Arts & Humanities Research Council

Automation Anxiety
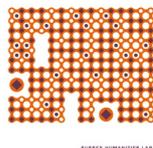
Workshop 2: Automation and (In)Security

#autanx
@automtnanxiety

http://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/automationanxiety

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

SUSSEX HUMANITIES LAB

UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

DCRC

About AHRC Automation Anxiety

From self-driving cars, through high-frequency trading to military drones and organised swarms of shelf-stacking robots, our era is marked by rising automation and a new fascination with the likely social, cultural, and economic impacts of this computationally driven transformation. This AHRC research network explores innovative methods by which the humanities might address contemporary cultural anxiety about new forms of automation, which we are calling automation anxiety. The focus of this network is to address, as a topic in its own right, the cultural and social anxiety generated by these new forms of computational automation. What new research methods can the humanities use to to map and understand automation anxiety around opaque computational decision making? What digital tools can be brought to bear on the diverse types of online public culture in which this anxiety is expressed? The workshops are organised around three key modalities of contemporary automation anxiety: **human obsolescence** through the automation of cognitive labour, or the end of (human) expertise; **human (in)security** through the automated extension of military power or law enforcement; and **human (in)attention**, forms of automation or delegation to machines which themselves produce anxiety or instability through their operation or uncanny effects.

About Sussex Humanities Lab

The Sussex Humanities Lab is dedicated to developing and expanding research into how digital technologies are shaping our culture and society, as well as the way we go about our research. The lab draws on expertise from diverse fields including philosophy and information technology, history and archaeology, media and communications, music and performance technology, and sociology, to ask questions which have always been at the heart of the humanities. Supported by £3 million of funding, the University of Sussex is creating a substantial research infrastructure to support work to develop new forms of digital humanities over the next four years. Our vision is to ensure that information scientists and literary theorists, media scholars, designers, and practitioners, social scientists and historians, collaborate to serve the fundamental roles of humanities research - to explore the human condition and its evolution, and the social and material worlds we make. We wish to make the humanities fit for purpose in a digital age.

About the Digital Cultures Research Centre, UWE Bristol

The Digital Cultures Research Centre (DCRC) is the hub for a network of researchers from across the University of the West of England whose work addresses the practices and socio-cultural meanings of emerging media. In a context of transforming media cultures, in which established methods of producing and understanding media are undergoing rapid change, we map and contextualise emerging practices and critically reflect on their aesthetics, ethics and impacts. DCRC research seeks to make an impact by creating new knowledge about creative media applications in real world contexts, and about everyday life in today's digital media ecology. The DCRC is a partner, with the University of Bristol, in The Pervasive Media Studio. Located at Watershed in Bristol's Harbourside, the PM Studio hosts a unique diverse community of artists, creative companies, technologists and academics exploring experience design and creative technology. DCRC researchers work in the open innovation Studio space, collaborating on projects and in dialogue with residents.

Programme

9.30 Tea / Coffee / Welcome

10.00 Round Table: Military-Industrial (In)Security

Ryan Bishop (WSA/ University of Southampton): Autonomous Remote Sensing Systems: Sensing Sovereignty and Subjects

Polyscaler autonomous remote sensing systems, as well as tele-technological weapons systems, presently constitute new regimes of tele-activity for real-time surveillance and data gathering. In their automated operations, these systems do more than simply generate information. They help constitute a markedly pervasive distribution of sensing, data generation, data gathering and communication into the weave of the world while simultaneously reconfiguring human engagements with it. The numerous large-scale interrelated remote sensing systems operative in the present have long genealogies in military research and development and remain influential in military, civic and corporate spheres. The political and philosophical effects of these radically distributed sensing systems on the constitution of the self and the subject's imaginary of its relation to others, especially in the form of the political subject in relation to sovereignty, open a shift in the terrain of geopolitical thought and the emergence of potentially new geopolitical concepts, frames and architectures. The work I have been conducting around these systems has been formed in conversation with Benjamin Bratton, who has decided to approach the situation as a design problem, while I have approached it as a critical theory/political philosophy issue. In this talk, I will consider specific systems and some of their material components as well as strategies for writing and thinking about them.

Elspeth Van Veeren (University of Bristol): Security in the Drone Age - Reinvestigating the Secret

If drone warfare, digital surveillance and targeted killing as contemporary and increasingly dominant yet controversial security practices are to be understood and debated, we need to pay attention to a number of ways in which these practices produce secrecy. Drawing on research from the Wikidronia Project – a project documenting US security practices in the Obama-era - this paper calls for a turn to data visualization techniques and strategies as method in order to capture and make sense of the complex politics of these security practices, the scale of the networks mobilized, their visualities, and ultimately their politics.

Patrick Crogan (UWE Bristol): Soldiers, Planks, Insects and Robots

This paper looks at constructions of the future of conflict involving lethal autonomous robotic systems (LARS) as found in some documents, reports, and predictions emanating from the 'military-industrial complex'. The aim is to examine the forms and figurings through which the relationship between the human and the nonhuman elements of the armed forces in prospective accounts of conflict are articulated. I am especially interested in the thematisation of swarming in these articulations, given its influential part in the (r)evolution of AI and robotics. Swarming is a natural phenomenon found in the animal kingdom that has played a major role in inspiring behavioural, physical and perceptual learning approaches to

AI beyond the cognitive modelling paradigm. It is of signal importance in these constructions if one is seeking insights into the way that human and nonhuman systems are being envisaged as articulated in the conduct of warfare – a concept which slips and slides between a human (historical-political) and natural (instinctual) designation across these constructions of the future of conflict.

11.45 Tea / Coffee

12.00 Methods 1

Noortje Marres (University of Warwick): What if nothing happens? Driverless street trials as experiments in interpretation.

This talk will investigate the "street trial" as a device for experimental inquiry into social issues raised by automated systems. I adopt a deliberately broad definition of what counts as an experiment, and discuss a range of different street trials involving so-called intelligent cars: a street test of a modified VW diesel car; the demonstration of a driverless pod on a public square in a middle-sized UK town; an artistic experiment in the streets of Amsterdam involving a remote-controlled miniature car. I will explore the capacity of social research to contribute to the creative and critical analysis and configuration of street experiments. In doing so, I will pay special attention to the role of interpretation, not only because 'achieving' a public or collective interpretation of the problems and promises of computerized vehicles is a crucial aspect of street trials, but also because I want to know whether the re-configuration of street trials into "experiments in interpretation" is a good objective to pursue.

12.45 Lunch

14.00 Methods 2

Andrew Goffey (University of Nottingham): Automation Anxiety and the Technological Unconscious

Picking up on the reference to subjectivity implicit in the notion of automation anxiety this presentation considers briefly some possible ways in which one might develop the notion of a technological unconscious - a term with some currency within the social and human sciences - so as to render it productive for thinking about affective dispositions in relationship to developments in information technology. If we can speak coherently about automation anxiety, I would argue, this is because populations have some troubling experience of automation in their daily lives already. Banal though the point may be, it raises interesting questions about how people come to know technology and what we can learn from the troubled relation to it that automation anxiety betokens.

14.45 Policing and (In)Security

Dean Wilson (University of Sussex): Algorithmic Patrol: The Futures of Predictive Policing

Predictive policing has garnered considerable academic and popular interest in recent years. Harnessing techniques of predictive analytics and data mining drawn from commercial, scientific and military fields, predictive policing extends the promise of pre-empting and forestalling criminal actions in real time. This paper interrogates the claims of predictive policing and its envisaged futures, ranging from the utopian visions of industry through to the dystopian vistas sketched in critical scholarship. The paper also considers the contribution and limitations of traditional policing scholarship, which on one level provides important insights into the contingent and contextual nature of technological innovations in policing, yet on another level can also constrain analysis within narrow empirical parameters concerned primarily with evaluation and organizational accountability.

15.30 Tea / Coffee

15.45 Round Table: Military-Industrial (In)Security 2

Benjamin Noys (University of Chichester): The Sex of Drones

It might be obvious to assume that the sex of drones (unmanned automated vehicles) would be male. In line with the masculine ideologies of militarism, in which anxieties and insecurities are bolstered by phallic identifications and the stigmatisation of female bodies and femininity, the drone would be another metaphorically masculine military technology. In contrast, however, the piloting or 'riding' of the drone, which involves male and female pilots, suggests a more complex gendering of this 'assemblage'. Tracing a series of interactions and genderings of drones and their preceding technological forms this inquiry aims to unsettle the 'security' of gender.

Cormac Deane (IADT Dublin): The Sounds of the War Machine

Technoscientific screen narratives about security and insecurity are highly informational. Viewers of, for example, the Bourne films or of the TV series CSI spend much of their time watching, and enjoying, the processing of reams of data on screens within the narrative. The weirdly prominent soundscapes of these inner screens are revealing of popular fantasies about the power of computing to detect and combat crime and 'terrorism'. As a methodological approach, listening to the sounds of the war machine helps us discern an important function of computational affect, which is to disavow the many deficiencies of a data-centred approach to security and insecurity.

17.00 Discussion

Speaker Information

Ryan Bishop is Professor of Global Art and Politics at the Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton UK, where is co-director with Jussi Parikka of the research group "Archaeologies of Media and Technology." He co-edits the journal *Cultural Politics* (Duke UP) and edits the book series "Technicities" (Edinburgh UP), "A *Cultural Politics* Book" (Duke UP) and "Theory Now" (Polity). Recent books include *Cold War Legacies: Systems, Theory, Aesthetics* (with John Beck, Edinburgh UP, 2016), *Across and Beyond: A transmediale Reader on Post-digital Practices, Concepts and Institutions* (with Kristoffer Gansing, Jussi Parikka and Elvia Wilk, Sternberg Press, 2016) and *Barthes/Burgin* (with Sunil Manghani, Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

Patrick Crogan is Associate Professor of Digital Cultures at UWE Bristol. He researches a range of digital cultural forms from videogames to drones to animation. He wrote *Gameplay Mode: War, Simulation and Technoculture* (2010). He is an expert in the work of philosopher of technology, Bernard Stiegler. He is Co-I of the AHRC Automation Anxiety network.

Cormac Deane's publications have appeared in *Culture Machine*, *The Journal of Sonic Studies*, *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, and *Science, Technology and Human Values*, among others. In 2016, Columbia University Press published his translation from French of *Impersonal Enunciation*, the final work of the seminal film theorist, Christian Metz. Cormac also worked as a news journalist in a Berlin television station for five years. Later, he was the archivist for the publishing/theatrical venture Field Day, of which he is a board director. A lecturer in media at the Institute of Art, Design and Technology in Dublin, he is currently preparing a book-length media archaeology of the control room.

Andrew Goffey is Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Critical Theory at the University of Nottingham. He is the author (with Matthew Fuller) of *Evil Media*, the editor (with Eric Alliez) of *The Guattari Effect* and (with Roland Faber) of *The Allure of Things.* He is currently writing books on the politics of software and on the work of Félix Guattari and is doing research on institutional analysis and on the materiality of information. He is also the translator of numerous works in the fields of philosophy and critical theory, including *In Catastrophic Times* and *Capitalist Sorcery* by Isabelle Stengers, and *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* and *Lines of Flight* by Félix Guattari.

Noortje Marres is Associate Professor in the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies at the University of Warwick. She studied philosophy and sociology of science and technology at the University of Amsterdam, and in 2012 published *Material Participation: Technology, the Environment, Everyday Publics* (Palgrave). Her book, *Digital Sociology: The Reinvention of Social Research* will be published by Polity this Spring.

Benjamin Noys is Professor of Critical Theory at the University of Chichester. He is author of Georges Bataille: A Critical Introduction (2000), The Culture of Death (2005), The Persistence of the Negative (2010), and Malign Velocities (2014). He has also recently published the article 'Drone Metaphysics' – available here: https://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/595/602

Ben Roberts is Lecturer in Digital Humanities at the University of Sussex. He has published widely on philosophy of technology, particularly the work of Bernard Stiegler. He is currently

completing a monograph entitled *Critical Theory and Contemporary Technology* and editing (with Mark Goodall) a collection called *New Media Archaeologies*. He is PI of the AHRC Automation Anxiety network.

Elspeth Van Veeren is Lecturer in Political Science in the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies and a resident at the Pervasive Media Studio at the Bristol Watershed. Specialising in the security cultures, politics and foreign policy of the United States, she has researched cultures of security associated with torture, Guantanamo, and more recently on drone warfare and targeted killing. Overall, her work concerns contemporary practices, technologies, and cultures that mobilise publics for and against war. Her latest project is a study of invisibility, secrecy and security.

Dean Wilson is Professor of Criminology in the Department of Sociology, University of Sussex. Dean's research areas include policing, surveillance, security and technology; and he has published articles on biometrics, border control and policing. His most recent publication (with Jude McCulloch) is *Pre-Crime: Pre-Emption, Precaution and the Future* (2016 Routledge). Dean is currently researching predictive policing and its implications for the future of law enforcement organizations.