do they refer to specific eras and events (Deleuze et Guattari *Mille Plateaux* 152-153). Many times they coexist,

are modified and can be transformed into each other, since “there is no general semiology” (169). At the same time, each line of flight or object can be used in each of these semiotics – or mixed semiotics – with different results, depending on the intention and original use. It is therefore sufficient to define the type of semiotics assumed by the World Wide Web and the function of the offline network within this semiotic.

The properties of the sign regimes, presented in *Mille Plateaux* (146-150), allow us to conclude that the Internet, through its current possibilities and uses, is a mixed semiotic of both the signifying regime and the post-signifying regime. On the one hand, as a post-signifying semiotic, the offline network uses, more than any other tool, *signifiante* and *subjectification* (149), by combining “the linear and temporal succession of finite proceedings, rather than [by] the simultaneity of circles in unlimited expansion” (150), with the decisive emotional exterior occasion of subjectification which creates linear series (150) and lines of flight with a positive sign (152). On the other hand, as a signifying semiotic, it includes the fundamental principles of the signifying regime so that the sign refers to the sign at infinity and is brought back by the sign, displaces the centre by relating to it and jumping from one circle to the other, makes an expansion of the circles according to its interpretations, refers to a major signifier, gives a face to the signifier (either the user or the administrator of the network), creates and is created in “a regime of ‘universal deception’” (147) and, finally, the line of flight that pierces it takes a negative sign (146-147).

Thus, for the offline networking practice to serve as a point of abolition of subjectification and signifiante, it should be able to escape the radial circular internet as a line of flight with a negative sign. At the same time, it should cross the circles of signifying semiotics as a line of flight with a positive sign. It will therefore function as a tool capable of transforming one abstract mixed semiotics into another, or possibly into a new mixed semiotics. To do so, it must act in both cases as a nomadic war machine, against the device of online networking, denying the potential for hyper-connectivity and interface that the latter offers. It should function as an internally produced point, “which operates by breaks, transitions, migration and accumulation” (148), posing functions and relations, as a polemical or strategic regime that transformed mixed semiotics into a pseudo-counter-signifying regime (170).

## **Conclusion**

It is obvious that this specific technical device did not exist at the time of writing of the two books to which I am referring. At the time, there was only ARPANET, a precursor to the internet. Consequently, this deleuzian-guattarian analysis is based on correspondence with the current era and on contemporary issues. But the offline network can be a useful aid in decisively changing the way we perceive internet semiotics today, primarily in terms of signifiante, subjectification, and the semiotics that presuppose them, with which we will put an end to difficulty. This device can radically change the way we – the network's users – will establish a network, by creating a line of flight with a positive sign in a signifying regime, as a decentralized server within generalized networking. And at the same time, by creating a line of flight with a negative sign in a post-signifying regime, a trajectory of a linear line of flight which the device does not support geographically, ethically and technologically. Through its extensive use in academia, education, art mediation, and artistic practices, the offline network can provide the nomadic war machine with a tactical quiver, one that will focus on the free sharing of information, without data theft, on ensuring privacy, and on controlling the networking and storage of user data.



Image 3: Offline network on Raspberry Pi in the 10th Berlin Biennial. Photo: Dana Papachristou

All of this can be done through the local, offline network, which will function as the body without organs of the internet Identity, as its use and capabilities will render it an unorganized organism, a non-subjective networking community, and a process of sharing of information without a major signifier. By functioning as a minor internet, based on the power of variation rather than the power of constants (Deleuze et Guattari *Mille Plateaux* 128), the offline network can serve as a rhizome of users, as well as a node of that rhizome, and offer subsidiarity to a diverse communication, without replacing the communication as the Big Other. This network can share information and copyleft material anonymously and without storing data, as a potential war machine. Its organization is rhizomatic instead of dichotomous, it is anonymous, and controls the classification of shared files by simply citing them without interpreting them. At the same time, the subject accommodates the ego without visualizing it, thus democratizing

anonymous communication in the form of a simple chat. In this way, a machine of deterritorialized faciality is created, which does not rely on the connectivity offered by the device, while the abstract machine is territorialized due to the limited connectivity scope, the local nature of the network and the specific hardware which facilitates connection, storage and sharing.

The objectives mentioned above can be achieved, not by an arborescent and dichotomous multiplicity of rhizomatic type, but by the creation of an a-centred system of “finite networks of automata in which the communication runs from any neighbour to any other, the stems or channels do not pre-exist, and all individuals are interchangeable, defined only by their state at a given moment – such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a central agency” (Deleuze et Guattari *Mille Plateaux* 26-27). And just as a military phalanx does not necessarily need a general strategist in order for soldiers to fire their arms, it also turns out that a multiplicity, a machinic configuration, or a society does not need centralized, unified automation to realize and demolish the arrangements of power which control and oppress it.

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### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s CEO testimony on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. 15/10/2021.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyJosQBtzsw> and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TeLKt5DpY>

<sup>2</sup> More on the copyleft issue: Faulks, David. “Proposal to add the Copyleft Symbol to Unicode by David Faulks”, February 23, 2016. 15/10/2021.

<https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2016/16059copyleft.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3gMGwvd4G1L33ozU3i3CX-KHLJcL3RxmhcJ0wpabVUpNQFE-ljZjwp7cs>

<sup>3</sup> The team of Spaces of Reflection consisted of various artists and researchers: Jasmeen Adeoshun, Magdalena Beger, Vivien Emmanouilidou, Sofia Grigoriadou, Maria Janus, Alexia Manzano, Dana Papachristou, Harriet Rabe von Froreich, Yorgos Samantas, Liz Stumpf, Simon Bejerholm Villadsen, Myrto Vratanou, Silke Wittig, and visitors Giannis Sarris, Simon Johnson and Mattin.

<https://bb10.berlinbiennale.de/calendar/spaces-of-reflection>. 15/10/2021.

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