



Organized by: Collège d'études mondiales - FMSH

In collaboration with: Iri (Centre Pompidou) and LabOnt (Università di Torino)

**TOTAL MOBILIZATION:
WEB AND SOCIAL REALITY**

Paris, 15-17 October 2015

What is the web doing?

What is the web?

What does the web want?

The web is mobilizing human beings in impressive and unprecedented ways. In order to understand this phenomenon, we should wonder what kind of entity the web is, how it relates to and bears upon human society and culture. The conference aims at doing so by involving scholars who, in their researches, are addressing these issues from different perspectives. e.g. philosophy, cognitive sciences, anthropology, social sciences.

Locations:

On Thursday 15th and on Friday 16th: FMSH, Le France, 190, avenue de France, Salle CNRS 638 (6th floor)

On Saturday 17th: Centre Pompidou, Place Georges-Pompidou, "Petite salle"

Mandatory inscription on: <http://www.fmsch.fr/fr/c/7775>

Language: English (and French)

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THURSDAY OCTOBER 15th (FMSH, Le France)

Society: What is the web doing?

9.45 Official Opening

Olivier Bouin (Collège d'études mondiales) et Maurizio Ferraris (Università di Torino)

10.00 - 13.00

Chair: Olivier Bouin (Collège d'études mondiales)

Maurizio Ferraris (Università di Torino)

The Mobilized Animal

Perhaps for the first time in world history, with the Web, the absolute is in our hands. But having the world in our hands is also, automatically, being in the hands of the world. On May 20th the Wall Street Journal wondered "Can You Sue the Boss for Making You Answer Late-Night Email?" This question relates directly to the general idea we have of humanity nowadays: what is a human being in the Web era? A total mobilization is the primary character of the world revealed by the new media – networked computers, smartphones, tablets, and of course all the devices to come in this fast-changing and unpredictable evolution. What is the force that moves me with the peremptoriness of a categorical imperative? What makes it so that a technical apparatus can mobilize human intentionality with such power, transforming our lives? How can it evolve autonomously, as if it were a body with an internal finality of its own? The answer is that a human being is not mainly a rational animal (many behaviors, such as working in the middle of the night, are far from being so) nor is he a social animal (sociality seems to be a precarious imposition dictated by evolutionary needs). A human being is rather a mobilized animal that, through this very mobilization, accesses rationality and sociality. Understanding the human being does not mean looking inside him nor does it simply amount to studying his behaviors. Rather, it means understanding what mobilizes him.

Antonio Casilli (Télécom ParisTech / EHESS)

Understanding Digital Labor: the Emergence of a Sphere of Social Conflict

Online and mobile platforms have prompted the emergence of a distinctive form of "digital labor". From Google's advertisement-oriented services, to Uber-like on-demand apps, from Youtube's content-farming to Facebook's social graph-based metadata exploitation, users' online presence is turned into revenue streams. Although such "implicit work" performed by users of digital platforms falls largely outside the paradigm of traditional waged labor, organized forms of social conflict are starting to emerge. In the past few years, at the fringe of traditional social movements collective action of internet users has already manifested itself through different types of struggles. The intersection of digital platforms usage and labor awareness reveals a set of economical and cultural tensions that underpin current networked sociability and raises the specter of social conflictuality.

Marcello Vitali-Rosati (Université de Montréal)

The Writer and the Architect – Web, Editorialization and Metaontology

The web is made of writing: everything on the web is written - even images and videos are code -, and the writing is the actual material of the digital space. At the same time the digital space is becoming more and more our main space, the space where we live our daily life. This is why we cannot consider the digital space as a parallel space anymore: the digital space is our reality. Starting from these assumptions, in my presentation I will address the following questions: 1. How is the digital space organized? 2. How can we interpret it from an ontological point of view? The concept of "editorialization" will be used for answering the first question and that of "metaontology" for answering the second one.

14.30 – 16.30

Chair: Alberto Romele

Milad Doueihi (Sorbonne Universités)

Social Realism in the Algorithmic Web

Algorithms translate information into data shaping social reality. How to think through this emerging digital materialism? A return to the formative period of digital culture will allow perhaps to better situate the current trends driven by the resurgence of diverse forms of “intelligence” grounded in machine learning and a complex recommendation model that has become the primary engine for sociability. Ultimately, how to think, within this new context, the relations between digital automation and socio-political autonomy?

Jacopo Domenicucci (Ecole Normale Supérieure)

Trust, in the Digital Era. Sketching Some Hypotheses.

It is common ground that digital technology is not simply giving rise to new forms of communication. It is rather reconfiguring the way we interact –its rhythm, shape, space and social meaning. Here we focus on a crucial feature of human cooperation: trust. We sketch the conceptual landscape of trust and reliance and present work in progress hypotheses about how connectivity specifically affects the way we trust.

17.00 – 19.00

Chair: Laurent de Sutter

Angela Condello (EHESS / Università di Roma Tre)

Documentality in the Web: a Legal-Philosophical Perspective

The web is a complex documental apparatus that registers, orders, produces and reproduces information and relations (both private and public). I shall argue that this intrinsic nature of the web emerges more clearly if we analyze it from the legal perspective. Law can be used, nowadays, as a paradigmatic dimension that shows how conflicts and interests emerge from the web because of its nature and structure. I will refer to both European (Google Spain, 2014) and American juridical cases in order to claim that the web has its own « positive force » independent from the intentionality of individuals: an autopoietic force capable of producing responsibility and of inverting power balances.

Antoinette Rouvroy (Université de Namur)

Title to be announced

FRIDAY OCTOBER 16th (FMSH, Le France)

Reality: What is the web?

10.00 - 13.00

Chair: Françoise Thibault (FMSH)

Michel Wieviorka (FMSH-EHESS)

L'impératif numérique est-il toujours d'actualité? (Is the Digital Imperative Still Relevant?)

Digital technologies are relevant for human and social sciences in two respects: firstly, as a source of data and as tools for analysis; secondly, as an object of investigation. The latter respect is especially relevant since digital technologies are at the core of a cultural and anthropological mutation.

Enrico Terrone (Collège d'études mondiales)

World Wide What? The Ontological Singularity of the Web

I will argue that the web is a particular abstract artifact, which has a beginning and could have an end in time but lacks a location in physical space. Indeed, the web is a peculiar self-standing space: a quasi-space, in which there are places, namely websites, and there are routes from one place to another, namely links, but there are no physical distances. Finally, I will investigate the conceivability of a "quasi-space world", whose basic dimensions would not be time and physical space but time and the quasi-space of the web.

Roberto Casati (CNRS, Institut Nicod)

Don't say this but that: Redescribing online life

In the last two years, after the publication of a book on "digital colonialism", I started collecting data about ways of describing activities, objects and behaviors gathering around "online life" and about the way we should conceive of pre-digital life. I'll present a list of those descriptions, in order to suggest some corresponding redescriptions that may help us in making fine-grained decisions about the digital migration. Digital natives are actually digitally coerced children, multitasking is actually task-switching, and holidays should not turn into working from picturesque places.

14.15 – 16.15

Chair: Angela Condello

Juan Carlos De Martin (Politecnico di Torino)

Towards an Internet Bill of Rights?

The calls for a constitutionalization of the Internet have been multiplying since the World Summit on Information Society held in Tunis in 2005 and have picked up considerable strength after the revelations of Edward Snowden in 2013. Since then, Brazil approved the Marco Civil law (April 2014) and a study commission of Italy's Chamber of Deputies produced a Declaration of Internet Rights (July 2015). Tim Berners-Lee, too, is promoting the idea of an Internet Magna Carta. What are the potential and limits of this rights-based attempt to shape the future of the Web?

Stefana Broadbent (University College London)

Strategies to Cope with Uncertainty

Most emerging digital communication patterns can be read as strategies to cope with uncertainty. The strong concentration of communication on close relationships through textual and visual channels indicates a significant reliance on proximal social spheres to ensure security and continuity. The extensive use of social media as platforms for engaging in the public debate is also indicative of the difficulty to find digital

environments that are appropriate for new forms of collective collaboration. Mainstream social media platforms offer a known environment in which complex issues can be explored.

16.45 – 19.45

Chair: Maurizio Ferraris

Luciano Floridi (University of Oxford)

The New Morphology of Power in the Infosphere

What is the nature of power today, in mature information societies? In this talk, I shall argue that, in liberal societies – awash with cheap goods and services and free information – the sociopolitical ability to control or influence people's behaviour (power) is exercised not so much through the control of things (goods and services) or information about things, but mainly through the control of the questions that determine the answers that give rise to information about things (uncertainty). In short, I shall argue that the new morphology of power is the morphology of uncertainty: those who control the questions shape the answers; and those who shape the answers control the world. If time allows it, I shall then explore the consequences of this emerging form of power and what can be done to regulate it in a socially beneficial way.

John Searle (University of California, Berkeley)

Computation and the Mind

Isabelle Pariente-Butterlin (Aix-Marseille Université)

Could There Be Real Changes from a Virtual World?

I will underline that the web is not a virtual world, even if we play on line games. The web is a so called "virtual world", where one is supposed to live "virtual lives". My main argument will be that those supposed virtual experiences allow us to come back from the web in the real world and to solve real problem we have to face in it. We loop through the web to come back, with further thoughts, in the actual world. This kind of reasoning is quite interesting. Since it has effective consequences in the actual world, as would say David Lewis, it is not different from it. So the web is part of the actual world. This point has many consequences I will develop, from both an ontological point of view and a normative point of view. Since the web is part of the actual world, we have to define again what it is to interact with someone else, both in the on line and in the off line world.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 17th (Centre Pompidou)

Mobilization: What does the web want?

9.15 – 13.30

Chair: Enrico Terrone

Vincent Duclos (McGill University)

Life in the Media: From Immersion to Mobilization in the Digital Clinic

Digital connectivity introduces a recent version of an age-old anthropological challenge, as it points toward the emergence, maintenance and collapse of spaces in which human lives are being nurtured and fostered, protected and cared for. Whether it be technical, symbolic, or cultural, mediation has always played a crucial role in this regard. It is a constitutive dimension of our being together, of an efficient immersion in social life. How, then, is digital mediation any different? Drawing upon the example of online disease tracking, this talk will suggest that life in the media is at once stiffening and de-centering of the self, attempts at enclosure/insulation and unprecedented exposure to the outside. While it is primarily discernible in emergent processes of capture and mobilization, digital media also hint at the openness of a life that will not be contained.

Bernard Stiegler (Institut de recherche et d'innovation)

A Web for a Neganthropocene

The advent of the web was a huge event because it suddenly introduced massively new possibilities of negentropic activities at the bottom level reticulated by the hyper-textual technologies made possible by the html protocol. After 23 years, the web as a platform has again become an entropic system submitted to computation. My communication will plead for a reinvention of the web in the light of the gained experience.

Laurent de Sutter (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

The Total Mobilization of Desire: Excitation at the Time of Social Networks

The invention of digital social networks has deeply changed our relationship to relationships. It has replaced the binary time of presence and absence by a continuum of quasi-presence that doesn't know the boundaries of distance, time or even activity. With digital social networks, we are totally mobilized by the others, and by the way others make us exist - meaning: give us a sense of perpetual excitement, and even excitation. This perpetual excitation has led to dramatic consequences from the point of view of how we socially behave in general, and of how our social behavior is restructured in its principles. If some authors have pointed towards the new economy of attention developed on the basis of digital social networking, few have dared to consider the changes occurring at the more fundamental level of desire. For why a new economy of attention? Why a new regime of interaction? The answer lies in a reconsideration of what desire is, and of how it is redefined in accordance with the enjoyment of quasi-presence that we experience through digital social networks. But the question is not so much how to desire quasi-presence. It is rather: haven't we ever desired anything else than quasi-presence ?

Alberto Romele (Universidade do Porto / University of Technology of Compiègne)

Materialization, Technicization and Socialization: Expanding (Literary) Hermeneutics toward Digital Technologies

In recent years, several researchers applied ontological hermeneutics – a second-degree reflection on interpretation and understanding as essential capabilities of human beings – to the domain of digital technologies, especially the Web. In this presentation, I will rather privilege literary hermeneutics as a candidate to account for the impact of digital technologies on individual and social life. More specifically, I will refer to Peter Szondi's "material hermeneutics", whose peculiarity is to be anti-dogmatic (critical), anti-transcendental (empirical) and anti-ontological. In Szondi's perspective, the term 'material' indicates both an object-oriented and a context-interested reflection on literary texts. In the first section, which corresponds to the first meaning of the term, I will investigate how digital technologies modify literary hermeneutics, according to a threefold

movement of materialization (from signs to clues), technicization (from clues to digital traces) and socialization (from texts to social reality). In the second section, I will critically go through this movement again, claiming that material hermeneutics might represent an alternative both to the humanities and engineering approaches to digital technologies.