Cross Connections: Online activism, real world outcomes

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Keywords

Internet, World Wide Web, Accessibility, Activism, Social Relations, Social Justice, Hacktivists, Online, Hackers, Identity, Net Activism, Tactical Media, Web Design, Virtuality, Virtual Communities, Refugee, Borders, Alienation, Censorship, Blogging, Mass Media, Copy-left, Open Source Publishing, Produser, Indymedia, Net Arts, Digital Archives, You Tube, Facebook, Social Networking, Digital Aesthetics.

Abstract

This research paper examines the role of the Internet as it relates to the development of social movements and political protest in the 'physical' world. It also analyses the role of independent media and reporting methodologies used by activists and net-artists.

The emergence of online activism and an emphasis on collaboration, information sharing and open source tools also had a significant impact on new media arts discussions and aesthetics.

The refugee activist movement in Australia is a key case study in this thesis, as it is an excellent example of how activists have used the Internet and WWW to garner support within the community and to engage people to come to protests. In addition, activists at the protests have reported these events on the WWW and this subject has also had a resounding impact within the context of contemporary and media arts.

The implications of identity online is a major factor in constructing the arguments in this thesis, as the relationship between 'real' and 'virtual' space is explored in detail as it relates to personal identity and online community.

Summary of activities

This thesis was written over a period of eight years from 2001. Parts of it have appeared in condensed forms at:

- ISEA2008, Singapore
  Topic: Now like no place, no place like now
- AOIR Conference 2006
  Hilton Hotel, Brisbane
  Topic: Online organising, real world responses, new world consequences
- ISEA2004, Tallinn, Estonia
  Topic: Wearable experience and textile symbolism
  (Panel: Geopolitics of Media: Asylum seekers and border crossings
- N5M4: De Balie, Amsterdam 2003
  Topic: Online networks and public outcomes in Canberra, Australia (TAZ)
- 'Joining the dots: The CAMEO 10th International Conference'
  University of Canberra 2002
  Topic: Cross connections
- Fine Art Forum, Volume 6 No 12 December 2002
  Cross connections: A glimpse into the aesthetic economy of online social relations
- *BORDERPANIC* READER
- The online work *Highway of Shame* included as supporting documentation was presented at:
  - *BORDERPANIC* online exhibition 2002
  - CTHEORY Multimedia issue #3 *Wired Ruins* 2002
- The major work *Swipe — airports, border and fences* was featured at:
  - Web Biennial http://webbiennial.org/galleries/g6.htm 2007
  - CUBE 37 Glass Studio, Frankston City Gallery (September — October 2006)
  - New geographies (http://www.laberintos.org/newgeographies/index.html) 2006
  - Swipe online project www.swipe.name 2006

Statement of original ownership

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the very best of my knowledge or belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed:

Date:

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This project is dedicated to the people and communities, who courageously put forth their story to the world, and in doing so, risk their own safety in the hope of a better life.

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Introduction: Net-activism and Tactical Media

This introductory chapter scopes out the thesis by outlining the central aims of the project. Firstly this will be achieved by exploring the issues that have emerged from my creative and activist participation for the duration of the PhD project. Secondly, I will be providing my working definition of net-activism and locating it within the broader fields of activism and online art with specific reference to my case study of the refugee activist movement in Australia.

I am undertaking this study to address a series of questions that were recognised as being central to my research from the outset. They include the following:

- What is the field of net-activism and net-art that focuses on refugee and related issues of displacement, migration and outsider identities ?
- Has net-activism and net-art significantly shifted contemporary theories about the interrelationship between place and space the contexts of the virtual and the 'real world' environments?
- What are the specific formations of online activist identity and how do they manifest in the off-line or actual world?
- How have forms of surveillance and counter surveillance challenged power relationships in net-art, net-activism, alternative media and citizen publishing?
- How do the aesthetics of net-art and net-activism impact on everyday society in the physical world?
- What are the appropriate methods to communicate and raise awareness for people that exist as 'non-people' in 'non-places'?

These questions all relate to a specific time frame, being the duration of this study — from 2001 to

2008.[1] To expand, I will be examining these specific contexts of net-activism through or via the notion of 'traffic' as representing the movement of both people involved with, and, information on, net-activist websites. The focus on human traffic is to determine who is actually involved, what they are doing in their roles as activists, who are the people they are advocating on behalf of and what kinds of communities are created to achieve common goals.

All of these questions are addressed both in the thesis and in my creative practice. In essence the impetus for this research can be traced back to one life changing event — a protest at the Woomera Immigration Detention Centre in September 2001, where I was both a participant and an observer. My involvement in this activist activity affected me deeply on a personal level and forced me to reconsider the role of activists and artists in dealing with the human subject of refugee activism. In short, the refugee activist has an advocacy role, as the subject of the awareness raising, the detained asylum seeker, is often both voiceless and invisible to mainstream society. One of the most significant problems for me as an artist was how I could use photographic and video documentation in a sensitive and respectful manner, as some of the conversations I overheard on the journey home revealed that other participants were more interested in the shock value of depicting asylum seekers in detention. I personally found this abhorrent and a misuse of our responsibility as advocates and as witnesses to the event.

[1] To explore in detail the emerging technologies and the development of the Internet it is crucial to contain the thesis within a specific date range. This time frame also represents a significant focus on refugee issues. For example, after the Australian federal election in 2007 and a change of government, there have been sweeping changes to the approach to detaining asylum seekers. For example, the 'Pacific solution' policy for dealing with unauthorised arrival by boat was instigated in 2001, after the Norwegian freight ship the *Tampa* under Captain Arne Rinnan rescued 439 Afghans from a distressed fishing vessel in international waters. The Australian government sought to prevent this by refusing *Tampa* entry into Australian waters, insisting on their disembarkment elsewhere. As a result, a diplomatic dispute brewed between Australia, Norway, and Indonesia. The Afghans wanted passage to nearby Christmas Island. The refugees from the *Tampa* were loaded onto a Royal Australian Navy vessel, HMAS *Manoora*. Most were transported to the small island country of Nauru as part of what was known as Australia's "Pacific Solution," and held in two detention camps, Stateside and Topside Camp, where they were eventually joined by hundreds of other asylum seekers. The Tampa crisis had an enormous effect on Australia both at home and abroad. Internationally, Australia was criticised by many countries, particularly Norway, who accused it of evading its human rights responsibilities. In 2008 the Rudd Labor government closed the processing centre in Nauru.

As an artist I was motivated to address the experience of detained asylum seekers and refugees on a conceptual level, through thematic agents such as alienation, dislocation and loss. I wanted to find ways to connect with the experience of alienation and link life experiences and emotions that were universally human, regardless of the differences in context and culture.

Certain events in the recent past are referred to throughout the thesis, though the research does not attempt to give a linear historical analysis of 'net activism' and 'net-art' per se. Rather, the intention is to give examples of how the Internet and WWW have facilitated and 'value-added' to the activist process and how that in turn has had a roll on effect to the development of arts and cultural projects and the aesthetics that have emerged to engage with the media and issues.

In addition, although in this thesis there is an emphasis on online communications and identity and the space of the virtual, this study is actually driven by the outcomes that manifest in the physical world not cyberspace. I am concerned with activities that are conceived, researched, developed and disseminated with the use of the Internet as a tool to share information and awareness specifically focusing on refugee and border issues. I am driven primarily by my practice as a writer and an artist concerned by issues relating to technology and politics, and, secondly by my experience in the workforce as a web manager and consultant in the field of government online communications. To provide a context for this research, I will now introduce some of the critical concepts and practices that are addressed in this thesis.

Definition of net-activism

Net-activism is a term that is applied to a range of citizen based activities that utilise the Internet and WWW in divergent ways. These activities include — using online petitions and distribution

lists to raise awareness; organising protests in physical locations as well as using online protest strategies like 'flooding'[2] servers to block traffic; developing and disseminating free online tools; and developing online communities.

As early as 1996 Ed Schwartz stated:

> In effect, NetActivism is an organizing manual for citizens who want to use the Internet to improve their communities and gain influence in politics. The Internet already connects us with people all over the United States and the world. The challenge lies in learning how to use this technology to help all of us achieve a central goal of every movement since the 1960s — to gain greater effective control over the decisions that affect our lives. We can accomplish a great deal with the online tools available to us now. Even more will be possible in the future.[3]

Much has been accomplished since Schwartz wrote this and my thesis is an attempt to address some of these events and issues related to activism online from 2001 to 2008 within the context of creative production and aesthetics.

Strategic practitioners and theorists: media as tactical response

In short, tactical media is a process that has engaged a plethora of artists, scientists, activists, journalists and technicians under the collective umbrella of this term, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. In 1997, David Garcia and Geert Lovink published a manifesto on the Nettime list titled *The ABC of Tactical Media*, they state in this long quote that:

> Tactical Media are what happens when the cheap 'do it yourself' media, made possible by the revolution in consumer electronics and expanded forms of distribution (from public access cable to the internet) are exploited by groups and individuals who feel aggrieved by or excluded from the wider culture. Tactical media do not just report events, as they are never impartial they always participate and it is this that more than anything separates them from mainstream media.

They go on to comment on the ethics and aesthetics of tactical media:

[2] The Zapatista Tactical FloodNet is a Java Applet that assists in the execution of virtual sit-ins by automatically reloading the targeted website several times every minute. Additionally, it allows for users to post statements to the site by sending them to the server log. FloodNet was created by the Electronic Disturbance Theatre members Carmin Karasic and Brett Stalbaum. This activist group executed FloodNet in April and December 1998 on Mexican and American government sites, respectively. http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ecd/ZapTact.html (accessed 18 December 2008).
[3] Ed Schwartz, *NetActivism: How Citizens Use the Internet* http://oreilly.com/catalog/netactivism/excerpt/index.html (accessed 18 December 2008).

> A distinctive tactical ethic and aesthetic that has emerged, which is culturally influential from MTV through to recent video work made by artists. It began as a quick and dirty aesthetic although it is just another style it (at least in its camcorder form) has come to symbolize a verite for the 90's.
>
> Tactical media are media of crisis, criticism and opposition. This is both the source their power, ("anger is an energy" : John Lydon), and also their limitation. their typical heroes are; the activist, Nomadic media warriors, the pranxter, the hacker,the street rapper, the camcorder kamikaze, they are the happy negatives, always in search of an enemy. But once the enemy has been named and vanquished it is the tactical practitioner whose turn it is to fall into crisis. Then (despite their achievements) its easy to mock them, with catch phrases of the right, "politically correct" "Victim culture" etc. More theoretically the identity politics, media critiques and theories of representation, that became the foundation of much western tactical media are themselves in crisis. These ways of thinking are widely seen as, carping and repressive remnants of an outmoded humanism.[4]

Identity politics is one the areas that Lovink and Garcia recognise and critique as a motivating force for tactical media, which situates it well as a concept evolving from 1990s feminist and postcolonial theory. However, in the 21st century tactical media has become so much more pervasive than just being the work of 'street rappers' and hackers. Tactical media has evolved to encompass creative and citizen based networks and operates across a range of political and social motivations. For example, Tatiana Bazzichelli focuses on how networking has emerged as an art form that crosses these boundaries. She comments that:

> The art of networking is based on the figure of the artist as a creator of sharing platforms and of contexts for connecting and exchanging... Perhaps it is also the most difficult type of contemporary art to define, for it is not based on objects, nor solely on digital or analogical instruments, but on the relationships and processes in progress between individuals.[5]

Geert Lovink's text *Dark Fiber* hones in on a number of case studies that fit within the context of online activism. This text also closely analyses the term 'tactical media'. He states:

> Tactical networks are all about an imaginary exchange of concepts outbidding and overlaying each other. Necessary illusions. What circulates are models and rumor, arguments and experiences of how to organize cultural and political activities, get projects financed, infrastructure up and running and create informal networks of trust which make living in Babylon bearable.[6]

Alex Galloway's text *Protocol* moves through a range of issues that are of relevance to this project.

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[4] Geert Lovink and David Garcia, *The ABC of Tactical Media* http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9705/msg00096.html (accessed 25 September 2003).
[5] Tatiana Bazzichelli, *Networking: The net as Artwork* Digital Aesthetics Research Center: Milan, 2006 (English Translation 2008), p. 26.
[6] Geert Lovink, *Dark Fiber: Tracking Critical Internet Culture* MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2003, p. 254.

In particular, his exploration of distributed networks, tactical media and the influence of theorists and artists such as Lev Manovich, Geert Lovink, Sadie Plant and *Critical Art Ensemble (CAE)* is useful for providing an analysis of how the culture of the network has emerged and how net-activism is conceptualised. His work challenges the utopian notion of online anonymity by addressing the protocols that move the information on the Internet. He comments in response to Lovink and Garcia as follows:

> But there is also a more general way of thinking about tactical phenomena within the media. That is to say, there are certain *tactical effects* that often only leave traces of their successes to be discovered later by the ecologists of the media This might include more than what would normally fit under the orthodox definition. Case in point: computer viruses. In a very bland sense, they are politically bankrupt and certainly no friend of the tactical media practitioner. But in a more general sense they speak volumes on the nature of network-based conflict.[7]

W. Lance Bennett in *Cyberprotest* makes the link between the significance of both identity and activism within the context of the distributed network. He comments that:

> Beyond identity processes, a second impetus for creating such broadly distributed communications networks is that the targets of global activism are numerous and they are slipping off the grid of conventional national politics. Many activists believe that labour, environment, rights and other policies of their governments have been weakened by pressures from global corporations and transnational economic regimes such as the World Trade Organisation.[8]

In Chapter 5 I discuss in detail the implications of the distributed network as a means of developing online community, identity and activist work.

Bazzichelli addresses the influence of hacker culture on net art and contemporary art, specifically in an Italian context. By focusing on precursors such as the Fluxus art movement and Mail Art she analyses cyberpunk, hacker art, network art, cyber-feminism and net-art as contributing to the evolution of online art and culture. Although Bazzichelli has a focus on a specific geographical site, she addresses a range of issues that explore the meaning of art as it is in relation to WWW media.

[7] Alexander Galloway, *Protocol: how control exists after decentralization* MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2004, p.175.
[8] W. Lance Bennett, "Communicating global activism: strengths and vulnerabilities of networked politics" in Van De Donk, W., Loader, B. D., and Rucht, D., (Eds.) *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements,* Routledge: London, 2004, p. 127.

For example, she comments in relation to the networked environment that:

> With hacker art the meaning of the work of art should no longer be looked at in its manifestation as object, but in the network of relation and in the collective processes that have contributed to its creation.[9]

She also comments that:

> In general, there seems to be great confusion surrounding the various definitions, which go from net art (or net.art, with a period between net and art) to web art, hacker art, new media art, cyber art, electronic art and digital art.[10]

There is also tactical media, do-it-yourself (DIY) media, 'Indy' media as definitions that are used to describe the production of culture in the online environment.

For instance, Lovink states in the context of tactical media practices and self referencing that:

> It is being said by system theorists that self-referentiality is a sign of emancipation. Discourse growth within the media context would then have the ability to transform an applied set of ideas taken from other disciplines into a higher set of complex concepts and references. [11]

Manual Castells was also a relatively early commentator on online social capital and the potential impact of online protests. He considers that:

> In other instances, the technological vulnerability of the Internet offers the opportunity for individual or collective expressions of protest to disrupt the websites of the electronic networks of government agencies or corporations targeted as representatives of oppression or exploitation.[12]

Axel Brun's work on citizen publishing and user driven online social spaces examines the way in which the Internet has emerged as a user driven space where media is created and shared. In particular, he addresses the process of screening material by collaborative news websites as 'gatewatching'. This is a social activity rather than a technical process, which falls under the auspices of 'protocols'. Jill Walker Rettberg's 2008 text on blogging is also important as a reference point for how users have been engaged in producing online material. She comments that:

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[9] Bazzichelli, T., *Networking*, p. 22.
[10] Bazzichelli, T., *Networking*, p. 19.
[11] Lovink, G., *Dark Fiber*, p. 169.
[12] Manual Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society* Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 139.

> Ten years ago, the word 'blog' didn't exist. Today, mainstream media routinely use the word without bothering to explain it. Weblogs have become part of popular consciousness with a speed that is remarkable by any standard... However, blogs are also part of a larger context. They are part of the history of communication and literacy, and emblematic of a shift from uni-directional mass media to participatory media, where viewers and readers become creators of media.[13]

Graham Meikle makes many references to earlier forms of media. This is appropriate, because the Internet has emerged along similar lines to other media. To be precise, the impact of the military has seen the development of many forms of technology, specifically in the field of communications.[14] The military history of the Internet (and many other forms of technology) calls to mind the notion that 'tactical' media is a means of interception and intervention that is politically motivated, much like its precursors in non-digital environments.

Culture Jamming and 'free' media culture

Culture jamming has had a significant impact on the development of net-activism and tactical media. It has also been associated with other formations of alternative media use, for example open source and freeware culture and hacking. Mark Dery wrote in 1990 about culture jamming:

> The term cultural jamming was first used by Negativland in 1984 to describe billboard alteration and other underground art that seeks to shed light on the dark side of the computer age.[15]

In many ways, culture jamming is an intervention into corporate statements and mass media. Dery goes on to state:

> Some of today's most incendiary artists derive the structure, style and subject matter of their art from mass media. Mordantly funny, frighteningly Orwellian and very much a product of the times, their work challenges the image merchants.[16]

The *Center for Communication and Civic Engagement* website summarises that:

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[13] Jill Walker Rettberg, *Blogging* Polity: Cambridge, 2008, p.1.

[14] See Paul Virilio's discussion on speed "Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*",* New York: *Semiotext(e)*, 1977.

[15] Mark Dery "The Merry Pranksters And the Art of the Hoax", *New York Times* (December 23, 1990) http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/23/arts/the-merry-pranksters-and-the-art-of-the-hoax.html?pagewanted=1 (accessed 2 March 2009).

[16] Mark Dery The Merry Pranksters And the Art of the Hoax *New York Times* (December 23, 1990) http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/23/arts/the-merry-pranksters-and-the-art-of-the-hoax.html?pagewanted=1 (accessed 2 March 2009).

> Culture jamming presents a variety of interesting communication strategies that play with the branded images and icons of consumer culture to make consumers aware of surrounding problems and diverse cultural experiences that warrant their attention.[17]

This article goes on to comment:

> The basic unit of communication in culture jamming is the meme: the core unit of cultural transmission. Memes are condensed images that stimulate visual, verbal, musical, or behavioral associations that people can easily imitate and transmit to others (see Richard Dawkins, The Selfish Gene, second edition 1989). For example, culture jammers play on familiar commercial memes such as the Nike swoosh, the McDonald's happy meal, or the Coca Cola polar bears to engage people of different political persuasions in thinking about the implications of their fashion statements or eating habits.[18]

The effects of culture jamming have proliferated into a broad range of cultural and activist behaviours, and the shift from intervention to invention resounds in the open source and freeware movement, with its promise of an online democracy. Lawrence Lessig (2004) addresses how business and corporate media use technology and the legal system to lock down the sharing of culture and creativity. By addressing the use of copyright laws to control "piracy" he puts forth the significance of FOSS/FLOSS[19] tools as a means of challenging big media control and actualising a democratic online space for the sharing of ideas and content. He also acknowledges that these limitations on sharing data was not part of the original design of the Internet. He states:

> Through legislation, litigation, and changes to the network's design, copyright holders have been able to change the essential character of the environment of the original Internet. If the original architecture made the effective default "no rights reserved," the future architecture will make the effective default "all rights reserved." The architecture and law that surround the Internet's design will increasingly produce an environment where all use of content requires permission. The "cut and paste" world that defines the Internet today will become a "get permission to cut and paste" world that is a creator's nightmare.[20]

The work of many net-artists and net-activists in the context of culture jamming challenges notions

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[17] Centre for Communication and Civic Engagement http://depts.washington.edu/ccce/polcommcampaigns/CultureJamming.htm (accessed 2 March 2009).

[18] Centre for Communication and Civic Engagement http://depts.washington.edu/ccce/polcommcampaigns/CultureJamming.htm (accessed 2 March 2009).

[19] Free and open source software, also F/OSS, FOSS, or FLOSS (for *Free/Libre/Open Source Software*) is software that is liberally licensed to grant the right of users to study, change, and improve its design through the availability of its source code. This approach has gained both momentum and acceptance as the potential benefits have been increasingly recognised by both individuals and corporate players. Hatlestad, Luc (2005-08-09). "LinuxWorld Showcases Open-Source Growth, Expansion". *InformationWeek* CMP Media, LLC. Archived from the original on 2007-11-25, Claburn, Thomas (January 17, 2007). "Study Finds Open Source Benefits Business" *InformationWeek* CMP Media LLC. Archived from the original on 2007-11-25 (accessed 18 December 2008).

[20] Lawrence Lessig *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* The Penguin Press, 2004, p. 283.

of “all rights reserved” and the control of media as it relates to copyright law and corporate ownership.

Digital Aesthetics

The emergence of online social spaces, activist intervention and creative participation has given rise to a need to address the aesthetic value of the digital. Anna Munster’s text *Materializing New Media* is a rigourous theoretical analysis of the media spaces, the role of the interface, virtual reality and digital aesthetics which challenges the Cartesian notion of the virtual as disembodied. She states that:

> The experience of new media artwork is marked by the broader cultural claims to the fast, efficient and high-band-width delivery of information that the integration of computing into day-to-day life has brought to millennial culture.[21]

It is a huge task to address how artists and activists have impacted on the aesthetics that have emerged in the fields of net-activism and net-art. In the early to mid nineties a number of artists were instrumental in terms of engaging with some of the dilemmas of cyberspace and visualising the media . The range of digital media and conceptual approaches has been divergent — using hypertext, animation and code to engage with the WWW, with varying degrees of success. These artists and projects demonstrate how an interest in socially motivated art has evolved from issues relating to gender, technology and identity. The role of identity is explored in more detail in Chapter 3. Sean Cubitt draws from a broad range of theory to discuss notions of the aesthetic in the digital realm. He acknowledges how European thinking has always sought to define the world wholly and completely, which leads to homogeneity and a focus on the dominance of culture and history. Cubitt comments that:

[21] Anna Munster, *Materializing New Media: Embodiment in Information Aesthetics* Dartmouth University Press: Hanover, 2006, p. 159.

> The pursuit of the European mind has been to identify the world, to see in it the whole of what it can be...over and over again our technologies and our cultures, scientific and artistic, discover in the raw material of the world we inhabit instabilities that indicate the limitations of the present: its politics, its knowledge, its economics, its beliefs.[22]

These instabilities reinforce the idea on a non-hierarchical and multilayered way of seeing the world, and it is in this model of not knowing all, of only knowing one's own part or node that an understanding of the digital aesthetic can be realised. Gianni Vattimo sees this notion as a form of aesthetic utopia. He states that "aesthetic utopia only comes about through its articulation as heterotopia."[23]

Cubitt identifies the role of the 'amateur' as an important element of the conceptualisation of the digital aesthetic and this is certainly a key factor in thinking about the types of communities and social structures that have emerged from the early explorations and engagements of net-activists and net-artists. He proposes that:

> The strength of the amateur 'system' is its real lack of systematicity, compared to the systemic regulation of the infrastructure of packet switching and the transfer protocols on the web.[24]

This statement highlights the asynchronous nature of the online environment as figured by the Möbius strip, to be discussed in Chapter 2, as well as addressing the augmented relationship between user and technology.

Augmentation: interfacing between space and culture

The notion of augmentation is discussed throughout the entirety of this dissertation as a conceptual framework that identifies a range of practices and behaviours that traverse between the real and virtual notions of space. There are a number of ways that augmentation has been defined by other writers and artists but I would like to make my definition very clear. Augmentation in the context of this research is on a level that could almost be considered banal, as it is as simple as hooking onto free wireless Internet with a mobile phone. It is not a notion of large cinematic screens streaming

[22] Sean Cubitt, *Digital Aesthetics* Sage: London, 1998, p. ix.
[23] Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society* Oxford, 1992, p. 69.
[24] Cubitt, S., *Digital Aesthetics*, p. 144.

information that is part of an architectural facade or as a synthetic world that is encapsulated by *SecondLife*, or a prosthetic limb or device, although these examples are all valid forms of augmentation and are discussed in detail in the Chapter 2. Augmentation, as I use the term in this thesis, is about the everyday, the phone we use to take photos and view and record videos, listen to saved music and the radio, and to store and share information with our friends. Moreover, augmentation is how we use the Internet to communicate via chat channels and telephonic tools like *Skype.*[25] As the Internet and WWW have evolved, it has also become evident that there is a significant amount of cross-media communications going on in the sharing of text, photographic and video content. WWW users are using the Internet connection to talk to each other adding to the capacity of the Internet to assist in the formulation of community, identity and activism as the communication mode between text, image, voice and speech has become increasingly blurred. The introduction of translation aids have also added to the distribution potential. For example, *Google* has a web page translation tool that allows the user to submit a URL and it returns the page in the desired language. Once the web page has been translated, the user can then navigate the website in the selected language. Of course, some content may not be expressed correctly, as there is always an aspect of loss in the translation process. When we check the White pages, we now have the option of having the phone number sent to us as an SMS to our mobile phone. From a design perspective the media is getting smarter, many mobile devices present web media in a readable and well laid out manner, whereas even as late as 2006, it was necessary to construct a separate Cascading Style Sheet for mobile phones and PDAs.[26] Software development has seen much more interoperability between types of devices, making it less to an obstacle to present media on the small screen. At the same time the storage capacity of these devices has grown as has the quality of the media capture. Most mobile phones released in 2008 had at least 3 mega pixel cameras making it possible to create

[25] Skype http://www.skype.com (accessed 12 February 2006).
[26]Personal Digital Assistant.

print quality images to A3 size.

The Möbius strip: linking and separating

Philosophical discussions concentrating on the mathematical term 'Möbius strip' are quite helpful when conceptualising the relationship between physical and virtual. The Möbius strip is like a piece of ribbon joined at the end with a twist. This twist creates an unending relationship between inside and outside, with both sides corresponding to the other in a play between surfaces and placement. This in many ways is more a representative model of the relationship between real and virtual, rather than presenting a concept that one aspect is alienated from the other. Perhaps it is more a notion of internal and external experience, both have effects on 'the body' but one form of experience is more apparent at time than the virtual 'other'.

The Möbius strip also is a way of conceptualising something that is linked and separate at the same time. Graham Meikle in the 2002 text *Future Active: media activism and the Internet,* alludes to how the Internet has capacity for this interplay by commenting that:

> A screen can connect as well as separate. It can enable people to take part who might otherwise never been able to.[27]

This is a specific reference to how the Internet and the WWW has enabled people to participate in civil actions on a global scale within the confines of an online environment. Physical space is no longer a barrier in many of these events the tactics are similar to already established forms of civil disobedience. He also states that:

> The virtual sit-in… is essentially an electronic update of an established protest gesture — it's about backing into the future.[28]

Meikle specifically focuses on tactical media and the use of the Internet, but his comments, whilst referring to a much older process or form of civil disobedience, underlines the capacity of WWW based media to connect people. This exact process makes the WWW and Internet vastly different

[27] Meikle, G., *Future Active*, 2002, p. 143.
[28] Meikle, G., *Future Active*, 2002, p. 143.

from other broadcasting and media formats — anyone can read the information and anyone can potentially respond and collaborate.

Old activist tools have also been reinvigorated and redeployed because of developments to the Internet and the WWW. For instance, collectives *We Are All Boat People* and *De Geuzen* use traditional forms of activist media as well as online tools to promote their cause. Images for tee-shirts, banners, posters and badges are all available for free download on the websites. The role of activists has been crucial in the development of the WWW as a tool for self-empowerment and for fostering issues of concern for many marginalised groups. Although this has not been unproblematic, there has been recognition of the need to realise that there are alternatives to not only the corporate controlling of communications online, but also to the way in which the scholarly discourse approaches this social, cultural and aesthetic phenomenon. Schäfer comments that:

> The scholarly discourse consequentially has to revisit its affection for active users, and to analyze user activities with regard to the socio-political implications they may have for a reconfiguration of power structures. Analyzing the actor-networks involved in shaping our cultural reality through patent laws, regulations, technological design, they can contribute significantly to making socio-political dynamics public and comprehensible to a broader audience.[29]

The form that this augmented space creates is mixed, hybrid and spilling over between divided notions of physical and virtual, making it challenging to describe this space using existing modes of aesthetic rationale. Munster whilst recognising the limitations of the virtual space identifies an aesthetic relationship to the baroque by commenting that:

> in spite of VR and indeed much of the late-twentieth-century cyberculture's disregard for the body, virtuality does not exist in a realm beyond or transcend corporeal existence...the baroque will become a force within contemporary information aesthetics as we enter the spheres of virtuality, human-computer interaction and globally networked information.[30]

The baroque is about excess, the physical and the sensual, the transcendence of the body and the relationship between space and temporality. Christine Buci-Glucksmann considers that:

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[29] Mirko Tobias Schäfer, *Bastard Culture! User participation and the extension of cultural industries,* All Print Utrecht, p. 295 http://tinyurl.com/6eurec (accessed 5 December 2008).

[30] Munster, A., *Materializing New Media*, pp. 88-89.

> The baroque is characterized by development, by the capacity to create infinite operations of expression, by the active unity of a force and an artistic form...The baroque continually transforms itself in an operation that temporalizes space and brings about its own appearance; disappearance. This is the form of time in its fluid continuity.[31]

The social relations formed online operate within the aesthetic framework of the baroque, as relationships expand beyond the virtual space into the corporeality of the physical or 'meat' world. The term 'meat' world is an expression coined in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, and has been used by many cyberpunk writers and thinkers in the realm of cyberspace theory as a means of expressing corporeality. Another key feature of the baroque is the notion of the fold as opposed to the grid, which is a Renaissance device. Timothy Murray considers that "the fold embodies the elasticity of seriality and the continuous labyrinth of single points (1's and 0's)."[32]

Murray's use of 'the fold' as a device to imagine digital aesthetics is useful in regard to my argument. In my notion of the aesthetics inherent in the cross connections between space, intent and communications, the Möbius strip is used as a motif — as a way of interlinking the physical with the virtual, challenging notions of the private with the public and the personal and an exploration of relevant activist, aesthetic and political issues. From this context of interlinking, an analysis is applied to the subject of each chapter as a means of lending authority to the issues that I explore my own creative practice. Other activist, artists and writers that are discussed act as an intermediary space between my personal interpretation and the theoretical positioning of the argument in each chapter.

Chapter outline

In Chapter 1, I contextualise my creative practice within the field of net-activism and net-art by comparing and contrasting it to other media based artists and activists. This is to demonstrate the impact of net-activism and net-art on contemporary mainstream art and to provide my thesis with

[31] Christine Buci-Glucksmann "Preface" *Puissance de Baroque: Les forces, les formes, les rationalites,* ed. Else Marie Bukdahl and Carsten Juhl, Galilee, p.13.

[32] Timothy Murray *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds* University of Minnesota Press, 2008 p. 5.

grounded examples using my own creative experience. Chapter 2 outlines the significance of the Möbius strip as a concept to imagine the relationship between virtual and actual space within the context of net-activism. I also include an analysis of a range of concepts surrounding physical space and place plus an analysis of the theory that has surrounded virtual environments and the notion of 'cyberspace' in this chapter. This discussion is necessary in order to examine the difficulty in dealing with refugee activism as this sector of the community and its normative concepts of space and space exist outside of the parameters of everyday society. Chapter 3 focuses on the formation of activist identity behaviours and explores how theory related to online identities has informed and contributed to singular and communal notions and practices of net-activism. This discussion shows that the types of behaviour demonstrated by activists who are named under various auspices that categorise the activity and locate it within a framework of reference that ascribes moral values commonly used in mainstream society. Chapter 4 examines the issue of surveillance within contemporary society with particular focus on how individual activists and artists have the capacity to utilise this technology to inform and promote their causes. It also outlines the way in which institutions are using surveillance and particularly how this has emerged post September 11 and how it has affected net-activism and civic life. Moreover, the ways in which activists, artists and the general public use tools of augmentation (phones, wireless media and digital cameras) also shapes the concept of surveillance in new ways that challenge an Orwellian notion of 'Big Brother'. Chapter 5 outlines the notion of distributed networks as being a significant means for activists to disseminate information and influence the authorities to affect change. This is relevant to my argument because this process of distribution allows for maximum coverage of an issue globally and has directly assisted in creating awareness of issues confronting refugees in Australian immigration detention centres. Chapter 6 revisits the concept of space, this time with a focus on the spaces in-between, aesthetics of fragmentation and notion of 'non-space'. This discussion outlines

how society constructs ‘in-between’ spaces that either challenge or deny a consolidated and visible sense of identity. The central case study in this chapter is incarcerated asylum seekers in Australia and how activists have used online tools and protests to raise awareness about a group of people that exist outside of everyday society. This extended discussion of place is significant to my thesis as refugee activism is my main focus as a subject and the lack of consolidated identity is a major theme within my creative practice. Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, summarises the findings of this research, and set forth issues and challenges for further research.

To set the stage, I will now expand on my interest in these issues as an artist and participant observer at Woomera 2001 and explore how a range of other artists have engaged with related issues within their practice.

Chapter 1: Net-activism as net-art — locating my creative practice within the field

In this chapter, I explore the question of what is the field of net-activism and net-art that focuses on refugee and related issues of displacement, migration and outsider identities? By addressing this question the chapter will also contextualise the thematic foci for the subsequent chapters by introducing a range of creative works that explore over arching issues related to net-art and net-activism that fit within the context of 'augmentation', 'identity formation', 'surveillance', 'distributed networks' and 'border issues'. By providing a definition of these terms, I seek to lay the groundwork for a discussion that addresses how these aspects have facilitated new notions of the aesthetic within the cultural milieu of media arts. Another purpose of this exploration in this chapter is to situate my creative works, *Highway of Shame* (2002) and *Swipe* (2005/06) within the broader context of net-art and art that has a focus on activist issues. In particular, the focus is on advocacy of refugees in detention, migration and other border issues as a means to interrogate the nexus between net-activism and net-art. By focusing on my work as an artist and its focus on the 'subject' and 'self', I demonstrate how personal experiences may be shared and how they inform a much wider social response within the context of communities both online and offline with the use of empathy.

Firstly in this chapter I discuss some of the types of creative and activist activity that has triggered aesthetic responses online. Secondly, I will discuss *Highway of Shame* and *Swipe* in relation to other work of artists that have been exploring similar themes and issues.

Challenging genre, challenging audiences

Debra Beattie is a Queensland based filmmaker, whose work has been produced for online and broadcast formats. Her 2003 work *The Wrong Crowd*,[33] presents an approach and mode of

[33] *The Wrong Crowd* was funded by the Australian Film Commission and hosted online on the Australian Broadcasting Commission's website http://www.abc.net.au/wrongcrowd/ (accessed 1 May 2005)

presentation that I find relevant to my PhD studio work. Firstly, she combines linear media in the form of a documentary that was re-cut for the website. Secondly, the content of the website is both strongly based in autobiography and engages with historical content of a political nature relating to the history of the Queensland Police during the Joh Bjelke-Peterson years.[34] Thirdly, there is the capacity on the website for users to contribute their own story and images. This is managed in a simple but effective way — by sending her an email. By using autobiography as a narrative vehicle, Beattie is able to address a range of socio-political issues that were apparent during this political era, many of which are still enduring to this day. Her work is not a form of tactical media as it is engaged with events of the past, but it is documentary in style and in terms of genre plays with the aesthetic of the 'amateur' by way of dealing with autobiography. The sharing of personal experiences on an emotional level is a way in which people construct memories and build up a history of witnessing or sharing in event. This process is called the *social sharing of emotions* and is arguably a strategy within *The Wrong Crowd*.[35]

Beattie's talk at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra in April 2005 affirmed many of my own concerns.[36] For example, she discussed the WWW as being a medium that is strongly influenced by text — that it works best when employed as a textual rather than visual medium. She stated that the aesthetics of the WWW as a creative medium was still in development. The intent of the work having the capacity to address personal memory as well as documenting history is also synchronous with some of the conceptual challenges in *Swipe*. Beattie discussed the limitations of the ABC as the host of the project because of the organisation's online accessibility requirements, in

[34] Joh Bjelke-Peterson was the premier of Queensland for 19 years, until 1987. During that time Queensland was known as a 'police state'. See McIlroy, J., 'Joh the tyrant of Queensland' *Green Left* ' http://www.greenleft.org.au/2005/625/34830 4 May 2005 for more information (accessed 21 March 2009).
[35] Rimé, B., Christophe, V., "How individual emotional episodes feed collective memory" in *Collective memory of political events: social psychological perspectives (*James W. Pennebaker, Darío Páez, Bernard Rimé, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997, p. 133.
[36] 28 April 2005, Lecture, Dr Debra Beattie, Lecturer, School of Arts, Griffith University, *The Wrong Crowd: An Online Documentary* (with the Centre of New Media Arts), National Museum of Australia, Visions Theatre.

particular how these requirements affected the development of the project. My only criticism of the accessibility of *Wrong Crowd* is that it relied heavily on image files that comprised the heading text, and use of frames is not an accessible way of presenting WWW based content. Beattie also mentioned that there had been many submissions made to her via email, and that with additional funding these stories will be included into the website later. The concern with accessibility and web standards was centred around a notion that these requirements curbed the creative exploration of the work. However, I would argue that the challenge is to create work within those parameters and to push the boundaries of what can be defined as accessibility or usability design.

To use personal experience and autobiography is a way to construct a fragmented narrative, as memory is fragmented and lacking in completeness because it is relegated to the past, albeit connected to the present notion of space and identity. The online environment lends itself to the telling of personal experience and identity as well as the genre of fiction. This genre explores notions not borne out of 'augmented' identity, in which there are links between the two notions of space, but to the creation of stories and characters that do not exist, to the extent of creating fraudulent businesses and organisations. The scenario of fictional identity is definitely outside of the process of cultural production for the most part, particularly when considering the development of mirror banking websites that have used to obtain peoples personal information for the purpose of cyber-crimes like fraud, theft, etc. On the other hand, to play with this notion of identity theft can also bring into play social and political injustices.

To provide an example of a group who have used 'false' identity to expose a range of social justice issues related to corporate globalisation and social equity and corruption is the *Yes Men*.[37] Instead of

[37] The Yes Men are a group of culture jamming activists who practice what they call "identity correction" by pretending to be powerful people and spokespersons for prominent organisations. http://theyesmen.org/ (accessed 29 July 2004).

considering that the false identity is fraud, the *Yes Men* refer to this process as identity correction, as they highlight how corporate entities use language as a means of creating an identity of themselves as being caring and responsible to humanity. This group is a collective that has explored a range of activist issues through performance and a website. Anyone can potentially become a Yes Man and participate in intervention events. On the *Yes Men* website they state that the objective is about:

> Impersonating big-time criminals in order to publicly humiliate them. Targets are leaders and big corporations who put profits ahead of everything else.[38]

In 2004, The *Yes Men* brought out a DVD that documents some of their culture jamming events. In a number of performances, they have posed as members of the World Trade Organization[39] and have created havoc at conferences with their interventionist techniques. Arguably, the *Yes Men's* most famous prank is placing a "corrected" WTO website at http://www.gatt.org/ (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). This fake site began to receive real emails from confused visitors, including invitations to address various elite groups on behalf of the WTO, to which they responded as if they were the actual WTO a move which launched them into the world of 'identity correction'. The *Yes Men* website comments that:

> In 1999, just before the big protests in Seattle, Mike and Andy set up a parody of the WTO website at the domain GATT.org. Some people mistook it for the real thing and wrote in with questions about all sorts of trade matters. Finally, Mike and Andy found themselves invited to conferences to speak as the organization they opposed. They scrounged up their savings, bought plane tickets, and went.
>
> As the World Trade Organization, Andy and Mike delivered shocking satires of WTO policy to audiences of so-called "experts." At an international trade law conference in Salzburg, Austria, they (i.e. the WTO) proposed a free-market solution to democracy: auctioning votes to the highest bidder. On the TV program CNBC Marketwrap Europe, the WTO announced that might equalled right, that a privatized education market would help replace Abbie Hoffman with Milton Friedman, and that there ought to be a market in human rights abuses. At a textiles conference in Tampere, Finland the WTO unveiled a 3-foot phallus for administering electric shocks to sweatshop employees.[40]

[38] The Yes Men http://theyesmen.org/ (accessed 24 March 2004).
[39] The World Trade Organization is an international, multilateral organization, which sets the rules for the global Trade system and resolves disputes between its member states; all of whom are signatories to its approximately 30 agreements. http://www.wto.int (accessed 21 November 2008).
[40] The Yes Men 'WTO' http://theyesmen.org/hijinks/wto (accessed 21 November 2008).

Another intervention by the *Yes Men* that highlighted slavery was at a conference on business in Africa on November 11 2006, where WTO representative Hanniford Schmidt announced the creation of a WTO initiative for "full private stewardry of labor" for the parts of Africa that have been hardest hit by the 500 years of Africa's 'free trade' with the West.[41] A press release of this presentation was widely distributed via Nettime and other activist channels on the Internet.[42] On the *Yes Men* website, the article states that:

> The initiative will require Western companies doing business in some parts of Africa to own their workers outright. Schmidt recounted how private stewardship has been successfully applied to transport, power, water, traditional knowledge, and even the human genome. The WTO's "full private stewardry" program will extend these successes to (re)privatize humans themselves.
>
> "Full, untrammelled stewardry is the best available solution to African poverty, and the inevitable result of free-market theory," Schmidt told more than 150 attendees. Schmidt acknowledged that the stewardry program was similar in many ways to slavery, but explained that just as "compassionate conservatism" has polished the rough edges on labor relations in industrialized countries, full stewardry, or "compassionate slavery," could be a similar boon to developing ones.
>
> The audience included Prof. Charles Soludo (Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria), Dr. Laurie Ann Agama (Director for African Affairs at the Office of the US Trade Representative), and other notables. Agama prefaced her remarks by thanking Scmidt for his macroscopic perspective, saying that the USTR view adds details to the WTO's general approach. Nigerian Central Bank Governor Soludo also acknowledged the WTO proposal, though he did not seem to appreciate it as much as did Agama.[43]

By engaging directly with the audience that support the issues that the *Yes Men* are critical of, they are able to use the tools of semantics and impersonation to be able to operate in that discursive space. The work of the *Yes Men* highlights not only the significance of culture jamming, but also demonstrates that collaborations are composed of contributors from all manner of backgrounds including artists, activists, writers and including what Cubitt would consider 'amateurs'.

[41] The Yes Men 'WTO proposes slavery for Africa' http://theyesmen.org/hijinks/wharton (accessed 21 November 2008).
[42] World Trade Organization http://www.gatt.org/wharton.html (accessed 21 November 2008).
[43] The Yes Men 'WTO proposes slavery for Africa'.

Defining identity formation online: bodies, behaviours and creative media

Christiane Paul (2003) recognises how human rights issues of racism, sexism and marginalised communities have consistently influenced art and activism. She comments that:

> The power structure of media, anti-racism, gender-activism, and support of underrepresented communities are among the issues that have been continually addressed by cooperatives of artists and activists.[44]

Paul identified two crucial issues in this quote — firstly she addresses the power structures of media and marginalised communities as a key issue and secondly acknowledges the collaborative role of cooperatives. In addition the notion of collaborative practice challenges established notions of the artist within the context of art for consumption, as does virtual art as it is in the public domain and not 'owned' as an physical object.

The topics of human rights mentioned in Paul's quote contribute to discussions of identity in creative and cultural contexts. And, as the notion of collaboration is about multiple perspectives and attitudes influencing the creative process and activist outcomes, identity is cyberspace is fraught with issues of multiplicity, fragmentation and alienation.

The role of identity and speaking positions is well documented in a significant amount of feminist literature in the 1990s, whereby empowerment from the margins could be attained by asserting one's social position and status by speaking from that vantage point as a form of resistance. For example, Gaytari Spivak (1999) states that:

> Resistance and the object of resistance often find their best articulation in such available tendencies as a picking field for interpellations given and taken.[45]

In the above quote Spivak refers to how women writers representing this form of resistance are able to do so through the like minded 'picking field' of publishing houses that have supported their

[44] Christiane Paul, *Digital Art,* 2003, p. 204.
[45] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A critique of postcolonial reason: toward a history of the vanishing present,* Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 112.

work. She also comments that:

> As in all instituting, however unsystematic, the subject of feminism is produced by the performative of a declaration of independence, which must necessarily state itself as already given, in a conservative statement of women's identity and/or solidarity, natural, historical, social, psychological.[46]

Spivak recognises the range of contexts in which identity is formed, as does Donna Haraway (1991) in the *Cyborg Manifesto.* The cyborg is conceived as a hybrid between machine and human and Haraway's text was highly influential in the development of theory related to digital media interactions in relation the partial nature of identity formation. She states:

> Consciousness of exclusion through naming is acute. Identities seem contradictory, partial, and strategic. With the hard-won recognition of their social and historical constitution, gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity.[47]

Emancipation is at the core of my interpretation of distributed and digital aesthetics, whether of people and communities, or of information and technology. This emancipation is brought about by resistance to the loss of human rights and it is achieved by challenging authoritarian media structures.

Issues of representation and difference has been highly influential in the fields of post-colonialism and cultural theories concerning identity, which has subsequently influenced thinking about online media spaces and identity. For example, David Morley addresses the changing notion of home, homeland and nation by exploring the destabilisation of these concepts through physical mobility and communications technologies. "The electronic landscapes in which we now dwell are haunted by all manner of cultural anxieties which arise from this destabilising flux."[48] He goes on to comment:

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[46] Spivak, G.C., *A critique of postcolonial reason,* pp. 112-113.
[47] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature,* Routledge, 1991, p. 155.
[48] David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* Routledge, 2000, p. 3.

> If the transformations in communications and transport networks characteristic of our period (sic), involving various forms of mediation, displacement and de-territorialisation are generally held to have transformed our sense of place, their theorisation has often proceeded at a highly abstract level, towards a generalised account of nomadology.[49]

This concept of nomadology does not discriminate between displacement by choice or by force, which is problematic as these two variations of movement are distinctly different experiences of change. The relationship between human and environment determines either an experience of exclusion and displacement or a sense of adventure and optimism about the future. The city has often been referred to as a space that demonstrates an augmented relationship between human, architecture and technology. For example, Elizabeth Grosz (1995) considers the interrelationship between the body and the city:

> The body, however is not distinct from the city for they are mutually defining. Like the representational model, there may be an isomorphism between the body and the city. But it is not a mirroring of nature in artifice: rather, there is a two way linkage that could be defined as an *interface*.[50]

This interface between body, city (or space) and technology is used by culture jammers, activists and artists as a way challenging the power structures of government and corporations. The notion of identity and the politics of the body in relationship to notions of power has been a focus for many artists exploring online and virtual environments. For example, Allucquere Rosanne Sandy Stone's discussion of the body plays with the notion of gender and identity — from her position as a transsexual. Her body in the physical sense has done what we can do online - to virtually morph and change shapes. She argues that:

> Representation at its most magical, the transsexual body is perfected memory, inscribed with the "true" story of Adam and Eve as the ontological account of irreducible difference, an essential biography which is part of nature. A story which culture tells itself, the transsexual body is a tactile politics of reproduction constituted through textual violence. The clinic is a technology of inscription.[51]

A collaborative group that figured prominently in the 1990s for their gender politics and

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[49] Morley, D., *Home Territories*, p. 3.
[50] Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, Perversion* Routledge, 1995, p. 108.
[51] Sandy Stone "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto", in Kristina Straub and Julia Epstein, eds., *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Sexual Ambiguity* Routledge: New York, 1996), http://www.sterneck.net/gender/stone-posttranssexuel/index.php (accessed 21 March 2008).

experimentation of online space is *VNS Matrix.* This Australian based group was a collective of cyber feminists from, featuring Josephine Starrs, Virginia Barratt, Francesca Da Rimini and Julianne Pierce.[52] They were a predominant force in the net-art stakes during this time and continue to be significant as individual artists. Their approach was '*Guerrilla Girls*'[53] in tactic and their collective work addressed notions of femininity, sexual desire and tele-dildonics. Their most well known statement is the "cyberfemininst manifesto for the 21st century", which has been discussed in many texts and online at feminist sites like *geekgirl* (http://www.geekgirl.com.au). Their contribution to net art is significant in feminist and cultural terms; their original site states that:

> The impetus of the group was to investigate and decipher the narratives of domination and control which surround high technological culture, and explore the construction of social space, identity and sexuality in cyberspace.[54]

Since *VNS Matrix* disbanded, Francesca Da Rimini (*Gash Girl, VNS Matrix*) has collaborated with Ricardo Dominguez and Michael Grimm in an ongoing project titled *Doll Yoko*, which explores a range of themes including gender, sexuality, war, dislocation and the plight of refugees.

Josephine Starrs has collaborated with Leon Cmielewski on a number of projects that have explored borders and migration.[55] *Floating Territories* (2004) and *Seeker* (2006) both explore issues of migration and identity with the use of game play and interactive installation. A statement by the artists describes their work as follows:

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[52] Leon Cmielewski and Josephine Starrs "VNS Matrix" http://lx.sysx.org/vnsmatrix.html (accessed 21 August 2001).
[53] The Guerrilla Girls are an anonymous group of feminist artists established in New York City in 1985, who used posters, books, billboards, appearances and other forms of culture jamming to expose discrimination and corruption. Trained as visual artists, their first work was putting up posters on the streets of New York to raise awareness about the gender and racial imbalance of artists represented in galleries and museums. The Guerrilla Girls chose their name "guerrilla" because they "…wanted to play with the fear of guerrilla warfare, to make people afraid of who [they] might be and where [they] might strike next". (From Guerrilla Girls. *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls*, Harper Collins: New York, 1995.) http://www.guerrillagirls.com/ (accessed 21 August 2001).
[54] Leon Cmielewski and Josephine Starrs "VNS Matrix" http://lx.sysx.org/vnsmatrix.html (accessed 21 August 2001).
[55] Leon Cmielewski and Josephine Starrs http://lx.sysx.org/ (accessed 21 February 2008).

> The Seeker installation uses three large projections to explore migration, territorial boundaries, conflict commodities and human displacement.
>
> Seeker's interactive component enables participants to map their own personal family migration history. Making a contribution allows access to a visualisation of all accumulated maps. The most recent vectors are drawn first, followed gradually by the vectors of previous participants. An alternative animated visualisation can be accessed by the viewer where elegant curves represent the distance each generation has travelled.[56]

This work was included in an exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in 2006 titled *Contemporary Commonwealth* which, in broad terms, explored issues of migration. In an essay by Jill Bennett entitled "Migratory Aesthetics: art and politics beyond identity" about the exhibition, she discusses how identity as a political framework has moved from a notion of the individual to the community :

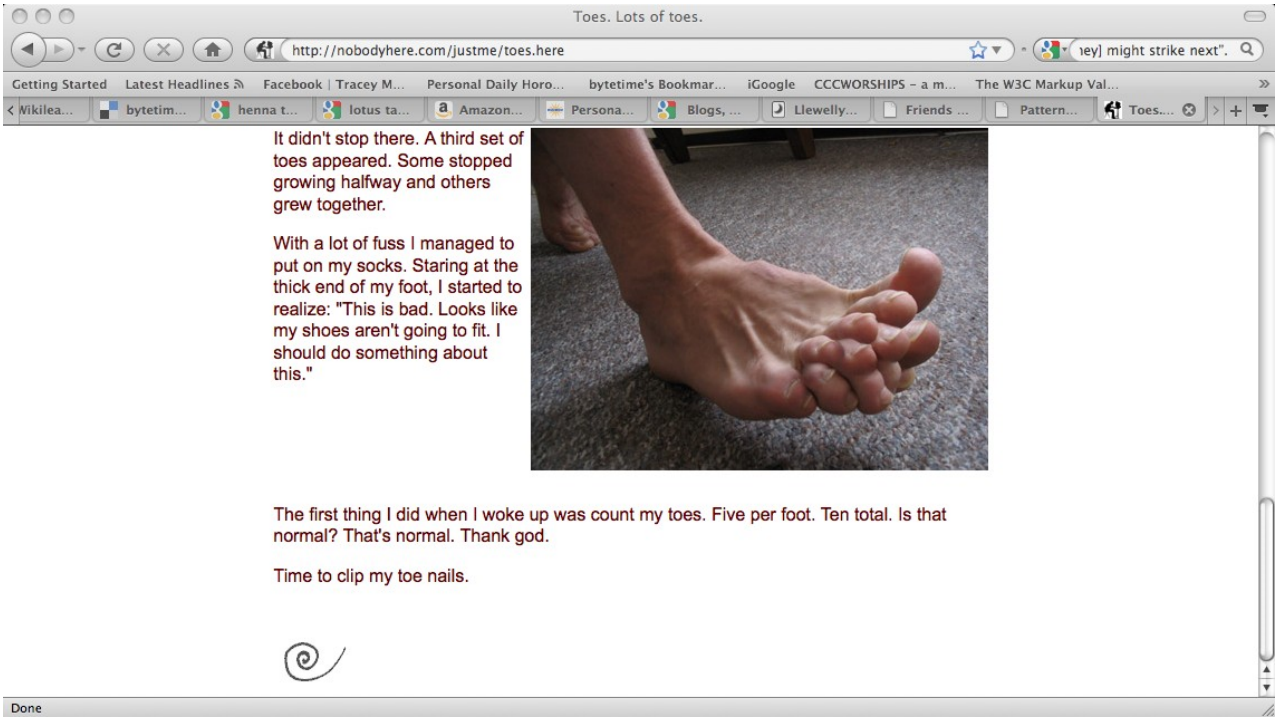
> that the shift from identity to relationality, and toward an exploration of communality as a process, is a key development in terms of political aesthetics. It is fundamentally a more aesthetic project than is identity politics insofar as it allows that a politics may be derived directly from aesthetic process and description—that aesthetics is a particular modality of the political rather than a form of mediation.[57]

In this quote Bennett also alludes to an aesthetic shift to the process or relationship that arises by having interactivity with the artwork. Although she states that this shift is a development in political aesthetics, it is also clearly a shift within the context of digital and distributed aesthetics. Her statement also begs the question - what is beyond identity? It certainly has not disappeared from theoretical and creative discourse, but perhaps it has been transformed by bigger political and ideological issues that have come into play in the 21st century.

There have also been some creative explorations into the notion of a 'lack of identity'. For example, the work of Jogchem Niemandsverdriet first come to my attention in 1999 when I requested proposals for an online project I curated for *MAAP 2000*. He responded to my call on the *Nettime* list and I found his work sat well within the thematic of the exhibition, titled *360 degrees* as I was

[56] Leon Cmielewski and Josephine Starrs http://lx.sysx.org/?page_id=3 (accessed 21 February 2008).
[57] Jill Bennett *Migratory Aesthetics: art and politics beyond identity* http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/m.g.bal/bestanden/Bennett%20Jill%20paper%20FINAL%20READER%20OPMAAK.pdf (accessed 21 February 2008).

looking for artists who used the WWW as a means to explore issues of identity. His website *Nobody Here*[58] is very relevant to some of the issues within my own work. For example, Niemandsverdriet regularly uses everyday experiences to connect to the audience in a way that evokes a common link between him and the user. Although in some parts of this work he is exploring ideas of isolation and alienation, at the same time he uses autobiography as vehicle to write about his experiences in a way that connects to the audience through shared human experiences and needs: some as simple as the need to trim one's toe nails.



Jogchem Niemandsverdriet "Toes" http://nobodyhere.com/justme/toes.here (accessed 21 June 2009)

His earlier use of JavaScript was playful and accessible, a very creative and innovative use of this programming language. The only drawback about this website, is that in later iterations of the project, it became increasingly reliant on Macromedia Flash for the web page content. This is problematic in terms of being compliant with WWW Consortium (W3C) accessibility standards as it limits access by low bandwidth and blind users. In the earlier version, he did not use proprietary

[58] Jogchem Niemandsverdriet, www.nobodyhere.com (accessed 05/07/2003).

software to manage his site or the multimedia content. Niemandsverdriet has been maintaining and adding to this site since 1998 and still manages to present something that is relevant and challenging about notions of displacement and self-identity. His overall theme of a masked or veiled identity is also highly relevant to my whole PhD project. Even the title, *Nobody Here*, signifies a sense of displacement or a feeling of lost identity. Although there is no overt reference to notions of migration and borders, the exploration of loss has strong connections to these themes.

The fractured nature of memory - *Highway of Shame*

My own personal experience of a protest at the Woomera Immigration Detention Centre in September 2001 was significant in terms of the development of my creative work for the PhD project. My journey to Woomera had such a powerful impact on how I saw the world, particularly in terms of how news is reported in the media that it took some time to digest how to address the issues in a way that included the personal and political implications of what I had witnessed. What resulted was a website titled *Highway of Shame*. To introduce *Highway of Shame* properly, a step into the past needs to be taken to ponder the global and national political landscape that existed one week after 11 September 2001. This is necessary because *Highway of Shame* is a documentation of my experience at a protest at Woomera Detention Centre on 22 September 2001 protest, during a time when there were significant political implications that affected media depiction's of refugees.[59] The terrorist attacked resulted in global panic, airports were closed, the movement of people was

[59] The Australian Federal government , led by John Howard (1996-2007) used refugees in detention as part of a racist election campaign, where the 'Children Overboard' footage was used to create an image of boat people as dangerous, potential terrorists. Given that many of the refugees in detention were also Muslim, a link was made between religion and terrorism, the repercussions of which are still impacting media representations and general opinion across the western world. See: ABC: AM Archive http://www.abc.net.au/am/stories/s482040.htm (accessed 23 January 2008); truth over board: lies, damn lies and politics http://www.truthoverboard.com/ (accessed 23 January 2008); Kim Arlington (24 August 2004). "Children overboard the most despicable of lies: Hawke". The Age (Fairfax). http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/08/24/1093246520431.html?from=storylhs (accessed 23 January 2008); George Megalogenis (27 February 2006). "They sank the boat, Howard says". The Australian. http://www.news.com.au/story/0,10117,18282114-28097,00.html (accessed 23 January 2008); David Marr (2006-02-28). "Truth overboard : the story that won't go away". Sydney Morning Herald (Fairfax). http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/truth-overboard--the-story-that-wont-go-away/2006/02/27/1141020023654.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1 (accessed 23 January 2008).

halted to and from the USA and an indelible link was made between the attacks and the Islamic community. Many of the detainees in Australian Immigration Detention Centres were identified as Muslims with a large majority from Iraq and Afghanistan, although the issue of ethnicity and religion is not a focus in my work. *Highway of Shame* is a recreation of events as I saw them, and it is a personal, political and critical exploration of my experience. This excerpt is from my journal, and describes, in part, my experience:

> The only way I can describe this event is as a life changing experience. My initial PhD proposal was going to focus on online shopping malls and consumption, but suddenly this project seemed to be self indulgent and irrelevant. One week after I watched the twin towers explode in New York City on TV, I witnessed attacks with water cannons and tear gas on people who had no escape in Woomera. I couldn't believe my eyes. The events of September 11 seemed strange and surreal — like the 1970s movie *Towering Inferno* that was only screened a week before. Reality did not seem to kick in; the explosion looked like just another Hollywood movie.
>
> My experience of Woomera Detention Centre was nothing like the alienated feelings of distance I had watching the twin towers burn. As I ran across the desert, my legs did not want to carry me, the tears streaming down my face did not seem like my own, and the voice screaming for the water cannon to stop appeared far away, not arising from my own throat. My body eliciting its own response, feeling a connection. I did not know anyone in the compound, but all I could think was 'What if my child or my parents were trapped there?', or, 'What if it was me in there?'[60]

This experience and the contrasting (and incorrect) reporting on the news started to make me reconsider the disparity between the experience of the witness and the that of the viewer, media/ spectator. Within the context of news reporting, the point or moment of capture of an event within the context of journalism is the starting point of the construction of narrative and the framing of the subject and topic. By the time the story is broadcast on television or published in the newspaper, report has already been edited, constructed and given a 'spin', hence it being mediated and a partial aspect of the narrative. To be personally involved as a witness participant brings in the element of physical shock and surprise, something that is not possible through the tyranny of distance created via the screen. John Hartley discusses how the mass media seek to identify with the perceived audience and in doing attempt to forge a notion of community. This process lends itself to inclusion

[60] Appendix 3.

and exclusion of sectors of the community, or as he describes "Wedom" and "Theydom".[61] Hartley details how when people from the excluded sector of society attempt to speak, that what they say is questioned or challenged as being the 'truth'. He uses the example of Aboriginal people and representatives as often being denigrated to this category. He states that:

> Aboriginal perspectives may be so foreign to 'our' notions of truth that they come across not as a point of view with its own validity but as literally untrue, biased, distorted or propaganda. Hence a spokesperson who insists on the citizenship or the rights of Aborigines, as opposed to conforming to welfare or corrective stereotypes, is likely to be represented in the news as an extremist.[62]

After my experience at Woomera Immigration Detention Centre in 2001, I realised that what we see as news on the television and what we hear on the radio is already a 'history' as it is a recreation of the past, a mediated, edited version of the story. It may incorporate facts, but it does not, and cannot recreate the event in its entirety and as Hartley suggests, there may be also strong bias for or against the subject of the story. What makes the nature of the history different from memory is the personal and intimate nature of memory, that is for the most part private and not subjected to the scrutiny and challenge of the mass media. David Lowenthal (1985) comments that:

> We accept memory as a promise of knowledge. We infer history from evidence that includes other peoples' memories. Unlike memory, history is not given it is based on empirical sources which we can decide to reject for other versions of the past.[63]

Aside from the response to an event as a witness rather than as a media consumer, there is the capacity to use the Internet actively, a process that enables the witness to tell recount their own experience, unfettered by the corporate media narrative. This realisation is what led me to create an online personal account of my experience as a witness to these events. Over time, this type of testimony has grown exponentially with blogging, citizen journalism, participation culture and the *Web 2.0* social networking tools. What has resulted is much more than an engagement in alternative media reporting from an activist perspective, it is now a core part of many peoples every day

[61] John Hartley, *The politics of pictures: the creation of the public in the age of popular media* Routledge: London, 1992, p. 209.
[62] Hartley, J., *The politics of pictures* p. 209.
[63] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1985, pp. 212-213.

communications. For example, millions of people update their status every day on *Facebook* (http://www.facebook.com) and *Twitter* (http://www.twitter.com) and the subject matter of these 'microfeeds' varies widely from self promotion of projects, to commenting on current affairs to the mundane 'what is for dinner' type of statements.

Temporality was an issue that I had to deal with in *Highway of Shame* because even though I was a witness to the events at Woomera Detention Centre, the work was developed sometime after the event and far from the location that initiated the ideas for this work. However, what remained with me was the memory of my reaction, my journal and the impact that witnessing and participating in the protest had on me in emotional and psychological terms. Bearing this in mind, I decided to proceed with developing a work that emphasised the personal and emotive aspect of the event, whilst still providing an account of the action and addressing the broader issues that surround the refugee activist movement. The challenge of communicating the protest and the larger social issues was undertaken by utilising keywords that both documented the event and provided a way forward in terms of building the movement and constructing a set of thoughts or wishes about the experience that considered the advocacy role of the activism surrounding refugees. In terms of the Information Architecture (IA), the website relied on a linking navigational pattern, where there were 6 or 7 links words on each page: one of the links would take you back: one would take you to a core text, the other links related to the words: hope, loss, etc. Each page had a short statement or story about the event or the movement that recorded my feelings and my perspective on that experience. This use of navigation is an example of how I explored the asynchronous aspect of the Möbius strip in my work *Highway of Shame*.

> By seeking to explore my experience form Woomera 2001 from both a poetic and personal perspective, *Highway of Shame* emerged as a word play, a fractured story, of moments and memories. This work explores an experience that was shared by many, and as such, the work explores the spaces between the personal and the public, between individual and community experience and identity.[64]

This work is also influenced by the notion of 'tactical media' as it was conceptualised as a media intervention that used autobiography and personal experience as a form of documentary history. Lowenthal (1985) argues that "Just as memory validates personal identity, history perpetuates collective self awareness."[65] This collective self awareness is amplified by how the media distributes that message, and the Internet has had the capacity to shift history from being a singular speaking position to a multi-perspectival narrative. Lowenthal also comments that:

> The stability of history is largely due to its dissemination in print, but much knowledge of the past survives scribal and even oral transmission more or less intact...And those who recount and receive histories — oral, scribal, and printed — rely on their being stable and faithful records, whereas we expect memory to mislead us...To be sure, time-transformed recollections likewise invent and discover new facts; like histories, memories review the past with present hindsight.[66]

The practice of blogging can provide an excellent example of tactical media: how a diverse group of people can affect how history is imagined and written. For example Salam Pax, better known as the Baghdad Blogger provided an insiders perspective into the invasion of Iraq by the "Coalition of the willing" during 2002 — 2004 in his blog *Where is Raed?*[67] In 2003, *Atlantic Books*, in association with *The Guardian*, published a book based on "Where is Raed?" under the title *The Baghdad Blog*. The book comprises blog entries from September 2002 to June 2003 with footnotes. This example exemplifies the potential of the personalised nature of citizen publishing, as represented by the blog, manifesting into an historical account of a particular significant period. However, this mode of documentation or publication was not the intention of *Highway of Shame* as the website was not presented in the linear, chronological format of a blog. Rather, its construction was conceived more as a poetic device designed to offer multiple, and horizontal pathways for the reader to experience.

[64] Tracey Benson, Artist Statement for Ctheory Multimedia, *Wired Ruins,* 2002.
[65] Lowenthal, D., 'The past', p. 213.
[66] Lowenthal, D., 'The past', p. 214.
[67] Salam Pax, *Where is Raed?* http://dear_raed.blogspot.com/ 2002 (accessed 21 January 2009).

My decision to use this type of narrative device was to emphasise the fractured nature of memory, that thoughts and memories come in grabs, or flashes of insight rather than as a cohesive whole.
It is important to distinguish between the conceptual and the technical implications of *Highway of Shame* and *Swipe* as these aspects drive the way in which the websites are structured as well as how they are situated in terms of 'net-art'. In terms of the conceptual and structural aspects of these works, I am using hypertext and accessible web languages (i.e. not proprietary software) to create a narrative that inter-links between my personal experience as a participant observer and as an attempt to find words and statements that have implications on the universal and humanitarian level. The intention is to create a work that is usable and engaging from a web standards perspective. Broadly speaking, the motivation for developing the work in such a way is to make it accessible technically and approach the work from an ideological position that is aligned with the shareware/freeware culture, better known as FOSS or FLOSS as mentioned on page 16.

Many of the lessons learnt from developing *Highway of Shame* informed the technical and creative elements of *Swipe*. For example, my use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and Extensible Hypertext Markup Language (XHTML) in *Highway of Shame* was at a rudimentary level, as I was a self-taught artist and teacher of web design. I now have proficient skills in CSS and this has influenced the structure of the syntax of the code used as well as the look and feel of the online work *Swipe*. There is also a shift away from creating work that is primarily based as in autobiography in *Highway of Shame*, to using the voice of the third person to create a work that is more ambiguous — as a potential narrative device to reflect the user's own experiences or to otherwise stimulate thought of their own past experience.

Synopsis of *Swipe:* crossing between virtual to public space

The other major work undertaken as part of my research was *Swipe*, a project that manifested in two

forms — as a website and a multi-screen digital projection. The technical environment in which the *Swipe* website was created was vastly different from *Highway of Shame*, as it was constructed after I had experience in working with large government websites and had received training in the areas of accessibility, IA, usability, CSS, international web standards and writing for the web. However, the overall intention of the work was very similar to the earlier work, as it was motivated by a desire to create a narrative that the reader could connect and engage with, and perhaps make a difference in terms of raising social awareness in a poetic and creative way.

The overarching thematic dual focus of *Swipe* is alienation and displacement, and in the website I constructed a multi-layered narrative that had the potential for users to identify similar experiences. The topics are personal though generic, as opposed to being focused on narrating an event experienced at a very personal, individual level. *Swipe* is also presented in French and English, with the intention to reach a broader audience. In *Swipe* my goal was to bring social and current affairs issues together from a personal perspective. I used self-referentiality with the intention of exploring a range of concepts and ideas, with a continuing focus on the subject of displacement and alienation. This an excerpt from an artist statement:

> There are many interesting and relevant historical examples of individuals or groups who are socially excluded. There is a range of medical subjects that have been considered outcasts — lepers, people with the plaque, aids suffers, to name a few.
>
> People suffering from mental illness have long been incarcerated and treated as sub-humans, as have people with physical and intellectual disabilities.
>
> Of course, race is another historical (and contemporary) boundary, where the 'outcast' identity is defined.[68]

The screen-based production of *Swipe* was exhibited as a projection installation at the CUBE37 Glass Studio at Frankston, Victoria in September 2006. As the exhibition opened on September 11, it seemed appropriate to incorporate references to 9/11, because of the relationship to airports,

[68] Appendix 4.

spaces in-between and the identity issues that have impacted on the media representation of Islam and 'terrorism' since that fateful day in September 2001. Douglas Kellner (2003) considers the relationship of media manipulation of spectacles of terror and suggests that 9/11 played out as a deadly drama live on television. [69] He also claims that terrorists are adept in constructing media spectacles to promote their causes and attack their adversaries.[70] Thus, the media is implicated as playing a role in creating an effect that was devised by the terrorists.

Terrorists are not the only ones that are adept at creating media spectacles, as this is a tactic often employed by activists, especially activists using online media tools on the Internet as a publishing medium. Kellner by focusing on how terrorists manipulate television media also inadvertently challenges how net-activism is often seen as a positive, utopian, democratic environment. For example, the network, although an essential element in the building of an online community is not, as Jeffery Juris (2008) point out, democratic by nature. He comments that:

> Networks are not *inherently* democratic or egalitarian, and they may be used for divergent ends... As we are reminded nearly every day, terror and crime outfits increasingly operate through global networks as well.[71]

Regardless of whatever the political orientation of the network, the processes of blogging and citizen publishing have significantly shifted the role of media away from the corporate entity that is mass global media ownership to a notion of individual power of expression to witness, document events and to share information.

Devolved media: distributed networks

The WWW operates on a structure that is predominately horizontal rather than vertical, hence the capacity for users to be able to have an equal investment in the intellectual content of the website or social network. This is in essence, how a devolved structure works. But as with government

[69] David Kellner, 'September 11, Spectacles of Terror, and Media Manipulation: A Critique of Jihadist and Bush Media Politics', In *Logos 2.1*. Winter 2003, p. 88.
[70] Kellner, D., 'September 11', p.86.
[71] Jeffrey S Juris, *Networking Futures: The Movements Against Corporate Globalization,* Duke University Press: Durham, 2008, p. 17.

Intranets and moderated newsgroups, there is the final authority of the moderator or administrator, who gives out the access permissions to the users. The use of the WWW as a medium for my creative works *Highway of Shame* and *Swipe* operates as a means of disseminating the information and as a play of mimesis. By this, I mean that work simultaneously mimics the immediacy of the medium because it is, in fact, the same medium, whilst having the same capacity to distribute as corporate media websites but using a different genre of writing — autobiographical hypertext as opposed to journalism. One difference, is that I am both author and administrator and have jurisdiction over the interface and the back-end — something that is not possible with much blogging and social networking tools. Another key difference is that I am a citizen publisher and seek no financial benefit for publishing my work, hence the lack of advertising on this website. *Highway of Shame* uses personal memory as the means of constructing the narrative and although this work can not be described as a blog per se, it uses a poetic device as a means of diarising events. Lovink refers to a notion of 'media memory', a concept that sits well with the intention of *Highway of Shame*:

> Media memory is embedded in the way people are using machines, it is an active process of constructing the past, not merely [a] technical one, which can be reduced to "storage" and "retrieval".[72]

The emergence of 'open source' software and Web 2.0 applications has meant people can not just self publish cheaply and easily, as the *Indymedia* suite of websites and blogs attest, users also have the power to improve and further develop the software and the code. Jeffrey Juris considers the self determination of the 'produser' as being an emerging cultural ideal. He comments:

> The self-produced, self-developed, and self-managed network becomes a widespread cultural ideal, providing not only an effective model of political organizing but also a model for organizing society as a whole.[73]

The quote demonstrates how online networking processes are impacting in society and how they have shifted perceptions about cultural attitudes and hierarchies, from citizens as passive receivers

[72] Lovink, G., *Dark Fibre*, p. 162.
[73] Juris, J.S., *Networking cultures*, p. 15.

of information to active and engaged contributors building networks of information and people. This has certainly been the case for the refugee advocacy movement in Australia. Juris also comments:

> Network designs are thus diffusing widely as digital technologies power the expansion of globally connected yet locally rooted social movements, which are increasingly organised around flexible all-channel patterning, rather than the traditional top-down political formations.[74]

These models are also not static or formulated in their structure either, each network is fluid and the dynamic of the activity and the personalities are continuously changing in order to facilitate the dialogue and the participation of the individuals within the group.

Axel Bruns applies the term 'produser'[75] to citizen publishing as a means to describe the proactive way members are engaged with the online community as exemplified by blogging and posting to alternative media websites and other more recent social media networks such as *Facebook*. Bruns recognises that the development of the software has enabled users to participate in a more direct manner. He states:

> Truly interactive media forms, therefore, are interactive not simply in the sense of enabling more effective interaction between users and the communications technologies they encounter, but in the far more significant sense of enabling more engaged interaction between and amongst *users* themselves, no matter how complex or ineffective the interface.[76]

Bruns also comments on the emerging technologies that:

> Open news affords its participants that experience directly, without the detour through the somewhat more abstract and detached world of collaborative software development.[77]

Moreover, for artists and activists to use autobiography as a form of journalism the media narrative is extended to include 'citizen journalism', this is how Debra Beattie's work crosses the boundaries between news, autobiography and documentary. For example, *PBS* 'Online News Hour' discussed

[74] Juris, J.S., *Networking cultures*, p. 14.
[75] M/Cyclopedia of New Media http://wiki.media-culture.org.au/index.php/E-Commerce_-_DIY_Business_Opportunities_-_Produser (accessed 2 June 2008).
[76] Axel Bruns, *Gatewatching: Collaborative Online News Production,* Peter Lang Publishing: New York, 2005, p. 120.
[77] Bruns, A., *Gatewatching*, p. 69.

this theme in a panel discussion early in 2007. Mary Hodder from *dabble.com* made the following observations:

> The real shift is control. Who gets to decide what we watch has gone away. I'm deciding. My friends are deciding. Other folks on the Internet are deciding. And that sort of yanks the rug out from underneath legacy media in a way that we've never seen before.[78]

This is what has shifted the power relations of online artists and activists. There is now a capacity for people to develop and disseminate their own material, like never before. This is especially true for the large developments made in open source and freeware communities, which I discuss in detail later in the thesis.

Activist art and intervention as practice — breaking down borders

There are many example of creative work that explores issues of borders, dislocation and alienation particularly in an Australian context. For instance, Mike Parr's 2002 performance *Close the camps* physically and conceptually engages with the issues of refugees in detention. In this work, he stitches up his eyes and mouth, in a similar way to protesting detainees. However, there is a twist to this seemingly mimetic performance. When Deborah Kelly asked him if he was showing the face of the refugees in detention he stated that he was in fact showing the face of Australia, contorted, ignorant, refusing to see or speak about this humanitarian crisis.[79] Ethically, I find this position very similar to my own approach. Throughout my art practice, I have attempted to maintain a position to only speak from my own perspective, as it is unethical, patronising and inappropriate to offer an interpretation of another's identity or experience. However, this is one of the key conceptual problems inherent in *Swipe* — as there is a necessity to describe a situation from the outside and the people engaged in the scenario have no opportunity to state their own case.

[78] PBS *Online News hour* http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june07/media_01-01.html 1/12007 (accessed 3 January 2007).
[79] Personal conversation with Deborah Kelly at , September 2002.

Heath Bunting's 2002-2003 *BorderXing Guide* website primarily consists of documentation of walks that traverse national boundaries, without interruption from customs, immigration, or border police. The work comments on the way in which movement between borders is restricted by governments and associated bureaucracies.[80] In this project Bunting seeks to challenge and breakdown the boarders between art and everyday life and sees himself as an interventionist and prankster in a similar context to culture jamming. What is very relevant in this project is the traversal between virtual and physical space as access to the website is only allowed by either visiting on of the physical sites or going through an application process, not unlike the bureaucratic processes of immigration between nations. The project intended a reversal of the way that borders restrict movement and at the same time challenged the supposed liberties that accompany the concept of the Internet as a borderless space.[81] Munster comments that:

> Our "freedom" to roam the great information superhighway is bluntly called into question by Bunting's reserve gesture, as it is only by our being verified as a virtual private citizen of restricted information with a virtual private address (and a credit card) that we enter the virtual space of restricted information servers in the online world. Bunting's selection of online public access points for his project attempts to build an alternative form of public space through information technologies themselves. Moreover, Bunting's physical negotiation of alternative places to cross the European borders reads like a "how-to" manual for asylum seekers and illegal immigrants.[82]

The *we are ALL boat people*[83] collective's (Deborah Kelly and friends) website and culture jamming actions also focuses on refugee issues and border crossing, by addressing the stereotypical view of 'boat people'. Aside from a series of large scale projections of the tall ships on Sydney's Opera house and other landmarks in the inner city of Sydney, on the website, there is a range of images available for download for creating tee shirts, posters, badges and banners. These images have slogans and also are aimed at raising awareness about refugees in detention. Also in Kelly's case

[80] Tate Online: British and international modern and contemporary art http://www.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/borderxing.shtm (accessed 3 January 2008).
[81] Tate Online: British and international modern and contemporary art http://www.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/borderxing.shtm (accessed 3 January 2008).
[82] Munster, A., *Materializing New Media* p. 106.
[83] 'We are ALL boat people' www.boat-people.org (accessed 21 March 2004).

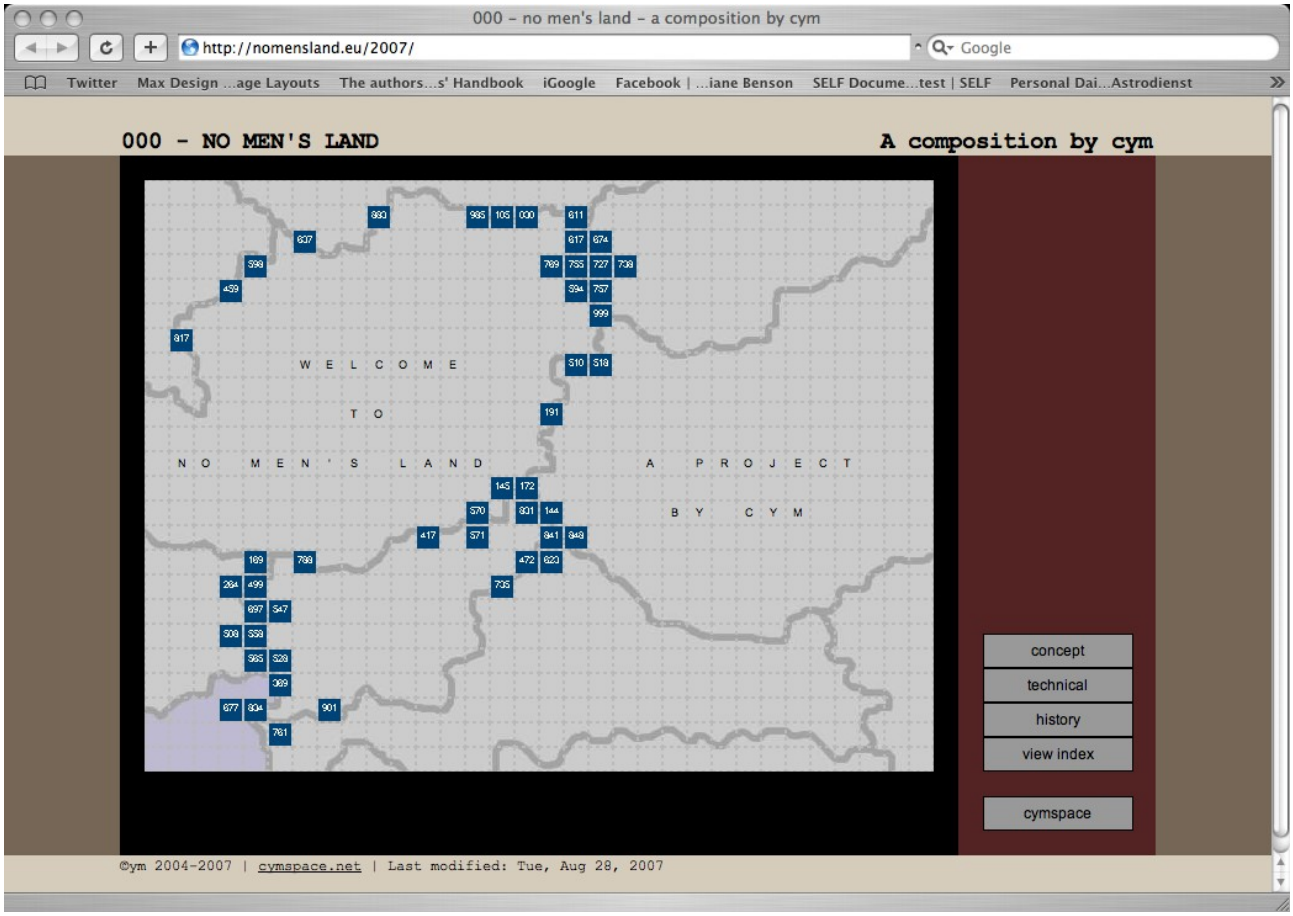
there is a strong relationship to her own cultural background as a white Australian, raised as a Catholic as a part of her identity that is critiqued. She uses images of Jesus Christ and Mary (sacred heart), as well as reproductions of tall ships that refer to the colonisation of Australia and the mode of transport taken by the first white people to this country.

Other significant international net-art works that have specifically dealt with issues of migration and borders include Austrian digital media artist cym's project *No men's land* which uses HTML tables to visualise the borders around Austria between 2004 and 2007. The website states:

> In the project No Men's Land cym is capturing some of the rapid changes of the Central European borders. On December 21, 2007 the border controls between Austria and its neighbouring countries Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia disappeared.[84]

The abstract HTML images are achieved by interpreting photographs as fields of colour that is then translated into the web based colour palette. Although the use of HTML tables as images is not compliant with web standards, this work does uses HTML as a creative medium, rather than a communications tool. When cym and I met at the "Border Transmissions" panel at ISEA2008, we discussed HTML and CSS as being creative mediums as she was interested in my CSS barcode in *Swipe*.

[84] Cym *No men's land* http://nomensland.eu/ (accessed 6/10/2008).



Cym — No Man's Land

Passage Oublié by *Obx Research Studio* is another recent interactive installation project that directly addresses the issue of mobility and borders with a specific focus on 'rendition', which is the practice employed by the US government to transport prisoners to secret detention centres around the work. The installation was part of a larger project titled *Terminal Zero One* located at Pearson Airport in Toronto, Canada. In a paper also presented at the Border Transmissions panel at ISEA2008 artist Maroussia Lévesque, discussed the installation in detail. Lévesque focused on the status of mobility, which resonated for me as her 'mobility continuum' offered a trajectory of the ranking of the passenger. This concept also situated all of the travellers within an in-between space, which was another conceptual element driving *Swipe*, in which I sought to find universal examples

of spaces in-between that presented themselves in a range of scenarios and locations.

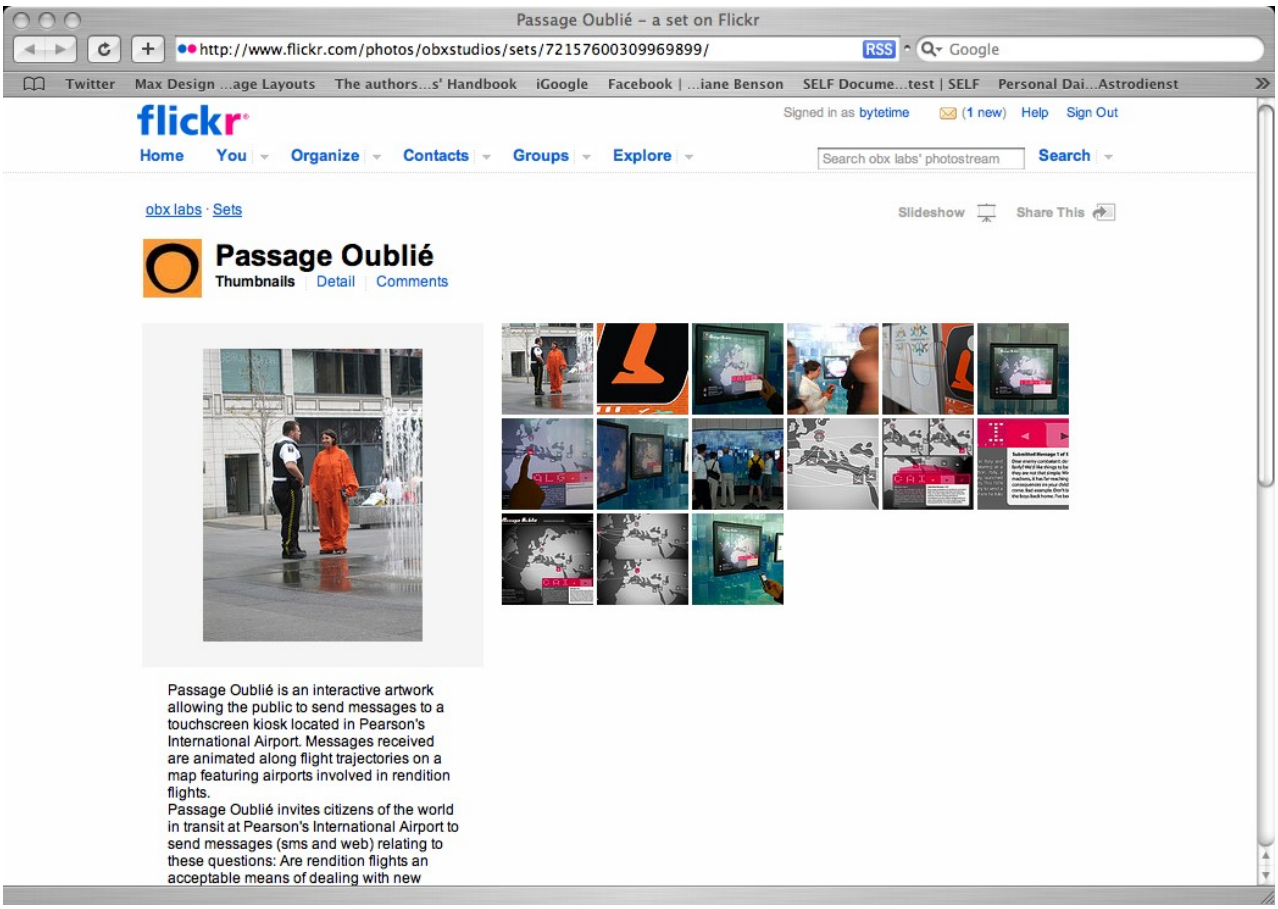
Maroussia Lévesque, Mobility Continuum

In a review by Christopher De Wolf about *Passage Oublié* he describes the whole exhibition *Terminal Zero*[85] with a focus on *Passage Oublié* as follows:

> It's a politically charged take on extraordinary rendition, the CIA's controversial practice of covertly transferring suspected terrorists from Iraq and Afghanistan to secret prisons where it is alleged they are likely to be tortured. Airports around the world are believed to have been used as transfer points for these prisoners…"If you send a message at 11:40 and there's a flight to Frankfurt at 11:41, it will go to Frankfurt," explains Maroussia Lévesque, the Montreal-based artist who helped develop Passage oublie at Concordia University's Obx Labs. "The idea is that here's only one degree of separation between where you're going and where these rendition flights go. You could be at an airport where this happens."…Levesque chose to focus on extraordinary renditions as "a bit of a reaction to the super-aesthetic things" that are the subject of most art. "But I'm also half-Arabic and it's something that personally gets to me -- the racial profiling at security checkpoints, the fear and ignorance of others."[86]

Lévesque's comments note how the subjective world of the individual leads to the development of a project that has much wider social, cultural and political implications. What is also apparent is the motivation to make work that has a focus on social, rather than aesthetic value.

[85] I include this long quote as it succinctly describes the conceptual processes involved.
[86] Christopher De Wolf (July 07 2007) 'Flights of fancy digital art' http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=89b663fa-d76b-4e3f-9a8e-4a44b6574950 *National Post* (accessed 01/10/2008).



Screen grab from Passage Oublié

Another example of a collaboration that straddles online activist art with a real world context is Blast Theory, For example the 2003 work *Uncle Roy all around you* which explored issues of urban surveillance and has game play from both street and online players. The project description on the Blast theory website states that:

> The city is an arena where the unfamiliar flourishes, where the disjointed and the disrupted are constantly threatening to overwhelm us. It is also a zone of possibility; new encounters.
>
> Building on Can You See Me Now? the game investigates some of the social changes brought about by ubiquitous mobile devices, persistent access to a network and location aware technologies.

> The following text describes the work in June 2003 at the world premiere at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. The work was changed significantly in subsequent presentations… Online Players are moving around a virtual city which correlates exactly to the real city. They too are sent on a mission to meet Uncle Roy. They can view photos of the real city by going to the corresponding location in the virtual city and clicking on an icon. Initially they can chat with other Online Players but cannot see or contact Street Players.[87]

This work informed the later work *Rider Spoke* which utilised the wireless networks available to users as they traverse the city on bicycle. The website states:

> Rider Spoke is a work for cyclists combining theatre with game play and state of the art technology. The project continues Blast Theory's enquiry into performance in the age of personal communication. Developing from works such as Uncle Roy All Around You (2003) the piece invites the audience to cycle through the streets of the city, equipped with a handheld computer. They search for a hiding place and record a short message there. And then they search for the hiding places of others.[88]

Finding a hiding place evokes behaviours that relate to border crossings, stowing away, concealing self and possessions and smuggling contraband. By using a wireless connection to engage participants into hiding, there is a relationship drawn between movement, surveillance, technology and the city.

Writer, filmmaker and net-activist Florian Schneider has been at the forefront of a range of projects that have focused on border and migration issues. He is one of the central collaborators of the *No Border Network* and an initiator of the 'No one is Illegal' campaign.

> He concentrates on how new communication and migration regimes are being attacked and undermined by critics of borders and networks. Schneider is one of the initiators of the No One is Illegal campaign and one of the founders of the noborder network and the Europe-wide internet platform, D-A-S-H. In 2001 he designed and directed the make world festival in Munich, and organised metabolics, a series of lectures on net art and net culture. He has also worked on several documentaries for the German-French television station, Arte, including What's to be done? which looks at contemporary activism. He also writes for major German newspapers, magazines, journals and handbooks.[89]

Incidentally Schneider was also the panel chair on the 'Border Transmissions' panel at ISEA 2008 where Lévesque, cym and myself were also presenters. Most importantly, what Blast Theory's and

[87] Blast Theory http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/work_uncleroy.html (accessed 30 August 2008).
[88] Blast Theory http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/work_rider_spoke.html (accessed 15 February 2009).
[89] Subsol http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors2/schneiderbio.html (accessed 20/07/2007).

Schneider's work represents is the continuing imperative of net-activist and culture jamming communities to work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes on social, technical and aesthetic terms.

Web 2.0 and collaboration culture

There are numerous websites aside from *Youtube* that encourage users to post videos to share amongst the community. For example, *EngageMedia* is an Australian based website that hosts artists and activists video work.[90] *Open Channel* is another Australian community whose tag line is "tell your story, make your film."[91] *Revver* video sharing network has a system where video artists can earn money by using the tools and sharing the video work.[92]

Henry Jenkins identifies that the collaborative nature of these online communities has an uneven quality as the contributions are not uniform in terms of style, issues and content. Jenkins states that:

> The new media operate with different principles than the broadcast media that dominated American politics for so long: access, participation, reciprocrity, and peer-to-peer rather than one-to-many communication. Given such principles, we should anticipate that digital democracy will be decentralized, unevenly dispersed, profoundly contradictory, and slow to emerge.[93]

For example, a collaboration that has traversed activism and art is *De Geuzen*.[94] Since 1996, Femke Snelting, Renee Turner and Riek Sijbring have collaborated on a range of projects under this banner for 'foundation for multi-visual research', which is based in Europe. This collective has a range of projects that have been based on 'tactical media' approaches. For example, in September 2003 at N5M4 (International festival of tactical media) in Amsterdam, *de Geuzen* hosted a 'swap meet', which in short was an opportunity for activists and artists to bring along badges, stickers, brochures and other forms of propaganda. I participated in this event and took along flyers, magazines, badges and stickers from around Australia that supported ending the detention of refugees. Both of the

[90] Engage Media http://www.engagemedia.org/ (accessed 21/02/2008).
[91] Open Channel http://www.openchannel.org.au/index.html (accessed 21/02/2008).
[92] Revver http://revver.com/go/share_help/ (accessed 21/02/2008).
[93] Henry Jenkins *Convergence Culture: Where old and new media collide* New York University Press: New York, 2006, pp. 219-220.
[94] De Geuzen (Femke Snelting, Renee Turner and Riek Sijbring) http://www.geuzen.org/ (accessed 21/3/2004).

collaborative groups have products that you can download from the site — stickers, coasters, cut out dolls and tee-shirt slogans. These products are designed as a means of further engaging the users to participate with the work and the issues at hand and are also indicative of how online and offline activities can intercept in the field of activism. *De Geuzen* also challenge what aesthetics mean for them as a collaborative group. They state:

> For us, aesthetics go beyond the way something looks to include more performative aspects of engagement with our research and audience. We are very specific about choices of materials and form, but what is most important is how various elements come together to create a situation of exchange; for us, this is the aesthetic encounter. So, aesthetics are not just the icing on the cake or eye candy, but they are about many different things ranging from very basic decisions such as whether to host a dinner, give a workshop or create a web-based project, to more detailed choices like materials, typography and form. All of these things shape the interaction we will have with our audience.[95]

The aesthetic concerns of *De Geuzen* are multifaceted and demonstrates how there has been a concerted effort to interrogate aspects of feminism, the everyday and technology into an aesthetic framework. It sits well with Cubitt's approach to digital aesthetics as being about being more than the organic unity of the art object. Cubitt also addresses that digital aesthetics need to address more than just corporate values. He comments in this long quote:

> Digital aesthetics needs both to come up with something far more interesting than corporate sites, and to act critically to point up their insidious blandness and global ambitions. Subversion of the dominant is inadequate. In its place, it is essential to imagine a work without coherence, without completion and without autonomy. Such a work, however, must also take on the scale of the cyborg culture, a scale beyond the individual, and outside the realm of the hyperindividuated subject. By the same token, aesthetics must move beyond the organic unity of the art object to embrace the social processes of making.[96]

In the majority of the above mentioned projects, the artists work collaboratively with the context of a research network or community collective. This also emerged in some mainstream contemporary visual arts exhibitions. For example, Australian based collective S*oda Jerk* were included in the 2008 *Primavera*, one of the most prestigious exhibitions of emerging art and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney. This demonstrates how significantly the concept of the network and the notion of the collective have impacted the ways in which artists work.

[95] De Geuzen http://www.geuzen.org/faq/ (accessed 21 March 2008).
[96] Cubitt, S., *Digital Aesthetics* pp. 142-143.

Do the social roles of net-activists and net-artists coincide, or more precisely collide? I would argue that while there might be some similarities in terms of content and subject matter, there are inherent differences ascribed to the 'value' of the work. One (art) is valued for its cultural and aesthetic value and the other (activism) is valued for its political and social contribution. The artworks, collaborations and activists I have discussed challenge these stereotypes because they do not sit easily within either category. Like the Möbius strip these designations are intrinsically linked and connected as one entity that has the capacity to create a dialogue between the synchronous and asynchronous structures of networks and augmented space.

In the next chapter, I will examine the notion of augmented space to further demonstrate how online communities, activism and art have influenced interactions in the physical world.

Chapter 2: The Möbius argument — augmentation between the physical and virtual space

In Chapter 2, I question whether net-activism and net-art has significantly shifted contemporary theories about the interrelationship between place and space in the context of virtual and 'real world' environments. I do this by continuing to build on the complex relationship between net-act and net-activism by describing the places where these events and this work is manifested, produced and distributed. This will be achieved by defining the range of discussions about notion of space which consists of cyberspace and it's location within the real world. Consideration is also given to the types of movement or traffic of people, ideas and information that exists in the realm of the cyber and physical. I identify these notions of space as hybrid and augmented spaces which are occupied by net-activists and net-artists who, by way of participation, have significantly transformed how space is imagined and traversed.

The Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary defines augmentation as follows:

> Aug`men*ta”tion\, n. [LL. augmentatio: cf. F. augmentation.]
>
> 1. The act or process of augmenting, or making larger, by addition, expansion, or dilation; increase.
>
> 2. The state of being augmented; enlargement.
>
> 3. The thing added by way of enlargement.
>
> 4. (Her.) A additional charge to a coat of arms, given as a mark of honor. --Cussans.
>
> 5. (Med.) The stage of a disease in which the symptoms go on increasing. --Dunglison.
>
> 6. (Mus.) In counterpoint and fugue, a repetition of the subject in tones of twice the original length.[97]

This notion of augmentation is useful in this study as the relationship between net-activism and real world outcomes is co-dependent and critical for the implementation of any successful activist/artistic intervention. Lev Manovich's 2002 text *The Poetics of Augmented Space: Learning from Prada* considers the notion of 'augmented space' as a concept that shifted the notion of a clear divide between the virtual and physical world to spaces that are affected and enhanced, 'augmented' by technology. He outlines that there has been a significant shift in how we imagine 'virtual' space since the 1990s:

> The images of an escape into a virtual space that leaves the physical space useless and of cyberspace — a virtual world that exists in parallel to our world — dominated the decade.[98]

He then goes on to say that:

> It is quite possible that this decade of the 2000s will turn out to be about the physical — that is, physical space filled with electronic and visual information.[99]

Manovich states that he derived the term 'augmented space' from an earlier and already established term 'augmented reality'.[100] However, the augmented space described by Manovich is one that imagines electronic architecture, large video screen bombarding our senses as we move through the city. The way I see augmented space is much more simple and pervasive — as a mobile device that goes everywhere in our pocket, potentially recording our experiences and our movements.

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[97] Dictionary.com. *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*. MICRA, Inc. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/augmentation (accessed 16 August 2008).
[98] Lev Manovich, *The Poetics of Augmented Space: Learning from Prada* p.1., Downloaded from http://www.manovich.net (accessed 30/06/2006).
[99] Manovich, L., *The Poetics*, p. 1.
[100] Manovich, L., *The Poetics*, p. 4.

The distinction between how we have shifted in our thinking about space is very significant — hand held computers, I-phones, I-paqs and mobile phones accessing the Internet and GPS technologies have all become part of the everyday practice of defining and locating various spaces. The distinction between the real and the virtual has become more nuanced because of these tensions. However my direct concern is how the activist utilises the technology as a means of achieving outcomes (i.e. protests, media attention, successful political responses), by having the capacity to broadcast, distribute and manage the flow of information via the Internet, mobile phones and other digital media and how process this has generated new forms of creative and cultural expression.

For example, the practice of citizen publishing and documentation of significant events has occurred to such an extent that now many large media outlets (CNN, ABC, Nine News) request audiovisual media from citizens who witness newsworthy events.[101] The quality of the media is of less importance that the usefulness of the information, which has also had an impact on rethinking the aesthetics of the screen from high end broadcast quality to low bandwidth, highly transportable media captured by mobile phones and many digital cameras. This type of information gathering is more viable with screen media as there is not the need for high resolution 'print' quality images.

Augmentation is about something being extended or assisted by another thing, in this case the body and space via technology. This relationship can be visualised by the use of the Möbius strip[102] as a symbolic and visual representation of the relationship between these elements. At first glance, the

[101] See: http://www.cnn.com/ireport/ (accessed 05/8/08) http://search.abc.net.au/search/search.cgi?query=user+submitted&collection=abcnews&form=news&num_ranks=20 (accessed 05/08/08) http://news.ninemsn.com.au/newswatch/ (accessed 05/08/08).

[102] The Möbius strip or Möbius band is a surface with only one side and only one boundary component. It has the mathematical property of being non-orientable. It is also a ruled surface. It was discovered independently by the German mathematicians August Ferdinand Möbius and Johann Benedict Listing in 1858. From *Wolfram Maths World* http://mathworld.wolfram.com/MöbiusStrip.html (accessed 1/11/08).

Möbius strip appears to be a two sided shape with an inside and outside edge, but upon closer inspection it is actually a one sided entity. This is because there is a twist in the loop, making the inside and the outside on the same side thus giving the shape only one edge. So instead of virtual/physical, micro/macro, personal/public being thought of as binary opposites or parallels, the concept of the Möbius strip allows these notions of space considered as dual inclusive designations that are interrelated and intrinsic to each other. Munster refers to the Möbius strip when considering the relationship between real and virtual space:

> The virtual/actual spatial discrepancy underlines the fact that digital space does not unfold in direct relation to the bodily traversal of it through time. Instead, digital spaces are Möbius-like, comprised of asynchronous feedback that loops between a doubling of and a splitting from bodily awareness.[103]

In this quote, Munster specifically refers to the notion of time within the virtual/actual context and this creates a looping effect that is asynchronous albeit linked. My proposition is that these spaces can also be considered as synchronous as well as asynchronous as the Möbius strip is in essence a one-sided shape with a twist. This Möbius-like link between inside and outside may not be smooth as sometimes the linkages are in clusters causing the surface to be lumpy and uneven. In the particular Möbius loop that represents net-activism and net-art, there are clusters of activity that have varying levels of engagement between notions of space. For example, the way we use these online tools is synchronous in terms of perception but asynchronous in terms of structure — the construction of a website is a good example of this interplay between synchronous and asynchronous. This is because what is visible in terms of the aesthetic 'look and feel' of the interface is a result of the background coding that is only understood by the web developer.[104] This interplay between synchronous and asynchronous is also a play in a notion of non-space as Alex Galloway reflects when considering the role of code within the context of a Marxist analysis.

[103] Munster, A., *Materializing New Media*, p. 96.

[104] Web sites have become more asynchronous over time as in the early days of web design it was commonplace to carve an image up and paste it into a table with no padding, borders or spacing so you could have links, roll-overs, different colours, images, etc. This is not complaint with W3C international standards and now CSS is used to drive the styles that affect the front end of the web site. This means that the structure of the web site is in the HTML and the styles are kept separately in the CSS.

He considers that:

> The factory was *modernity's* site of production. The "non-place" of empire refuses such easy localization. For empire, we must desend instead into the distributed networks, the programming languages, the computer protocols, and other digital technologies that have transformed twenty-first-century production into a vital mass of immaterial plays and instantaneous transactions. Indeed, we must read the never ending stream of computer code *as we read any text* (the former having yet to achieve recognition as a "natural language"), decoding it's structure of control as we would a film or a novel.[105]

In my work *Highway of Shame*, the use of the navigation is used as a means to control the construction of the narrative, giving the surface appearance of an asynchronous and non-linear approach, whilst in the background using hyperlinks as a means to control the flow of information.

Many definitions specifically address the relationship between physical and online space, hence the reference to 'augmentation'. How this relationship is conceptualised is important to recognise as one of the key factors in how the net-activist movement has been realised 'on the ground' in practical terms. A large amount of theory analyses the division between virtual and physical space, which foregrounds the discussion of the connectedness of various concepts of space and how this are understood by activists, theorists, and the new media community at large.

For example, Munster comments that:

> If the culture of information and its aesthetics were dominated by any two tendencies during the late 1980s to mid 1990s, they were virtuality and interactivity. The virtual, more than any other quality or dimension associated with digital technologies, has promised to leave the body and its "meat" behind, as minds, data and wires join together in an ecstatic fusion across the infinite matrix of cyberspace.[106]

As time has passed the conceptual dislocation between body and virtual space in information theory has been superseded by arguments and definitions that acknowledge the connectedness between these spaces. What has emerged is a notion of space that driven by user interaction, a concept that defines online media space as very different to other forms of media that users consume, and, for the most part, situate the user/viewer as a passive observer instead of an active producer of content.

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[105] Alex Galloway "Protocol, or, How Control Exists after Decentralization" *Rethinking Marxism* Volume 13, Number 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2001) p. 82.

[106] Munster, A., *Materializing New Media*, p. 86.

Mark Andrejevic (2004) makes the link between user participation and power relations by commenting that:

> the development of interactive, networked communication technologies offers to transform sites formerly devoted to passive reception into spaces of production. Digital convergence ostensibly overwhelms the spatial divisions associated with the concentration of power, and with the alienation of consumers and viewers from the production process. Thanks to the new medium, we can all gain access to the means of production by migrating into the undifferentiated, liberating realm of cyberspace.[107]

When considering the space of the virtual, I am referring to the online communications space of the Internet and not the physically engaging space of virtual reality (VR). In Lister, et al, a distinction is made between the two. The VR space is referred to as immersion, primarily because of this physical aspect of interaction. The helmets and body suits provide tactile and positioning feedback, while the user remains in physical space.[108] In contrast to this, the online communications space is referred to as a place that is like 'where you are when you are talking on the telephone.'[109] As stated earlier, the interactive, augmented space between real and virtual can be visualised by the use of the Möbius strip as a symbolic and visual representation of the relationship between these elements.

Background — envisioning the virtual

Right from the onset of the development of the Internet, scholars and thinkers have been challenged by what the online world represents, how it can be used and how it can be conceptualised as an environment.

Munster here comments on three terms that define the differentiation of virtual and real space:

[107] Maria Andrejevic, "The webcam subculture and the digital enclosure" *Media space: place, scale and culture in a media age* Couldry, N. and McCarthy, A. (Eds.) 2004, p. 194.
[108] Martin Lister, et al., *New Media: a critical introduction* Routledge: New York, 2003, p. 35.
[109] Lister, M., et al., *New Media*, p. 35.

> Although virtuality and the digital are not synchronous, they are nonetheless imbricated. Three terms circulate in proximity to the virtual: the actual, the possible and the real. In digital configurations of virtuality, the real is most often invoked as its partner, simultaneously imbruing virtuality with the modality of possibility and its concomitant task of *realizing* possibilities.[110]

Mirko Schäfer (2008) states that:

> Participation has become a key concept to frame the emerging media practice. It considers the transformation of former audiences into active participants and agents of cultural production on the Internet.[111]

Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the WWW identities the WWW as a social space to assist the building of relationships. He states:

> The Web is more a social creation than a technical one. I designed it for a social effect — to help people work together — and not as a technical toy. The ultimate goal of the Web is to support and improve our web like existence in the world. We clump into families, associations, and companies. We develop trust across the miles and distrust around the corner.[112]

This quote from Berners-Lee sums up the motivation behind developing the Internet as a publicly accessible device. He had a very specific purpose in mind when he first took his proposal for the WWW to CERN[113] (The European Particle Physics Laboratory, near Geneva in Switzerland) in 1989. He saw this invention as a tool for people to talk to each other, either across the ocean or down the street.

Arguably it has become much more than a communications tool as it has spawned a cultural revolution that is driven by the mixing and sharing of media and data by the users. This culture of 'redaction' has the aesthetics of a montage, with multiple authors.

The initial development of the Internet emerged from US military interests during the height of the Cold War Era. By building on the military model, Berners-Lee wanted to create a communication network that could operate outside of research and governmental interests. Berners-Lee envisioned this network as a means of connecting ordinary people from around the globe. Schäfer reminds us

[110] Munster, A., *Materializing New Media*, p. 90.
[111] Schäfer M, T., '*Bastard Culture!'*, p.16.
[112] Tim Berners-Lee, *Weaving the Web: The original design and ultimate Destiny of the World Wide Web by its Inventor* Harper: San Francisco 1999, p. 123.
[113] European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) http://public.web.cern.ch/public/ (accessed 21 August 2001).

that the new media space of the Internet is still vulnerable to the exploitation of corporations, despite the availability of freeware and shareware and the potential power of user participation and citizen publishing. He comments that:

> Although the new media practice challenges some established business models, it does not necessarily make the industries exploiting those models disappear.[114]

Berners-Lee recognised that we form web like communities and that is what has made the WWW such a powerful agent for building social change, but as Schäfer observes, this change is is not all pervasive as the industries that hold up existing business models are also benefiting from the use of the WWW.

Space and power

There is a wealth of literature that focuses on the notion of space as its subject and many of these texts also link discussions of identity to ways of imagining space. For example, the field of post-colonialism invests much into analysing place and space. Kate Darian-Smith, Liz Gunner and Sarah Nuttall, the editors of *Text, theory, space: land, literature and history in South Africa and Australia* state in the Introduction that:

> The notion of space as a multidimensional entity with social and cultural as well as territorial dimensions has been a prime concern in recent scholarship, particularly in the fields of post-colonial literatures and history, and social and cultural geography.[115]

This interest in space has not dissipated, rather the interest from the field of cultural studies has inevitably shifted from a focus on the contested ground of post-colonial physical spaces to contested notions of virtual spaces, spaces that in the 1990s were considered the new frontier, a place for pioneers to go and colonise and imagine notions of 'self'. The language of colony was re-inscribed onto this imagined space as a means of locating it within discourse. By being a pioneer in this virtual world, a position of authority is thus established in a space that until recently was considered the 'other' to the physical world. Paul Carter has written much about the experience of

[114] Schäfer, M.T., *Bastard Culture*, p. 17.
[115] Kate Darian-Smith, Elizabeth Gunner and Sarah Nuttall, *Text, theory, space: land, literature and history in South Africa and Australia* (1996) p. 2.

the landscape and of the migrant and talks about a gap between reality and history, between the experience of a place and its name. For example, he states that:

> An authentically migrant perspective would, perhaps, be based on an intuition that the opposition between here and there is itself a cultural construction, a consequence of thinking in terms of fixed entities and defining them oppositionally. It might begin by regarding movement, not as an awkward interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but as a mode of being in the world. The question would be, then, not how to arrive, but how to move, how to identify convergent and divergent moments; and the challenge would be how to notate such events, how to give them a historical and social value.[116]

This 'gap' or notion of in-between has also been investigated when considering cyberspace. For example, Munster obverses that:

> Many theorists of cyberspace have remarked upon a gap that seems to structure the relations between cyberspace and physical space.[117]

Michel Foucault's work on power is of particular relevance to this discussion and his work is also considered influential when contemplating space within the context of post-colonialism.[118] He uses the motif of the *depositif* (apparatus) to explore the heterogeneous mix of discourses and information:

> What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.[119]

The apparatus which can be recognised as the notion of identity is significant to contextualise place and space. Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires (1993) point out that it is not spaces which ground identification but places.[120] They go on to comment that:

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[116] Paul Carter, "Living In A New Country: Reflections on Travelling Theory", *Meanjin*, 3/1990, p. 431.
[117] Munster, A., *Materializing New Media*, p. 89.
[118] Munster, A., *Materializing New Media*, p. 89.
[119] "The Confession of the Flesh" (1977) interview. In *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (ed Colin Gordon), 1980: pp. 194-228. This interview was conducted by a round-table of historians.
[120] Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires, *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location* London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1993 p. xii.

> How then does space become place? By being named; as the flows of power and negotiations of social relations are rendered in the concrete form of architecture; and, of course, by embodying the symbolic and imaginary investment of a population. Place is a space to which meaning has been ascribed.[121]

In recent times there has been an emergence of colonised virtual spaces where individuals perform with their 'synthetic' identity. Another more recent term for engaging in these online 3D, gaming environments is 'augmentology',[122] but this term has really been used to describe being active in worlds such as *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft*, rather that participating in the actual world with technological aids — which is more precisely what I am discussing in this thesis. Both of these examples are gaming environments that have evolved as places in which the world is being constantly rendered and expanding as more players come online.

Whilst game play is an interesting field of inquiry, it is not the context of space that this study is primarily focused, as the emphasis in augmentology is online game play and participating in online environments, whereas I am more focused on the physical environment and how is has been influenced and enhanced by processes of augmentation. In particular, the concern in my research is how the physical space is augmented by the online environment and the tools that are used to shift between the two notions of space. These tools are both technological and semantic as the way in which space is described transforms space into place. Physical space is also a site of movement, of grouping - people connecting for a purpose, converging and uniting for an issue and just as quickly diverging from the place.

Convergence and divergence are interrelated themes that emanate from online social relations and the notion of convergence is crucial to a discussion regarding net-activism. Munster states in *Materializing New Media: embodiment in information aesthetics* that:

[121] Carter, E., Donald, J., and Squires, J., *Space and Place*, p. xii.
[122] Augmentology 1[L]0[L]1_ http://www.augmentology.com (accessed 27/08/08).

> The digital production of virtual space, like virtual time, oscillates between two socio-technical-aesthetic poles: the fabrication of space through familiar strategies of realist representation such as continuity, directionality and referentiality, and the creation of largely unvisualized spaces that operate accordingly to a combination of discontinuity, nonlinearity and distributed connection. Hence virtual spaces are also governed by these two vectors of convergent enfolding and divergent unfolding.[123]

This enfolding and unfolding again brings into play the baroque aesthetic and the motif of the Möbius strip. Munster in discussing notions of digital and virtual space notes that:

> It will be up to artists, designers, technicians and new media activist of all shapes and sizes to create these with an eye for not simply new perceptual experiences but the production of new forms of social, political and ethical relationships.

Equally so, it is also up to artists, designers, technicians, theorists and activists to determine the language, as well as the conceptual and aesthetic issues within this spatial field of production.

The issue of temporality is central to David Lowenthal's text *The Past is a Foreign Country* and he states in reference to the memorialisation physical relics and the construction of narratives that:

> Whereas history in print and memories recorded on tape can be disseminated without limit and are thus potentially immortal, physical relics are eventually worn away...Earlier structures inexorably give way to subsequent ones if only because two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time.[124]

Lowenthal's text falls broadly into the field of postcolonial writing as he is examining and challenging linear, singular notions of history by addressing the role of personal nostalgia. Paul Carter's 1987 text *The Road to Botany Bay* also fits within this theoretical frame of post-colonialism, although his discussion on space focuses on linguistics and the colonial process of naming the landscape. His 2002 text *Repressed Spaces: The Poetics of Agoraphobia* examines the experiential nature of traversing spaces, through a discussion of the cultural history of agoraphobia. He comments that:

[123] Munster, A., *Materializing New Media*, pp. 101-102.
[124] Lowenthal, D., *The Past*, p. 239.

> Since its first clinical description in the late 1860s, cultural critic and clinical psychologists have disputed its nature. For critics of modernity, it is a symptom of urban estrangement. The soul doctors, on the other hand, have treated it as a symptom of psychic displacement.[125]

Although what Carter is exploring exists in the realms of psychology, for the exile, the refugee and the outcast, the experience is about *physical* displacement, not psychic displacement. Christian Fuchs (2009) identifies agoraphobia as being connected to semantics, particularly when considering the field of Internet studies that focus on the context of the local. He comments that:

> The field of local internet studies appears to suffer from semantic agoraphobia — a fear of open semantic spaces. Yet researching local settings should not necessarily limit one's conceptual space to one or two familiar notions, especially if these are of questionable sociological value, as is the case with community.[126]

However, the space in which displaced people inhabit is unfamiliar, not related to a context of identity and therefore devoid of meaning and context — a 'non-place'. Mark Augé's (1995) exploration of non-place is significant to conceptualising the notion of a 'non-space'. He writes:

> Just as the intelligence of time, it seems to us, is more complicated by the overabundance of events in the present than undermined by the radical subversion of prevailing modes of historical interpretation, so the intelligence of space is less subverted by current upheavals (for soils and territories still exist, not just in the reality of facts on the ground, but even more in that of individual and collective awareness ad imagination) than complicated by the spatial overabundance of the present.[127]

This unstable space has long been pursued by art theorists also, who focus on the experience of the spectator. For example, Manovich comments as follows:

> ...if in the simulation tradition, the spectator exists in a single coherent space — the physical space and the virtual space that continues it — in the representational tradition, the spectator has a double identity. She simultaneously exists in the physical space and in the space of representation. This split of the subject is the trade-off for the new mobility of the image as well as for the newly available possibility to represent any arbitrary space, rather than having to simulate the physical space where an image is located.[128]

The problem with discussing this singular position of the spectator, despite Manovich alluding to a double identity in the context of augmented media is that the activist is an active participant in the process and not a passive onlooker. Mark Hansen is critical of Manovich's discussion of the

[125] Paul Carter, *Repressed Spaces: The Poetics of Agoraphobia* Reaktion Books: London, 2002, p. 9.
[126] Christian Fuchs, *Social Networking Sites and the Surveillance Society*, Forschungsgruppe, 2009, p. 12.
[127] Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* Verso, 1995 p. 34.
[128] Manovich, L., *Language*, p. 113.

interface and the role of the body/spectator. He states that:

> Put bluntly, Manovich seems to overlook the *physical dimension* that is the issue in the body's experience of space, regardless of whether the space concerned is an actual physical space or a simulated, virtual one.[129]

Hanson's statement affirms that augmented media spaces are not just for passive observing, that the experience for the user has significantly more impact in terms of a physical experience.

Why cyberspace?

Author William Gibson originally coined the term 'cyberspace' in his novel *Neuromancer* in 1984. It is used to define the phenomenological space one enters when engaged with computer-based communications. Although it is a term that often ascribed to the Internet and WWW, it in fact falls far short in describing the types of communications and outcomes of social relations in an online environment. Gibson saw cyberspace as a place that operated in Cartesian terms — mind no long aware of body — separated and acting out an dislocated experience between mind and body. Although discussions around themes of disembodiment were very popular during the mid to late 1990s, it is now recognised by many that in fact cyberspace has a huge role to play in the physical world as well.

The split between real and virtual space emerged primarily because cyberspace was often not considered part of the 'real' world, but ironically, it can only exist through engaging people in the physical world with the computer. It was often presented as a counter position to the 'real' world of physicality. For instance, Tim Jordan states that:

> Cyberspace can be called the virtual lands, with virtual lives and virtual societies, because these lives and societies do not exist with the physical reality that 'real' societies do. With the emergence of cyberspace, the virtual becomes counter posed to the real. The physical exists in cyberspace but is reinvented. Virtuality is the general term for this reinvention of familiar physical space in cyberspace.[130]

This reinvention of 'space' is only possible by having knowledge of the physical world, and is

[129] Mark B.N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media: A New Philosophy for a New Media,* MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2004, p. 40.
[130] Tim Jordan, *Cyberpower: the culture and Politics of the Internet,* 1999, p. 1.

attained through lived experience. Contact with another person or persons via the media of the Internet and WWW may be a networked form of communication, but nevertheless there is a living person on the other side of the interface. An awareness of this schematic assists in conceiving of a place that is both different though familiar to the 'real' world of corporeal existence.

Lovink affirms this belief. In referring to the DDS (Digital City Project) in his 2002 text *Dark Fibre* he states:

> Even though urban and spatial metaphors in general may have exhausted themselves there is little to be found in the mathematical emptiness of "pure" disembodied virtuality.[131]

In other words, the notion of a disembodied emptiness in virtual communications is a redundant concept. What is actually happening is more of an augmented form of communication — one that is facilitated by the use of the Internet as a mode, rather than face to face, telephone or print forms of conversations. And arguably, the term augmentation is a more metaphor than the urban and spatial metaphors that Lovink is referring to in the above quote.

Augmented space

Essentially the body is the corporeal locus of what we understand as our identity — this is 'where' the self is housed in the context of the physical world. Regardless of whether you present a representational or essentialist picture of identity, the body is a central factor in the equation. Elizabeth Grosz's work has long examined the role of the body and space, including that of the physical versus virtual reality. For example, when discussing computer versus biological viruses, she commented that the "same obscurities are there at the biological level that exist at the computer level"[132] A corporeal history of the self can be traced any number of ways; from genes, to the scars the body bears, to responses to environmental conditions. However, these examples are only the external evidence of past events and the subsequent impact. The process of familial naming in is

[131] Lovink, G., *Dark Fiber*, p. 64.

another method used in creating identity that is utilised in a variety of ways. How the process of naming is played out online is somewhat different as an online profile may indicate the date the profile was created and where the body houses the corporeal history and past, the online profile is tracked via the users postings and Real Simple Syndication (RSS) news feeds.

A huge amount of research has focused on issues related to identity since the 1980s, specifically in the humanities field. Much has been written 'from the margins' and has analysed the role of cultural difference, women's issues and national identity as having a significant relationship to how we perceive and recognise each other. Donna Haraway commented that: "feminist knowledge is rooted in imaginative connection and hard-won practical coalition—which is not the same thing as identity but does demand self-critical situatedness and historical seriousness."[133] For Homi Bhabha the notion of identity is problematic in terms of cultural difference because of how the "equal cultural worth of each group is determined." Bhabha states that the attempt by liberal discourse to normalise cultural difference "does not recognize the disjunctive 'borderline' temporalities of partial, minority cultures"[134] My work *Vault* (Appendix 1), explores some of these themes, with a particular focus on the visibility of identity within culture. In this work, I used Caroline Chisholm's removal from the five-dollar note as symbolic of a loss of history, identity and culture. Moreover, her disappearance represented the loss of a story about a pioneering woman who had a significant impact on the development of the Australian nation because of her contribution to to the development of education.

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[132] This is the text of an interview with **Elizabeth Grosz**, Professor of Comparative Literature at the State University of New York, Buffalo, by Robert Ausch, Randal Doane and Laura Perez, three members of the Found Object editorial collective. It followed a talk presented by Grosz at the City University of New York Graduate School and University Center and sponsored by the Center for the Study of Culture, Technology, and Work. The interview considers several themes, including the significance of Deleuze's philosophy; Lacan, psychoanalysis and feminism; humanism, biological systems and complexity theory; and a reconsideration of the dominance of identitarianism in feminism, queer theory and a radical politics. http://web.gc.cuny.edu/csctw/found_object/text/grosz.htm (accessed 14 November 2006).

[133] Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium.FemaleMan?_Meets_OncoMouse™,* Routledge: New York, 1997, p. 199.

[134] Homi Bhabha, 'Culture's In-Between' In *Questions of Cultural Identity,* Sage: London, 1996 p. 56.

The body in terms of discussion on technology occupies two separate terrains— the domain of the virtual and notions of disembodiment as one, with the android or augmented reality of human engaging with machine as its 'Other'. However, what of the real space created by online communications and organisation to civil action? Manovich discusses the move away from a notion of virtual reality to an 'augmented space'; where in physical space the body is assisted, monitored and assessed by machines — cell phones, video security and palm pilots. Certainly, with the technology becoming cheaper it is becoming more accessible to more users. People can send each other photos and movies almost instantly and with a distribution size only limited to their network of Internet discussion lists, news groups, friends, family and colleagues. As stated earlier, Manovich argues that the 1990s were 'about the virtual':

> We were fascinated by new virtual spaces made possible by computer technologies. The images of an escape into a virtual space that leaves the physical space useless and of cyberspace — a virtual world that exists parallel to our world — dominated the decade.[135]

Lister et al comment "in little over ten years the term 'virtual reality' has become part of everyday language."[136] They go on to state that:

> The virtual is frequently cited as a feature of postmodern cultures in which, it is argued, so many aspects of everyday experience are technologically situated. Older certainties about 'reality' have become problematic, and questions arise about the kind of identity or sense of self that individuals who live in such cultures may have.[137]

Manovich shifts way from the notion of virtual space and considers that:

> It is quite possible that this decade of the 2000s will turn out to be about the physical - that is, physical space filled with electronic and visual information.[138]

There are definite precursors to Manovich's speculation, in many ways he is building on many earlier discussions about technology, architecture and cyberspace, particularly Paul Virilio's discussion in an essay titled *Critical Space*. Virilio spoke of the impact of virtual space on architecture within the context of an electronic environment:

[135] Manovich, L., *The Poetics*, p. 1.
[136] Lister, M., Et al., *New Media*, p. 34.
[137] Lister, M., Et al., *New Media*, p. 34.
[138] Manovich, L., *The Poetics*, p. 1.

> Interactive image interactive city: if *every image has a destiny of magnification*, one must consider that in the era of non-separability this destiny is realized before our eyes thanks to the joint department of the urban electronic environment and of systems architecture, improbable architecture but undeniably efficient.[139]

This notion of non-separability indicates that there must be a link between the body and environment at some level. For example, the play between public and private notions of space is also full of contradictions when thinking of online communications and augmentation. For example, you are in your private home, engaging in a public discussion on a listserv, or, you are in a public place (a park), sending an email or SMS to your lover. It is in these incongruent gaps between presence and absence that make the Möbius strip a useful motif to visualise the connectedness and interchange of these relationships.

One disturbing contemporary example of the interplay between personal and public space and the impact of 'augmentation' is the *Virginia Tech massacre*. This was a school shooting that unfolded as two separate attacks approximately two hours apart on 16 April 2007, on the campus of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia, United States. The shooter, Seung-Hui Cho, killed 32 people and wounded many more before committing suicide. The use of camera and sound recording equipment on mobile phone devices evidenced the massacre in process, with the users posting the events to news websites and the video blogging website *YouTube*. The shooter also recorded himself before and in between the attacks and posted the footage to NBC and *YouTube*.[140] In the same week two teenage girls from Victoria died in a suicide pact after putting a note on their *MySpace* blog.[141] The girls Stephanie Gestier and Jodie Gater posted the note the night before they went missing in the Dandenong Ranges National Park in Victoria. Stephanie's grieving mother is also believed to have used the Internet to post a letter of

[139] Paul Virilio and James Der Derian *The Virilio reader* Wiley-Blackwell, 1998 p. 58.
[140] Raw Video: NBC Releases Gunman Video Manifesto http://video.aol.com/video-search/Raw-Video-NBC-Releases-Gunman-Video-Manifesto/id/3540744790 (accessed 01/05/2007).
[141] 'Police investigate MySpace RIP' http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,21603808-2,00.html?CMP=KNC-google (accessed 01/05/2007).

farewell to her daughter. The author of the note, identified by Southern Cross Broadcasting as Stephanie's mother Juli, a transit police officer, says her daughter, her only child, "was found with her friend hanging from a tree". Although these two extreme examples demonstrate the negative potential of the significance of augmentation in the context of citizen publishing, identity and the media, it is only a small representation of the millions of members of websites like *YouTube* and *MySpace*. The tragedy of these examples is that the corporate media finds these types of stories more newsworthy than a positive example of how these sites have promoted and assisted people to develop skills and relationships. In addition, when the Internet is used for self harm the audience is scrutinized by the corporate media commenting, and acting as a virtual participant. For example in 2008, the Internet as a site for the performance of pain was stepped up another level when Abraham Biggs committed suicide live over the Internet while recording the event with a web cam. When the Associated Press (AP) reported on the event, there was much speculation about the role of onlookers and they commented that:

> An investigator for the local medical examiner's office told the AP that before Biggs killed himself, some viewers encouraged him not to do it, others egged him on, and still more debated how big a dose of pills he needed to take for it to be effective.[142]

Certainly these examples of user participation and citizen publishing challenge the ethics and morality of some types of 'augmented' behaviour and make the notion of public and private and actor and spectator a vexed relationship.

Online artistic interventions with activist intent

Probably one of the best-known identities, if not a celebrity in the field of art and technology in the context of augmentation, is the inventor, mathematician and artist Steve Mann.[143] He creates all kinds of wearable monitoring devices — glasses with TV screens and a camera, a tie with camera and other surveillance equipment for the body — which records and displays what the wearer sees.

[142] Mark Evitt, "Internet Trolls Cross the Line with the Latest Internet Suicide" *Pop + Politics* http://www.popandpolitics.com/2008/11/24/if-a-line-exists-on-the-internet-surely-its-been-crossed/ (accessed 2 March 2009).

[143] Steve Mann, *Personal Web Page* (1995) http://wearcam.org/steve.html (accessed 12 May 2003).

Mann does not easily fit the discreet description of activist, artist or inventor because he embodies all of these characteristics in his work. In many ways, these objects recall Manovich's articulation and definition of augmented space — the machine and human in augmented physical space rather than in virtual space.

Augmentation is also having an effect on how web developers are creating content for the WWW. With the development of CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), there is an emphasis on creating styles specifically for hand held devices — PDAs and Blackberrys. These devices and mobile phones are an excellent example of augmented reality — as they are carried around and used in any physical space.

This view is perhaps supported by Marshall McLuhan's succinct argument about how all electronic media 'work us over' in terms of their capacity to influence and affect perceptions:

> All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the massage. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments.[144]

As the Internet has developed, there has been increasing control placed on users by governments in the context of international, federal and state and territory law. For instance, *The Washington Post* Staff Writer made this statement on 4 January 2001:

> For much of its life, the Internet has been seen as a great democratizing force, a place where nobody needs know who or where you are. But that notion has begun to shift in recent months, as governments and private businesses increasingly try to draw boundaries around what used to be a borderless Internet to deal with legal, commercial and terrorism concerns.[145]

A good example of how government has sought to restrict use of online material can be seen in the following exmple. The Australian Government introduced the *Broadcasting Services Amendment*

[144] Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium and the Massage* Corte Madera: Gingko Press, 1967, p. 26.
[145] Ariana Eunjung Cha,'Rise of Internet 'Borders' prompts fears for Web's future' *Washington Post* Staff Writer: Friday January 4, 2001, P EO1.

(Online Services) Bill 1999 into the Senate on 21 April 1999. The Bill was pushed through the Senate and passed with some amendments on 26 May 1999. This Bill followed a Senate inquiry that totally ignored overwhelming industry and user opposition.[146] The subsequent legislation placed great limits on the content hosted by Internet Service providers, particularly about material dealing with any form of sexuality. This bill has hit artists particularly hard, as issues that focus on gender and sexual identity are curtailed and censored by this law. Nevertheless, this is not an isolated scenario, as attaining access to a range of materials is becoming increasingly difficult and limited around the globe due to copyright and censorship restrictions.

Part of what online censorship represents is a limit to self expression, as boundaries are drawn around what or what not is appropriate for users to publish as a means of defining themselves, a denial of the 'real' self. Many discussions in cultural and psychoanalytic theory focus on a discussion of the 'real'. It is a term that refers to the exchanges that occur in the physical world, as opposed to the virtual world of cyberspace. Within the thesis there are references to the "real me", and this term does not have a specific reference to the 'real' or virtual notion of identity. Rather, it is a reference to how the individual identifies self and what they share with others in the context of their public persona.[147] This collection of public personas that are presented within the context of the online social environment inhabit a space that is driven by information management systems following structural protocols to enable the flow of communications. Schäfer considers this as a socio-technical ecosystem. He comments as follows:

[146] Electronic Frontiers Australia *Internet Censorship Laws in Australia* (1994) http://www.efa.org.au/Issues/Censor/cens1.html#comm (accessed 14 June 2002).
[147] Katelyn Y.A. McKenna, Amie S. Green, and Marci E.J. Gleason, *Relationship Formation on the Internet: what's the Big Attraction?* Journal of Social Science, Vol. 58, No. 1, 2002 p. 10.

> The photo-sharing website Flickr constitutes such a socio-technical ecosystem. A system-wide plurality of users is actively engaging in Flickr, but behind the graphical user interfaces on the Flickr servers, information management systems react to user activity. Socio-technical ecosystems can easily be incorporated into other systems. Flickr is connected to the Yahoo search engine and influences search requests for images by delivering results, matching the Yahoo user's search request with keywords generated by Flickr users when uploading their photos. Like actor-networks, the socio-technical ecosystem is also subject to the dispositif of participation.[148]

Schäfer's use of the dispositif is applied more broadly than just as a means of interpreting media content, as economical, institutional and social contexts are also taken into consideration. He also considers that the dispositif is open to elements of play, participation and even sensual experiences by offering the possibility of understanding the 'in-between' as the capacity of action and the transactions and transformations between the various aspects of 'the said and the unsaid'. [149] The Möbius strip is called to mind here as a motif to reflect on the visible human transactions and the invisible technical/corporate drivers that power the back end of the website.

Accessible design /spaces of access

The design of virtual spaces is integral to how the traffic may flow, and is not unlike the architectural design of physical spaces. Users need to be able to access the space and interpret information and navigational paths and be able to traverse the online space seamlessly without thinking about where the information can be found.[150] Design and accessibility is still an area in need of development in terms of educating users who have a DIY approach — e.g. education about accessible and user centred design . There are many sources of information about the 'rules' for web design and most designers agree about core issues that affect the look, feel and usability of a site. For instance, Jakob Nielson, eminent author of *Designing Web Usability: the practice of simplicity* (www.useit.com), and Lynda.com (www.lynda.com) are both leaders in web design aesthetics and have similar views about what constitutes 'good' design in an online environment.

[148] Schäfer, M.T., *Bastard Culture*, p. 30.
[149] Schäfer, M.T., *Bastard Culture*, pp. 26-27.
[150] Steve Krug's text *don't make me think* is an excellent guide to making websites usable and accessible. Here is a review by Christian Watson (Smiley Cat Web Design) http://www.smileycat.com/miaow/archives/000175.php (accessed 30 March 2008).

Both build on early web fundamentals stated by Berners-Lee that concentrate on three primary areas of consideration. These are all linked to accessibility in some way - coding for usability, visual design for navigation and usability to present an overall structure that is accessible to the widest possible audience. Another leading designer Derek Powazek, author of *Design for community: The Art of Connecting Real People in Virtual Spaces* agrees and adds:

> We know that building community online can be a wonderful, enriching process. We know that it creates sites with a tighter bond between creator and visitor, and member to member. We might even suspect that those bonds can sometimes transcend the virtual realm and cross over into the real world.[151]

Many other websites focus on what does not work — Vincent Flanders' long standing website www.webpagesthatasuck.com would have to be one of the best known websites for focusing on bad web design — he has a daily 'sucker' and has been trolling the web since 1996 finding the worst examples of design. Another term that Flanders uses is 'Mystery Meat Navigation', a phrase applied to sites that use graphics as links without offering *alt text* tags or a text description. Flanders' term applied to a basic breach in the accessibility guidelines. Users who have a sight disability cannot use a screen reader to interpret an image if it does not have a text description, which is generally known as 'alt text'. In addition, the lack of screen reader interpretation has also been a long standing issue with Flash based websites.

Like any form of media, the WWW has some basis rules for publication. These rules govern how content should be presented. The W3C has accessibility guidelines and these are used by government agencies and organisations as a starting point for the publishing of online material.[152] The Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) — formally the National Office of Information Economy (NOIE) is the agency that has further developed the W3C

[151] Derek Powazek, *Design for Community: The Art of Connecting Real People in Virtual Places,* 2002, Online version http://designforcommunity.com/essay7.html .
[152] The World Wide Web consortium http://www.w3.org (accessed 21 August 2001).

guidelines and legislated these recommendations as a requirement for government WWW publishing. In 2008, Australian government agencies still have a long way to go to make their content compliant, but with the release of the *Review of the Australian Government's Use of information and Communication Technology*[153] better known as the Gershon Review, it is hoped that a there will be a Whole of Government shift towards compliance and uniform standards for websites. By ensuring that web standards in usability and accessibility are adhered to, the website builds capacity to engage the broadest possible audience base, enabling people from all ages, cultures and abilities to access information easily. This standardised approach to web publishing also demonstrates how significant the processes of augmentation is to the development of online spaces that enable people to explore and experience the WWW in a way that is democratic and socially aware of the diversity of the individual user. In the next chapter, some of the ideas and concepts of online identity are explored as agents to distinguishing behaviour and activity online.

[153] Sir Peter Gershon, *Review of the Australian Government's Use of information and Communication Technology* http://www.finance.gov.au/e-government/strategy-and-governance/ict-review.html (accessed 2 December 2008)

Chapter 3: Tracking Identities in Tactical Media

The question of what are the specific formations of online activist identity and how they manifest in the off-line or actual world is the focus of this chapter. Thus far the interplay between online art and activism has been explored in terms of the interrelationship between both types of activity and the notion of space and cultural context. In addition to this, the concept of augmented space has also been considered in terms of interplay between the physical and virtual. In this chapter, I continue to build on my discussion by focusing on the social behaviours that define net-activists and net-artists in terms of identity formation and how this has impacted on the development of online tools. An analysis of online identity concepts will underpin the discussion, as will an exploration of the gaps between possibility and probability — what activists do and what they potentially will do in terms of figuring behaviours and aesthetics that in turn influence culture and contemporary art. As I have already stated, the Internet has created a major shift in the production and dissemination of culture and the connections between communications, technology, arts and activism have become more nuanced. In addition to these issues, the notion of traffic is also crucial in understanding not just the movement of information and people but as a means for culture to spread in terms of a social phenomenon.

So what is the difference between forming social relations that exist primarily in the 'meat'[154] world to what exists in the 'cyber' world? Firstly, it is assumed that identity is formed under a range of circumstances, which include the social, geographical and cultural signifiers that position the identity within the context of the real world as well as the online context. For example, Lisa Nakamura comments that:

[154] The expression 'meat' world is also from *Neuromancer* and describes interactions in the physical world as opposed to cyberspace.

> Digital reproduction produces new iterations of race and racialism, iterations with roots in those produced by mechanical reproduction. Images of race from older media are the analogue signal that the Internet optimizes for digital reproduction and transmission.[155]

In contemporary global and technological society, there is much to observe and consider in how we understand 'identity'. To do so ethically entails a commitment to being aware of 'where we speak' by not speaking for others around us, unless we are asked to do so. Yes, we can have community, but the notion of community only arises by addressing the individual identifiable behaviours that make up the whole.

True selves or theatre of the self

It has been argued that the notion of the 'true self' is one of the reasons why online communities do have currency and authority in the 'real' world. This is primarily because participants expose themselves to the rest of the community as their 'true self'; there is a certain level of vulnerability associated with communications with the group. Bargh, et al (2002) documented a series of experiments to determine the ability of Internet to define relationships and the individual's self-concept. This was initiated because there had been a substantial amount of research into how 'authentic' notions of self-identity often arise in circumstances that are not in the everyday physical environment of the subject. For example, they refer to the intimacy of a conversation between strangers sitting together on a train journey.

They assess that people possess multiple senses of the self and this is well documented in the fields of sociology and psychology.[156] E. Tory Higgins built on the premise of the 'true self' and distinguished between *ideal*, *ought*, and *actual* self-concepts: the 'ideal self' contains those qualities one strives one day to possess, the 'ought self' those qualities one feels obligated to possess, and the

[155] Lisa Nakamura *Cybertypes: race, ethnicity, and identity on the Internet* Routledge: New York, 2002, p. 15.
[156] The authors refer to Goffman (1959) and Jung (1953). Both Jung and Goffman made the distinction between the public and private notion of the self.

'actual self' those that one actually expresses to others at present.[157] The true self however is distinct from the actual self — it is similar yet different. Both personas are grounded in the present (ideal and ought personas relate to the future and past notion of the self) but the true self allows for an exploration of the inner (private) aspects of the self to be explored, whereas the actual self is concerned with the realm of public space.

Bargh, et al predicted in the experiments that an individual's 'true-self' would be more activated and accessible than the 'actual-self' during online interactions with a new acquaintance and that the opposite would be true of face-to-face meetings. They suggested that one important difference between the typical Internet and typical face-to-face interaction is the Internet's ability to facilitate self-expression. Firstly, the Internet has the capacity for people to remain relatively anonymous in one's individual or group-level interactions.[158] Secondly, there is less social cost to saying or doing something that is deemed a negative trait or a taboo subject. The ability to confide in strangers usually has fewer implications for the individual than to expose one's self to friends and family. If one has continued contact with the same person, this self-disclosure can lead quickly to the development of friendship, as trust is quickly established.

The predictions of Bargh, et al were found to be accurate after a series of a further three experiments:

[157] Higgins, E. T., 'Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect' *Psychological Review, 94,* 319-340 (1987) cited in Bargh, J.A., McKenna, K.Y.A. and Fitzsimons, G.M., 'Can You See the Real Me? Activation and Expression of the "True Self" on the Internet' *Journal of Social Sciences* Volume 58, Issue 1, 2002, p. 34.
[158] Bargh, J.A.; et al., *Journal of Social Sciences,* p. 35.

> The present findings have identified two important and unique qualities of Internet (compared to face-to-face) communication: (1) that by its very nature, it facilitates the expression and effective communication of one's true self to new acquaintances outside of one's established social network, which leads to forming relationships with them; and (2) that once those relationships are formed, features of Internet interaction facilitate the projection onto the partner of idealized qualities.[159]

Because of the ability of the Internet to allow people to reveal their 'true-selves', the power of the physical markers that could potentially limit communications and the development of relationships is eroded. Age, gender and race are all aspects that can be withheld from others in the context of virtual space and in many instances this strengthens the community, as the focus is on the subject or issue at hand — not the politics of physical difference. Nakamura acknowledges the complexity of cyber identity:

> Bodies get tricky in cyberspace; that sense of disembodiment that is both freeing and disorienting creates a profound malaise in the user that stable images of race work to fix into place.[160]

One of the ongoing debates about online identity has been the issue of authenticity and the notion of 'legitimate' contact between people, as opposed to having intentions to defraud and deceive users by the use an identity that is either entirely fictional or assuming another's identity. When Howard Rheingold wrote this in 1993, he was imagining the future of online communities:

> You can be fooled about people in cyberspace, behind the cloak of words. But that can be said about telephones or face-to-face communication as well; computer-mediated communications provide new ways to fool people, and the most obvious identity swindles will die out only when enough people learn to use the medium critically. In some ways, the medium will, by its nature, be forever biased toward certain kinds of obfuscation. It will also be a place that people often end up revealing themselves far more intimately than they would be inclined to do without the intermediation of screens and pseudonyms.[161]

Rheingold's proposition that people end up revealing themselves more intimately online is certainly evident in the research about the 'true self' that has already been discussed. By engaging in the online community, people create an identity for themselves, which is built on the interaction that they contribute. This in turn has an impact in the context of the physical world as the participation in the online community builds a reputation for the contributor in whatever arena in which they

[159] Bargh, J.A.; et al., *Journal of Social Sciences,* p. 45.
[160] Nakamura, L., *Cybertypes*, p. 6.
[161] Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Finding Connection in a Computerised World* London: Secker & Walburg 1994 http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/1.html (accessed 15 June 2006).

participate.

Online identity, community and consumption

Sadie Plant comments that out of all the media and machines that emerged in the twentieth century the Internet has been taken to "epitomize the shape of this new distributed nonlinear world."[162] Plant also considers that the success of the Internet as a communication media lies in its non-hierarchical structure. She says, "No central hub or command structure has constructed it, and its emergence has been that of a parasite, rather than an organizing host."[163]

There has been a range of attempts by theorists to locate online activist notions of identification and forms of communication. For example, Manual Castells (2000) comments as follows:

> News coverage of the demonstrations invariantly highlights the role of new communication technologies, especially SMS and the Internet, in facilitating and enabling the protests.[164]

This recognition by Castells about the use of these technologies emphasises how the use of the technology facilitated the activist activity. But what constitutes or defines an activist operating within augmented spaces? Dorothy Denning (2001) describes activists, hacktivists and cyberterrorists as categories of the types of activity in which she broadly defines as 'hacktivism'. She identifies a number of activities that hacktivists are involved in: virtual sit-ins and blockades, automated email bombs, web hacks and computer break-ins, and computer viruses and worms.[165] When discussing activism, she comments that:

> The Internet is a powerful tool for communicating and coordinating action. It is inexpensive to use and increasingly pervasive.[166]

Denning also identifies a range of ways in which activists use the Internet — collection,

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[162] Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture* Doubleday: London, 1997, p. 46.
[163] Plant, S., *Zeros*, p. 49.
[164] Manual Castells, *The Mobile Communications Society,* 2000, p. 211.
[165] Dorothy Denning in Arquilla.J., and Ronfeldt, D.F. (Eds)., "Activism, Hacktivism and Cyberterrorism: The Internet as a tool for influencing foreign policy" *Networks and Netwars: the Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy,* RAND: Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, National Defense Research Institute, 2001, p. 263.
[166] Denning, D.E., *Networks and Netwars*, p. 242.

publication, dialogue, coordination of action, and direct lobbying of decision makers.[167] Whilst Denning distinguishes the difference between the types of activity she admits the following:

> Although the three categories of activity are treated separately, the boundaries between them are somewhat fuzzy. For example, an email bomb may be considered hacktivism by some and cyberterrorism by others.[168]

This quote highlights the highly subjective notion of locating identities within any context, not just within the context of the Internet, thus demonstrating the problematic concept of identity. This was an issue that was prevalent in pre-WWW discussions,[169] by writers such as Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Stuart Hall, and Rosi Braidotti. For example, Hall, in his controversial article "Who Needs identity?" comments:

> It seems to be in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship between subjects and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs — or rather, if one prefers to stress the process of subjectification to discursive practices, and the politics of exclusion which all subjectification appears to entail, the question of identification.[170]

This quote highlights where the process of identity formation is linked to the situatedness of the subject and hints at the issues resulting from exclusion. The refugee and more specifically the incarcerated asylum seeker are subjects that can not speak for themselves, making the issue of identity vexed as self determination is part of the identity construction process. The are monitored and surveillanced but do not have the opportunity to speak for themselves in most cases.

McLuhan once said, "Men on frontiers, whether of time or space, abandon their previous identities. Neighbourhood gives identity. Frontiers snatch it away."[171] This quote speaks about the impact of changing circumstances on the notion of self, particularly how these new experiences enable us to perform multiple identities. His quote also calls to mind Julie Kristeva's discussion on exile, where she says:

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[167] Denning, D.E., *Networks and Netwars*, p. 243.
[168] Denning, D.E., *Networks and Netwars*, p. 241.
[169] See Judith Butler (1993, 1999), Elizabeth Grosz (1993, 1994, 1995), Stuart Hall (1990, 1996, 1997), Rosi Braidotti (1991, 1994), Homi Bhabha (1990, 1994) and Gayatri Spivak (1995, 1999).
[170] Stuart Hall, *Questions of Cultural identity* p. 2.
[171] Marshall McLuhan, http://www.marshallmcluhan.com/poster.html (accessed 24 November 2006).

> The one by whom the abject exists is thus a deject who places (himself), separates (himself), situates (himself), and therefore strays instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing.[172]

What emerges from displacement is a loss of identity, and a disruption to the context of home, which is a central theme in my creative work *Swipe*. In addition, the decision to use the WWW as a creative medium in *Swipe* and *Highway of Shame* was triggered by the potential for communicating to a far-reaching and diverse audience, one that could perhaps identify with what I was hoping to achieve: a desire to make a difference and contribute to discussions and critiques of identity and alienation. Moreover, it was important to speak from my own personal experiences rather than trying to imagine the impact of isolation and alienation on people who have had life experiences that were far outside of my own.

Aside from my own exploration of the WWW as a creative medium to communicate and explore identity, there is a diverse range of tools and interfaces to interact online. For example, the use of textual environments like chat and MSN to communicate and present an online identity is now been expanded exponentially with virtual spaces of *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft* (WoW) creating a much more realistic and three-dimensional use of virtual space. However, debates about 'authentic' identities still exist in these spaces, but have become much more complicated and diversified because of the use of avatars within these virtual environments. The avatar is the proxy, or stand-in for the user and is created with a wide range of physical specifications. It would be highly unlikely for someone to attempt to recreate their own physical characteristics, as part of the entertainment value of these websites is to explore an alternative world or space. Lisa Nakamura comments on how the construction of the avatar can play out unconscious and conscious racial desires:

[172] This is (most of) chapter one of Kristeva's book, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982) http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/wyrick/debclass/krist.htm (accessed 25 May 2003).

> Digital avatars, or renditions of self, provide a pipeline into the phantasmic world of identities, those conscious or not-so-conscious racial desires and narratives that users construct and inhabit during their interactions in cyberspace.[173]

Through the avatar, the virtual 'physical' can be altered to explore different bodies, but behind the screen still exists the person who is communicating. Even the use of video and digital photography as a form of self representation online only reflects a partial notion of self.

The augmented relationship between real and virtual

The discursive space between what denotes 'real' and 'virtual' is still contested ground. For instance, as discussed by Grundmann, Paul Virilio (2000) considers rejection of the human body as the only context for discussion of the body and identity in discourses related to art and technology:

> Rejection of the human body or its virtualization, declares Virilio, are the only alternatives presented to the art lover by the multimedia academy led by body artists such as Stellarc and Orlan.[174]

I would argue that what actually transpires in the realm of the virtual is not a rejection of the human body and it is not simply an adjunct or augmentation; rather it is an aspect of the physical sense of the self that is experienced in another way that is not a typically understood expression of the body. Rheingold is closer to the mark when he states that when we are not able to see each other in cyberspace we do not make assumptions about that person based on physical appearance. Identity markers such as gender, race and age are only revealed if the user makes those characteristics public. People, whose physical handicaps make it difficult to form new friendships, find that in virtual communities they are treated, as they always wanted to be treated— as thinkers and transmitters of ideas and feeling beings, not necessarily as bodies with a certain appearance and way of walking and talking (or not walking and not talking).[175]

Sherry Turkle notes that the Internet affords individuals a virtual laboratory of sorts — a space for

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[173] Nakamura, L., *Cybertypes,* p. 32.
[174] Grundmann, H., (Ed.) *Art + Telecommunication* Western Front Publication: Vancouver 1984, p. 4.
[175] Rheingold, H., 'The Virtual Community: Finding Connection in a Computerised World', Secker & Walburg, 2004 http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/1.html (accessed 23 May 2004).

exploring and experimenting with different notions of self. She comments that traditional ideas about identity have been tied to a notion of authenticity that such virtual experiences actively subvert.[176] Online users have the choice to reveal as little or as much of the truth about their 'real' identity as they like to their audience. Not only that, if someone can pretend they *are* you, then you could have big problems. Judith Donath states that:

> Individual identity — one's claim to be a particular individual, either in the physical or the real world - can also be challenged. A particularly costly form of identity deception is impersonation. If I can pass as you, I can wreck havoc on your reputation, either on-line or off.[177]

Anyone can set up a hotmail account and concoct any personal details they like and then join any multitude of listservs[178] with the intention of creating a false identity. Even though social networking websites like FaceBook frown upon such activity there is little that the administration can do to monitor profiles — not with 300 million users.[179] However, this is the exception rather than the rule. The majority of people who join lists have legitimate interests but some seek to disrupt sites, act as surveillance, mask their identity and use the Internet as a means to commit crime. Other people engage online with communities using other forms of social networking tools to provide an alternative voice to mainstream media and seeking an awareness of crucial issues related to civil liberties, artistic expression and censorship.

Framing time and identity in cyberspace

The projected body[180] as defined by Manovich in his *Learning from Prada* essays is conceivably a temporal manifestation of the fold as it explored as an aspect of the digital baroque — as there is always a delayed process of time from the filming of the body to the representation of the form in screen, print or projected media. Additionally, in this state, the body or identity is 'mediated' and

[176] Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the age of the Internet* Simon and Schuster: New York, 1995, p. 185.
[177] Judith Donath, *Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community*
Prepared for: Kollock, P., and Smith M.., (Eds.) Communities in Cyberspace.
http://smg.media.mit.edu/people/Judith/Identity/IdentityDeception.html (accessed 21 April 2006).
[178] A listserv is an email based discussion group, where members can post articles and respond to other posts. -*empyre*- is a moderated listserv, others are unmoderated and members may post freely on topic related subjects.
[179] Facebook statistics http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics (accessed 21 August 2009)
[180] Manovich, L., *Learning from Prada*, p. 1.

potentially fetishistic, as it *is not* the person, only a fragment, a glimpse and a proxy for the 'real' self. This partial and technologically augmented experience of the body also calls into play the Möbius strip as a motif, and the interplay of the projected or online space and 'real' space is a asynchronous temporal differentiation. This process of mediation is also editorial; the body (identity) is recreated and edited under the direction of supervisory eyes (including the imaged person) to present a refined, framed 'grab' of identity. With the WWW, we are confronted with two types of framed identity — with the recreation of the digital image as it is manipulated and edited into a suitable format, and the effect of the image as it is downloaded and transformed over the Internet. The second type of framing is contingent on the time taken to transfer the image. For instance, GIF (Graphic Image Format) images can be downloaded in a progressive mode, meaning that the image is transferred in several stages with each one having more clarity than the last.

Just as there are legal responsibilities, borders and restrictions in the online environment that mirror physical space, there are stereotypes of personalities. However, while the behaviours do reflect social behaviour in the physical world there is a sense that these identity types have certain characteristics that result from how they engage online. This is what will be the focus of the next part of the chapter.

Defining net-activist behaviour, forming net-activist identity

It is important to describe some particular types of online behaviour because they in part define how users behave in the majority and in part what net-activists do outside of the context of the 'real' world as a result of behaviours displayed online. In some cases the activists gained notoriety and infamy because of how these behaviours have been located or stereotyped in the 'real' world. These stereotypes have often been used by 'legacy' media to incite a level of distrust and fear about the online space, but making it full of unscrupulous, perverted, rude and fraudulent identities.

The lurker as observer

The first defining online identity behaviour is that of lurking. In short, the lurker is a person who passively hides on email lists (listservs). In other words, a lurker subscribes to a newsgroup but never contributes to the discussion. Lurkers are generally frowned upon in net culture as perhaps having sinister motives, even though the lurker population is in the majority. For example, there are over 1000 members of the media arts community -*empyre*- but the participation in the monthly discussion would be from less that 5% of the readership.[181] One common misconception is that lurkers are pedophiles. One can create a fictitious character in a chat room or website, but a lurker just sits back and watches the discussion, and does not attempt to communicate.

Whilst it is difficult to research exactly when the lurker first appeared as a term, Jenny Preece and Blair Nonnecke, in their paper, titled, *Why Lurkers lurk,* presented at the AMCIS Conference in Boston (June 2001), commented that: "lurkers reportedly make up the majority of members in online groups and discussions lists."[182] Many online list members are on multiple lists and are vocal and engaging in the discussion on some, but not others. Lurkers lurk for a range of reasons: they are not native English speakers and do not feel confident, they believe they are alone in their opinions, want to remain anonymous to preserve privacy and safety, had limited time, too many messages to deal with, and feel uncomfortable with the tone of the forum.[183] When a lurker does decide to post to the list for the first time, they are considered 'delurked'. The flip-side of this type of activity is that of members who are vocal and posts regularly to the list. This type of participation is interpreted by members in a number of ways. Members either look up to this person as a senior member of the list and therefore their opinion has value, or other members see this member as an attention seeker, and as someone who is using the list to promote their agenda or career or both.

[181] -*empyre*- http://www.subtle.net/empyre/ (accessed 6 June 2008).
[182] Blair Nonnecke and Jenny Preece, *Why Lurkers lurk* http://www.ifsm.umbc.edu/~preece/Papers/AMCISlurker.01.pdf p. 1 (accessed 14 November 2006).
[183] Nonnecke, B., and Preece, J., *Why Lurkers lurk*.

An example of an artist who has challenged the notion of lurking is John Halcyon Styn (http://halcyon.styn.net), creator of *Citizen X* (www.citizenx.com) and Cocky Bastard (www.cockybastard.com) websites. In *Citizen X*, web cams are utilised as a means of forming a list or community online — this way everyone is visible and no one can lurk or 'vandalise' the space. This website is a precursor to the rise in popularity of blogs and vlogs.[184] There is a range of chat rooms on the Citizen X site and some members of the community have ambassadorial roles to address issues associated with web cam misunderstanding (e.g. confusion with a porn site). These members have the capacity to throw people off the site for 24 hours. Styn's approach is very much in the vein of Andy Warhol's concept of 15 minutes of fame as his work is about exposing identity rather than operating covertly online. In essence, he is exploring ways of producing intimacy in an online environment and his attitude reflects the general dislike of the lurker, who is perceived as being sneaky and covert. However, this process is problematic on another level, as the monitoring of list members purveys a sense of surveillance and in many ways, the role of surveillance is not addressed in a critical manner, a significant conceptual oversight in the post September 11 political climate.

Whilst there is still strong evidence to suggest that lurking is still common-place, there are a range of Web 2.0 applications that focus of identity exposure within the context of social networking — e.g. *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *Bebo*, *Linkedin*, amongst others. Artists online also have a increasing capacity to participate and share information via websites like *Red Bubble*, *Artsreview*, *Flickr, Youtube*.

[184] Video logs.

The hacker - technology terrorist or coding crusader?

The hacker is a very enigmatic character, which, in almost Dadaist terms, defies description. On *Nettime*, it has been argued that the hacker is the artist of the future, while others (usually from corporate media) see hackers as a menace to public security. For example, at regular publication gatherings, hackers have been subjected to intense security checks, even a far back as the early 1990s. In this long quote from the *Complete Hacker's Handbook* it was documented at a *2600* meeting that:

> Mall security personnel surrounded the hackers and demanded that they all submit to a search. Anyone who resisted was threatened with arrest. People's names were written down, and their bags gone through. People who tried to write down badge numbers of security staff or attempted to film what was happening were further harassed. Eventually everyone was told to leave the mall or face arrest.
>
> Emmanuel Goldstein, the editor of 2600, was outraged at the behaviour of the security staff and, using the power of the Internet to provide mass communication, alerted other people to what was going on. Eventually this information came to the attention of a local reporter who phoned the mall and spoke directly with the security director of this mall.
>
> While the reporter was taping the interview, the security director inadvertently let out the fact that the whole search and question operation was organized by the secret service. For a long time the hacker community had suspected that the secret service was organizing local law enforcement and private security to crack down on the so-called "hacker menace".[185]

Amongst these self-named hackers argue the difference between hackers (those who create code for interventionist purposes) and crackers (those who crack the codes of others for interventionist purposes). Whether artists or not, the refreshing part of the discussion surrounding hacktivism and art is that the notion of art is being more strongly drawn into the realm of everyday experience and the realities that impact upon social and political discourse.

On 2 May 2002, a program on the ABC titled *The Hacktivists*[186] analysed the difference between hackers and crackers, looking at the diversity of these groups and lack of unity between them. This program stands as an early 21st century testimony to the changing cultural climate, where the power

[185] Complete Hacker's Handbook: Chapter 3 http://www.telefonica.net/web2/vailankanni/HHB/HHB_CH03.htm (accessed 4 February 2009).

[186] A summary of the documentary can be found at http://www.abc.net.au/hacktivists/ (accessed 5 May 2002). Also available on this web site is a 'hacktivist study guide' that is very useful when considering net activism.

relationships in art and culture has shifted from that of the arts institution and curator to artists self promoting with celebrity like status. For example, you can book *CAE* and *Yes Men* for a workshop or lecture on *Evil Twin Booking.*[187]

McKenzie Wark is one of a number of writers to write a manifesto for hackers, and this one has been well documented in texts on the subject. In this long quote, he states that:

> Whatever code we hack, be it programming language, poetic language, math or music, curves or colourings, we create the possibility of new things entering the world. Not always great things, or even good things, but new things. In art, in science, in philosophy and culture, in any production of knowledge where data can be gathered, where information can be extracted from it, and where in that information new possibilities for the world are produced, there are hackers hacking the new out of the old. While hackers create these new worlds, we do not possess them. That which we create is mortgaged to others, and to the interests of others, to states and corporations who control the means for making worlds we alone discover. We do not own what we produce — it owns us[188]

This statement reinforces an understanding that the process of hacking is about creating something new from the old, hence the assertion that hackers do not break code and systems, as their 'bad press' would have it, they create new forms and meanings from the old. Wark goes on to comment that:

> While we recognise our distinctive existence as a group, as programmers, as artists or writers or scientists or musicians, we rarely see these ways of representing ourselves as mere fragments…Geeks and freaks become what they are negatively, through their exclusion by others. Hackers are a class, but an abstract class, a class as yet to hack itself into manifest existence as itself.[189]

Just as other creative people in the online environment struggle to be defined, so do hackers. The labels that applied to hackers do not seem to be easily ascribed to the range of behaviours as signs of identification.

The role of the troll

Trolls online are essentially seen as troublemakers who intervene and send abusive posts to lists and

[187] Evil Twin Booking http://eviltwinbooking.org/index.cfm (accessed 5 January 2009).
[188] McKenzie Wark, M *A Hacker Manifesto* http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors0/warktext.html (accessed 20 November 2006).
[189] Wark, M., *A Hacker Manifesto*.

sites. *Indymedia* readers often have to contend with much rubbish on the site as quite often trolls make the only responses to genuine posts. At the time of the Woomera 2002 protests, there were a range of spams from trolls including threats of murder and more irrelevantly, posts of nude women. This manner of anti-social behaviour is typical of trolling. As mentioned earlier, in the example of Abraham Bigg's Internet suicide, onlookers viewing his suicide left messages:

> The Website that hosted Biggs' Web cam, justin.tv, has deleted the video and the comments people made while viewing it. The AP spoke to someone who claimed to have viewed the suicide and reported that as Biggs lay on the bed, other viewers cracked jokes. When police officers entered the room, in addition to "OMG" responses, viewers posted "lol" and "hahahah.[190]

Whilst this type of activity pushes moral and ethical limits, trolls often see their behaviour as a means of contributing to social discourse. In an interview with Alex Birch, well known hacker and troll Weev comments:

> Trolling is a method, a style of rhetoric and action. It can be used for constructive or destructive purposes. Some of the greatest champions of Western philosophy have implemented the troll method.[191]

Trolling is defined on the *Anti Troll FAQ* as:

> Subscribing the victim to hundreds of unwanted pornographic email newsletters, and sites. Complaining to employers about non existent misdemeanours. Sending garbage emails without indication of sender. Telephone calls at dead of night. Harassing the close relatives of victims.[192]

It is difficult to locate exactly when the troll first appeared on the Internet but it would be fair to suggest that trolling has been around as long as the practice of 'spamming'[193] email users.

Unsolicited spam and 'phishing'[194] swindles are often also the work of trolls. However, their

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[190] Mark Evitt, Internet Trolls Cross the Line with the Latest Internet Suicide *Pop + Politics* http://www.popandpolitics.com/2008/11/24/if-a-line-exists-on-the-internet-surely-its-been-crossed/ (accessed 2 March 2009).

[191] Alex Birch Interview: Professional Hacker and Troll Weev *CORRUPT.org: remaking Modern Society* http://www.corrupt.org/act/interviews/weev (accessed 24 March 2009).

[192] Dave Fawthrop, *Anti Troll FAQ* (2002) http://www.hyphenologist.co.uk/killfile/anti_troll_faq.htm (accessed 30 January 2007).

[193] SPAM is a term that refers to unsolicited bulk email messages. Spamming is the act of mass posting electronic junk mail.

[194] Phishing is the process of distributing bulk email to people to get money by fraudulent means. Using fake banking information and the 'Nigerian' letter are two ongoing examples of this type of troll activity.

overarching role is to post open publishing lists and blogs with politically overt or unsuitable material. Trolls are adept at deceiving people about their identity by necessity, because they engage in behaviours that are unacceptable to the rest of the community. Judith Donath argues that trolling is a game about identity deception, and one that is played with the permission of most of the players. This is because the troll attempts to pass as a legitimate member of the group, sharing their interests and concerns. Judith Donath comments that:

> The newsgroup members, if they are cognizant of trolls and other identity deceptions, attempt to both distinguish real from trolling postings and, upon judging a poster to be a troll, make the offending poster leave the group. Their success at the former depends on how well they — and the troll — understand identity cues; their success at the latter depends on whether the troll's enjoyment is sufficiently diminished or outweighed by the costs imposed by the group.[195]

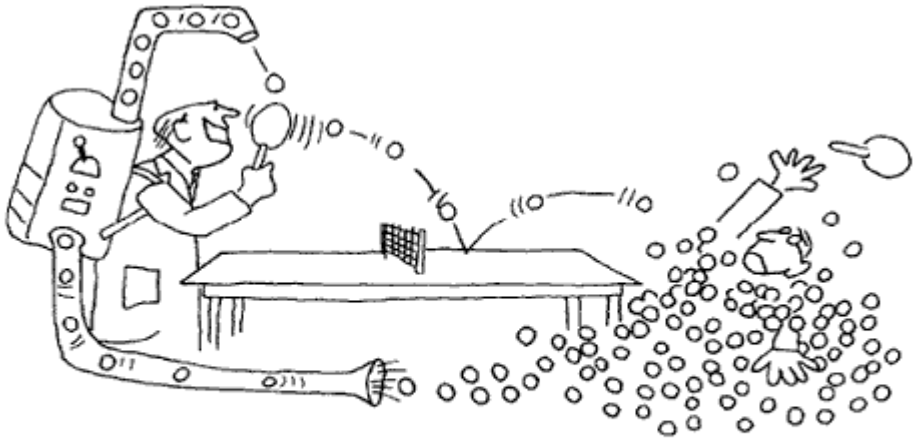
List members have labelled sometimes innocent and inexperienced users as trolls, not realizing that the posts were legitimate. For example, in this long quote Donath states that:

> Trolls can be costly in several ways. A troll can disrupt the discussion on a newsgroup, disseminate bad advice, and damage the feeling of trust in the newsgroup community. Furthermore, in a group that has become sensitized to trolling — where the rate of deception is high — many honestly naive questions may be quickly rejected as trollings. This can be quite off-putting to the new user who upon venturing a first posting is immediately bombarded with angry accusations. Even if the accusation is unfounded, being branded a troll is quite damaging to one's online reputation.[196]

'Flaming' is another word to describe a type of behaviour that is seen as anti-social and destructive to an online community. The act of flaming is about being argumentative and nasty in an online conversation, and has sometimes resulted in a list member being exiled from the list community. The exclusion of list members brings into play a whole other set of issues that are embedded into online discussion — the role and responsibility of list moderation. Another aspect of unwanted or unsolicited online communications is evident in the distribution of spam. Flaming is also often used by a list member to try and defame other members of the online community, or to belittle the discussion.

[195] Donath, J., *Identity and Deception*.
[196] Donath, J., *Identity and Deception*.

Trolling and flaming are often seen as obstructionist strategies, designed to confuse discussion and delay a decision or direction. This type of behaviour is similar to that of 'filibustering' which is a term used to describe how and action can be 'pirated' or when in the context of legislation, when debate continues to block the passing of the law.[197] All of these behaviours are not generally representative of net-activists but could conceivably be used as either a coordinated collaborative strategy or as a form of individual protest.



. . . filibustering destroys communication.

Illustration from Licklider, J.C.R. The Computer as Communications Device
Science and Technology 1968

There are many terms for different types of online behaviours, and, as the Internet continues to grow there will also be new ways to name these behavioral attitudes. Mike Reed's website *Flame Warriors* is testimony to this ongoing process of naming, as he requests people to contact him when new stereotypes emerge so he can document them on his site.[198]

[197] Online Etymology Dictionary : filibuster (n.) 1587 as flibutor "pirate," probably ultimately from Du. vrijbuiter "freebooter," used of pirates in the West Indies as Sp. filibustero and Fr. flibustier, either or both of which gave the word to Amer.Eng. (see freebooter). Used 1850s and '60s of lawless adventurers from the U.S. who tried to overthrow Central American countries. The legislative sense is first recorded c.1851, probably because obstructionist legislators "pirated" debate. Not technically restricted to U.S. Senate, but that's where the strategy works best. http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=filibuster (accessed 6 December 2008).
[198] Mike Reed, *Flame Warriors* http://redwing.hutman.net/~mreed/warriorshtm/lurker.htm (accessed 20 November 2006).

Engaged communities

The discussion of space in terms of community is relevant to the formation of online identity behaviour, particularly when it is specific to the notion of participation and engagement. The use of a digital media form serves to enhance and provide a higher level of access to individuals within a community. This is not only prevalent in online communications, but in other forms of media — for example teleconferencing and video-conferencing that function in a similar way.

It is necessary to examine the use of and types of media to determine the effectiveness of the Internet as a form of interactive media that creates many variables of engagement, making it an active media, rather than a receptive media.[199] For example, activity does not occur in the case of television as a form of media, as viewers are essentially passive: they can change the channels of the television, but they can't shape what they are seeing and they certainly can't create new material for viewing, unless they are engaged in community based broadcasting or are professionals in the field. But to present the shift as a simple transition from passive viewer to active audience is problematic according to Schäfer, as there is not the focus on the apparatus that enables this process of participation to occur:

> Refusing a writing of media history as a continuous development from passively consuming audiences to actively participating users, this research frames participatory culture in a complex dispositif with unfolding actor-networks and socio-technical ecosystems.[200]

Christiane Paul in *Digital Art* (2003), comments on how communities on the Internet did not operate in isolation from the 'real' world. She states that:

> Network technologies have become all-pervasive and it would be wrong to understand the Internet networks as a separate virtual territory that has no connection with our physical environment.[201]

The interactive function of the Internet can facilitate the building of online and offline communities. In addition, the online media format has the capacity to empower the user, who can potentially

[199] This is my phrasing — receptive media refers to passive forms of media that rely on one way communications stream (television and radio), exchange media is a two way media format — the telephone and the internet.
[200] Schäfer, M.T. *Bastard Culture!*, p. 30.
[201] Paul, C., *Digital Art*, p. 122.

evolve as a 'produser'. This is because "they are no longer producers or consumers, publishers or audiences, but both at the same time. They are not prosumers, but user-producers: produsers."[202]

The word 'community' may be defined as the "warmly persuasive word" which describes an existing set of relationships; or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. Maria Bakardjieva states, "It seems never to be used unfavourably and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term."[203] The term community covers many types of relations and is only limited by the number of descriptors applied to it. In short, it is a formation of like-minded participants who are engaged at a variety of levels. There is no difference between the real and virtual modes of community except the issue of physicality, because community is constructed identically in both contexts. In short, community is constructed in two ways — people coming over a common issue or interest, or by certain identifying factors such as geography, religion, gender and race. Bakardjieva also comments that:

> The complexity of the term relates to the difficult interaction between the tendencies originally distinguished in the historical development: on the one hand, the sense of direct common concern; on the other hand — the materialization of various forms of common organization.[204]

Community represents the social and cultural space in which we exist, in physical and psychical terms. There are many parallels between the 'real' and the virtual that are interrelated and conjoined, hence the use of the Möbius strip as a motif. In both spatial contexts, there is the impact of individual personalities on the overall community. This can affect the success of the community group in achieving its objectives if there are difficulties in the communication exchanges between the individuals involved in the community group. Howard Rheingold pinpoints the main differences between 'real' and virtual communities:

[202] Alex Bruns, http://snurb.info/index.php?q=node/286 (accessed 02 August 2006).
[203] Maria Bakardjieva, http://www.ucalgary.ca/~bakardji/community/definition.html (accessed 20 July 2006).
[204] Bakardjieva, M. http://www.ucalgary.ca/~bakardji/community/definition.html (accessed 20 July 2006).

> The way you meet people in cyberspace puts a different spin on affiliation: in traditional kinds of communities, we are accustomed to meeting people, then getting to know them; in virtual communities, you can get to know people and then choose to meet them. Affiliation also can be far more ephemeral in cyberspace because you can get to know people you might never meet on the physical plane.[205]

Anita Blanchard and Tom Horan in *Virtual Communities and Social Capital* argued that there were two types of online communities, and that they evolved in very different ways. They state that there are two types of virtual communities, one which evolves online and the other that is generated by an existing physically based community, for example a town council that places its services online. About virtual communities, they consider that:

> The second type of virtual community is geographically dispersed with members participating due to their shared interests in a topic and not their shared locations…The members of these communities may never meet each other and their interactions may be limited to just that topic or community of interest.[206]

Later in the article, they argue that the form of community that evolves from a 'real' world situation holds more social capital[207] than the virtual counterpart. However, this assertion is based in speculation, rather than fact, as they note:

> Little is known about the relationship between these two types of communities.[208]

As previously stated these two modes of community supplement and facilitate the other, primarily because of the capacity of these relationships to hold currency in the 'real' world and the connection between the two — regardless of where the community was formed. The first types builds on an existing community structure and the second one arises from a genuine desire for the participants to be engaged. Marshall McLuhan considers that engagement with electronic media as integral and inescapable to modern society:

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[205] Rheingold, H., 'The Virtual Community: Finding Connection in a Computerised World'.
[206] Anita Blanchard and Tom Horan, 'Virtual Communities and Social Capital', *Social Science and Computer Review* 1998 Claremont Graduate University, USA p. 7.
[207] Social capital is a term used to describe the value of relationships forged in community or membership in a group. For example, social networks between individuals could assist in securing employment, or access to another network or information.
[208] Blanchard, A., Horan, T. *Virtual Communities*, p. 8.

> The instantaneous world of electric informational media involves all of us, all at once. No detachment of frame is possible. [209]

Whilst it might not be possible to be detached from the frame, it is possible to conceptualise and discuss what exists outside of its field of reference.

Beyond the frame

Postcolonial and feminist theories rely on presenting a discussion on what exists outside of the frame of mainstream culture, whereas McLuhan is arguing that we are not able to detach from the frame and distance ourselves with electronic media. What is not visible in the frame is the material that is thought about, pondered and then responded to — as in how online produsers contribute their own comments, responses and opinions regarding the news and current affairs — as backchannelled communications. Going back to the notion of an asynchronous space represented by the Möbius strip, the other aspect of the Internet that should be considered is the code — it is not visible but shapes the presentation of the information because it structures our communications within a programming context, through the use of languages like CSS, HTML and JavaScript.

McLuhan also references television as a form of immersive media and claims that:

> Television demands participation and involvement in depth of the whole being. It will not work as a background. It engages you. Perhaps this is why so many people feel that their identity has been threatened.[210]

Is this statement valid in terms of our contemporary understanding of the immense difference between television's and the Internet's capacity to engage and involve the audience? There is much to be challenged in this statement by McLuhan. Perhaps the viewer is engaged by the television, but it is a passive, one-way communication stream. There is no opportunity to respond, to dissent from the information being broadcast, unless you take the time to phone or send a comment to the television station's management via their website. That is not to say you cannot react, but do the broadcasters hear your dissent? The closet examples of two-way communications in the context of

[209] McLuhan, M., *The medium is the massage,* Gingko Press: Corte Madera, 1967, p. 53.
[210] McLuhan, M., *The medium*, p. 125.

television are reality-based shows like Big Brother and Australian Idol, where you as a viewer can vote people off the show by using SMS, phone calls and the Internet. Other television programs have phone and Internet surveys on current affairs topics. In all of these examples, a mediating media channel is required to engage and get a response from the television, be it the Internet, the telephone or snail mail.

Aside from these examples of interactive engagement with television, it is largely a passive form of communication; you watch and are told the facts, stories and current affairs of the day — whether or not the subjects are of interest or of relevance. This is in direct contrast to being engaged in an online community. On the Internet, participation is considered active, as you can participate in discussions, create your own websites, blogs, and vlogs, participate and start your own online communities. This is not an indication of how all individuals participate in the community as a whole, as the lurker and troll represent a different and negative form of engagement with the community.

Hybrid spaces, hybrid identities as products of augmentation

Earlier in the chapter, the discussion focused on the formation of online identity as being an extension of the expression of identity in the 'real' world. In addition, the issue of a singular identity has been exposed as problematic on the content of real and virtual formulations of identity. Donath presents a view that in the realm of the 'real' world, identity is a singular entity:

> In the physical world, there is an inherent unity to the self, for the body provides a compelling and convenient definition of identity. The norm is: one body, one identity. Though the self may be complex and mutable over time and circumstance, the body provides a stabilizing anchor.'[211]

Albeit that corporeality stabilises identity, the features of the physical identity are singular in name only, because an individual has many facets that define their personality and community

[211] Donath, J., *Identity and Deception*.

relationships. Even earlier than this, feminist writers such as Rosi Braidotti and Julie Kristeva explored the notion of identity as being fluid, multiple and continually changing and evolving. For example, Braidotti's (1994) discussion of the 'nomadic identity' presents it as a practice that involved the "affirmation of fluid boundaries, a practice of the intervals, of the interfaces, and the interstices."[212] Kristeva (1986) recommends that women should "employ a *double* discourse which reflects the real state of identity which must always be fluid — at the same time both "masculine" and "feminine" - both inside and outside the boundaries of the symbolic.[213]

However, when within the space of the virtual, there is much more of a capacity to have multiple notions of self and this has certainly been documented in theoretical discourses that focus on online identity. Donath states that:

> The virtual world is different. It is composed of information rather than matter. Information spreads and diffuses; there is no law of the conservation of information. The inhabitants of this impalpable space are also diffuse, free from the body's unifying anchor. One can have, some claim, as many electronic personas as one has time and energy to create.[214]

Donath seems to be assuming that the physical notion of identity is singular and only the virtual identity has the capacity to have multiple facets. I suggest that there is a heightened capacity to assume multiple identities online, and these can be transposed into the real world by way of identity fraud. In some cases this type of fraud matters — theft and other criminal activity. In other cases, it is more or less harmless — a creative fantasy character for example.

I would argue that this is the exception rather than the rule as the majority of Internet users want to make a connection with other people in a genuine way. What is more apparent in the context of the online community is that once engaged, the user is compelled to participate and reveal themselves

[212] Rosi Braidotti, "Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference" in *Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Columbia University Press: new York, 1994, p. 7.
[213] Julia Kristeva, Toril Moi *The Kristeva Reader,* Columbia University Press: New York, 1986, p. 181.
[214] Donath, J., *Identity and Deception*.

to the rest of the group. McLuhan observes that:

> The shock of recognition! In an electric environment, minority groups can no longer be contained-ignored. Too many people know too much about each other. Our new environment compels commitment and participation. We have become irrevocably involved with, and responsible for, each other.[215]

Heidi Grundmann (1984) discusses how eminent researcher and artist Roy Ascott refers to a notion of devolved or dispersed authorship that results from the interaction developed in electronic communities:

> telecommunications events do not, unlike other kinds of artwork, originate from a solitary artist but grow from what Roy Ascott calls a "dispersed authorship". Such authorship is only possible through the use of "interactive" systems — as opposed to centralised distribution systems like television or teletext...[216]

Quite often, what evolves is a concept for a project and then the participants refine the idea over time. For example, the September 2006 discussion on -*empyre*- featured an artist from the USA and a collaborative group from the Netherlands as well as myself as the moderator, and the early development of the discussion was backchannelled[217] amongst us to define the topic.

MUDs and MOOs: communities of the nineties

MUDs and MOOs are an excellent historical example of how people engage with communities online. Although in many instances the environments and identities created are fictional in nature, this does not lessen their capacity to engage an audience that then formulates an identity as a community. Lister describes a MUD (Multi-User Dungeon or Domain or Dimension) as:

> Multi-User Dungeon (sometimes also 'domain' or 'dimension'): Dating from the early 1980s, an online role-playing environment originally derived from Dungeons and Dragons type games. Normally text based, Multi-User Dungeons allow numerous people to play and interact at the same game scenario at the same time. Also, MOO, Multi-User Object-Oriented spaces in which users built an environment in 'object-oriented' language which allowed pre-coded navigation through text-constructed 'spaces'. Increasingly replaced by shared spaces in which users speak to each other and interact through 'avatars' in, for example online gaming.[218]

It was very popular in the 1990s to go into these spaces, create an avatar identity and then

[215] McLuhan, M., *The medium*, p. 24.
[216] Heidi Grundmann, (ed) 'Art + Telecommunication', Western Front Publication, 1984, p. 4.
[217] Back channeling is a term that refers to discussion between list members and moderators that happens outside of the list. Developing topics and prompting guests are two ways in which this process is used on -*empyre*- to stimulate discussion.

participate in the role-playing or dating space. Nowadays these spaces have been overtaken by the three dimensional virtual space of *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft.* Despite the development of *Web 2.0* graphical communications tools, textual interfaces are still very popular, for example *Facebook* has a chat window so users can talk to friends.

And as with the reality of the physical world, there may be behaviours that are considered inappropriate, anti-social and illegal. For example, the well-documented case in 1993 on Lambda MOO, of the online rapist Mr. Bungle.[219] Julian Dibbell brought the case to popular attention in his 1993 *Village Voice* article, "A Rape in Cyberspace," and it soon found its way into scholarly discussions of cyberspace, particularly on questions of subjectivity in online environments and the nature of online communities.[220] At the time there was a strong reaction of disgust amongst the majority of this MOO community and this led to much debate about developing rules and conventions of conduct for participants. Lister et al comment that:

> This involved arguments about democratic, authoritarian and libertarian solutions to the 'governance' of the shared communication. Here, then, we can see the 'real world' structures' of civic governance imported into cyberspace.[221]

Identity construction, then, is not only about creating individual personas; it is also about being part of a group linked by a common interest or cause and being bound by the behaviours that are deemed acceptable to that community. This offers a sense of solidarity among the participants, who may have been isolated in their opinions in the past.

Trafficking identity

When considering the notion of trafficking identity, there are a range of issues to consider — the

[218] Julian Dibble "A Rape in Cyberspace: How an Evil Clown, a Haitian Trickster Spirit, Two Wizards, and a Cast of Dozens Turned a Database Into a Society" *The Village Voice* December 23, 1993 http://www.juliandibbell.com/texts/bungle_vv.html (accessed 4 May 2008).
[219] Robert Yagelski, 'Computers, Literacy, and Being' *Kairos 6:2* http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/6.2/features/yagelski/bungle.htm (accessed 20 November 2006).
[220] Yagelski, R., *Computers, Literacy, and Being*.
[221] Lister, M., et al., *New Media*, p. 169.

trafficking of information, movement of identity, borders, control and protocols of access. Galloway identifies a downed server as "the ultimate disruption of the Net continuity." On the Internet information must keep moving, otherwise the user is under threat of data loss and software corruption.[222] Rheingold comments that:

> The Battle of Seattle saw a more deliberate and tactically focused use of wireless communications and mobile social networks in urban political conflict.[223]

This example demonstrates the connection of media to the physical context of traffic as well as a demonstration of how information is trafficked globally and locally.

As mentioned earlier, Blast Theory build on the use of wireless technology in a range of works. Aside from 'Uncle Roy all around you' the interactive work 'Rider Spoke' also explores the city using wireless communications technology. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt coined the term 'netwar' which is used to describe the type of events represented by Seattle'99 (also known as the 'Battle of Seattle'). In their text *The Advent of Netwar* they reflect on the non-hierarchical structure and tactical approach that informs this type of activity:

> The capacity of this nonhierarchical design for effective performance over time may depend on a powerful doctrine or ideology, or at least a strong set of common interests and objectives, that spans all nodes, and to which the members subscribe in a deep way. Such a doctrine can enable them to be "all of one mind" even if they are dispersed and devoted to different tasks. It can provide an ideational, strategic, and operational centrality that allows for tactical decentralization.[224]

Another term that appropriately describes they sort of traffic that is created by these convergences is 'swarming'. Kevin Kelly makes this observation:

> The more fit-the more interesting or useful-a fact is, the wider it spreads. A pretty metaphor compares the spread of genes through a population with the similar spread of ideas, or memes, in a population. Both genes and memes depend on a network of replicating machines-cells or brains or computer terminals. A network in this general sense is a swarm of flexibly interconnected nodes each of which can copy (either exactly or with variation) a message taken from another node.[225]

Rheingold comments about this strategy that:

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[222] Galloway, A., *Protocol*, p. 67.
[223] Rheingold, H., *Smart Mobs*, p. 160.
[224] Arquilla, J., and Ronfeldt, D.F., *The Advent of Netwar*, National Defense Research Institute, 1997 p. 180.
[225] Kevin Kelly, *Out of Control: The Rise Of Neo-biological Civilization*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1994 http://www.virtualschool.edu/cox/pub/94WiredSuperdistribution/KelleyOutOfControl.html (accessed 21 March 2008)

> Individual members of each group remained dispersed until mobile communications drew them to converge on a specific location from all directions simultaneously, in coordination with other groups. Manila, Seattle, San Francisco, Senegal and Britain were sites of nonviolent political swarming.[226]

When users online imitate the swarming movement of users within physical space , there is potential to crash the servers because of overload. Too much traffic is an effective vehicle in raising awareness in both notions of space as both context offer a capacity for halting or changing other users movements, which then has an impact on the corporate or government entity that has been 'swarmed'. However, what is of concern to users (activists or consumers) is that that through a range of technologies physical and virtual movement is surveillanced and tracked. The surveillance of the citizen is further explored in the next chapter.

In conclusion, the exploration of online identity has now reached epidemic proportions, with blogs and vlogs being increasingly published on the Internet in the social network spaces *of Facebook*, *My Space* and *Youtube* to mention a few. This phenomenon has challenged what it means to be a publisher, writer, journalist and artist, and by doing so has radically shifted what online identity means in the real world. What has emerged is a notion that identity is multi faceted and fluid, rather than a rigid and singular entity. What is also evident is that individuals have a sense of empowerment over how they portray themselves and how they present visual and textual narratives of their identity in an online environment. All of these elements reinforce the argument of the Möbius strip — that the physical and virtual spaces are in fact part of the same environment, only presented in a different context and with differing implications.

The Internet and WWW have provided a sense of empowerment to those who have access to it, as they have the capacity to provide an alternative version of current events as well as building communities that have common goals. In the next chapter, the use of surveillance tools by nat-artists and net-activists will be more fully explored a means of engaging with the Internet on a

[226] Rheingold, H., *Smart Mobs*, p. 162.

cultural and political level with outcomes that affect experience and have implications in the physical world.

Chapter 4: Surveillant vision — sedition, censorship and concealment

So far in this thesis I have put into context a range of artists and activists work being done by using the WWW; described the spaces between the real and the virtual; and addressed the formulation of identity online. In this chapter, I explore how forms of surveillance and counter surveillance have challenged power relationships in net-art, net-activism, alternative media and citizen publishing.

The political and technical landscape of the time frame between 2001 and 2008 has shifted dramatically in two ways that are relevant to this dissertation: firstly in terms of how the Australian government is dealing with asylum seekers in detention and secondly in regard to the evolution of a massive range of online social networking tools that have shifted online culture and the way in which people interact and share media. The punitive approach taken in 2001 post September 11 appears to still occupy a contentious space with the Rudd Labor government initially dismantling the Pacific Solution and reviewing immigration detention policy, to moving back to an off-shore, incarceration approach to managing illegal boat arrivals. Whilst these changes have potentially represented a more lenient, humanitarian approach after the fear, panic and paranoia of September 11, the same can not be said about other civil rights, particularly those governing privacy. Since September 11 there has been an exponential increase in how people are monitored in society by the use of all manner of surveillance technologies including camera, data-tracking, biometrics and body scanning by the government. This in turn has created a notion within society that movement is controlled and managed through these means of surveillance. However, this scenario is not one where passive citizens are monitored by the Orwellian 'Big Brother'. As Internet and media technology has become cheaper, mobile and more accessible there has been a sharp increase in the use of the of this media by artists, activists and the general public to report on events and happenings that occur outside of the net of broadcast news media. This has been coupled with the

rise of re-mixing, open source and creative commons cultures where media, code and information is shared, added to and reconfigured. This shift in cultural values has challenged the arts establishment as these new methodologies challenge the authority of the artist as 'creator'.

As this use of user generated 'activist' and 'tactical media' surveillance is the topic of this chapter, I will present a range of examples whereby online activists and artists have used counter surveillance to inform public opinion, challenge established concepts, create new work and to expose crime. These groups include Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan (*RAWA*), *Sarai*, *WITNESS*, *CAE*, Soda Jerk and the discussion list –*empyre*- where as a moderator I organised a discussion on sedition in February 2006.

Surveillance strategies

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the use of surveillance has increasing been used to monitor and control citizens, especially within an online context. For example, in December 2008 an Australian lawyer was the first to utilise the social networking tool *Facebook* to serve legal documents. Lawyer Mark McCormack used *Facebook* to serve an eviction notice on a couple - and an Australian supreme court then approved the move. He had tried several times to contact the couple by other means, but without success.[227]

Protest through out the ages has always been about presenting an opposing view, and a multitude of strategies have been used to make a point. John Gilliom (2006) uses a number of generic examples and makes the following observations about the many forms of public opposition about perceived invasions of personal privacy:

[227] Sky News: Facebook Message Evicts Couple http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/World-News/Facebook-Used-By-Lawyer-To-Serve-Eviction-Notice-On-Couple-In-Australia/Article/200812315181894?f=rss (accessed 21 March 2009).

> Licence plates are obscured or intersections avoided; public officials are mocked and find their own high-technology tools used against them; false names are given to supermarkets. No grand battles; no great protests; no sweeping promises of definitive success in besting the powers of surveillance. But this is, apparently, a wide-spread pattern of unconventional politics through which ordinary people can express and mobilize their opposition to surveillance policies while at the same time achieving short-term gains that are important in their daily lives.[228]

He attributes these various forms of resistance are as a result of the "huge and diverse landscape made up of the countless surveillance initiatives that have marked recent years."[229] Not surprisingly this surveillance of society is not democratic in the way it is managed. Gilliom goes on to comment that "we all live with a variety of surveillance programs tracking the basic patterns of our behaviour. Indeed, it seems clear that those with greater affluence and participation in mainstream institutions may be subject to more comprehensive surveillance."[230] These surveillance programs are all pervasive, from the use of biometrics in travel documents, to Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tagging of products to the personalised advertising on gmail and Facebook triggered by email and profile key words.

From Gilliom's comments it is reasonable to assume that resistance to surveillance programs is widespread and not only relegated to that of activists. However, it is when activists turn the surveillance tools to the institutions that the role of the net-activist comes into play. This counter surveillance is one of a range of strategies effectively used in tactical media.

Counter surveillance and the culture of the visible — Tactical Media

There have been many significant activist events that have been augmented by online media and citizen journalists. Most ostensibly, the development of the anti-WTO and other anti-imperialist actions that were highlighted particularly with Seattle in 1999 is an early tangible and physical result of online organising and collaboration. This particular protest is a necessary starting point for

[228] John Gilliom,'Struggling with Surveillance, Resistance, Consciousness, and Identity', in Ericson, R and Haggerty, K.D. *The New Politics of Surveillance and Visibility,* University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 2006, p. 113.
[229] Gilliom, J., *Struggling with Surveillance*, p. 113.
[230] Gilliom, J., *Struggling with Surveillance*, p. 125.

discussion regarding the development of online activism. Such public demonstrations have seen the widening spread of 'tactical media', and other behaviours like swarming, which are usually socially or politically motivated. The role of these artists/activists in an action is that of a subjective participant rather than spectator — a significant shift from the traditional 'objective' approach used by news media.

As an Australian example, the *S11.org* website was strategic for organising the protests against the World Economic Forum (WEF) at Melbourne's Crown Casino in 2000, as was the Woomera2002 site for the Easter 2002 actions in solidarity with detained asylum seekers. By the use of mass postings to other lists and frequent updates on the sites, both of these events provided a broad audience with information about the protests, as well as postings of news regarding the events that emerged from these actions. For example, *Indymedia* news gave information on the asylum seeker escapees in the case of Woomera 2002 and police violence against activists at the Melbourne Crown Casino during the S11 anti-WTO protests in 2000.[231]

To expand on the notion of tactical media, in the Oct/Nov 2002 issue of *Realtime Arts*, McKenzie Wark was asked his opinion about 'tactical media'. He responded that:

> For there to be such a thing as tactical media implies that there are also strategic and logistic media. These terms go together, and describe 3 different levels at which contestation can take place. If the tactical is local and contingent, the strategic involves planning and coordination. The logistic would then refer to systematic, global and long-range organisations of forces.[232]

In this article, Wark also refers to Geert Lovink's 2002 publication *Dark Fiber* on the role of tactical media artists/activists. He affirms Lovink's assertion that tactical media emphasises the role of interconnectedness between social groups — operating as ideologically different entities but united

[231] S-11 shutdown the W.E.F. (14 September 2000) http://pandora.nla.gov.au/nph-arch/2000/S2000-Sep-14/http://www.s11.org/s11.html *National Library Pandora Archive* (accessed 2 April 2009) and Dr. Bernard Barrett 'Beating Up: A Report on Police Batons and the News Media at the World Economic Forum, Melbourne, September 2000' http://www.australianpolitics.com/pg/groups/barrett-s11-report-2000.shtml *Australian Politics.Com* (accessed 2 April 2009).

[232] Wark, M., "Strategies for Tactical Media". *Real Time* #51 Oct/Nov 2002 (accessed 4 January 2003).

and working toward similar outcomes — whether actions or events, or to promote awareness. He also acknowledges the connections that exist between old and new forms of media, mainstream and alternative media and the intertwined roles of practice and theory. He repeats Lovink's question: How does a phrase on a wall turn into a global revolt?[233]

In many ways, this article indicates that Wark's thinking on the topic of 'tactical media' is influenced by Lovink even though he has been commenting on this field for some time. He refers to Lovink in other publications, most notably *Nettime*, where one of his articles was published on the N5M website, where he comments that:

> Lovink and Schneider ask the right question in 'A Virtual World is Possible'. What is to be done? Unfortunately, they have not done it. Yes, there is a need for a political position outside of the dialectic of the street and cyberspace. Yes, there is a need for a new position for new media outside of the dialectic of the media market and the art market. And yes, the place to look is in deconstructing the techno-libertarian ideologies of the 90s.[234]

It is the process of convergence, and the willingness to 'spread the news', that can has the capacity to turn a statement into a movement. A sense of timing is at stake when dealing with activist organised protests and convergence actions. The significant role of timely networking of information combined with an objective to create or stage an event in order to raise awareness or to intervene in a situation is what can create the unified global revolt referred to by Lovink and Wark. Lister, et al (2003) considers that convergence is a term used to describe the ways in which previously discreet media forms and processes are drawn together and combined through digital technologies.[235] The anti war protests in 2003 are possibly the closest example to a global revolt, and in many countries there have not been protests of that size since the Vietnam War.

In many ways the protests of the 1960s used precursor technologies to build the movement. For example, leaflets, posters and photographs proved effective in providing information and education

[233] Wark, M., 'Real Time #51'.
[234] Wark, M., 'Re: From Tactical Media to Digital Multitudes' *N5M4* http://www.n5m4.org/index6ebf.html?118+575+2392 (accessed 20 November 2006).
[235] Lister, et al., *New Media*, p. 385.

to influence citizens on issues. A positive example of how the political change of heart has been achieved in a contemporary example is the 'Free David Hicks' campaign by promoted by Australian online social activism and advocacy network, *GetUp*. By raising funds for billboards, gathering online petitions and offering template campaign letters to Ministers of Parliament, this network was able to apply significant pressure on the Howard Government to get David Hicks released from Guantanamo Bay in 2007 after he was captured and detained in December 2001. *GetUp* is an independent, grass-roots community advocacy organisation giving everyday Australians opportunities to get involved and hold politicians accountable on important issues.[236]

Surveillance culture — art as capture

In *Deleuze and Space* by Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert, the discussion focuses on the influence Deleuze and Guattari has had on the theorizing of space. An historical line is traced from the concepts of the individual being essential to the constitution of place as argued by Heidegger and Lefebvre, to the conceptualisation of empty space promoted by later thinkers, for example Augé, Debord, de Certeau, Deleuze and Foucault. Buchanan and Lambert argue that:

> Doubtless it was Foucault's book on the prison that set the tone, creating a dour atmosphere of institutional triumphalism that his own later work would later try to ameliorate by outlining a *modus vevendi* for life in the glare of surveillance.[237]

This glare of surveillance recalls Foucault's discussion on the panopticon[238] as well as George Orwell's 'Big Brother' in *nineteen eighty-four*.[239] Citizen journalism, net-activism user driven social networks have challenged the traditional positioning of surveillance from the institution monitoring the individual to the individual monitoring institutions. That said, unfamiliar spaces, both online and physical has an impact on knowledge and awareness of self as emotions and behaviour are different to when a person is comfortable and 'at home'.

[236] GetUp website http://www.getup.org.au/about/ (accessed 9 March 2009).
[237] Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert, *Deleuze and Space* Edinburgh University Press, 2005, p. 3.
[238] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.), Vintage, 1979, pp. 201-202.
[239] George Orwell, *nineteen eighty-four*, Secker and Warburg, 1949.

The issue of surveillance has a been a topic of interest for artists and activists. For example, sousveillance is a term used to describe the inverse use of surveillance devices. Steve Mann, et al state that:

> All such activity has been *sur*veillance: organizations observing people. One way to challenge and problematize both surveillance and acquiescence to it is to resituate these technologies of control on individuals, offering panoptic technologies to help them observe those in authority. We call this inverse panopticon "*sous*veillance" from the French words for "sous" (below) and "veiller" to watch.[240]

This inverse panopticon not only challenges the role of the voyeur as being authoritarian as is in the case of surveillance used by bureaucracies, it also brings into play a multi perspectival view — one which is not one all seeing eye traversing the landscape but of a multitude of eyes monitoring this authority from all vantage points. This process feeds into the notion of distributed and digital aesthetics as it's strength as an organising force is in the multilayered and nodal structures that are created by this form of participation.

Online tactical engagement as counter surveillance strategy

Having access to media and being successful tactically in terms of counter surveillance necessitates an ethical approach to the situation, one that considers the subject as well as the position of the media tactician (artist/activist). This is an all-consuming exercise as the artist also is immersed in the event as a participant. For instance, in my online documentation of Woomera in September 2001, *Highway of shame*, the audio included my chants and cries during the event. I initially found this strange because I was very conscious of using a camera, but, obviously, when my attention focused on what was actually happening around me I lost concentration and focus as a 'camera person' because I was immersed in the action. As a result, I am still unsure as to whether my activity could be describable as counter surveillance or tactical media as the initial intention was not clear in my mind because of my involvement as an activist.

[240] Steve Mann, Jason Nolan and Barry Wellman, "Sousveillance: Inventing and Using Wearable Computing Devices for Data Collection in Surveillance Environments", *Surveillance & Society* 1(3): pp. 331-355.

What is important is that the process that has been described as tactical media does not get reduced to just another catchphrase or label; this would be catastrophic in terms of continuing to build social awareness. Wark's concluding statement in *Realtime* is somewhat pessimistic:

> Tactical media has been a productive rhetoric, stimulating a lot of interesting new work. But like all rhetoric, eventually its coherence will blur, its energy will dissipate. There's a job to do to make sure that it leaves something behind, in the archive, embedded in institutions, for those who come after.[241]

I would like to suggest a more positive view of the inevitable shift in the rhetorical significance of tactical media. Perhaps the name may change but hopefully the incentive and motivation for artists to continue producing challenging work that explores new forms of media and questions societal conditions will remain.

As stated earlier, shareware and freeware cultures are excellent examples of how online artists have the capacity to engage tactically with their audience. The work of Australian activist artist Deborah Kelly (www.boat-people.org) and the Belgian/Dutch feminist collective *de Geuzen* (www.geuzen.org) offer both images and leaflets available to download free. This ensures the potential for widespread dissemination of material to other activists and interested parties in both hard and soft copy.

Moreover, what has actually happened as a result of how activists have used the internet has been an exponential growth in accessible and free online tools for social interaction and sharing information. This is primarily because activists online have significantly contributed to the development of the software. However, as fast as the WWW grows in terms of free culture, there has been an increasing and corresponding closure of many free online materials — now only available by transmitting a credit card number or strictly adhering to copyright procedure.

[241] Wark, M., 'Real Time #51'.

Copyright law has become highly significant for users of the Internet, and there have numerous cases of prosecution concerning the infringement of copyright. For example, students in Australia and the US have been sued for copyright infringement arising from music piracy.[242]

As much as corporations jostle for control over the WWW, activists and hackers online have met them with continuing resistance. However, their power is limited regardless of tools used for jamming sites and creating virtual sit-ins. In official terms, the conscience on the WWW has primarily been the responsibility of the W3C, initially set up by Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the WWW, as we know it. Tim Berners-Lee and others created W3C as an industry consortium dedicated to building consensus around Web technologies. Research.[243] This organisation has implemented standards for websites in terms of the accessibility, style of writing and the use of metadata to ensure that web content is readable and findable online. Other organisations have also offered their support to the consortium — universities and public collection based sites are good examples of supporters of a WWW that is not owned per se. In Australia, there have been significant attempts by government agencies to adhere to the W3C guidelines, initially manifested as NOIE (National Office for the Informational Economy) and later AGIMO (Australian Government Information Management Office).

Some years before Berners-Lee invented the WWW, Hackers were talking about the capacity of sharing software and information. For example, the famous expression that "Information wants to be free" was coined by Stewart Brand in 1984 at the first Hackers conference, in which he was also an organiser. Roger Clarke comments that:

[242] The Australian National University 'The Internet and Music Piracy' http://information.anu.edu.au/copyright/use/downloading.html (accessed 21 November 2003).
[243] World Wide Web Consortium, 'About the World Wide Web Consortium (WC3)' http://www.w3.org/Consortium/ (accessed 21 November 2003).

> Stewart confirmed this on Tue, 29 Jun 1999 07:00:58 -0700 in an email to TBTF (thanks Eric Scheid, Keith Dawson and Kragen Sitaker). Stewart wrote:
>
> "In fall 1984, at the first Hackers' Conference, I said in one discussion session: "On the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it's so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life. On the other hand, information wants to be free, because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these two fighting against each other."[244]

One of the most significant features of online community is its resonance in the real world. The Internet has facilitated opportunities for activists to network and discuss issues across cultural and geographical borders and the results have been evident in the mass actions of the last few years as well as the burgeoning development of open source and freeware software collective. People post to each other globally and then organise on a local level — a classic example of the adage 'think global-act local'. The tools activists developed have influenced much more broadly that just the activist community.

The dilemma of ethical engagement

Do you have more of a right to film or record a political event when you are an activist and a participant or witness? How is 'tactical media' different from 'net activism' and net-art, if both use the WWW as a publishing format? One could argue that in many ways they are the same, as all rely on engaging with the Internet as a means of distribution, even if as an intervention.

As mentioned earlier, Seattle '99 was seen as a starting point for mass action to be directly assisted by the Internet's capacity for global distribution of information. What makes the Internet different from other forms of telecommunications is its capacity to behave as a two-way conduit, rather than a relationship between active broadcaster and passive audience. Not only can you receive information on the Internet, you may also choose to then disseminate this information — posting to as many users (potential broadcasters) as you choose**.** This makes the Internet a powerful tool for the purpose of counter surveillance — as a means for activists to use the same or similar

[244] Roger Clarke, http://www.rogerclarke.com/II/IWtbF.html (accessed 21/10/2008).

technologies for the purpose of monitoring the government, police and military. Although, this use of counter surveillance was used much earlier — for example in the case of the Rodney King.

The bombing of the World Trade Center in 2001 (September 11) was an historical moment that has changed how citizens are now monitored in daily life, particularly when embarking on air travel. In public places there has been exponential increases in the use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), which may be used as evidence for criminal investigations as well as civil lawsuits. New passports use biometric information to verify the travellers identity.[245]

Disneyland, ironically billed as the "happiest place on earth" has been using various surveillance technologies for many years, even before September 11. In an article by Karen Harmel in *News21*, she comments that:

> The government has looked to Disney for advice on biometrics in the past. After 9/11, one Disney executive was part of a group convened by the Federal Aviation Administration and other federal agencies to help develop a plan for "Passenger Protection and Identity Verification" at airports, using biometrics.[246]

There are many debates that have been raised about the ethical aspects of biometrics as well as the use of surveillance in public spaces. IT has been argued that these forms of surveillance impinge on the citizen's right to freedom, whereas the authorities argue that the technology is used to protect that very freedom from criminals and terrorists. These ethical dilemmas are also evident in discussions of counter surveillance employed by activists. Also within this debate is the issue of piracy of copyrighted material, which also encompasses discussions of freeware and 'mixing' culture.

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[245] Biometric recognition, or, simply, biometrics, refers to the automatic recognition of individuals based on their physiological and/or behavioral characteristics. By using biometrics, it is possible to confirm or establish an individual's identity based on "who she is", rather than by "what she possesses" (e.g., an ID card) or "what she remembers" (e.g., a password). Jain, A.K. Ross, A. Prabhakar, S. "An introduction to biometric recognition" *Circuits and Systems for Video Technology* Dept. of Comput. Sci. & Eng., Michigan State Univ., USA; Volume: 14, No 1, 2004, pp. 4- 20.

[246] Karen Harmel, *Walt Disney World: The Government's Tomorrowland?* http://news21project.org/story/2006/09/01/walt_disney_world_the_governments News 21: A Journalism Initiative of the Carnegie and Knight Foundations, September 1, 2006 (accessed 2 September 2009).

There is also the issue of the the ethics associated with using sousveillance as a citizen. Lucas D. Introna and Amy Gibbons comment that:

> Sousveillance—the view that we can invert the all seeing eye of the panopticon—may allow for the actions of the watchers to be exposed and may subsequently engender a certain level of accountability on the part of the state. But who will engage in such sousveillance on behalf of the citizen?[247]

I would argue that inverting the capacity of the citizen to watch and record actions is extremely problematic as it can be argued that there is already a significant amount of accountability put onto citizens to be ethical in 'watching' others. For example, spying on others, stalking and monitoring the movements of people is seen as socially unacceptable behaviour. So to respond to Introna's and Gibbon's question, as citizens there is already in place a set of social norms that define what is and isn't appropriate in terms of voyeuristic behaviour.

Who gets to play?

The issues of globalisation, human rights and equality have become increasingly significant to contemporary arts discussion and practice in and at *BORDERPANIC* (2002), Art of Dissent (Melbourne festival) (2003), N5M4 (2003), *ISEA* (2004, 2006 and 2008) and the March 2003 edition of *Artlink*. The themes of these exhibitions and publications have covered a diverse range of topics including human rights violations, globalisation, surveillance, diversity, refugee advocacy, border control, opposition to war and political dissent. For example, the Symposium themes at *ISEA2008* were: Locating media; Wiki Wiki; Ludic Interfaces; Reality Jam; and, Border Transmissions.

What has become much more widely available on the Internet are 'alternative' forms of current affairs media transmission (text, image and sound), which respond, contrast and react to the corporate media view of the world. This is a result of hardware becoming cheaper and accessible to

[247] Lucas D. Introna and Amy Gibbons "Networks and Resistance: Investigating online advocacy networks as a modality for resisting state surveillance" *Surveillance & Society* 6 (3): pp. 233- 258 http://www.surveillance-and-society.org/ojs/index.php/journal/article/view/networks/networks (accessed 2 September 2009).

more people than ever before and a growing DIY approach to the transmission of material online. In Paul's words:

> Affordable software and hardware, the Internet, and mobile devices such as PDA have brought about a new era for the creation and distribution of media content.[248]

The use of DIY media is also the result of increasing awareness by activists of the need to gather evidence to support their cause — either to present an alternative viewpoint or to be used litigiously in the court system to support the cases of various activist groups. The spread of DIY media is not the only aspect of this cultural shift. The aesthetics that define high and low art have been seriously challenged by the intervention of these communicative and affordable technologies.

WITNESS: facilitating self determination

The role of *WITNESS* is significant as an agent for social and cultural change; this organisation has assisted a broad range of activist and community groups around the world to present their stories. This is done by offering training and providing video cameras to these groups. For example, one of the groups partner's *RAWA* was crucial in exposing the human rights abuses by the Taliban during their ten-year reign.[249] *RAWA* will be further discussed later in this chapter. *WITNESS* was founded in 1992 by musician and activist Peter Gabriel and the Reebok Human Rights Foundation as a project of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (now Human Rights First).[250] When Gabriel was part of Amnesty International's Human Rights Now! Tour in 1988, he was struck by the stories he heard from survivors of human rights abuses and the lack of attention these stories received in the media. He had brought along one of the first camcorder models and realised the potential of video as a tool against abuse; he noted that perpetrators of abuses were often brought to justice when photographic or video evidence of abuses existed.[251] In 1992, *WITNESS* was born, not long

[248] Paul, C., *Digital art*, p. 204.
[249] RAWA www.rawa.org, (accessed 23 September 2002).
[250] WITNESS 'About Witness' http://www.witness.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=78 (accessed 26 March 2009).
[251] WITNESS 'About Witness' http://www.witness.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=78 (accessed 26 March 2009).

after video of Rodney King being assaulted by four Los Angeles police officers focused interest for concrete human rights change by way of using citizen journalism as a form of evidence and intervention. The website states:

> WITNESS partners fight for the rights of indigenous people, for an end to systemic gender violence and the use of children as soldiers, and for environmental protection where human communities are at stake.
>
> WITNESS trains partners to turn compelling testimony and images into powerful human stories and strategic advocacy campaigns that make a difference.[252]

The work of *WITNESS*, the *Indymedia* network (IMC) and a range of other online groups, are all testimony to the role of sousveillance and online networks in providing an alternative narrative that is both independent and DIY.

The actions of these groups defies the negative and despairing attitudes of the media that Paul Virilio refers to by asking the reader to remember:

> the 'media of hate in the ex-Yugoslavia of Slobodan Milosovic' or the '"Thousand Hills Radio" of the Great Lakes region of Africa calling Rwandans to inter-ethnic genocide?' Faced with such 'expressionist events', he answers, 'surely we can see what comes next, looming over us as it is: an *officially terrorist art* preaching suicide and self mutilation — thereby extending the current infatuation with scarring and piercing.'[253]

Virilio may be correct in assuming that the media is drawn to events that have political punch or shock value. What is called to mind in the context of the Australian media in this type of scenario are the desperate acts of self mutilation by asylum seekers in detention. Attempted suicides, stitching of lips and of eyes together and other acts of self-harm that have all been presented on the media and misinterpreted by journalists and politicians as some bizarre cultural practice.

Media theorist Kellner acknowledges the importance of the Internet in offering alternatives to corporate media. In his essay titled, *September 11, Spectacles of Terror, and Media Manipulation: A Critique of Jihadist and Bush Media Politics* Kellner asserts how corporate media can be used for

[252] WITNESS 'About Witness' http://www.witness.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=78 (accessed 26 March 2009).
[253] Paul Virilio, *Art and fear* 2003 pp. 23-24.

political gain and as a means to instil fear and anxiety in the population. He describes as follows the importance of the Internet in providing an alternative voice to the mainstream:

> In a world when ever fewer media corporations control the broadcasting and print media that the Internet provides the best source of alternative information, a wealth of opinion and debate, and a variety of sites that might possible political discussion and organization [sic].[254]

Kellner acknowledges that there is reactionary discourse and misinformation on the Internet, but there is potential to become well informed about news topics and issues. He also comments on the significance of the Internet in assisting the development of the anti-globalisation and anti war movements on a global scale.[255]

Sometimes the alternative voice actually appears on the surface to be conforming to the situation in which they are reacting to. Long term *WITNESS* partners *RAWA* is one such example, as they resisted the brutality of the Taliban from under the burqa, by documenting events to assisting women and children with medical help and education.

RAWA

The role of *RAWA* would not have received global attention in activist and humanitarian circles in the last ten years if they had not used the WWW and Internet as a means to spread information and media footage of the political situation in Afghanistan on the Internet. The fundamentalist rule of the Taliban outlawed access to all forms of media, including the Internet, radio and TV (with the exception of religious broadcasts) — making it very difficult for outsiders to find out what was going on as well as stifling public opposition to this oppressive regime. The women in this organisation have not only brought breeches of human rights in Afghanistan to global attention, they have done so at the risk of their personal freedom and safety. Other support *RAWA* provides to the community includes education and medical assistance for women who would otherwise be

[254] Kellner, D., 'September 11' p. 100.
[255] Kellner, D., 'September 11', p. 100.

denied these basic human rights.

As mentioned earlier, during the Taliban years, *RAWA* used the burqa to enable them to undertake their activist work and as a form of resistance. Gillian Whitlock comments that:

> Afghan women will choose to sustain the burqa as a powerful symbol of nationalist and feminist resistance, and many feminist activists will question the uses to which the figure of the burqa-clad woman is put in the West. Images of Afghanistan during the Taliban years are rare, and almost all of them—including the film footage of the shooting of Zarmeena in the Kabul soccer stadium in 1999, which has been shown many times in the West since September 11 in particular—were filmed with cameras hidden beneath burqas. These images were smuggled out of the country that way too. [256]

But the veil as a tool of resistance is only used out of necessity. On the website it states that:

> As far as we are concerned, we will NOT wear the veil as far as security and social discretion allow us, for we regard rejection of the veil as a symbolic form of resistance and defiance of the fundamentalists. To wear, or not to wear, the Islamic veil is a completely personal issue and no one has the right to interfere with this decision or impose the veil upon us.[257]

The majority of the video and photographic documentation of the public executions by the Taliban in the soccer stadium is copyrighted by *RAWA* and the organisation uses these images and other marketing merchandise to raise money for the medical and education programs they run for Afghan women and children.

Sarai

Sarai www.sarai.net is another example of an organisation in a developing region that has been able to voice its position in a global context via the WWW. Its projects in the poor regions of India have proven very successful in providing skill development and access to people who would otherwise not have access to digital media and the Internet. At the 2003 N5M4 International Tactical Media Festival in Amsterdam, *Sarai* presented a collaborative installation titled *Cybermohalla*, a work that explored urban identity. The word *mohalla* means city in Hindu and Urdu languages.[258] This work

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[256] Gillian Whitlock" The Skin of the Burqa: Recent Life Narratives from Afghanistan" *Biography,* Vol. 28, 2005 published on *Saifuddin: The Travelogues of a Traveler* http://wasalaam.wordpress.com/2007/01/29/the-skin-of-the-burqa-recent-life-narratives-from-afghanistan/ (accessed 9 March 2008).

[257] RAWA's standpoints http://www.rawa.org/points.html (accessed 9 March 2008).

[258] N5M4 *Cybermohalla* http://www.next5minutes.org/n5m/article.jsp?articleid=2761 (accessed 30 September 2003).

has a tactical focus and analyses local and global networks:

> In its broadest imagination, one can see Cybermohalla as a desire for a wide and horizontal network (both real and virtual) of voices, texts, sounds and images in dialogue and debate. 'Public'-ation modes are and will be as diverse as wall magazines, books, posters, stickers, web pages, audio streams, animation etc. The present technological juncture provides a possibility, the point is to actualise it.[259]

Cybermohalla is physically located in two media labs in Delhi, called Compughar, in the LNJP basti and Dakshinpuri Colony. These small media labs run on free software and low-cost media equipment.[260] Key members of the *Sarai* collective were represented at the ISEA2004 festival, giving a number of keynote speeches and workshops at the festival and conference. At the end of ISEA2004 proceedings *Sarai* was awarded with the annual UNESCO digital art prize for its contributions of creative and critical engagement with digital art. *Sarai* also regularly produce a hardcopy Reader and have published six so far to date.[261] For example, Sarai 05 reader, titled *Bare Acts*, focuses on a range of issues that relate to the title — acts of terrorism, border crossings, disruptions and other political themes. Culturally speaking, all of the *Sarai* Readers promote diversity in terms of the types of writing and content. For example, in the introduction of *Bare Acts* edition states that the editorial process intends to generate great variety of tone and style, primarily because of the broad range of contributors from "philosophers, software programmers, novelists, filmmakers, lawyers, historians, comic book writers, artists and students."[262] The editors also deliberately "sought to make different registers of writing, the academic, the literary, the journalistic, the autobiographical and the practice-based speak to each other."[263] This approach was a dedicated commitment to a democratic process of discourse production, to encourage a diversity of expression and discourse production. Such a commitment to a democratic approach to multiple voices and identities is a thread that runs through *Sarai*'s projects, as evidenced by *Cybermohalla*

[259] N5M4 *Cybermohalla*.
[260] N5M4 *Cybermohalla*.
[261] Sarai Reader 01: *The Public Domain;* Sarai Reader 02: *The Cities of Everyday Life*; Sarai Reader 03: *Shaping Technologies;* Sarai Reader 04: *Crisis/Media;* Sarai Reader 05: *Bare Acts*; Sarai Reader 05: *Turbulence.*
[262] Sarai Reader 05 *Bare acts*,The Sarai Programme, Delhi, India, 2005, p. viii.
[263] Sarai Reader 05 *Bare acts*, p. viii.

and the *Sarai* Readers. It reflects a conscious engagement with various discourses regarding identity and a non-hierarchical notion of writing, theory and practice. *Sarai* is certainly a network that has evolved with an active approach to using the Internet as a means to democratise space and identity.

Critical Art Ensemble (CAE)

The *CAE* is a collaboration of artists whose participants place a high value on experimentation and on engaging the unbreakable link between representation and political and social change.[264] *CAE* are an eclectic group based in the United States that started in 1986 who have made a significant impact on the use of tactical media and the crossover developments between technology, art and activism. They received major global attention in the online arts community when, in May 2004, one of the founding members, Steve Kurtz was arrested after his wife passed away in the middle of the night. When the paramedics arrived at their house, they noticed biological cultures growing in Petrie dishes. These bio-cultures were for an arts project that he was working on. Kurtz was arrested and since then there has been an ongoing battle with the US Government and the Supreme Court about this case. In response to the arrest of Kurtz, a defence fund has been set up on the WWW to assist in paying the legal costs and raise awareness of this case. Later in this chapter, issues related to the Kurtz case and civil liberties will be explored in more detail, as one of the members of *CAE* and one from the *CAE Defense Fund* were guests on the February –*empyre*- discussion that focused on sedition.

CAE have contributed significantly to the contemporary notion of tactical media in the digital age. They see the mix of people involved as:

[264] Quoted from the manuscript of *Critical Art Ensemble* 2001 http://www.critical-art.net/books/index.html (accessed 25 April 2003).

> Often not artists in any traditional sense...Nor are they simply political activists …For those of us who are involved in tactical media felt a kind of relief that we could be any kind of hybrid artist, scientist, technician, craftsperson, theorist, activist, and could all be mixed together in combinations that had different weights and intensities.[265]

This sense of hybridity also encourages the participants not to think of themselves as fixed identities, rather as being able to learn from each other and become proficient in other areas of expertise. This notion feeds into those arguments concerning notions of multiple identities. *CAE* see this feeling of communal identity as a liberating force, as they could all work under the communal banner of tactical media, not being tied to individual areas of expertise. The *CAE* manifesto also states that:

> Many felt liberated from having to represent themselves to the public as a specialist and therefore valued.[266]

This statement from the *CAE* certainly affirms the sentiment that a collaboration is much more than the sum of its parts.

A synopsis of the –*empyre*- 'sedition' discussion

Luis A. Fernandez and Laura Huey consider that surveillance and resistance act as a dynamic with one action feeding the other, regardless of whether the surveillance or sousveillance is the initial action, as both will yield developments on both strategy and technology. They comment that:

> In sum, we suggest that if surveillance and resistance are best understood as dynamic, then we must examine instances of resistance first, since they are likely going to be not only a response to surveillances practices but also present the new starting ground for the next set of surveillance mechanisms.[267]

This dynamic is reminiscent of Foucault's argument that "Power incorporates the resistance to power".[268] To have power, means that in response, there is a resistnce to that power and authority. Lovink and Ned Rossiter's essay in *Fibreculture 5*, titled 'Dawn of the Organised Networks',

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[265] Quoted from the manuscript of *Critical Art Ensemble.*
[266] Quoted from the manuscript of *Critical Art Ensemble.*
[267] Luis A. Fernandez and Laura Huey, "Ïs Resistance Futile? Thoughts on Resisting Surveillance" *Surveillance & Society* 6 (3): pp. 199-202 http://www.surveillance-and-society.org/ojs/index.php/journal/article/view/networks/networks (accessed 2 September 2009).
[268] Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*. Penguin: London, 1976, p. 95.

articulates many of the issues that are imbued in online community, particularly focusing on the ways in which they are organised and the forms in which they are activated. They state that:

> There are no networks outside of society. Like all human-techno entities, they are infected by power. Networks are ideal Foucault machines. They undermine power as they produce it...Foucault's dictum: power produces. Translate this over to organised networks and you get the force of invention.[269]

This statement works well as an overlaying concept for the discussion hosted on *-empyre-* discussion list in February 2006. This discussion focused on the potential impact that the sedition laws introduced under the Anti-Terrorism Act (No. 2) 2005[270] would have on artists and culture in terms of censorship and freedom of expression. The *-empyre-* list provides an opportunity for people from a range of backgrounds and positions to discuss topics of common interest, with equal authority. The discussions on *-empyre-* are moderated, but only to screen posts that breech netiquette — for example trolling and flaming other list members.

The moderators of the *-empyre-* list are responsible for organising topics and guests on a monthly basis. My role with this list is to represent the Asia Pacific region and I was tasked with finding a topic that had a focus on local issues for February 2006. It was evident by the recent content of other lists (*Fibreculture*, *Nettime*), that there was significant concern among the list members about the then proposed changes to the Anti-terrorist law. Although these were changes to Australian law, there were cases in the international arena that gave precedence to these concerns. The court case in the USA with Steve Kurtz was particularly relevant to the discussion as it raised concerns about censorship and limitations of artists to explore topics of political and cultural significance in their work. By inviting a member of the *CAE* and the *CAE Defense Fund*, it was hoped that the discussion would look at both the artistic and litigious aspects of this case.[271]

[269] Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter,'Dawn of the Organised Networks' http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue5/lovink_rossiter.html *Fibreculture Issue* 5 *Precarious Labour* 2005.
[270] Anti-Terrorism Act (No. 2) 2005 *Com Law* http://www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/Act1.nsf/all/search/9249AE71DF443FDFCA2570D80024D5A0 (accessed 20 November 2006).
[271] CAE Defense Fund http://www.caedefensefund.org/ (accessed 28 November 2006).

The *CAE Defense Fund* was set up in 2004, after Kurtz's arrest and the ensuing legal action. The website outlines a key reason why this case represents a serious concern for creative people in the community:

> This is a precedent-setting case with profound implications for freedom of speech, expression, and inquiry; for the privatization and disciplining of knowledge; for artists, scientists, researchers, and anyone involved in interdisciplinary work; and for anyone critical of government policy.[272]

In response to these widespread concerns in the online arts and activist community, I organised a discussion for the -*empyre*- list. I invited a range of guests who could offer informed opinions from the legal and arts sectors of the Internet community. Here is an excerpt of the call for discussion:

> This month on -*empyre*- , the discussion will focus on the legal term sedition, and its political impact on global media and culture…Our guests this month: Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) members Lucia Sommer and Claire Pentecost (US), Nicholas Ruiz (US), and Ben Saul (AU)…In December 2005, the Anti-Terrorism Bill was pushed through the Australian Parliament. This legislation has met with much concern from the cultural sector and human rights and freedom of speech advocates. On 27 October 2005, Chris Connolly…makes the comment that the best known use of sedition laws was during the period of McCarthyism in the USA in the 1950s…As artists and cultural producers are we losing our right to express ourselves and comment on the state of our society?[273]

As the moderator, I decided that the guests should have a range of experiences and backgrounds to give the discussion a well-rounded edge. For this reason, the following guests were invited. It must be noted that a number of significant Australian figures in the sedition debate did not accept to participate in the discussion.

Sedition has the potential to impact on net art, media art and tactical media in significant and profound ways. It has the capacity to make artist's work illegal, thus silencing their capacity to express a condition of society or an impact on humanity and rendering their work invisible. Virilio

[272] CAE Defense Fund *Why should this case concern me?* http://www.caedefensefund.org/faq.html (accessed 28 November 2006).
[273] Tracey Benson, 'Introduction to February discussion on -*empyre*-' https://mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2006-February/date.html (accessed 3 March 2006).

considers the question of whether there is a correlation between visibility and being heard as follows:

> *To speak* or *to remain silent*: are they to sonority what is *to show* or *to hide* are to visibility? What prosecution of meaning is thus hidden behind the prosecution of sound? Has remaining silent now become a discreet form of assent, of connivance, in the age of the sonarization of images and all audio-visual icons? Have vocal machines' powers of enunciation gone as far as the denunciation of silence that has turned into MUTISM?[274]

The sedition topic on -*empyre*- was intended to throw open discussion on the new laws in Australia and the shift towards increased censorship in the arts. However, was this successful?

In some ways, just the suggestion of this issue as a topic of conversation had the capacity of rendering people silent. It was interesting to note that there was not much posted that addressed the potential impact on alternative news productions like *Indymedia* and blogs that had an overt political focus. As Virilio questions above, such a silence could be interpreted as a form of assent from individuals who otherwise have the capacity to speak.

Other individuals consistently display a sense of courage, because of their apparent lack of fear and/ or refusal to be silenced. Deborah Kelly from *we are all boat people* is an active member of the -*empyre*- community and has a reputation for not shying away from difficult subjects. The sedition discussion was no exception. Kelly's involvement with *BORDERPANIC*, *We are all boat people* and *Austr**aliens*** (PICA 2003) have certainly located her practice within the tactical media framework and her statements could put her in a potentially risky situation in regard to the sedition clause. Some of the culture jamming work of *We are all boat people* has been considered illegal, especially the large scale video projections on Sydney Opera House. In a conversation with Bec Dean, Kelly commented that:

[274] Virilio, P., *Art and Fear*, p. 69.

> Our message is a simple one, and we think it says something all Australians know and understand. The only difference between 'us' and 'them' is circumstance. Our government has shown no compassion, and certain elements within the mainstream media have deliberately perpetuated the myths about refugees…In response, we have decided to spread our own message of unity and compassion...the strategy of the SWARM. A thousand small actions, lots of individuals doing something, anything. The message gets out, but more importantly, it gets into the minds of ordinary Australians.[275]

The article goes on to document a number of actions planned by *We are all boat people* that were thwarted by authorities:

> Their most recent actions have proved challenging and potentially litigious. On the eve of the Budget announcement, Kelly drove to Canberra to project the tall-ships image onto Parliament House, a site where protest is illegal. As Peter Costello announced an increased allocation of federal money to 'Border Protection', Kelly and her Canberra Boat People network were surrounded on the lawn by Commonwealth Police. Previously, on Good Friday this year, the group chartered a boat in Circular Quay as a roving, floating projection booth following the swift shut-down by security guards of several land-based attempts to project on the Sydney Opera House. Before the group had even embarked, the boat was boarded by Commonwealth Police who threatened to revoke the captain's commercial charter license if any projections were made on prominent sites.[276]

Leading up to the passing of the anti-terrorist legislation in Australia, there was active discussion in the arts community about how the outcomes could affect and stifle creative expression. The *Human Rights Defender* made a special paper available that focused on the changes in legislation.[277] Debate ran hot in the months leading up to the introduction of the legislation; and opposition from the arts and journalism communities was strong. As the draft of the legislation was not readily available in the public domain, the ACT Chief Minister, John Stanhope, saw fit to publish the document on his website, thus receiving strong criticism from the federal government and praised for his courage by the groups in the community who believed they would be adversely affected. Similarly, the Victorian Peace Network website has links to articles and legal opinions and findings about the laws.[278]

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[275] Bec Dean "The artist and the refugee: tooling up for action" http://www.realtimearts.net/article/49/6760 *Real Time Arts* #49, June-July 2002 (accessed 3 February 2009).

[276] Bec Dean The artist and the refugee: tooling up for action http://www.realtimearts.net/article/49/6760 *Real Time Arts* #49, June-July 2002 (accessed 3 February 2009).

[277] Ronni Redman, and Alan Morris, (Eds.) *Human Rights Defender* http://www.ahrcentre.org/documents/Human_Rights_Defender-The_Anti-Terrorism_Bill_(No2)_2005_(TEXT_ONLY).pdf (viewed 20 November 2006).

[278] Victorian Peace Network http://www.vicpeace.org/sedition/resources.html (accessed 25/08/2006).

Although the discussion of sedition was hosted in February 2006, it continues to have currency as arts; media and cultural communities are still unsure how they may be affected. For example, a recent post published on Facebook detailed a list that was apparently maintained by the Australian Communications Media Authority ACMA about censored websites.[279]

The pitfalls of the net activist agenda

How are media artists engaging with politically sensitive material and vulnerable people, for instance, detained asylum seekers? It was reported through word of mouth and documented on *Indymedia* that during Easter 2002 some media students filmed escaped detainees at Woomera without permission, and the *Hope Caravan's* documentary titled "The worst of Woomera" was accused of doing the same. Ethically, this practice is abhorrent to many media artists aware of the intrusive nature of their medium. This is when activism and the role of media artist can become significantly blurred as the inherent dangers of producing such media potentially put lives at risk. The tensions between the 'meat' world and the space of the virtual have potential repercussions that have an impact across both spatial spectrums of community. For example, without a doubt the work of activists involved in *RAWA* is indeed dangerous — they risk execution and torture if found out. This has not changed since the Taliban has been overthrown by the coalition invasion — as the people in power now are linked to the Northern Alliance, a group that also has a history of violence and oppression, particularly towards women.

What makes tactical media and sousveillance different in terms of representation and process, to the role of journalism? We could state that it is the ground, or the position of the 'author' — artist, journalist, activist or produser. I would argue that ethical representation is the key responsibility of those with access to WWW based media. As I have so far demonstrated, access to the Internet and

[279] Australian government secret ACMA internet censorship blacklist, 6 Aug 2008 http://wikileaks.org/wiki/Australian_government_secret_ACMA_internet_censorship_blacklist%2C_6_Aug_2008 (accessed 31 March 2009).

having the capacity to utilise free software and code is a way of short-circuiting the position of passive receiver and transferring the identity of a receiver into a produser. Moreover, the contribution of *RAWA*, *Sarai*, *WITNESS*, *CAE* and -*empyre*- have proved the capacity of people to be active and contribute to the development of a discussion and the shaping of a movement, be it creative or politically minded. Not only is it crucial for disempowered groups to have access to present an alternative to the dominant narrative; it is equally important for those with access to DIY media who seek to assist those without access to do so with an ethical and responsible attitude — for the sake of not only human safety but also to recover and retain human dignity. In the following chapter, the focus will be on the network and its capacity to distribute and promote information.

Chapter 5: Distributed Networks

I have explored net-art and net-activist aesthetics by addressing the relationship between 'real' and 'virtual' space, the formation of online identity and community and how the use of surveillance in tactical media has been used by activists so far in this thesis. In this chapter, I consider how the aesthetics of net-art and net-activism impact on everyday society in the physical world. This will be undertaken by demonstrating how information is distributed to activist and creative networks via a range of online tools and structures that facilitate the sharing of information and the conceptualisation of digital aesthetics. These networks are distributed, having a range of aesthetic contexts and structures that impact of the social interplay between people, activities and ideas. In addition, I will build on my argument about the significance of the alternative online media channels on arts and culture. A range of websites offer alternative news and current affairs reporting and these websites have value added not only for creating awareness in relation to social issues but also in regard to the emergence of web applications using open source and freeware development. This critical mass that represents the open source community has also impacted on the mainstream culture and arts, particularly in the area of 3d games and animation.

A number of relevant websites will be analysed for their contribution and significance in the ongoing development of the WWW in terms of building social networks, citizen publishing and alternative media. For example, the *Indymedia* Independent Media Center (IMC) network and *Znet* websites will be addressed as early catalysts responsible for facilitating online activism and secondly for the open source coding which has enhanced the sharing of the technology driving these websites. Other associated listservs used to disseminate content published on *Znet* and *Indymedia* will also be addressed, most significantly the *Nettime*.[280] These websites have contributed greatly to

[280] An archive of Nettime posts can be found on www.nettime.org.

the development of knowledge and awareness of issues-related humanitarian aid and social justice around the globe since the inception of the WWW. These examples will be identified with the aim of demonstrating how activists have used distributed networks to participate and assist in the dissemination of media and supplying other journalistic content to the sites. The difference between local and global nodes will be analysed as part of the overall structure of a range of distributed networks, to outline the horizontal structure of this global network of websites.

In addition, I will address the role of email news lists (listservs) as having the capacity to disseminate information broadly, as well as contributing to the development of audiences for alternative media sites on the Internet. This has been an effective tool for activists and artists. An analysis of listservs provides a backdrop to the role of alternative media sites and their capacity to invigorate a response at street level, resulting in acts of public protest and civil disobedience. It will be argued that the volume of DIY independent media reporting on these listservs was a major contributor to *Znet* and *Indymedia*. The success of these websites is directly related to the networks that are established, as the website does not operate in isolation; rather the community depends on the exchange and cross-fertilisation of issues and ideas from a range of sources. The specific listserv communities that will be analysed is *Nettime*, *-empyre-* and *Fibreculture.* Once this ground work has been discussed, I will address how the distributed networks forged by these listservs and websites have influenced a range of Web 2.0 communities including *MySpace*, *Facebook*, *Bebo, Twitter*, *Delicious*, *Identi.ca* and *YouTube.* Before these examples of distributed networks are presented, I will provide a definition of distributed networks, with a specific focus on the aesthetics that are inherent in this model for communication.

Distributed Networks: a process of d/evolving

Throughout this thesis, I have explored some key factors that determine the aesthetics of the

network and how the success of this horizontal and nodal structure relies on the content and information being distributed. This structure is much like the popular example of the rhizome, which was a philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1972-1980) project.[281] They state that:

> Principle of multiplicity: it is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, ”multiplicity,” that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world. Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or ”return” in the subject. A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows).[282]

And that:

> There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity... A language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence.[283]

Deleuze and Guattari's idea that a multiplicity is neither subject or object but in effect is continually changing as it grows, makes it an entity reliant on its own activity to exist. This eternal growth and evolution is very much part of conceptualising the distributed network. Edwina Bartlem (2005) addresses the seemingly incongruous relationship between 'immersive aesthetics' and 'distributed aesthetics' and considers these as two sides of the same discussion. She states:

> On the surface, discourses of immersive aesthetics and distributed aesthetics may appear incongruous. The terms evoke different media, creative processes and modes of audience engagement. On one side stands the ideal of immersive aesthetics in Virtual Reality (VR) art and screen-based installation. On the other side, shimmers the fluid ideal of distributed and dispersed aesthetics that circulate around discourses of net.art. Distributed aesthetics implies creative modes of operating in, and experiencing, the spatial and temporal flows of information networks.[284]

Distributed aesthetics then, not only imply the creative experience of engaging in the temporal traffic of the online environment, it also defines an alternative means of communicating and collaborating. Moreover, the effect of the temporal and spatial loops and folds enable the

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[281] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 'A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia', Trans. Brian Massumi. London and New York: *Continuum*, 2004. Also see Vol. 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 2 vols.1972-1980.

[282] Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F., *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 8.

[283] Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F., *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 8.

[284] Edwina Bartlem, http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue7/issue7_bartlem.html 'Reshaping Spectatorship: Immersive and Distributed Aesthetics' *Fibreculture*, Issue 7, 2005.

information and experience to be continually redefined and relocated into an infinite array of creative outputs, that are only limited by the user's engagement. A devolved model relies on the ability of the authors (produsers) to contribute and distribute content and it is the flow and process that effects the form of the distributed aesthetic. This shift in power relations for authors and artists who now have the capacity to engage an audience and to publish their work has forever changed and blurred the boundaries between the message, the production and distribution.

Alternative media reporting/ Arts Activism

The connection between arts, tactical media and activism is not new, but it has blossomed in the online environment of distributed networks. Christiane Paul (2003) references the history of media arts activism as follows:

> Activism in art is not a new phenomenon and has a long history. When Sony portapacks, the first portable video cameras, became available in the late 1960s, artists and activists used this portable recording power for establishing alternative media networks, addressing issues of documentation and representation in the context of control of media distribution.[285]

Seattle'99 was the first of a series of demonstrations that made maximum use of the Internet as a means of disseminating information about issues related to economic globalisation, the role of the World Trade Organisation and the Multilateral Trade Agreement. This event was the international launching pad for the first *Indymedia IMC* (Independent Media Centre) and many lists including *Nettime*, *Recode* and *Postcolonial* traced the events. Arguably, it was the also the first open source, citizen publishing endeavour to achieve global recognition, waving the way for later developments of online social networking tools.

This was not the first example of how the Internet has been utilised to raise public awareness around an issue or political action. For instance, Graham Meikle (2002) in refers to another earlier example of raising social awareness on the Internet in the 'McLibel' case where McDonalds took an

[285] Paul, C., *Digital art*, p. 204.

English activist couple to court for handing out pamphlets criticising the fast food giant. A summary of the case and its impacts on the net community is outlined in this long quote from *Future Active*:

> 'The leaflet brought all these arguments that different people were making against McDonald's and put [them] all in one place,' explains Jessy, one of the founders of McSpotlight, who prefers not to reveal her surname. 'The environmental movement, animal rights activists, trade unions, nutritionists, advertising standards campaigners: all these people were amassing evidence against McDonald's. All the leaflet did was tie them all together and ask: "do you still want to support this company?"' Faced with the Byzantine complexities of the UK's libel laws, and potentially ruinous costs, three of the group apologised and backed out; Steel and Morris, however, angered by what they saw as corporate censorship, chose to fight the suit. What followed was a surreal expedition through the legal system and corporate power, taking 314 days of court time, encompassing a counter-suit in which the defendants turned the tables on McDonald's for distributing 300,000 leaflets of their own (which labelled Steel and Morris liars), and spawning a film and a book, as well as the McSpotlight site.[286]

Details about this case were being passed around in 1996 on the Internet and later a documentary created in two stages was screened on SBS in 2000 as *McLibel: Two Worlds Collide* and the conclusion *McLibel* in 2005.[287] I first saw the contentious pamphlet in 1997, when it was still being distributed on the streets in Brisbane by a number of autonomous activists. This leaflet documented the ongoing battle that the Greenpeace activist couple (Helen Steel and Dave Morris) were having with McDonalds in the UK courts. The website www.mcspotlight.org continues to inform readers about this landmark case and its authors say that this case motivated the creation of the website. This statement on the 'help page' sums up what the website is about:

> The biggest, loudest, most red, most read Anti-McDonald's extravaganza the world has ever seen. Anything you could possibly want to know about McDonald's or McLibel nestles somewhere in our 21,000 files. Don't get us wrong, though, we're not telling you to give up your Big Macs. We just provide the info for you to judge for yourself.[288]

Since the 1999 protests in Seattle, a range of anti-globalisation and political activists' networks have proved very effective in rallying support and developing mass protests. In Australia, the actions at Woomera and Baxter Detention Centres are an excellent example of how this type of organising and

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[286] McSpotlight 'extract from Chapter 3 on McSpotlight' http://www.mcspotlight.org/media/books/meikle.html (accessed 20 November 2006).
[287] SBS http://www.sbs.com.au/whatson/index.php3?progdate=21:06:2005 (accessed 23 September 2006).
[288] McSpotlight http://www.mcspotlight.org/help.html (accessed 23 September 2006).

action has developed from online communications. Whilst the television media in Australia gave these events little attention, solidarity protests and reports were relayed around the globe via sites like *Indymedia*, the *LA Times* and the *UK Guardian*. The specific example of Australian refugee activism will be discussed in length in the following chapter.

Backing into the future?

Meikle refers to the online modus operandi as a replication of the past tactics of political activists. He refers to this process 'backing into the future'. An example of this type of activism is mass posting of press releases and flyers' advertising protests and issues by email. In many ways, this is the same sort of process as postering and handing out leaflets, except it reaches a much larger audience and with much greater speed. Many artist/activist collectives make files freely available for download on their websites to be made into posters, badges and banners for example *De Geuzen* and *we are ALL boat people* have both used these analogue forms of activist media distribution to positive effect. In terms of tracing a chronology of activist propaganda material, historically we can go back as far as Goya's graphic images of war that were distributed as a sort of early, gory 'comic' — mass prints that were cheap to produce and easily carried and concealed. Meikle comments as follows:

> The whole repertoire of tactics developed throughout the twentieth century, from the Suffragettes to Civil Rights, from Greenpeace to ACT UP, from Ghandi to Greenham Common, have all found their digital analogues, as social activism moves into cyberspace. Letter writing, phone and fax trees, petitions. Newsletters, newspapers, samizdat publishing, pirate radio, guerilla TV. Ribbons and badges, posters, stickers, graffiti. Demonstrations, boycotts, sit-ins,strikes, blockades.[289]

Meikle does acknowledge a shift in the activist process with the onset of *Indymedia*, as this particular network of sites enables anyone to contribute information to the server, a two way process, rather than the metaphoric loud hailer or fractured and edited news media report on television that only operates from sender to receiver.

[289] Meikle, G., *Future Active*, p. 25.

Another network that has been active in freeware and share ware tools and a grassroots ideology is *dyne.org*. The ideology of the *dyne* network synchs in well with the motif of the Möbius strip as it represents the digital aesthetic and the connectedness between identity, technology and community. On the website it states that:

> The fundamentals of this network are identities, defining themselves with and through their activity: dyne.org is not represented neither subsumes them. Each identity emerges by the code that has published... Theory and practice can't be separated in our network of autonomous peers: while the participation is open, development tools and documentation are shared so that anyone can train independently to interact with others.[290]

This network has been active since the mid nineties and has been a significant contributor to the development of practical and theoretical outcomes in the field of net-art and net-activism. Interestingly, the first *dyne* website, published in 2000 had an image of a Möbius strip and Gertrude Stein's quote "a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" - clearly indicating the interconnectedness of community, activity, technology and art.

Indymedia

The online presence of *Indymedia* has been highly significant for presenting an alternative media representation of many issues. The Independent Media Center (IMC) network is a means for independent media contributors to submit vital material that opposes the edited and censored corporate media depiction of civil actions and political issues. As mentioned earlier, Seattle '99 was a launching pad for *Indymedia*.

The first *Indymedia* site was launched to coincide with the World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle, November 30—December 2 1999. The protests, now known as the 'battle for Seattle' were triggered by the proposal of implementing multilateral free trade agreements. The initial website was primarily set up for the purpose of offering alternative media portrayals of the protests and for publicising the issues arising from the free trade agreements. The following long

[290] dyne.org free software foundry http://dyne.org/dyne_foundation.html (accessed 1 November 2008).

quote from the *Indymedia* website demonstrates the impact the website had on the broader corporate media networks and media activists around the world. It also outlines the history of *Indymedia* and is available on the 'about' page of the website:

> The Independent Media Center (www.indymedia.org), was established by various independent and alternative media organisations and activists in 1999 for the purpose of providing grassroots coverage of the World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle. The center acted as a clearinghouse of information for journalists, and provided up-to-the-minute reports, photos, audio and video footage through its website. Using the collected footage, the Seattle Independent Media Center (seattle.indymedia.org) produced a series of five documentaries, up linked every day to satellite and distributed throughout the United States to public access stations.
>
> The center also produced its own newspaper, distributed throughout Seattle and to other cities via the Internet, as well as hundreds of audio segments, transmitted through the web and Studio X, a 24-hour micro and Internet radio station based in Seattle. The site, which uses a democratic open-publishing system, logged more than 2 million hits, and was featured on America Online, yahoo, CNN, BBC Online, and numerous other sites. Through a decentralized and autonomous network, hundreds of media activists set up independent media centers in London, Canada, Mexico City, Prague, Belgium, France and Italy over the next year. IMCs have since been established on every continent, with more to come."[291]

The difference between the *Indymedia* network and corporate media is that there is no financial owner. It operates as a distributed network that is structured around a horizontal rather than a hierarchical model. Meikle comments that "to tell the Indymedia story as one in the alternative media tradition would be to focus on the extent in which the movement fosters horizontal connections and open participation in contrast to the vertical flows of the established broadcast and print media."[292]

There are five *Indymedia* sites in Australia — Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, all of which are contained within the Oceania hub.[293] Whilst they are all very different in terms of visual and stylistic approach and local content, they present overarching story lines that cut across all websites. What links the IMC collectives together is a set of guiding principles known as the

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[291] Indymedia global node www.indymedia.org.about (accessed 11 December 2002).

[292] Meikle, G., 'Indymedia and the New Net News', *M/C Journal* 6.2 (2003) http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0304/02-feature.php (accessed 27 November 2004).

[293] See Appendix 9 for the list of Indymedia nodes live as of 2002.

Principles of unity. One of the principles of unity states that IMCs 'shall be committed to the use of free and open source code, whenever possible, in order to develop the digital infrastructure, and to increase the independence of the network by not relying on proprietary software."[294]

Technology of *Indymedia*: open source software — the technology of net-activism

Open source technology provides the coding framework of *Indymedia*. This is useful for a number of reasons — firstly, open source code is free and predominately 'copyleft'[295] meaning that it may be distributed where ever and to whom ever, as long it is a not for profit venture. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the structure of *Indymedia* is nodal rather than hierarchical, with each site being funded and facilitated at a local level, as it is important that the functional framework is not cost prohibitive. Thirdly, seeing that *Indymedia* promotes an approach that encourages the sharing rather than owning of information it would be a huge ethical mistake to utilise a corporate structure to create and maintain the websites.[296] In juxtaposition, social networking and media sharing websites like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *MySpace* are worth millions, because of the strategic an targeted use of advertising. In a recent article, Steven Hobson defined the difference between Social Media and social media and argues that whilst one, 'Social Media', offers power and openness to communities and individuals; the other, 'social media' is the realm of marketers and gurus attempting to convince the user that by buying the right tools they then have access to this great cultural change. He comments that:

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[294] Indymedia *Principles of unity* https://indymedia.org.au/principlesofunity (accessed 3 March 2004).

[295] Copyleft is a general method for making a program or other work free, and requiring all modified and extended versions of the program to be free as well. http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/ (accessed 02 May 2007).

[296] Open source coding allows for a large degree of accessibility, including metadata and alt text descriptions for images. It is noted that not all of the sites actually implement alt text and metadata information.

> Social Media — that's with a capital 'S' and a capital 'M' — is a belief that through the use of technology and real openness we could see incredible changes in our society. Social Media allows us to create powerful individual voices that can't be dismissed the same way that they use to be in the past; and it is with those voices that change will come about...Social Media is the glue; or conversation pathways, that brings together all these communities and gives them a larger platform to speak from. This is the power of Social Media in its purest form and it does have the power to facilitate great social change...Then we have social media — that's with a small 's' and a small 'm' — which is the realm of marketers, self-named gurus and self-important mavens who would have you believe that by using the right tools you can be a part of this great change they are trying to sell you.[297]

The open source technology behind *Indymedia* was created in Australia by a group of self-professed IMC geeks known as the 'cat@lyst collective.' They created an open publishing format known as *active software*. Their site www.cat.org.au discusses the software and its applications as well as promoting other sites that utilise the open source code called 'active'. The acronym c.a.t. stands for 'community activist technology' and the slogan on the front door of the cat@lyst site states that c.a.t is "Low tech grass roots net access for real people. Pedestrians, public transport and pushbikes on the information super hypeway."[298] The first website that was created using *active* publicised the July 18 anti-globalisation protests in Sydney and S11 in Melbourne in 1999.[299] Bruns attributes Sydney based web developer Matthew Arnison as largely responsible for providing the technology base for what was to become *Indymedia*.[300] Back in 1998, Arnison was a member of cat@lyst and had traveled to the US in 1999, where he met with some of the activists organizing the protests in Seattle.[301]

This open source code is also responsible for www.active.org.au series of sites based in a range of Australian centres, including Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Wollongong. This was the original software used by *Indymedia*, but more recently, other open

[297] Steven Hodson, 'Social Media vs. social media — there is a difference' *WinExtra* http://www.winextra.com/index.php/2009/03/21/social-media-vs-social-media-there-is-a-difference/ (accessed 14 April 2009).
[298] Cat@lyst | Community Access technology www.cat.org.au (accessed 11 December 2002).
[299] Although there are many references to this web site via other media and activist sites, the actual web site has now been decommissioned http://www.j18.org/ (accessed 11 December 2002).
[300] Bruns, A., *Gatewatching*, p. 14.
[301] Rebecca Martin, 'Protesting in the 21st century' *Catapult* http://www.abc.net.au/catapult/stories/s1259653.htm (accessed 19 September 2006).

source programs have been adopted by individual IMC sites.

In essence, the formation of any arm or node of *Indymedia* depends on the local community. Anyone can instigate this process and now there are plans for the formation of a Canberra *Indymedia*. What is required in the first instance is community support in the form of letters and emails to the global site. From this point, a core team of people needs to work as the organising committee, with two of these people having defined roles — one as a tech support person and the other as the co-ordinator/administrator. Once this has been established, the group then submits this information to the global *Indymedia* site for approval. This process has only been implemented in the since late 2002 because of the burgeoning demand for communities to set up *Indymedia* websites.[302]

Indymedia in Australia

The first *Indymedia* site was created in the lead up to the S11 protests in Melbourne in 2000. Melbourne IMC (Independent media centre) states on their site that:

> Melbourne *Indymedia* is a collective of independent media groups and producers, offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage of struggles, actions and celebrations. Everyone is a witness, everyone is a journalist.[303]

It is not possible to read from the site who the individuals were that were responsible for setting up the Melbourne *Indymedia* site. As the process of setting up an IMC involves community support, it most likely evolved from the input of a plethora of groups and individuals. It also needs to be stated that in many instances activists shield their personal identity as their involvement in certain campaigns could have outcomes that are litigious or threatening to personal safety in extreme cases. With the implementation of the 2005 Anti-Terrorist legislation and the sedition clauses as discussed in the previous chapter, activists have be more careful to not be vulnerable to prosecution. For the

[302] Indymedia debate, n5m4, Amsterdam September 2003.

[303] Melbourne Indymedia www.melbourne.indymedia.org (accessed 24 March 2004) It needs to be stated that in March 2008, the Melbourne Indymedia collective was disbanded after 7 ½ years and the archives posted to the 'Wayback Machine' http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://melbourne.indymedia.org (accessed 12 April 2009).

activists that are immersed in work that evokes strong reactions from either side of the political spectrum, anonymity is often the only means of traversing such contentious terrain.

Whilst the open source code 'active' was the initial software package widely implemented by the Independent Media Centers (IMC) collective of sites, each site varies in its use of colour and image. The overarching site structure is similar from site to site in terms of the use of tables, layout of the core information and provision of the means to self publish. However, there are slight changes in the featuring of content — each site varies slightly in the hierarchy of material. Some prefer to feature links to other IMCs as a priority, whilst others focus on search capabilities or submissions to Newswire. It is interesting that some aesthetics can impede the political impact of the website, so it is to the benefit of *Indymedia* that there is a consistent interface design, to enable users to feel comfortable.

Time changes everything

On December 8 2002, an article was posted to *Nettime* titled 'The sad decline of Indymedia' by Reverend Chuck0.[304] This posting outlined many contingent issues surrounding the content and level of participation on *Indymedia* sites with particular focus on the global site. One of the first issues explored was the 'vague politics' of the IMCs. Chuck0 argues that:

[304] Chuck "Chuck0" Munson - Webmaster and coordinator for the entire Infoshop website. Founded this project in January 1995. Writes original content and serves as newswire moderator. Chuck is one of the Internet pioneers when it comes to providing political content online. In 1992, he co-founded Spunk Press, an online digital library which pre-dated the advent of the world wide web. In 1992 he also helped create one of the first e-zines, Practical Anarchy Online. In January 1995 he founded the Mid-Atlantic Infoshop, which later became Infoshop.org. Chuck has been an activist since the mid 1980s, when he worked on the South Africa divestment movement and the Central America solidarity movement. Chuck has a long history in publishing, both alternative and mainstream. He started Practical Anarchy zine in 1991. He was a co-editor of Alternative Press Review. And he was a webmaster and computer guy for AAAS and Science magazine. He currently serves as the chair of the Alternatives in Publication Task Force (SRRT) in the American Library Association. From http://www.infoshop.org/inews/staticpages/index.php?page=20050108104545132 (accessed 13 October 2003).

> This vagueness of politics has allowed an international network of right wingers and racists to abuse and disrupt the IMC websites, which has harmed the IMC's functionality and reputation in ways that may not be fixable without stepping on a lot of toes.'[305]

Incidentally, Chuck0 is also a key person on the *Infoshop* site, a website that was instrumental as a precursor to the IMC network.

Perhaps Chuck0's comment does have credence, as it is interesting to note that a search for *Indymedia* on the *Nettime* website shows how much the IMC was discussed and used as a means of disseminating information. There were virtually no posts submitted in the period from September 2002 to August 2003. The archive revealed that the peak time for *Nettime* to be publishing and discussing *Indymedia* content was between January 2001 and September 2002. This would seem to indicate some truth in Rev. Chuck0's argument that left wing activists are turning off *Indymedia* as they are fed up with being confronted with the troll[306] content. At the *Indymedia* workshop at N5M4, in Amsterdam in September 2003, a spokesperson from Finland discussed why the Finnish IMC was closed. One of the primary reasons was the lack of volunteers available to monitor and respond to troll intervention. This is an inherent problem with all sorts of voluntary community groups, that there are never enough resources to manage the workload. Also, the horizontal structure of *Indymedia* does not facilitate a clear notion of the politics, rather its role is as a channel for communications. It stands to reason that some individuals may feel betrayed when the direction of the sites shifts away from their political perspective. In more recent tims there have been claims of *Indymedia* shutting down debate and discussion, by censoring posts that are not left-wing enough.[307]

The structure of the global site has changed because of this problematic usage of the site. Now the newswire (the self-publishing feature) has been taken off the front-page, making it a two-click

[305] Infoshop http://www.infoshop.org/inews/stories.php?story=02/12/08/2553147 (accessed 13 October 2003)
[306] See definition, Chapter 1, p.94.
[307] Personal conversation with S11 activist 26/04/2007.

operation to reach this part of the site. This may seem trivial, but the more clicks it takes to access any information on the web the less likely it will be used by contributors. This rule of usability stands for any type of interactivity from purchasing books, doing banking to self-publishing and is a general standard of screen usability protocols.[308]

Some organisers of *Indymedia* see these changes as threatening the very core philosophy of the IMC network. In September 2003, the role of *Indymedia* was debated at N5M4, an international event for media activists held in Amsterdam around every two years. One of the key issues at the N5M4 debate was readdressing the hierarchical structure (or lack of it) in the *Indymedia* network. Structural management has become an increasing issue with the IMC network, as there is often repetition of content on different sites. In addition, there is a great difficulty archiving the content on the network comprehensively — making researching of the topics a challenging task for users. Due to the anarchist politics that have influenced the development of *Indymedia*, the notion of a structure that is hierarchical is viewed with disdain. However, there have been a number of possible solutions put forward; one is that some parts of *Indymedia* are to be focused on themes — for instance climate, migration and environment. The second is that the global site houses the archives for the entire network — a simple solution but a daunting task considering the fact that *Indymedia* is run by volunteers.[309] As mentioned earlier, the *Indymedia* community is not easily defined as having a particular political agenda, rather the community is made up of readers, produsers, volunteers and critics.

Znet/Zmag

Znet has also been a mainstay for online activists and those interested in reading and producing alternative media content for almost a decade. Launched in 1995, it is more in the structure of a

[308] Discussion with web managers from DIMA, DEH and DEST at *Neilson and Norman's* 'Usability week' Sydney, July 16-18 2006, See Jakob Nielsen, Steve Krug and Jerry McGovern.

[309] Indymedia workshop, N5M4, Amsterdam September 2003.

traditional site — divided into sections such as news, email, and interactive.

On the interactive part of the website users can contribute content that is visually and functionally formulated like a newsgroup. Readers can follow subject 'threads' in a similar way to the *Nettime* archive. The threads link posts that reference each other in some way, directly or indirectly by way of either content or chronology. The purpose of the *Znet* interactive section is described as follows:

> Use this overarching Znet InterActive facility to post or view (user posted) reports, analyses, photos, and links to our highly searchable, user-friendly display areas. Topical sub sites are created as needed for national demonstrations, etc.[310]

Znet creative is a section of the Zmag website that:

> is a facility for *Znet* users to enter poetry, short fiction, and lyrics. Enter offerings that others will appreciate, or search by topic, author, or keyword for materials that have been placed by other users.[311]

What is interesting about this section of the *Znet* site is that creative contributions are considered as significant to the content of the site — a method that draws artists and activists closer together. The emphasis on contributors posting creative works makes *Znet* different from *Indymedia* in terms of it being a produser website. Works may be political or about current affairs, but they do necessarily have to focus on these issues to be submitted on the website.

Newsgroups

Before the emergence of *Indymedia,* online activists employed a number of means to create community awareness. Mass emails and posting to newsgroups (or listservs) were very effective in creating awareness of issues. Meikle addresses in detail the role of online social relations concerning civil actions and the promotion of particular issues by community groups. For instance, the Zapatistas[312] are a significant cultural group and arguably the first to have utilised the Internet as a means of promoting cogent issues. Meikle states that:

[310] Znet: The spirit of Resistance Lives http://www.zmag.org/interznet.htm (accessed 10 November 2003).
[311] Znet: The spirit of Resistance Lives http://www.zmag.org/interznet.htm (accessed 10 November 2003).
[312] The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) stands against the 70 year, one-party rule of the PRI (the ruling party of Mexico). They especially take issue against the oppression that this reign has wrought on the people of Mexico.(http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/comment/why.html)

> The Net enabled the Zapatistas to spread their bulletins, communiqués and alerts without the necessary endorsement of mainstream media; more importantly, it enabled them to build networks of support and pressure from NGOs and activists around the world.[313]

The process undertaken by the Zapatistas was very effective and provided a model that other activist groups and organised civil actions have followed as a means of disseminating information, sharing media (e.g. photographs and video footage) and presenting a platform for the issues at hand. For instance, the previously mentioned actions at Woomera and Baxter detention centres in Australia over the last few years have been a subsequent example of the capacity to distribute information and media to an audience seeking an alternative to corporate TV and print media perspectives.

However, like the physical impact and litigious consequences that the Woomera and Baxter actions had on detainees and supporters, there were tragic outcomes for members of the Zapatista communities, as despite their successes in creating an online media event and dictating its terms, the Zapatistas continued to struggle against very non-virtual forces. On 22 December 1997, more than 40 members of a Zapatista community were shot dead at Acteal by state-supported paramilitaries.[314]

Newsgroups and listservs still play in important role in ensuring vital information is widely distributed. Earlier in the chapter, the role of *Nettime* was mentioned in terms of its capacity to disseminate information about a range of issues. Theorist and critic Geert Lovink was one of the original developers of *Nettime* and he continues to be involved in similar projects. For example, he has been involved in the Australian cultural list *Fibreculture*, a listserv that has many artists, media

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The Zapatista uprising occurred when four towns were seized on 1 January 1994. The EZLN had been in existence in some form since 1983 but it is only after 1994 that a clear history of the EZLN and events in Chiapas can be constructed. http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico.html
The enormous response to the 1996 Zapatista call for a series of continental and intercontinental Encounters led to an historic gathering in Chiapas at the end of July 1996 where over 3,000 grassroots activists and intellectuals from 42 countries on 5 continents came together to discuss the struggle against neo-liberalism on a global scale. http://www.eco.utexas.edu/~hmcleave/zapsincyber.html (accessed 16 November 2006).

[313] Meikle, G., *Future Active*, pp. 145-146.

[314] Meikle, G., *Future Active*, pp. 145-146.

makers and activists listed as subscribers.

Obviously, the role of websites like *Indymedia* were important in publishing alternative interpretations of news and current affairs and they were successful because of the way in which people act and participate with the information published on these sites. This is 'Social Media' at work. For instance, when readers encounter a story they deem important on such a website, they may decide to alert other readers by referring to the article or site by mailing the lists with which they are affiliated. In addition, many people have developed their personal lists over time — these might include family, friends and work-mates outside of the activist community in which they are involved with as an activist. This transference of information across the users networks is central to the concept of distributed aesthetics. This is even more pronounced with the onset of Web2.0 technologies. Users can synch tools together to share media across the communities, for example, when I update my status in *Identi.ca* it automatically updates my *Facebook* and *Twitter* status. Also, when I add links to *Del.icio.us* and images to *Flickr*, they are also published as updates on *Facebook*.

As Bruns notes:

> Indeed, the fundamental driver of the changes in journalism, as well as of many wider changes in society, is an idea of access and participation for which the Internet and its associated technologies can be seen as emblematic examples rather than determining components.[315]

These comments refer to a shift in how society in general now operates; although he is discussing the Internet and its technologies, he does not confine these changes only to online communications, because these changes have affected society on every level, from ideas of what constitutes a country to how an individual can negotiate communal space.

[315] Bruns, A., 'Gatewatching', p. 307.

Local contingents

The role of local Canberra activist websites has made a contribution to the ACT activist community, including Argus (www.argusonline.com.au), community radio 2XX www.2xxfm.org.au, the Canberra Refugee Action Collective (RAC) email list and website (www.refugeeaction.org.au) and the Canberra arm of Active (http://www.active.org.au/canberra).

Since 2000, the Canberra arm of the Refugee Action Collective (RAC) has been using the Internet and WWW as a means of disseminating vital information to activists and refugee lobby groups. This has proved effective in organising actions and creating awareness. However, RAC is not alone. *Argus* were responsible for producing an 'UNAUSTRALIAN' series of t-shirts, which proved very popular when I took them to N5M4 in 2003. They have been producing a free magazine since 1996 that covers a range of current social and political issues. At the same time of producing the t-shirts, *Argus* also put up posters around the Canberra CBD, publicising the 'UNAUSTRALIAN' campaign. The posters used images of then Prime Minister John Howard and Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock. Their website (www.argusonline.com.au) has been live since 2001 and editor Anthony Mason states that when the paper-based publication comes out the hit rate of the site goes up by around 200 percent.[316] When I was investigating the story around the posters being ordered down, I was able to contact Anthony via the website — a fortunate thing considering that staff at Impact records refused to give me contact details. If the plan for a Canberra *Indymedia* goes ahead, *Argus* will have a strong linking relationship and use the alliance to post information and publicise events and forthcoming editions of the paper based version of the 'zine'.[317]

Community radio station 2XX has also had a significant role in the Canberra activist community over many years. It has a range of programs dedicated to a range of issues including but not limited

[316] Personal conversation with Anthony Mason 28 August 2003.
[317] The term 'zine' is the street expression for magazine. Zines are usually non-commercially produced and distributed through community networks, including records stores, community centres, libraries and community radio stations.

to Aboriginal sovereignty, women's issues and workers rights. They promote activist events and publicise public meetings and civil actions in the Canberra region. The website at www.2xxfm.org.au is primarily used as a means to document programming details and other station related news and events. However, the website also maintains a number of functions that are broadcast on radio but are accessed more frequently online — 'ease down the road' (for lifts) and 'accommodation listings' are two examples of information on the website.

Another website used as a notice board in Canberra is the Active Canberra site at www.active.org.au/canberra. Active utilises open access software created by the cat@lyst collective discussed earlier. Primarily this site works as a notice board — advertising forthcoming meetings and rallies in the activist calendar. A range of groups use this site including RAC, trade union organisations and anti food irradiation activists. Some of the posts submitted by individuals are informative as well as entertaining and in your face — for instance on 27 August 2003 a post was submitted from *irate cyclist* titled "I fucking hate cars". So in essence, the Active Canberra site operates in much the same way as an *Indymedia* node, by having an open publishing format with the capacity to present a range of content — not just focused on one issue like the RAC site.

The *RiotACT* website has the following tag line: The-RiotACT is an online forum for News and Views in the Canberra (ACT) Region. It's an open and interactive ACT online soapbox, a Riot. It is "right of reply".[318]

RiotACT was established in late 2000 with the purpose of setting up an open journalism project focused on the Australian Capital Territory region and its inhabitants.[319] The website is often used to debate community issues and local politics as well as somewhere to promote local arts and cultural events.

[318] Riot ACT http://the-riotact.com/ (accessed 17 September 2008).
[319] Riot ACT http://the-riotact.com/?page_id=6989#ourstory (accessed 17 September 2008).

Joining the dots

So far in this chapter, the role of inter-linking issues online has been explored as a means of spreading a message or building a social movement. *Indymedia* was and continues to be significant because of the other networks (*Nettime* and *Fibreculture*) that assist in disseminating the information hosted on the IMC sites. The horizontal model of distributing information is inclusive and encourages a two-way communications stream, which is what makes these networks a successful means of spreading news for citizens.

In effect, it is because of people having a desire to not have ownership but share and exchange information that makes sites like *Indymedia* effective. The use of open source software and the 'copy left' methodology of participants also reinforce a sharing and egalitarian approach to access to information and media files.

When considering how distributed networks have been used by net-artists and net-activists, it is important to locate some of the significant online spaces in which online activism has grown and how these spaces have in turn created and facilitated divergent forms of online identity that have a real world outcome. In the next chapter, some of these real world outcomes are explored by analysing a range of protests in remote Australia, creative work and other activities that focus on immigration detention and refugee activism.

Chapter 6: A convergence of space: place, space and 'non-place'

In previous chapters a range of issues relating to net-activism and net-art have been explored, including: the notion of virtual space, the formulation of online identity and community, the use of surveillance and counter surveillance, digital and distributed aesthetics and social networks as a means of encouraging two way communication with a focus on cultural and political awareness. In this chapter, all of these threads will be drawn together to address a particular activist and cultural case study — refugees in Australian detention centres. The key question in this chapter considers what are the appropriate methods to communicate and raise awareness for people that exist as 'non-people' in 'non-places'?

In Chapter 1, (see page 70) this subject was introduced within the context of my own creative work and as the main contributing factor in the development of the thesis topic. To address the refugee activism as a case study within the broader activist context, I explore a number of issues. Firstly, I will be discussing a number of protests in remote Australia that focused on the issue of asylum seekers in detention. I will then address the notion of the immigration detention centre as a 'non-place' which exists outside of everyday society to further contextualise the importance of place and space in determining and constructing identity. Finally by presenting a range of online and offline art and human rights projects that have tackled the issue of asylum seekers in detention and refugees, I demonstrate the significant role of the Internet had had in terms of the broader impact on the artistic and cultural milieu.

The support for detained asylum seekers in this country is an important and significant case of how citizens have used the capacity of the Internet and other activist tools to refuse to be portrayed in a certain light, or to be stereotyped, particularly as 'UNAUSTRALIAN'. The role of the Internet in

the campaign to end the mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia is a galvanising force which aided activists to organise protests and disseminate information. For example, there have been a number of key examples of civil disobedience that were facilitated by the use of the Internet in Australia. These events were largely developed online, with the intended purpose of organising people to attend mass protests at geographical sites considered both remote and isolated from urban, mainstream, Australian society.

Strategies of resistance: protests at Woomera

A series of major actions have taken place at detention centres in outback Australia. On 22 September 2001, around 400 people from Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Canberra converged on Woomera Immigration Detention Centre to offer support to the detainees and to raise awareness on a range of other issues associated with the Woomera site and surrounding land. This action occurred at a time when there was much media and political attention placed on asylum seekers and boat people, because of the *Tampa* crisis, the September 11 attacks in new York raising fears of terrorist attacks, and the sinking of the *Siev X* soon afterwards. Seven years later in 2008, momentum of the refugee activist movement in Australia has slowed somewhat as the government is acting on recommendations from a government committee that will see people being detained in Immigration detention centres for a maximum of one year, amongst other significant changes including the detention of children. The proposed limit on detention is one of 18 recommendations made to the Federal Government by the 'Joint Standing Committee on Migration' in its report, *Immigration Detention in Australia: A New Beginning*.[320] There has been some positive changes that have seen some activist and advocacy groups wind up their projects. For example, *Chilout* (Children Out of Detention) officially shut down in 2008 after the announcement by Senator Chris Evans outlining reforms to immigration policy, which included the commitment to not ever put children

[320] Emma Rogers, *Govt report recommends 12-month immigration detention limit,* http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/12/01/2434833.htm (accessed 2 December 2008).

immigration detention.[321]

At the 2001 protest at the Woomera Immigration Detention Centre, as discussed within the context of my creative work in Chapter 1, there were a range of issues aside from the mandatory detention of asylum seekers. These were articulated as the acknowledgement of the land rights of the Kokatha community (the traditional owners of the land surrounding Woomera), and a protest against the proposed dumping of nuclear waste 50 kilometres from the township. This event was initiated by the Melbourne arm of the Refugee Action Collective (RAC), and then promoted in sister branches in Canberra, Sydney and Adelaide, where other activists came on board to participate.
There were a number of key motivations behind the first solidarity tour to Woomera. Firstly, the protest acted as a means of presenting to the world an alternative picture of the site and its conditions: an image uncensored by government and corporate media interests. In addition, it was deemed necessary to offer the detainees an image of Australian citizens that was contra to corporate media: one of welcome, hope and compassion, rather than the media representation of a nation consumed by xenophobia and racism.

However, at the site on the day of the demonstration, 22 September 2001, there was a chilling reminder of the power of the mass media to create narratives that sustain the perceptions of "Wedom" and "Theydom" that Hartley defines (see page 38). At the protest, the ABC news media left relatively early - deciding that there was not going to be any action worth reporting, aside from some friendly Mexican waves from the detainees and the protesters. Some time later in the afternoon, after vigourous chanting from both sides of the fence activists and detainees (who were divided by some two kilometres of the 'Woomera Prohibition Zone'), ACM (Australian Corrective

[321] A Just Australia 'July news — Welcome changes to detention policy' http://www.ajustaustralia.com/whatshappening_newsletter.php?act=newsletters&id=91 (accessed 20 March 2009).

Management) decided to act, assaulting the detainees with water cannons and tear gas.

Responding to the calls of distress, the protesters started to move towards the centre, crossing into the 'prohibited zone' attempting to get closer to the detainees. The activists were instructed by South Australian Police and ACM not to move any closer to the compound; so with linked arms the protesters sought to pressure ACM to cease their assault. After a prolonged 'stand-off', the protesters agreed to return to the invisible fence perimeter if ACM would remove the water cannon and not fire any more tear gas. Once this had been assured, the demonstrators retreated behind the line, only to witness yet another barrage set upon the detainees who had no means of escaping the assault.

That evening in the ABC News (22 September 2001), the report stated that the assault on the detainees only started after the protesters had crossed over into the prohibited zone, laying the blame firmly at the feet of the demonstrators, accusing them of being provocative troublemakers. This misinformation was either the result of a deliberate choice to support the actions of ACM, or was caused by a lack of first-hand knowledge of the events by the journalists who had left the site and later procured the video footage from independent media group *Ska TV*.[322] As a result of the sale of the video footage quite a few contributors to the Melbourne *Indymedia* site argued that the role of Ska TV as a 'not for profit' community driven organisation was in question.[323]

However, despite the damning image of the protest that was presented on television, alternative versions of the events were being quickly distributed online using a number of methods. Emails from protesters were presented on a number of email lists that have a global audience, for example

[322] Ska TV http://www.skatv.org.au/ (accessed 30 October 2001).
[323] Adelaide Indymedia http://adelaide.indymedia.org.au/front.php3?article_id=520 (accessed 3 October 2001).

Nettime and Postcolonial-list. Other stories and images were posted on *Indymedia*. Within two days, the message had spread through many activist, scholarly and net-artists networks, with many members of these networked communities articulating their shock and abhorrence at the events online.[324] The outcomes of this first action at Woomera Detention Centre set the stage for subsequent actions over Easter 2002 and later at the newly opened and purpose built Baxter Immigration Detention Centre during Easter 2003 and subsequent Easters. The protest was moved to Baxter as the Woomera Immigration Detention Centre was closed, with most of the detainees being transferred to Baxter in late 2002.

From a personal context, as part of my own experience of the event at Woomera in 2001, after returning to Canberra I posted a report summarising the events that occurred on 22 September to the *Nettime* and Postcolonial lists.[325] The post was intended as a means of responding to the negative and incorrect version presented on the TV news. This action was met with quite a number of emails of support and letters thanking me for providing this information. Over the next few days, other activists and media makers at the protest started to make their contributions, stimulating global interest in the plight of detained asylum seekers and further promoting their cause. (It is worth noting that crowd control interventions like water cannons and tear gas had not been used in this country before mandatory immigration detention). In addition, it is ironic to think that the demonstrators were blamed by the TV media as being the cause of the 'trouble' but for some reason they were not subjected to the tear gas and water cannons. Perhaps the reason for this is intrinsically tied to the gulf between having citizen's rights and having no rights as a detainee. As this thesis demonstrates, my involvement at the 2001 Woomera protest impacted significantly on my creative work and was directly referenced in *Highway of Shame* (see page 36).

[324] To access these postings go to www.nettime.org and follow the lists to archive and place 'Woomera' as the search keyword.
[325] traceyb 'Woomera detention centre', *Nettime* 25 September 2001 http://amsterdam.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-bold-0109/msg00792.html (accessed 30 March 2008).

At the end of the demonstration on 22 September, as the protesters reluctantly retreated to the buses to return home they chanted 'We will be back'. At that time, everyone talked about building a bigger and more powerful voice of dissent through developing another protest, one that would be able to reach mainstream Australia with the hope to bring about some awareness of the issues at state. These early plans did indeed come to fruition with activists returning the following Easter weekend for the Woomera 2002 auto-nomadic festival.

Woomera 2002

The action at Woomera in April 2002 is a significant example that has captured the imagination of many activists around the world. This was primarily because, in quite literal terms, the fences meant to divide simply fell down, and a number of detainees were able to escape from the Woomera Detention Centre assisted by activists.

Once again, a range of connected issues surrounded the protest: primarily a linking of environmental, human rights and land rights concerns. These themes were expressed in the overriding statement for the action at Woomera 2002, which was documented on a website produced for creating public awareness and information sharing. It states:

> Our humanity is obliterated in Woomera, in the concentration camp, by missiles, by nuclear weapons, by toxic waste, by colonisation, by fear and division.[326]

This action was also planned to maximise opportunities for activists to have access to photographic, sound and video media. For instance, the website for Woomera2002 presented the issues and themes for the action, and referred to the event as a 'nomadic festival' that would be presenting:

[326] pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/23525/20020211/www.woomera2002.com/index.html (accessed 30 June 2003) This link can not be found by doing a search in Pandora as it is restricted (accessed 16 November 2006).

> ...A kaleidoscope of cascading autonomous actions, media streams and screenings, workshops, discussions and happenings...a diversity of tactics to disrupt the present and create the future.[327]

A number of activists that have links to Melbourne Indymedia designed the site. The slogans were also developed via a process of collaboration between these people. As mentioned previously, individuals have not been named in order to protect them from harassment.

What made this protest inherently different from the initial Solidarity Tour in September 2001 was the definitive and organised use of text, digital and analogue photo and video media in an active manner to promote the cause, before, during and after the event. Whilst there were many writers and media artists at Woomera in 2001, this was a self-initiated process rather than a deliberate tactic or strategy. Whilst I would consider some of the media outputs of Woomera 22001 as 'tactical media', in this example, it was in a naïve form, rather than the orchestrated and organised example of Woomera 2002. The Solidarity Tour of 2001 is perhaps better described as activism that was initiated in physical space and facilitated by the WWW in an ad hoc manner, rather than consciously using the WWW and Internet as the main channel for communications.

Arguably, the 2002 protest at Woomera made conscious use of an already existing resource within the activist community. For instance, five people from Canberra attended the 2001 protest. Of those five individuals, three were involved in community radio and the other two (including myself) were experienced in photography and digital video. All of these people were aligned with the Canberra Branch of RAC with varying levels of involvement.

In September 2001, the Canberra contingent met a bus from Sydney at Yass and what became evident from early in the trip is that not everyone was going because of the humanitarian issues at

[327] pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/23525/20020211/www.woomera2002.com/index.html (accessed 30 June 2003) This link can not be found by doing a search in Pandora as it is restricted (accessed 16 November 2006).

stake. From my experience, the first protest drew many ‘media makers’, but not all of the people involved intended to participate in the action as protesters. These individuals were primarily concerned with the potential documentary value of the Solidarity Tour. The second time around everyone was much more aware not only of the issues at stake but the possible physical, psychological and litigious repercussions for all parties concerned — especially for the detainees for whom they wished to demonstrate support and solidarity. It was very important to people who had witnessed the brutality of the 2001 protest that the detainees would not be harmed by ACM again.

The protest was facilitated by an Internet email listserv accessible via the website, which assisted in the planning stages of the action - campsites, public amenities, meeting places, etc. The listserv also facilitated in the development of activist strategies over the weekend, by creating awareness of legal issues, the response of the Woomera Township and providing information about the previous action and outcomes. After all, this was not your ‘run of the mill’ protest in town. As a participant you could be arrested without charge for being within the prohibited zone by the Federal or South Australian Police, a situation that had the capacity to create a variety of scenarios in terms of protesters being ‘held’ by authorities. Concerning these issues, the Woomera 2002 listserv was invaluable for anyone considering taking the journey.

As with the 2001 demonstration, a diverse range of community groups was involved in the 2002 protest. On the website, some organisations formalised themselves as an ‘affinity group’. These groups included (but were not limited to):

> BoatPeople.org; desert.*indymedia;* Hunter Organization for Peace and Equity (HOPE); The Koala Convoy; Labrats; No One is Illegal; Safety Team; Urban Guerillas; xborder; Johnny Pharnam Phan Club [328]

The notion of an affinity group was described on the website as a:

> group of people who have an affinity for each other, know each others' strengths and weaknesses, support each other, and do (or intend to do) political/campaign work together.[329]

Over the Easter weekend, the coverage on mainstream news was vague about the actual chain of events that led to detainees liberating themselves and escaping from the compound. However, on *Indymedia* there were constant updates from people talking to activists on site at Woomera using mobile phones. As the weekend progressed, more reports came from the activists themselves as they regained access to the Internet. As well as reports from the 'front line', there were letters of support and solidarity for the detainees and activists from all over the world. For example, in Berlin, Wellington, New York and Scotland there were solidarity actions at the same time of the Woomera 2002 protests, as statements of support for the asylum seekers and the activists. There were also actions in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane over the weekend.[330]

The protest was to have a positive effect on the mental health of detainees in Woomera. Dr Glenda Koutroulis, a Melbourne psychiatric nurse and sociologist for over 20 years, witnessed the mass mental health problems taking place inside Woomera. She broke the silence on Woomera Detention Centre, speaking to Penelope Debelle in an article about the protest in *The Age* on April 23 2002:

[328] pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/23525/20020211/www.woomera2002.com/index.html (accessed 30 June 2003) This link can not be found by doing a search in Pandora as it is restricted (accessed 16 November 2006).
[329] pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/23525/20020211/www.woomera2002.com/index.html (accessed 30 June 2003) This link can not be found by doing a search in Pandora as it is restricted (accessed 16 November 2006).
[330] A comprehensive list may be located at Melbourne Indymedia: http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org/woomera.php#saam (accessed 20 April 2002).

> After the Easter protest where 800 people rallied at Woomera and broke down perimeter fencing, allowing about 50 detainees to escape (11 of whom are still free), Koutroulis says the mental health climate temporarily improved. "There was quite a drop in the numbers of people who were self-harming or attempting suicide. They recognised there were Australians who did give a damn about them."[331]

Sadiq Ali, a young Afghani who was in Woomera since February 2001 escaped in the 2002 breakout. His story, which was published on *Antimedia* outlines in detail the suffering of asylum seekers in Woomera. He comments that:

> In Woomera everyone is became crazy. Men, women and children everyday they are cutting their self with razor blade, drinking shampoo and hanging their selfs. They are committing suicide. The ACM who are running the camp they are very bad with us. They are abusing us and saying that are you coming again to Australia. Australia is not your fathers country. This is your punishment for coming Australia.[332]

Given this report, it is of no surprise that access to Immigration Detention Centres is tightly monitored and controlled. Sadiq also stated that he would never give himself up to authorities. It was reported in 2005 that he was still at large and since that date there have been no reports of his capture.[333]

Newsgroups and mass posts

The lines or borders between the 'real' world and the 'cyber' world have become increasingly slippery as one responds to the other. For example, Andrew Bolt from *The Melbourne Herald Sun* blamed online media source *Indymedia* for the action/escape at Woomera over Easter 2002, probably because *Indymedia* had continual updates from contributors over the weekend, as well as publishing online press releases leading up to the event. The Andrew Bolt column said on April 4 re the Woomera escapes:

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[331] Penelope Debelle, 'Blowing the whistle on hidden suffering in Woomera' http://theage.com.au/articles/2002/04/23/1019441244295.html *The Age* April 24 2002 (accessed 30 April 2002).
[332] Sadiq Ali 'Desert Storm — escapee' *Anitmedia* http://www.antimedia.net/desertstorm/escapee.shtml (accessed 29 March 2008).
[333] "Woomera detainees caught three years after escape" *The Age*, http://www.theage.com.au/news/immigration/woomera-detainees-caught-three-years-after-escape/2005/10/10/1128796446879.html (accessed 2 September 2009).

> "What was planned? A long posting on the activists' *Indymedia* website on the Sunday before the protest spelled it out: 'Traveling to Woomera? Don't forget to bring bolt-cutters' it began."[334]

What he fails to state in his article is that anyone can contribute to this site and therefore the content is not the 'fault' of *Indymedia*. As it was, at that stage, un-moderated, perhaps his issue is about censorship and control of the perceived audience rather than *Indymedia* itself. This example illustrates how a moderated website can expose contributors to criticism, as inexperienced users could perceive that there is a consensus on the material published on the website and that the views are that of the community, as opposed to an individual produser. What he is also unaware of was the Woomera2002 listserv, which was the main tool used for the planning and strategy of the protest.

We are so much more than the sum of our parts. In choir singing, a 'fifth' voice only arises from the united song of the four. In some ways, the same could be argued for the role of identity in relation to Net-activism and online community — the united voices for a cause can send a global message that can challenge governmental and mass media constructions of 'nation' and 'national identity' in a way that has much larger effect that the number of activists can have on the ground. Many people involved in the refugee rights campaign have signified their shame at being Australian, and this area of political and cultural activity has activated an alternative perception of Australian identity on the Internet around the globe, one that is external to the commonly accepted stereotype.

[334] Andrew Bolt, *The Age* April 4, 2002 p.16.

nla.pic-an23149183, Seselja, Loui, 1948- [Demonstrator with banner expressing shame to be Australian over the Federal Liberal Party's policy and treatment of refugees, Garema Place, Civic, Canberra on Aug. 31, 2001] [picture] /2001. 1 negative : b&w ; 5.5 cm. x 5.5 cm.

The outcome of these events cogently represents the power of online communities to present an alternative perspective, one that is not mediated or censored by the wheels of corporate media production. For me to state and use my personal experience of the protest as a witness only gains validity and authenticity as a narrative when other people add their own interpretations and experiences of the event.

Dysfunctional utopia — proud of being un-Australian

As earlier mentioned, one of the continuing concerns of many otherwise patriotic Australian individuals throughout the 'Free the Refugees' campaign has been the overriding sense of shame at

being Australian. Many people have voiced their embarrassment at being a citizen of this country and have actively expressed this concern at all of the protests in urban centres and remote detention centres. Refugee advocate Jane Keogh had this to say after going to Baxter detention centre:

> As I left Baxter on the last day of my visit, I had one immediate wish. I just wanted to forget all I had heard and seen. I wanted to block it out of my mind and heart. I wanted to block out the faces, and the images of suffering now and suffering to come for the friends I have in Baxter. I wanted to go to sleep, and wake up four years ago before all this happened. I wanted my old loved Australia back. I wanted to be part again of a country I could be proud of. I felt a great anger at Philip Ruddock, John Howard and Greg Wallis. I felt anger at Simon Crean and the Labor Party for not providing an alternative that would make any real difference to my friends in detention. I have scanned Labor policy so carefully but I can find not one single thing that will make an iota of difference to any of my friends in detention or out now on temporary Protection Visas. I felt anger at those in DIMIA and ACM who collaborate day by day with this cruel torture of fellow human beings. I felt ashamed of being Australian.[335]

This concern has also been visually evident at the ongoing protests in Sydney, Melbourne and other major urban and regional areas. For instance, at the opening of Federal Parliament on February 12 2002, people travelled from all over Australia to voice their shame and anger at the inhumane treatment of detained asylum seekers. Whilst the concept of a 'shameful' national identity is problematic in ideological terms to many socialists and anarchist groups, it has allowed people with a 'nationalist' notion of identity to participate in the campaign. One of the affinity groups at Woomera in 2002, 'Koala Convoy', featured a strong nationalist perspective albeit one entrenched in 'shame'.

[335] Jane Keogh "Shame, Australia, Shame" *Refugee Action Collective (Victoria)* http://www.rac-vic.org/html/jane-keogh.htm (accessed 5 March 2004).

Photo of Argus editor Anthony Mason wearing 'UNAUSTRALIAN' t-shirt, September 2003

Photo of wall at The Australian National University, featuring 'UNAUSTRALIAN' posters, July 2003

Popular Canberra online zine *Argus* produced tee shirts that simply stated 'UNAUSTRALIAN' as a challenge to reactionary statements published in media at the time. There is considerable irony in producing such a protest statement. At the time of the 2001 Federal election, the issues of mandatory detention and the 'Pacific Solution'[336] were presented as political strategies to ensure and protect our way of life as Australians. In other words, both the Liberal and the Labor parties saw this immigration policy as integral to defending our national identity, and effectively rewrote what being 'Australian' actually means. Gone was the notion of mateship, tolerance and generosity as features of our national archetype; what emerged was reminiscent of earlier narratives in Australian history — fear of the 'yellow peril' and xenophobia cogently re-inscribed as features of national identity.

Baxter 2003

In April 2003, a follow up action was organised over the Easter weekend at the new purpose-built facility called the Baxter Detention Centre in South Australia. From the road, it is an awesome and

[336] The Pacific Solution is a term that is used to refer to detaining asylum seekers off the Australian Mainland. The Tampa crisis was the event that launched the Pacific Solution. The asylum seekers were detained in Nauru and Christmas Island. The last Tampa asylum seeker on Nauru, Mohammed Sagar was offered resettlement in a Scandinavian country in 2006 after 5 years detention. For more information on the Pacific Solution see Amnesty International's web site: http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/engasa120092002 (accessed 24 November 2005).

frightening site, nestled in the foothills outside Port Augusta on the highway to Ceduna. Searchlights engulf the surrounding landscape and the layers of razor wire lead one to assume that this is a maximum-security prison. Foucault's discussion of the panopticon[337] comes immediately to mind, as there is conceivably no escape from view at this site. For the detainees this is even more abhorrent that Woomera — the enclosure prohibits anyone from seeing the landscape because of the height of the walls. Detainees can only see the sky, the rest of the outside world, including the horizon is removed from view.

Held over the Easter weekend 18—21 April 2003, it sought to build on the outcomes of the previous two protests at Woomera. A number of websites promoted the call to action at Baxter in Easter 2003. For example, www20.brinkster.com/baxter03 is a site from Queensland that had information for going to the action as well as other pertinent issues regarding mandatory detention of asylum seekers. The Baxter watch website at www.baxter2003.baxterwatch.net was later redirected to the Perth *Indymedia* site. However, in 2007 both of these websites have been decommissioned as they have served their purpose. In its original format, users could subscribe to the Baxter 2003 list, access vital information regarding associated issues and submit their own content to the site. In a functional sense, it operated similarly to the *Indymedia* IMC network and utilised the same open source software known as *Active*.

Woomera Class Action

The final chapter in the narrative of the Woomera detention centre has occurred some time after it officially closed its doors in April 2003 with the remaining detainees going to Baxter Detention Centre.

On May 19 2003, the ABC television current affairs program 'Four Corners' presented a report on Woomera Detention Centre, exposing:

[337] Foucault, M., *Discipline and Punish* Tavistock: London, 1977, p. 177.

> the horrors that went on behind the razor wire of the Woomera immigration detention centre before its closure in mid-April.[338]

The next day saw the beginnings of a class action being brought against ACM and the Department of Immigration (DIMIA), commencing with a group of 15 nurses previously employed at the detention centre, who wished to make the Australian Government and ACM responsible for breaching human rights. The *Melbourne Age* reported on May 24 that:

> The gates of Woomera detention centre creaked open slightly again this week, revealing that it is not just asylum-seekers who are scarred by the detention experience.[339]

As with other events in connection with the detaining of refugees in remote and isolated sites around Australia, it is difficult to obtain information that relates to this class action. Further to this, it was impossible to get the then Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock to admit to any claims of inhumane treatment and trauma from the staff as well as the detainees. When the class action emerged, one of the featured problems was the lack of adequate staffing in the centre. *The Age* article states that:

> The former operations manager with Australasian Correctional Management at Woomera, Allan Clifton, claimed on the ABC's Four Corners program that fraudulent staffing figures disguised how badly the centre was run. The program screened confronting footage taken from an internal security camera showing one inmate slashing himself on razor wire and another, deeply distressed, hunched on a mattress on a floor.[340]

Further to this:

> Ruddock said contractual issues were being examined but there was no requirement for ACM to provide staffing numbers to DIMIA. "The department's focus is on outcomes," he said. "Services are to be provided in accordance with the immigration detention standards."[341]

As the doors closed on Woomera Detention Centre, measures were being taken by the Australian Government to ensure that images like these would not be screened to the Australian and international community. As the detainees were transferred to Baxter Detention Centre, near Port Augusta in South Australia, new rules about photographing and filming detainees in Immigration

[338] Sarah Stephen, 'Systematic ACM cover-up at Woomera exposed', *Green Left* http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2003/539/539p6.htm (accessed 15 October 2003).
[339] Penelope Debelle, 'Woomera's second wave of escapees', *The Age* 24 May 2003 http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/05/23/1053585702106.html (accessed 15 October 2003).
[340] Debelle, P., *Woomera's second wave of escapees*.
[341] Debelle, P., *Woomera's second wave of escapees*.

Detention Centres came into being.

Censorship

There has been increased control over what is available in terms of broadcast and Internet media. In 1999, controls on the Internet were tightened up with the *Broadcasting Services Amendment (Online Services)* that banned all sites of a sexually explicit nature. The problem with this law was the censoring of all references to sexuality, including sexual health and artist's sites addressing issues of gender and sexuality.

On July 8 2002, the ABC media watchdog program *Media Watch* presented a segment titled 'Woomera or North Korea'. This short report compared media access restrictions between DIMIA and North Korea, opening provocatively by stating:

> The Howard government is particularly keen to protect the privacy of asylum seekers by placing extraordinary restrictions on media access.[342]

In this story they quote directly from the DIMIA restrictions to openly demonstrate some of the tactics of dehumanisation that asylum seekers in detention are confronted with on a daily basis, citing that photographers and camera crews:

> '…will not photograph/film….people in detention…in a way that may be identifiable; noting that pixelling/blurring of faces is not sufficient'[343]

Months after the protest there were still around eight people unaccounted for in the Woomera 2002 breakout, and it has been reported in supporter's circles that some of these people are still safe in the community.[344] By protecting the Woomera escapees, people risk being considered as terrorists under the post September 11 'Anti-terrorist' legislation, Criminal Code Amendment (Anti-Hoax and Other Measures) Act 2002, passed in parliament on 13 February 2002.[345] The actions by tactical

[342] 'Woomera or North Korea' *Media Watch* ABC TV 8 July 2002 www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/080702_54.htm (accessed 12 December 2002).
[343] 'Woomera or North Korea' *Media Watch*.
[344] Jess Whyte, 'Account Of Demonstrations At Woomera Detention Center', *Znet* http://www.zmag.org/content/Activism/whyte_woomera.cfm (accessed 02 May 2007).
[345] Parliamentary Library 'Terrorism Law' http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/law/terrorism.htm (accessed 24 March 2003).

media artists and activists on the one hand offer a different interpretation of current affairs and political activism; on the other hand their actions potentially incriminate them with very serious charges under a range of legislation. This is why the 'real world consequences' of tactical media and online activism have resonance and significance.

About RAC (Refugee Action Collective/Coalition)

RAC has been one of the key groups assisting collaboration with other refugee activism groups. Although RAC does not include all the groups that are active around refugee rights activism, it is a fair statement to say that they are the backbone of the network, especially in Canberra. For instance, RAC groups in all major centres have built a reputation for inviting speakers from a range of other community groups, past employees of ACM, doctors researching the effects of incarceration of asylum seekers and other relevant groups and individuals.

There are RAC groups in all major urban centres in Australia and the composition of the membership varies from group to group. For example, the Canberra contingent of RAC is a combination of people from a wide range of groups ranging from Amnesty International to the International Socialist Organisation, Green Left, The Greens, Koala Convoy Resistance, Friends of the Earth as well as a number of Christian and aid groups. This example is indicative of the ideological and political mix of RAC membership around Australia. Also, many individuals who are involved have no alliance to any other parent group. Canberra RAC spokesperson Phil Griffiths states that the email list is one of the 'most powerful means of distributing information'[346] as well as the vehicle for organising supporters for protests and volunteers for information stalls regularly operating in a number of Canberra suburban areas.

[346] Personal conversation with Phil Griffiths 18 September 2001.

The non-place — out of sight out of mind

Convergence and divergence are interrelated themes that emanate from online social relations and this is highly relevant to a discussion regarding net-activism. In her discussion of virtual space, Munster states the following:

> The digital production of virtual space, like virtual time, oscillates between two socio-technical-aesthetic poles: the fabrication of space through familiar strategies of realist representation such as continuity, directionality and referentiality, and the creation of largely unvisualized spaces that operate accordingly to a combination of discontinuity, nonlinearity and distributed connection. Hence virtual spaces are also governed by these two vectors of convergent enfolding and divergent unfolding.[347]

I suggest that these vectors are not just an affect of what happens in virtual space, but a phenomenon that also occurs within physical space, particularly within the context of the non-places earlier described. The enfolding and unfolding Munster describes recalls the motif of the Möbius strip with its uneven lumps. It is also an apt description of the way in which remotely located protests operate as events. Woomera 2001 and 2002 both exemplify how distributed networks devise a pathway to united gathering in physical space.

Refugees living in immigration centres, refugee camps and awaiting immigration status are in limbo. In short, they are either metaphorically or physically non-people in non-place. But there are other places and behaviours that impact on these notions of non-person and non-space. How actual space is imagined has shifted radically in the new millennium and it is necessary to address the issues of space as we are dealing with notions of non-space in the actual world as well as in the virtual world of networked spaces. For example, William J Mitchell discusses concepts of presence and its absence or transformation via digital technology in *ME++: the cyborg self and the networked city.* He comments:

[347] Munster, A., *Materializing New Media*, pp. 101-102.

> For architects, continuous fields of presence and the destabilization of person-to-person relationships demand some radical rethinking of the fundamentals. The standard procedure of twentieth-century modernism was to start by distinguishing and separating functions-the better to optimize spaces for particular functions and to announce those functions visually...But this strategy makes little sense when wireless electronic devices can support many different activities at a single location or the same activity at many different locations, and when running different software can radically alter the functions provided by the device without changing its form at all.[348]

Mitchell identifies that the functionality of spaces has been challenged by the emergence of wireless devices and alludes to the augmentation of these spaces by the technology. But what of spaces that exist outside of what is considered as public or private space? The spaces that are not considered as destination or spaces for citizens — for example, the places in-between or beyond identity — the 'non-place'. This issue resounds for a range of minority groups within society, prisoners, mentally ill, the aged and homeless as all potentially invisible.

Humanitarian Impact - Cultural Responses

After Woomera 2001, there was a rising interest in the arts sector in the work generated from independent media makers, 'culture jammers'[349] and activist artists, for example the emergence of groups like *We are all Boat People* and *No one is illegal*[350] onto the net art and activist networks. In March 2002, well-known political artist Juan Davila ended the silence on refugee issues within mainstream visual arts scene. His exhibition, simply titled 'Woomera', sought to raise awareness about the plight of asylum seekers and to jolt the arts community out of apathy. He states that:

[348] Mitchell, W.J., *ME++*, p. 162.
[349] The role of 'culture jamming' is somewhat contested, as it is not clearly determined if these acts are a form of civil disobedience. In short, culture jamming is a process where consumer and political advertising is appropriated and given an alternative meaning by the culture jammers. "Culture jamming is an intriguing form of political communication that has emerged in response to the commercial isolation of public life. Practitioners of culture jamming argue that culture, politics, and social values have been bent by saturated commercial environments, from corporate logos on sports facilities, to television content designed solely to deliver targeted audiences to producers and sponsors." From the *Center for Communication and Civic Engagement* web site http://depts.washington.edu/ccce/polcommcampaigns/CultureJamming.htm (accessed 03 January 2007).
[350] No one is illegal http://www.antimedia.net/nooneisillegal/ (accessed 10 May 2004).

> As artists, we should remain open to the question of how such events in Australia are to be symbolized. Rather than taking refuge in the benevolent boredom of Australian culture and its refusal to deal with history and memory, we should propose an enquiry into the psychological forces that support and resist this horror.[351]

This exhibition of large canvases was confronting. In this exhibition, he brings to attention two central figures. "One is the half-caste itinerant in Chile — a so-called terrorist. The other is the refugee in Australia."[352] In *Detention Place 2002,* a naked woman covered in blood stands in the desert, behind her is a man (possibly Davila) on his hands and knees as if unable to move, stunned. Further, in the distance the detention centre buildings are recognisable. The woman stares out at the viewer, holding the shutter release to a medium format camera in the foreground of the image. This painting operates powerfully on a number of levels: it refers to the physical pain of the detainees; the emotional trauma of people engaged with the confronting actions that have occurred at Woomera in the last few years; and the stunned sense of helplessness felt by many in the community. In addition, the role of the camera is also significant — it is capturing the viewer — they are 'detained' by their own misconceptions; also it represents both the censorship of visual imagery as well as the push by activists to lift the veil behind the razor wire.

McLuhan explores the historical roots of the notion of detention, and considers its context within the modern world. He sees the idea of a closed space as something that has its roots in the "thirteenth and fourteenth centuries — at the time perspective and pictorial space was developing in our western world."[353] He believes that "the whole concept of enclosure as a means of constraint and as a means of classifying doesn't work as well in our electronic world."[354]

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[351] 'Juan Davila: Woomera' *ABC Arts Online* http://www.abc.net.au/arts/visual/stories/s534433.htm (accessed 12 December 2002).
[352] *Juan Davila: Works 1988 — 2002*, cat. Canberra, ACT: Drill Hall Gallery 2002 p. 17.
[353] McLuhan, M., *The medium*, p. 61.
[354] McLuhan, M., *The medium*, p. 61.

McLuhan also comments that:

> the new feeling that people have about guilt is not something that can be privately assigned to some individual, but is, rather, something shared by everybody, in some mysterious way. This feeling seems to be returning to our midst.[355]

I would argue that he is partially correct in that rise of electronic media has given individuals an increased capacity to 'see' the rest of the world, and in doing so, form opinions and feel guilty and take on responsibility for the conditions of other people. His reference to feelings of guilt is certainly expressed by the many individuals who oppose the detention of refugees. Some have taken on those feelings of guilt and have demonstrated resistance in powerful ways.

On June 15 2002, eminent artist Mike Parr staged a performance at the Monash University Museum of Art where he stitched up his mouth, cheeks and eyes. In this performance titled 'Close the concentration camps', Parr utilised self-mutilation and pain as a means of protesting against the Australian Government's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. During this performance, Parr spoke to no one and no one was permitted to speak to him, emphasising the exclusion and silence that people experience in immigration detention centres. He stated that he wanted "to use the language of my 'body art' to make the strongest possible statement in support of the detainees."[356]

[355] McLuhan, M., *The medium*, p.61.
[356] *Sunday Morning* ABC Radio National 28/07/2002 http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/sunmorn/stories/s615518.htm (accessed 27 May 2003).

Mike Parr, "Close the Camps" Documentation of performance 2002

By insisting on a non-verbal mode of performance, Parr was able to engage with the reality faced by asylum seekers in detention on a physical level. Later in 2002, activist artist Deborah Kelly asked him if his intention was to represent how detainees inflict self-harm. Whilst this would be a logical analysis of this performance, he disagreed, stating that it was a representation of the face of Australia, ugly, contorted, non-communicative, ignoring the voices of asylum seekers and refusing to see the reality of what was happening in detention centres.[357] Although Parr's and Davila's works were not strictly web based, they are relevant because of the discussion that was generated about the works on the WWW. Both artists also had versions of these works online.

Paul Virilio's text *Art and fear*, addresses the role of political correctness in art theory and questions the work of artists like Orlan and Stellarc, who use what he refers to as 'self mutilation' as a means of raising social and political themes in their art practice. Although he does not mention Mike Parr, it is also worthwhile considering him in this vernacular. Virilio questions a political correctness that presupposes a terroristic, suicidal and self-mutilating theory of art.[358] When

[357] Personal conversation with Deborah Kelly 4 September 2002.
[358] Virilio, P., *Art and Fear*, p. 12.

considering the work of these artists in particular, the role of the body in terms of politics and technology is an important aspect to consider, as is the 'art for art's sake' debate that divides aesthetic and issue based work. I would argue that when artists are addressing the body as it relates to technology, beauty and identity that there is a much greater impact when they use their own bodies to perform rather than represent a situation. Virilio may be right in suggesting that there may be an element of political correctness in this approach, but what is the alternative? Surely using a live model is out of the question both from the perspective of human right as well as being able to successfully communicate ideas related to self identity.

In September 2002, the *BORDERPANIC* project was initiated by the Performance Space in Sydney as a co-production with the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) and N5M4 in Amsterdam. This project curated by Deborah Kelly and Zina Kaye sought to bring together "artists, media makers and thinkers who are questioning the world geopolitical and metaphorical borders."[359]

BORDERPANIC included a range of outcomes and events including: an exhibition at Performance Space with a performance by Mike Parr, a seminar in association with *Metro Screen*, a symposium and tactical media lab at the MCA in association with John Pilger's exhibition 'Reporting the World' plus the website and production of the *BORDERPANIC* reader.

What is evident in the Reader was the diversity of activists and groups represented at *BORDERPANIC*. This demonstrates not only that the curators had a very good knowledge of the activists and artists involved in refugee campaigns, but that there is a strong divergence of artists and activists working in this area. 'Culture jamming' was featured strongly as a method to raise awareness. For instance, *we are all boat people* first gained attention in October 2001 in Sydney

[359] *BORDERPANIC* reader, p. 1.

when an 11 metre-high projection of a First Fleet sailing ship with the words 'Boat people' labelling the image appeared on the Opera House. The next evening a church in Darlinghurst was the screen for the boat people image. Aside from the obvious litigious aspects of such interventions, *we are all boat people* offered other activists an opportunity to participate in like-minded culture jamming actions by encouraging people to download 'kits' from the website.

The curators, Kelly and Kaye, invited a number of people engaged with refugee rights activism from all the major Australian urban centres to speak and engage with participants at the tactical media lab (TML). The notion of a TML was first conceived at the initial N5M event in Amsterdam in 1996.[360] Well-known media theorist Geert Lovink was amongst the initial group who defined and formalised the process of a TML. Essentially, this type of an event operates as workshop of sorts but with no one individual taking an authoritarian position in the group. Usually a facilitator assists the group in finding key areas for discussion. The process is about creating achievable outcomes in terms of tactical media activism.

What was significant in the production of *BORDERPANIC* was that the participation and action of culture jammers and activist artists was given an official platform in the realm of 'contemporary arts' practice.[361] For many years, the theme of identity has featured as one of the only means for artists to explore relevant political issues such as colonisation, migration, racism and marginalisation. Many of the events and actions surrounding issues related to the plight of refugees in detention are, in fact, presenting the concept of one subject speaking for another — a problematic notion when considering the theme of representation in connection with identity politics.[362] This is

[360] N5M2 http://www.n5m.org/n5m2/ (accessed 16 November 2006).
[361] Julianne Pierce, then the Executive Director of ANAT (Australian Network of Art and Technology) and formally of VNS Matrix, stated in the *BORDERPANIC* Reader that part of the role of ANAT is to 'respond to the pulse of the community and to enable the vocalizing and dissemination of ideas and strategies' (*BORDERPANIC* Reader p.44).
[362] See Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion on ventriloquism in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

essentially because for identity to be addressed in any critical context there needs to be a subjective rather than an objective process of analysis. However, in the case of asylum seekers in detention, we are confronted with human beings being denied subjectivity, not permitted to have an identity. With then Immigration minister Phillip Ruddock referring to these dislocated people as 'refuseés', the semantic inference is that of refusal and on a more sinister vernacular level as rubbish.[363] In many ways, *BORDERPANIC* set the stage for a number of politically driven conferences and publications in the arts community on a national scale, which took on these issues of identity in the context of people not allowed to speak. In the context of postcolonial theory, the 'subaltern'[364] is a term that references marginalised and lower class social groups with little or no social power.

The March 2003 issue of *Artlink* was dedicated to issues surrounding war and displacement and provided reviews of a wide range of exhibitions hosted around the nation exploring the theme of refugee rights either as an outright or subtle statement. For instance, *Queue here* was the title of an exhibition at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space Canberra exploring the theme of queuing in November 2002. By employing the concept of the queue, the curators Lisa Byrne and Silvia Veléz were able to engage with a range of works dealing with ideas related to immigration law, consumer society, queuing and waiting. Other projects were much more direct in addressing the plight of refugees. For instance, the *A4 Refugee Project* hosted at the Queensland State Library and curated by Jane Gallagher did not attempt any subtlety or postmodern word play. Simply put, when the call for artists went out the criteria was for work that engaged with the issue of refugee rights. There was no guise of metaphor or overarching reference to other aspects of western culture, making it in a way more accessible as a survey exhibition addressing the given theme.

[363] Personal conversation with Deborah Kelly, 4 September 2002.
[364] The 'subaltern' is a term made widely known by Spivak in her 1988 essay "Can the subaltern speak", Homi Bhabha also used this term in his 1996 essay "Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism".

Other Players

The sites, actions and groups I have outlined in this chapter are by no means comprehensive. For instance, www.spareroomsforrefugees.com is a site managed by Julian Burnside (Queens Counsel) and Kate Durham and based in Victoria. At this site, you can offer accommodation to refugees who have been in detention and successfully acquired a temporary protection visa. In addition to providing this crucial service (as holders of TPVs can not access many services in the community), the site has other links to refugee support groups, suggestions as to how you can get involved in supporting refugee rights and fact sheets addressing popular misconceptions about asylum seekers.

The examples I have provided demonstrate the broad scope and diversity of people and groups involved in the refugee rights campaign. It is testimony to the fact that this issue is not only on the agenda of left wing groups, religious denominations or other advocacy organisations. It has had far-reaching support from a wide cross-section of the community, and it is fair to argue that this would not be readily visible without having the capacity to use the Internet and WWW as a means of sourcing information and networking.

In this chapter, I have discussed the significant role of online media in offering an alternative image of the issues and events surrounding refugees in detention. I have also acknowledged the work of a number of artists, organisations and events that focus on the theme of refugee rights. I have explored at length several projects that I have been involved with as an artist and moderator that focus on similar human rights issues. The relationship between online activism, the refugee activist movement, the cultural implications and the connections to my own work were emphasised this chapter as interconnected threads tying together activist and artist issues through linking strategies and mutual humanitarian concerns.

In the next chapter, I will present my conclusion to the thesis, which will sum up all the issues in this research project and present potential areas for further investigation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

One of the inherent challenges of my PhD project has been in developing an approach to the issues surrounding net activism and net-art that addresses the exponential growth of the online medium as a space and the associated theory that encompasses aesthetics, social issues and political shifts during the time period from 2001 - 2008. Because of these constant changes within the realm of the technology and the changing Australian and global political agendas, I was motivated to analyse the shifting notion of identity and community within the context of an online environment, with particular emphasis on net activism and tactical media. It is evident in my discussion that these issues are still very active and central to developing notions of aesthetics and communications within the field for digital media studies. In many ways the technological tools and the communications have evolved at a speed that has left behind the theory and this thesis is an attempt to demonstrate how this has occurred, specifically within the context of refugee activism and advocacy in the cultural milieu.

My approach to the topic was undertaken by presenting a range of discussions surrounding subjects and political issues that concern people in the cultural and broader sectors of the community. What I have also sought to address is how tools and behaviours instigated by net-activists and net-artists have proliferated and aided the conceptual development and user engagement intended by the same media technology.

Online organising, real world responses, new world consequences

Since the early days of HTML driven websites, the WWW has changed dramatically — visually, aurally and interactively. Our experience has grown from a textual world into a dynamic environment where all sectors of the community meet — family, interest and hobby groups, and most visibly, in terms of commercial and corporate interests. Throughout this thesis, I repeatedly

used the Möbius strip as a concept and motif for the relationships that evolve from online communications and tools used by the communities. This is because the inside links to the outside, public connects to private and the individual links to community, and, of course, the relationship between 'real' and virtual. It is a powerful signifier for me as it reinforces the reliance on both notions of space to inform the other. It also signifies the processes utilised by produsers and online activists, as they create an online environment, engage is real world events and then document the experience online.

Rather than citing the history of the WWW, this thesis discussed a range of issues that have transpired in a social context within the defined time frame of 2001 to 2008. The intention of focusing on this time frame was to closely analyse how open source and freeware communities have operated in different ways for artists, coders, writers and publishers to distribute and share their work to other users, and how this social engagement or 'Social Media' has led to further developments in 'social media' from both a communications and technical perspectives.

I have consistently argued together with theorists including Jenkins, Lovink and Galloway, that the 'real' world and cyberworld do not exist in isolation from each other; rather they can enhance and facilitate the development of knowledge, relationships and communities. In addition to this, I have argued that the Internet and WWW have also aided a breakdown in the distinctions between artist, activist, producer, user and consumer. I used tactical media as an example of how the roles of artist, activist and media producer have converged to allow for more fluid connections between notions of 'real' and virtual space.

In the Introduction, I presented a series of questions that I wanted to answer in the thesis, which included:

- What is the field of net-activism and net-art that focuses on refugee and related issues of displacement, migration and outsider identities ?
- Has net-activism and net-art significantly shifted contemporary theories about the interrelationship between place and space the contexts of the virtual and the 'real world' environments?
- What are the specific formations of online activist identity and how do they manifest in the off-line or actual world?
- How have forms of surveillance and counter surveillance challenged power relationships in net-art, net-activism, alternative media and citizen publishing?
- How do the aesthetics of net-art and net-activism impact on everyday society in the physical world?
- What are the appropriate methods to communicate and raise awareness for people that exist as 'non-people' in 'non-places'?

In Chapter 1, I addressed the question of what constituted the field of net-activism and net-art which focuses on issues related to refugee activism, displacement and migration. A range of artists and activists work was considered, including my own projects *Highway of Shame* and *Swipe.* What emerged from this discussion, is the recognition of a significant shift from the political context of the individual, as per feminist and postcolonial approaches to identity pre WWW to an emphasis on collaborative projects and artist/activist networks. This change in focus has influenced contemporary art and broadcasting media as the power relationship has shifted from a notion of an individual voice against the dominant culture to a collective voice offering an alternative viewpoint. In addition to this social shift, I also argued that there has been significant development and accessibility in the technology used to engage individuals. By using a range of collaborations

including *Blast Theory*, *De Geuzen*, *VNS Matrix* and *Yes Men*, I demonstrated how artists have engaged with humanitarian issues and utilised various forms of online media to explore social issues. On page 55, I argued that whilst there may be similarities between the roles of net-artist and net-activist in terms of content and subject matter, that there is an inherent difference to the 'value' of the work in social and aesthetic terms.

In Chapter 2, the focus was on how net-activism and net-art has significantly shifted contemporary theories about the interrelationship between place and space the contexts of the virtual and the 'real world' environments? I provided a definition of cyberspace and located the Möbius Strip as a motif that represents the augmentation and interaction between online space and physical space and place. The discussion on the Möbius strip analysed the how these linking relationships can be synchronous and asynchronous by nature of the media and the code that sits behind it. I also discussed how users of the online environment were active and not just passive receivers of information, and by doing so become cultural producers of online content. The notion of 'redaction' and montage are relevant to considering how media is produced in a augmented environment. In addition, I discussed how this shift in cultural production is also a shift in power relationships within the context of space despite the gap between physical and online experience. Furthermore, I addressed how augmentation has impacted physical space in subtle and almost invisible ways, via portable devices such as mobile phones, and I-pacs. By pursuing the Möbius strip as a motif for the interactions between the two notions of space, I also compared this scenario to a sense of the baroque aesthetic, which is about excess, sensory overload and a folding, fluid sense of movement. The influence of postcolonial theory and its emphasis on diaspora, physical displacement and nostalgia was considered as a means of understanding and conceptualising the gap between real and virtual space. As noted in Chapter 2 (see page 67), Augé's notion of non-place is a cogent example of this as is Kristeva's

discussion on the exile.

In the early days of the WWW, the online space was considered a place of freedom, of information and media sharing with little control, but as the WWW has progressed as a tool for communications, I argued that there have been increasing controls on the media available and the way in which users interact. Copyright laws and censorship laws have all attempted to curtail users from speaking freely and sharing information without risk. Although some of the guidelines invented for the WWW have been useful in terms of a user experience (accessibility, usability) other rules have sought to inhibit the flow of traffic online.

Chapter 3 explored the specific formations of online activist identity and how they manifest in the off-line or actual world? I analysed the behaviours that have had a significant impact on the development of a media art aesthetic by pursuing the process of collaboration, user participation and the notion of traffic. The issue of identifying race and culture is explored via Nakamura, in particular the emphasis on the 'right to speak' and user empowerment gained by having capacity to express one's self.

In addition, the notion of the 'true self' was also explored as a contributing factor to the the process of developing online personas and in turn was considered a feature of how that individual participates within an online community. On pages 81 - 83 , I noted that Bargh, et al recognised that the 'true self' is more likely to be revealed online as there are less inhibitors when communicating via the screen. Self consciousness and shyness are able to take a back seat and the user is able to create for themselves a sense of self which is a product of self expression. This online identity then builds capacity and a reputation by the engagement in community groups by way of contribution to

discussion and sharing of media.

Some well-known online stereotypes were also analysed in this chapter, specifically the hacker, the lurker and the troll. It was argued that many of these labels are problematic, limiting and not representative of the activity undertaken online. For example it was discussed that, The label 'hacker' is particularly vexed as the original meaning of the term was used to describe coders and people who liked understanding code. Due to mass media and Hollywood reinscriptions of the term hacker, it has now come to mean someone who cracks or breaks through the code for personal gain or political or social mischief. Identity fraud was also considered as an online behaviour that also has moral and legal implications and also a subject that receives a lot of bad press, despite that it does not happen very much.

Drawing on identity theory from the 1990s, I argued that identity is never static or singular and is always moving and fluid, even though online identity is a proxy for the physical self and in being so is actually abstracted from the physical self. I also argued that identity online is also always a partial representation of the self despite how much of the true self is revealed. A number of Web2.0 tools were cited as being able to assist users to create their online identity — *Facebook*, *Bebo* and *Myspace* are examples. These tools have created online communities by the nature of the software, rather than any specific point of discussion or subject that usually is the connection point of the establishment of an online community.

The notion of community was also explored in detail in particular how online and off-line communities are formed, and how they interact and intersect. I argued that the notion of community is a social and cultural representation of space in physical and psychical terms and that although

there is speculation about the intersection of online and offline community there are linkages between these spaces that enhance and inform each other. I addressed a number of online communities that have had an historical impact — i.e. MUDs and MOOs as well as contemporary 3D communities such as *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft*. I also explored other tools that online communities use to facilitate communications — the chat tool in *Facebook* for example.

In Chapter 4, I considered how forms of surveillance and counter surveillance challenged power relationships in net-art, net-activism, alternative media and citizen publishing. I initially addressed the shift in human rights and privacy post September 11, to illustrate how governments and corporations have increasingly monitored our society. My discussion focused on how this surveillance utilises a range of tools including CCTV; the use of *Facebook* to serve court documents; and monitoring traffic flow online to glean information for the purpose of control or as advertising opportunities.

The role of counter surveillance or sousveillance (see page 113) was also explored as an activist strategy as well as tool that online and media artists have used with much success. The work of Steve Mann was noted on page 73 for being critical to providing an understanding of this inversion of surveillance which brings into play the individual's capacity to document powerful bodies with the purpose of making them responsible for their actions. A number of collaborative activist and artists groups were discussed within the context of counter surveillance including *WITNESS*, *RAWA*, *Sarai* and *CAE*.

I then turned to the sedition discussion on the -*empyre*- list, which I moderated in February 2006 as a means of demonstrating the concern that artists and activists had for the loss of democratic free

speech and creative expression that was increasingly evident in new laws focusing on terrorism and censorship. In this discussion I acknowledged how silence out of fear renders these limits to expression as valid as a lack of resistance suggested support or acquiescence for sedition and censorship. In the lead up to the passing of the sedition clause of the anti-terrorism act there was significant community resistance, including from state and territory governments, which had little impact on the passing of this legislation.

The pitfalls of sousveillance was also addressed as there is a moral and ethical responsibility of the tactical media artist to ensure that the subject is not dehumanised or put into further danger by being documented. I use the example of *RAWA* to illustrate how dangerous exposure can be for some activists, who literally put their lives on the line to expose injustice.

Chapter 5 addressed how the aesthetics of net-art and net-activism impact on everyday society in the physical world by way of the distributed network model. I provided an overarching definition of the distributed network and illustrate a number of relevant examples of how this model works. By exploring some of the technologies that have enhanced the capacity of the Internet to distribute information and develop networks, the role of freeware and open source software was addressed as having a significant impact for the empowerment of users, whether artists or activists. In addition to this, I analysed a number of online media channels that built their communities using open source technologies, for example *Indymedia*. Following from this discussion of the distribution network, the tools and communities, I addressed how these distributed and open source models have influenced a shift in the notion of a digital aesthetic, one that relies of media mixing and sharing.

As part of this discussion, I used Meikle's concept of 'backing into the future' to consider how

activist strategies and process of the dissemination of information has not changed essentially, but is now enhanced by the infinite reach and cheap distribution method provided by the online environment. *De Geuzen* and *We are ALL boat people* were used as examples of artists/activist collaborations that have developed downloadable materials to promote a cause or issue. It was also recognised that because of the two-way communications capacity of the WWW that there has been a shift in terms of the type of media that is created, that instead of the report being about facts and from one perspective, that news has shifted to a multi-perspectival and subjective notion of reporting.

I returned to the Möbius strip as a motif for how the distributed aesthetic functions and looked at *dyne.org* as an example of an online community that have identified the Möbius strip as a useful illustration of the process in open participation and collaboration on information and tools development. This group has significantly contributed to the practical and theoretical outcomes of net-art and net-activism by focusing on the intersection between community, activity, technology and art.

Indymedia was explored in detail for its role in developing a dispersed and devolved model for information sharing and reporting and is compared to later Web 2.0 websites like *Facebook*, *Twitter, Bebo* and *Myspace*. Although there is capacity to build applications for these Web 2.0 online media tools, the emphasis is on creating profit. This was evidenced, particularly on *Facebook* by how the advertising on these sites is targeted to key words you use in your profile, your interests i.e. the groups you join and your geographic location. The difference between Social Media (indicative of social change) and social media (use of tools for personal promotion) was also considered in relation to the distributed network and online communications as two examples of very different

uses of the media despite the naming of the activity.

In Chapter 6, I discussed the refugee activist movement and the issue of non-place within the context of immigration detention. I discussed a number of protests which had a significant impact on both the refugee activist movement in Australia and the cultural landscape. My experience at Woomera Immigration Detention Centre in 2001was explored in detail, with particular emphasis on how the Internet was used as a broadcasting tool. The incorrect reporting of this protest was also explored as a juxtaposition to user generated stories and reports, which in turn answered my question regarding the appropriate methods used to communicate and raising awareness about the plight of asylum seekers in detention.

The 2002 Easter protest in Woomera was also discussed as a significant event as there were a number of escapes from the Detention Centre on Good Friday. The logistics of the protest were developed online and in this protest there was much more deliberate use of alternative media as a means of communicating events. The class action of staff at the Woomera Detention Centre against the federal government was also discussed as once this became public there was increased attention by mainstream media on the human rights issues of Immigration detention.

Some of the specific activities undertaken by activists and arts were also explored — for example the 'UNAUSTRALIAN' campaign generated by Canberra alternative zine *Argus*. The artwork of Juan Davila and Mike Parr was also discussed as an example of how the human rights issues reported by online communities had disseminated to the broader cultural community. Other groups including the Refugee Action Collective and *GetUp!* were also discussed as key groups who actively raised awareness. The notion of detention and non-place was also explored from a theoretical perspective to provide a context of why refugees in detention generate such response

from a social, activist and cultural perspective and the problematic role that artists and activists have in raising awareness about this particular group, because they do not have the capacity to speak on their own behalf. It was also argued that although the online communication tools are available, it is important to ensure that this particular demographic are not further dehumanised by well meaning attempts to represent them and to assume knowledge about their experience. As the WWW has evolved so has the capacity for users to engage and participate in the spaces in which they inhabit virtually. From *Indymedia* to *YouTube* and *Second Life*, users have actively participated in the creation of the website content and by doing so have become 'produsers' rather than passive observers.

Through the use of the case studies that focus on refugee activism and the role of artists and activists, I have argued that there must be an ethical approach taken to conveying stories and experiences when raising awareness about people that are displaced and in immigration detention. Net-artists and net-activists can greatly assist in the process of self-empowerment in regard to people caught in non-places and I have argued that there is great capacity to both raise awareness and facilitate media skills transferral in a broad range of ways. By assisting people who have no social power to have a voice and presence is a challenge and its own reward for activists and artists dedicated to human rights. Throughout this thesis, I have presented a broad range of individuals and groups who have made significant social and cultural impacts via the use of online forms of communication and creativity. These efforts have effectively kept issues of migration, borders and displacement alive and relevant to contemporary political debate and opinion. Without the capacity of online communications it is highly doubtful that the mainstream media would have been challenged about these subjects. The shift from media as an authority to media as a perspective and speaking position has forever changed how people communicate and share information.

There are still many opportunities to research how the WWW defines a community, or how blogging and social networking tools can aids social awareness about an issue. The Internet has revolutionised and diversified our access to media, and in this thesis, I have been able to demonstrate that it has empowered users by its capacity to operate as a two-way communications channel with infinite distribution potential. Moreover, given this potential, it is my sincere hope as an artist and an activist that the Internet continues to build capacity and develop as an accessible tool for communications and creativity for people everywhere, regardless of class, gender, religion and nationality.

Glossary

Acronym	Definition
ACM	Australian Correctional Management
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CMC	Computer Mediated Communications
CSS	Cascading Style Sheets
HTML	Hypertext Markup Language
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
IMC	Independent Media Center
PDA	Personal Data Assistant
RAC	Refugee Action Collective
RAWA	Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan
RSS	Real Simple Syndication
VR	Virtual Reality
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWW	World Wide Web

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Appendix 1: Vault, In da haus and Lost Connections

In March 2002, I was invited to present an exhibition at the Bundaberg Regional Gallery, as part of the celebrations for International Women's Day. My installation was placed in a small gallery known as the 'vault'. The Bundaberg Regional Gallery building has had many past identities, including being Customs House and later as a bank. The vault gallery was the safe during the building's incarnation as a banking facility.

All of these aspects of the venue were very relevant in the production of this series of works that comprised of photocopy transparencies placed in deep frames and lit as to produce shadows on the wall.

The source material, procured from early colonial sketches, depicted images of migrants, rural Australia and migrant ships. The central motif in the installation was an image of Caroline Chisholm, the famous Australian woman pioneer. I decided to use her image for a number of reasons:

- her role in early settler society
- the connection to International Women's Day
- to reference her disappearance from the five-dollar note

This work explored history and transparency, and whilst was not focused on personal experience, it attempted to present a visual historical narrative that was transparent, devoid of an intent to situate historical images within a logical framework. At the time, I could see this idea working as a much larger collage of ideas, but soon came to realise the conceptual limitations of such a project.

It was my initial intention for my PhD studio work, to collect a series of images printed on transparent film and then project light and video through the images. By making the screen transparent in this installation, I proposed to address the imbalance inherent in the narratives of history and in the TV media. The shadows and blurred images projected on the wall sought to expose that there are grey areas and darkness, the unknown or indecisive parts of the self/nation/globe. The untold stories of events rendered invisible by the media eye.

We as individuals consume media; our attitudes about issues are mostly formed by what we see on TV, read in newspapers or on the Internet. However, we only ever see a part of the story, the piece that is sold to us somehow. A number of conceptual concerns informed this idea: as an artist I was concerned with the presentation of imagery that is screen-based at some point; the multi-layering of images was a metaphor for many perspectives and stories; and the use of transparent material relating to a notion of historical 'truth'. However, this proposal did not seem to explore the medium of most interest to me — the WWW.

Installation view of 'Vault'

Installation view of 'Vault'

Installation view of 'Vault'

Installation view of 'Vault'

In da haus

Places like home is a web and flash based work which explores the psychological notion of home. It questions the meaning of home and its associations with experience, memory and identity. It was produced as part of a project titled *In da haus*, for Canberra Contemporary Art Space in 2002.

This work forms an interactive narrative that is activated by the user, who chooses links in the text of the story. Patterns existing in the 'back end' structure of the site change as the site is navigated. The story is based on a number of key words that echo throughout the site. This navigation is also a visual patterning of images relating to the text.

The place we live and the objects that become precious to us, become so because of our attachment to memories of significant events in the past that make us feel 'at home'. These are treasured moments worth remembering, and often objects — keepsakes and souvenirs operate as proxies or stand-ins for that experience.

Home is the epicenter of experience; it represents us on a daily level. We surround ourselves not

only with the necessities of life like food; we also adorn our homes with objects that make us feel comfortable, familiar and safe. However, it is not the material that makes us safe; rather, it is the emotional value we invest in the object. A material object is ultimately more precious if it has sentimental value.

Home on the WWW is a slightly different, though very relevant concept. Online home is also known as index, simply put — the place where you categorise, label and organise all your stuff.

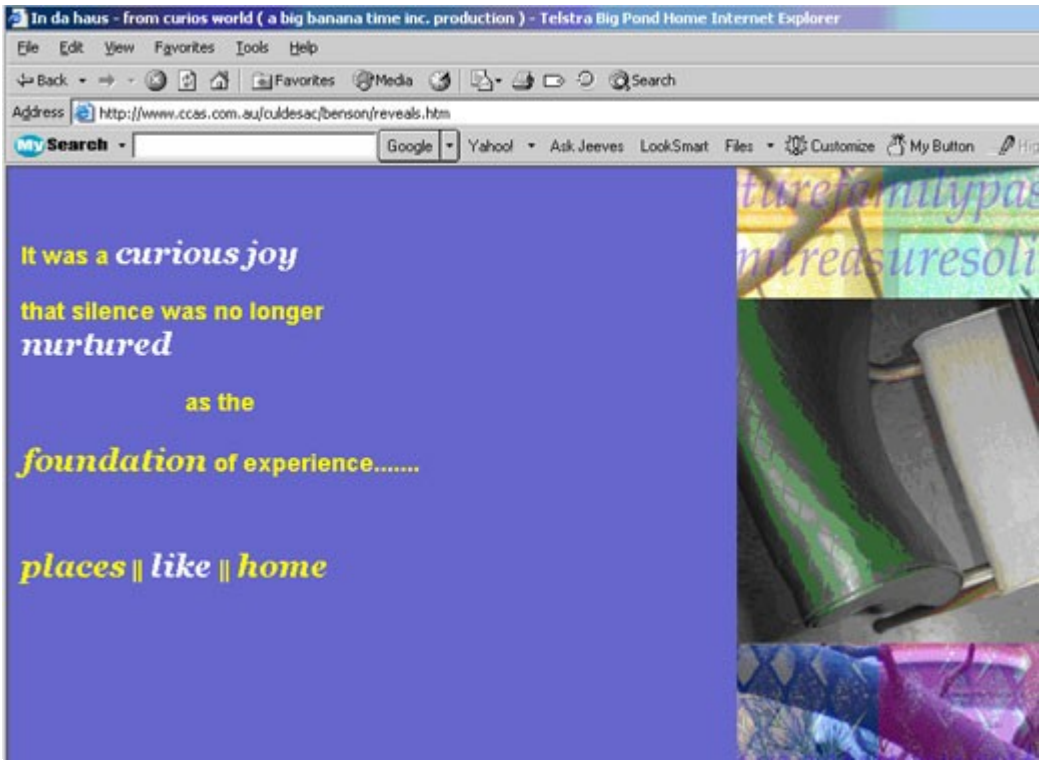
It is a means of structure and organisation, like the home, particularly the notion of family and the mapping of genealogies that create the structural fabric of human social life. This structure is a form of patterning — that is presented in our genes, in our behaviour and in the materials that surround us on a daily basis.

The concept of home has shifted significantly in the last two hundred years, from a familial connection to a place through ties that are generational, to a contemporary transient society that often recognises home symbolically rather than concretely.

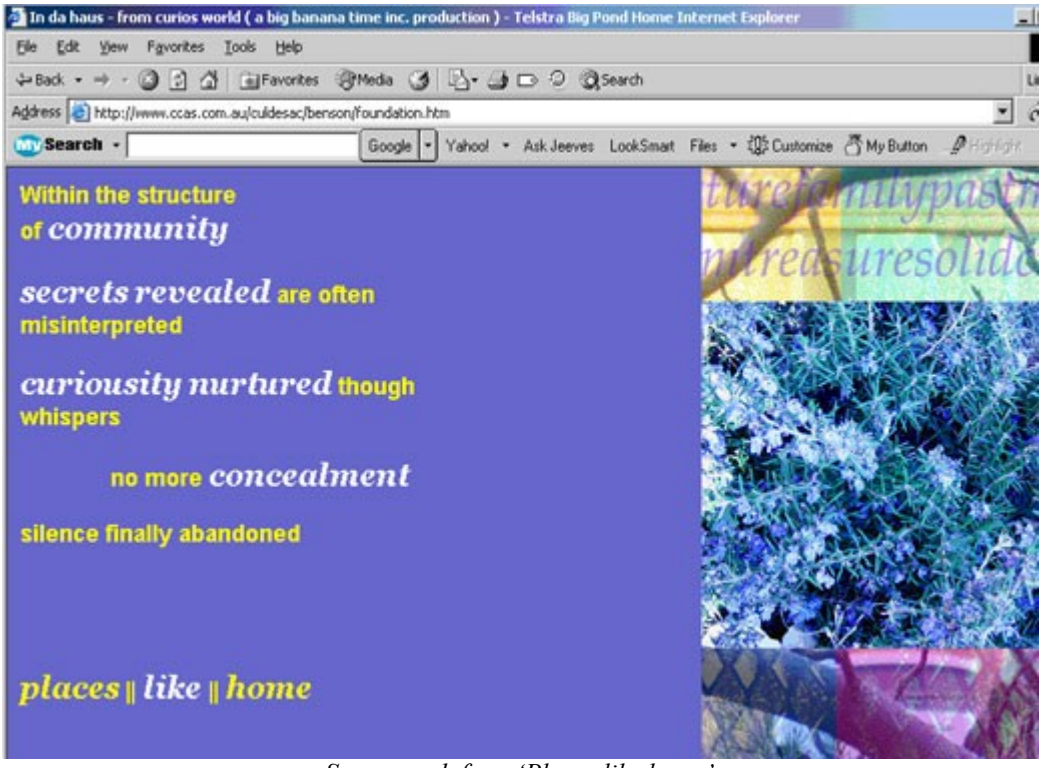
Given the current realities of displaced people around the world, the notion of home to which we are familiar is a luxury indeed.

Places like home was, in technical and conceptual terms, quite similar to *Highway of shame*. This site was also built with HTML, CSS and was comprised of hypertext, digital still and moving images. The difference with this work was the focus on a metaphorical notion of home, rather than

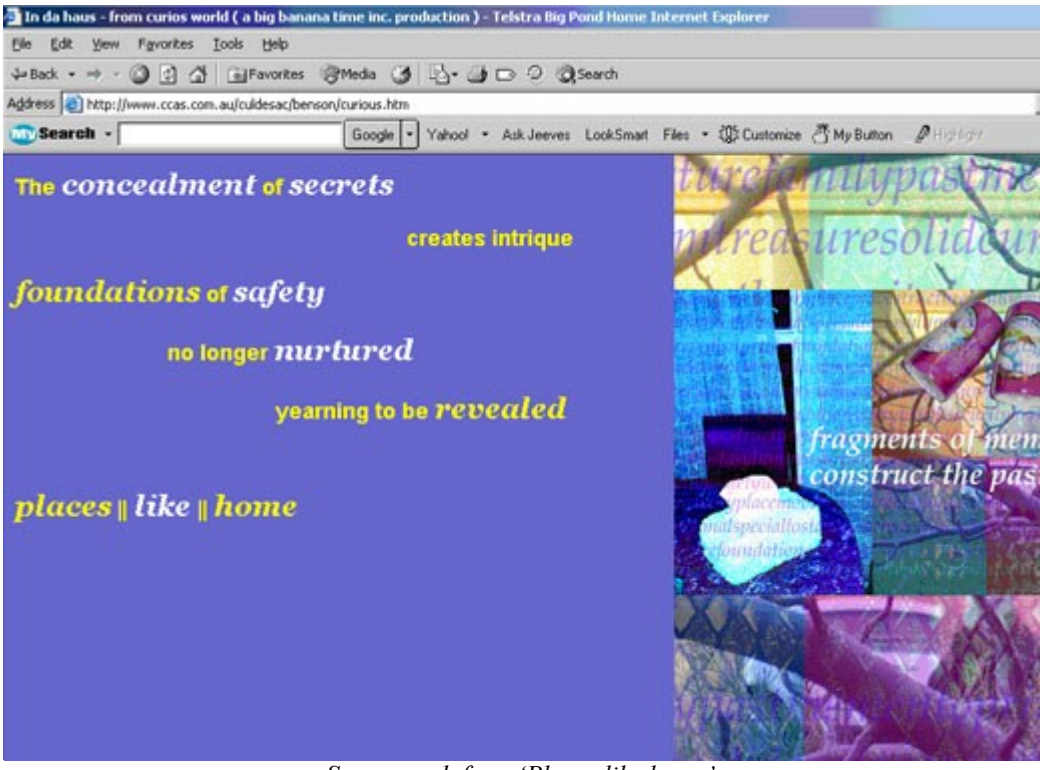
an event that was about displaced people.



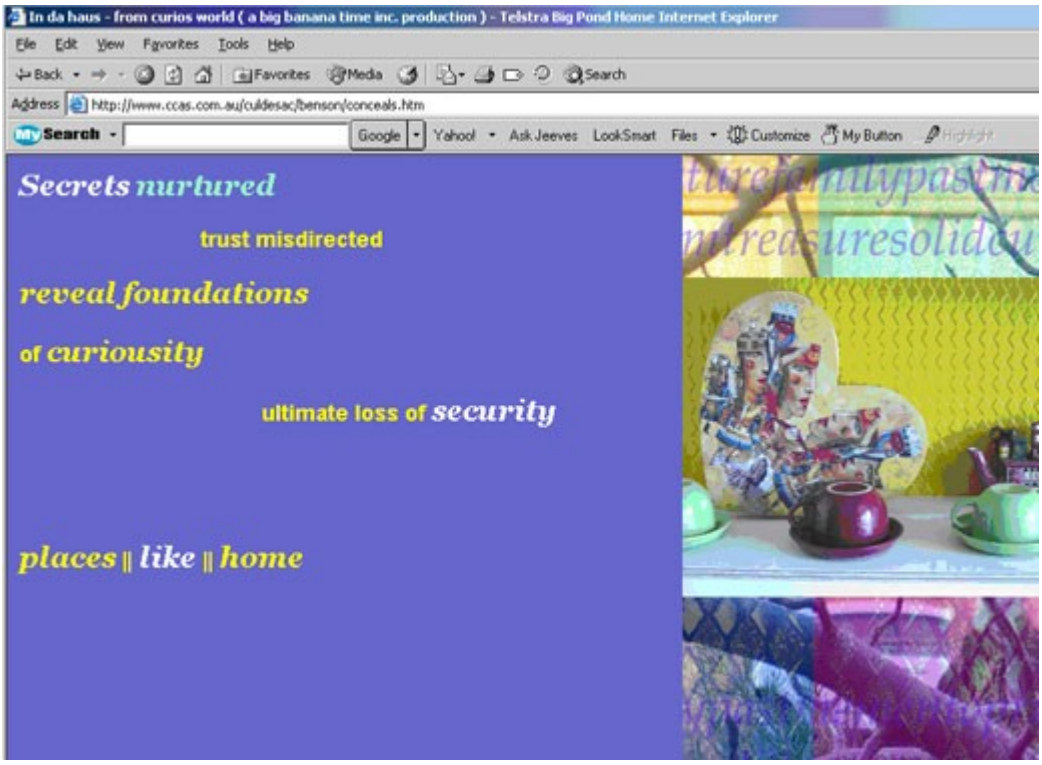
Screen grab from 'Places like home'



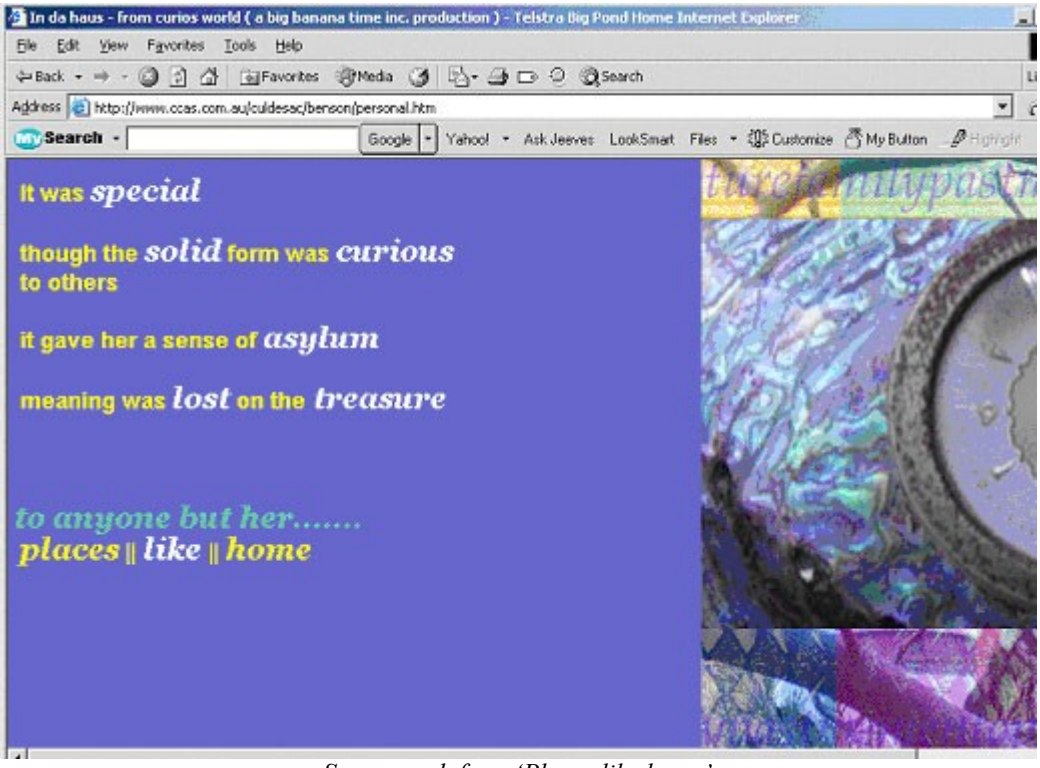
Screen grab from 'Places like home'



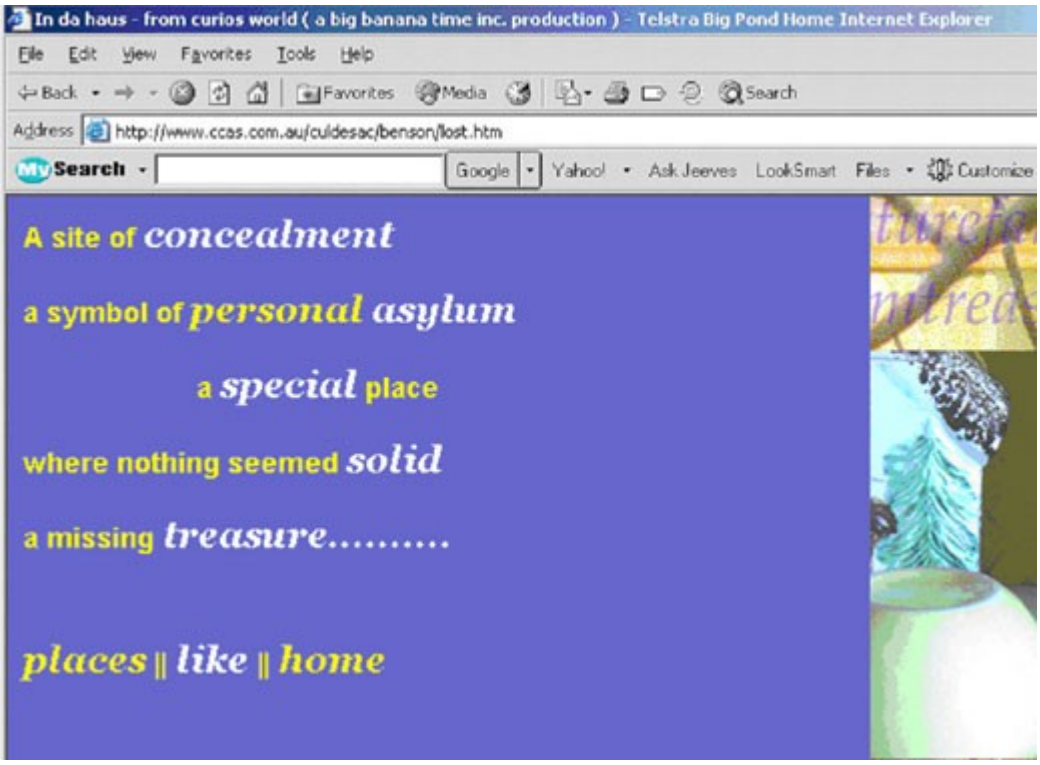
Screen grab from 'Places like home'



Screen grab from 'Places like home'



Screen grab from 'Places like home'



Screen grab from 'Places like home'

Lost connections

The installation *Lost connections* was presented as part of Refugee week in 2002. It was exhibited at *this is not a phone box* gallery at Gorman House and was presented not long after the *In da haus* project at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space.

This work is an exploration into migration and the loss of familial identity that occurs in the process of migration. This installation is an autobiographical work that combines elements and objects from various family members that migrated to this country. The photomontage is constructed from old family photos, advertisements from the ship that brought my family here and places of origin in the old country.

All of these images and objects have special and significant meaning to me in terms of how they represent the ancestral ties to the places where my family originated, or, how they came to be in my possession. For instance, the doll in the centre of the image was a gift from my great grandmother on her return to Australia in 1972 from her last trip back to her village in Yorkshire. Madeira (the doll's name and place of purchase), is one of the few objects I own that remind me of my great grandmother, who passed over in 1974. When I look at the doll I remember the house she used to live in, and how I used to play in her laundry as a small girl. Madeira evokes her voice, her broad Yorkshire tones, rounded vowels and references to 'our Mary' and 'our Donald'. Years ago, my mother told me that when I first started to speak I also had a broad Yorkshire accent, that must have been learnt from my grandmother and her mother.

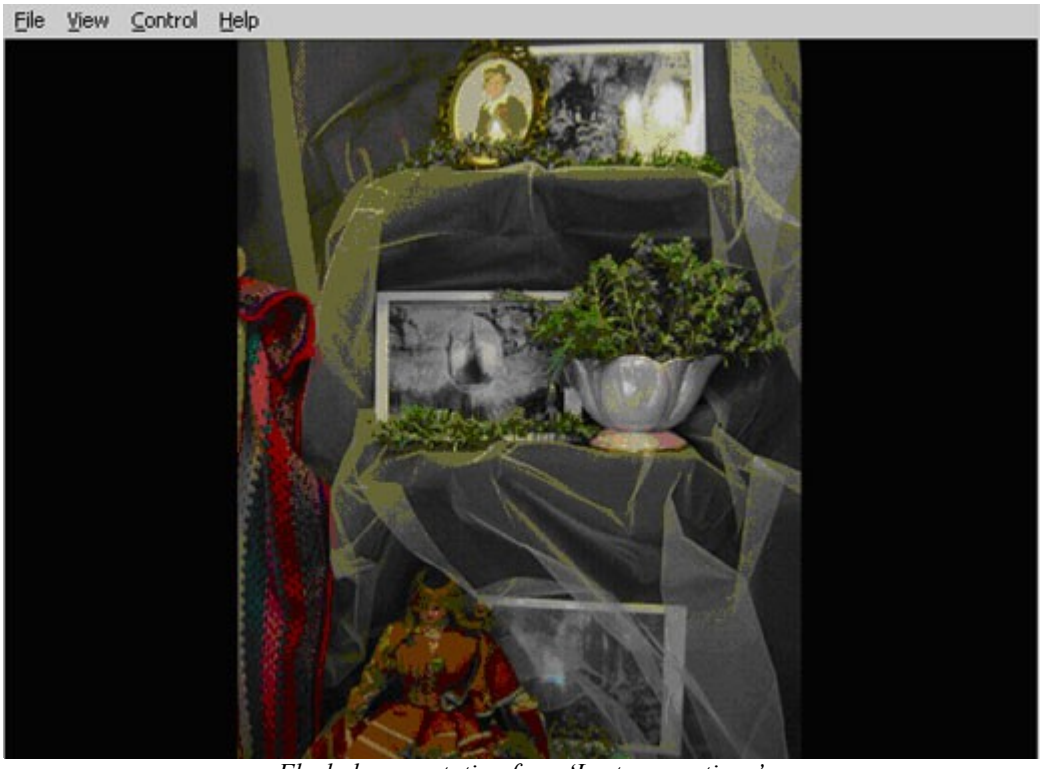
This work is about memory and the piecing together of a narrative that formulates a sense of self. I also used fresh herbs in this work, rosemary for remembrance (as the saying goes) and lavender for

my grandmother, Mary, who loves the colour and fragrance of this herb. Memory is often triggered by the sense of smell, so it seemed appropriate to place these herbs in the installation.

Despite having these objects that conjured for me a sense of family and ancestral heritage to another place and another time, this work does not constitute a full narrative about my genealogy. Over generations, so much has been lost that all that is left is some token reminders of where my family came from.

Lost connections and *Places like home* are attempts to address a notion of loss from within my own experience.

Flash documentation from 'Lost connections'



Flash documentation from 'Lost connections'

Appendix 2: CUBE 37

Artist Statement

By using words and images that evoke a sense of disorientation and the notion of the spaces in-between, this project attempts to consider mobility and identity as it is articulated by technology and the social impacts of the 21 century.

Swipe: airports, borders, fences explores how alienation affects perceptions of identity. The work aims to present a range of issues related to notions of loss of identity and displacement. By investigating the implications of diaspora and the breaking down of safe, describable forms of identification as a process that creates alienation, this work attempts to present the spaces in-between. There are many cases where the condition of social displacement may occur in terms of social relations. For instance, a change of residence and community can trigger feelings of isolation and lack of security in a previously affirmed sense of self.

As a community, we have become dependant on technology to allow us to go between here and there. This work asks us to consider not just who, but, where we are and the implications of navigating the zones in-between.

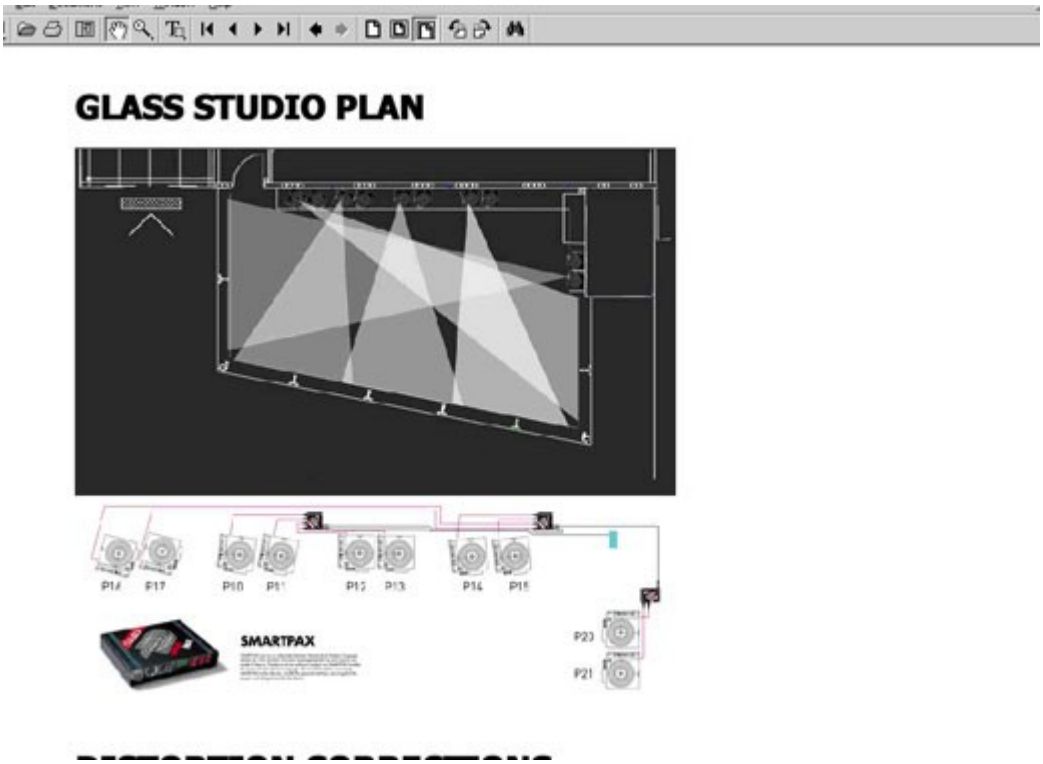
Furthermore, as a global community our sense of security has shifted radically post 9/11 and seeing that this exhibition opens on the fifth anniversary of this event, the work also takes into account how the notion of national and personal liberty and identity has been scrutinised since the World Trade Centre was attacked.

The proliferating use of the term 'zone' in contemporary times indicates the specific mobilization of a term to denote regulation of the movement of bodies within and across those spaces. As such we may index its rules and guidelines, its closures and cultural constraints, as much as the domain of possibility and potentiality. In his film, *The Stalker* (1979), the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky called this place a zone. It is a form of non-place and exists in the midst of what appears as an industrial wasteland…Within the zone, the force of contact is not only animated by a series of encounters of exchange or mis-encounters, but also as crossings in which occupancy becomes a contested ground for sovereignty, or potential ground for mutual reckoning of what has taken place and the desire for co-habitation and multilateral trust. We may also speak of zones as a more abstract designation, mobilisaed by modernization and the ideology of a global order that has designated a series of zones that partition, structure and sanction the world into lesser or greater levels of social inequality, impoverishment and destitution.[365]

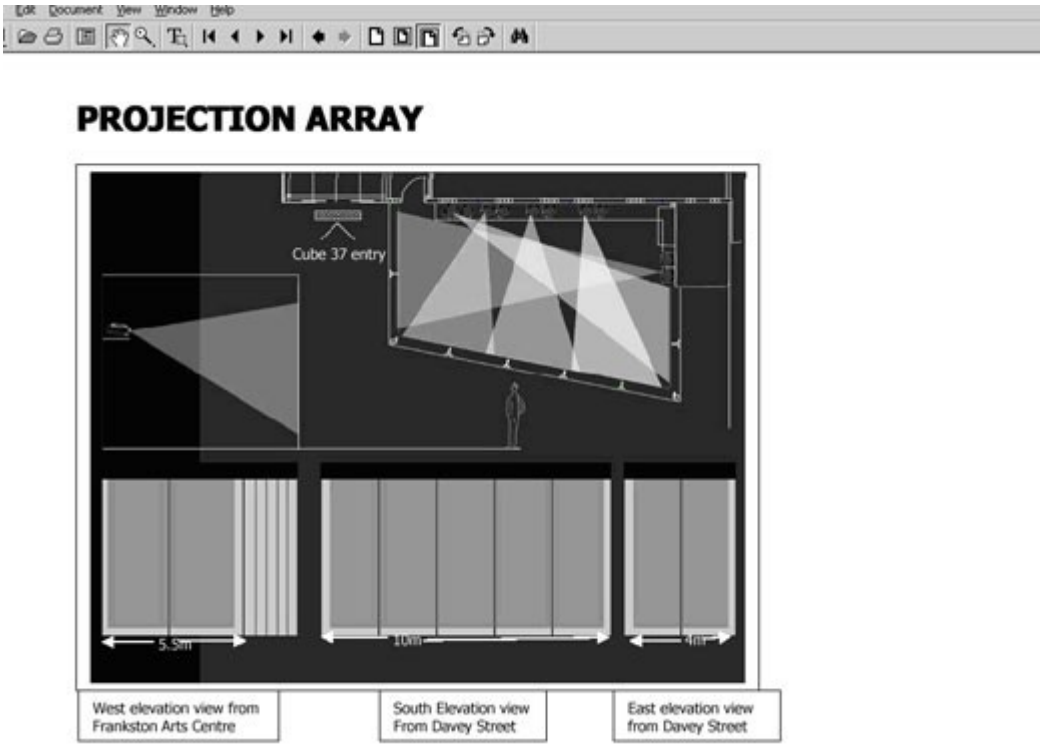
Gallery view of CUBE 37 Glass Studio

[365] Artistic Director and Curator's introduction to *Zones of contact* Biennale of Sydney 2006 pp.44-45.

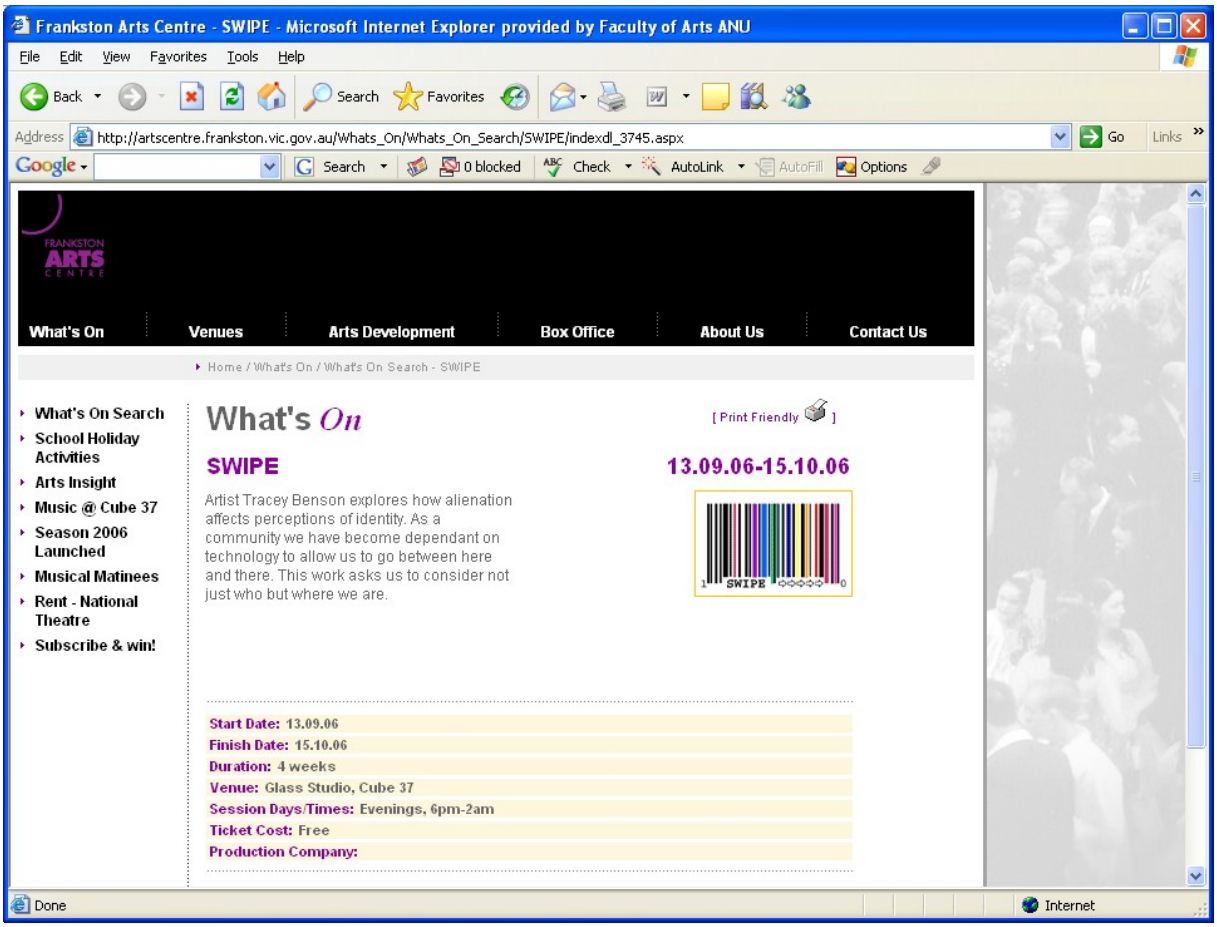
Gallery view of CUBE 37 Glass Studio



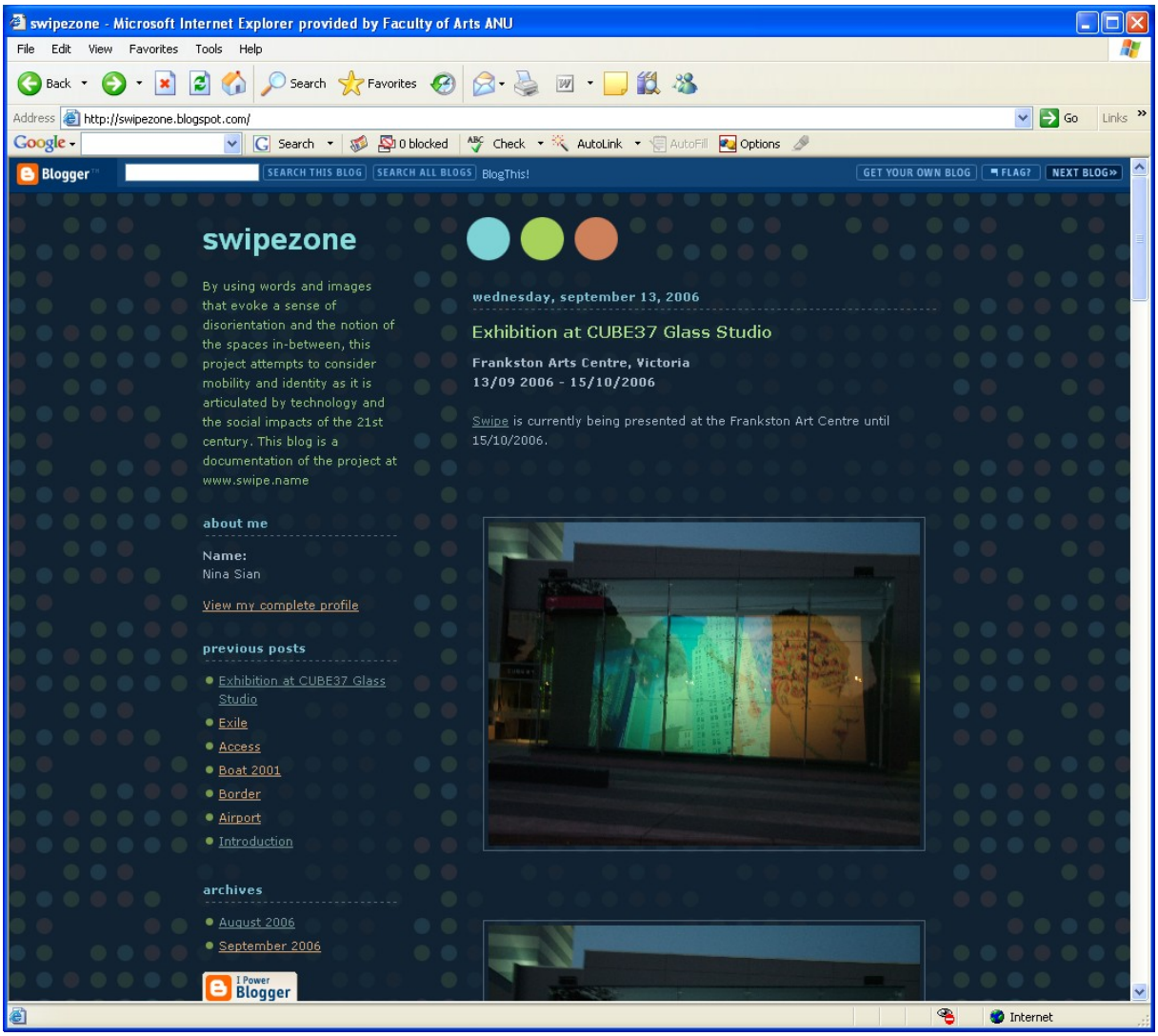
Gallery view of CUBE 37 Glass Studio



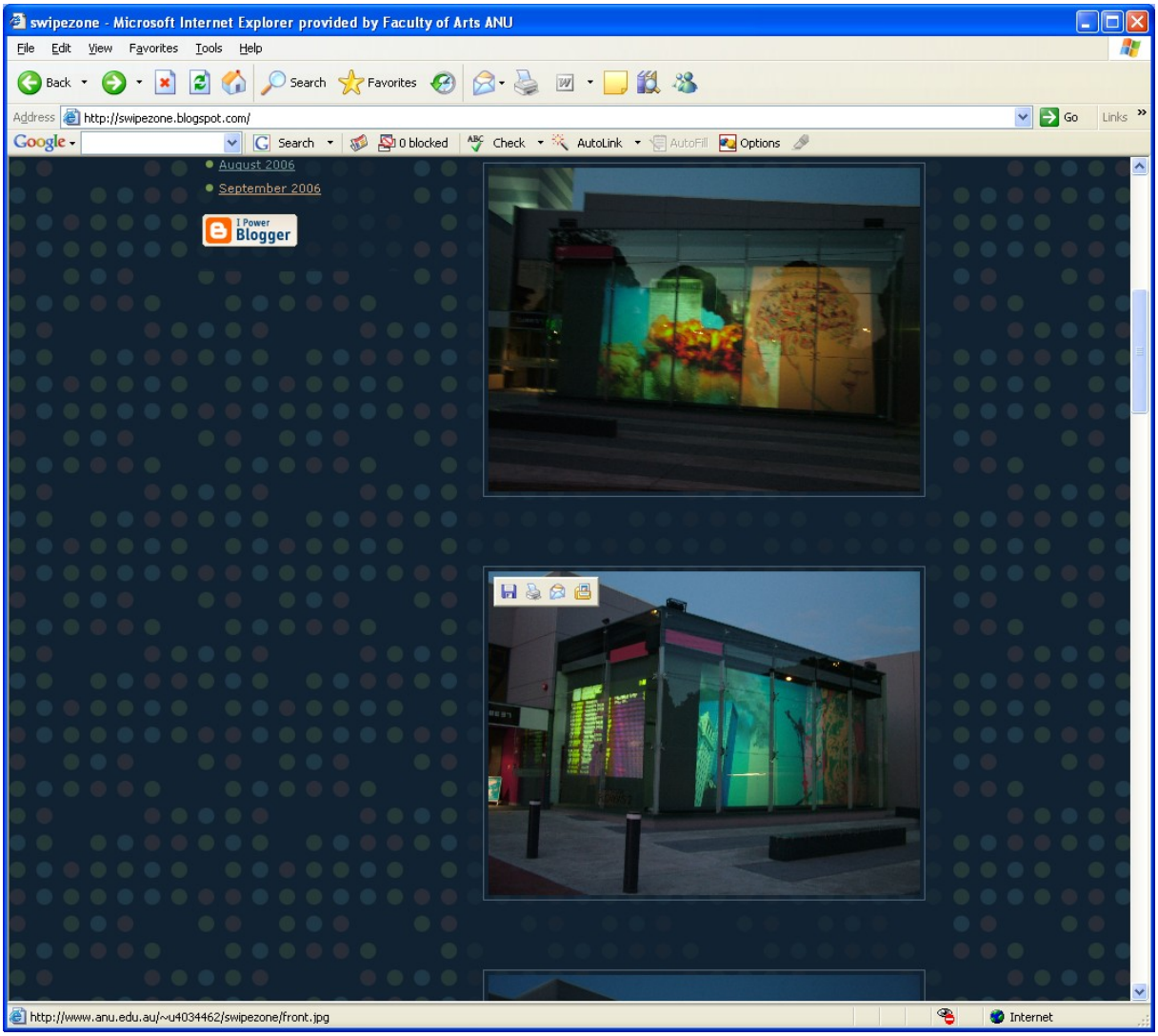
Gallery view of CUBE 37 Glass Studio



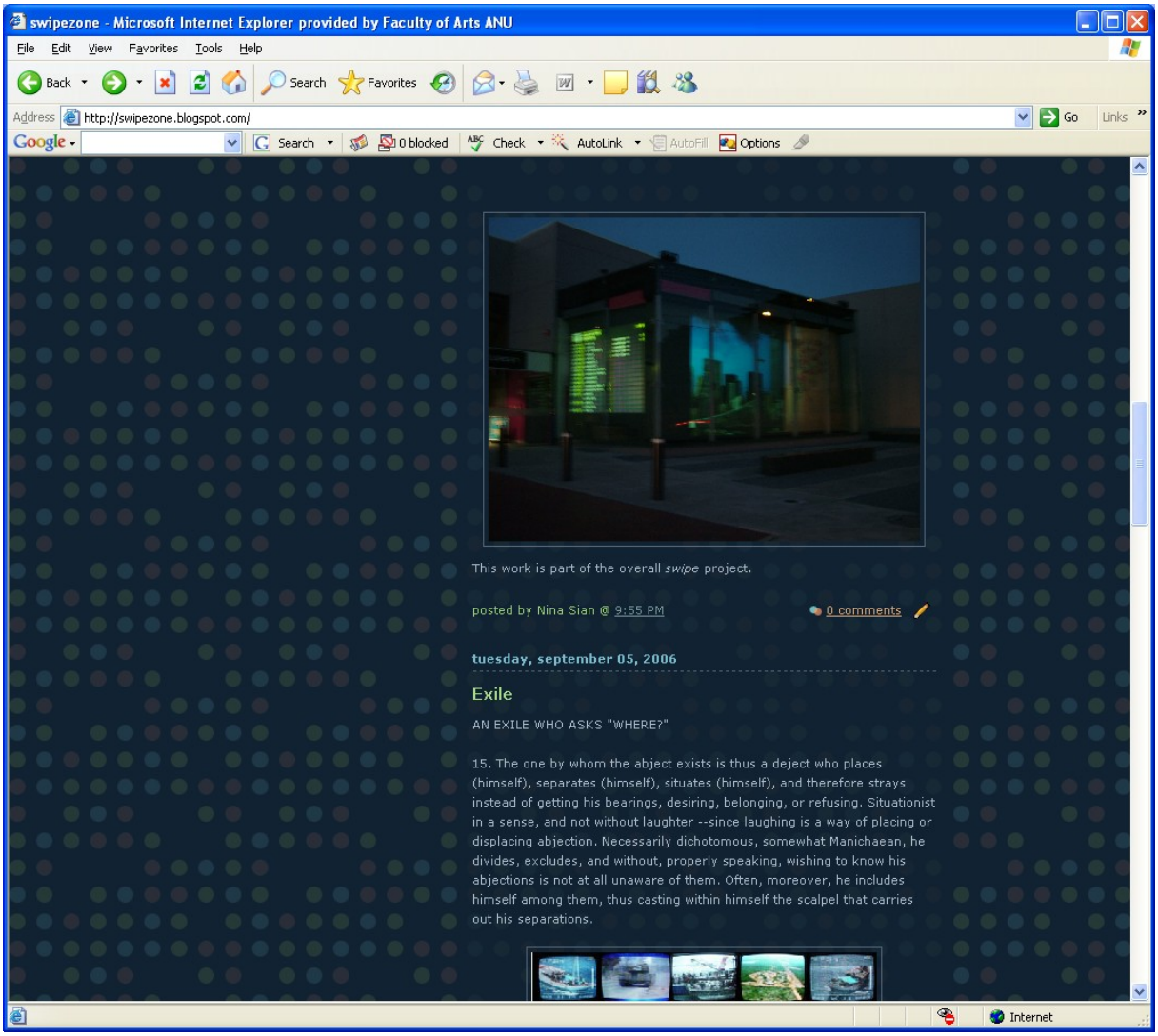
Screen grab from Frankston arts Centre http://artscentre.frankston.vic.gov.au/ viewed 05/09/2006



Screen grab of http://swipezone.blogspot.com featuring documentation of exhibition, viewed 14 September 2006



Screen grab of http://swipezone.blogspot.com featuring documentation of exhibition, viewed 14 September 2006



Screen grab of http://swipezone.blogspot.com featuring documentation of exhibition, viewed 14 September 2006

Appendix 3: Highway of Shame

Background — Journey to Woomera

In September 2001, one month after I enrolled in my PhD program, I was asked to travel to Woomera Detention Centre to participate in a protest against the mandatory detention of asylum seekers. The event was also a protest in support of a number of other issues related to the area around Woomera. It was also a demonstration of support to the traditional land owners, the Kokatha community's ongoing campaign for land rights, as well as a protest to the then proposed uranium dump fifty kilometres from the Woomera township.

The only way I can describe this event is as a life changing experience. My initial PhD proposal was going to focus on online shopping malls and consumption, but suddenly this project seemed to be self indulgent and irrelevant. One week after I watched the twin towers explode in New York City, I witnessed attacks with water cannons and tear gas on people who had no escape in Woomera. I couldn't believe my eyes. The events of September 11 seemed strange and surreal — like the 1970s movie *Towering Inferno* that was only screened a week before. Reality did not seem to kick in; the explosion looked like just another Hollywood movie.

My experience of Woomera Detention Centre was nothing like the alienated feelings of distance I had watching the twin towers burn. As I ran across the desert, my legs did not want to carry me, the tears streaming down my face did not seem like my own, and the voice screaming for the water cannon to stop appeared far away, not arising from my own throat. My body was eliciting its own response, feeling a connection. I did not know anyone in the compound, but all I could think was 'What if my child or my parents were trapped there?', or, 'What if it was me in there?'

After I returned to Canberra, I found it very difficult to reconcile my experience at Woomera with my research at university. This was primarily because, in my earlier work, I was able to weave issues of concern into my artwork by using elements or parody and irony to get the point across. Humour was my weapon of choice. Moreover, in the work, every effort was made to use these tools responsibly — only reinventing images from my own culture, not appropriating other cultures images and iconography. The topic of exploring the human rights issues with asylum seekers in detention was fraught with problems. Firstly, they were a group who had lost the right to speak or be identified (this will be elaborated later). Secondly, how could I present this subject ethically, without further objectification resulting in a dehumanising process. Nowhere could I find a means of using my existing conceptual tools to discuss the injustices of incarcerating these people.

What did start to emerge as a possible vehicle for discussion was the idea of loss of identity. As issues surrounding the formulation of identity had been a key theme inherent in my work for around ten years, this development posed itself as an intriguing departure from earlier work, without disassociating completely.

Creative development

In December 2001, the online journal Ctheory Multimedia accepted a proposal for me to produce a website that explored my experiences of the action at Woomera Detention Centre. This site, titled *Highway of shame* was a documentation of my experiences using a combination of hypertext, still digital photographs and moving images.

The images used in the website came from two sources; some were taken from my digital video

documentation and the others were copy-left images downloaded from the *Indymedia* website.

The final website not only covered the events of September 2001, I also included pages that documented a national protest at the opening of parliament on 12 February 2002, and a page referring to the Woomera2002 protest where detainees were able to escape the compound assisted by protesters.

The main intention of this website was to link words that evoked the events of that day, not in a documentary sense; rather the aim was to relate a personal and emotive response to that day and the ongoing issue of refugees in detention. The word play is cyclical; as to navigate along certain link paths sometimes will bring you back to the same page, as a means of reinforcing certain aspects of the narrative.

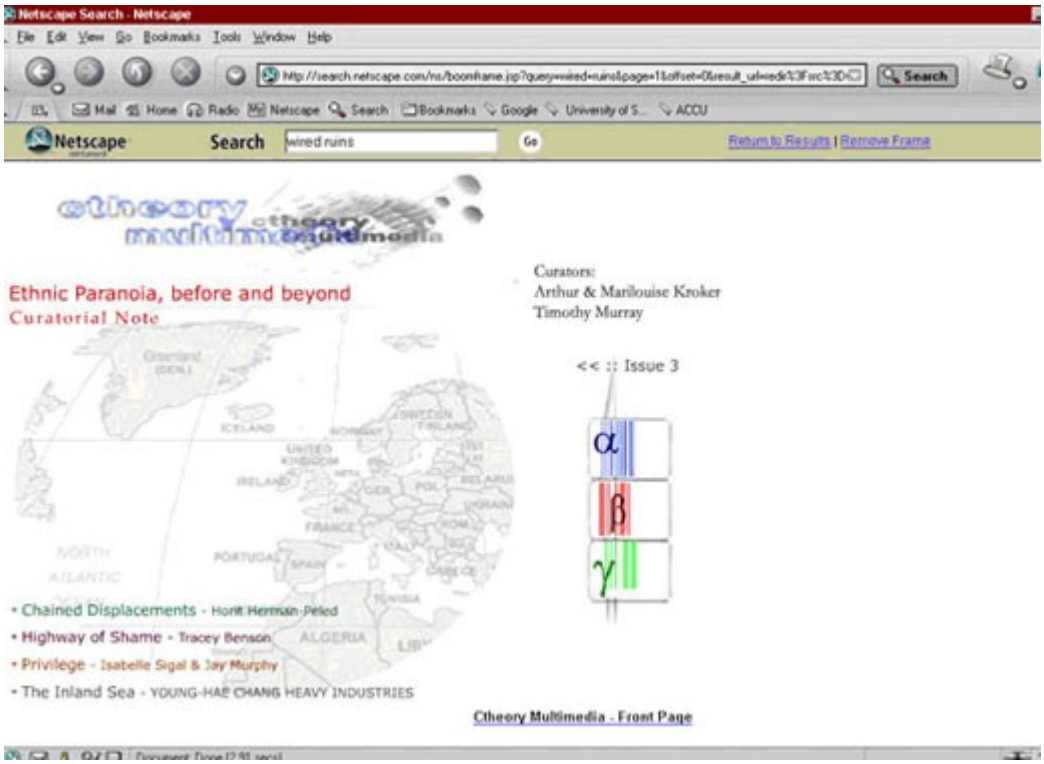
Themes of alienation, displacement and disempowerment were the main issues that developed the project on a conceptual level. However, there were also many positive and proactive word plays to signal that the cause was not futile: hope, community, together.

Navigation design

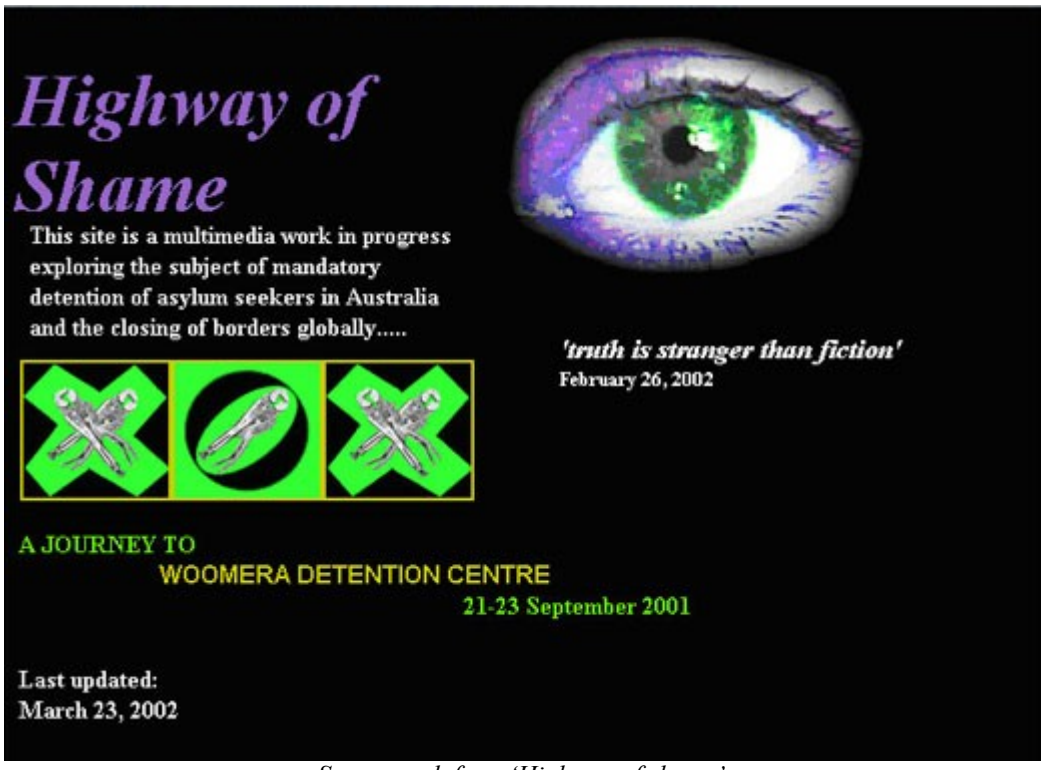
The initial concept for the design of the site was to make the navigation link in a way that users could move around in a layered circle. This way, if a user was on any particular page they would not be able to go back to a page where they had already been — unless they were on the last screen, then they could jump to a range of links in the website. The intention behind this use of navigation was not to necessarily create a linear or hierarchical narrative, but to get the user to focus on one specific section of the story before they move to the next area or page.

This work is the precursor to the major work *Swipe* in terms of concept and approach. As with *Swipe*, the site is built in HTML with JavaScript and CSS. This work attempted to be accessible in terms of compliance to W3C standards, but the lack of user testing before publication saw a number of key issues unresolved before the website went live on the Ctheory multimedia site.

The project attempted to incorporate both history and memory into the narrative, and in doing so sought to address issues related to personal and public notions of experience. After attending Debra Beattie's talk at the National Museum of Australia in April 2005, it was encouraging to know that there was someone else around that was interested in dealing with history and memory, in her online documentary *The Wrong Crowd*.

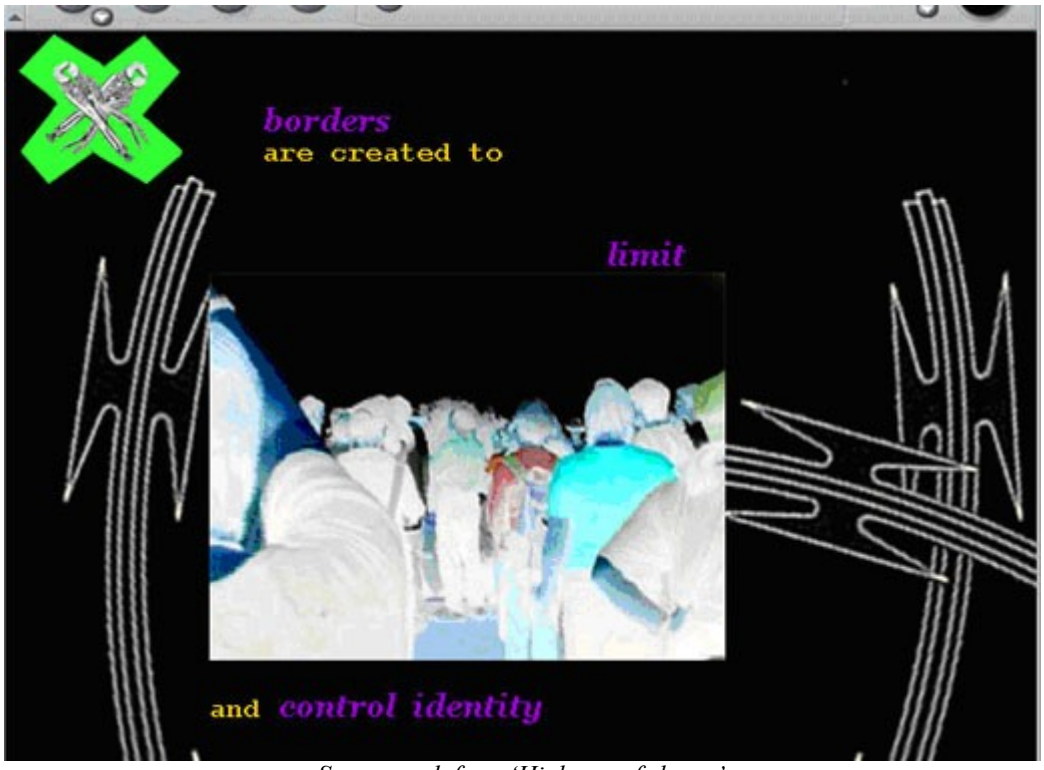


Screen grab from Ctheory Multimedia 'Wired Ruins'

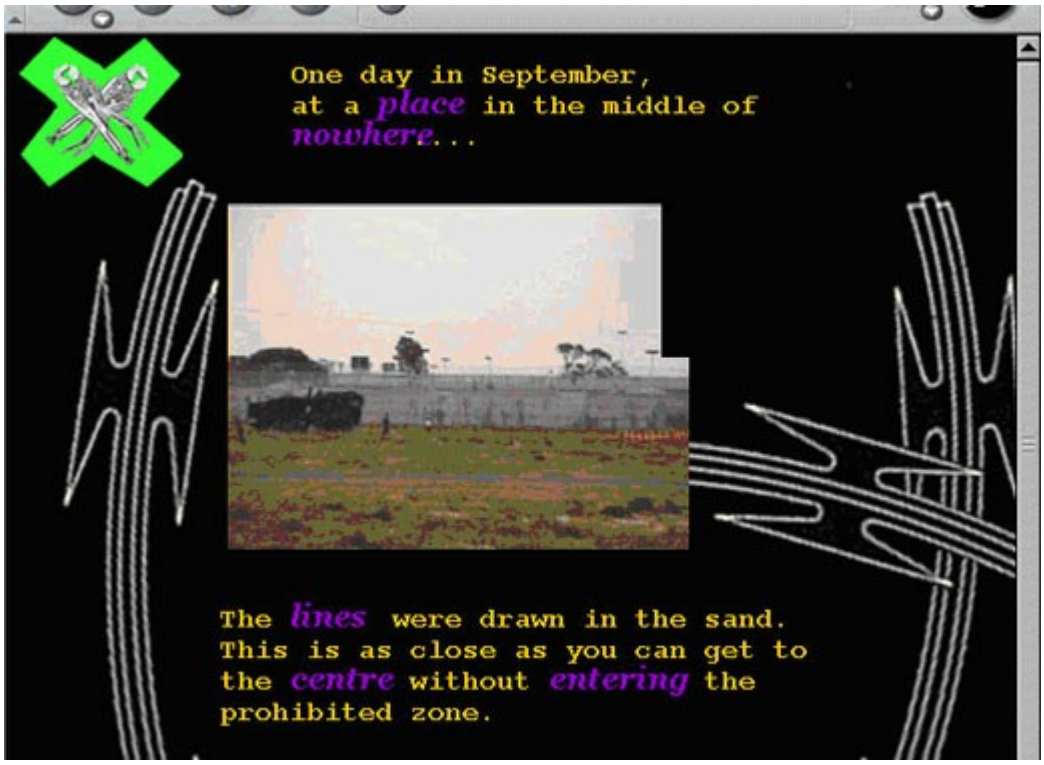


Screen grab from 'Highway of shame'

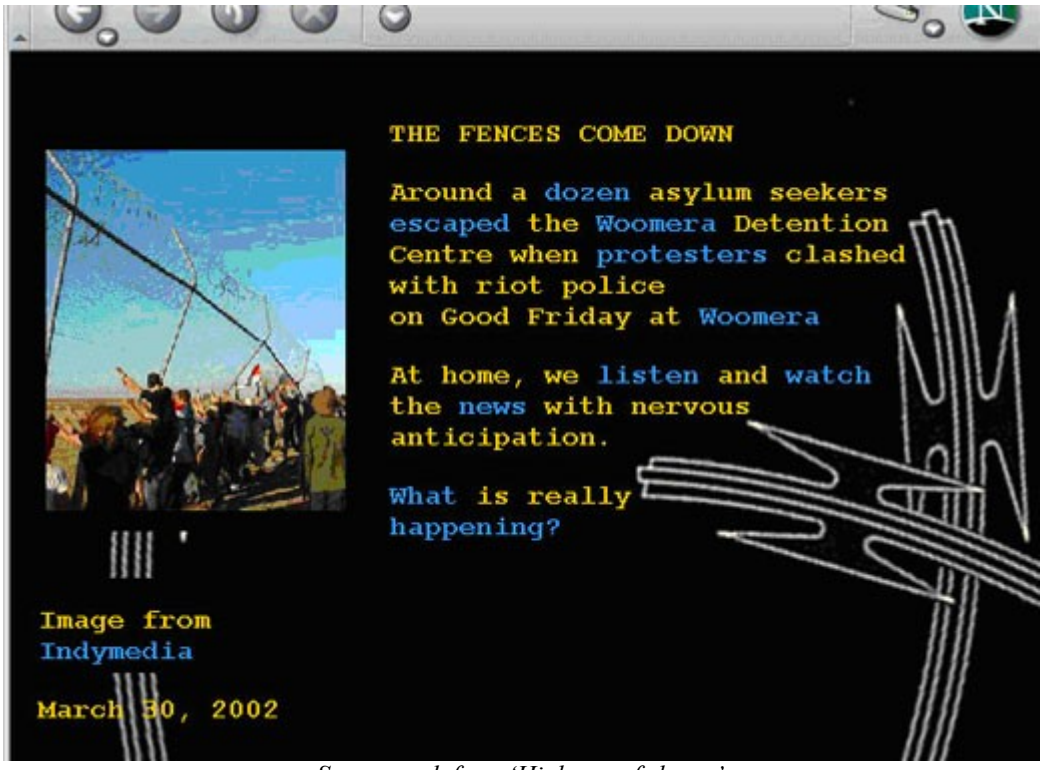
Screen grab from 'Highway of shame'



Screen grab from 'Highway of shame'



Screen grab from 'Highway of shame'



Screen grab from 'Highway of shame'

Appendix 4: Swipe — airports, borders and fences

Overview

The aim of Swipe was to present a range of issues related to notions of loss of identity and displacement. It is built on concepts that were initially explored in *Highway of Shame*, but has extended them into two crucial domains; the space of the personal and the space of the public. The work is seeking to investigate the implications of diaspora and the breaking down of safe, describable forms of identification as a process that creates alienation. There are many cases where the condition of social displacement may occur in terms of social relations. For instance, a change of residence and community often triggers feelings of isolation and lack of security in a previously affirmed sense of self.

On a more political level, a contemporary example of this dissolution of identity can be found in the practice of incarcerating boat people in detention camps. By law, these people are denied the right to be citizens, are referred to by number (much like the Nazi camps), and are not allowed to access services in the community. In addition to these strictures, there are policies in place that forbid journalists to photograph asylum seekers in detention as it may humanise them. This was documented on the ABC television show Media Watch,[366] 7 July 2002, citing the DIMIA guidelines:

> '…will not photograph/film … people in detention …in a way that may be identifiable; noting that pixelling/blurring of faces is not sufficient.'[367]

Swipe seeks to pursue the notion of lack of identity and alienation. The challenge is how does one articulate such a position without being merely descriptive? This work is largely autobiographical, as this seems to be the most ethical way of engaging with this topic. In addition, as a person married

[366] 'Woomera or North Korea' *Media Watch*.
[367] 'Woomera or North Korea' *Media Watch*.

to a Muslim, I am very aware of the divide between personal and public space in every day life.

Although the images and video are largely autobiographical, the themes are directed at experiences that are universally human in nature. Are we all capable of feeling isolated, what are the catalysts for alienation are some of the issues at stake in this work.

Material

There was a range of materials that I used in my final works for my PhD project. Firstly, I built a website using CSS and XHTML, thus complying with international WWW standards for accessibility. The WWW based work was also be largely developed using free coding and software. This is of primarily concern because it is important that the web section of the project utilises software and coding that is freely available and supported by the WWW consortium[368]. For instance, the Indymedia[369] network of websites uses a variety of open source programs.

The screen projection part of this work was presented at the Frankston Arts Centre multimedia space — Cube 37 Glass Studio[370], September—October 2006. This space was ideal for the presentation of *Swipe*, as it faces to the street and is glass on three sides, allowing for multiple projections. This space also has a range of equipment for the work, including three data projectors, three DVD players and ten slide projectors. Documentation of this work forms part of my submission.

[368] World Wide Web Consortium (1994) http://www.w3.org (accessed 24 July 1997).
[369] Indymedia global node www.indymedia.org.about (accessed 11 December 2002).
[370] See Appendix 2 for images of the CUBE 37 gallery and floor plan maps

Context of media

The decision to use the combination of website with photography and digital video is to keep as closely as possible to DYI media reporting methods. There is a widespread use of digital photography, web cams and video documentation of demonstrations and other civil actions on the *Indymedia* network. In addition, the web and DYI media has been useful for many of the artistic and activist groups as a tool for disseminating information on a global level.

My decision to utilise DYI forms of web-based media is informed by its capacity to be accessible to the average consumer. It is not software created for corporate applications, and its functions are largely demystified, as opposed to specialist tools that often seem to be shrouded in trade secrecy. In addition, the cost of many propriety software applications is prohibitive for all except government and larger corporate entities.

I have been employed in a wide range of government agencies as a web manager since 2003 and since that time seen a significant ideological shift away from proprietary software to open source application. This shift has been motivated by the realisation that open source can be custom built to suit the organisation's needs and is considerably cheaper.

Implications of subject matter

There are many interesting and relevant historical examples of individuals or groups who are socially excluded. There is a range of medical subjects that have been considered outcasts — lepers, people with the plaque, aids suffers, to name a few.

People suffering from mental illness have long been incarcerated and treated as sub-humans, as

have people with physical and intellectual disabilities.

Of course, race is another historical (and contemporary) boundary, where the ‘outcast’ identity is defined.

Alienation is also a product of capitalism, according to Karl Marx. It arises because of the distance created between the worker and the product of their labour — as the worker has no claim on the object, even though it was made or created by them. Marx also discusses the role of commodity fetishism as having an impact on people in terms of feeling of alienation and displacement. In a capitalist society, worth is placed on material goods for consumption, and advertising thrives on consumers’ perceived feelings of lack.

The images used in this work encapsulate both personal and public notions of these emotions. This is employed as a motive to override the same feelings that are explored in the work. By recognising that, as humans there are shared common emotions, perhaps a more compassionate understanding can be made of some experiences considered initially to be external to the realms of one person’s or community’s reality.

Swipe — Airports, borders and fences: first draft

A quote from Julie Kristeva in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* about the role of the exile has resonance for *Swipe*:

AN EXILE WHO ASKS "WHERE?"

The one by whom the abject exists is thus a *deject* who places (himself), *separates* (himself), situates (himself), and therefore *strays* instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing. Situationist in a sense, and not without laughter --since laughing is a way of placing or displacing abjection. Necessarily dichotomous, somewhat Manichaean, he divides, excludes, and without properly speaking, wishing to know his abjections is not at all unaware of them. Often, moreover, he includes himself among them, thus casting within himself the scalpel that carries out his separations.

Instead of sounding himself as to his "being," he does so concerning his place: "*Where* am I?" instead of "*Who* am I?" For the space that engrosses the deject, the excluded, is never *one*, nor *homogeneous*, nor *totalizable*, but essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic. A deviser of territories, languages, works, the *deject* never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines — for they are constituted of a non-object, the abject — constantly question his solidity and impel him to start afresh. A tireless builder, the deject is in short a *stray*. He is on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding. He has a sense of the danger, of the loss that the pseudo-object attracting him represents for him, but he cannot help taking the risk at the very moment he sets himself apart. And the more he strays, the more he is saved.[371]

This text and especially this quote articulate the challenge inherent in my research project. Kristeva succinctly articulates what is the antithesis of identity. Notions of identity are formulated around the location of proxy objects as a means of naming self and experience. In this analysis of the exile, we are confronted with the desire for a non-object and the implications of searching for something that is removed from view and knowledge.

What is the inherent difference between *where am I* and *who am I*? How much importance is placed upon a sense of place when formulating a concept of identity? Perhaps the notion of *who am I* becomes more significant once there is a shift from an individual's sense of home. The *where am I* question is not stated in this scenario — rather *who am I* is defined by not being at the familiar locale.

Keywords

Words are potentially much more powerful than images, they have the capacity to evoke history and

[371] http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/wyrick/debclass/krist.htm (accessed 25 May 2003).

mythology in the content and to evoke strong emotions that are tied to sound and etymology. *Swipe* relies on a series of keywords that guide the user, with the intention to create a sense of empathy and co-identification using the word. The keywords focus on feeling of displacement, of alienation and of loss of identity:

> exile, void, beginning, mistaken, crossed, translate, dream, lost, imprisonment, separate, inferior, imagine, access, inherit, denied, loss, time, metro, waiting, family, normal, native tongue, passport, fence, past, border, airport, transit, boat, hospital, alone

These words and pages are also presented in a French Language version as an attempt to expand the readership of this work. The decision to provide a multilingual aspect to the website is also motivated by a desire not be trapped in an Anglo-centric world-view. Whilst I cannot escape the fact my background is European and I am identified as an 'Anglo' because of my Caucasian features and predominately English language skills, I would like to engage people outside of this matrix as readers and contributors to the work.

Cornelia Rau, ethics of media and subject

Early in 2005, the media revealed that a mentally ill Australian citizen had been detained in isolation at the Baxter Detention Centre. Her case for me is significant, as she represents so many of the issues I am trying to tackle in my studio work. Firstly, she is an outcast because of her mental illness. Secondly, she is a case of mistaken identity. However, for me it is the last aspect is the most powerful and evocative. The fact that she ended up in Baxter points to some serious problems in the system and the degraded mental health of detainees in the centre. I state this because even though she had a strong history of mental illness, this was not picked up, indicating that many of the detainees are suffering from mental illness, all, or in part because of the conditions of immigration detention.

In terms of how Cornelia Rau case is going to be interpreted in my studio work, I am highly

conscious of my ethical stance in not representing or speaking for another person because of the capacity for patronising and belittling reading of the subject. The case of Cornelia Rau and the Palmer report is now used as a case for government to address its processes in the field of expert and rules based systems.

Human buttons

For instance, there is a website that documents 'human buttons', by writer and activist Osam Altaee (Sam), an Iraqi refugee living in Lebanon. This site presents images of refugees that are used for raising money as being intensely humiliating and inaccurate representations. Sam clearly defines the difference of social conditions for displaced peoples and those living in poverty.[372] This site for me reinforces the importance of not taking a representational approach. I think at this point in the game, autobiography is the only way to go with this project.

Interface development

There have been several versions for the *Swipe* website interface. The first version used a series of nine rollover images as the main navigational tool. This was disbanded for a number of reasons; it had limitations in terms of creating a complex narrative structure; the colours that were used were also limiting in terms of my capacity to bring in other assets; the images were not largely representative of the sense of alienation that I was trying to convey.

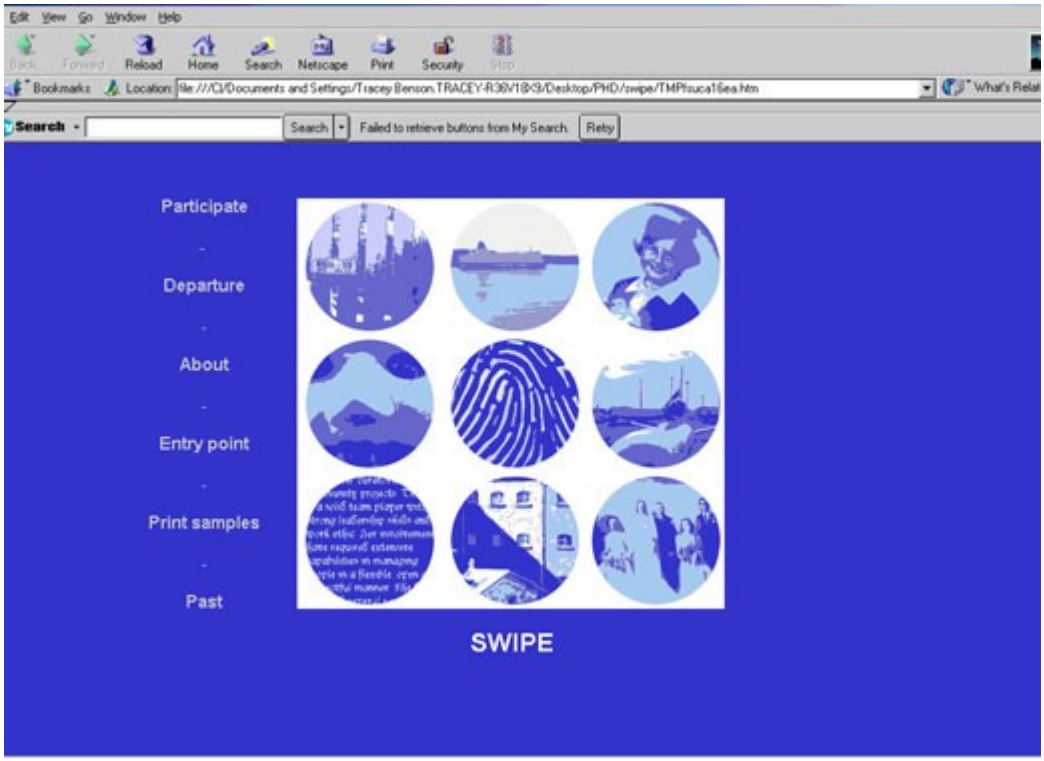
Now there are two interfaces — one for the narrative, creative aspect of the work and another one for the documentation of the project. Once the project is completed, the documentation part of the site will also have the thesis and an archive of images. In addition, the creative work will have animations on each of the pages and will have a web documentation of the projection from *CUBE*

[372] http://unhcr.cyberfreehost.com/human-buttons.htm (accessed 23 March 2005).

37.[373]

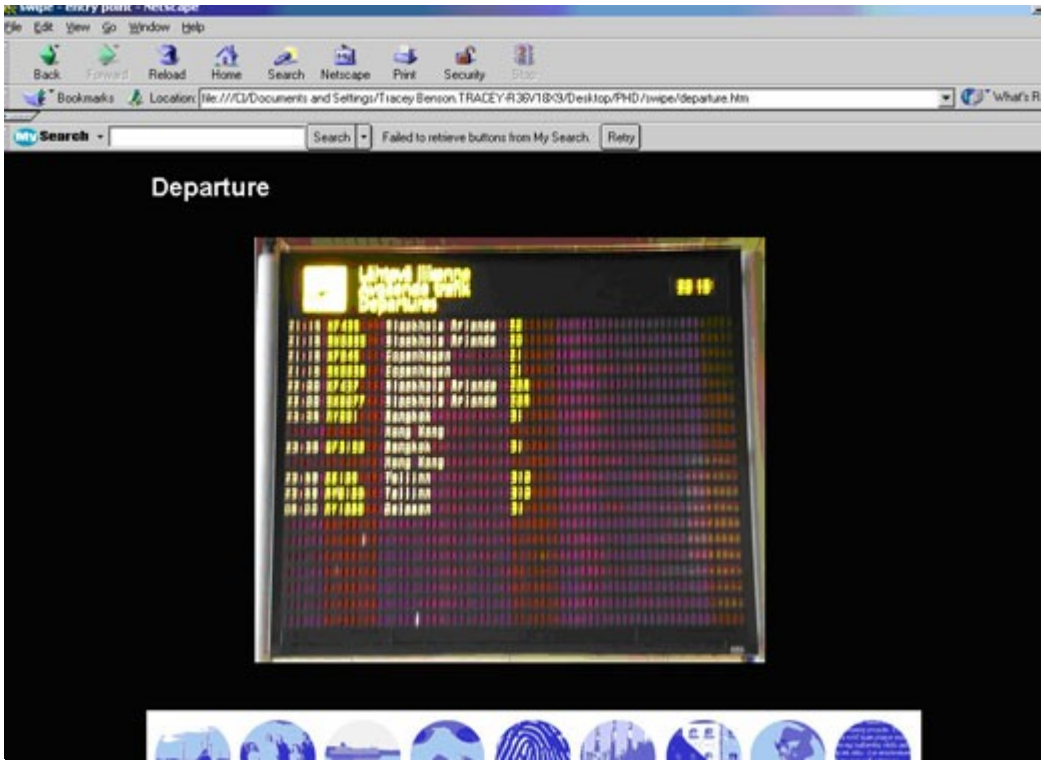
The narrative part of *Swipe* uses a bar code as the entry point to the work. Each of the stripes in the bar code links to a separate page, with each page having a number of third level links. The text component of the narrative is a combination of my own writing and the writing of other authors. On each page is a link back to the front door of the website if the user wishes to 'escape'. Other links in each of the narrative second level pages go to other pages at the same level, so it is possible to link in a non-linear as well as in a hierarchical manner.

In *version three*, the bar code is extended to all of the second level pages, making the navigation more consistent and giving the user more orientation to where they are in the website.



[373] For more information about CUBE 37, see Appendix 2.

Screen grab from 'Swipe' version one



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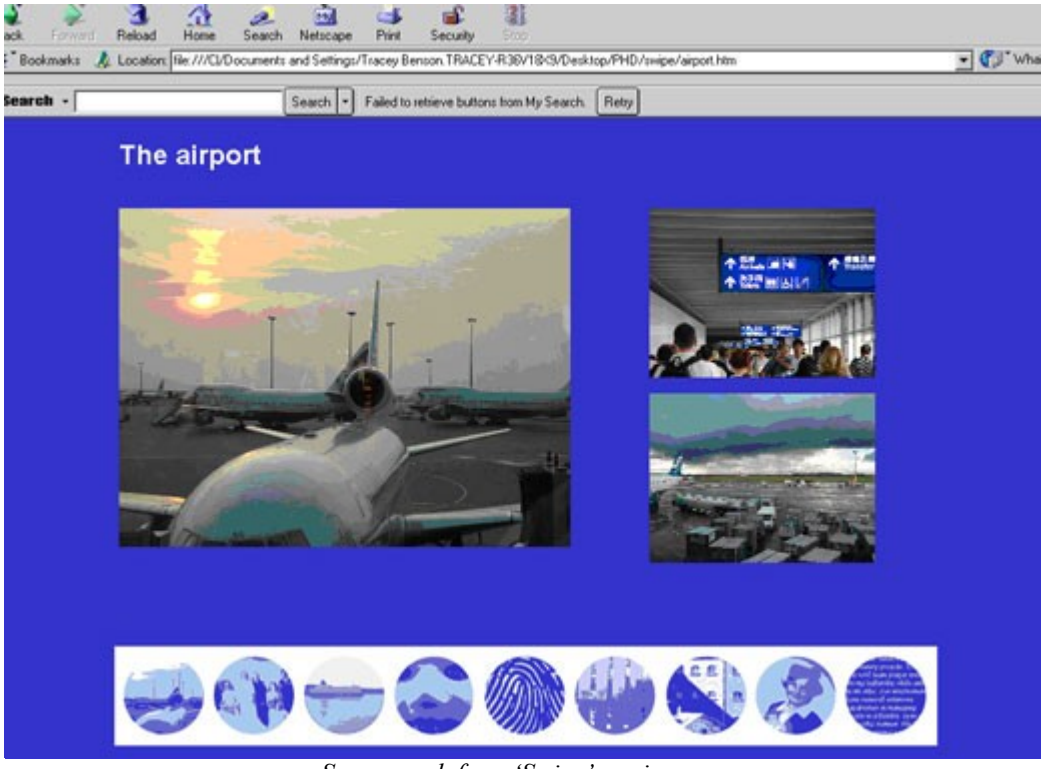

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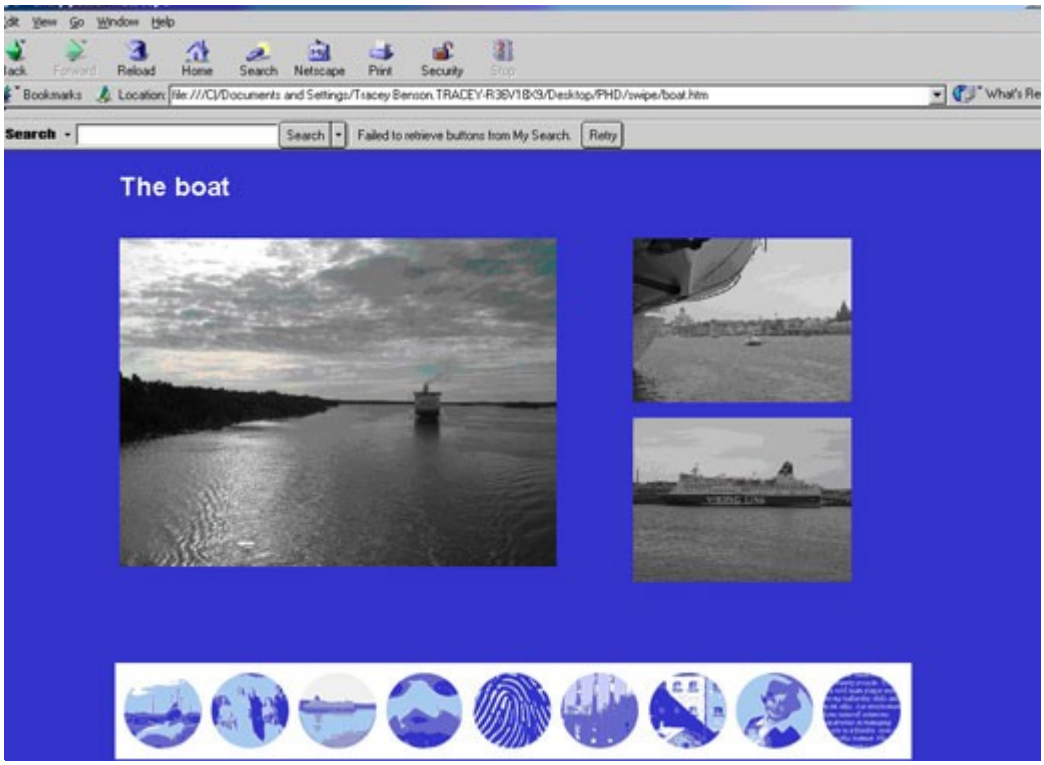

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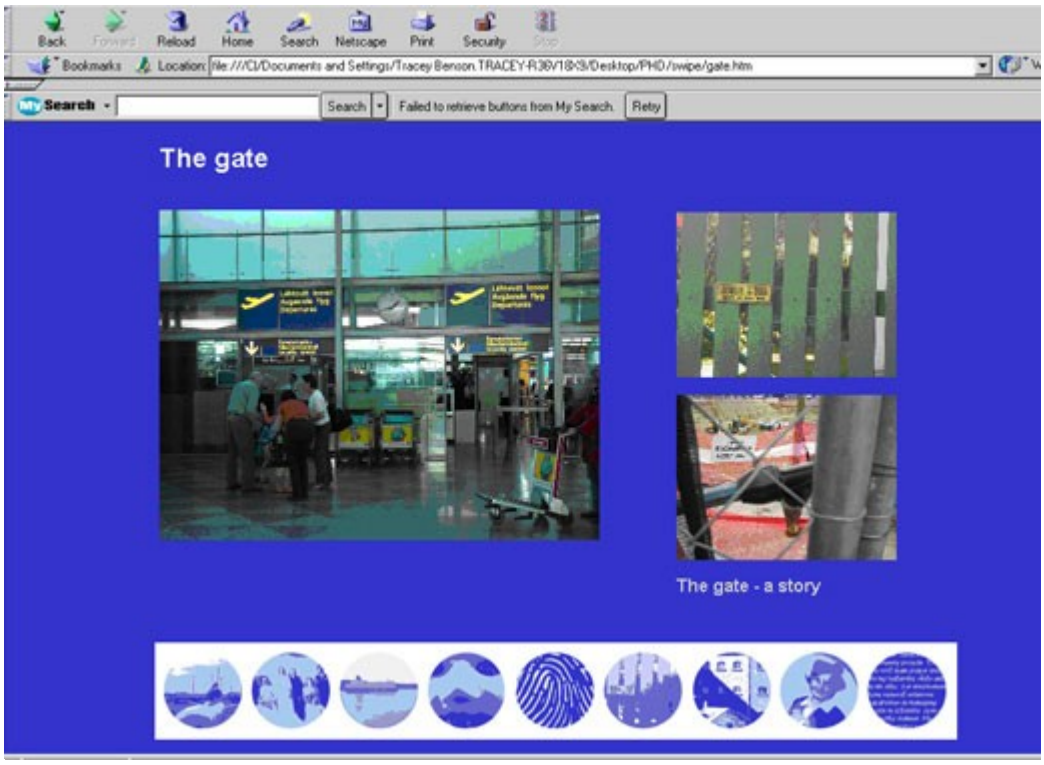

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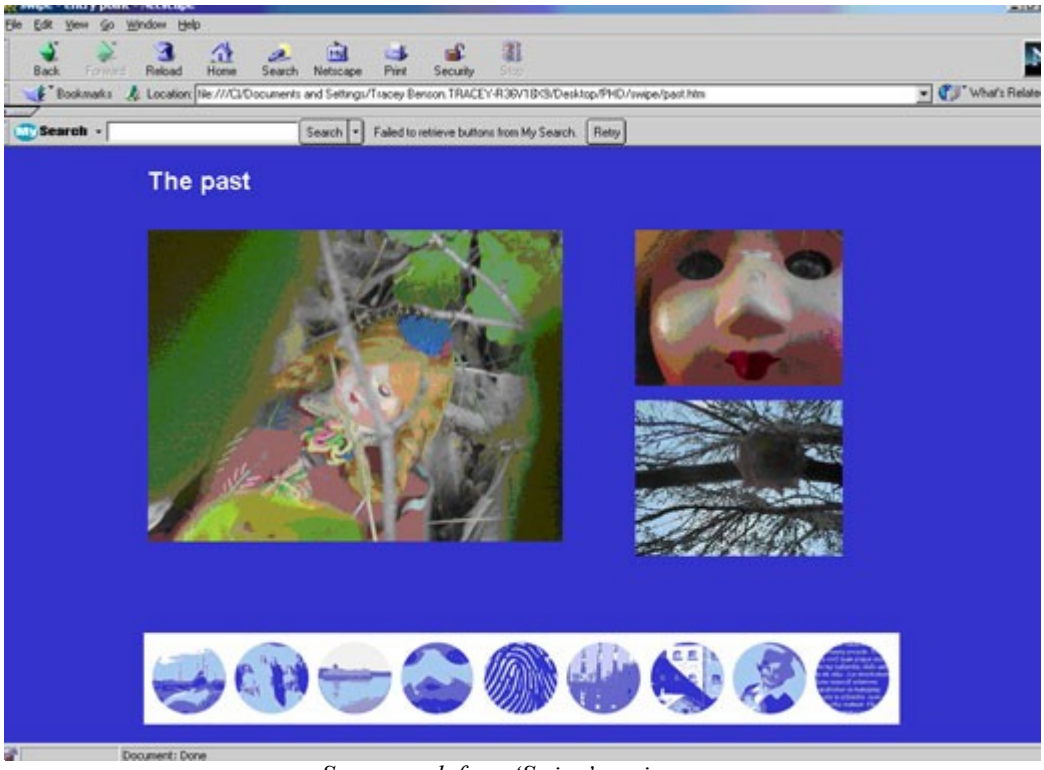
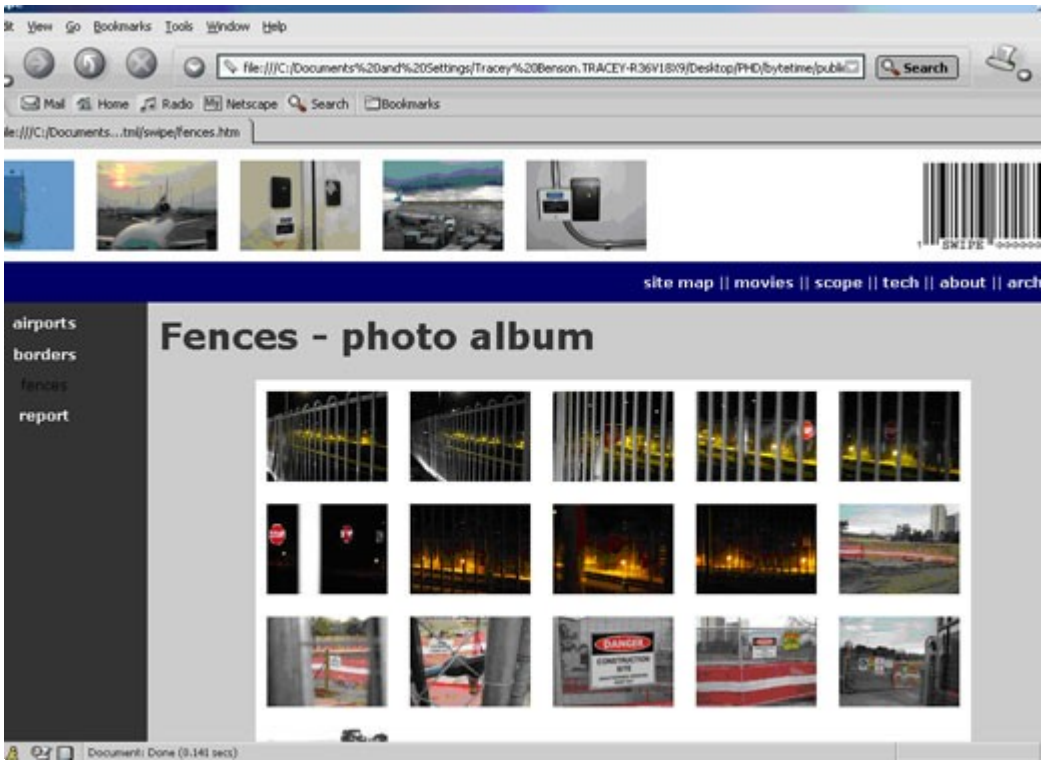


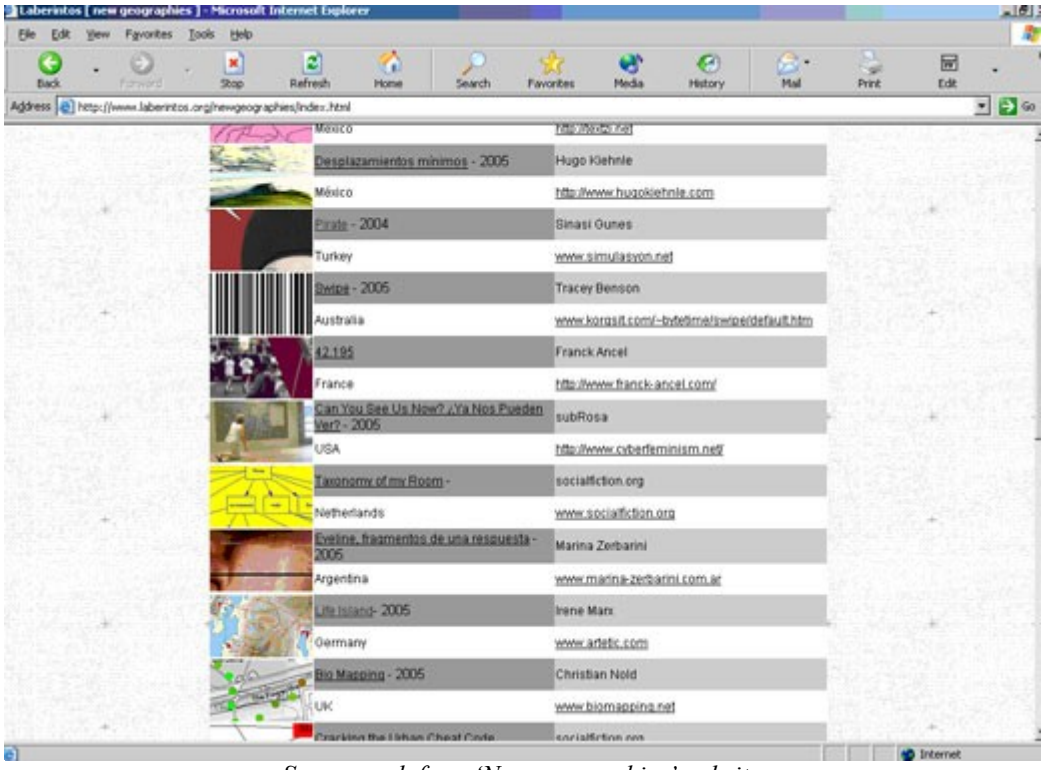
Screen grab from 'Swipe' version one

Screen grab from front door 'Swipe' version two

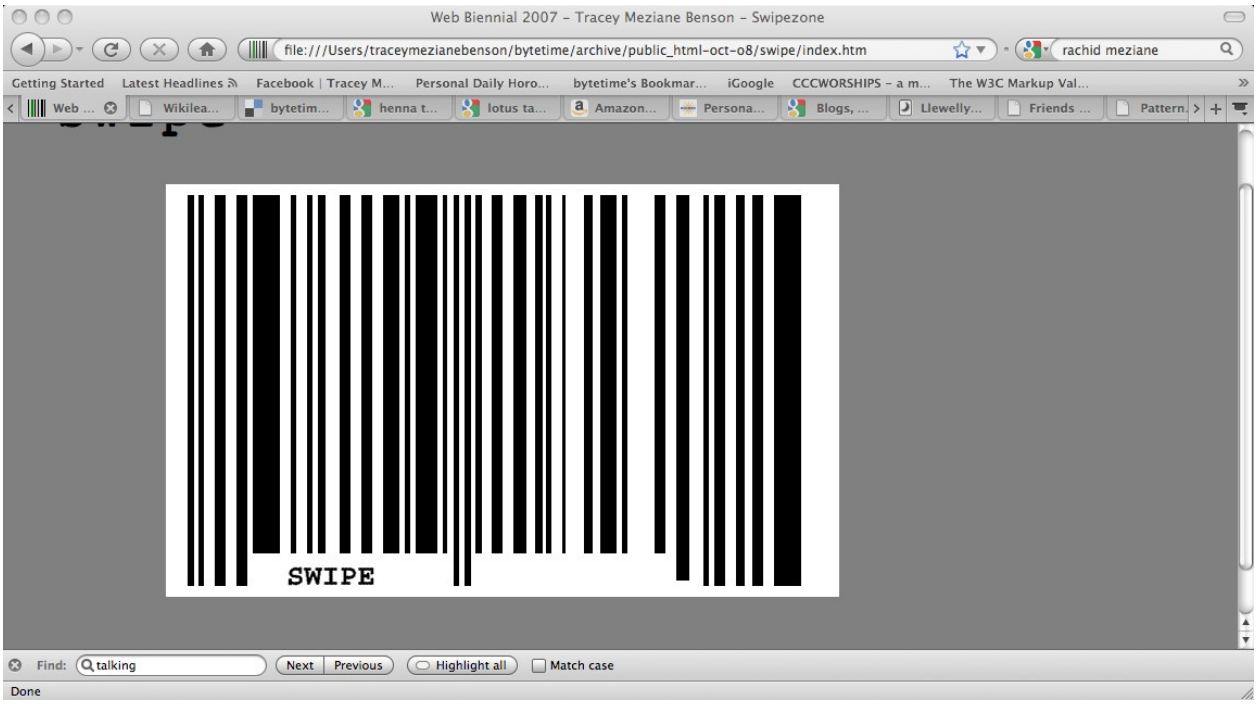
Screen grab from front door 'Swipe' version two



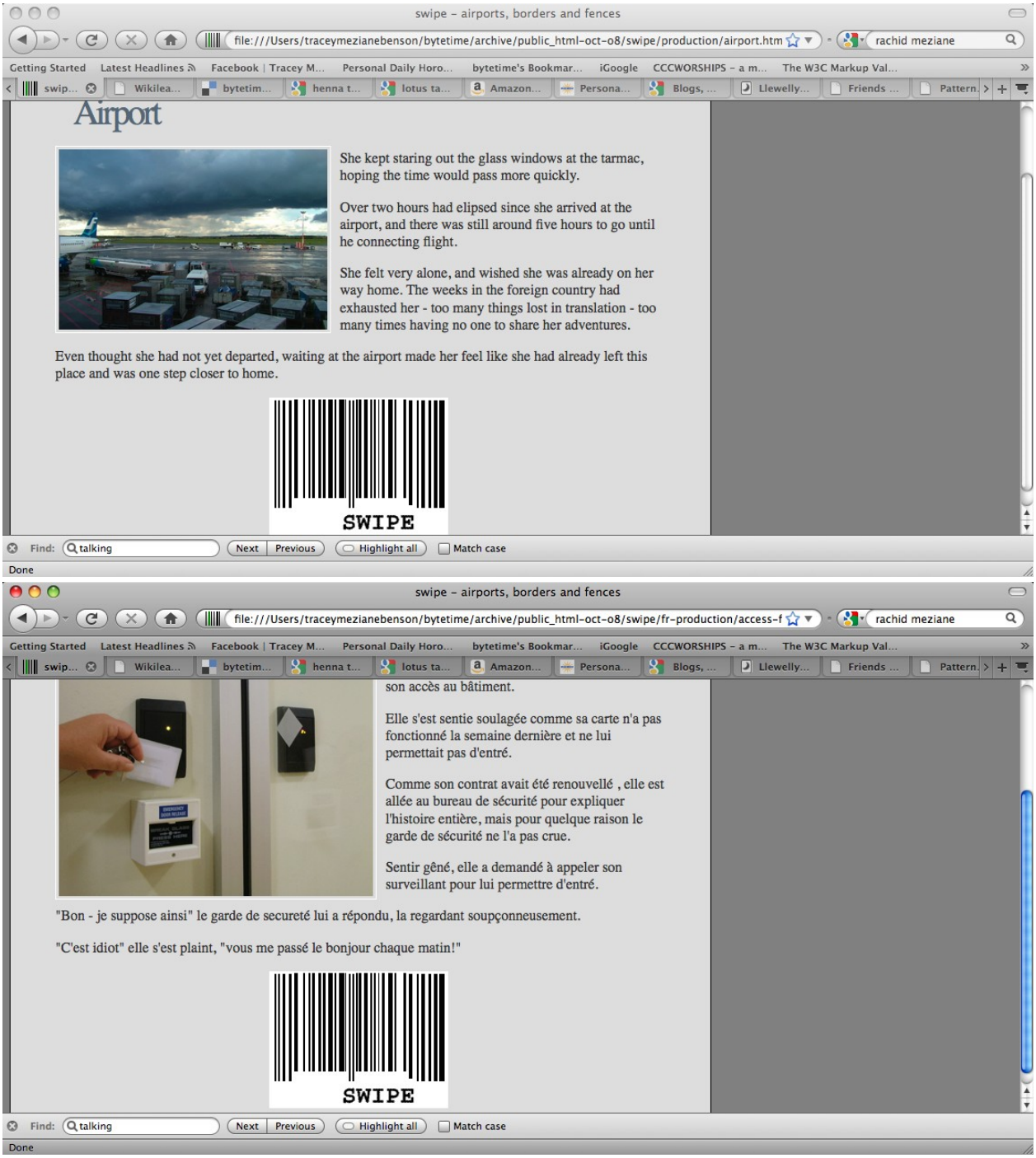
Screen grab from 'Swipe' version two



Screen grab from 'New geographies' website



Screen grab from 'Swipe' version three



Screen grab from 'Swipe' version three

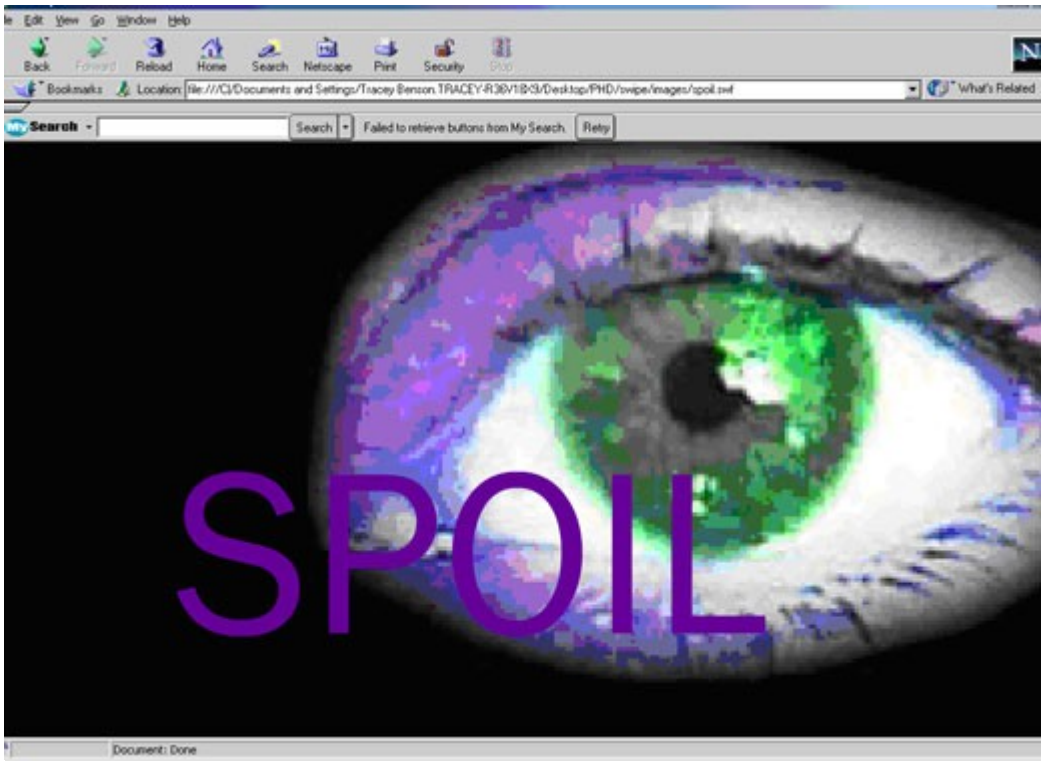
Appendix 5: Spoil

Early in 2003, I decided to explore in more detail my responses to mass corporate media. I gathered a series of digital photos that I took of the news broadcasts on television and created a Flash animation. This animation, titled *Spoil*, was a response to the US led invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.

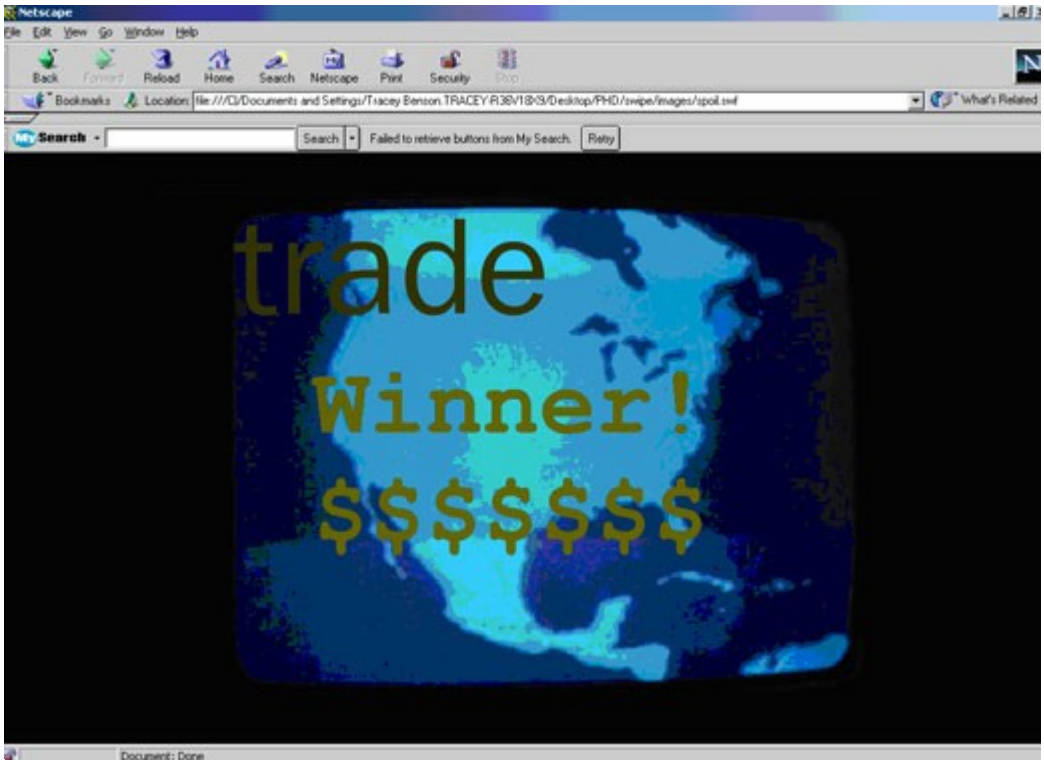
This was mainly an experiment with sound, as I had not played with layering audio bytes in web-based animation in any detail before this point. The sound, gathered from a free audio download site, and attached to layers in the animation, was eerie and provoked feelings of confusion and alienation. This experiment proved productive for building the concept for my final animation work, as I was made aware of the full capacity of Flash to produce sound-scapes.

After my experience at Woomera in 2001, I fully understood the capacity of corporate media to twist a story to fit a preconceived agenda.

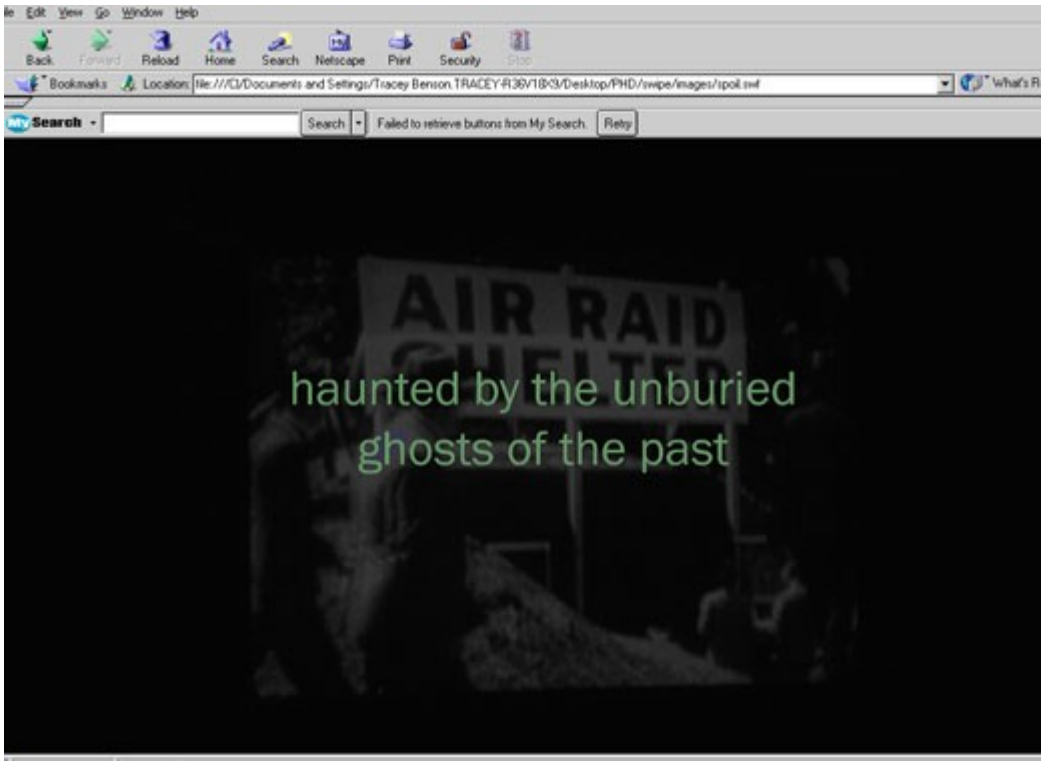
The decision to use images gathered from TV news was an attempt to reinterpret and reclaim the images to construct a narrative that made sense to me as a viewer and receptor of this information.


Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location: file:///C|/Documents and Settings/Tracey Benson.TRACEY-R3BV1B/S/Desktop/PHD/swipe/images/spoil.swf
What's Related
Search
Search
Failed to retrieve buttons from My Search.
Retry
SPOIL
Document: Done

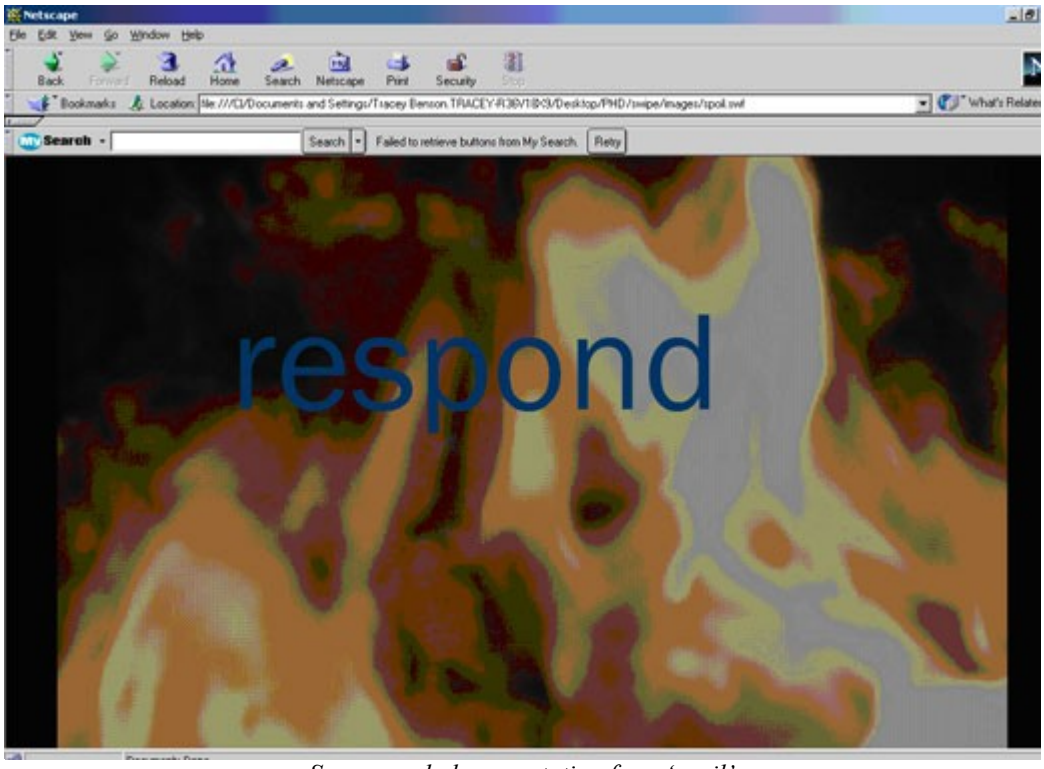
Screen grab documentation from 'spoil'



Screen grab documentation from 'spoil'



Screen grab documentation from 'spoil'



Screen grab documentation from 'spoil'

Appendix 6: Technical Challenges

In many ways, the technical aspects have shaped the conceptual issues inherent in the development of this work and vice versa. This is primarily because of my technical and conceptual concern with producing work that was accessible in terms of adherence with the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) and W3C standards. This particular criterion would enable the web based aspect of the work to be available to the widest possible audience, and, inclusive of users with visual impairments and/or older browsers.

The main core of this research led me to adopt a XHTML platform, where the code and functionality was not reliant on proprietary software to be published. This publishing standard also ensures that the site is compliant with W3C accessibility guidelines.

This is with exception, as part of the website uses Macromedia flash for moving imagery. Flash was also used to produce the video projection aspect of the exhibition.

Since starting my PhD project, I have learnt an immense amount about content management systems, online accessibility and open source systems. This research has further concreted my belief that open source based websites are undoubtedly better in a range of ways. For instance, open source platforms are cheaper to install and easier to update. The code is human readable and is not subject to the limitations of proprietary based content systems. Coding is easily updated and add new features added without incurring expensive consultancy and implementation charges from the software owner.

In 2004, I attended a conference at the National Library of Australia titled *Archiving web resources*. This was an affirming experience for me as I was made aware of the number of international collecting institutions that use open source platforms to manage their online collections. For a number of years, I have been aware of the significance of open source software as an economical and accessible alternative to proprietary software. The speakers from www.archive.org, the US Library of Congress, the National Library of Australia and many other institutions overwhelmingly confirmed that this is the direction archives are taking to manage web-based content.

On the final information day, there were demonstrations of a range of tools used by collecting institutions. We were shown how the tools work in terms of the interface and database structures and what programming/software is used to drive the individual systems. As mentioned earlier, open source software was a key component of these tools, in combination with Java, JavaScript and XML based languages.

Since attending that conference, I have spent considerable time exploring the back-end of Australian government sites. AGIMO and DCITA both use an open source program *Squizz* that produces clean code that is easy to read. After speaking to the web development officer at DCITA, I was made aware that *Squizz* is not totally with out bugs, but overall, it is a simple program that was affordable, accessible and functional.

Another more program that had positive reviews on *Nettime* by academic and digital design lecturers is *Moodle*. It is a free content management system, which is also an open source program. You can download it from the website at http://moodle.org/. At this point, this program seems to be

the most attractive for me to present my final work. It is a program designed for developing online courses, but I think that this interactive element will be very useful to my interest in having audience participation, rather than adopting a blogging approach.

Copyleft and Open Source

As mentioned in the main text there is a strident resistance to the corporate identity of the WWW. Copyleft is one such example. The term copyleft refers to a non-profit approach of the dissemination of material. From the development of software, to the distribution of documentary and artistic video and multimedia material online, there is a wide variety of different forms of media accessible for research and educational purposes.

This approach encourages the mutual exchange of information and fosters accessibility online. Although Berners-Lee saw a democratic place where the business market could coexist, what has resulted is in fact a divergence. Copyleft supporters recognise the attempts corporate interest has made in closing down access to information, media and code.

Historically speaking, the burgeoning use of the Internet and WWW created increasing litigious issues related to linking documents from websites and email. The enforcement of copyright has become a recent and incremental part of the tightening of the freedoms of interacting online. A range of international laws governing the use of sound, image and software now controls much of what was once freely shared between coders, researchers and novices.

The example of Napster demonstrates the vulnerability of web hosts who use peer to peer networking to distribute and share materials online.

However, there have been significant shifts towards developing projects and materials that are 'copyleft' and/or using creative commons[374] licences. This process builds on the law of copyright but adds distribution terms, giving the right to modify and redistribute the programs code or any program derived from it. These legal rights also bind the user to redistributing the product in the same manner.

The license for copyleft was first distributed in 1989 by GNU (Gnu's Not Unix).[375] It was initially developed by the Free Software Foundation specifically for the development of software and does not apply to any other media that is available online. The success of this licensing concept was exemplified most significantly by the popularity of Linux, particularly RED HAT. Making a program copyleft ensures that the code of material is continually developed and refined, as well as expanding the possible applications available to users.

Another form of copyleft licensing is the application of the Design Science License. This is "not a specialized license that only applies to certain kinds of works or subject matter, or only for the products of a particular organization, but it is a comprehensive, generalized license that can be used for any work recognized by copyright law. And under terms of the licensing, samples of a work may be used *in other types of works*. No other licensing, including "free software" licensing, currently permits this. The DSL also ensures that the attribution integrity of a work is kept.[376]

[374] Creative Commons http://creativecommons.org/ (accessed 15 March 2003).
[375] Free Software Foundation (1996-2009) "GNU Operating System" www.gnu.org (accessed 10 February 2003).
[376] Free Software Foundation (1996-2009) "GNU Operating System: What is copyleft" http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/ (accessed 10 February 2003).

The claiming of Intellectual Property rights is another means of placing limits on the dissemination of online materials. Large multinational corporations foster this type of legislation in particular as a strict point of law. That is hardly surprising, as they are the most equipped to deals with the cost of litigation. The home user who also develops software for work or recreation does not have such right of reply.

Aside from the challenges to presenting work that is accessible and user friendly, my other main technical learning curve has occurred in the area of sound production. I have not had any formal training in sound editing or the creation of sound-scapes, so this area of the research has been very interesting. The use of sound in the flash animations is important to me because it enables a non-sighted user the opportunity to experience the work. The sounds I have used in my research have come from a variety of sources — websites with free sound effects, my own recordings of places and spaces and voice recordings. I have found that Flash is sufficient for my needs in editing and layering sound, as it attaches sound to layers, enabling the relationship between sound and image to be closely tied.

Appendix 7: Woomera or North Korea? ABC transcript

And while we're worried about privacy, the Howard government is particularly keen to protect the privacy of asylum seekers by placing extraordinary restrictions on media access.

If you wonder why you know nothing about the people there, have rarely seen their faces unless they're mutilating themselves on the wire and don't know their stories, then this is the reason.

Journalists:

> '…may not interview any person who is detained under Australia's immigration law.'
>
> DIMIA Restrictions

And photographers and camera crews:

> '…will not photograph/film … people in detention …in a way that may be identifiable; noting that pixelling/blurring of faces is not sufficient.'
>
> DIMIA Restrictions

The Department of Immigration reckons it can insist on this restriction:

> '…in or outside the Immigration Processing and Reception Centre.'
>
> DIMIA Restrictions

The dwindling ranks of journalists with working experience behind the Iron Curtain are familiar with these sort of restrictions. A few of them still apply in North Korea:

> 'Journalists will be accompanied by a government guide at all times. They may not leave the hotel unaccompanied.'
>
> North Korean conditions for journalists

Here's the local equivalent:

> 'An Immigration Officer will accompany participants at all times; participants (and their photographer/camera crew…) must stay with the accompanying officer at all times.'
>
> DIMIA Restrictions

When its time to leave North Korea:

> 'Journalists will show their tapes to the guide at the end of the trip.'
>
> North Korean conditions for journalists

And when its time to leave Woomera:

> ‘Representatives of the Department will view the photographs/film for use with the resulting report/s, to ascertain that staff or people detained are not identifiable.’
>
> DIMIA Restrictions

The Australian media is at last starting to object to this. Channels 7, 9, and 10, the ABC and the Adelaide Advertiser all told Media Watch they were refusing to join a planned press visit to Woomera the other day because of these restrictions.

Grant Heading of Channel 10 told us:

> ‘We made the decision not to go… there were to be no shots of any detainees and any vision that was shot was to be vetted before it was released. It was totally unacceptable that they wanted to vet vision…’
>
> Heading to Media Watch

If you believe the Department of Immigration, it’s a positive benefit to people behind the wire that they remain faceless.

> ‘The purpose of these requirements is not to restrict your ability to report on the centre, but to ensure that detainees are not identifiable in any way in order to protect their individual privacy and safety and, potentially, the safety of their families overseas.’
>
> DIMIA Restrictions

The problem with this is that the detainees have no choice in the matter. It’s compulsory privacy, so it’s no use them sending out pleas like this:

> ‘We request the media to come inside and see the whole truth about persecution of people in the Australian Woomera refugee detention centre. We, the undersigned request the media to be allowed into the camp to interview us on TV, radio and for newspapers so that we can tell our stories to the public.’
>
> The Woomera Petitions Have a look»

No go I’m afraid. Not because the government wants secrecy no, no but because they’re protecting people’s privacy.

This Wednesday the press are invited to inspect the newest camp at Port Augusta with no restrictions at all because:

> ‘…there will be no detainees in the centre at the time…’
>
> Editors alert for 10 July tour

Yes, the Australian press will be absolutely free to report anything they like about the empty

buildings, the empty yards and the empty rooms. Can't wait[377]

[377] 'Woomera or North Korea' *Media Watch.*

Appendix 8: –empyre- guest biographies

Guest bios:

Lucia Sommer is an artist, writer, and activist whose work is concerned with pleasure in everyday life and the creation of critical ephemeral publics. Since 1994 she has taught art in various settings from public school to museum, and her work has been shown individually and as part of the cyberfeminist collective subRosa in Europe and North America. Currently she is pursuing a PhD in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester, NY.

Claire Pentecost is an artist and writer, engaging a variety of media to interrogate the imaginative and institutional structures that organize divisions of knowledge. Having spent years tinkering in a conceptual laboratory for ideas about the natural and the artificial, her most recent projects concentrate on industrial and bioengineered agriculture, the alternatives and the trade regimes that force one over the other. She has been an active member of the Critical Art Ensemble defense fund (www.caedefensefund.org).

Nicholas Ruiz III was born in New York City. His work has appeared in Noema Tecnologie e Society, Rhizomes.net, Media/Culture.org.au, The International Journal of Baudrillard Studies, Reconstruction, Public Resistance and elsewhere. He is also the editor of Kritikos: http://garnet.acns.fsu.edu/~nr03/

Dr Ben Saul is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales, the Director of the Bill of Rights Project at the Gilbert + Tobin Centre for Public Law, and an Associate of the Australian Human Rights Centre.

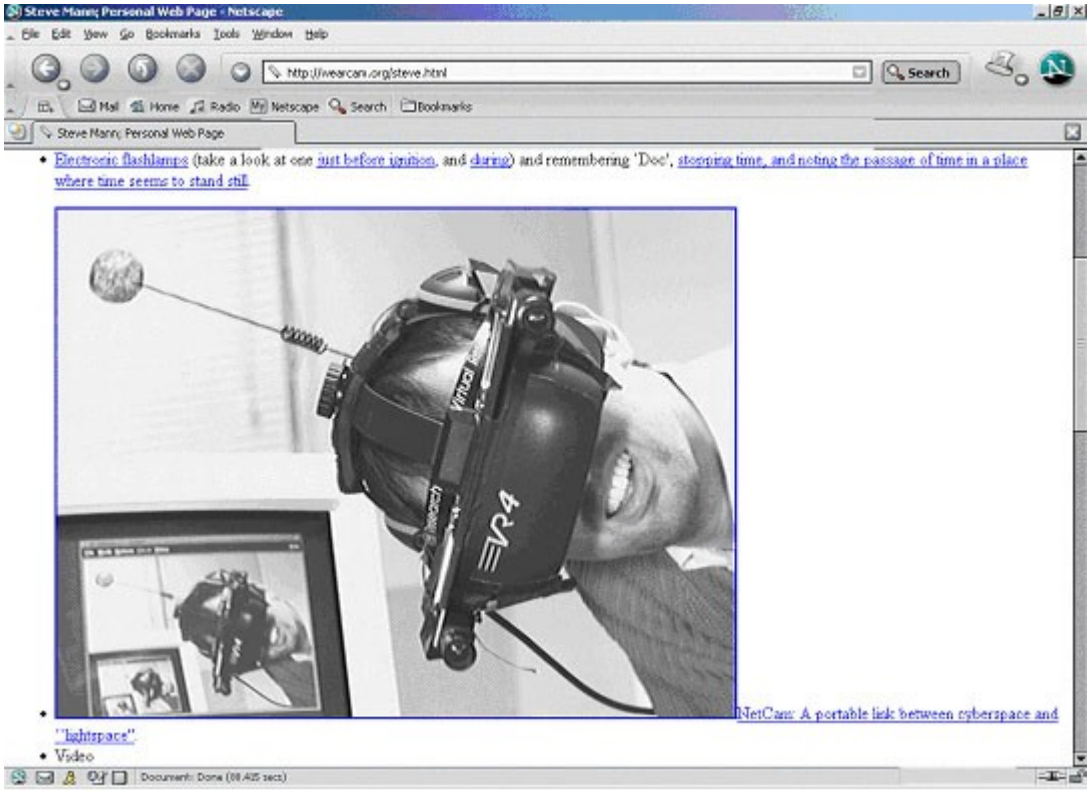
David Vaile is the Executive director of UNSW Cyberspace Law and Policy Centre. Background in law, IT and communications includes public interest litigation, virtual community for community advocates, database development and online education. Teaches Cyberspace Law, manages 'Unlocking IP' and 'Privacy Principles' research. Interests include privacy/data protection, copyright and digital IP, e-health, risk management and user-centred design.[378]

[378] Benson, T., 'Introduction to February discussion on –*empyre*-'.

Appendix 9: Indymedia Nodes

www.indymedia.org	**Europe**	**Latin America**	**United States**	rocky mountain
	andorra	argentina	arizona	rogue valley
Projects	athens	bolivia	arkansas	san diego
climate	austria	brasil	atlanta	san francisco bay
print	barcelona	chiapas	austin	area
radio	belgium	chile	baltimore	santa cruz, ca
satellite tv	belgrade	colombia	boston	seattle
video	bristol	ecuador	buffalo	st louis
	cyprus	mexico	chicago	tallahassee-red
Africa	euskal herria	peru	cleveland	hills
ambazonia	finland	qollasuyu	danbury, ct	tennessee
nigeria	galiza	rosario	dc	urbana-champaign
south africa	germany	sonora	hawaii	utah
	hungary	tijuana	houston	vermont
Canada	ireland	uruguay	idaho	western mass
alberta	istanbul	**Pacific**	ithaca	**West Asia**
hamilton	italy	adelaide	la	beirut
maritimes	lille	aotearoa	madison	israel
montreal	madrid	brisbane	maine	palestine
ontario	nantes	jakarta	michigan	
ottawa	netherlands	melbourne	milwaukee	
quebec	nice	perth	minneapolis/st.	(Reference :
thunder bay	norway	sydney	paul	www.indymedia.org April 2004)
vancouver	paris		new jersey	
victoria	poland	**South Asia**	new mexico	
windsor	portugal	india	north carolina	
	prague	mumbai	north texas	
East Asia	russia		ny capital	
japan	sweden		nyc	
	switzerland		oklahoma	
	thessaloniki		philadelphia	
	united kingdom		pittsburgh	
	west vlaanderen		portland	
			richmond	
			rochester	

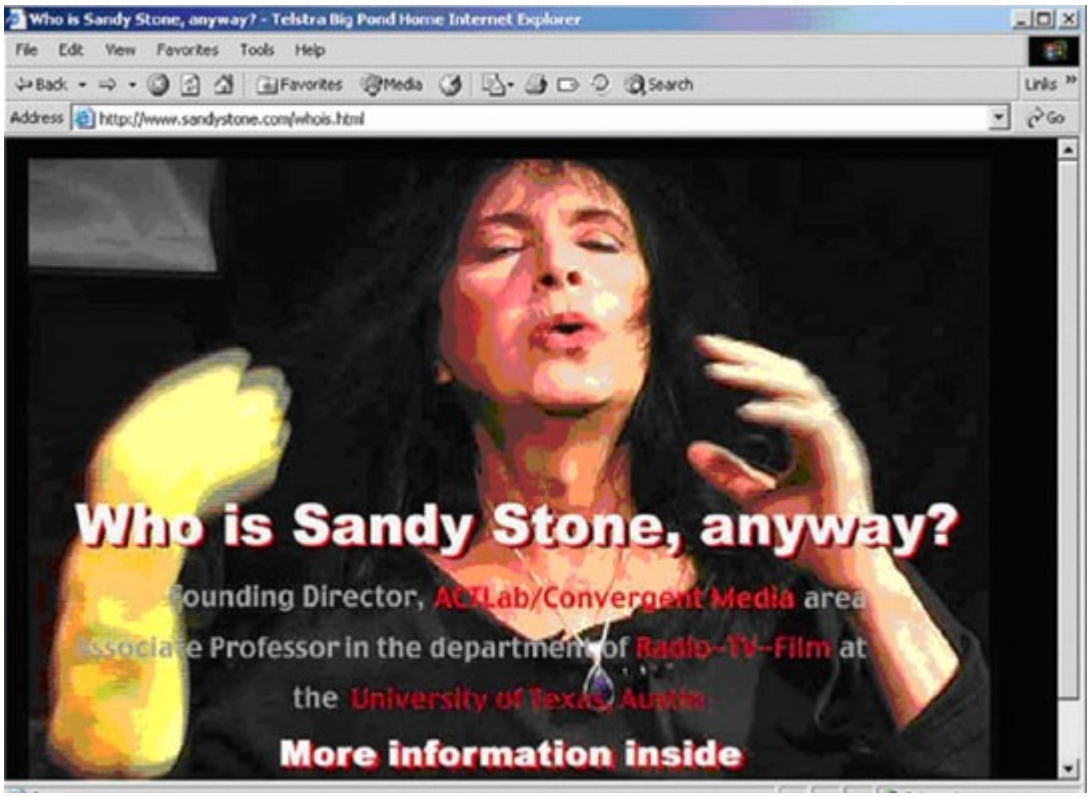
Appendix 10: Screen shots of websites



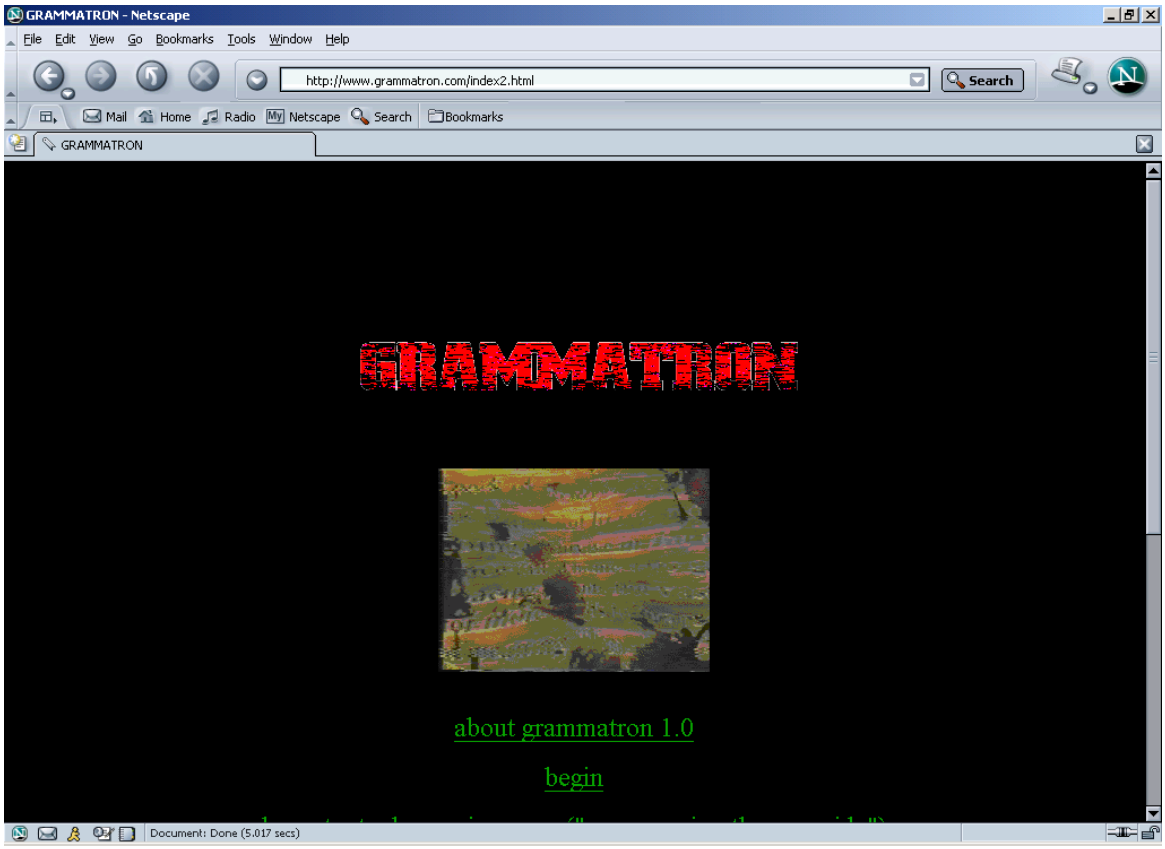
Screen grab of www.wearcam.org website, by Steve Mann (accessed 19 February 2002)

Screen grab of 'VNS MATRIX' website — September 2002

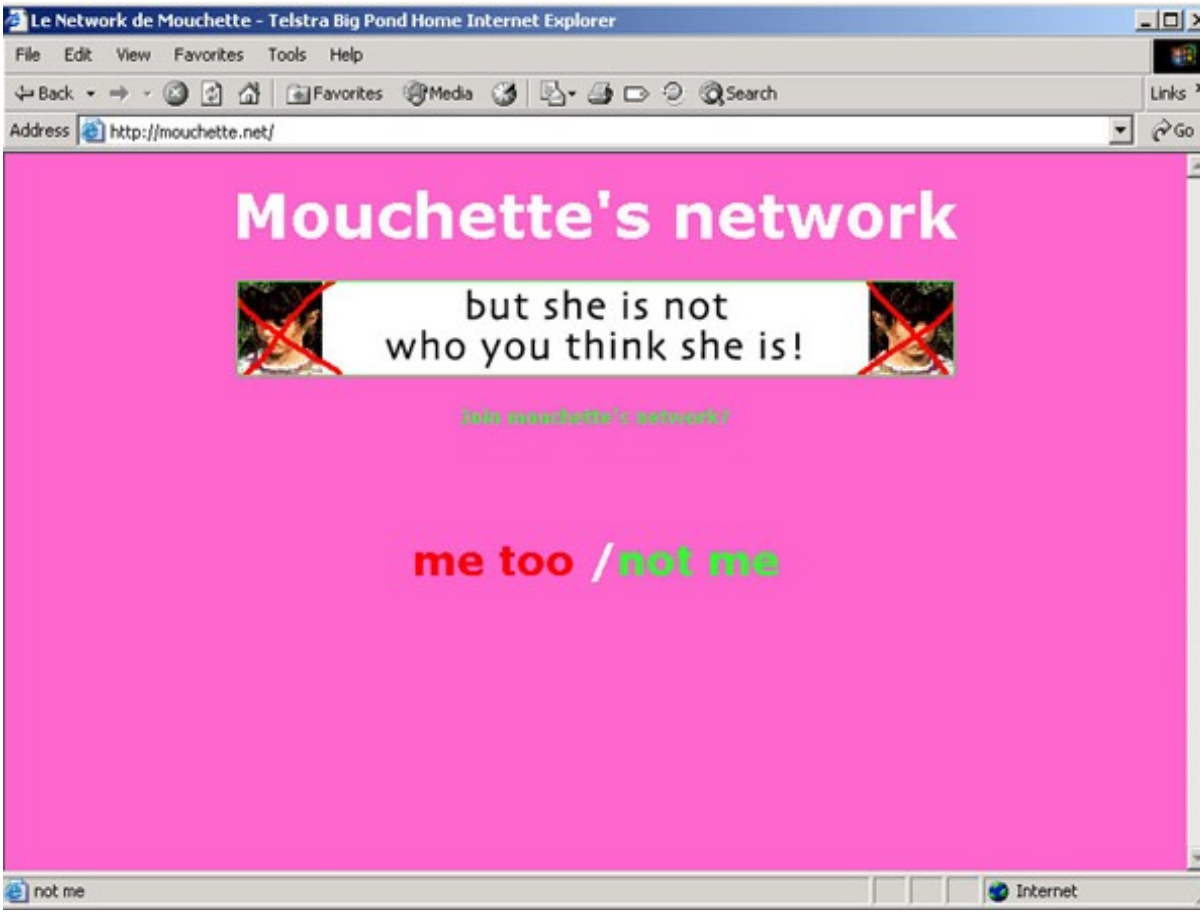
Screen grab of 'citixenX' website by John Halycon Styn



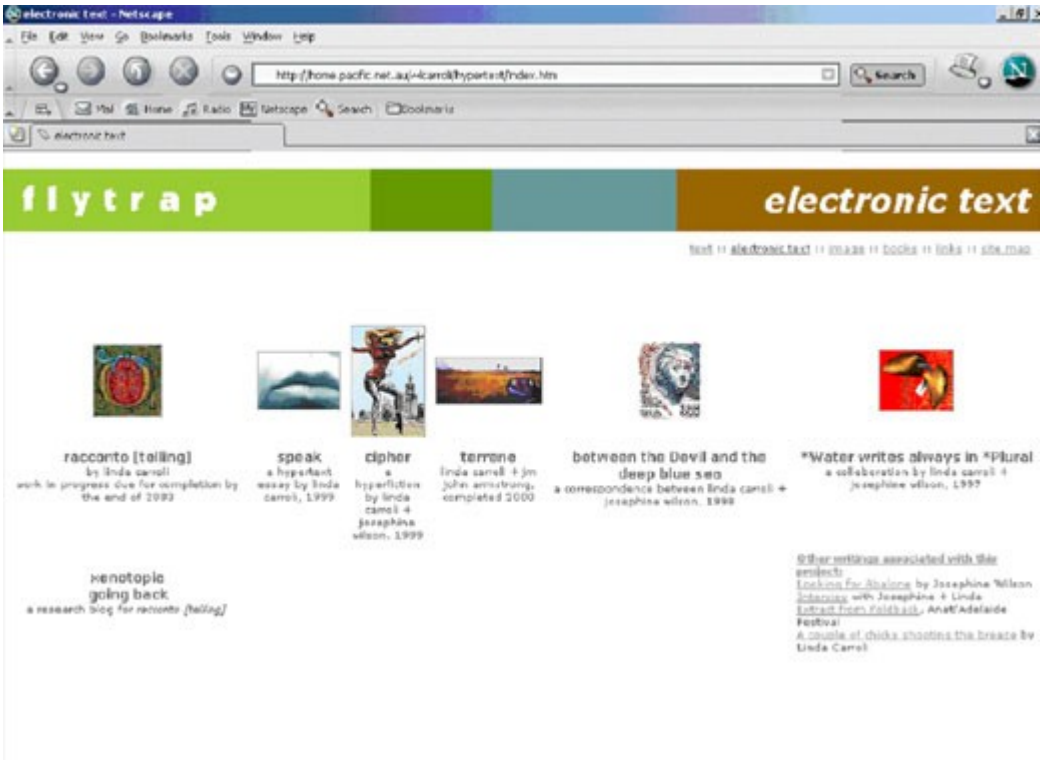
Screen grab of www.sandystone.com, September 2002



Screen grab of 'GRAMMATRON' website, by Mark Amerika



Screen grab of www.mouchette.net



Screen grab of 'Flytrap' website, by Linda Carroli

Screen grab of 'Pink bits' website, by Di Ball

Screen grab of dollyoko website by Francesca Da Rimini

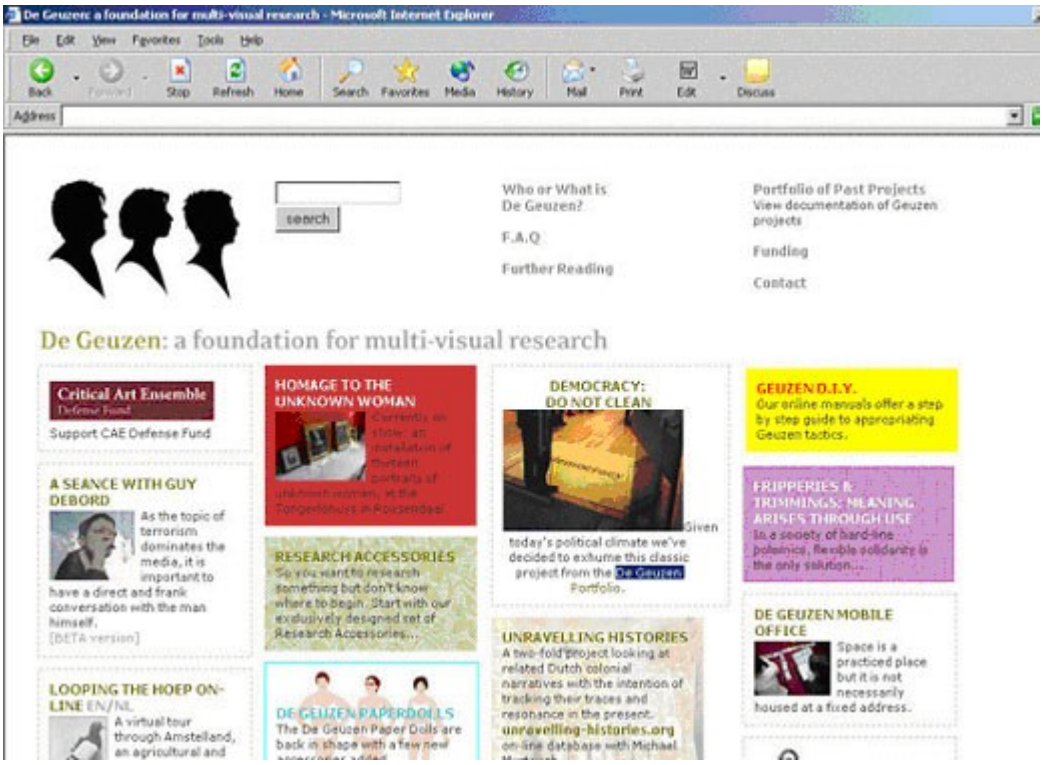
Screen grab from www.cockybastard.com

Screen grab of www.witness.org website

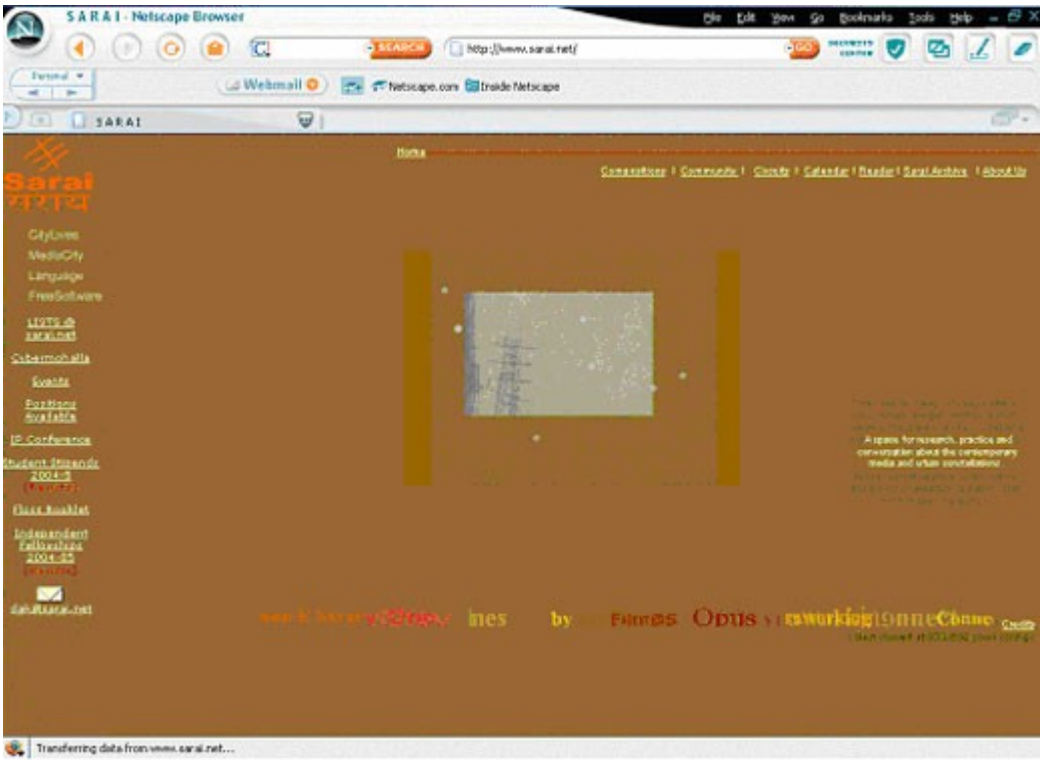
Screen grab of www.rawa.org website, September 2003

Screen grab of www.n5m4.org website, September 2003

Screen grab of 'We are all boat people' web site



Screen grab of www.geuzen.org April 2005

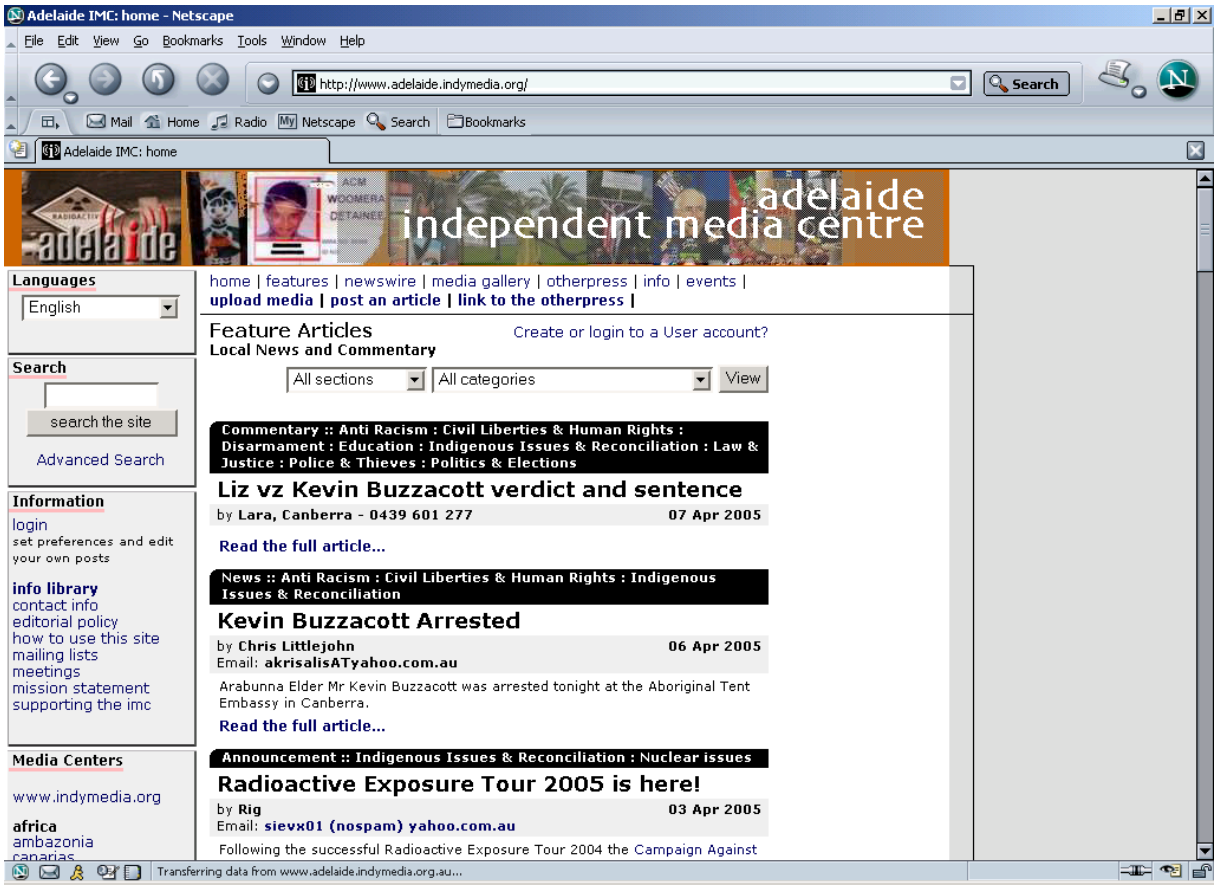


Screen grab of www.sarai.net July 2005

Screen grab from Melbourne Indymedia website — April 2005

Screen grab from Brisbane Indymedia website — March 2004

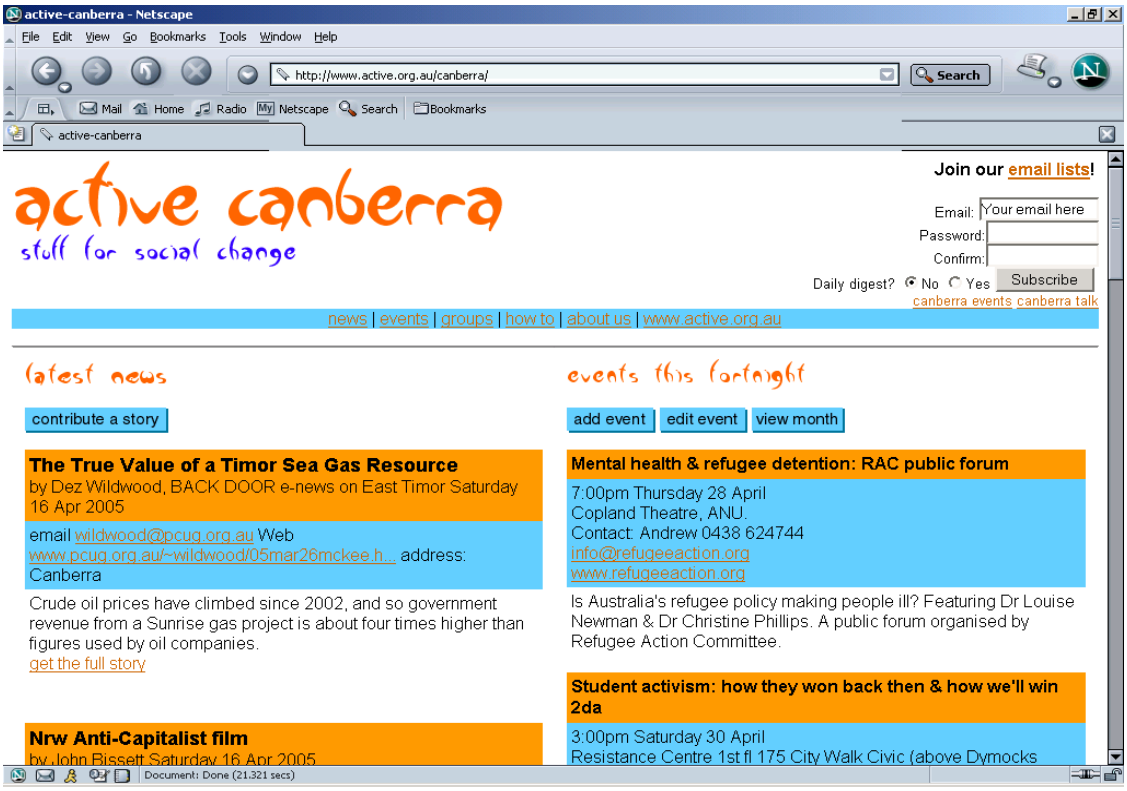
Screen grab from Sydney Indymedia website April 2005



Screen grab from Adelaide Indymedia website — April 2005

Screen grab from Perth Indymedia website — April 2005

Screen grab [from www.2xxfm.org.au](http://www.2xxfm.org.au)



Screen grab from www.active.org.au/canberra