Conspiracy Lecture
V2, ROTTERDAM, curated by Stephen Kovats

Introduction by Stephen Kovats

TANGENT_CONSPIRACY
V2_Institute for the Unstable Media
20.00, Friday, December 01, 2006
www.v2.nl

Long before a clandestine military-academic collaboration created the 1960's ARPANET the speculative mechanisms of conspiracy theories have fueled global events. The internet and it's growing Web 2.0 counterpart have moved beyond the realm of information exchange and redundancy to become the real-time fora of narrative construction. Fuelling and fanning all forms of popular speculation the net now creates its own post-modern mythologies of world domination, corporate control and government induced fear fetishism. If the net itself is not a conspirative construct designed to control and influence global intellectual expression then, rumour has it, it plays the central role in implying as much. Has the internet now become a self-fullfiling prophecy of its own destructive speculation? V2_, in collaboration with the Media Design group of the Piet Zwart Institute, invites you to join Florian Cramer, Claudia Borges, Hans Bernhard and Alessandro Ludovico in an evening of net-based conspiracy built upon abrasive speculation, conjectural divination and devious webbots.

Alessandro Ludovico, editor in chief of Neural, has been eavesdropped upon electronically for most of his life due to his hacktivist cultural activities. Promoting cultural resistance to the pervasiveness of markets, he is an active supporter of ideas and practices that challenge the flatness of capitalism through self-organized cooperation and cultural production. Since 2005 he has been collaborating with Ubermorgen and Paolo Cirio in conceptually conspiring against the smartest marketing techniques of major online corporations.
http://neural.it/

Florian Cramer, course director of Piet Zwart Institute Media Design, had his education sentimentale as a member of the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy and is rumored to be involved in numerous anonymous collective efforts. His interest in plots, networks and signs brought him to study literature and investigate networks, speculative programming and cultural semiotics. Next to encouraging hacker approaches to information design, he currently researches the subliminal impact of obscenity on the human mind.
http://pzwart.wdka.hro.nl/mdma/programme/

tatibrazil aka Maria Claudia de Azevedo Borges hails from São Paulo, Brazil where she graduated in Clinical Psychology. Her official life as an artist began in Rotterdam where, after 10 years of busying herself with oilpaint, she was seduced by the Internet. As part of her practice exploring women's issues she trains and designs critical bots using female identity, language and narratives. Her methods are highly unorthodox, using the material of conversation and jargon as a means of information gathering. Currently, it is claimed, that she collaborates with the ethereal being known as Joy Evidence.

http://www.d-tati.org/bot/
http://tati.sohosted.com/retrieveme/index.html

Hans Bernhard is a St. Moritz based artist whose true madness first surfaced when he started up the internet-underground cult etoy in 1994. In 1999 he and three other founding members of etoy bought the mother company etoy.holding while investing dot-com money in a Sofia based software firm (esof ltd). During the web-site action Vote-Auction to buy and sell votes during the 2000 U.S. presidential elections Hans and lizvlx (UBERMORGEN.COM) were sued by 12 U.S. states, investigated by U.S. federal attorney Janet Reno, observed by the FBI, the CIA and the Austrian secret police and put under NSA surveillance. Afterwards he initiated NAZI~LINE (with Christoph Schlingensief), a neo-nazi re-integration project. Other projects currently getting him into serious trouble with German/Austrian secret services and corporate lawyers include GWEI (Google Will Eat Itself), the Injunction Generator and Amazon Noir.

UBERMORGEN.COM / etoy.holding
http://www.ubermorgen.com

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TANGENT_CONSPIRACY will also feature sisterO and The Algorithmic Oracle who will reveal your place in the manifold of time with their Media Divination 2.0. Bring an image or article of personal interest and be ready to disclose your date of birth ...

Andrea Fiore,The Algorithmic Oracle, is currently a second year student of Media Design at the Piet Zwart Institute. He holds a degree in communication sciences from the University of Rome with a thesis on software as cultural artifact and spends much of his time data mining, profiling, conjuring social software, and exploring digital archives and privacy issues.
http://pzwart2.wdka.hro.nl/~afiore

Nancy Mauro-Flude's sisterO project involved an extended period of research in Colombia looking at new & old media at the Society of Ethnomedicine, this resulted in a series of transmission based performances. Her work as a performing artist refers to the history of political cabaret, mesmerism and the experiential worlds carried in their wake. Currently a Master's candidate in Media Design, Piet Zwart Institute.
 http://sistero.sysx.org/index.html
 http://eclectictechcarnival

--- start lecture ---

Some words about the Cultural conspiracy Background – <mark>Hans</mark>

1. digital hijack (We hijacked 1.5 million people from search-engines during a 4-month period in 1996. the action was scripted as an internet-action movie. As a result, the CIA was involved and the austrian secret service housesearched my appartmeent 6 am without warrant. It was a inofficial collaboration between the austrian secret service and the US secret service

(CIA, responsable for the protection of the US president). While in my appartment the agents were looking for harddisks and floppy-discs because from our etoy-server a series of death-treaths against chelsae clinton were sent off. During this time, my appartment was full of drugs so it was a difficult situation. We finally resolved the situation by handing over false printed log-files to the secret service. Even worse was that at the same time we were heavily censored by the vienna university, they pulled the plug on our server because we sent out an email with a Ascii-gun „Image, this was enough for them to kill off our internet-hosting.) Hans

2. Vote-Auction.net (During the presidential election 2000 Al Gore vs. George W. Bush, we ran a internet-platform buying and selling votes from US citizens. The slogan was: „Bringing capitalism and democracy closer togehter", it was a media hype, we counted over 2500 news-features globally and we were featured in a 30 min. CNN prime time show exclusively about the project. Immediately the NSA, the CIA, the FBI, Janet Reno and 13 State Attorneys became involved in the case. We had to deal with fake Journalists, with lawyers and agents from different entities. The U.S. governement spent millions of dollars on the case without knowing wheter we were artists or eastern europen businessman bringing capitalism and democracy closer togehter, so both sides did not know who was on the other side, we had to deal with spooks, we didnt know what the CIA, FBI, NSA and the different US-courts would do and how they work, it was a tense and difficult situation for both sides) Hans

Why do we do it?

To break the porcellaine interface – Alessandro

How things start to get out of control?

As i mentioned for vote-auction, due to internet/digital comm technology we dont know who is on the other side – things start to spin very fast, very heavy loads of information start to move, respectively the sheer amount of information is just overwhelming, the real-time publication, the user-communication and the press-work become very threatening. So we are in the middle of a mass media storms, between the fronts of secret services, corporate spys and lawyers and other agencies. GWEI – the Google Will Eat Itself project was one of the Media hack projects.– Hans

Cases:

3. **GWEI – how it works** – by having a series of over 50 hidden web-sites carrying google text advertisments we earn money with each click our robots generate. We then transfer the money we receive FROM google to our swiss bank account where we automatically BUY GOOGLE shares. So, by using this autocannibalistic model Google eats itself but in the end **we** own it. (it is a paradox situation, because by using Googles Adsense advertisment program we also contribute – in microterms – to their growth of profit and to the rise of the share value). After the buying process we distribute the shares to the public through a company called GTTP Ltd). It will take us over 200 Million years to take over Google.... –– *So to explain or clarify the piece a little more in detail*. We use the core-business-technology of Google, which is their Adsense program. With this program Google places Text-Advertisments on millions of web-sites, any web-site can subscribe to this service and earn

some money – depening on how many times their users click on the advertisement. We have 50 such advertisement web-sites. So each time a advertisment on our website is beeing clicked, a micropaiment – between 10 cents to 1 dollar – is transfered from Google to us. Then we wait until we have enough money to buy the next Google share. Thats the whole trick. <mark>Hans</mark>

4. **GWEI – Google Conference** <mark>Alessandro</mark>
5. **GWEI – Reuters** <mark>Alessandro</mark>

6. **GWEI – decoy Accounts terminated** – (every time Google was involved, – i.e. Reuters interview, they started to investigate GWEI and they terminated some of the so called decoy accounts we laid out for them to find. Decoy accounts are Websites we put out on the internet so they can be easily found by Google, to satisfy their need to do something against GWEI, meanwhilee our hidden system would remain untouched and we could continue operations without struggling with Google – <mark>Hans</mark>
7. **GWEI – Wired Magazine** (we had a long term preparation for an article with Wired Magazine – the print version. They wanted us to do a feature on GWEI in their art-section, we prepared gfx, we did an extensive interview, everything was set... but then in the last moment the article got canceled without reason, i tried to find out why but they would not answer, they just said that they had orders from the top, Now... the mothercompany of Wired Mag is Conde Nast and Conde Nast is one big media company. They have a very close advertisment-relationsship with Google, whatever that means... we will never find out...) – <mark>Hans</mark>
8. **Email from Fake Accounts** – (media storm, many many emails from strange people with strange email adresses with strange content, this became a real problem with user-communications, it started to go out of control, and as i already mentioned, it is very hard to judge what a persons intention is if you have only virtual contact via email or skype) <mark>Hans</mark>

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9. **Skype threatening chats** – <mark>Alessandro</mark>/<mark>Hans</mark>

Chat History with (johannes.beus)
Created on 2006-11-27 17:18:24., 2006-09-06

Johannes Beus: 16:37:20: hi
Paolo Cirio: 16:38:17: hi dear
Johannes Beus: 16:38:36: youre the one who coded the google will eat itself thing?
Paolo Cirio: 16:38:48: Yes right
Johannes Beus: 16:38:58: could get you into big trouble
Paolo Cirio: 16:40:42: why?
Paolo Cirio: 16:40:53: who are you?
Johannes Beus: 16:41:05: its not ony against the adsense tos but against the law, called fraud

Johannes Beus: 16:41:52: see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Click_fraud
Paolo Cirio: 16:42:07: yes..i know about argument
Paolo Cirio: 16:42:21: but you don't know what do google about the law
Paolo Cirio: 16:42:44: do you know what kind of personal information they collect with adsense ?
Paolo Cirio: 16:42:57: so many thing are against law
Paolo Cirio: 16:43:12: anyway have you some thing of important to tell me
Paolo Cirio: 16:43:13: ?
Johannes Beus: 16:43:28: no, just wanted to hear if you know what you are doing.
Johannes Beus: 16:43:33: have fun :)
Paolo Cirio: 16:44:03: yes i know..but don't forgot that i'm an artist not tieff
Paolo Cirio: 16:44:09: is a bit different
Johannes Beus: 16:44:37: fraud is fraud, no matter if you think its art or not.
Paolo Cirio: 16:45:22: no exactly..depend what do you doing with fraud..if you use for steal for personal use or for comunicate something
Paolo Cirio: 16:46:04: so many art was illegal ..and then become history fot everybody
Johannes Beus: 16:46:54: i'm pretty sure the judge won't think so
Paolo Cirio: 16:48:21: depend who pay the judge..in sum nothing of legal is realy legal..
Paolo Cirio: 16:48:51: anyway..something is a must for political activist
Paolo Cirio: 16:49:03: and we take the risk
Johannes Beus: 16:49:42: hm, ok. your choice. just wanted to let you know of the risk.

10. **Neural Adsense cancelation** – <mark>Alessandro</mark>

11. **Cease-and-desist letter from Google Hamburg** – (in the friendly Google style, even lawyers use googles do no evil strategy and style – <mark>Hans</mark>

„QUOTE: we write you in the name of Google Inc. 1600 Amphitheatre Parway, Mountain View, California. Google was informed about your Project GWEI-Google Will Eat Itself. On your web-site there is the following information: Quote „Now we have setup a vast amount of such Adsense accounts for our hidden Web-Sites. Each time someone visits a web-site within our network of sites he /she triggers a series of robots. For each click we recieve a micropaiment from Google.“ End Quote. We mean that the text can only be understood that you open up or have other people open up Adsense accounts with Google. It is obviously the intention that you or others click on the Adsense pages and receive paiments for this. For doing this, you also state that you are using robots. We may inform you that this is against Googles Adsense policy. It is strictly forbidden to use automated tools to generate clicks. This policy is not only to protect Google but tho protect the advertisers. They can experience direct losses by your activites. (Keyword: GWEI eats Advertisers). We dont have to mention the criminal law implications this project might have for you. We are very well aware that this is an art project. But this does not free you of the reglementations of our policy or the general law. For this we have to mention the legal consequences this activity might have for you. Be asured that Google will use all legal means to prosecute such fraud. Usually this does not only imply the termination of your Adsense account but can also mean that you have to pay back your earned money and that we press charges so you have to pay reimboursement for the damages you caused. With kindest regards, Dr. Arnd Haller, Legal Department.“ END QUOTE

12. **Read Amazon Noir Press-Release**- To finish up we would like to introduce our lates cinspiracy project called Amazon Noir. This is again a collaboration between Ubermorgen.com, Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico. I will read the press-release to fully explain the project. – <mark>Hans</mark>

THE PLOT
The Bad Guys (The Amazon Noir Crew: Cirio, Ludovico, Lizvlx, Bernhard) stole copyrighted books from Amazon by using sophisticated robot-perversion-technology coded by supervillain Paolo Cirio. A subliminal media fight and a covert legal dispute escalated into an online showdown with the heist of over 3000 books at the center of the story. Lizvlx from UBERMORGEN.COM had daily shoot outs with the global massmedia, Cirio continuously pushed the boundaries of copyright (books are just pixels on a screen or just ink on paper), Ludovico and Bernhard resisted kickback-bribes from powerful Amazon.com until they finally gave in and sold the technology for an undisclosed sum to Amazon. Betrayal, blasphemy and pessimism finally split the gang of bad guys. The good guys (Amazon.com) won the showdown and drove off into the blistering sun with the beautiful femme fatale, the seductive and erotic massmedia.

THE TECHNOLOGY
The Amazon Noir Robots (Sucker01-12) used the frontdoor to access the huge digital library of Amazon.com. They tricked around with Amazon.coms "Search Inside the Book" function until it gave away the complete volumes of copyright protected books. This was carried out by sending 5.000 – 10.000 requests per book. After this process the data was logically reassembled into pdf-format by the SIB-Book-Generator.

THE TRUTH
All our work is done in the open. Our matter is accurate. Amazon Noir was scripted as an internet-movie. The whole digital action (media hack) was carried out in the global massmedia, within the art world and on a highly sophisticated technical level in the clandestine matrix of our global networks.
Amazon USA, Amazon U.K., Amazon Germany and Amazon France were vulnerable targets. During the attack they transformed part of the „Search Inside the Book" technology to defend the rights of the copyright holders – without actually solving the problem. Over 3000 Books were downloaded and distributed through p2p (Peer-to-peer networks: Gnutella/G2, BitTorrent, FastTrack, ed2k) between April – October 2006.
In July 2006 Amazon France and Amazon USA threatend to litigate. The matter was resolved out of court October 30th, 2006. Amazon (USA/France) bought the Amazon Noir software for an undisclosed sum – both parties signed a non-disclosure agreement.