Infiltration, Decontextualisation, Appropriation And Hoax, *Medium Reflective* Artworks In The Age Of Electronic Crowds

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Abstract

This article analyzes different tactics used by contemporary artists usually interested in exploring our relationship with media and technology. It starts by acknowledging a desire for interactivity and transparency in contemporary society, art reception and in product and interface design. But it also recognizes a very particular techno-social context in contemporary occidental societies – the existence of an *electronic crowd* in which everyone appears permanently interconnected, receiving, producing and sending information. This context is considered here as a potential ground for artistic intervention and different *medium reflective* artworks/interventions are analyzed as examples of such aesthetic potential.

Keywords

Tactical Media; Infiltration; Friction; Transparency; Détournement; Public Space; Appropriation; *Medium Reflective Artwork*; *Electronic crowd*.

Introduction

The activist impulse that characterizes the advent of interactive arts at the beginning of the 20th century seem to have faded away in many contemporary interactive art forms. If the first propositions played with the tensions between touch and anti-touch traditions in art and society, contemporary interactive forms have transformed museums and galleries into complex polysensory installations, engaging spectators in playful and cheerful experiences. As different analysis have already highlighted, very often, such experiences favor play and physical operation over critical reflection. [30] Moreover, technology seems to be foregrounded in many of these experiences in ways that resemble scientific demos or arcade games. This *technological correctness*[1] is nonetheless rejected by some artists favoring error,

glitch and friction over transparency and immersion. The use of errors as aesthetic functions is not new, although, as the work by Jodi and Netochka Nezvanova suggests, with the progressive introduction of machines and electronic media in the field of art, error has become not only a subject to explore but also a form of critical media aesthetics. [31]

"As our digital culture oscillates between the sovereign omnipotence of computing systems and the despairing agency panic of the user, digital tropes of perfect sound copies are abandoned in favour of errors, glitches become aestheticized, mistakes and accidents are recuperated for art under the conditions of signal processing." [32]

Following the observations made by Peter Krapp and other theorists we agree that audio-visual glitches, noise, system crashes and other undesired forms of electronic failures have been integrated as aesthetic elements in art and design propositions. Yet, they seem to have been somehow absorbed and commodified and are now part of our cultural landscape. The book *Glitch – Designing Imperfections* for example, provides us with a catalogue of imperfect or abnormal images that are the result of deliberate accidents created by artists and designers. In the field of music creation, Kim Cascone also detects an *aesthetic of failure* in the field of contemporary electronic music composition. Using noise as material, the avant-gardists Luigi Russolo, John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen are seen as strong influences in the introduction of noise and malfunctions into our contemporary electronic soundscapes. [33] According to Rosa Menkman, glitch transforms the artwork into a form of "unstable utterance of counter aesthetics", a critical media object that gives the opportunity to "critique the conventions of the medium". [31]

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[1] "Art itself is becoming TC. In fact, media art is frequently cited to vindicate the TC trend. We are invited to marvel at computers' improved capabilities and resolution and to be seduced by their evolutionary speed. Typically, the user of the artwork by mapping his or her actions to causal

effects in the environment thus, TC art cannot be divorced from the desire to police the user by offering some kind of token control. The special effects themselves become the object of the artwork and the main incentive for its contemplation – a phenomenon we might call the "effect" effect." [27] The term "Technological Correctness" is cited as originating with art critic Lorne Falk.

But is this opportunity still possible? What happens when the *aesthetics of failure* become assimilated into our cultural audio-visual landscapes? Are errors and glitches still failures that break transparency and make media opaque?

There is no simple answer to such questions since each situation needs individual consideration, although one might acknowledge that visual and sound glitches have been accepted and become ubiquitous, as well as the media that produce them. Today not only are they part of our mainstream soundscapes but they have also been assimilated as visual strategies for graphic design in magazines, posters or motion graphics and have also been displaced to the physical world of matter, becoming materialized in the form of sculptures or daily objects.

But what happens if these malfunctions, glitches and noise are applied to interactive experiences? Is there a potential for aesthetic experience that goes beyond the representation and the use of visual and sound glitch and noise?

Artists such as Jodi, Christopher Bruno, Mathias Gommel or Samuel Bianchini have been integrating this kind of tactics in which errors of communication, glitches and other types of failures become elements of aesthetic elements of friction. A delicate balance between error, frustration and artistic intention is established and the aesthetic experience emerges from this moment of doubt. We could provide different examples and analysis of artworks and performances representatives of this idea yet, we would like to focus on the core idea of this article: how artists use the *electronic crowds* simultaneous as space and medium to create and present aesthetic experiences.

When speaking about *electronic crowd* we are referring to the ensemble of humans and their media outlets. More than never, contemporary public and private spaces present a complex network of agents and agency between human and technological actors. We are permanently connected to each other and to things by means of all kinds of electronic devices, screens, speakers and terminals. We argue that these can be potentially used by artists not just as vessels for visual or sound contents but instead can be disrupted and subverted in order to provoke critical awareness or different types of critical distance. In works such as the *Image Fulgurator* by Julius Von Bismarck or *Newstweek* by Julian Oliver and Danja Vasiliev the artists act anonymously, hidden in the middle of the crowd or behind the screen, subverting and transforming the normal use of our technological extensions (the digital cameras and the computer/internet) into opaque objects that aim to provoke detached reflection. In both works, spectatorship is a condition that emerges involuntarily and even if the spectator is not really able to manipulate the work's structure, he or she still needs to act and to operate his or her device, in order to access the work.

The article analyzes *infiltration*, *decontextualisation*, *appropriation* and *hoax* as potential tactics for an artistic practice in a time in which each one of us has become an image producer and where the interest in production, participation and action is greater than the interest in contemplation. Such strategies aim to render visible the transparent *digital maelstrom* surrounding us by asking: what lies behind the scenes of this customary media façade that ultimately envelops all the ramifications of the social, personal and political?

Making, acting, interacting: the new paradigm

For some decades, a shift from a contemplative paradigm to an "active" paradigm has been observed in very different fields of our society and we believe that has been fomented to a large extent by technological development. According to Boris Groys in art reception, the *vita contemplativa,* which some time after Kant was considered superior to a practical attitude, has been discredited and replaced by what he names *vita activa.* [3] Erkki Huhtamo also observes a shift from a society that was essentially tactiloclasmic, to one that is gradually becoming participative and accepting the physical touch. [2] These transformations have been somehow represented in the field of art by authors such as Marcel Duchamp and Naum Garbo that demand spectator's physical participation in the sense-making process. At the same time, outside the field of art, the emergence of the self-service store, the penny arcade and other services have given people more authority in their choices. This shift has become more visible and been catalyzed by the advent of digital computers and the internet and today, when trying to define "New Media" two words seem impossible to avoid: *interactivity* and *ubiquity*. New media promotes interactivity by allowing people to communicate and participate bi-directionally as opposed to traditional media such as newspapers, radio or TV. The flexible, mutable and recombinant essence of new media allows a permanent hybridization and endless reproduction of media protocols and formats. After becoming participative, media has become customizable and is now ubiquitous, infiltrating all the capillaries of society. As Giorgio Agamben observes, even if certain devices date back to the time of homo sapiens', today they seem to model, contaminate and control every instant of our lives [8]. Anyone can have their own radio, TV channel or newspaper, expressing their thoughts and sharing their knowledge, lived and felt experience, skipping the traditional top-down system of most mass media. As Clay Shirky observes, "everyone is a media outlet." [9] From the already commonplace e-mail to *YouTube*, *Instagram*, personal blogs, online forums, online newspapers, podcasts, online radios, online social networks such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* or *Diaspora*, chat rooms as Messenger or *WhatsApp*, *Second Life* and Voip services such as *Skype*, media surround us and mediate us in the most intimate manifestations but also in our collective decisions. This empowerment of the individual has a direct impact on the way the collective comes together to identify, discuss and solve the problems of society. However, at the same time as these social tools have allowed for more participation, response, immediacy and sharing,

they have given rise to what Jean Baudrillard calls the *Ecstasy of Communication:*

"We no longer partake in the drama of alienation, but are in the ecstasy of communication. And this ecstasy is obscene. Obscene is not confined to sexuality, because today there is a pornography of information and communication, a pornography of circuits and networks, of functions and objects in their legibility, availability, regulation, forced signification, capacity to perform, connection, polyvalence, their free expression. Its no longer the obscenity of the hidden, the repressed, the obscure, but that of the visible, the all-too-visible, the more-visible-than-visible, it is the obscenity of that which no longer contains a secret and is entirely soluble in information and communication." [14]

In a time of pervasive media, technological devices and information saturation, one needs to understand the workings of these technical devices and the media we are engulfed by. More and more, media has become the nervous system of democracy and in light of this, artists, hackers and media activists have a central role in the discussion that takes place in the public sphere. If *culture jammers'* actions relied on reclaiming the public space through the production of counter-messages and in the subversion of public billboards, a new media/digital artist or activist should reclaim the public media space.
But why do we need artists to examine and short-circuit our technological devices and media spaces? How can their actions contribute to open discussions and bring consciousness about the public sphere we belong to?

Transparency and Code

The face-to-face meetings and discussions that usually took place in public physical space such as cafés, public squares and gardens have partly migrated to online digital spaces parallel to the world of atoms, becoming mediated by all kinds of technological devices. These immaterial places and devices where public opinion gathers and eventually evolves into political action have their own rules and laws, encrypted in the form of code. Code, software and other "hidden" internal processes of our devices have therefore become central issues that should not be discarded by those who gather, discuss and intervene in the affairs of the public sphere. The way in which *Google* or *Facebook* services deal with our personal data and the way they design their interfaces should be an issue of public concern. Artists and other actors have an expertise that brings awareness and critical distance to such issues. The same is true to all the software and electronic devices which transparently inhabit our routines.
The "all too visible" that Baudrillard associates with information pornography contrasts with the invisibility of the code and internal processes that our nano-devices hide under shiny plastic cases and liquid crystal screens. Lately, not only are the code and data obfuscated but the hardware and the mechanical components have also become black-boxed, making the core structures progressively more hid-

den and leaving only a simplified version of the device available to us. [15]
Interface design is essentially oriented towards a strategy of transparency and immersion and as Galloway observes, the challenge comes from maintaining the distinction between edge and center (medium/interface and content). [16][11]

"As technology, the more dioptric device erases the traces of its own functioning (in actually delivering the thing represented beyond), the more it succeeds in its functional mandate; yet this very achievement undercuts the ultimate goal: the more intuitive a device becomes, the more it risks falling out of media altogether, becoming as naturalized as air or as common as dirt." [11]

Transparency is often related to the clarity and visibility of a process or information transaction, for example in the context of politics or economics. However, in the field of HCI, transparency is instead associated with frictionless communication then mostly related to the concealment of information. [16] Rather than concentrating users on the functions and internal processes of the device, the transparent interface therefore wants them to focus on and become immersed in the contents. Then, the more they use the device, the more they become immersed and the interface "disappears", becoming invisible to their consciousness unless for any reason the "tool breaks", making the interface *present-at-hand*[2]. This process is obviously related to a consumer society interested in producing and acting faster, more effectively and without place for errors. However, down below the surface of our friendly and playful devices we find the "rules, conventions and relationships, which are basically changeable and negotiable, being translated into and fixed in software". [16] As Inke Arns maintains, the code not only affects the graphical interface but has a political effect on the virtual worlds we inhabit and as a performative text it is becoming law. [16]

In the age of the *electronic crowds* and networks, an effective action is one that happens at the same place where the crowd is and the networks flow. A pervasive and ubiquitous phenomenon needs pervasive and ubiquitous action in order to transform our personal and public technological devices into opaque, unworking vessels for detached reflection. Each device is a potential mirror waiting to be broken or subverted but also a potential vessel to be filled with different content. Art manifestations have left the gallery a while ago in order to find their public and in an attempt to merge with people's everyday life. This delocalization has been observed in Participatory and Relational art but also in movements such as Futurism, Dadaism, Situationism, Culture Jamming and among others, more recently in so-called *Flash Mobs*.

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[2] According to Heideggerian terminology, when we use a hammer we use it without theorizing it, thus it is *ready-to-hand*, although if it breaks then it becomes visible or *present-at-hand*.

Moving away from the gallery

The dissolution of the artist's individuality, authorship and authority as well as the de-materialization of artwork characterized the avant-garde movements at the beginning of the 20th century. [7] The art object gave way to ephemeral public events that required the spectators' presence and very often their physical participation. According to Groys the Futurists and the scandalous actions created by Filippo Marinetti produced a kind of bridge between art and politics through a kind of "event design" that was used as a strategy to conquer the public space by means of provocation. [7] For Marinetti, "articles, poems and polemics were no longer adequate. It was necessary to change the methods completely, to go out into the street to launch assaults from theatres and to introduce the fisticuff into the artistic battle." [13] Then, as Claire Bishop asserts, "with Futurism, performance became the privileged paradigm for artistic and political operations in the public sphere." [13] This was also observed in Dadaist and Russian public experiments, although the latter had an ideological character whereas the former were anti-ideological and anarchists. [13] André Breton considered the public space away from the cabaret and the proscenium frame to be a privileged realm that could hold the attention of the public and create a bond between art and spectators' lives. [13] The *Excursion to Sain-Julien-le-Pauvre* and *The Maurice Barrès Trial* are two examples of public performances led by Dada in in 1921. [13]

Some decades later, like the Dadaists, the Situationist International (SI) headed by Guy Debord and Gil Wolman also reacted against commodifiable art in favor of art that should not be separated from life. The works produced by the Situationists were rarely visual, with the exception of films, and were often found in the form of text and in the construction of ephemeral situations, which were rarely documented. Two strategies were commonly used to construct situations: *dérive* and *détournement*. The first consisted in random ramblings around the city without a defined duration that could occur alone or in small groups of participants. [19] Such ramblings or drifts in the streets allowed the participants to observe, have encounters, confronting them with some "taken-for-granted" views of life and action. [10] The second strategy, *détournement*, was directly influenced by the techniques of collage, photomontage and the subversion of painting previously adopted by the Dadaists and Surrealists. This technique allowed the appropriation of cultural materials, undermining and subverting their original meaning. According to Debord, this was a true critical cultural practice that did not support the creation of new objects but instead acted over the existing means of expression. [13]

These public actions and performances outside the gallery spread throughout the fifties and sixties, influencing artists such as Allan Kaprow who staged the first *happening* in 1958, John Cage, Lygia Clark, Valie Export, Joseph Beuys and in between others Gordon Matta-Clark.

Some decades later, during the eighties, Culture Jamming rediscovered the Situationist tactic of *détournement* to re-claim the urban public spaces. This tactic has been commonly used by artists or activists which appropriate and take over the existing images of advertising billboards and subvert their original meaning, eventually exposing the "underlying truth of a corporation's strategy". [20] Jan Lloyd observes: "the public sphere has only ever been a site of communication and "free speech" for those that hold political, cultural, and economic power." This kind of "citizen art" as Rodrigues de Gerada calls it, therefore regards the public sphere as a place of cultural meaning-making and reclaims the right to public discourse, as opposed to the one-way flow of communication that characterizes the omnipresent corporate advertising mechanisms. [20]

The actions and culture jams normally use billboards and other advertising material in public spaces, although culture jammers have been extending their actions to CCTV systems (counter-surveillance) and have recently moved onto the internet. [10] With the development of new media technologies, artists have begun to explore the possibilities and the limits of public space, through the creation of temporary events, performances, happenings or installations using multimedia. Krzysztof Wodiczko, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, or Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz have been using public spaces and monuments as canvasses for very precise video and light interventions that play with local social, economical and political contexts, mixing online and offline worlds, also exploring issues of space and time. However, the use of technology in some of these interventions has been criticized and highlighted as another form of cultural industry in disguise, a new kind of *"effect" effect*[3] working in favor of technological commodification. [1]

From another perspective, as a social tool the immediacy and connectivity brought by technology is at the origin of a very contemporary urban phenomenon, *Flash Mobs*. These actions, which normally occur in public spaces, gather hundreds of people who engage "in seemingly spontaneous but actually synchronized behavior." According to Clay Shirky they can be divided into "harmless but attention-getting fun" events and, on the other hand, political protests. [9]

In their movement towards the public space artists are not looking to create objects and "utopian realities" but rather to "engage with the existing reality", creating contexts for potential action. [12][18] By means of provocative, scandalous, polemic, humorous, playful, spectacular, uncanny, shocking or practical actions, artists have been calling and holding the attention of a wider audience outside the white cube and far away from the rigid structures of art institutions in an attempt to build a more inclusive public sphere. Nevertheless, even if the effects produced by such actions are small and their consequences difficult to track,

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[3] Rafael Lozano-Hemmer describes the *"Effect" effect* as a situation in which the "special effects become themselves the object of the artwork." (Lozano-Hemmer, 1996) The effect for the effect's sake.

they temporarily change the dynamics of power thus producing anxiety in those with power. [18]

Today the public is split between offline and online spaces and, according to statistics delivered by Comscore, in 2011 European citizens were online for a monthly average of 27.5 hours per person. [29] Online presence has been increasing with access to less expensive technologies, portable devices that enable permanent online presence and free Wi-Fi connections, so it is normal that for a while artists have been turning their attention to this "new" space and planning their actions here.

The increasing online presence reinforces the shift from a disciplinary society to a society of control and surveillance where the smallest movement or action becomes traceable and tagged. [17] Yet, as noted in the first section, another shift is observable in media consumption. The "passive" *mass* media consumer is quickly giving way to a participant who uses media "tactically". [24] Building on Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Every Day Life*, Geert Lovink and David Garcia classify the *rebellious user*[4] as the "happy negatives" who uses media in a critical way, "by which the weak becomes stronger than the oppressors by scattering, by becoming centreless, by moving fast across the physical or media and virtual landscapes." [24] The authors classify tactical media as a "form of qualified humanism" that acts as an antidote to the commodification of human life but also to "newly emerging forms of technocratic scientism which under the banner of post-humanism tend to restrict discussions of human use and social reception." [24] By "becoming the media[5]", through the creation of media *anti-environments* that break and undermine the normal functions of the media and its mechanisms from the inside, the rebellions highlight the structures of power and turn them opaque rather than transparent, temporarily allowing the "hunted to become the hunter". [24] By means of custom made software and hardware, the rebellion has been critically exploring and subverting the technological landscape, using some tactics and techniques that are identified in the following section, during the analysis of some recent artistic, activist and social experiments.

Turning media opaque: infiltration, decontextualisation, appropriation, and hoax

As we saw during the previous section, artists have been using very different tactics to reclaim the public space and to hold the attention of passers-by, and lately have been adapting them in order to examine and comment on our use of electronic media, disrupting the flow of use by means of subversive reverse-engineering.

The video superimpositions in public spaces and monuments of Krzysztof Wodiczko, the fake websites and conferences of the Yes Men, the *shop dropping* carried out by Barbie Liberation Organization (BLO) and the city scale laser projections by Hehe collective have been using tactics of infiltration, decontextualization, appropriation and hoax that aim to draw our attention to social, political, ethical, gender, economic and environmental issues. However, these actions are constructed to essentially focus the spectator's attention on the "content" rather than on the medium in use.

Lately a new kind of action that we might call *medium reflective* has been put forward by artists, hackers and media activists. Such actions might take place in the offline public space, in online spaces such as news or social network services or in the intersection of both. The artists normally create a temporary situation in which they can remain incognito or remote in the case of online actions, so their presence is normally not perceived and the intervention occurs without any kind of official authorization. The interventions are normally subtle and very surgical and they always depend on the use of a certain medium, so they demand specific actions from the users or, in these circumstances, the *involuntary spectators*. In order to clarify this idea, we'll describe and examine four different projects (*Image Fulgurator*, *default to public: tweakleak, Face to Facebook*, *Newstweek* and *2.4GHZ*) that follow this modus operandi.

The Image Fulgurator is a device created by the German artist Julius Von Bismarck that reverses the normal operation mode of a photographic camera so that instead of taking pictures, it projects pictures onto any surface. The device detects when the flash of another camera nearby goes off and at the same instant projects a predefined image onto a target surface. The artist has been using the apparatus in public spaces that are normally crowded with tourists or at events involving photojournalists. In Tiananmen Square in Beijing, Bismarck "fulgurated" a white dove (Magritte dove[6]) over the portrait of Mao Zedong on Tiananmen Gate. The tourists who took photos with their digital cameras could immediately access the manipulated photo, a superimposition of a dove over Mao Zedong's face. Another intervention took place in 2008 when Barack Obama visited Berlin and made a public speech in front of the Siegessäule. This time, Bismarck "fulgurated" a Christian cross onto Obama's lectern, diverting his political role and changing the meaning of the event itself. The tactics adopted by the artist includes infiltrating crowds and image superimposing images that produce *deceptive détournments*[7].

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[4] De Certeau characterizes the consumer as a rebellious user that uses media tactically.

[5] "Don't hate the media, become the media" is a popular slogan by the activist and musician Jello Biafra.

[6] This superposition seems to make reference to René Magritte's *The man in the bowler hat,* depicting a white dove that hides the face of a man.

[7] Debord and Wolman identified deceptive détournements as the detouring of major political, artistic or philosophical signs and minor détournements as the detouring of ordinary elements to another context.

Fig. 1 – *Image Fulgurator performance* at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China.

default to public: tweakleak by Jens Wunderling is a networked installation, that operates in public places. Inside a café in Berlin, a printer installed inside a monolith, printed Twitter messages on small sticker strips. Each time a tweet was sent in the vicinity of the café, a sticker containing the message was printed and the author was notified over Twitter by an alert message: "Your tweet has just been printed on a sticker." Later, if someone took the sticker from the printer, a message would be sent to the tweet's author: "Your tweet has been taken away." [21] With this apparatus, Wunderling connects two spheres that are normally separated and work very differently, first questioning the sense of online and offline privacy and then creating an awareness of self-exposure. [21] By leaving the online sphere, the tweet enters the physical world of matter and atoms that has different mechanisms for processing information and the author loses track of his or her message since anyone can take away the sticker. This loss of control seems to highlight the incongruities between both spheres, and instead of solving them the artist uses them as part of the work's statement. By decontextualizing and appropriating the user's information and by notifying him/her that the message has been set "free" into the physical space, the artist is producing a kind of *distancing effect*[8] allowing the user to reflect on the medium's mode of functioning and on his/her relationship with it.

Another case of data manipulation is *Face to Facebook*, a "global mass media hack performance" by Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico. The artists developed an algorithm that automatically appropriates and displaces the information available on personal profiles on Facebook, recontextualizing it on a new dating website, "lovely-faces.com". Beyond obtaining textual data, they were able to steal the user's profile photos which were then arranged according to their facial expressions on the new website. This provocative action resulted in "one thousand media coverage around the world, eleven lawsuit threats, five death threats, several letters from the lawyers of Facebook." [23] This action, as well as *Tweaktleak,* reminds us that all the information that we give to social networks is available and accessible to others. Even when profiles are private, companies such as *Facebook* keep our data on their servers so they can use it or sell it to other companies. Furthermore, as Cirio and Ludovico maintain, "any user can easily duplicate any personal picture on her hard disk and then upload it somewhere else and mix it with different data. The final step is to be aware that almost everything posted online can have a different life if simply recontextualized." [23] This temporal displacement is then a symbolic action and representation of a commodification movement that is already occurring in our networks, however it is mostly invisible. With the emergence of online social networks we have witnessed the obsolescence of *telescreens*[9] and the architectural metaphor for modern power named *Panopticon*. Today, on Facebook alone more than 1 billion active users knowingly feed the network every day with the most refined information that telescreens or panopticons could never obtain. Coupled with a ubiquitous and effective CCTV surveillance system integrating face detection algorithms, social networks have become an essential, powerful source of information, and as a consequence, resistance to such networks has become a potential threat to society, seen as suspicious behavior[10]. In this context, Benjamin Gaulon's work *2.4GHZ* creates a disruption in the omnipresent CCTV network by infiltrating it with small counter-devices near the CCTV cameras in the public space. These devices are essentially small LCD monitors coupled with a 2.4GHZ video wireless receiver that display the image captured by the closest CCTV camera and make it accessible to the passer-by.

 Newstweek, a project by Julian Oliver and Danja Vasiliev, employs a similar tactic of infiltration, using a custom-made counter-device that allows remote hackers/writers to edit and manipulate the news displayed on some main online newspapers. [22] A hijacked wall plug containing a mini-router is plugged into a power outlet in public cafés or any other places with open Internet access points, becoming part of the customary environment. The open wireless network in the surroundings of the counter-device partly comes under its control, generating a modified network that allows the hacker to edit the online news by using a graphical interface. The artists have carried out at least one intervention, infiltrating a Starbucks café in Paris, and they also made available the instructions to build the

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[8] Bertold Brecht used direct audience-address techniques to prevent the spectator from having a passive emotional reception, avoiding an exclusive moment of amusement and entertainment. These techniques revealed the illusory and manipulative construction of the piece, keeping the spectator intellectually distanced from it. [4]

[9] In George Orwell's famous novel 1984, telescreens are devices of mass surveillance, featuring televisions and video camera. They are use by the "Thought Police" from the Inner Party.

[10] In an article retrieved from the Daily Mail in October 2012: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2184658/Is-joining-Facebook-sign-youre-psychopath-Some-employers-psychologists-say-suspicious.html

device on their website Newstweek.com. More than just creating content, this project proposes a counter-device, which explores the nature and the typical top-down flow of mass media by using a tactic of hoax or "facts-fixing". As the authors maintain, *Newstweek* highlights the vulnerability of a reality which is increasingly dependent on media but also displays the complexity and ignorance fomented by the workings of networks and devices. [22]
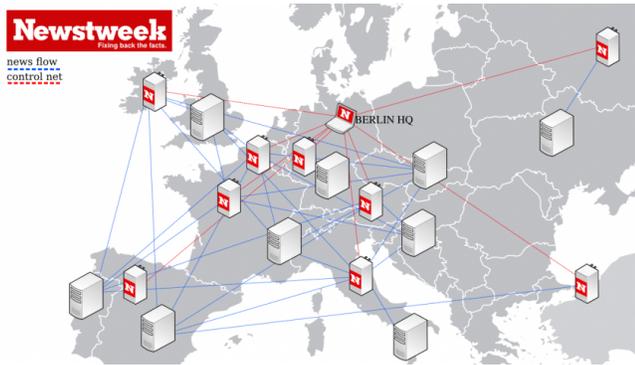

Fig. 2 – *Newstweek* network map example

These *medium reflective* interventions have as a common goal the undermining of our online and offline routines, making visible what is normally transparent or, to be more accurate, invisible. Instead of creating new alternative media, the artists and media activists infiltrate, appropriate and decontextualize the dominant media, opening temporary fissures that call for a detached and critical reflection. By operating through shock and estrangement, these interventions create an understanding of a certain situation and call for a "specialist" gaze normally found in museum contemplation. [28] Jacques Rancière maintains that "being a spectator is not something that "we should turn into activity" but instead is "our normal situation."" [26]

In our everyday lives we are constantly making sense of events and situations and, according to a pragmatist approach in aesthetics, outside the museum, in the streets, at home or online, aesthetic experiences can potentially occur. A *medium reflective* object is therefore by no means anti-aesthetical.

When Bismarck or Gaulon focus our attention on the experience of digital cameras and CCTV cameras, it is not the same kind of attention one pays to work of art when simply looking at the technique or at the medium used by the artist. It is the subversion of that medium that produces the aesthetic experience. It is when the medium is no longer transparent that we finally understand the way in which we are bounded by the "invisible" laws of code, software and hardware. Another aspect of these medium reflective interventions is their "nomadic" and ephemeral nature. Unlike some types of public art (e.g. sculpture) and monuments which progressively become part of the cultural and urban landscape, such interventions appear and move fast, adapting to the media and infoscapes in constant metamorphose.

In this regard, these kinds of interventions and actions seem to expand the frontiers of interactive arts by redirecting and interrupting the media user's flow of activity for the sake of new meaningful and critical interactions. Despite the evident changes to the reception mode, the user is still an active participant, which is crucial in order to trigger the aesthetic experience. One might ask if the distracted user is able to contemplate such surgical and ephemeral interventions, but these emergent proposals foreshadow a promising future for art and design merging with everyday life routines.

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