

LOOSE
CONNECTIONS:
MODES OF
UN-RELATING

International conference organized by the Ph.D. program
'Loose Connections: Collectivity in Digital and Urban Space'

JAN 12, 2017 / 10-20h

10:00-10:30 INTRODUCTION

10:30-12:30 SESSION / SIMULATION AND DATA PRACTICES

Chair: Kathrin Fahlenbrach

Losing Track of Certainty – Simulation and the Problem of Convergence

Gabriele Gramelsberger

Vague Matter, Thick Thresholds and Weak Causality: Data Practices in Epidemiology?

Steffen Krämer

Meandering Connections: On the Move with Grindr

Michael Liegl

12:30-14:00 LUNCH

14:00-15:30 SESSION / SENSUAL AND AFFECTIVE MATTERS

Chair: Katharina Liebsch

Neoliberal Structures of Feeling

Ben Anderson

Assembling Noise: The Speculative Ontologies of Sonic Disruptions

Ignacio Farias

15:30-16:00 COFFEE BREAK

16:00-17:30 PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

IMMATERIAL MATERIALITIES:
INFRASTRUCTURES AND THE ELEMENTAL

Workshop by Annika Kühn, Vanessa Weber

With a documentation of the video-sound installation

THE WILDNESS OF WAVES by Nika Son, Helena Wittmann, and Theresa Breithaupt

Discussant: Ignacio Farias

INTENSITY AND ITS ABSENCE

Workshop by Janine Klemmt, Sandra Noeth, Christian Helge Peters

Discussant: Ben Anderson

17:30-18:15 COFFEE BREAK + SNACKS

18:15-19:45 KEYNOTE

On Loose Relations

Graham Harman

20:00 CONFERENCE DINNER

JAN 13, 2017 / 10-17h

10:00-12:30 SESSION / LOCATIONS OF UN_RELATING

Chair: Gabriele Klein

Lagging Proximities, Ambivalent Intimacies

Susanna Paasonen

Entubulating Proximity: Virtual Infrastructures for Mobile Dwelling

David Bissell

Urban Promises: The Power of Loose Connections

Alexa Färber and Laura Kemmer

12:30-14:00 LUNCH

14:00-15:30 SESSION / LOOSE COUPLINGS

Chair: Sina Farzin

Potentialisation as Immune Mechanisms in the Welfare State

Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen

The Mediality of Looseness

Urs Stäheli

15:30-16:00 COFFEE BREAK

16:00-17:00 LECTURE PERFORMANCE

Paralogistics and Improbability Drives

Sibylle Peters

SESSION / SIMULATION AND DATA PRACTICES

Losing Track of Certainty – Simulation and the Problem of Convergence

Gabriele Gramelsberger, Witten/Herdecke

Computer-based simulation enters the field of non-linear problems in science and engineering. It allows a view into the spatial and temporal behavior of complex systems and their future development. Tomorrow's weather, next decade's climate change, new molecules, and never before existing genomes of organisms, respectively, have become familiar objects of today's knowledge. However, the simulated view into the future and into the new comes at a price. Computational science is leaving the traditional domain of certain knowledge and exact computations as it enters the realm of approximate results. Mathematically speaking, simulation only promises the convergence of the unknown exact solution of a problem, it never can give certain answers. Furthermore, computational science is challenging our traditional understanding of causality. Unlike today's unbounding of correlation by big data analytics, which involves new and challenging epistemic problems in itself, approximation poses its own threat to causality. Popularized as "chaos", the non-linear behavior of dynamic systems accounts for non-predictability and non-understandability of these complex systems under study by simulation. This leads to the question, what kind of science and knowledge arise from simulation studies' dominating today's scientific disciplines like physics, chemistry, engineering, and increasingly biology. The paper will explore the epistemic challenge of computer-based simulation and will confront it with the epistemic challenge of big data analytics.

Gabriele Gramelsberger is professor for philosophy of digital media at the University Witten/Herdecke. Her research is focused on the shift of science into computational science by the introduction of computer-based simulation, data-intensive methods, and interconnected collaborative working spaces. She has carried out an extensive study on modelling and simulation in meteorology and cell biology. From 2009 to 2012 she was principal investigator at the FU Freie Universität Berlin of the international research group "Lifelike Algorithms & Cellular Machines" investigating the increasing convergence of information and bio technology.

Vague Matter, Thick Thresholds and Weak Causality:

Data Practices in Epidemiology?

Steffen Krämer, Hamburg

The discipline of epidemiology is traditionally occupied with large datasets and with various actors that are assembled to sense, report and detect epidemics. Most historical reconstructions have focused on paradigm shifts in the underlying causal assumptions, from bacteriology to disease ecology, from infectious to chronic to re-emerging infectious diseases. Against this background, looseness seems to apply to the way the causal web of epidemiology had increasingly branched out. But only few have studied the technological conditions and practices that are involved in making sense of an epidemic as excessive, multicausal and distributed phenomenon. In three vignettes, the talk will discuss technical objects and objectives which might work as attractors or relays for the individuation of loose collectives. Together, they also help to move away from the understanding of epidemics as singular outbreak events and rather focus on the continuous making of alert infrastructures. First, 'vague matter' acknowledges that epidemiology is invested in Big Data research where vagueness is drawn into the realm of possibilities, and yet, vagueness matters differently for epidemiologists. Second, 'thick thresholds' refers to the many different temporalities involved in detecting and monitoring epidemic outbreaks. Third, weak causality counters the idea that correlation replaces the observational frame of causality by stressing that causality still is a primary objective of epidemiologists.

Steffen Krämer is a media practitioner and a doctoral candidate at the University of Hamburg. His work is concerned with the interaction of spatial imaginaries and new and old media ecologies. As part of the research group 'Loose Connections' he investigates data and mapping techniques in epidemiology. Before, he realized documentaries and visualizations for Forensic Architecture at Goldsmiths University London. Among his publications are: Immune Landscapes (2012-, essay film), Framing Excessive Violence (2015, ed., Palgrave).

Meandering Connections: On the Move with Grindr *Michael Liegl, Hamburg*

In classical sociological analysis anonymity and individualization are held to be defining features of the urban and the corresponding attitude of “civil inattention” (Goffman), while freeing individuals from traditional ties, also makes encounters and relationships less likely. One way to bridge this urban addressability gap is through iconic places, which suggest certain connotations or are designed for certain activities. For gay men, such places solving the precarious task of identifying each other in the anonymous urban space were the gay bar, the gay sauna or the cruising park.

Digital technologies such as location based social networks or augmented reality technology render such prominent places expendable insofar as they attach digital profiles to random public elements (such as buildings or humans), providing the passer-by with information in the form of lists about that entity’s mode of addressability. An assumption now is that digital ubiquity leads to an erosion of such ‘real’ and lived structures like the gay neighborhood. But there is also the opposite assumption which fears that such digital platforms do away with anonymity, turning the urban yet again into a form of *Gemeinschaft*, where the loose and fluid relations become fixed.

In our analysis of the location based online dating platform Grindr we argue that those media technologies rather than increasing or decreasing looseness or fixity of relations, enable modes of un_relating where it is always the co-existence of relating and un-relating which together facilitate connections.

Michael Liegl is a Post-Doc Researcher and the coordinator of the PhD Program “Loose Couplings: Collectivity at the intersection of Urban and Digital Space” at Hamburg University. In his research he investigates the interplay of technology, spatial organization and social relations with a focus on the layering and hybridization of online and offline collaboration and ubiquitous computing. Recent publications include: ‘Media Assemblages, Ethnographic Vis-Ability and the Enactment of Video in Sociological Research’ (distinktion 2014), ‘Nomadicty and the Care of Place’ (Journal of CSCW 2014) and Intimacy Mobilized: Hook-Up Practices in the Location-Based Social Network Grindr (ÖZS 2016).

SESSION / SENSUAL AND AFFECTIVE MATTERS

Neoliberal Structures of Feeling *Ben Anderson, Durham*

How does a dominant structure of feeling change and through what forms does it live on? And how do people live with/in and relate to structures of feeling as they become residual? Thinking in relation to the event of Brexit and the widespread diagnosis of the ‘end of neoliberalism’, this paper will explore these questions by considering transformations and emergencies across various contemporary structures of feeling – specifically forms of disaffection and enthusiasm, boredom and outrage, and hope and panic. As such, it considers how neoliberalisms (de/un)form through a series of shared, widespread, affective qualities that temporarily become structures of feeling. By drawing into relation the terms ‘structure’ and ‘feeling’ the concept of ‘structures of feeling’ implies an unresolvable indeterminacy or perhaps oscillation between absence and presence, form and formlessness, coherence and incoherence, and cause and effect. Thinking with the concept in the context of debates about modes of (un) relating therefore changes the kinds of questions we might ask about how something begins and ends and lives on. By staying awhile with various (post) Brexit scenes and situations, the paper will explore the changing intensities of neoliberal structures of feeling amid their transformation in today’s populist moment.

Ben Anderson is a Professor in Human Geography at Durham University (Department of Geography). Over the past five years, his research has focused on how affects such as emergency, hope and fear are part of contemporary political and cultural life. His monograph on theories of affect – *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions* (Routledge) – was published in 2014. Supported by a 2013 Phillip Leverhulme Prize, he is currently conducting a genealogy of the government of emergencies in the UK that focuses on the birth of the emergency state. He is also working on a series of projects that examines the affective geographies of contemporary neoliberal lives. This paper relates to work on (Post)Brexit Futures with Dr Helen Wilson (University of Manchester) that explores how Brexit becomes present as an event and is mediated by people’s (non)relations to the future.

Assembling Noise: The Speculative Ontologies of Sonic Disruptions

Ignacio Farias, Munich

In the last years, environmental noise has gained increased visibility in European cities especially through citizen art-ivist movements and new policy assemblages. These movements and initiatives problematize, inquire, map and tackle the sonic disruptions that result from the dense co-existence of people, machines, infrastructures and other life forms, especially in cities, in strikingly different ways. In this talk, I first describe some of the variable urban assemblages through which noise comes to matter and second discuss what I'd like to call the speculative ontology of noise. Considering speculation not as a philosophical, research or design method, but as an empirical mode of assembling urban worlds, I argue that the speculative ontology of noise is simultaneously shaped by a certain concern about matter and a certain indifference of matter.

Ignacio Farías is assistant professor at the Munich Center for Technology in Society and the Department of Architecture of the Technical University of Munich. His research interests lie at the crossroads of urban studies, science and technology studies and cultural anthropology. His most recent work explores the politics of urban environmental disruptions associated to tsunamis, the heat-island effect and environmental noise, as well as the challenges of technical democratization, especially in the context of smart city projects. Together with Anders Blok, he has recently co-edited *Technical Democracy as a Challenge to Urban Studies* (City, 20(4), 2016) and *Urban Cosmopolitics: Agencements, Assemblies, Atmospheres* (Routledge, 2016).

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PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

IMMATERIAL MATERIALITIES: INFRASTRUCTURES AND THE ELEMENTAL

With inputs by Vanessa Weber and Annika Kühn

Whereas the notion of infrastructures is mostly connected to a certain idea of solidity, durability and technicity, the connotations of the elemental tend to integrate looseness, ungovernability and fluidity. Within this workshop we want to question these attributions and discuss their fraying. Inspired by empirical findings we not only want to explore infrastructures and the elemental as separated entities but also analyze their loose and tight, ephemeral and durable relations. We apprehend their alternation as a layering of surfaces, as a folding and unfolding of skins and their ongoing processes of becoming sentient.

Within our phd projects we work on the rapid growth of cruise business and the exuberant engagement with sensor technologies, both within the port of Hamburg. We engage with the dissolving of infrastructures as well as a solidifying of elements. Our cases reveal the simultaneity of becoming-elemental of infrastructures and the becoming-infrastructural of elements. Crossing the sea to reach cruise destinations transforms water into infrastructure and solidifies fluid elements into regularly frequented waterways. At the same time, these waterways reveal their very own motions, temporality and uncontrollable forces thus challenging common assumptions on infrastructural stability and stillness. In the case of sensors, infrastructures are becoming ephemeral and sentient by feeling motions. At the same time these flows of motions are transmitted into computerized infrastructures where data are collected, stored, and selected. Regarding these processes the common assumption of data being virtually distributed in the atmosphere can be questioned empirically.

Annika Kühn is part of the graduate school 'Loose Connections'. She works at the intersection of social theory, mobility studies and media studies. Her research interests include poststructuralist theories, infrastructure studies and mobile methods. In her doctoral thesis she examines the temporality, spatiality and sociality of cruise infrastructures (e.g. ships, software, terminals, jetties) and elaborates on the very specific, but also mundane moments of 'infrastructural standby'.

Vanessa Weber is a PhD candidate at the Graduate School 'Loose Connections' at the University of Hamburg. Her research interests include cultural and media sociology at the intersection of urban studies. In particular her work engages with the materiality of the social and its sensual, aesthetic and affective dimensions. In her doctoral thesis she explores the cultural implications of sensor technologies in urban spaces focusing on the processes of infrastructuring data. Besides the practices of generating, collecting and storing data, the work that needs to be done in order to reduce the 'data deluge' attracts her attention.

Followed by a documentation of the two-channel video-sound installation
THE WILDNESS OF WAVES

HD | Stereo | 18' | 2016

by Nika Son, Helena Wittmann, and Theresa Breithaupt.

Nika Breithaupt alias Nika Son, born 1981 in Bad Berleburg, originally studied Painting at The Hochschule für Künste Bremen, before transferring to The Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg (HFBK), finally graduating predominantly as a sound artist and musician. Influenced by Musique Concrète and the outer space of electronic music, she primarily works with manipulated field recordings, tape-loops, analogue synthesis, voice fragments and radio waves. Further information at www.nikason.de

Theresa George, born 1984 in Cottbus, studied Anthropology, Politics and Journalism at The University Leipzig between 2005-2013. She continues her academic pursuit of a critical and self-reflective anthropology, which leads her to interdisciplinary collaborations and continuous social mediations. Her main interests are forms and genres of contemporary production of knowledge and culture, in both the global and post-colonial contexts.

Helena Wittmann, born 1982 in Neuss, originally studying Spanish and Media Studies in Erlangen and Hamburg, she went on to attend The Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg (HFBK) between 2007-2014. In her films and within her artistic practice, rooms constitute much more than just bare venues of a storyline. She questions and contextualises the boundaries of these rooms, in them, with them, on them and along them. Further information at www.helenawittmann.de

INTENSITY AND ITS ABSENCE

With inputs by Sandra Noeth, Janine Klemmt and Christian Helge Peters

In dialogue with Ben Anderson's concept of "bodies bored", this workshop dwells on the question how intensity and its absence impact the formation of collectivity. Three impulse statements taken from on-going research in the frame of the graduate school will open up the discussion from different perspectives by asking: a) Why is a critical assessment of lower affective intensities and 'un_relations' problematic for most affect theories (Christian Helge Peters)? b) How do (non-)intensities, resulting from an ideology-driven self-organized formation, structure events (through the example of 'barcamps', i.e. conferences based on internet-cultures)? (Janine Klemmt); 3.) How can absence and boredom be described as decisive elements in the process of becoming-border and becoming-collective, as exemplified in contemporary choreographic work from Lebanon and Palestine? (Sandra Noeth)

Christian Helge Peters is a PhD candidate at the Graduate School „Loose Connections“ at the University of Hamburg. He holds an MA in social theory from Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena. His research interests include sociological theory and affect theory; his Ph.D. project focusses on a sociological theory of affect.

Janine Klemmt is a PhD candidate at the Graduate School "Loose Connections" at the University of Hamburg. She questions how the "new spirit of capitalism" (Boltanski/Chiapello) is reflected empirically in a new type of conferences called "barcamps". Theoretically based at the intersection of sociology and media science, she focusses platform-based interaction situations, evoked by organizational, architectural and internet-based means.

Sandra Noeth is a curator and dramaturge. She is a PhD student at the Graduate School "Loose Connections" at the University of Hamburg. Her work engages in political and ethical perspectives on the human body, notably in the context of contemporary artistic creation in the Middle East. In her PhD project, she questions the role, status, and agency of the body in the entangled experience of borders and collectivity.



On Loose Relations

Graham Harman, Los Angeles (Cairo)

The theme of loose relations has grown in importance as the drawbacks of fully relational ontologies (Whitehead, Latour, Barad) have become increasingly clear. If entities are defined entirely in terms of their relations, then they contain no thingy surplus that enables them to enter new relations in the future, as Aristotle already showed in his *Metaphysics*. Faced with this situation, a few contemporary thinkers have sought a comfortable middle ground by claiming that relations between entities are “direct but partial.” In other words, a human observer does make direct contact with a tree, but simply not with all of the tree. Yet this solution is merely wishy-washy, since it continues to accept a philosophy of direct relations between things, while adding the caveat that the observer makes contact with only, say, 42% of the tree, but this 42% (or whatever percentage we imagine) is touched in direct fashion. In this lecture I will explain why such a model is impossible. I will then provide a theory of loose relations drawing on three important ideas. First, there are those theories of indirect causation found in the history of Western philosophy: the occasionalists, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. Second, we have Mark Granovetter’s famous sociological article from the early 1970s on the strength of weak ties. And finally, there is the claim of object-oriented ontology (OOO) that metaphor is an exemplary case of loose connections that is clearly more powerful than literal comparisons with their very strong ties. The theme of loose relations is so important that an entire research program can be built from it.

Graham Harman is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (on leave from the American University in Cairo). He is the author of fourteen books, most recently *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory* (2016) and *Dante’s Broken Hammer: The Ethics, Aesthetics, and Metaphysics of Love* (2016). He is the editor of the *Speculative Realism* book series at Edinburgh University Press and (with Bruno Latour) co-editor of the *New Metaphysics* book series at Open Humanities Press. He is a founding figure of both the *Speculative Realism* and *Object-Oriented Ontology* (OOO) movements.

SESSION / LOCATIONS OF UN_RELATING

Lagging Proximities, Ambivalent Intimacies

Susanna Paasonen, Turku

Network connectivity has become a matter of infrastructure as an affordance and resource without which everyday lives no longer quite function. What was some two decades ago a rare addition to social routines, interactions with and through networked media have increasingly become their elementary components. The degree to which our intimate connections to partners, friends and family are not merely mediated through but paced by networked communications becomes evident in moments of failure – when servers are unresponsive, devices cease to function and networks grow congested.

Focusing on accounts of technological failure, this talk examines intimate attachments to devices and applications and the modes of proximity and distance that communication through them involves. Constantly haunted by the shadow of disconnection, ubiquitous connectivity emerges as generative of expectations, temporalities, both fleeting and lingering affective intensities and attachments.

Susanna Paasonen is professor of Media Studies at University of Turku, Finland. With an interest in studies of popular culture, affect, sexuality and media theory, she is most recently the author of *Carnal Resonance: Affect and Online Pornography* (MITP 2011) as well as co-editor of *Working with Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing Differences* (Routledge 2010) and *Networked Affect* (MITP 2015). Susanna’s current research focuses on sexual play, the tag #NSFW, distraction and the less positive range of affect connected to online exchanges.

Entubulating Proximity: Virtual Infrastructures for Mobile Dwelling

David Bissell, Canberra

This paper examines the theme of loose connections by orienting attention to the infrastructures that connect us, creating new senses of distance and proximity. The paper starts with the claim that much work on infrastructure has overlooked its important immaterial dimensions. The paper proceeds by explaining how these immaterial dimensions can be approached through the concept of habit. It shows how habit has infrastructural qualities in the sense that, through its virtual dimension, habit supports and sustains all manner of everyday practices. The paper then puts this Bergsonian understanding of the virtuality of habit into dialogue with Sloterdijk's volumetric thought. It does this in order to develop the concept of 'entubulation' which invites a way of attending to the kinds of virtual enclosures that habits give rise to. With the assistance of empirical moments drawn from a project on distance labour mobilities, the paper suggests how entubulation describes a peculiar quality of immanent inhabitation that redraws our conventional understandings of distance and proximity. In doing so, the overall aim of this paper is to open up a conceptual space to imagine infrastructure as prone, vulnerable, transformative and profoundly strange.

David Bissell is senior lecturer in the Research School of Social Sciences at The Australian National University. He combines qualitative research on embodied practices with social theory to explore the social, political and ethical consequences of mobile lives. His current two projects funded by the Australian Research Council are examining how mobile working practices are changing the constitution of the home (with Andrew Gorman-Murray); and how robotics and AI are reshaping employment futures (with Anthony Elliott and Thomas Birtchnell). His most recent project investigated how commuting in Sydney affects people's sense of self, their relations with others, their job and their sense of place in the city. He is an editor of *Stillness in a Mobile World* (Routledge, 2011) and *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (Routledge, 2014).

Urban Promises: The Power of Loose Connections

Alexa Färber and Laura Kemmer, Hamburg

This talk examines "modes of un/relating" by focusing on the role of promises for urban collectivities. We argue that the figure of the promise may contribute to our understanding of the gravitational force of the city, to how it attracts a heterogeneous set of actors and shapes both their becoming-collective as well as their multiple detachments and dissolutions. Promises such as the classical "city air makes free" or newer notions of political transformation and socio-technical innovation do not only assemble a multiplicity of people, materialities and imaginations. Promises also fundamentally put into question the allegedly "stable" character of such urban collectivities. Against the common understanding of promise relations as a kind of social contract, we claim that the connections they forge are characterized by openness, indeterminacy and incompleteness. Rather than questioning their fulfillment or breaking, our interest lies in the spatio-temporal expressions of promises (Abrams/Weszkalnys 2013). In this talk we discuss the analytical potential of conceiving promise as suspension, as filling the temporal gap between a present articulation and an unrealized future and thus loosely connecting us to a spatial "there" which is not (yet) "here". Drawing from empirical examples on the everyday articulation of urban promises in Rio de Janeiro and Hamburg, we show how agency is distributed and contested around promises that do not solely rely on human pronunciation, but have become independent and attached to a set of "promising things" (Ahmed 2010) in/of the city.

Alexa Färber is Professor of Urban Anthropology and Ethnography at the HafenCity University Hamburg and the primary investigator for the "Low-Budget Urbanity" research initiative. She received her PhD. from the Humboldt University of Berlin and has a Master in Islamic Sciences and European Ethnology, also from Humboldt. Her research interests include methodologies of ANT and urban research, urban imagineering, Islam and urban space, mobility and Low-budget urbanity.

Laura Kemmer is working on her PhD project on 'Bonding', which strives to carve out the quality of connections between inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro and the first electric tramway (bonde) of Latin America. Drawing from conceptualizations of affect and urban assemblages, Kemmer asks for the infrastructural promises that reside in specific tram-materialities and their implications for distributions of agency, emerging temporalities and spatial transformations. She is a fellow at the Graduate School "Loose Connections" at the University Hamburg and associate fellow at the Center for Metropolitan Studies in Berlin.

SESSION / LOOSE COUPLINGS

Potentialisation as Immune Mechanisms in the Welfare State

Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen, Copenhagen

Today public managers celebrate 'the future of the future', 'anti-structures' and 'liminality' as a zone of transformation. They encourage each other and their employees to 'expect the unexpected' and to 'think the unthinkable'. Many new technologies emerges promising potentialisation of employees, welfare, organizations and citizens. Examples are steering Labs, future games, managerial performance arts, freedom letters, paradoxical orders, citizens in the centre, co-creation and trust-based partnerships. In theories about autopoietical systems immune mechanisms are seen as mechanisms protecting the operations of the system against its own structures. They un-relate the operations from the structures of the system. Immune mechanisms are always about auto-immunity. Taking up this notion I will try to observe potentialisation and potentialisation technologies as a kind of immune mechanisms protecting the welfare state against it self. From within potentialisation identifies structures as problematic pr. definition. Potentialisation sees itself as anti-structures working for transformations. But if the immune mechanisms really work then there is always a price to pay. Immune mechanisms cannot discriminate between structures, and they are typically built up being ignorant to knowledge created by the system. By dissolving the certainty of expectations, by de-connecting operations from the network of expectation, technologies of potentialization also risk to do harm on welfare systems. For example, by mobilizing contradictions between the future and the present, you risk to destroy the value of experience. And by insisting on resources of the single citizen, you run the risk of endanger the citizen's experience of legal rights and legal justice. In the end they put at risk the welfare systems they tried to protect in the first place.

Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen is professor in political management at Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy, CBS. He is the research director of the politics group at MPP. His field is public administration and welfare management in a very broad sense, which he approaches through Luhmann's systems theory, Laclau's discourse theory and Derrida's deconstruction. He has been working on topics such as the "Hetrophonic welfare organizations", "polycentricism and the supervisions state", 'intimization of management', "contractualization of citizenship", "management of feelings and interpenetration", "partnerships as second order promises", "games as technologies of potentiality", "towards a playful form of hyper-responsibility", "hybrid governance".

The Mediality of Looseness

Urs Stäheli, Hamburg

This paper offers a re-reading of the concept of „loose couplings“ in social and media theory. The Austrian psychologist Fritz Heider introduced the idea of loose couplings in an influential essay on „Medium and Things“ (1927). Media consist of loosely coupled elements – and it is this looseness which creates their capacity of making absent things present. The paper traces how this early materialist media theory was re-articulated in organization theory (Weick) and social theory (Luhmann). I argue that these readings de-materialize the idea of media, but still maintain the assumption of looseness. The paper reads this persistence of looseness as a symptomatic marker of the limits of relational theory. Looseness indicates a necessary moment of separation, isolation, and disconnection, pointing to the question of how relationality rests upon a primary disconnect.

Urs Stäheli studied Sociology, German Literature and History. He received his PhD from the University of Essex, held Post-Doc positions in Bielefeld and Luzern and was a full professor at the University of Basel. Since 2010 he holds the Chair for Sociological Theory at Hamburg University where he also chairs the PhD program “Loose Connections: Collectivity in urban and digital Space”. His Publications include: Infrastrukturen des Kollektiven, in: Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung 13 (1), 2013, S. 99–116; Entnetzt Euch!, in: Mittelweg 36, 2013, S. 3–28; Listing the Global: Dis/connectivity beyond representation?, in: Distinktion 13 (3), 2012, S. 233–246; gem. mit Ch. Borch (Hg.), Nachahmung und Begehren: Gabriel Tarde, Frankfurt/Main 2009; Spektakuläre Spekulation: Zum Populären der Ökonomie, Frankfurt/Main 2007; Sinnzusammenbrüche, Weilerswist 2000.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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