

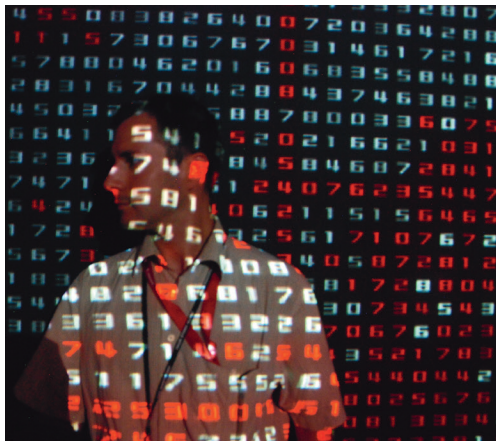
# Digital Existence II

# PRECARIOUS MEDIA LIFE

The Sigtuna Foundation, October 30 – November 1, 2017



## Digital Existence II: PRECARIOUS MEDIA LIFE



Digital media have the power to transform our existence, raising particular questions and vulnerabilities as part of the experience of being human in the digital age. Big data and hyper-connectivity, tracking and trolling, digital life and digital death are only some of the issues that require an existential media analysis that underscores the precarity of human existence. This conference will be devoted to critically mapping the various digital vulnerabilities that face us in our contemporary media age.

The Digital Existence conferences bring together scholars working in fields where a burgeoning exploration of the existential dimensions of digitalisation is visible today; media philosophy, media memory studies, the philosophy of technology, death studies, internet studies, human computer interaction, and the field of media, religion and culture.

The conference is organized by DIGMEX – a network within the research programme ‘Existential Terrains: Memory and Meaning in Cultures of Connectivity’ (<http://et.ims.su.se>) headed by Dr. Amanda Lagerkvist, Associate Professor and Wallenberg Academy Fellow, at the Department of Media Studies at Stockholm University (funded by the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation, the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation, and Stockholm University), in collaboration with the Sigtuna Foundation and the Nordic Network for the Study of Media and Religion ([http://www.sigtunastiftelsen.se/index\\_hk.asp/id/15](http://www.sigtunastiftelsen.se/index_hk.asp/id/15)).

**The conference committee** consists of: Amanda Lagerkvist, Head of Programme and conference general, Katya Linden, DIGMEX co-ordinator and conference organiser, Evelina Lundmark, conference assistant, Margaret Schwartz, Michael Westerlund, Amit Pinchevski, Anna Reading, Mia Lövheim, Charles M. Ess and Tony Walter.

### THE SIGTUNA FOUNDATION

The Sigtuna Foundation is a privately owned cultural foundation whose principle aim is to inspire human thought and reflection as well as to stimulate and facilitate dialogues, encounters and bridge relationships. The emphasis on dialogue is rooted in Christian humanism which strives to protect each individual's rights and dignity and also understands human existence as including spiritual values and dimensions.

[www.sigtunastiftelsen.se](http://www.sigtunastiftelsen.se)



## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### **Proxy politics:**

### **From global climate change to racial profiling**

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun

Proxies are key to modeling physical and social networks and to managing risk and vulnerability: from global climate change to network neighbors. Analyzing paleoclimate models that reveal patterns of global warming alongside models that predict a person's race, gender and personality, this talk addresses the thorny question of proxies: their necessity and their limitations.



**Wendy Hui Kyong Chun** is Professor of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. She has studied both Systems Design Engineering and English Literature, which she combines and mutates in her current work on digital media. She is author of *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (MIT, 2006), *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (MIT 2011), and *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (MIT 2016). She is co-editor (with Tara McPherson and Patrick Jagoda) of a special issue of *American Literature* entitled *New Media and American Literature*, co-editor (with Lynne Joyrich) of a special issue of *Camera Obscura* entitled *Race and/as Technology* and co-editor (with Anna Fisher and Thomas Keenan) of *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader, 2nd edition* (forthcoming Routledge, 2015). She is a 2016 Guggenheim Fellow, ACLS and American Academy of Berlin Fellow, and she has been a Member of the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), a Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard and a Wriston Fellow at Brown. She is also the Velux Visiting Professor of Management, Politics and Philosophy at the Copenhagen Business School; she has been the Wayne Morse Chair for Law and Politics at the University of Oregon, Visiting Professor at Leuphana University (Lüneburg, Germany), Visiting Associate Professor in the History of Science Department at Harvard, of which she is currently an Associate.

### **Vulnerable cyborgs reloaded:**

### **From narrative technologies for self-shaping to vulnerability transformations in modernity and the anthropocene**

Mark Coeckelbergh

New media and technologies shape our lives in various ways. For instance, we use social media as “narrative technologies” to shape our selves and organise our lives and cope with human vulnerability. However, I argue in this talk that technologies do not only enable us to cope with vulnerability; by doing so, human vulnerability is also transformed. We typically use technology as anti-vulnerability tool, but the result is new vulnerabilities. If we adopt a truly posthumanist and relational view, then what we do with technology also alters us – both at personal level and at the level of the human condition. We have always been intimately connected to technology; in this sense we are cyborgs, vulnerable cyborgs. The question then seems: how do we want to cope with human vulnerability, that is, how do we want to be vulnerable, how do we want to be human? Yet this question is problematic; the analysis must be further developed by historicising it: today, in modernity and the anthropocene we are not the same cyborgs as we used to be. As we are now related – and hence vulnerable – to large socio-technological-natural systems and as we find ourselves in a situation that is called “the anthropocene”, it becomes questionable how much agency we have with regard to the specific ways we cope with human vulnerability. Is there room to

hack our vulnerability, or is resistance futile? Answering these questions – not only about self-shaping but also about the human condition – will be crucial for vulnerable cyborgs in the 21st century.



**Mark Coeckelbergh** is Professor of Philosophy of Media and Technology at the Department of Philosophy, University of Vienna, Austria and part-time Professor of Technology and Social Responsibility at the Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility, De Montfort University, UK. Currently he is the President of the Society for Philosophy and Technology. Previously he was co-Chair of the IEEE Robotics & Automation Society Technical Committee on Robot Ethics, was involved in European research projects in the areas of robotics and responsible innovation and was Managing Director of the 3TU Centre for Ethics and Technology. His publications include *New Romantic Cyborgs* (MIT 2017), *Money Machines* (Ashgate 2015), *Environmental Skill* (Routledge 2015), *Human Being @ Risk* (Springer 2013), *Growing Moral Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan 2012), and numerous articles in the area of philosophy of technology, in particular ethics of robotics and ICT. He also has research interests in moral philosophy, environmental philosophy and ethics of finance.

## **What are the consequences of tracking, trading and sub-priming the subject through stealth?**

Beverley Skeggs

I will draw on our ESRC research project entitled “A Sociology of Values and Value” (ES/KO10786/1), which uses software to ‘track the trackers’ (in this case - Facebook), and examine what this means for current understandings of personhood as our browser data is constantly scrutinised for sources of potential value. Are people aware that their personal data may be traded in milliseconds up to 70,000 times per day? Or not, which also has significant consequences if their personal information is sold onto debt agencies? Does this matter? Is it possible to go below the radar of digital trackers? So far, the US Federal Trade Commission and the Belgian government have found it impossible to call trackers to account. Is there any way to regulate the way people are classified beyond their knowledge and which are likely to have lifetime consequences? What are the consequences of all this tracking and trading for subjects and sociality?



**Beverley Skeggs** has been Professor of Sociology, at Goldsmiths, University of London since 2004. She has published *The Media; Issues in Sociology* (1992); *Feminist Cultural Theory* (1995); *Formations of Class and Gender* (1997); *Class, Self, Culture* (2004); *Sexuality and the Politics of Violence and Safety* (2004) (with Les Moran) and *Feminism after Bourdieu* (2005) (with Lisa Adkins), and with Helen Wood, *Reacting to Reality TV: Audience, Performance, Value* (2012) and *Reality TV and Class* (2012). Beverley is currently Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London, having previously worked at the University of Manchester, and before that Director of Women’s Studies at the University of Lancaster. She has also taught at the Universities of Keele and York. She was the Kerstin Hesselgren Professor in Gender Studies at Stockholm University in 2007. Beverley is moving to become the Director of the Atlantic Fellows Programme at the LSE in September 2017. For further information about her current ESRC project, see: <https://values.doc.gold.ac.uk/>

## ENDNOTE by Peter-Paul Verbeek



**Peter-Paul Verbeek** is professor of Philosophy of Technology and co-director of the DesignLab of the University of Twente, The Netherlands. He is also honorary professor adjunct at Aalborg University. His research focuses on the philosophy of human-technology relations, and aims to contribute to philosophical theory, ethical reflection, and practices of design and innovation. He is currently working on a 5-year project, with a team of 6 people, to investigate the mediating role of technology in knowledge, morality, and religion. His publications include *Moralizing Technology: Understanding and Designing the Morality of Things* (University of Chicago Press, 2011) and *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design* (Penn State University Press, 2005). Verbeek is a member of UNESCO's World Commission on the Ethics of Science and Technology (COMEST). His work has received several awards, including the Borghgraef Prize in Biomedical Ethics 2012 (Leuven University), and the World Technology Award in Ethics 2016 (World Technology Network).

## Featuring: Mathias Ussing Seeberg, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art BEING THERE

The exhibition BEING THERE opened at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art on October 10, 2017. Through the work of nine contemporary artists, among them Lizzie Fitch & Ryan Trecartin, Ian Cheng, Cécile B. Evans, Ed Atkins, Bunny Rogers and more, it describes, like an anthology in exhibition form, a difficult navigation for the individual between the physical and the digital. The presentation will go through the contributions by the nine artists and describe how the works relate to the subject in question.



**Mathias Ussing Seeberg** holds a master's degree in art history from the University of Copenhagen and is curator at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. His latest exhibition is entitled BEING THERE and explores an existential interregnum between the physical and the digital.

Screening and talk: October 30, 19.15 – 20.00, VENUE: Stora salen

## Program

### Monday 30 October (Venue: Stora salen)

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| 09.30 | Registration and Coffee in Stora salen   |
| 10.30 | <b>Welcome</b> to the Sigtuna Foundation by Alf Linderman, Executive Director<br><b>OPENING</b> of the conference by Amanda Lagerkvist, Head of Programme                                  |
| 11.00 | “Proxy Politics: From Global Climate Change to Racial Profiling”<br><b>Keynote Lecture by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun</b> , Brown University<br>Response by Margaret Schwartz, Fordham University |
| 12.15 | Lunch  |

13.15      **Workshop 1. World makers: design, ethics, knowledge**  
Chair: Charles M. Ess, University of Oslo

**Wendy Moncur**, University of Dundee: "Living Digitally: A Human-Computer Interaction Perspective" • **Airi Lampinen & Barry Brown**, Stockholm University: "Mobile Devices as Probes for Revealing Idiosyncratic Life-worlds" • **Sun-ha Hong**, MIT: "On the Terror of Becoming Known" • **Petter Karlström**, Stockholm University: "The New Normal and Design Fiction" • **Annette Markham**, Aarhus University: "Digital Technology as Tool, Place and Way of Being: Heuristics for Understanding Relations and Levels of Intimacy"

Enquirer: Peter-Paul Verbeek, University of Twente

14.45      Coffee in the room

15.00      **Workshop 2. Limit-situation: The Bearings of (Dis)connection**  
Chair: Tero Karppi, University of Toronto

**Amanda Lagerkvist**, Stockholm University: "Digital Caesura as Fecundity: Limit-situations of the Digital" • **Jonne Hoek**, University of Twente: "Technologically Mediated Limit-situations of Life" • **Paul Frosh**, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: "Vital Signs: Screenshots, Social Media and Existential Delegation" • **Jenny Sundén**, Södertörn University: "Dis/connections: On Technological Brokenness and Queer Relationality" • **Dorthe Refslund Christensen**, Aarhus University & **Kjetil Sandvik**, Copenhagen University: "Vulnerability Rhymes with Resilience"

Enquirer: Amit Pinchevski, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

16.30      Mini break

16.45      **Workshop 3. On the line**  
Chair: Anna Reading, King's College

**Michael Westerlund**, Stockholm University: "Digital Rumination among Suicide Bereaved People" • **Karina Horsti**, University of Jyväskylä: "Ethics and the Visual Representation of Migrant Deaths at Europe's Border" • **Evelina Lundmark**, Uppsala University: "Performing Private Truths in Plain and Precarious Sites: Atheism on YouTube" • **Tobias Raun**, Roskilde University: "Vulnerability and Emotional Self-management in Relation to Mourning Online" • **Daniel de Zeeuw**, University of Amsterdam: "Mastering Distance-to-self: on the (Auto) immunitary Logic of Online Trolling"

Enquirer: Mia Lövhelm, Uppsala University

18.15      Freetime

19.15      **Lecture/Screening: "BEING THERE"**. Mathias Ussing Seeberg,  
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art

20.00      Drinks/reception in Rosengårdssalen

20.30      Dinner

## Tuesday 31 October (Venue: Stora salen)

08.30 “Vulnerable Cyborgs Re-loaded: From Narrative Technologies for Self-shaping to Vulnerability Transformations in Modernity and the Anthropocene”  
**Keynote Lecture by Mark Coeckelbergh**, The University of Vienna  
Response by Amanda Lagerkvist, Stockholm University

09.45 **Workshop 4. Memory traces: enduring...ephemeral**  
Chair: Tony Walter, University of Bath

**Tamara Kneese**, University of California & **Ben Peters**, University of Tulsa: “Afterlife Imaginaries 1844/2044: Technologies for the Future in Silicon Valley and Mormon Theology” • **Felicity Tsering Chödrön Hamer**, Concordia University: “In Loving Memories: Navigating Grief in a Time of Abundance” • **Nadia de Vries**, University of Amsterdam: “Temporal Heirlooms: The Vulnerability of Digital Memories” • **Frances Corry**, University of Southern California: “Never Forget?: Exploring Precarious Digital Memories of 9/11”

Enquirer: Amanda Lagerkvist

11.00 **Screening** (Coffee in the room)

11.45 **Discussion**  
Discussion Leader: Anna Reading, King's College

12.30 Lunch

13.30 **Workshop 5. Automata and agency**  
Chair: Sun-ha Hong, MIT

**Tero Karppe**, University of Toronto: “‘They thought they were cheating but they were actually all alone’. Ashely Madison and the Social Bot Affair” • **Emily van der Nagel**, Swinburne University: “Exposing Vulnerabilities through Forced Connections on Social Media” • **Tanya Kant**, University of Sussex: “Brought into Being by the Algorithm: Existential Insecurity and Algorithmic Anticipation of Web Users” • **Stacey Pitsillides**, University of Greenwich: “Dance With Agency: The Things That Embody the Dead”

Enquirer: Wendy Hui Kyong Chun

14.30 **Walk and talk session**

15.30 Coffee in Rosengårdssalen

16.00 **Discussion**  
Discussion Leaders: Charles M. Ess & Mia Lövheim

16.30 **Workshop 6. Disabilities**  
Chair: Amit Pinchevski

**Linus Andersson & Niklas Westberg**, University College Halmstad: “Autism, New Media and the Transformation of ‘the Social’” • **Debora Antunes**, Universiteit Antwerpen: “The Digital as Prosthesis: Autism and Digital Media” • **Vendela Grundell**, Stockholm University: “Glitched Bodies: Digital Critique in Photographs by the Visually Impaired” • **Natalie Hendry**, RMIT University Melbourne: “Negotiating Anxiety and Visibility: Young Women’s Experience of Mental Illness and Affective Practices of Social Media” • **Alberto Romele**, University of Burgundy: “Parrhesia Anesthetized or the Uselessness of Being Courageous in the Digital Age”

Enquirer: Michael Westerlund, Stockholm University



- 18.00      Network meetings, freetime
- 20.00      Dinner

### **Wednesday 1 November (Venue: Stora salen)**

- 09.00      "What are the Consequences of Tracking, Trading and Sub-priming the Subject through Stealth?"  
**Keynote Lecture by Beverley Skeggs**, London School of Economics  
 Response by Paul Frosh, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- 10.00      Coffee in Rosengårdssalen
- 10.30      **Workshop 7. Keywords: Vulnerability & Value**  
 Chair: Johanna Sumiala, University of Helsinki

**Ganaele Langlois**, York University & **Andrea Slane**, University of Ontario Institute of Technology: "Digital Economies of Shaming" • **Carsten Stage**, Aarhus University: "Cancer Narratives on Social Media: In/visibility, Dis/empowerment and Dis/connectedness" • **Margaret Schwartz**, Fordham University: "Say Her Name: Towards a Politics of Vulnerability" • **Connor Graham & Eric Kerr**, National University of Singapore: "Being Vulnerable Digitally: Versions and Vocabularies" • **Lois Lee**, University of Kent: "Understanding Existential Precariousness in Digital Media Through the Meta-existentiality of 'Unbelievers'"

Enquirer: Mark Coeckelbergh

- 12.00      Lunch
- 13.00      **Writing Session**  
 Chair: Margaret Schwartz
- 14.30      **Endnote by Peter-Paul Verbeek**
- 15.15      **Roundup and DIGMEX plans**  
 Amanda Lagerkvist
- 15.30      **Conference Ends** (Coffee in Rosengårdssalen)
- 15.30      **(Existential Terrains Advisory Board Meeting)**



**Stockholm  
University**

*Knut och Alice  
Wallenbergs  
Stiftelse*

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