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*Dear Reader

If you did not see any of “The Common Sense installations, I highly recommend that you please stream a video clip available in the article, [“In the future, people will pay to feel unemployed: On Melanie Gilligan’s latest film”](#) on Rhizome.org prior to reading the essay, as it may help contextualize its description.

AFFECTIVE CAPITALISM + “The Common Sense”

“Where the production of the soul is concerned...we should no longer look to the soil and organic development, nor the factory and mechanical development, but rather to today’s dominant economic forms, that is, to production defined by a combination of cybernetics and affect.”

Michael Hardt, “Affective Labor,” 94-97

INTRODUCTION

Affect and labor, affect and value, and affect and biopower, have received much historical and contemporary analysis from theorists and philosophers across a range of orientations.¹ The concept of affective capitalism relates to each of these clusters, and since this past year, affective capitalism appears to be a thematic academic focal point.² Having encountered artist Melanie Gilligan’s work, “The Common Sense,” at De Appel

¹ Hardt “...understands [biopower] as the potential of affective labor...the power of the creation of life...the production of collective subjectivities, sociality, and society itself” (98). He distinguishes his definition from Foucault’s as “...Politics has become a matter of life itself, and the struggle has taken the form of biopower from above against a biopower from below...[the] Foucauldian view of biopower, however, only poses the situation from above...When we look at the situation from the perspective of the labor involved in biopolitical production, on the other hand, we can begin to recognize biopower from below” (98-99). I believe that in a different analysis using biopower/biopolitics could be of great benefit, but for this essay I refrain from any further exploration of it in reference to my object.

² See Affective Capitalism Symposium at University of Turku June 2014; Ephemera Journal Special Issue: Affective Capitalism 2014; S3 Affective Capitalism at the Affect Theory Conference October 2015.

this spring, I have taken an interest in its emergence and relevance. In this paper, I examine the concept of affective capitalism through the object of Melanie Gilligan's recent work "The Common Sense."

"The Common Sense" is a 3-phase video installation of a 15-episode sci-fi narrative drama mini-series about a future affective technology called entrainment, or more commonly referred to in its object-form, "The Patch." The Patch looks like a chewed piece of gum, is worn in the mouth like a sort of prosthesis, and simultaneously transmits and receives affect, emotions, and physical sensations between people. The videos show a future world in which The Patch becomes ubiquitous in work environments, in which actors of the capitalist system maximize productivity and efficiency through affect.

I argue that this use of the technology results in crisis ordinary-as-world condition, in which every character, no matter their life situation, is bound by precarious work, education, and basic living needs; infinite debt; overworking and mandatory urgency; and the general devaluation of life. I propose that these conditions cause a voidance of trust, as understood as the ability to believe in the reliability and assurance of something and/or someone beyond what you are able to know. I articulate how "The Common Sense's" speculative capitalist system subsumes and employs affect that is void of trust. This voidance's resulting social conditions formulate subjectivities that cripple characters' capability to conceive of any form of or hope for an alternative world. While the technology makes possible the manifestation of a new moment of collective living and connectivity, it is articulated by subjectivities made from a sustained threatened and isolated state. I consider this a resulting paradox of proximity. I argue that every

transmission and reception through The Patch, in addition to this paradox, reinforces the void of trust and creates an ontological insecurity and severe isolation of individuals.

I believe that this play on trust within affect through this technology sustains these conditions, and is what “The Common Sense” video series brings to the concept of affective capitalism. After looking at elements of the series’ narrative content, I analyze Gilligan’s installation production- its locations, events, viewer experience, and online realization. I propose that the narrative’s speculative proposition of affective capitalism, in combination with the performativity and self-reflexivity of the installation’s production and viewer experience, makes the work in its entirety productive as a micro-political movement in our evolving relationship with technology. Before entering my argument, I contextualize the concept and provide a brief summary of “The Common Sense.”

AFFECTIVE CAPITALISM

Affective capitalism is also not a new concept. It has been considered within various kinds of labor and consumerism, including but not exclusive to advertisements, environments, faces of the service industry, experiences, and brands, all of which are all crafted to convey a certain *something* to turn prospective consumers into actual consumers.^{3 4} While there are many descriptions of this concept, I commence with an articulation of it I use in its emerging sense:

³ “Affectivity has generally acted as a language or a means that incites a certain positive predisposition in the interlocutor, like when a salesperson smiles and affectionately greets a new customer” (Prada).

⁴ For example, theorist Michael Hardt opens his essay “Affective Labor,” Theoretical frameworks that have brought together Marx and Freud have conceived of affective labor using terms such as *desiring production*, and...numerous feminist investigations analyzing the potentials within what as been designated traditionally as *kin work* and *caring labor*. Each of these analyses reveals the processes whereby our laboring practices produce collective subjectivities, produce sociality, and ultimately produce society itself” (89).

...Affective capitalism [as descriptive of] a particular mode of capture where resonances between bodies – both human and non-human alike – enter systems of value and value production. Affective capitalism both appeals to our desires, needs and social relationships and establishes them... it can be cognitive, non cognitive, or pre-cognitive... Our capabilities to affect and become affected are transformed into assets, goods, services and managerial strategies... (Karppi and Mannevuola).

What makes this concept as “emerging” in comparison to its earlier analyses and related conceptual clusters is its presence within and through the most recent and third wave of capitalism, the socio-technological system of cognitive capitalism. Additionally contributing to its emergence is the proliferation of contending accelerated developments that are increasingly apart and defining of our daily lives. Cognitive capitalism “...is founded on the accumulation of immaterial capital...it is a mode of accumulation in which the object of accumulation consists mainly of knowledge, which becomes the basic source of value, as well as the principle location of the process of valorization...[it] is based on the cooperative labour of human brains joined together in networks by means of computers” (Boutang Yann, 50-57).⁵

A few defining elements of cognitive capitalism that engender affective capitalism as related to my paper’s focus are the growth, proliferation, and/or domination of: immaterial production (for example, “...forms of production that lead to immaterial products – focused towards things like ideas, code, images, affects as a product...”); immaterial labor (for example, pop urban studies personality Richard Florida’s highly influential conception of the Creative Class);⁶ the virtualization of the economy/

⁵ One of the many other definitions of cognitive capitalism is by P2P theorist and activist Michel Bouwens, “Cognitive capitalism refers to the process by which information (data, knowledge, design or culture) is privatized and then commodified as a means of generating profit for capital...the driving force of capitalism in our age is the eradication of all Commons and the commodification of all things” (64-65).

⁶ “In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida describes the emergence of a new socio-economic class, one that creates ideas and innovations rather than products and is the driving force of post-

datafication of industry and social life; flexible production; users of digital technology devices as co-producers; the increasing indistinguishable temporalities (work, non-work, sleep, wake); and the shifting terms of proximity (that is, as digital technologies become ubiquitous, social contact/interactions multiply and are no longer limited by physical restraints, which feeds into the collapsing of social/personal boundaries) (Boutang-Yann, 50-53; Crary; Hardt, YouTube).

In our current moment, ~~affect is employed through capitalism with an unchartered liberty, often unknowingly and copiously received, produced, and taken.~~ And as “...Interactive and cybernetic machines [technology] become a new prosthesis integrated into our bodies and minds and a lens through which to redefine our bodies and minds themselves,” affective capitalism-as-concept is fast and deeply-shaping our social subjectivities, power, and value (Hardt and Negri). Thus, I consider Gilligan’s speculative portrayal of this concept with the hope to realize one face of its critical potential in its emergence.⁷

“THE COMMON SENSE”

“The Common Sense” narrative is made of three video phases that were installed in three different locations in The Netherlands. Phase 1 was installed at Casco in Utrecht

industrialism rather than industrialism...there are two layers to the creative class. First, there is a “Super-Creative Core” consisting of “scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects, as well as the thought leadership of modern society: nonfiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think-tank researchers, analysts and other opinion-makers.” Second, there are “creative professionals” – those who “work in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries such as high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and health care professions, and business management” – as well as many technicians and paraprofessionals who now add “creative value” to an enterprise by having to think for themselves. All these, taken together, constitute a true economic class that “both underpins and informs its members’ social, cultural and lifestyle choices” (Editor’s Introduction, 143)

⁷ Think exploitations in manipulating social media platform feeds, the changing of our reliance on corporations through peer-to-peer/sharing economy, big data marketing, attention economy...there are infinite references and in my closing I return to contemporary references.

from 4 November 2014 to 25 January 2015. This phase is about how after a decade of use in which The Patch transforms work and social conditions, the technology's networks suddenly fail and cause massive economic disruption and social and personal disorientations. When system is online again, the storyline splits into two possible futures. Phase 2A was installed at de Hallen from 13 December 2014 – 1 March 2015. In this first proposed post-rupture narrative, groups come together in attempt to resist the exploitative uses of the technology and there is an outbreak of protests. Alternatively, in Phase 2B installed at De Appel from 23 January 2015 – 1 May 2015, society goes back to normal use of The Patch post-rupture. Its exploitations continue as part of daily life and new conceptions for further exploitation of users manifest.

In the first episode of the installation video series, a character introduces a 10-year old video series. This series is also called “The Common Sense,” and its storyline follows the transition from first generation of The Patch called “one-way” (as it only permitted a one-way transmission of emotion/physical sensation/affect) to the current model, called “two-way” (as it permits simultaneous sharing and receiving of emotion/physical sensation/affect). For the sake of clarity, I make a few delineations for hereon out: the artwork in its entirety (including the video installations, all video phases, related events/talks/the website/locations) is “The Common Sense”-1 or TCS-1. The 15-episode video series in all its iterations (as installed at the galleries and online) is “The Common Sense”-2 or TCS-2. And finally, the 10-year old video series as portrayed within/ watched by characters of TCS-2 is then “The Common Sense”-3 or TCS-3. Gilligan's Russian-doll effect used here is important and I return to it later in this essay.

CRISIS ORDINARY AS WORLD CONDITION

The speculative world of TCS-2 is one of crisis ordinary, as understood through Lauren Berlant. That is, quite literally, the mode of crisis has become ordinary- it is a condition of the world, of all lives. It becomes completely embedded to the point that while its symptoms are felt/known, the state of crisis is not something that is not thought beyond. There are not conceptions of the possibility of a different life (no good life fantasies). Gilligan situates this crisis ordinary world in the first few episodes of TCS-2, and reinforces its effects throughout each phase.

Gilligan's phase 1 of "The Common Sense" opens with a classroom of late teens to young adults who are studying entrainment. The teacher plays them the 10-year old video series, "The Common Sense." The first few characters of the TCS-3 program are as follows. First, we see a pregnant woman who signs a legally binding contract with the company JUVI to transmit from her fetus via The Patch. The following scene is of a high-status business woman of the company "Affective Technologies Inc." who receives an urgent "final warning" message about her work performance levels related to a single client negotiation over her breakfast from the company's senior vice president, as well as notice that her position will be up for review. She takes a brief moment to share her distress with the audience before the shot returns to the screen on which it shows a countdown of the 10-minutes she has to respond to the email. During this countdown, she receives notice from JUVI that her "new baby has arrived ! !...[and her] pre-birth neural entrainment session is ready ! Login to feel the *rejuvenating* brain waves of life before birth..." (italics authors own).⁸ This appears to give her a brief moment of satisfaction, and she takes a sip from her mug before heading into the office and the meeting in which

⁸ Depressing considering the context yet worthy to note branding language: "JUVI" → rejuvenating waves as product.

she was warned to pick up her game.⁹ She acts confident in her meeting contribution. In the following scene, a young woman receives the message “Starting today all employees must wear [the new two-way] entrainment devices at work at all times” while walking to the entrainment help center that happens to be on a school campus (think T-Mobile store).

In the following TCS-3 episodes, we discover a few things – the pregnant woman transmitting from her fetus is revealed as a low-level worker, who is deep in debt and has multiple jobs including working in a factory and as a sex-worker (via transmitting sexual favors for immediate monetary deposits into her bank account/profile). The Patch help center woman who was at first excited for the two-way is fired after receiving negative feedback due to very brief, negative customer reactions. The high status businesswoman remains in a constantly threatened state and seeks additional releases through the use of other human’s transmissions, but not social relations, despite creating highly effective Patch programs for company’s to incorporate in their management systems (causing heightened efficiency and major job loss).

Pulling back to the classroom of TCS-2, the teacher talks to the students. She states that through the series they can see that in its origins, The Patch two-way was used for all sorts of exploitative purposes. She also explains that the introduction of The Patch two-way induced excitement because people thought that it could help bring about collective social change against the corrupt social structures. The students are confused and find this past hope comical. They do not make the connection to their current situation, which appears to be the realized future of the history 10-years past. That is, while they are sitting in the classroom, they simultaneously work other jobs (including

⁹ ‘Satisfaction’ as the emotion conveyed is important here. Instead of relief, contentment, or reassurance, the sense of satisfaction may be derivative of the confirmation of her ownership of something she wants (a fetus’ brain waves).

monitoring employees performance at another company); receive work messages with very short response times with a countdown; and report that when they receive performance feedback from those they are servicing and those that monitor those relations literally makes them feel sick (as anger/anxiety/aggression/displeasure transmits directly to them). They pay tuition and must do class-repayment work for private company's products. Their legal loan/work contracts for their education are subject to change without warning. The teacher asks them, "How does it feel to know that your responses directly regulate my behavior?" They respond slightly defensively, yet simply, with "We all have to do it. We all like to make people happy." None of the characters realize that they are not actually doing it to make anyone happy, but instead to receive the necessary response from the consumer of the company they work for to so they are less likely to get fired. The affective capitalist system transforms responses into value that is sought by both the exploited and exploiters, the latter of which put that tension of the former to use to maintain their position of power.

The students are missing a lot here, as emphasized by the blatant mirroring of conditions between TCS-2 and TCS-3. The conditions are not exclusive to the students. As the narrative develops we see that every character is subjected to such threatening and volatile life conditions. While hierarchies remain in companies, social classes, labor types (physical/service/knowledge-based), everyone is under crisis-inducing conditions. For example, workers of all levels are fiercely monitored, consistently threatened, capriciously fired, and people work constantly. Additional characters range from top executives/company founders and a variety of scientists to low-level service clerks, factory workers, and freelance workers. All of these characters have debt, need multiple

incomes/jobs often worked simultaneously, receive very short time-requests and countdowns for emails no matter the time of day, constant/ever-present feedback that is transmitted through physical sensations, expectation for ultimate flexibility, and high-rates of fickle expulsion from their jobs (i.e. there is absolutely no interest in employee investment, retention for any level, and minor one-off actions can induce a firing). Basic human necessities are threatened: people are consistently unable to afford food and home utilities such as water unexpectedly shut off due to debt. There is no security in any aspect of life to be found.¹⁰

The students' inability to recognize the parallels between TCS-3 and their current realities indicates that the symptoms-causes of crisis ordinary are so deeply embedded in their subjectivities they are incapable of relating to the world, or even having a possible conception of an alternate relation, beyond the world shaped by affective capitalism. But what makes this inscription possible, making crisis ordinary a world condition?

VOIDANCE OF TRUST + ONTOLOGICAL INSECURITY

In TCS-2, characters relate to each other through the same technology that is used to induce the threatening conditions outlined above and relate to each other, via this technology, at the same time as they work. They relate to each other through the contexts and formats in which The Patch is developed- that is, through information, or more specifically informationalized affect. Likewise, working overlaps with and infiltrates all arenas of life, even sleeping. For example, while a student is sitting in class and working via The Patch simultaneously, she reports that she got so good at working this job

¹⁰ It is worthy to note the presence of works that describe similar conditions but in different and real contexts- just two are Judith Butler's "For and Against Precarity" and Rosalind Gill's "Breaking the silence: The hidden injuries of neo-liberal academia."

(monitoring employees for another company) that she could do it in her sleep, so she was given sleep shifts. The functions and uses of The Patch reorients social relations: as Hardt states, “In the production and reproduction of affects, in those networks of culture and communication, collective subjectivities are produced and sociality is produced—even if those subjectivities and that sociality are directly exploitable by capital” (96-97).

While Hardt believes that “This is where we can realize the enormous potential in affective labor,” I believe that in TCS-2 there is an omission of the integral element of trust, which is necessary for the development, functionality, and sustainability of social systems and relationships (97). In a very basic sense, it is through trust that we can cooperate or rely on for survival- whether that is through the assurance of basic human needs, protection from outside offenders who threaten those needs or our agreed-upon livelihoods, and the assurance of agreed upon rights (among the thousands of other aspects of general social construction- these are just some fundamental examples). I trust that in my social structure I have the right the needs for living. In TCS-2, the social structure in fact secures no right to basic human rights or living necessities, but the right to *trying* to attain them through the rules of the system (money). This system delegitimizes their humanity, the right to life, and reorients them through the right to exploited value. This system is based in the assurance that it cannot be trusted for anything other than securing its self-perpetuation.

In TCS-2, all communication (social and work) runs through this perpetual conduit of impending emergency of the unknown and life-as-value. The symptoms of crisis ordinary rule the characters’ lives. They only know themselves and everything around them through this conduit of insecurity. Nobody can rely on their own ability to

secure an expectation for on-going survival/ a generally standardized state of living, nor their social system to help secure a life. Considering that when using The Patch, the brain is constantly receiving and giving and therefore in every exchange the state of insecurity, a delegitimized life/right to be, separation of individuals, and network groupings is unconsciously and constantly reinforced. They revalorize the capitalization of themselves and their insecurity in every feeling, relation, and affect they have, as when they use The Patch they are never not working or connecting. A neuroscientist who works with patch data frames this, “There is a network of connections in the brain that turns on when the brain is at rest, called the default network...in the past, it was often busy with interpreting other peoples internal impulses in order to predict their actions...Now The Patch sends other people’s impulses to it directly, as a result, the brain is rarely at rest anymore.”¹¹ As this is a perpetual state of creation and reinforcement, the void of trust in affective capitalism creates an insecurity in their own being, an ontological insecurity.

Subjectivities, then, are formed through relations void of trust. Trust is replaced by insecurity in value they have no right in determining. Individuals and their relations (social, work, and consumer) are built with the focus on the differentiation of bodies-their needs and desires that act as a separation, as it is competition that motivates and procreates capital. This is made possible and reinforced by a collapse of relations in addition to temporalities, as social communication also happens through The Patch and often at the same time of work relations. This collapse of time and relation garners values, determined by the capitalist system, between and of the characters, their work,

¹¹ In addition, all of these exchanges are given data point, a value through the network. Companies collect, organize, analyze, and capitalize on the data through the affective capitalist structures of management programs, consumerism, profiles. In turn, these same structures determine their data-producers’ (the subjects) value and thus situate their insecurity through debts/loans for education and living, basic home utilities, products; and, communicate this information to the subjects through affective exchange.

their social relations, and themselves/ bodily needs. These values are returned through the affective capitalist system to be practiced by the characters, determine their livelihoods, and to be consumed by them. People relate not by contact with each other but by the value attributed to their communicative exchange.¹²

CLUSTERS AND HYPER-INDIVIDUALISM

Exchange between individuals reinforce their separation and social alignments act either in competition and/or distinguishing values, which creates a kind of isolated proximity through network-structured orientation. As you cannot trust a competitor, someone you only relate to through a value, we see the carrying-over of the lack of trust within all social relations. For example, when the students find out over the loudspeaker that the school has changed their contracts and they must work more to fulfill their loan requirements, a poor student exclaims to another exasperated, but middleclass, student “YOU only have to work TWO jobs, they have me working FIVE!” This is just one of many examples in which shared vulnerabilities are not, in fact, shared, and communication is limited to clusters in which the value is understood.

These orientations structure their worlds, and while they may encounter other types of people such as in class, they are led to cluster with others close to their own orientations. Before The Patch network failure, the same middle class student mentioned above can know the difference between herself and her poor peer, but she does not socially exchange with him, as there is no reason for her too. During the The Patch failure

¹² During The Patch network failure, students are incapable of relating and communicating. The teacher is unsure how to help them, and tells her roommate (a neuroscientist) about it- she says that the kids don’t normally spend time together in person or communicate without The Patch. They are embarrassed to try and express themselves without it. In an earlier episode, one student remarks smugly that non-Patch communication is colloquial. The teacher recommends that they spend time together in person and to play trust games. Her roommate offers to help with the severe cases.

shows too that the students do not know how to communicate with each other without their Patch- that is, verbally and visually. Since lives are dedicated to staying afloat, we do not observe social situations in which people who do not already work or live together connect. So, unless there is a purpose for someone to connect (i.e. at work or with someone they live with), they are not likely to make a connection. And, even when there is a reason for someone to connect, it stays within a certain field or limited context, otherwise it is considered negative. This is seen when the poor student simply forgets to thank someone and is terrified by his mistake, as it could threaten his entire livelihood- his observing teacher asks if the person could understand his mistake by feeling that he was tired or sick, which he wasn't, he simply forgot- to which she replies that he should indeed be terrified for his mistake.

The tightly bound cluster relations are even emphasized in TCS-3, when three people move into an apartment and proclaim to “living in common” after using the Two-Way. While they are all “highly educated professional” white women who appear to be the same age with similar-sounding titles of bioinformatics, bioanalytics, and computational finance, a character who encounters the group for the first time is surprised by the “diversity” of their cluster and is very curious as to how they all met since they are in different fields. This particular episode of TCS-3 is watched in TCS-2, and is another hopeful signal towards patch use allowing different kinds of communications across clusters to develop – that is, communications that are orchestrated by individuals and not the rigid isolations of the power system. Unfortunately, even in TCS-3 a dystopian vision remains as the women's desires collide and separate their understanding of one another, and of themselves. They are unable to adapt to taking in and receiving simultaneously,

causing anger, frustration, and confusion of wills. They get lost in knowing who they are and what their own feelings are, and are unable to connect with and relate to the other in a way that would lead to what we would consider now an empathetically informed feel and decision. We see here that the exchange that would typically permit empathy, or even just simple understanding with ability to process and make an informed response, instead just separates them. In TCS-2 cross-cluster communication starts to happen post-rupture, but similar issues arise in the difficulty relating-processing across differences. The closer character's are the more intense their insecurity and isolation becomes.

THE PARADOX OF PROXIMITY

The Patch technology marks the most intimate proximity of communication in human history. It's use manifests what the characters consider to be stronger forms of community than ever seen in the past (like cluster living and working groups). It is here we see a paradox: living in common creates and reinforces hyper-individualism. To recap this process, the voidance of trust in the affective exchanges determining value separates individuals. Thus, by living in common, we see that The Patch "tightens the screws" on network orientations and subjectivity, in addition to the isolation reinforced in each communication/exchange.

As such, with this proximity comes the increased isolation of individuals with the appearance of closeness. One TCS-3 character employed by "Affective Technologies, Inc." states, "Everyone knows this is the age of the post-individual." This appearance of closeness between bodies is one more layer that nurtures and appeals to ideal subjects for sustaining the exploitative system. It also is one more layer that thwarts the development and productivity of social change post-network failure.

SUSTAINING THE SYSTEM

The Patch network failure makes a few important possible openings for the characters as mostly explored in Phase 2A. Most obviously, it forces individuals to spend considerable time in the world without their normal transmission. While some users who think of The Patch as a surveillance device, this is a relief and doesn't understand why once the networks turn back on anyone would return to using it. Alternatively, others experience and acknowledge the difference in feelings (feeling an emotion on The Patch vs. feeling an emotion off The Patch), but are not averse to returning to using the device. Additionally there are characters that think that it is a tool that is a part of their "collective resources" and can be useful for their cause.

The neuroscientist of the latter opinion believes that she can change the subjectivities of children through exercises with The Patch in the attempt to teach them they are not separate but shaped through each other. While the results of her efforts are unrealized in the 15-episodes of TCS-2, the neuroscientist's idea shows that the network failure made an opening for the questioning how the resonances between peoples through the device are being employed.

Another opening for new communications across clusters and feeling-fields outside of the established value-system is made when the networks turn back on after the failure and transmission paths are all mixed up. While the storyline does not provide clear explanation of how this works technically, the mixed-up transmission paths seems something like a mixture of cell phone lines crossing based on something other than us dialing a specific person but rather haphazardly and semi-spatially crossing their path,

more like Tinder; combined with Facebook suggesting new friends via an algorithm not based on people who you probably already know. In these mixed-up transmission paths, exchanges start to happen between differently oriented, cross-cluster people. We see the middle class student develop a new orientation that includes the poor student in her “common-” they talk, share conversation, and ideas, and meet with many others in a social situation they develop on their own (i.e. not through school or work.) We see scientists, teachers, cluster living freelancers, food service workers, and more meet and engage outside at protests and in monthly meetings, held in a cluster-living quarter. We see discussion and disagreements arise. These are connections that could have not happened without the disruption of how their bodies were previously tightly oriented for the efficiency and productivity of the system. These connections represent new resonances beginning to be formulated by the characters’ determination, i.e. reorienting their value.

There is the conception for social change on a grand scale and attempt of working in a group to conceive of it. They discuss ridding the use of money and the development of a bartering system. There is an emphasis on the idea to shape people to have the same affective concern they have for themselves/their immediate connections for the greater common good. While this idea may be inspiring, the approach is problematic because they are so deeply embedded in their hyper-individualistic subjectivities that developed Patch users are conditioned to continue to exchange without trust and maintain their separation.

Gilligan situates this in Phase 2A via the character Romi, who associates The Patch with exploitation and is an anti or/ regulated-use patch advocate. The repetition of

one act, in pre-Patch network failure and post-Patch network failure, demonstrates her isolation and inability to truly connect in a way that would indicate she can be trusted by another with whom she lives “in common” (her roommate). Despite the openings The Patch failure creates, when Romi watches her roommate going hungry (she cannot afford food), Romi offers with sincerity to patch in with the roommate so she may have the transmissions of eating/feeling fullness. Despite Romi clearly having additional food cooking that she is not consuming, she does not offer the roommate any actual food- the very exchange that would instill closeness between two human beings: knowing that when you are starving, your friend/living mate who has plenty will share with you. This second-time decision is reinforced when her starving roommate asks if her friend may patch in too, to which Romi kindly agrees. Romi doesn’t conceive of giving her roommate food because she simply doesn’t realize that is something to do. She has never experienced or seen being taken care of in that way, because the world in which she exists food is not a right, but the value that equates to food is- for which The Patch is the conduit.

Romi is also an active protestor, and in the final episode of 2A there is an overlay that exposes Romi realizes that she should not be fighting the police, but rather “the whole system.” Despite her realization, protest meetings unfortunately lose steam and she continues to confuse the technology with power. As long as her relations, including with herself, are void of trust and replaced by a resonance of systematic value to which she cannot have any say in, then she remains unable to change her subjectivity. Because of the inherent insecurity, this is a troubling double bind. This double bind can also be considered in why the protest meetings may have stopped: it is mentioned that while they

exchanged with a range of people in the meetings, not everyone agreed on things. Because they understand all exchange as a separation, which garners a social value, and maintains their isolated subjectivities, they do not know what to do with their disagreements despite fighting for a cause in which they align. They are unable to mobilize despite and through their differences.

While the technology clearly is deeply interrelated to whatever future there will be, it is not the technology that determines it. What are necessary are subjects who are capable of practicing the world/system of which they conceive. I believe that an interview discussion about Hardt's concept "the multitude," understood as "...a multiple formation that is able act in common politically through networks of cooperation...the acting in concert politically," sheds light on this particular failure in TCS-2. First, to act in concert, there must be trust in the other (Hardt, YouTube). Second, Hardt and his interviewer agree that "democracy can only be practiced if you have subjects who are capable of acting and thinking with others democratically and in order to have democratic subjects – claiming and taking responsibility for common, not delegating responsibility to state or something else, there needs to be educational process at work to build those kinds of subjectivities" (Hardt, YouTube). Here I am not concerned with the goal of democracy but rather simply the theoretical equation leading to the conception for the practice of an education process. And finally, their articulation that "...the only way to respond to this challenge [of achieving the multitude/ acting in concert politically] is through the production of subjectivities that are capable of cooperating across differences" (Hardt, YouTube).

Because of the character's inability to trust embedded in their comprehension of social value and the reinforcement of this in each exchange, long-term Patch users remain ideal subjects for the affective capitalist system, incapable of shifting their subjectivities on a one-to-one level and beyond.

PERFORMATIVITY + SELF-REFLEXIVITY IN TCS-1 INSTALLATION PRODUCTION

Gilligan picks up in the installation production and satellite programming where the narrative drops off. That is, she plays with temporal, spatial, and educational structures on a variety of planes through the production of TCS-1. First, let's consider its making and installation. The work was funded by three different institutions and installed in each according location over three different time spans.

The installations themselves were all slightly different in their structure, as informed by the building's architecture and institutional practice. For example, at the Phase 2A installation at Casco, theoretical reading material was made available outside the installation room. I find this (optional) added educational element to be a nicely aligned self-reflexive addition to the exhibition experience considering the Phase 2A narrative of social unrest yet failure based in the inability to educate new subjectivity. Additionally, the collaboration of three typically competing art institutions is a successful performativity of a TCS-2 failure- that is, in the realized production of a shared goal across differences.

Also tied to the temporality and spatiality of the exhibition installations is the consideration that it creates the likelihood for different people whose paths may not normally cross, or cross repeatedly, to do so. While this may seem trivial, this opens the

possibility for new proximities, which may at first be uncomfortable/awkward (or not) but may develop into conversations and connections that could be productive merely through the shift in awareness of the individuals.¹³

There were multiple educational programming events, ranging from a field trip to all three installations, video screenings, lectures about just the work and its production, discussions about the work and other artworks simultaneously exhibited at the institutions, guided tours, and panel discussion- all of which happened across not only the three art institutions but at film locations and even the Maagdenhuis. This programming encouraged educational discussion, debate, questioning, and diversity in those experiencing it. The programming was spread out across the locations, over a long period of time (November 2014 – May 2015). This is an abnormal presence, activation, and engagement for one artwork to realize- it is almost comparable to a marketing campaign or project, which its promotional movie- styled poster and website design also suggests. This pop cultural cross-referencing here encourages a variety of angles from which to think about, and question, the work itself. The series is also meant to become available to stream online on its website this June, extending its presence and creating a new form from which to understand it, as to experience the temporally-and –spatially tied exhibitions you also had to pay to enter them.

Additionally, the experience of just the installation itself was performative of The Patch technology. The videos were played across separate monitors, oriented horizontally and vertically, that were installed to poles of different heights. To hear the audio, viewers

¹³ I had this experience myself, having visited de Appel to view the exhibition, going to a panel discussion related to the work at one of the film sites of The Lloyd Hotel, and returning to de Appel for the “Sunday School” talk with Gilligan.

had to wear large (to block out external sound), wireless headphones. Because they were wireless, viewers had to orient themselves with a certain proximity to the screens to get the audio connection. This forced viewers to physically consider their physical relationship to the positioning of the monitor/wireless technology (tall viewers would have to sit or bend down for lower monitors, short viewers would stand on built-in platforms for higher monitors), as well as awareness of others also watching the same monitor.

Viewers would be forced to stand very close to or even touch strangers for the duration of the video. There was not verbal communication but the knowingness of the simultaneous experience of the video content in close proximity but completely separately. If they were to connect on their experience of the work it would have to be after they had already absorbed the experience through their (somewhat) isolated position. Quite literally, this creates a performative viewer experience of The Patch-informed subjectivity. I found this performativity to be comical, yet confident in its intention for self-reflexivity, when considering that it is apart of the installation experience, titled “The Common Sense,” (TCS-1), from which vantage point we watch the video series about an exploitative social system/use of technology, “The Common Sense” (TCS-2), in which the characters watch but don’t recognize the parallel of the exploitative use of the technology in a video series “The Common Sense” (TCS-3).

Some of these efforts in the work as a whole could be challenged. For example, while some of the programming, the video installations were shown at art institutions that at least two out of the three charge a fee (albeit only a 7 euro entrance fee and an additional 3-10 euro fee for some events), which may exclude a certain bracket of people

from either visiting, or visiting more than once, and/or participating in its additional programming. Also, it may be questioned if truly a diverse group of people participate, considering the again the audience that would actually know about Gilligan, the institutions, or would respond to the exhibition posters that were installed all around the city of Amsterdam (possibly in additional cities too).¹⁴ While there may be an eclectic group of thinkers from a range of backgrounds (like curators, protesting anarchists, international students), as were during her presence at the Maagdehuis, I wonder how this work would, or if it should, relate to people in more severe precarious conditions comparable to the characters in the video (such as minority groups, or people who are working three-five jobs to keep their water on). As well, the diversity of opinions of those likely to engage in conversation could be questioned.¹⁵

And finally, while the reading list at Casco was quite interesting, could it have been made more accessible and encouraged by being made available at each location and/or by being made into a take-away booklet, apart of the exhibition pamphlet, or on the website (even if just the list and not the full material if copyright laws are a consideration)? I have a hard time imagining that much was truly absorbed from the paper copies of theoretical/critical literature that requires a good amount of time and attention from the average educated reader.

CLOSING

¹⁴ I will note that I was surprised by the variety of locations of the posters for the De Appel Phase 2B exhibition, including but not exclusive to a brown bar bathroom in the Jordaan, a cement back wall of a training high school in the far Oost, and bike underpasses.

¹⁵ Again, though, I can comment that at least the two events I attended did procure a range of at times conflicting yet productive vantage points.

By functioning within the realm of sci-fi, the narrative of TCS-2 uses and plays with the concept of affective capitalism in the very real ways it is currently manifesting through cognitive capitalism.¹⁶ It makes quite obvious to its audience the need to meaningful challenge what aspects of our social relations we prioritize in our developing relationship with technology.

I find that through performing some of the speculative arenas of affective capitalism explored in TCS-2 and TCS-3, the work as a whole makes an opening for how we approach our current moment of affective capitalism and its formation-emergence. I emphasize here that TCS-1 is not just critical or performative or self-reflexive, but through all of these elements it creates a platform that achieves a self-appointed exit from *some* elements of the preexisting power structures we exist within. It shapes a multi-dimensional engagement with itself, its object of critique, and with its audience; and it shapes an audience experience that forces participants to indeed do the same (performivity, self-reflexivity, with possibility for further engagement through the non-exhibition programming). It is informed by marketing practices, that is, in its campaign or project-style production and range of manifestations it creates a platform for itself and

¹⁶ Just one of many worthy references is American artist Warren Neidich, who attempts "...to produce a new language with which to understand the political and cultural consequences of digital architectures upon our contemporary brains and minds" in his writing (335). In one chapter of "The Psychopathologies of Cognitive Capitalism: Pt. 2," he writes about neuronal response testing in relation to soft drinks, in which the preferred drink is associated with "...increased neuronal activation in the brain regions to be involved in reward...[and considers] Could the artificial stimulation of these regions one day lead to artificially induced preferences?" (338). He goes on to define "...‘neuropower’...[which] delineates the new conditions of power in cognitive capitalism. Neuropower concerns the ways and means that capitalism intervenes upon the neuroplasticity of the brain in order to produce the perfect consumer through bottom-up processing" (Neidich, 339).

others by which to engage and act through and beyond.¹⁷

I refrain from saying the work is subversive as I believe this word is often used to suggest something disruptive and radical. I do not think this work uproots the system of its critique, and even more explicitly I don't think it undermines it, but is informed by it and works through it. The work acts critically – that is, it is an intelligent and thoughtful commentary on an emerging and urgent contemporary social development. The work is also productive, in that it points to an issue and in the work's materialization does something it says is necessary. It works with affective capitalism, technology, and people in a new way; it made a variety of openings through its installations and programming to nurture what it proposes through others, and its on-going manifestation carries similar potential. I find, then, that the work is practically and theoretically productive to the emergence of affective capitalism. Through my analysis, I explored the use, or misuse, of trust within the concept of affective capitalism. I traced the performative awareness shift in the installation, and would like to leave on a forward-looking note through some current developments of affective capitalism.

In many ways, forms of what one character (a Patch strategist at the company that runs all Patch networks in the Netherlands) attempts to develop at the end of the series in Phase 2B is being explored now. This character attempts to cut out the representational middleman of money and instead have an activated need/desire translate directly to the exchange. The strategist reassures us that this exchange would still directly correlate to

¹⁷ This concept of "Platform" has proliferated in media and marketing, and its adoption by artists/creators is quite interesting and empowering in what that means within the context of disturbing existing power structures. This article <http://www.thefader.com/2015/05/21/radical-ideas-that-inspired-holly-herndon-platform> in The Fader about Holly Herndon's newest album "Platform" is quite relevant and would be an interesting topic to explore further in another essay.

the individual's work and market value, but through this use people adapt through their desires more directly to the product that would fulfill that desire. This way, The Patch “unlock[s] the ways that patch behaviors can cause maximal neuroplastic change...[and becomes] an exchange instrument that turns people into more lucrative subjects...[thus,] tailoring people to fit the client's needs” (TCS-2, Phase 2B E 5). This makes me think immediately of Amazon's 1-click purchase button, of the proliferation of PayPal payment option across websites, of YouTube's latest announcement that you can now purchase products directly from videos, among a seemingly infinite other examples, among so many other references.

Two examples that I came across while writing this essay feel particularly relevant to the resonance between affective capitalism and Gilligan's work that I explored here. First, the American chain restaurant “Uno's Pizzeria” introduction of “ziosks:” tablets that sit on the tables. The tablets already prove to be highly effective in having people order more (eat more and spend more) and finishing their meal faster. At the end of their meal, the ziosk asks them to rate their server. While an interviewed manager said that at this moment, he probably wouldn't fire someone from a bad rating, but that the scores permit him to consider their position through performance patterns of scores over time. When one server was asked about receiving (only) a 2.5 score, he proclaimed almost proudly that he just needs to try harder and be better.

My second reference is the phenomenon of the huge Autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) online community. ASMR is often described as a distinct, non-sexual, pleasurable, tingly and calming feeling, sometimes on your scalp or other areas of your body. There is no scientific proof of its existence, but there are thousands of

videos and recordings that people around the world produce, share, and listen to induce ASMR. I find the "...countless YouTube videos of whispering and hair-brushing out there as calming triggers..." "...that people are physically impacting each other anonymously online, soothing each other and healing each other, even"" to be an incredibly interesting and positive manifestation of affective community through technology (Dazed and Confused, Herndon). These two examples are meant to show the range and capacity for the emergence of affective capitalism, and to leave this essay on a curious and empowered note.

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