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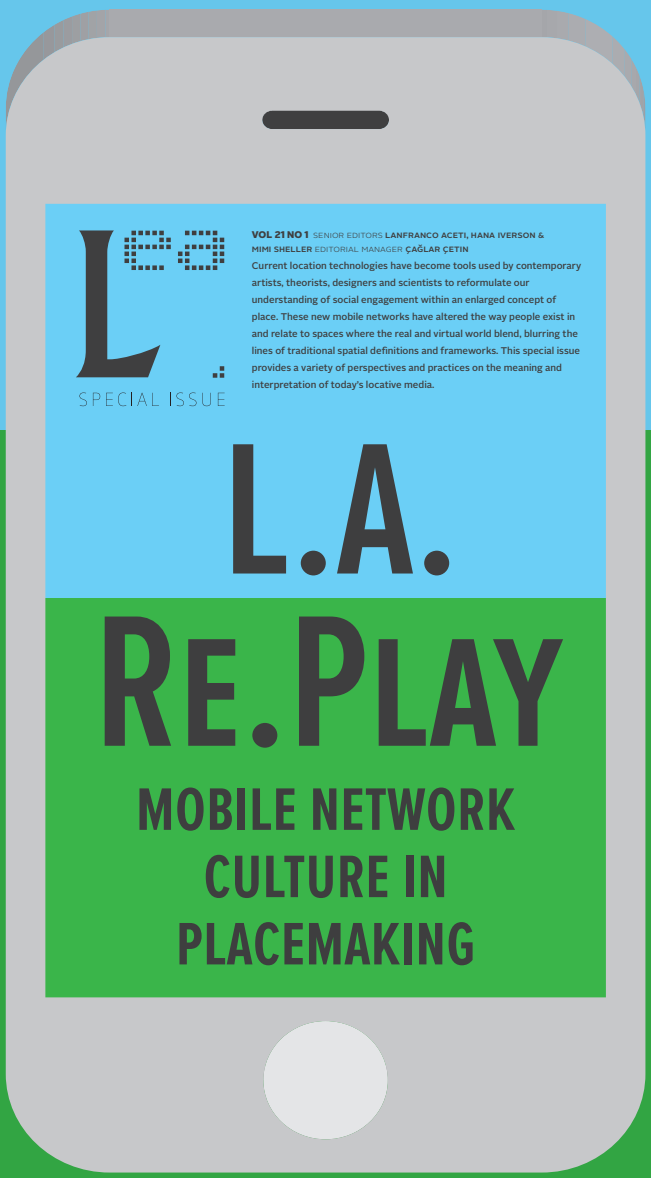
LEA

SPECIAL ISSUE

VOL 21 NO 1 SENIOR EDITORS **LANFRANCO ACETI, HANA IVERSON & MIMI SHELLER** EDITORIAL MANAGER **ÇAĞLAR ÇETIN**

Current location technologies have become tools used by contemporary artists, theorists, designers and scientists to reformulate our understanding of social engagement within an enlarged concept of place. These new mobile networks have altered the way people exist in and relate to spaces where the real and virtual world blend, blurring the lines of traditional spatial definitions and frameworks. This special issue provides a variety of perspectives and practices on the meaning and interpretation of today's locative media.



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To Lorraine and Earle Iverson,
visible in the space of memory.

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L.A. Re.Play: Mobile Network Culture in Placemaking

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Meanderings and Reflections on Locative Art

The word 'locative' is often accompanied by the word 'media' as if it were to seeking a legitimacy in its technologic features more than in the artistry of the production of content. Instead, I'd like to place the word 'art' at the forefront of the argument, and to consider the notion of locative art as art that is spatially contextualized, art that encompasses artistic practices that draw from movement (and/or the lack of it) and location, which is their source of inspiration, content, materiality, and context. This notion can be enlarged to encompass virtual, hybridized, and non-virtual worlds, since there is a notion of spatiality in all of them, although in some artworks this notion may be expressed as an abstraction. The desire is to move away from the word 'media,' and to take a stance that defines artworks on the basis of their aesthetic merit, rather than as being hindered by the accompaniment and masquerade of words such as media, which, far from clearing the field, create complex and unwieldy taxonomies of materials, processes, and aesthetics.

This special issue, which is based on the work done by Hana Iverson and Mimi Sheller, might appear similar to the *Leonardo Electronic Almanac* special issue, Volume 14, No. 3, which was entitled "LEA Locative Media Special Issue," and which hit the 'electronic waves' in 2006. There are several reasons why it was time to produce a new issue on Locative Art, and the most important of these was the new sense of sociopolitical consciousness that pioneers of digital technologies and contemporary artists are bringing forward. Drew Hemment wrote in his introduction to the "LEA Locative Media Special Issue":

> *Artists have long been concerned with place and location, but the combination of mobile devices with positioning technologies is opening up a manifold of different ways in which geographical space can be encountered and drawn, and presenting a frame through which a wide range of spatial practices may be looked at anew.* [1]

It is instead a step forward in the analysis of what has been produced and what locative art has evolved into over the past 10 years, from a nascence of anxiety and hope for its evolution, to its present form as an artistic medium gaining recognition within the complex world of contemporary fine arts.

This special issue should be read as an analysis of these recent evolutions, and of how locative *media* have engaged the world and mapped their own domains in the process of becoming locative *art*, now embedding itself within the increasingly contested realms of public space and social activism.

The media of the 'locative' experience have become less and less of prominent features of the aesthetic process and now figure as a component, but not as *the* component of spatially located and contextualized works of art.

The aesthetic practices of the contributors to this special issue have defined and continue to redefine the vision of what locative art should be, as well as in what context it should be 'located,' and – at the same time – have challenged traditional contextual and relational interpretations of the art object and its social and political functions.

The decision to stress the elements of spatially contextualized art resides in the increased importance that public as well as private space have gained following the technological developments that erode both spaces in favor of invasion of privacy, the blurring of public boundaries, and the control of locations, bodies, and identities. This erosion comes at the hands of corporate, state, and military regimes that, by parading ideas of democracy and social wellbeing, flaunt basic human rights while increasingly enacting dictatorial forms of control and surveillance.

The blurring of the boundaries between public and private is such that the idea of concealing one's location becomes an insurrectional act, particularly under oppressive regimes such as Turkey, where knowledge of the citizenry's location is necessary to enforce restrictions on freedom of speech. Movement, speech, media, bodies, and identity appear inextricably interconnected within contemporary societies, in which personal existence is no more, and the idea of switching off – disconnecting oneself from the systems of control and surveillance – is perceived as dangerous, insurrectional, and revolutionary.

The idea of spaces that are and must be contextualized becomes extremely important when bandying about definitions of 'armchair revolutionaries' and 'click activists.' In fact, while it may be possible to recognize and identify these armchair revolutionaries and click activists in the United States and the United Kingdom, applying the label proves more difficult in other contexts; namely, countries in which the erosion of democracy is more pronounced and readily visible. Tweeting is a dangerous activity in places like Turkey, Iran, or China, where a tweet or a click may quickly lead to the police knocking on the door, ready to enforce restrictions on freedom of speech, or, more accurately, westernized perceptions of freedom of speech disseminated over the internet that do not necessarily correspond or apply to local realities.

The current furor over whether the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, looks like Gollum, [2] the fictional character in *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien, is but one of many forms of control and crackdown. In Turkey, as elsewhere, this has created a sense of panic among the population which, by self-limiting and self-restricting its freedom, has generated a sense that the state possess a kind of digital panopticon, leading to a wide-spreading malaise of self-censorship and obedience.

This continued crackdown follows the protests at Gezi Park in 2013, after which the Turkish government apparatus refined its methods of censorship. During the Gezi Park protests, people tweeting and retweeting the news were arrested and threatened in a sweeping attempt to demonstrate the government's ability to 'locate' individuals. People with roots in the country were identified, located, and expelled by the state apparatus which targeted individuals and families who did not fit within the new neo-Ottoman agenda.

In this conflict between freedom of speech and censorship, the issues of location, as well as those artworks that use location as an aesthetic element, rise to outmost importance. The ability to locate individuals is paramount in exacting retribution, and locative media become a kind of Trojan horse that facilitates the pinpointing and identification of protesters. At the same time, locative media and augmented reality offer the opportunity to flaunt governmental oppression by layering context over controversial spaces. [3]

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"There is now a menace, which is called Twitter," Erdoğan said on Sunday. "The best examples of lies can be found there. To me, social media is the worst menace to society." [4]

Erdoğan's words are reflected in Amnesty International's report, which reveals the level of intimidation employed by the Turkish government to silence opposition from a variety of sectors within civic society.

"Social media users active during the protests have been prosecuted, while attempts have been made to block the sites that carried their words and videos." [5]

It is the progressively politicized nature of space and location, as well as the act of locating, that makes locative media art political, politicized, and politicizable. [6] Hence, locative media art must be placed in the context of the political stances and struggles, or lack thereof, that will define its aesthetic, or lack of aesthetic. Conor McGarrigle recalls the Situationist International in his construction of locative situations framed as a form of alternative construction and engaged relation with life, a relation that people can define and not just passively consume.

> *To counter what they saw as the banality of everyday life, they proposed actively constructing situations rather than merely passively consuming or experiencing them. Rather than describing and interpreting situations, the situationists would seek to transform them. If, as they believed, human beings are 'moulded by the situations they go through' and 'defined by their situation', then they need the power to create situations worthy of their desires rather than be limited to passive consumers of the situations in which they find themselves.* [7]

In sociopolitical and philosophical terms, this analysis provides the opportunity to perceive life as being founded on the responsibility and sense of gravitas in human action – *faber est suae quisque fortunae* – which, by stressing the possibility of construction – the *artifex* as creator – reestablishes the Situationist International within a locative art practice that constructs and reshapes life in a social context that no longer appears to afford hope.

> *This definition of the participant in the constructed situation as an autonomous agent within the structure of the work and not limited to enacting a predefined script is key. I will identify locative works which exhibit this tendency, which go beyond a model of the participant being defined by the application in favour of an open model, a set of procedures or a toolkit with which participants construct their own situation to be 'lived' independently of the artist.* [8]

The definition McGarrigle proposes creates a dichotomy between the sociopolitical constructs and adopted behavioral models in new media versus the open procedures of engagement that enable the *artifex* to construct situations and therefore construct his/her own destiny.

It is this transformative potential emerging from the construction and/or reconstruction of space that, as editors, Hana Iverson and Mimi Sheller want to present and argue in favor of:

> *By considering the practices of process-based, socially engaged, conceptual and performance art and their relationship to activism, design and mobile art, we are able to examine the conditions of how these projects may transform place, politics, and the realm of public art.* [9]

This LEA special issue is a survey that explores and aims to understand the sociopolitical possibilities of contemporary art, and that delves into the realm of location and its contexts.

My hope is that it may offer readers the opportunity to understand the complexity of materials, processes, and contexts – as well as the contemporary responsibilities – that art practices wield in their location and construction of media outside the limitations that Marshall McLuhan defined as "rear-view mirror" approaches.

... de meo ligurrire libidost. Gaius Valerius Catullus, fragments.

Lanfranco Aceti
Editor in Chief, Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Director, Kasa Gallery

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L.A. Re.Play: Mobile Network Culture in Placemaking

INTRODUCTION

Artists, social scientists, and theorists have increasingly explored mobile locative media as a new kind of social and spatial interface that changes our relation to embodiment, movement, place and location. Indeed, many artists and theorists have claimed mobile locative art as a crucial form of social experimentation and speculative enactment. In the social sciences recent work especially draws attention to cultural adoption and everyday appropriation of mobile media, the re-emerging significance of place-making and locatability, and the infrastructures, regulatory regimes, and dynamics of power that shape contexts of use. [1][2][3][4] This work has drawn attention to the intersection of place-making, movement, and political aesthetics. Rowan Wilken emphasizes ideas of "place as relational, as inherently connected to mobility, and as constantly worked out through mundane practice," [5] drawing on Tim Cresswell's studies of being "on the move," [6] Larissa Hjorth's work on "mobile intimacy," [7] Tim Ingold's idea of "ambulatory knowing," [8] and Ingrid Richardson's work on interactive media and forms of "visceral awareness," [9] amongst others. All of these contributions to theorizing mobile locative media are particularly relevant when it comes to interpreting recent works in mobile locative art.

In the arts and culture fields the debate on mobile media to date has focused on the creative potential of mobile locative media and ubiquitous computing, its cultural impact, and critical responses to mobile digital art. [10][11][12] Some of the most interesting questions concern how new mobile media can change relations between embodiment, place, and spatial awareness, echoing these debates in the social sciences. For example, media curator and theorist Christiane Paul highlights the importance of the digitally-enhanced body as a new kind of interface:

> *[D]igital technologies have expanded the agency enabled by our embodied condition: our bodies can function as interfaces in navigating virtual environments; avatars can be understood as a virtual embodiment; wearable computing can establish a technologized connectivity between bodies; and mobile devices can function as technological extension of embodiment, connecting us to location-based information and enhancing awareness of our environment or "social body."* [13]

Given the significance of artists in the debates about mobile locative media [14][15] (see Southern in this issue), we believe it is a productive time to further explore how artworks using the new contexts afforded by mobile locative media are engaging new kinds of hybrid embodied/digital interactions with place, location, and movement.

How exactly do mobile digital technologies expand the agency of our embodied condition? In 2002, Australian media theorist Ross Gibson was asked what will be the artistry of the future; he replied that "artists will supply us with the beguiling processes of transformation … artists won't be fabricating objects so much as experiences – they will offer us intensely 'moving' immersion in (or perhaps beyond) the objective world. This immersion will be so *moving* that the 'objective world' will cease to be sensible in the ways we thought normal." [16] What will exist as art in this future vision? How does mobile art reconfigure objects, subjects, place, space and time? How does mobility extend the discussion around media art through a broader reconfiguration of cognition? As Claire Bishop asks, what does it mean "to think, see and filter affect through the digital"? [17] If the physical world is the ground for the affect produced by the digital, then how do the emerging art practices of mobile locative media immerse participants in site-specificity as well as distant networked places, and unfold local temporalities as well as deeper collective times and histories?

In this special issue we want to argue for the need to radically re-think the genealogy, purposes, and affects of mobile art, in an effort to enlarge the critical vocabulary for the discussion of "digital art," and the divides that it encounters. Arising out of a double session on *Mobile Art: The Aesthetics of Mobile Network Culture in Place Making,* and the associated mobile art exhibition *L.A. Re.Play*, co-organized and co-curated by Hana Iverson and Mimi Sheller, with assistance from Jeremy Hight – and held at UCLA, the Art Center College of Design, and the Los Angeles Convention Center as part of the College Art Association Centennial Conference (Los Angeles, February, 2012) – this project brought together some of the leading U.S. and international artists working with mobile and geo-locative media today. This concentrated series of events, along with this special issue of LEA, provides a platform and situation to reflect upon mobile media art today: where it has come from, how it is being practiced, and where it is heading.

We intend to move beyond a geo-locational or screen-based focus (that has attracted the attention of some artists due to the proliferation of smartphones) to address a body of works that extend outward to collective experiences of place. Mobile media art is one of the key arenas in which emergent interactions with the embodied and sensory dimensions of place, movement and presence itself are being explored. Crucially, it can be understood as connected to wider histories of performance art, relational art, immersive theater, experimental video, sound art, and socially engaged public art. Mobile art includes a diverse set of practices that might involve sound walks, psychogeographic drifts, site-specific storytelling, public annotation, digital graffiti, collaborative cartography, or more complex "mixed-reality" interactions. It tends to engage the body, physical location, digital interface, and social relations both near and distant, sometimes in terms of what one contributor calls "relational architecture." Through its unique visual, sonic, haptic, social and spatial affordances, mobile art provides a sensory engagement with virtual and material surroundings, mediated through the participant's embodied sensations augmented by digital technology. Featured at international festivals such as the *International Symposium on Electronic Art* (ISEA), *FutureEverything*, *Conflux* and *Radiator,* it also offers an important locus for thinking about new kinds of social engagement with other people, collectives, or publics.

In introducing this special issue we will focus on three key themes that emerge out of this body of work: first, the ways in which mobile art is socially networked and participatory, often involving the creative collaboration between artists, participants and the broader public, and what the implications of this are; second, the crucial ways in which mobile art engages with location, augmented physical presence, and sensory perceptions of place, eliciting new experiences of "hybrid space" as both a bodily and more-than-bodily experience; and third, the political possibilities for mobile locative media to add new dimensionality to public space, and thereby push the boundaries of civic

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engagement and politics in mobile network culture beyond its current limits. Interspersed throughout this introductory discussion we describe and locate the specific essays in the special issue, as well as noting some of the art works in the *L.A. Re.Play* exhibition. The issue itself includes a range of materials generated out of the CAA panels, the exhibition, and ongoing discussions amongst the participants, including artists' descriptions (and images) of their own work and reflection on their practice, more theoretical and historically informed analysis of aspects of mobile and networked art, interviews with artists and between co-participants in the project, and creative writing that emerged out of this year-long process.

SOCIALLY NETWORKED AND PARTICIPATORY MOBILE ART

The notion of participatory art has been trying in different ways to enlarge the consideration of art and aesthetics for more than thirty years. Mobile art, like other new media art, has a strong relationship to politically and socially engaged art in that both fields rely on "a highly critical and informed view of interaction, participation and collaboration." [18] The works we present will examine these conditions in more depth. Mobile art often happens outside the space of the gallery or museum, and without any intervening art object, as such, it may be "locative" yet hard to locate. It may appear on hand-held screens, or computer screens, often with the addition of speakers, headphones, or earbuds, but it might also extend far beyond these devices into a wider experiential realm; it may engage with the "virtual" realm, as well as mobilizing various kinds of narrative imagination and imaginaries of place; it may address the present embodied context, even as it interweaves it with histories or futures.

Emergent mobile art forms are able to take seemingly disparate elements and make sense of them to create a coherent yet unique experience for the viewer, listener, or participant. Many mobile art pieces are collaborative – engaging other artists or audiences in a shared vocabulary, and thereby incorporating their contribution into the whole. Umberto Eco, in his "The Poetics of Open Work" refers to open works "as those which are brought to conclusion by the performer at the same time he (or she) experiences them on an aesthetic plane." [19] These works are not open, in the sense of open to interpretation; they are open in the way in which they require participation in order to finish the act of the work itself. This is especially true of mobile artworks in which the relational ethics are a key part of the aesthetic.

The "relational turn" across many art activities and creative disciplines favors methodologies that are interactive, process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented, and open in Eco's terms. "Situated engagement," for example, is a theoretical frame for a participatory design approach that uses mobile technologies to focus on and design with micro-local neighborhoods, in living contexts that invite social participation and are often oriented toward social change and justice. Critic and curator Mimi Zeiger notes the link between "socially engaged art" and "tactical urbanism," which have also been embraced as more mobile and fleeting engagements with urban space:

> *[M]any activist designers have embraced "tactical urbanism" as the go-to descriptor (see the recently published and downloadable guidebook* Tactical Urbanism 2: Short-Term Action, Long-Term Change. [20] *[..] these projects are oppositional to the conventional operations – or strategies – of urban planners. Flexible and small scale, often temporary and with limited budgets, tactical projects take advantage of "chance offerings" – public spaces, empty lots, municipal loopholes. They deploy the fleetness and mobility described in [Michel de Certeau's]* The Practice of Everyday Life. [21]

Likewise, mobile art can be said to enter the urban realm in a tactical way, making use of existing spatial patterns and routes, handheld devices and forms of navigation, modes of watching and listening, yet bending these towards other purposes. It creates a new relation to place, drawing the participant into a playful and potentially awakened form of engagement; part serendipity, part chance collage, the accidents of mobilized perception form a newly mediated kind of "exquisite corpse" in a surreal game of adventure as artistic venture.

Many of the works in *L.A. Re.Play*, and those discussed in the essays in this special issue, create new modes of creative co-production and networked participation in the city, and require participation in order to be accessed. Each one depends upon its context in the public realm, and plays upon the interdependence of digital and physical experiences, which activates a renewed sense of place and flexible relationship to cartography. Various kinds of soundwalks, along with mobile Augmented Reality, distribute mobile art across a walkable terrain whereby a series of situated visual and sonic elements can be accessed and experienced by an ambulatory audience. Such works have their roots in both land art and sonic artwork, as explored further in the essay contributed by Ksenia Federova on the "sublime" potential of sound. Artist Teri Rueb, for example, whose work was presented in *L.A. Re.Play* and in an essay here, explores in her mobile auditory works "a thinking and doing landscape... to define a radically expanded field in which to consider embodied interaction and mobile media." Experiencing her work helps us "to think bodies, sensations, space and time together." [22] Several artists working with mobile media draw on the history of psychogeography, originally set in motion as a surrealist experiment with the city through the "derive," a drifting serendipity of encounter, while others lean towards mobile gaming. [23]

The artists working with mobile psycho-geography create new ways to navigate choreographies of place, now augmented with mobile and locational technologies. For example, Leila Nadir and Cary Peppermint of *ecoarttech* present their piece "Indeterminate Hikes+," which "acts as both locative artwork and practice-based inquiry into the imagination of public place and the environment in the context of networked mobility and ubiquitous computing devices." Aesthetically, though, their work is not about the technology or the mobile experience itself, but takes inspiration from Guy Debord's psychogeography, Felix Guattari's lines of flight, John Cage's random yet structured processes, and Michel Foucault's radical ethics of the self. Likewise, Australian architect Ian Woodcock discusses his collaborative works "PastCityFuture" and "en route," which "uses locative technologies, psychogeographic techniques and urban choreography to create in participants a heightened awareness of presence and context, the here and now." So the movements generated in these pieces occur both outside as a transit through space, and inside as a transformative state of being in place.

Choreographies here intersect with cartographies, which emerge as a key terrain for exploration of the digital co-production of space. Once new, but now increasingly routine, digital technologies such as Geo-Positioned Satellite (GPS) navigation systems and popular applications such as Google Earth have transformed the experience of the map as an interactive, dynamic, and multi-scalar interface, as noted especially in the essay by Dutch artists Esther Polak and Ivar Van Bekkum, which describes their project of redeploying Google Earth as an artistic medium. Their

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piece A Tom Tom Opera takes the viewer on a drive through a landscape accompanied by a satellite navigation-inspired choral soundtrack, which speeds past with "Doppler effect," culminating in the visual and sonic crescendo of a crash. They ask: "What happens when people move through public space, listening to an electronic voice which is controlled by an invisible network of information systems?" As a kind of opera situated on the highway, the "visualisation is based on a GPS-track and animated directly in Google Earth, using its digital cartography as a worldwide, spatial opera-stage." Maps, routes and cartographies are also explored by Robbins and Lambert, whose work "I-5 Passing" represents the atmosphere of a drive along Interstate 5, running between Los Angeles and San Francisco, as a representation of the mobile space of a particular kind of California culture. Both pieces explore the affects of digital cultures blended with cultures of automobility and the re-mixing of past and present temporalities.

Jeremy Hight also contributes to the issue with a meditation on the city of Los Angeles, reminding us of its many pasts, taking its measure, unfurling its maps. Encompassing the geological, the archaeological, the historical, and the creative, this journey through the L.A. of the imagination replays in our minds, transforming the familiar cityscape into a textured urban fabric that is "mutable, surreal, disruptive and often enchanting." [24] There are many ways of moving with and through "virtual" media that when coupled with narrative and stories seek to re-enchant the disenchanted landscape of the technologically-scripted non-place. Hight's creative writing piece reminds us that cartographies are also closely related to what Sawchuk and Thulin in their contribution refer to as "chorographies": "conceived of as a way to reconsider the temporal and affective dynamics of place through the practice of writing, reflection, and artistic practice." They draw out the tension between this affective dynamics of meaningful place and the "representational fiction of the pinpoint *within* the mapping process and the implications of this fiction for locative media artists, designers and the publics we desire to engage." To pinpoint a location does not make it a "place" until it is enacted in relation to a temporal and social context, and a single location may be unstable, and part of many such intersecting contexts.

In effect the participatory, experiential realm of mobile, locative, situated engagement not only completes the circuit of the creative act, but also redefines the consciousness, experience and agency of the participant. The artists and theorists included in this special issue engage, subvert and recombine our perceptions of place, building on traditions of Social Practice Art and Relational Art, but also engaging forms of participatory theater, experimental cinema, and collective narrative. Mobile art in this sense incorporates audiences – calling attention to their very corporeality and social/spatial situatedness – often in challenging ways. Many of these works combine evocative digital imagery, sound walks, mobile narrative, and site specificity, yet they do not necessarily require a high-tech "sentient city" [25] to make them work. They also can be distinguished from more commercial or simply entertaining forms of mobile pervasive gaming although there can be a blurring of the two areas, as found in the series of immersive theater and mobile game works by the collective Blast Theory. [26]

In re-configuring contemporary "technoscapes" and "mediascapes" enacted through the relational embodied praxis of mobile art, such works re-set or re-play "modernity at large" in new ways. [27] Mobile locative art evokes stories and creates new affordances for people to turn public spaces into meaningful places, to turn designed environments into new kinds of public experience, and to turn software interaction into potentially critical praxis. This leads to the next key element that we want to highlight: the radical mutation that mobile art can offer to our experience of space itself, through the production of a sense of immersion within digitally networked and "hybrid" place as we move through the physical world. [28]

HYBRID SPACE AND MOBILE AUGMENTED REALITIES

Mobile media artworks are at once definable and indefinable. They suspend performers and participants in a tension around co-presence and mediated interactions that defy formal modes of presentation. Many works engage, subvert and recombine our experience, perceptions, and interactions with place and location by drawing upon elements of communication and sense perception that are both immediately present and mediated by technology (sight, sound, narrative, affect, memory, history). In this issue, Jason Farman's analysis of Simon Faithfull's performance art piece, *0.00 Navigation*, for example, notes the relation between physical objects (such as fences, houses) and virtual objects (such as GPS coordinates, or the Prime Meridian) in a kind of oscillating experiential space. Mobile media artists challenge and equip us to activate new social practices and performances via "hybrid spaces" [29] that blur the distinction between physical and digital, bodily and virtual, artwork and everyday space, creator and audience. Practitioners take it as given that through everyday practices with wireless networks and mobile social media, people are creating new ways of interacting with others, with places, and with screens while moving, or pausing in movement. Emerging practices of "mobile mediality" – understood as a new form of flexible, digitally mediated spatiality [30] – are accomplished in motion, just as the artworks exloring it are not simply new apps, but are experiential happenings, performative interactional events. As such, they have implications for embodied perception.

Mobile arts practices that engage with our increasingly software-embedded and digitally augmented urbanism help to create a greater awareness of what some describe as "remediated" space, [31] "networked place," [32] or "hybrid space." [33] Media theorist Adriana de Souza e Silva, in her studies of mobile locative networks and mobile gaming, argues that "Hybrid space abrogates the distinction between the physical and the digital through the mix of social practices that occur simultaneously in digital and in physical spaces." [34] It is not one or the other, but both at once. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin in their book *Remediation: Understanding New Media* draw a distinction between immediacy and hypermediacy. The idea of transparent immediacy, or media proposed as "interfaceless" and immersive, occurs in earlier imaginaries of Virtual Reality (VR), imagined as drawing the participant into another world. Hypermediacy, on the other hand, involves a mix or juxtaposition of elements, both digital and physical, being in this sense more like Augmented Reality (AR). [35]

In contrast to ideas of immersive media, therefore, the experience of hypermediated digital space is that it is rapidly dissolving into or permeating everyday life, especially through mobile devices. Elizabeth Grosz, in her book *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* argues that this dissolve takes place at the level of the perceptual, where there is a "change in our perceptions of materiality, space and information, which is bound directly to or indirectly to affect how we understand architecture, habitation and the built environment." [36] For artworks created within this hypermediated hybrid environment, the point is to create works that exist in this delimited realm both perceptually and actually. The issues of becoming remain continually processual. Such artworks have a kind of unstable or flickering presence, even while accessing multiple levels of "reality." They might involve what Paula Levine in her contribution refers

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to as "elastic geographies," in which one cartography is displaced onto another to create a blurred experience of both at once, as in her work *Shadows from Another Place: San Franscico<->Baghdad* (2004). Or the materiality of digital media might involve adapting to weather, noise, and gestures within a kinaesthetic field, even as one follows an abstract GPS coordinate depicted as a blinking dot on a screen, as Sawchuk and Thulin explore in their analysis of works like *Lost Rivers* and *Montreal in/accessible*, and contributor Jen Southern explores in works such as *CoMob*.

The mobile media artists who interest us are precisely those who are exploring how to create or move within these hybrid spaces of amplified (hypermediated) reality via new modes of open (yet critically attuned) engagement with embodied experience, with urban and natural landscapes, and with digitally-mediated public space. Southern, in her contribution to this issue, delineates six elements of "locative awareness" that includes a heightened sensitivity to being situated, embodied, relational, networked, experimental, and multiple. These embodied and networked engagements with hybrid experiences transform the familiar cityscape (or, in some cases, non-urban landscape) through an intensified awareness of the urban fabric, its multiple architectures, streetscapes, and social flux, as strangely mutable, perhaps disruptive or uncanny, even enchanting. Ecoarttech's "IndeterminateHikes+," for example, re-enchants the city by importing into it an experience of the natural:

> *This mobile app imports the rhetoric of wilderness into virtually any place accessible by Google Maps, creates hikes, and encourages its hiker-participants to treat the locales they encounter as spaces worthy of the attention accorded to sublime landscapes, such as canyons and gorges. Thus the ecological wonder usually associated with "natural" spaces, such as national parks, is re-appropriated here to renew awareness of the often-disregarded spaces in our culture that also need attention, such as alleyways, highways, and garbage dumps. This project extends ecological awareness into mobile spaces, into the places humans actually live, democratizing conversations about environmental sustainability and ecological management that too often occur only in a scientific context.*

Contributor Martha Ladly also considers how mobile technologies "are grounded in place, creating responsive hybrid spaces in which the real, embodied, personal experiences and stories of the artist and the audience may create a powerful, participatory opportunity." Mobile art thus addresses crucial theoretical questions about how and where participatory politics takes place, when the relation between physical space, networked space, and the growing experience of hybrid space involves the physical and the digital as co-synchronous sites of engagement, conversation, and responsive communication.

By provoking questions about the possibilities and limits of the new borders between the physical and the virtual, the real and the imaginary, the tactile and the tactical – many mobile artworks reinvent a relationship to aesthetic digital objects, interrogate public presence and memory, and deploy new strategies for intervention. Teri Rueb's soundwalking piece *Elsewhere : Anderswo* is a site-specific sound installation across two sites. Visitors carry small GPS-equipped computers and wear headphones. Sounds play automatically in response to their movements in the landscape. As they move through layer upon layer of responsive sound, [she writes] "little elsewheres" are grafted onto the landscape in the form of variously local and foreign, synchronous and asynchronous "soundtracks." Place is a verb. Place making and the meaning of place, "placings," unfold as a continuous dialogue between the physical and built environment and its inhabitants.

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Landscape is a special kind of "placing." Yet her interventions she argues, are also "displacements," which introduce multiple sensory and perceptual layers into the temporalities and subjectivities of moving through a landscape.

Participants in soundwalks can experience an embodied engagement with place and, in some cases, a remediated performance of everyday actions that reorganize the experience of space and time. This type of work is situated in the embodied sensory experience of landscape, but also lends itself to collective sound-mapping and the production of new mixed-reality soundscapes and mobile acoustic ecologies. Ross Gibson notes that "The rhythms with which and within which a person can *perceive*: the time spans in which we sense our acuity, these time spans are becoming ever more elastic." [37] Mobile art becomes a way to perceive this elasticity of temporality, and reflect upon movement-space as we co-create it. And such elasticity of perception plays upon the "displacements" noted by Rueb and the "entanglements" alluded to by Southern, both of whom use GPS to subtly interfere with perceptions of place and awareness of various kinds of placement.

Locative media art has the capacity to bring together multiple rhythms of landscape that combine the live, temporal, and ephemeral aspects of a socially mapped place-ment. Picking up on Henri Lefebvre's (2004) [38] concept of rhythmanalysis, geographer Tim Edensor argues that "rhythmanalysis elucidates how places possess no essence but are ceaselessly (re) constituted out of their connections... Places are thus continually (re)produced through the mobile flows which course through and around them, bringing together ephemeral, contingent and relatively stable arrangements of people, energy and matter." [39] Through a kinaesthetic sense of bodily motion we apprehend time and space, but through the interventions of mobile art we also inhabit it differently. Through sensory perception and physical mass, we orient ourselves toward the world, and create both place and displacement through the frictions and rhythms of our mediated movement. Movements have different rhythms, and those rhythms of movement flow through cities and landscapes, shaping their feel, sculpting their textures, and making places. [40] For Lefebvre such intersecting trajectories and temporalities even included the polyrhythms of trees, flowers, birds, insects, and the movement of the earth, sun and soil down to the molecular and atomic levels.

So it is the coming and going of all of these mobile assemblages and interweaving rhythms that mobile artists are exploring as they experiment with the new "movement-space," [41] a dynamic digitally-mediated spatial awareness mediating between bodies, architectures, and natures. Social theorists argue that there are ambivalent and contested "affordances" that "stem from the reciprocity between the environment and the organism, deriving from how people are kinaesthetically active within their world." [42] "Motion and emotion" are "kinaesthetically intertwined and produced together through a conjunction of bodies, technologies, and cultural practices." [43] The chorographies and choreographies of mobile art become a way of conjoining the affective experience of place and the effects of hypermediated locatability. Highlighting temporality becomes a way of re-thinking location, while the acute awareness of matching a physical location with a virtual object while using mobile locative media assists in a re-thinking of temporality and place. In some cases this new orientation is connected to a politics of place, location, and embodiment. Our final concern is to ask what the political implications are of some of the recent entanglements of mobility, location, and public art.

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EDITORIAL

POLITICAL ART IN NETWORKED PUBLIC SPACE

Mobile artists are exploring how to create hybrid spaces of amplified reality as new modes of open engagement with embodied experience and public space. Ultimately such projects may transform place, politics, social research, and art itself, its modes of practice and forms of dissemination and engagement. Simon Sheikh in his essay "In the Place of the Public Sphere? Or the world in Fragments" refers to "counter-publics" that "entail a reversal of existing practices into other spaces and identities and practices." [44] While the notion of counter-publics has a long history [45] there is a shifting sense of publics today, and a shifting understanding of what is public, due to a blurring of public and private as one enfolds into the other. [46] Like other critics of the Habermasian public sphere such as Iris Marion Young, Nancy Fraser, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, Sheikh goes on to call for this counter-public to be "relational, articulatory and communicatory." [47] As new hybrid spaces and networked places emerge from contemporary practice, they have the potential to transform modes of political engagement and participation in the public sphere and to generate transformative hybrid approaches to the natural-social-spatial-cultural matrix in which we move, dwell, and create the future. How does this new public become a platform for different and oppositional subjectivities, politics and economies, and thereby frame a new public art?

One crucial political intervention of mobile art concerns the ways in which it brings the virtual, the augmented, and the digital into conversation with the production of bodies, spaces, sensation and affect. Sarah Drury, in particular, explores in her essay the forms of "body spatiality" that emerge in mobile augmented reality artworks. She draws on Elizabeth Grosz's work to describe the "zone of sensitivity" that occur between an individual body and the spaces it inhabits. [48] Mobile AR works can intervene in such internalized body images by reconfiguring the spaces with which they interact. As geographer Peter Merriman notes, "writings on mobility and non-representational theory" have begun to trace "the more-than-representational, performative, expressive improvisations of bodies-in-movement-in-spaces" by describing "the production of complex entwined performativities, materialities, mobilities and affects of *both* human embodied subjects *and* the spaces/places/landscapes/environments which are inhabited, traversed, and perceived." [49] Mobile augmented reality opens up our perception and bodily experience of the spaces through which we move, allowing the materialities and performativies of buildings, streets, surfaces, and other non-human elements of space to evoke a new kind of body spatiality – which has political implications for individual and collective agency and capacities to mobilize.

Some mobile artworks raise personal and political questions about what constitutes a public space, or a public sphere, while others address the more dystopian elements of surveillance, inclusion/exclusion, and (dis)connection in the digital era. When the group Manifest AR uses site-specific augmented reality digital imaging as an interventionist public art to infiltrate highly regulated public spaces such as Tianamen Square in China, or the US-Mexico border where immigrants are dying in the desert, or even the Museum of Modern Art in an illicit AR exhibit, it engages the overlaying quality of augmented reality to seed our political imagination with new possibilities. As they describe it:

> *The group sees this medium as a way of transforming public space and institutions by installing virtual objects, which respond to and overlay the configuration of located physical meaning. [..] Whereas the public square was once the quintessential place to air grievances, display solidarity, express difference, celebrate similarity, remember, mourn, and reinforce shared values of right and wrong, it is no longer the only anchor for interactions in the public realm. That geography has been relocated to a novel terrain, one that encourages exploration of mobile location based public art. Moreover, public space is now truly open, as artworks can be placed anywhere in the world, without prior permission from government or private authorities – with profound implications for art in the public sphere and the discourse that surrounds it.*

Other works present other kinds of opportunities to re.think, re.experience, and re.play an awareness of space, landscape and the city that spans the local and the global, the public and the intimate, calling into question the bases for such distinctions and their contemporary blurring. Artist Jenny Marketou, interviewed in this issue, uses "the city as a space and the electronic communication networks as platforms and creative tools for intervention and connection between exhibition space, public space and social interaction." Notably her work engages with the phenomena of drone-like surveillance cameras floating above public space, closed circuit television, and the mixture of these low-resolution moving image technologies with globally networked computers and social media platforms; all of which are enacted on participating viewers crossing through public spaces of the city. She is concerned with what the new architecture and protocols of wireless networks do in terms of public surveillance, data mapping, knowledge, information and communication, issues which have become central in the field of mobile media studies. [50] Locatability has become increasingly commoditized (as something apps and big data companies trade in) and politicized (placed under sous-veillance or resisted by masking location); thus mobile locative art can remind us of what is at stake in being un/locatable. [51]

Paula Levine's *The Wall - The World*, which was displayed as part of *L.A. Re.Play*, allows viewers to transport the "security wall" that Israel built to control Palestinian territories on the West Bank, effecting an imaginary mobility through a transposed experience of the politics of place. Focusing on a small segment of the barrier, about a 15- mile area just east of Jerusalem extending between Abu Dis in the south and Qalandiya in the north, *The Wall - The World* lets the viewer envision this 15-mile segment of the West Bank wall transposed onto any city in the world in Google Earth. The wall appears on the left side of the screen in the West Bank, and on the right side of the screen, in the viewer's city of choice. Using Google Earth's navigation tools as a kind of imaginary mobility, viewers can explore the impact of the structure in both areas simultaneously. *The Wall - The World* is part of Shadows From Another Place, a series of work that maps the impact of distant events in local terms, on local ground. It produces an effect that Ricardo Dominguez of Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) calls "lobal," in which the global is processed through and tamed within the local, in contrast to either the predominance of the global or even the "glocal," in which the local is transformed by global networks. [52]

The Transborder Immigrant Tool by EDT/b.a.n.g. lab (Ricardo Dominguez, Brett Stalbaum, Amy Sara Carroll, Micha Cárdenas, Elle Mehrmand), which was also presented in *L.A. Re.Play*, is a project designed to repurpose inexpensive mobile phones that have GPS antennas to become a compass and digital divining rod of sorts. Through the addition of software that the team designed, it can help to guide dehydrated migrants lost in the deserts of the US-Mexico border to water caches established by activists. It provides poetic nourishment as well, in the form of text messages conveying advice and inspiration. As an actual hand-held device, it serves as a practical and aesthetic intervention in the border, humanizing the harsh politics of the exclusionary international boundary; but it is also a disruption of the political space of the border *and of the*

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aesthetics of the border, generating intense debate and critical thought as much as material intervention. It is a clear example of the potential for critical design and its ability to make you think. As Fernanda Duarte has noted in her interpretation of the *Transborder Immigrant Tool* as a kind of tactical media, it "constitutes a model of micropolitics in practice because their subversive and critical poetics invents alternative lines of flight, and proposes temporary and nomadic constructions without making claims for a revolutionary transformation of reality or utopian designs." [53] In this issue, Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) have composed another kind of creative tactical intervention in what they name the "trans [ ] border." They offer the original piece "Faust y Furioso" as a play that plays with genres, boundaries, borders and crossings. Their work is further contextualized by an interview with Ricardo Dominguez, conducted by *L.A. Re.Play* participant Leila Nadir.

We hope this set of sessions, art exhibition, and this special issue of LEA will begin to lay the groundwork for a more sophisticated critical evaluation of mobile art that is fully situated in its historical context, its contemporary practice and its future potential. By considering the practices of process-based, socially engaged, conceptual and performance art and their relationship to activism, design and mobile art, we are able to examine the conditions of how these projects may transform place, politics, and the realm of public art. Visualizing internal emotional processes and relating them to route or wayfinding; constructing narratives in a virtual and spatial locality that reveal attachments and connections; positioning oneself imaginatively and actually along a continuum of nature and technology; and exploring the ephemeral quality of technologically mediated art work all assume heightened resonance when they are located in place. [54] Mobile locative media engages strategies that work against the assumptions and stabilities of site and location and are articulated through the interdisciplinary engagement of what has become a new entanglement of art with the social, technological, cartographic, and political implications of mobility.

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Columbia. Her more recent project *Elsewhere : Anderswo* engages visitors in a kind of play with urban place and space. See her essay in this issue for further discussion.

23. Mobile gaming combines GPS with Bluetooth short range data exchange, WiFi wireless internet, SMS short messaging service and cell networks and has emerged alongside locative art as an experimentation with urban public space via forms of "radical play" inspired by Situationist practices and ideas like the "derive" and unitary urbanism. See Sophia Drakopoulou, "A Moment of Experimentation: Spatial Practice and Representation of Space as Narrative Elements in Location-based Games," *Aether: Journal of Media Geography* 5A (2010): 63-76; and Adriana De Souza e Silva and Daniel M. Sutko, eds., *Digital Cityscapes: Merging Digital and Urban Playspaces* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).
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Hyperallergic Interview

Ricardo Dominguez talks about the Transborder Immigrant Tool with Leila Nadir

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Leila Nadir: The Transborder Immigrant Tool and the artists involved in creating it have been investigated by the Republican Party and the FBI Office of Cybercrimes. You have been accused of misusing public funds and promoting illegal activities; your tenured position at UC San Diego was threatened. Given your history of pioneering new forms of activism and civil disobedience with electronic media, you are no stranger to the state's interest in your work. How has the US government's response to TBT been similar to or different from your previous encounters?

Ricardo Dominguez: The major difference between the 2010 investigations of projects by Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab and those that took place in the late 1990s was the nature of the stage: in the 1990s we were an autonomous group of artists creating art projects online that activated responses from the Mexican government to the Department of Defense. From the FBI to NSA [National Security Agency], these entities failed to establish any investigations on an international or national level, even though they really wanted to. In 2010, the stage was

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A B S T R A C T

Almost five years ago, Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab released the first iteration of the Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT), a mobile-phone technology that provides poetry to immigrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border while leading them to water caches in the Southern California desert. In 2010, the project caused a firestorm of controversy on the American political scene, and the artists of EDT/b.a.n.g. lab were investigated by three Republican Congressmen, the FBI Office of Cybercrimes and the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), where Ricardo Dominguez, co-founder of EDT (with Brett Stalbaum) and principal investigator of b.a.n.g. lab, is an associate professor in the visual arts department.

I recently sat down with Dominguez – virtually, of course – in order to learn more about the project. We began our conversation discussing the FBI/Republican/UCSD investigations and then explored more deeply some aspects of EDT/b.a.n.g. lab's philosophies of art and activism and the complex conceptual terrain that the work of TBT traverses. In the course of our conversation, Dominguez talked about the ecological grounding of civil disobedience, the invention of new spaces of imagination and the difference between art and activism. One of my favorite moments was in Dominguez's elaboration on the latter: activists break the law, while artists change the conversation theatrically, by disturbing the law.

Dominguez and I crossed paths frequently in New York's late 1990s net art scene, and what I have always enjoyed about talking with him is the way he uses language to disrupt the concepts and terms that have settled into our collective imagination, stagnating into clichés. In this interview, locative media becomes dislocative, Homeland Security drones appear as feral animals, global positioning systems transform into global poetic systems, a Fox News host becomes an unwitting advocate of the power of poetry and typographical empty brackets [ ] become a way to represent the infinities, the overflow, that cannot be contained by state control and repression.

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Figure 1. *Transborder Immigrant Tool performance intervention*, Ricardo Dominguez, 2008. Photograph by Brett Stalbaum. © Brett Stalbaum, 2008. Used with permission.

completely different: the Transborder Immigrant Tool and our Electronic Civil Disobedience performances were now being created and performed with the support of a large institution, the University of California and CALIT2 (a new-edge technology research center) at UC San Diego. I was also a tenured professor based the history of this type of art practices and the research matrix I established in 2004 when I started working at UCSD. And of course the outcome/output of my collaborative research.

TBT was already under investigation starting on January 11, 2010, by UCSD (this included the entire group of artists working on it). Then I came under investigation for the Virtual Sit-In performance against the UC Office of the President (UCOP) on March 4 (against students' fees in the UC system and the dismantling of educational support for K–12 across California). That was then followed by an investigation by the FBI Office of Cybercrimes. The FBI was seeking to frame the performance as a federal violation, a cybercrime, based on UCOP stating that they lost $5,600 because of the disturbance. It is important to know that the cost had to be over $5,000 for it to be a crime, so UCOP tacked on $600 to push the performance into cybercrime territory. I think that all the actions on the streets of California, the occupations and protests across all the UCs by students and faculty and the online actions, created a space where they could not fail to notice its impact on multiple scales. There were three investigations in total. They were all seeking to find a way to stop TBT and to de-tenure me for doing the very work I was hired to do and tenured for, so the irony was lost to no one, not even the FBI. In the end, all the investigations were dropped. UCSD did not find any misuse of funds for the TBT project (three Republican Congressmen had called for the investigation). I did have to agree not to do another VR Sit-In performance on the UCOP for close to four years, but the day I signed the agreement, a number of supporters across the nation did a VR Sit-In on UCOP again – so I am not sure what that means. UCSD dropped its actions to de-tenure me and instead gave me merit for my research. One strange element about the agreement that they wanted me to sign, without even giving me or my legal team time to look over, was that it included clauses like: I would never speak or write about what had happened, I was never to create any art work that might disturb anyone and of course, refrain from any artivist performances – none of which I agreed to. How could we do our research if we did?

LN: The TBT was recently curated last fall in *Ecologías Correlatives* at the Brooklyn gallery 319 Scholes and last spring in *LA Re.Play* at the University of California, Los Angeles, two exhibitions about environment and place. While the dialogue and controversy around the TBT tend to focus on its role in immigration politics, its inclusion in these shows highlights the project's capacity to act as an ecological artwork. b.a.n.g. lab's own descriptions represent TBT as a trail-hiking tool and are replete with spatial and geographical terms, such borders, nature, desert and global positioning. How do EDT 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab understand TBT as an environmental or ecological work, and how do you think this particular feature has been engaged or experienced by critical and public audiences?

RD: TBT connects un/expectedly to borders, nature, desert and global positioning via a geo-poetic disturbance and dis-locating prophecy as to a double moment in the history of critical ecologies. In our play *Sustenance: A Play for All Trans [ ] Borders*, Amy Sara Carroll, a member of EDT, writes:

> Transcendental-isms *and* ¡Tierra y Libertad! *(Land and Freedom): Mid-nineteenth century, in an essay alternately titled "Civil Disobedience" and "Resistance to Civil Government," Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine." He was, of course, referring to the well-oiled machinery of the state, and its bedfellow capitalism, as each related at that time to the U.S. reterritorialization of Texas and the globally inflected (ideological) state apparatus, otherwise known as slavery. Thoreau's call for informed dissent, squarely tied to transcendental -isms, infuses the landscape, "la tierra," with the very concept of an inter-Americanist "libertad," taken up in parallel fashion in the proliferation of Zapatista struggles (1910-1917 and 1994-present). In each instance, the specificity of place – a Walden Pond, a rural Massachusetts, a United States built upon inclusion versus exclusion for Thoreau; a Morelia, a Chiapas, a Mexico that guarantees equal access to land and education for the Zapatistas – literally grounds the possibility of "civil disobedience," materially and virtually.*

TBT's connection, according to Amy Sara Carroll, is to critical ecologie(s)/environmentalism(s) that are grounded to a geo-projection of these transcendentalisms as an ethico-aesthetic disturbance which marks the Mexican/US border, and all borders perhaps, as what Rob Nixon has termed the "slow violence" of the neo-liberal dismantling of bio-citizenship. This bio-citizenship is one of trans [ ] citizenship that crosses between multiple forms of life: from black bears to plants to water to global labor as borderized-entities that are blocked from geographic movement, which is the blocking of life itself. What is not blocked from movement is multiple types of techno-toxicity (Latin America as dumpster zone of last generation Silicon Valley economies) and free-trade markets from the US, China, EU and others. TBT is a small gesture that echoes back, at least for us, some of these occluded conditions, and marks them via the gesture as aesthetically visible.

LN: This is a powerful overview of the ways in which an imagination of place and landscape is essential to understanding injustice, capitalism, globalization and resistance. Yet it seems that the ecological "grounding" of so many political issues, even those so clearly involving movement across space (such as restrictions on human mobility while opening borders for commodities and toxic trash, which you cite), are obscured by a public conversation focused on culture, laws, economics, labor and trade. How has TBT, as a work of landscape or la tierra and as a work that highlights the biological-ecological need for water, affected the terms of this dialogue among critics, the art world and public audiences, including immigrants and spectators? What kinds of responses has EDT 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab received, besides the Republican Party, FBI, and UCSD investigations?

RD: TBT was targeted by right-wing media, specifically Fox News, and that caused an increased level

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Figure 2. *Transborder Immigrant Tool*, Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab, 2007. Photo courtesy 319 Scholes. Used with permission.

of extremely violent emails toward the members of EDT/b.a.n.g. lab. We could tell whenever a story about TBT appeared on Fox News because of the number of emails that occurred right afterwards. We even had to have meetings with the Department of Justice to help us alert the very police and FBI who were investigating us about the level of aggressive harassment we were under and having them offer protection to some degree. Here is one email that we received:

> *Author : Leonard (IP: 173.128.108.219 , 173-128-108-219.pools.spcsdns.net)*
> *E-mail : yourworstnightmare444@yahoo.com*
> *URL :*
> *Whois : http://ws.arin.net/cgi-bin/whois.pl?queryinput=173.128.108.219*
>
> *Comment:*
> *Hopefully, you traitors will be shot in the back of your heads when you least expect it.*
> *Isn't it great that you're relying upon the tax money of Americans to destroy America.*
> *Nearly all illegals from Mexico and Central America are NOT Spanish Europeans, but indigenous morons who never invented the wheel.*
> *FUCK YOU!*

Another strange and critical response to TBT came from Glenn Beck, who on his website and old Fox New show insisted that TBT's poetry would "dissolve" the nation! Which I believe is indeed the power of poetry – which is often disregarded by supportive critics of the project. That is the power of poetry and/or the aesthetic in general.

On an institutional level, University of California, San Diego (UCSD) investigated TBT in terms of accounting: What was the small amount of funding by EDT/b.a.n.g. lab used for? Was it used as indicated in our proposal of 2007/2008 or something else? UCSD accounts investigated the value of the TBT poetry and our intellectual effort based on some unknown cost and revenue model. The final outcome of that year-long investigation was:

> *Project Assessed to be an Appropriate Use of Fund on July 21st, 2010*
> *"Based on our review procedures, we concluded that neither University funds nor effort were used inappropriately during the development of the TBT or the Project."*
> *– San Diego: Audit & Management Advisory Services 0910 University of California. Subject: Use of Resources Investigation – Transborder Immigrant Tool AMAS Audit Project 2010-75 (July 21, 2010)*

But the strange and funny part of this investigation was that UCSD never informed any member of EDT/b.a.n.g lab about the investigation being over or what the outcome was. It was only about a month later that I discovered it by accident and requested the materials from this Audit & Management Advisory Services group. They said they had forgotten to send it.

TBT also received extremely supportive responses from Water Station Inc. and Border Angels. Both of these NGOs have been working for more than a decade, leaving water caches along the Anza-Borrego area of Southern California, and EDT/b.a.n.g. lab was very lucky to be able to work with them. Without them we could not create the locative wave points for the water caches that TBT navigates its users to as part of its safety tool component. Communities all over Latin America have also been funding and intellectually establishing different levels of dialogue that range from immigrant activist networks to new media art communities. Also, a very important social force field for TBT has been the curators, critics, scholars and artists/artivists who have chosen to speak out about the project and to exhibit TBT.

LN: It is fascinating that a right-wing talk show host can regard TBT's poetic content as a more powerful force than do some of the project's supporters, though this is not entirely surprising. In environmental thought and activism, a field I'm familiar with, art and literature are often treated as a fun addendum to the "real" work of science; eco-artists sometimes seem to have absorbed this understanding themselves when they concentrate on making work that primarily visualizes data or documents and solves problems, devoid of poetic content. How do the members of EDT 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab understand their roles as both artists and activists? You mentioned earlier that TBT, as an aesthetic "gesture," can make visible circumstances that are otherwise

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obscured. What sorts of effects can aesthetic "disturbances" achieve that analysis and activism perhaps cannot?

RD: All the members of EDT 2.0/b.a.n.g. anchor their being and becoming as artists and every gesture that we make as an aesthetic gesture. And for us the frame of our work can be traced as an aesthetics of code switching between the Greek etymology of the word "aesthetic" (*aisthitikos*, that which is "perceptive by feeling") and the effective poetry of code that functions, that "works." Thus we are constantly and concurrently affective and effective. Activists have traditionally, for good reasons, focused solely on the side of effective use of social technologies or actions. These projects must have or at least be imagined as having strong, concrete outcomes to the conditions that have failed or are failing to create the spaces necessary for a community to be sustainable in any number of ways. And often power, as command and control, will respond to activists by targeting them as law breakers or potential law breakers and shut them down under the empirical weight of the "Law."

The question of aesthetics, at least for us, creates a disturbance in the "Law" to the degree that it cannot easily contain the "break" and it is forced to enter into another conversation – a conversation that power-as-enforcement may not want to have. For instance, back in 1998, EDT had a series of encounters with the US Defense Department (DOD), and in a front-page article on October 31 in the *New York Times* on EDT and hacktivism, the DOD stated that: "If it [the Electronic Disturbance Theater] wasn't illegal it was certainly immoral … " If we had been activists, the question of "illegal" would have been a stable term for framing our work, but our practice of creating affective and visceral responses as theater between the codes of the utilitarian-effective created another space – that of the "immoral" or, more specifically, questions of poetry, ethics and justice. It is this performative matrix that is often set aside in reading our art; often the terms targeted are "electronic" and "disturbance," not "theater." So when you ask what can art do that activism cannot do, it is a different distribution of response that the aesthetic affords via our investigations of code switching as an art practice. A practice that operates as Amy Sara Carroll and Micha Cardenas have theorized, as the paraliterary or transreal in our work, which echoes, to some degree, Jacques Rancière's statement that "The real must be fictionalized in order to be thought."

LN: Your description of how disturbances of law (as opposed to breaking the law) create new spaces and moral possibilities reminds me of Foucault's theorization of gay "style" in the 1980s. Calling for a queer ethics in which new ways of living are imagined in the spaces of freedom within heteronormative culture, he said, "We must think that what exists is far from filling all possible spaces." EDT/b.a.n.g. lab seems to exhibit a similar ethic of exploiting or inventing space. You state that TBT is "creating affective and visceral responses as theater between the codes of the utilitarian-effective." This skirting of the instrumentalist use of technology, in favor of the theatrical, seems to have a connection to queer theory like Foucault's, and EDT/b.a.n.g. lab does indeed describe TBT as a "queer technology." How do you understand the relation between TBT's queerness, its status as a repurposed technology and the theatricality of aesthetic disturbances?

RD: By aligning TBT with a global poetic system instead of a "global positioning system," we queer the technological condition towards the "trans" of the gesture, of the trans-body in relation to gender, class, race and desire. The TBT project calls into question the northern cone's imaginary about who has priority and control of who can become a cyborg or "trans" human. Immigrants are always presented as less than human (bare life) and certainly not as part of a community which is establishing and inventing new forms of life, when in fact those flowing in between immigrant communities are a deep part of the current condition that Haraway's research has been pointing towards as the core of the cyborg-condition. For us TBT is another marker for the queer turn in these unexpected – or better said, unconsidered – trans-emergences, both as new forms of desires and as new forms of life. The investigation of queer technology and what this queering effect has been, or is, is an important part of our conversations, especially via Micha Cardenas's research into the trans-real. This gesture dislocates the techno-political effect with aesthetic affects that become something other than code: a performative matrix that fractalizes and reverses the disorder of things with excessive trans-bodies acting from the inside-out of those enforced borderless borders. As the Zapatistas said, "We do not move at the speed of technology, but at the speed of dreams." This is the material heart of the trans-border-borg queer ecologies.

TBT's code is also open-sourced and is available at Brett Stalbaum's site, which allows the code to switch the question of the border to its possible use in other borders around the world and the possibilities of other global poetic systems to emerge. We also imagine that the safety tool aspect of the code is a queering of poetry, that the effective code is poetry as well. TBT is not a locative media project but a dislocative media performance.

LN: My work explores the unexpected ways that nature and animality inhabit human infrastructures and imagination, so I'm curious if TBT has experienced any animal encounters in the wilderness of the Southern California desert? Any climate or weather interruptions?

RD: No, we do not have any stories to tell at that end of the spectrum as of yet, but I can imagine that at the end of the project (if it can end), we may have some tales to tell. We have heard stories that immigrants in the US/Mexico border have been telling stories about odd encounters with strange "pajaros" (birds) in the skies above them while crossing the border. We speculate that these "birds" are Homeland Security drones, or perhaps feral drones, lost and drifting in the desert of the real, looking for a home that never existed. ■

The Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT), a group who developed Virtual-Sit-In technologies in 1998 in solidarity with the Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico. His recent Electronic Disturbance Theater project with Brett Stabaum, Micha Cardenas, Dr. Amy Sara Carroll (University of Michigan), and Elle Mehrmand, the *Transborder Immigrant Tool* (a GPS cellphone safety net tool for crossing the Mexico/U.S border was the winner of "Transnational Communities Award" (2008), this award was funded by *Cultural Contact*, Endowment for Culture Mexico – U.S. and handed out by the U.S. Embassy in Mexico), also funded by CALIT2 and two Transborder Awards from the UCSD Center for the Humanities. *Transborder Immigrant Tool* was exhibited at 2010 California Biennial (OCMA), Toronto Free Gallery, Canada (2011), as well as a number of other venues, the project was also under investigation by the U.S. Congress in 2009/10, and was also reviewed by Glenn Beck in 2010 as a gesture that potentially "dissolved" the U.S. border with its poetry.

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