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What ‘Postdigital’ Means to Us: Roundtable with Members of the Centre for Postdigital Cultures

Abstract: Facilitated by the sixth author, this roundtable was conducted on 24 January 2024, at Coventry University. It brings together members of the Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University, from the centre’s five core research strands: Post-publishing; Postdigital Intimacies; ArtSpaceCity; Ludic Design; and AI and Algorithmic Cultures. Here we explore the multifaceted and interdisciplinary meaning to us of the concept of the ‘postdigital’ and unpack the salient characteristics that make it an important concept in future practice-research-theory.

Keywords: postdigital, cultural theory, social justice, games studies, post-publishing, intimacies, AI, art practice

Introduction

This roundtable discussion brings together members of the Centre for Postdigital Cultures (CPC), Coventry University, with representatives from the centre's five core research strands: Post-Publishing; Postdigital Intimacies; ArtSpaceCity; Ludic Design; and AI and Algorithmic Cultures. In this discussion, we explore the multifaceted meaning of the concept of the 'postdigital' in our work across aesthetics, politics, cultural and social theory, and in technologically mediated everyday life. We unpack the salient characteristics that make it an important concept in future practice-research-theory. The discourse on the 'postdigital' in CPC revolves around interdisciplinary research strands, showcasing diverse perspectives on its definition and implications.

Within our own discussion, we advocate for sociocultural and more-than-human approaches that critique technological determinism and binary classifications. We explore how the postdigital disrupts normative digital presence, foregrounds social and cultural issues and dimensions, and addresses embedded inequalities through different approaches to social justice. Key insights include the rejection of simplistic binaries, the recognition of the inseparability of digital and non-digital realms, and the importance of considering diverse communities and cultures in a postdigital global development. Additionally, discussions touch upon the materiality of digital technologies, and the meaning of technological advancement in the context of environmental catastrophe and societal collapse. Overall, the dialogue underscores the need for critical engagement with and through the postdigital, highlighting its relevance across various disciplines, and its potential to shape future societies.

Note: Facilitated by the sixth author, this roundtable was conducted and recorded as a conversation between participants on 24 January 2024, at Coventry University. It was subsequently edited collectively, for general clarity and minor refinement of certain key points and arguments. The participants would also like to note that authorship is in alphabetical order, not order of contribution level.

Research Focus and Strands

Marcus Maloney: So, if we can start by everyone giving a sense of your own individual research focus, and also the focus of your research strand here in CPC.

Kevin Walker: I'm Associate Professor of Immersive Media. I lead the AI and Algorithmic Cultures strand, and we look at technologies from artistic and anthropological perspectives. So, in keeping with the postdigital strand, we take a cultural perspective, which includes the 'cultural industries,' let's say, and other cultures internationally. And, in focusing on technological spaces like Silicon

Valley, we differentiate ourselves in terms of culture – cultural studies, cultural and critical approaches, versus looking at economics, economic approaches.

Mel Jordan: I'm Professor of Art and the Public Sphere, and my interest is in publics, politics, and culture – more specifically, the way that art and publics interact (e.g. Jordan). I lead the ArtSpaceCity strand, and we take the city, or we assume the city, as a place where culture, politics, publics, and the digital merge. And in terms of thinking about the postdigital's relationship to the city, we're trying to use the concept as a way of opening up our relationship to the city in political theoretical terms. We also see it as a way to critique the human, the digital, and capital.

Sylvester Arnab: I'm Professor in Game Science, and my research interest is in playful and game-based methodologies, pedagogies, and design practices, for informing ways for human development, cultural experiences and engagement, and community engagement. It's very much around how approaches such as 'play' and games can be used to design different types of experiences that can achieve serious outcomes. The strand that I'm leading at the moment is Ludic Design and we focus on design practices through the lens of play, really. And this includes a subset of play, which is gameplay, game-based approaches and design, which allow us to observe, and track, what is actually happening when we are engaging with playful activities. Our focus is very much also around social justice. So, we are working with various communities, especially in Asia, and we also work with communities in Europe, trying to engage them in activities that are meaningful and purposeful, but designed through the perspective of playfulness.

Janneke Adema: As Associate Professor in Digital Media, my own research focuses on the future of publishing, specifically looking at academic publishing. Within this, I look at aspects such as experimental publishing, open access publishing, and the 'politics of the book.' The research strand that I convene is called Post-Publishing. This strand brings together researchers and practitioners – working collaboratively as well as individually, exploring alternative pasts, presents, and futures, for publishing. What we're trying to do is reimagine what publishing is, but also what publishing does, and how we can perform it differently. We've worked together with various organisations and activist groups to explore how we can do publishing differently, in potentially more ethical and responsible ways. But we also want to *re-perform* institutions and communication practices within the field of scholarly communication. In this context, we support various publishing projects, we set up networks and collectives, and we very much see this kind of organising work as practice-based activist interventions into the field of scholarly communication and knowledge production.

Marcus Maloney: Can you expand on that wonderful phrase, the 'politics of the book'?

Janneke Adema: The politics of the book looks at how the book is not a neutral format in which to convene our thoughts and ideas; it's an active agentic form that shapes reality. It's a material form that directly intervenes in the ways that we communicate, and this form determines the kind of relations that are formed around

a book. We explore the politics of the book by performing the book differently, and by thinking through what the book is, what publishing is, what publics are – we examine all the relations that come together in the production of knowledge, and the politics that are inherent to that.

Adrienne Evans: I'm Professor of Gender and Culture, and Postdigital Intimacies is the strand I'm a part of in CPC. We're interested in intimacy as being more-than-human, and how intimacies are also more than (or other than) private, and are formed through relationalities, connections, identifications, and networks between ourselves and the nonhuman. For us, then, the postdigital is important in the sense that it blurs notions of the digital and non-digital, the public and the private, and therefore also what we might call 'intimate life.' So, to give a quick example, one of the things I always find really interesting is the focus on in-person meetings, as if that 'in-person meeting' hasn't already involved emails, calendar invites, and so on. So, we end up with this kind of horizontal relationship, but not necessarily equal relationship, between the digital and the non-digital. My own research within this theme is largely looking at the way postdigital intimacies present themselves in terms of contemporary gender relations – and through a feminist ethic.

Petros Lameris: I'm part of Ludic Design with Sylvester and the rest of the team, and I'm interested in how immersive technologies, including games, AI, and other digital media in general can optimize the way that we're learning. So, this is the overarching aspect, especially in terms of, for example: if we introduce generative AI and games as two different aspects, how might we combine them to optimize certain practices? Also, I'm quite interested in using immersive technologies in other domains, such as, for example, democracy. And we're looking at how AI analytics, games, the Metaverse, and other interactive storytelling tools can enhance the way that democracy and political expression is instantiated between citizens. I think this is a very interesting postdigital aspect in that it's not a binary kind of thing, differentiating physical and digital realms. We're interested in how we can use technologies in order to have a more seamless experience between the physical and digital.

Marcus Maloney: I'm Assistant Professor of Sociology, and I research men and masculinities online, particularly some of the more problematic cultures associated with that. And I'm in the Postdigital Intimacies strand with Adrienne. I also do research which overlaps with Sylvester and Petros in Ludic Design, in terms of exploring gender contestations and inequalities in video game cultures.

Definitions and Scope

Marcus Maloney: The first question is about definitions. How do we actually define the 'postdigital' as a concept? Is it fair to say that that it's kind of a broad, malleable concept that you can take and make your own in different ways? Or is it more 'locked down' than that?

Mel Jordan: I was just thinking about what it meant to me, and I think it means a few things. I quite like ‘non words’ anyway. I quite like prefixes and mucking about with things. Maybe it’s a sort of mash-up thing related to making art or something (see Bourriaud). So, any of those things I don’t have any problem with because I think words and meanings come and go, and you can change them and move them around. What it means to me is that somehow it does this non-‘technologically determined’ thing that I like, as someone who makes art and has taught art for a long time. I always wanted to teach art practice in a non-technologically determined way, because otherwise, people get locked into particular formal and technical techniques. And for me, the postdigital concept enables this shift – it’s digital, more-than-digital, and not digital at the same time.

And I think that it can enable interdisciplinary research across arts, humanities, cultural studies, political theory, social science, which I’m also interested in – where all those things can intertwine. The postdigital also enables us to reevaluate the digital, and hijack the digital from the realm of the technical. And it allows us to acknowledge its role in the construction of our current behaviours, and ensuing habits and social relations. Maybe I’m making up what I want it to do! It does set digital media and its systems as a key facet in the way we design our life worlds. And it also aims to disrupt the digital’s continuing normative presence in society by developing new consciousnesses around our individual and collective engagement with it. The postdigital, as an approach, does give us the space in CPC to be pretty expansive.

Marcus Maloney: I’m in exactly the same place. I just use more sociological language in saying that, for me, it foregrounds the socially constructed nature of digital spaces that do tend to be seen in techno-determinist terms. In a sense, it’s kind of foregrounding people rather than the technology in these kinds of spaces.

Adrienne Evans: I would say it’s both. I wouldn’t want to put them in a hierarchy by saying people are the most important, or technology is the most important.

Mel Jordan: For me, it’s a culture thing as well – art and culture – that’s informed by the historical avant-garde’s perspective regarding the importance of art, literature, and culture in the development of the subject, society, and the ways we live together. Art and everyday life etc. And that’s why it was interesting to hear what Janneke had to say about the ‘politics of the book.’ I want to do the ‘politics of the artwork’ in that same way.

Sylvester Arnab: For me, it’s more about listening to different views. I agree that it is more about taking a human-centric approach in how we look at the ‘digital.’ There are a lot of assumptions around the postdigital. For example, the idea that the digital is very well embedded within our lives – this is true, but also untrue. This is where social justice needs to come in, and critiquing the digital in terms of how digital literacy is capital – not everyone has it. What will happen to those who are left behind? I think this is where we come in, looking at the digital from a cultural perspective, from societal perspectives, and in terms of the ‘gaps.’ So how has the digital really changed the way that

people behave, and the way that economies have been further developed? What will happen to those people who are in remote parts of Borneo who don't have access to the tech, for example? How can we learn from the digital to see what types of social capital or cultural capital they already have that could actually be part of the whole ecosystem? You don't have to be connected to the digital to benefit from it.

Adrienne Evans: And it also depends on how you're defining technology. What is the technology? It doesn't have to be a computer. As Cramer (2014) would argue, even with the notion of 'digits' – our fingers are digits.

Petros Lameris: For me, it's about some sort of seamless integration of digital technologies to everyday life, while also acknowledging that it might be something that it is connected with social and cultural experiences, as well as educational experiences. I suppose one challenge that we might face is how are we going to educate the less connected? How are we going to train them? How are we going to facilitate this transition between the non-digital and digital? Or do we need this type of transition at all?

As Sylvester mentioned, in Ludic Design we're trying to instigate ways of using technologies in underdeveloped societies and cultures. Do we need to provide some sort of more basic assistance or support, just as a start, to get things going in an autonomous way? Or do we need to have a more structured and ongoing approach that provides specific skills and mindsets for people in underdeveloped contexts to understand how to use digital technologies?

Marcus Maloney: It's also about acknowledging that those without access are impacted by the digital, not just in terms of not having access to it. What happens in the Global North tech space is impacting people in the Global South in ways they're unable to intervene in.

Adrienne Evans: For us in Postdigital Intimacies, it's about understanding the indistinguishability of the digital and non-digital: the way the more-than-digital is embedded in the institutional, infrastructural, embodied, and subjective, with a constant assemblage of these all working on each other and intertwined. If we take the postdigital seriously, we need to understand it through education, health, economics, government, the wires and cables that it enables, as well as the importance of its technological devices and platforms. And the gestures and tactility of its users, both human and non-human. For example, the touch of our fingers on the material screen, of the gesture of the selfie pose, and how these become naturalised into our bodies.

That is to say, I think some of the ways the postdigital has been defined in scholarship – for example, as an aesthetics – risks ignoring the sociality of the postdigital that, for me especially, has particular gender implications; that is, the more the digital interacts with gender power relations, as well as those intersections defined by race, class and sexuality. Coming back to that earlier idea of the postdigital having no strict definition, I think if we leave it as a free-floating

term, then it can mean anything to anybody, and you kind of potentially lose that politics. I do think we need a sense of what it means for the work that we do. And, for all of us across CPC, there's an underlying focus on social justice and a particular politics in our respective uses of the postdigital.

Janneke Adema: I'm not a fan of strict definitions. Instead, I tend to look at how a concept has been, or is being, used within a discourse. As a concept, the postdigital has been used quite extensively within publishing studies. Previously, I presented a paper on how it's been used, or how it has been positioned, within a wider publishing discourse (Adema 2022). Mostly, there's this kind of periodising logic, a kind of inherent temporality that the postdigital problematises with this prefix 'post-.' What the postdigital as a concept actually wants to do – and how it has been positioned – is that it complicates any simplistic temporality of 'post' as indicating 'that which comes after digital.' And I would argue that the postdigital has been applied and positioned like this in four different ways. The first is in relation to simplistic binaries more generally: we've already discussed oppositions such as digital versus analogue, the body versus digital, print versus digital, the real and the virtual, etc. The postdigital tries to complicate a lot of these simplistic binaries. As the digital and computational have become ubiquitous and hegemonic, fully embedded within life, the body, and society, the idea of disconnected or discrete digital and analogue categories, worlds, or even lives, has become anachronistic. But even though the embeddedness of the digital in everyday life has become more visible, familiar, and normalised, this does not mean these intertwined categories of the digital and the non-digital were discrete before.

Secondly, the postdigital also functions as a discursive intervention in 'techno-utopian' rhetorics visible in certain strands of cyberculture, new media studies, and the digital humanities – like those focused on 'the digital revolution' and 'the urgency of the new,' which, as Cramer (2016, 23–24) argues, is still abundant in "the world of policy makers and institutional funding bodies" and which, as Adenekan et al. (6) argue, flattens the realities of global experiences, where "the utopian dimension of transnational online community-building and solidarization," as they state, "are increasingly challenged as the power asymmetries of the 'real' world jut into the digital sphere." Thirdly – and this goes specifically back to publishing – the postdigital also showcases specific practical material interventions, in infrastructures of media production. In the light of empty promises around digital empowerment and interactivity, print is, for example, gaining new importance as a technique that evades the restrictions of algorithmic control, surveillance-rich corporate media, and data mining systems, which have aided the transformation of the consumer from subject to object. The analogue media that are therefore newly being embraced and experimented with under the banner of the postdigital are often those that are the most tangible and most easily self-makeable. In this context, postdigital art and activist interventions focus on DIY culture and

community-control and ownership of media instead, including, to quote Cramer (2016, 17) again, “zines that become anti-blogs or non-blogs, vinyl as anti-CD, cassette tapes as anti-MP3, analogue film as anti-video.”

Finally, the postdigital has also been positioned as a kind of ‘speculative imaginary.’ And with that, I mean a speculative imaginary towards what the digital is, but also towards *what it was*. The postdigital as an imaginary therefore influences how we see the past from the present condition and how digitisation has operated as an asynchronous process, occurring at different speeds and over different periods and has been culturally diverse in each affected context. It’s an imaginary that rethinks the past, the contemporary, and the future of media, complicating simplistic assumptions around historical development. It’s about reconfiguring what the past is and rethinking that continuously – and this opens up the possibility for different speculations on the future. Beyond intervening in teleological and utopian discourses, the postdigital can also be seen as a critical reflection of digital aesthetic immaterialism. In this sense, it foregrounds a *rematerialisation* of digital technology, where it often also signals a return to prioritising the human and more situated experiences (see Murray 447–448).

Sylvester Arnab: This links to the whole idea of game science, and hybrid learning spaces, where our ability, in terms of how we can configure experiences at the ‘speed of need,’ should not be defined or restricted by the binary of things: for example, digital, non-digital, formal or informal, and so on, and so forth. So, depending on the actual needs, you might not have digital at all, because it’s not what the social group or culture needs (Arnab). It’s important to have that appreciation of the non-restriction or non-restrictive approach in designing or creating something, and not just jumping on the trends of whatever is happening. For example, suddenly everything has to be AI. But AI should be used in a more informed way. Why are we using it? Where do we use it? What is it going to improve? Who is going to benefit from it? So, looking at this concept of hybridity allows us to encourage people to question the fundamental ways something is created, wherever and whatever that something might be.

Petros Lamas: I think Cramer’s (2014) analysis of the meme, ‘You’re not a real hipster until you take your typewriter to the park,’ defines really well what the postdigital is in terms of these false binaries between old and new, digital and non-digital. But we need to make sure that we involve different kinds of communities, different kinds of people, different kinds of cultures that aren’t aware of what postdigital is, and how development might be instigated through different kinds of means (e.g. Salomao, Wasson, Lamas & Maloszek).

Kevin Walker: Another way of thinking about the ‘post’ in postdigital is that it’s not necessarily about *after* the digital but, rather, after the digital has become *normalised* in certain cultures and societies. But on the other hand, we can indeed imagine that the post-digital might actually mean after the digital, because with the impending collapse of society – which seems to be getting closer and closer

– what’s going to survive? Anything digital, at least in the non-material sense, is going to be gone pretty much instantly.

Coming back to my research strand, AI and Algorithmic Cultures, we look at the most advanced technologies, and ask fundamental questions like, ‘What is artificiality? What is intelligence?’ These are important, and also non-digital, questions. We need to keep in mind the material aspects of these technologies. Where does AI come from *materially* in the world – the actual metals and energy? And where does it go (for further exploration of these questions, see Walker and Drupka)?

Marcus Maloney: This reminds me of Denson’s *Discorrelated Images* in which he looks at forms of digital media as anticipating a post-anthropocentric age, that technologies like AI are kind of eerily telling us what the world is going to be like when we’re no longer the primary agents determining things, or just wipe ourselves out. And these automated processes will still be operating, left in the rubble.

Apprehensions and Opportunities

Marcus Maloney: One thing that came through implicitly to me earlier was a bit of tension for CPC, in how we use the concept, between a practical need to kind of have ownership of something versus the kind of sentiment that’s probably shared amongst people wanting things to be fluid and more democratic. And there’s an element of institutional pressure here versus a more critical sentiment around concepts, who owns them, and whether they should they be locked down. Do you have any apprehensions about how we use postdigital, not just as a guiding concept, but as the name of our research centre?

Adrienne Evans: When I’ve talked about ‘the Centre for Postdigital Cultures,’ or when I talk about ‘postdigital intimacies’ or just the ‘postdigital,’ there can be a little bit of an eye roll. Because if you’re talking about ‘post’ in theory already, talking about a postfeminist sensibility, or poststructuralism, and then you start talking about postdigital culture as well, there is a sense of, “how many times can you see ‘post’ at the beginning of a word?!” So, I do think there’s something in this that’s maybe a problem. Not necessarily a practical problem, but more an academic or intellectual problem. What’s the ‘post’ doing that makes it useful?

Marcus Maloney: I have experienced similar things, not just with this specific concept, but that whole “oh, not another post!” sentiment. And there’s a real anti-intellectualism underpinning it, I think. Listening to everyone here talk about what the postdigital means – in many different ways – it seems to be about moving beyond *status quo* understandings around the digital. And, if you think about the prefix from the postmodern onwards, it’s always been about trying to move beyond modernist understandings, or concrete and conventional understandings. So there probably is a need to constantly push back on that dismissiveness because

underpinning it is basically a resistance to change, and a resistance to challenging the status quo.

Mel Jordan: Yeah, and maybe there's almost resistance to something that might be transient, contingent, and effectual of transformation. I think the postdigital gives us that, which is very exciting. It's much easier to go back to a solid 'this is this' sort of thing. And I think that openness is something that I want to embrace. It's a scary one, in that it also implies the 'post-human'. I do think it's different to the 'postmodern' and 'post-truth' uses of the prefix, because I think the digital itself is a different sort of thing to attach it to. The digital is sort of implicitly forward-thinking anyway, and then you've got the 'post' added onto that, which is like this layering of a mess! I just think that it's quite exciting.

Janneke Adema: I also wonder if, as a concept, the postdigital is also more needed in certain fields and contexts but might be superfluous in other fields. Within the field of publishing, especially in academic publishing, there is still a strong reliance on print-based systems and traditions. In that sense, for us, having that term, and the prefix itself, has been very useful. One way, for example – again, going back to this idea of binary thinking – is that it's really breaking down this distinction between print and digital by showcasing how a lot of the ways that even print workflows and setups in publishing that result in a printed object are completely entangled with the digital – see PDFs, for example. And the postdigital in this sense is helping us to start breaking down this idea that we still need to follow print imaginaries in a way that the publishing system, and the relations around it, are set up. Publishing is maybe one of the media industries that has been the least progressive in making that move to the digital for various political reasons, because many people are invested in these print-based systems and hegemonies, and profit from them, all connected to this idea that a book is a print thing that has a certain shape and form. In that sense, it's useful for our political project to challenge those kinds of assumptions (Adema 2021).

The other way the concept has been useful for us is around the idea of temporality, and this is maybe even more important. As a kind of an overarching project, what we're doing in post-publishing is also trying to break down distinctions between research and publishing. So, the way that this is currently set up is, again, very teleological in the sense of, as scholars, "we do our research, and then we publish it" – the idea that research and publishing are different stages with different stakeholders involved. And what we are arguing for is this idea of making research 'public' through all of its stages, and breaking down the linear distinction between research and publishing. We're trying to argue that publishing is something that we inherently need to take more responsibility for, as academics, and to see it as something that's inherently part of the research realm. For us, then, the 'post' in post-publishing means thinking through what publishing is, and how it sits within this presumed temporality? Who has ownership over this process? I agree that, as a prefix, 'post' can potentially be overused but I actually think it's in dire need to be used *more*

within a publishing environment to really push people to question those aspects.

Mel Jordan: It reminds me of the process of post-production in art practice – the idea of ‘display, reset, production, reception, display’ in the making of artworks, and the need to break down and reveal those moments. There’s this very careful idea of the ‘artwork’ – similar to what Janneke is saying about a careful idea of the book – so that everything involved in the process of creation is hidden before you get to the ‘thing.’ And it’s as if the ‘thing’ just arrives in the world, as if it hasn’t been produced, or it doesn’t have social relations, or it doesn’t have systems and capital – all these dominant and hidden things driving it forward. So much of what I’ve been interested in is about complicating and breaking down that idea that culture arrives ready formed, and we then contemplate it in a certain way.

Adrienne Evans: It’s the same in terms of the process of writing a journal article.

Kevin Walker: Or something technical, like an AI system or process.

Adrienne Evans: I do remember one of my former PhD students writing a wonderful section on ethics, where she was talking about embodiment and the connection and disconnection with the material environment. She was doing a digital ethnography and discussing the experience of having back pain from being at the computer. There’s that moment you get sucked into following the hashtag and kind of everything else disappears and you become so immersed that you have to eventually stand up and stretch your back. ‘Digital’ research is a real embodied activity.

Sylvester Arnab: There’s a link here to what we are interested in as a research strand in terms of looking at games as an instrument of play generally. Why do we spend hundreds of hours in a dark room just to play a game? We are looking at this from the perspective of the sense of autonomy, the sense of agency, the sense of curiosity, the sense of ownership, and the sense of experimental spirit (Arnab).

Adrienne Evans: Or does the hashtag have the agency? Or the AI and algorithm?

Sylvester Arnab: Yes, the ‘nudged’ principles behind it. We are very much interested in that, from the ludic perspective. One thing we are working on at the moment is ‘value-based design.’ So, it’s not about designing because you want to create games, or you want to create art, or you want to create books; rather, it’s all about the values you want to instil within anything you might create – whatever that thing ends up being. So, if you want people to have the autonomy to say, ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ to participate or not participate, what types of experiences should you create? Within our current work in democracy, we allow people to not participate. If you force people to ‘play,’ then it’s not play! If someone prefers not to participate, they can observe, and this can be seen as no less active. A postdigital sensibility should enable people to have the autonomy to choose what they want to do, whether to participate in the digital or not participate, and not be penalised because they don’t have the capital, or even just the desire to be involved.

Mel Jordan: And this idea of ‘rehearsal’ relates as well. In terms of these perspectives on imaginaries, I think there’s something in the idea of the artwork

or the art process, or whatever you want to call it, as a process of rehearsing or playing out a set ideas or values. I'm especially interested in engagement and being together, and then playing out how you could be together – rehearsing it, trying it, seeing what it feels like, and viewing the whole process as an integral part of what is produced.

And this has implications for how we can think about democracy in a way that is more antagonistic or agonistic. We're so used to thinking of democracy as *liberal democracy*, in which consensus is something we aim for as a product. But how does it feel if we rehearse consensus together, or even non-consensus, and see if we can live with that? I see that drive in how Sylvester and Petros describe games. It's like a new embodying, a new imagination, a new imaginary.

Projects and Applications

Marcus Maloney: We've already begun to do this, but could we expand on how we apply the postdigital, how it informs specific projects we're involved with?

Petros Lameris: It's about solving real-world problems, and introducing technology in order to help people to solve problems that they face in their everyday lives. One of our projects that attempts to do this is DALI, which is about data literacy, and how to introduce this concept through games. So, we try to create little paper-based games for introducing this concept in terms of what people need to do when they are on a website or on social media, or would like to visit a specific web page, for example. Are you going to give your password? You know, simple stuff like, for example, you should never use as a password the name of your dog or your pet, which can be a mistake that older users can make. Sometimes they're not aware of very simple rules of making passwords. So, we might want to just help people understand how they can improve basic data skills through simple and non-digital games (e.g. Lameris, Arnab and Lewis).

Sylvester Arnab: It's an example of using non-digital means for teaching the digital.

Petros Lameris: Which is a bit of a paradox, and it works, because you show all these different kinds of similarities and non-similarities between non-digital and digital aspects.

Marcus Maloney: In terms of how it's informed my own individual projects, I've been working on a qualitative interview project with Ryan Scoats at Birmingham City University focused on a group of about forty women who are active in board gaming communities in the USA and the UK. We've been exploring their perceptions of that culture, and, in theorising that cultural space (Scoats and Maloney, forthcoming), it became a perfect opportunity to talk about postdigital dynamics because board games, as Sylvester and Petros will know, are a perfect example of that. On the one hand, they're this age-old analogue hobby, but the

culture surrounding them now is so entangled in the digital via the YouTubers who post content about it, and all those forums and online spaces inhabited by the community. In fact, the recent massive rise in popularity of board gaming over the last decade or so is to some extent a digital phenomenon.

Petros Lameris: And through digitally mediated participatory design approaches, the players themselves are increasingly becoming the designers of games as well. So, there is this fluidity and flexibility in terms of the different roles that the community is taking on.

Marcus Maloney: Adrienne, I'm hoping you might talk about the report you and I recently produced, with Lindsay Balfour and Sarah Merry in *Postdigital Intimacies*, looking at the UK Government's Online Safety Bill (see Balfour, Evans, Maloney and Merry). Would you agree that we were only able to fully see the weaknesses, or the gaps, in that legislation – as something so narrowly focused on content, and on the digital – through a postdigital lens?

Adrienne Evans: Yes, absolutely. And I think that's another big usefulness of the postdigital in terms of the fact that – even though we around this table are recognising that fluidity, and the ways in which the digital is constantly interacting with the non-digital – actually in our laws, in our regulations, in our institutions, in most of the ways our worlds are structured, it's still very much defined by 'this is the realm of the digital' and 'this is the realm of the non-digital.' The example that always comes to my mind is the issue of 'cyberflashing,' as if being cyberflashed or being sent a 'dick pick' is any different to having somebody flashing at you in the street. Why are we making a distinction here? Cyberbullying is another one: it's just bullying! Why are we prefixing it with cyber? And yet, our worlds are still structured so much around the idea that there is a distinction. The example that's been coming up recently is the issue of virtual rapes in the metaverse and what that means for how we understand experiences that are framed as 'virtual' and, therefore, apparently not 'real.' They actually cause an awful lot of pain and suffering for people who experiencing them.

Marcus Maloney: Yes, these are, first and foremost, social and cultural issues, not technological ones.

Adrienne Evans: And Mark Zuckerberg is making it easier. There's all this reporting (e.g. Nix; Sales) about rapes in the metaverse, and he comes along and says, 'I'm going to make the avatars look more human' and 'I'm going to improve the AI.'

Petros Lameris: Sylvester and I have been in projects where you need to employ specific consultants and/or lawyers to help determine whether an avatar is going to create an offense, for example. So you need real expertise, specialist expertise, when you're engaged in this sort of work to alleviate the potential implications of such practices in metaverses and the like. Projects like these do require lawyers and legal support in case these things happen. It's quite mandatory now to seek legal support in such situations.

Kevin Walker: One project I'm currently working on that's relevant – more on

the ‘algorithmic culture’ side of our strand than the AI side – is about time and temporality, and digital time in particular. Specifically, the clock on your mobile phone – on everyone’s mobile phone – everyone in every country, or at least the majority of adults, now have a mobile phone (Silver). The project is looking at the effect of this. Are people using the digital clock to structure their day? What happens to traditional, non-digital practices in different cultures? What happens to their temporal practices?

Again, it’s very much going against the digital. So, that postdigital sentiment is about pushing back against the digital hegemony that’s coming primarily out of Silicon Valley. As part of the project, I’ve been going to Silicon Valley and interviewing people at Google, Apple, Meta, and all these companies who are designing technologies and looking specifically at the clock, and how these engineers and designers structure their time, and how much of that goes into the technologies. And the other side is looking at the cultures of the people who receive those technologies, and whether they use them or push back against that hegemony.

Janneke Adema: One experimental publishing project I want to highlight is postdigital from the outset in how it combines the strength of both the print and the digital media, and functions as a critique of the way academic publishing is currently set-up, with its focus on individual humanist authors and book objects. The Radical Open Access pamphlets are a series of hybrid both riso-printed and digital pamphlets published by Post Office Press, in collaboration with various presses within and allied to the Radical Open Access Collective (ROAC). Each pamphlet contains the papers presented at one of the seven panels of the 2nd ROAC conference. Central to this project was to highlight the collaborative and non-competitive nature of the publishers that are part of the ROAC, in contrast to the commercial and proprietary practices of the large commercial publishers dominating academic publishing.

We chose the pamphlet format because of their historical importance as media to rapidly communicate political ideas. Being a rapid format, this enabled us to have the pamphlets with the conference papers available both online and in print during the conference itself, enabling further interactions with the content of the papers online. Making them available via the Humanities Commons repository meant we could also tweet the pamphlets as a set, which we did at the start of the conference. The pamphlets were published using creative commons licenses and authors and editors/publishers shared copyright. As these have been published in collaboration with the other presses in the collective, they were able to add either their curated/edited pamphlet or the series as a whole to their own catalogues, and the design files were shared with them to enable them to do extra print runs of the pamphlets and to republish them. The pamphlets were designed to break down various binaries between print and digital, publishing and research, and they make visible the process of doing research and publishing and the invisible design and printing labour that lies behind our research dissemination, and how

designers and publishers, as well as the formats in which we publish our research, are co-producers and co-agents in knowledge production.

Mel Jordan: I'm currently working on an article with Giorgia Rizzioli entitled "Introducing Open Montage: Material Performativity in Encountering Urban Media Configurations in Space" (Jordan and Rizzioli, forthcoming). The concept emerged from discussions about the lack of a more-than-human perspective in placemaking and how the publics of public art interventions and cinema spatializations are considered similarly to those of gallery and movie theatre audiences. Our next challenge is to extend this to write about 'The Postdigital Public Sphere.' I'm also part of an art collective called the Partisan Social Club. We have been making a series of short films (e.g. Jordan) which encourages participants to create a short 30-second 'selfie' with their mobile phones. The project is called 'Collective Nouns for Political Publics.' The idea is to invent a new collective noun to share with others. Examples include "A Grabby Grab Grab of Landowners," "An Unkindness of Tories," and "A Back Scratch of Trustees." The project aims to make the selfie 'more public.' By creating new collective nouns, participants can play with language and meaning, transforming the selfie from a photographic self-portrait into an open expression of their political beliefs.

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