

Schedule

15:00 - 15:20 Welcome

15:20 - 16:00 TITiPI presentation

16:00 - 16:30 Q&A

16:30 - 16:45 BREAK

16:45 - 17:40 Collective Relearning

17:40 - 18:00 Conversation and Wrap-Up

Varia's Code of Conduct: <http://varia.zone/en/pages/code-of-conduct.html>

Collective note taking could start here :)

<https://pad.vvvvvvaria.org/digital-solidarity-networks>

Today is the last of three events on digital solidarity networks. Special guests: TiTiPi!

Infrables

TITiPI as emerging institute
institution in the making

in times of global cloud computation

what infrastructures do, not only the cable and the servers

thinking through "operations"
a term to talk about the coming together of infrastructures, communities and institutions.

the work of making an institution is part of doing digital infrastructure work differently

In the past year, they've been working at a distance due to COVID restrictions, operations that bring communities, institutes and infrastructures together are becoming more legible to more people due to pandemic.

Early in pandemic, COVID apps were introduced. Tried to understand what was going on and what impact this would have on operations of people, institutions and communities. Through bug report tried to engage with this.

These operations that bring institutions communities and infrastructures are becoming more legible

Worry that this would have a big impact on how communities, institutions would operate, so a bug report was formulated:

<https://github.com/DP-3T/documents/issues/118>

Half-analysis, half complaint
reporting of something not working

in the repository of a group who was developing a proposal for an open source decentralised solution for running COVID apps

in order to come to that formulation, they were relying on Seda who at the time was active as an engineer in the group that was developing a proposal, and also miriyam who was working on helen working on queer operations

understanding that for some there was small changes, but for others there was a huge impact

not only expert knowledge, not only meta-knowledge of what was going on, but also "lived experiences"

lived experiences were crucial in trying to understand what was going on

this became stronger when recently they did another bug report

Recently did another bug report, something not working, responding to EU digital COVID immunity certificate.

<https://github.com/ehn-digital-green-development/hcert-spec/issues/84>

"fair" treatment

at the same time, the structural shifts were incredibly impactful and also difficult to formulate. in the time of desiring to shift out of a terrible situation, it was very hard to make a report of what was going on with immunity certificates in a language that would speak to people who were having intuitions that something was not right

on the one hand, expert understanding and on the other hand a stream of stories and anecdotes that were alluding to how operations were shifting

"how the operations were being operated on"

what animal are we looking at, what octopus is this?

the sharing of anecdotes, in the times of conspiracy theories, is really difficult, but it's politically important, it's producing solidarity

in a time when conspiracy theory are being put aside as difficult to put stories forward as they are easily dismissed as such, it was important to think with these stories

politically important to think-with these stories

"come to terms with the abstractness of the shifts"

but also, how they are showing a shift of control

[image on the screen showing notes from a session they had on their first night's meeting where they tried to make a historical timeline of how global computing operations have led to the cloud being in place; showing different shifts that have happened.]

while telling the story they realised how hard it is to figure out where to act, to intervene, how to move with things that are in place

to think about how from the particular individual experience could transform these stories into tools; by sharing these anecdotes, not as something that happened to *me* but as something that could happen to *all of us*

thinking not from the aspect of overview
(while not forgetting about it)
practice a zoom out view

bring in humour and complexity into the practice and try to bring some hooks into this nightmare cartography that they started to make
how people are negotiating these systems already

"nightmare cartography"

they just started finishing one project where they had conversations with people about how they observed the infrastructural shifts

going back to those notes from the conversations and their experiences trying to gather in bruxelles, they gathered 5 anecdotes about operations operating

"operations operating"

"operation thinking"

Helen reads anecdote (joined by improvisational dramatic piano by Seda) #1 Amazon vouchers as payment & university micromanaging.

Anecdote #2: Vaccine Bro's, read by Miriyam, accompanied by melodic piano by Seda.

Anecdote #3: corona 'Help', read by Femke, accompanied by minimalistic and abstract improv piano, sadly interrupted by a wonky wifi connection or overheated laptop? The bureaucratic intricacies of getting government support during the pandemic. Neoliberal policies biting hard, while modernist piano tunes confuse yet sustain our attention.

Anecdote #4: self-managing a demonstration on eventbrite. Read by Helen accompanied by piano music you might expect in the morning, on an autumn sunday. Neoliberalism has infiltrated the minds of eventbrite users... voluntarily registering and catlling participants in a demonstration, gathering data about them.

Anecdote #5: travelling to BRX read by Miriyam accompanied by troubled piano, the kind that keeps you on your toes, your heart hanging on every note. An intimate story about COVID test taking, handing over a tube of spit to a stranger.

///

abstract thinking & concrete thinking

many things can count as infrastructures
for titipi, the interest is in computational infrastructures

from personal computers to where we are today

"infrastructural dependencies"

digital functionalities become dependent on computational intermediaries

as a result of some financial shifts, tech companies kept growing and gave us oversimplified cloud infrastructures

mobile devices > network > growing into 5g now

when a lot of developers try to develop functionality
they are not taking a computer and putting a service on top of it (?) but tying different parts of the world up with a comp infrastructure that is owned by a few companies

Cloud services centralise power in the hands of a handful of companies. Even independent developers are relying on this layer of infrastructure up to a certain extent. Digital enclosure.

In a sense, Google, Amazon, etc are not developing technology, they are:

zipping us in

they are sewing us in

complex infrastructures of control

computational infrastructure is important because it is expected to and proven to bring a source of income when the predominant model of advertisement is clearly not giving returns to tech companies

institutions have IT

and they make an expense

this can be removed (as it is a risky expense, expensive because of many updates)

the proposition of the cloud is that you can move everything to the cloud, which is much cheaper for the institute

but while doing that...

they are creating a common infrastructure for these institutions and benefiting from this

Vendor lock in (addition, not mentioned). All expertise, and hardware infrastructure and know-how is moved out of the institutions and into the cloud. Now completely dependent on cloud service provider, with very different goals and interpretations of good business practice than institutions and their staff.

"moving IT from the inside"

"operations" > guts of the institutions

anything from admin workflows to organising resources for the org, anything that is being automated and pushed to cloud infrastructures

the problem with this is if you take the gut of an org and put it on a cloud, what happens with that org?

what happens when "taking out the guts from an organisation"?

clouds that operate on a global scale
that do not care about your local context
which is something that is very difficult to reverse

already happened with journalism and publishing (ad based models that drove the institutions, once that money was gone, the institutions collapsed ?)

what happens if we continue to gut public institutions in general? with the autonomy and agency of those institutions?

what happens to the autonomy of institutions?

not that these institutions cannot be violent themselves (rephrased?)

=====

Q&A

=====

Q (Manetta): using issue tracker on github to speak back to software dev and people working on the software. Listening to the anecdotes, how can they be used to speak back to such large processes?

A: the way in which stories circulate; trying to understand lived experiences that are slightly non-coherent; it's different from an ethnographic text; almost through the telling of stories they help to articulate the thing that is being articulated;

Anecdotes speak back to something that is always in process, rather from something fixed.
A bit like gossips.

Trying to understand what "speaking back" is?
Speaking back can also be opening up paths to others. As it is all complicated.

Q: Do you see anecdotes as an activist act? Building solidarity? How can infrabels be turned into an action?

infrabels - parables on infrastructure?

Not to be alone

A way to share the hurt, and to create energy for action.

Sharing the complexity of what is going on there.

Subjective level & collective level

Relationality between how you imagine, vocalize, how feelings come back...

Stories can trigger stories...

But there is also a collective element...

Political and collective element in anecdotes. Has something to do with stamina, reserves on individual level. Empowerment. Empowered stories can be counter-hegemonic. This is where we rule, we mediate, communicate, knowledge through anecdotes. In political cultures, there's this whole writing on for instance communication and mediation under dictatorships in Syria, where anecdote and story are vehicles for critique. Speculation, what if we add this element or that element: Allows us to imagine new infrastructures. Passing on truth. Engendering solidarity.

Conspiracies exaggerated anecdotes that purposefully don't activate.

Anecdotes and stories as vehicles for critique.

By inserting a story, you can even manipulate the story, by adding ingredients...

"imagine we can"

dialectics between offline (ethnographic tales and stories) and online (infrastructures)

Never alienated from the offline.

The politics of 'as if' (Syria, also Morocco)

Cheering for the king, acting as if, full of codes. Every cheer is more like a boo or spit.

Q by Lidia: how did you come up with the format of the bug report, and what are the affordances of this format?

A (Femke): few years ago started working with Roel. Trying to understand what was happening with skin color modifiers of emojis. How could this be a response to communication infrastructures contributing to racism staying around. Unicode consortium was proposing an update to standard, with a Request For Comment. To test the proposal. We decided to formulate a response/comment. Try to articulate the problem. Not easy. Used each other's skills to formulate problem. When you speak to platform that ... needed a shifting of problem space. Putting pressure on framework.

In such RFC environment, only bugs are expected that fit the "problem space".

political decision to bring other infrastructures

In the end bug report was closed because it was not "a technical issue", it was regarded as something not in relation to the technical object.

(Helen): the technical is not the only answer.

The bug report as a confrontation to the dominance of the technical perspective.

We are asking ourselves: Is the bug to be repaired or fixed? What does it mean to crush some of these bugs? We should have a kind of convivial relationship to them.

=====
Collective Relearning
=====

+++++

Melting your CPU, one meeting at a time!

A stab in the dark at team building

```
      _..--"\
     _..--" \
    _..--"  _..--"
   _..--"  _..--" |
  \ o  _..--" _..--"
 \_..--"\
  |  \
```

+-----+

+-----+

+++++ micro ++ soft ++ protest +++++

+ against the unequal distribution +

+++++ of terms and conditions +++++

Join us in the blackout room!

+++++