

# PROVOCATIVE ALLOYS: A POST-MEDIA ANTHOLOGY

EDITED BY  
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REMAKING  
MEDIA PRACTICES:  
FROM  
TACTICAL MEDIA  
TO POST-MEDIA

CLEMENS APPRICH

The assumption that 'old' media are not simply replaced but rather dialectically preserved by 'new' media is as old as media studies itself. However, it is not only the sublation of the old into the new that characterises the development of media technologies, but the engagement with old media formats also leads on to a progression of practices that finally provide a new approach to these technologies. Thus, since the beginning of the 20th century, electronic media (radio, television, computer-based networks, etc.) have been affected by a constant interrelation between avant-garde experimentation and mass distribution. The following article will trace back some of the practices that have made use of new media technologies in order to bring about Guattari's idea of a post-media age: a transformation of classical media structures towards new collective assemblages of enunciation. In media theory, this process was accompanied by a dialectical movement: first in the 1980s, postmodern media theory jettisoned Marx's critique of ideology and abandoned all hope of an emancipatory use of media technologies, and then the tactical media movement of the 1990s rejected this quietist standpoint of (academic) media theory in order to re-invent new forms of media activism. This 'double disengagement' ultimately opened up new fields of counter-hegemonic agency, thus enabling a variety of media practices that are still valid in a post-media era. This article, therefore, follows the assumption that the transition from tactical media to post-media should not be considered as a rupture, but rather as a 'Becoming-media' of those practices that emerged in 1990s.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, the practices of tactical media have not disappeared but rather merged into everyday (post-media) life.

## Baudrillard vs. Enzensberger – First Disengagement

According to French media theorist Jean Baudrillard the mass is 'no more than the zero degree of the political'<sup>2</sup> By this, Baudrillard means the 'zero degree' of social meaning, the dissolution of the political. Contrary to Marx's conception of a political mass movement, it is therefore irrelevant if the masses overcome their supposed alienation, because the mass itself is the place of this alienation. For Baudrillard, the mass has reached its culmination. It is accelerating towards its limit, which today is expressed as social implosion rather than a revolutionary explosion. This also applies in relation to mass media which, from a Marxist point of view, has long been considered a manipulative force:



Television still of the Yes Men's Andy Bichlbaum on the BBC News, 2004



It has always been thought – this is the very ideology of the mass media – that it is the media which envelop the masses. The secret of manipulation has been sought in a frantic semiology of the mass media. But it has been overlooked, in this naive logic of communication, that *the masses are a stronger medium than all the media* [...].<sup>3</sup>

Hence, the masses must not be freed from the media, in order to unleash their revolutionary potential, but on the contrary, the media has to be freed from the masses. In this quietist view, the masses no longer produce the social, but rather simulate it. In the ‘society of simulation’ the social loses its meaning, thus rendering any political change impossible. This disengagement from the political programme of Marxism is not only in contradiction to the widespread suspicion within leftist theory which sees in (mass) media nothing more than (mass) manipulation, but also contrary to any hope for a socialist strategy of (re)appropriating (mass) media, as suggested by Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s ‘Constituents of a Theory of the Media.’<sup>4</sup>

In his essay, written in 1970, Enzensberger criticises the renunciation of an emancipatory use of new media technologies by members of the ‘68 generation. For him, it is clear that a socialist media theory has to appropriate the ‘manipulative power’ of the media if it does not want to be powerless against technological developments:

[E]very use of the media presupposes manipulation. The most elementary processes in media production, from the choice of the medium itself to shooting, cutting, synchronization, dubbing, right up to distribution, are all operations carried out on the raw material. There is no such thing as unmanipulated writing, filming, or broadcasting. The question is therefore not whether the media are manipulated, but who manipulates them. A revolutionary plan should not require the manipulators to disappear; on the contrary, it must make everyone a manipulator.<sup>5</sup>

The electronic media, for Enzensberger, constitute a new productive force whose practical means are already in the hands of the masses. However, the dominant relations of production would suppress the ‘mobilising power’ of the media, thus leading to a de-politicisation of the masses: ‘In its present form, equipment like television or film does not serve communication but prevents it. It allows no reciprocal action between transmitter and receiver’<sup>6</sup>. In this sense, the transition from a simple apparatus of distribution to a veritable tool of communication is not a technical but a political problem. In reference to Bertolt Brecht’s ‘Radio Theory’, Enzensberger shows that every

transistor radio is, by the nature of its construction, not only a receiver, but also a potential transmitter.<sup>7</sup> The maintained separation into transmitters and receivers therefore only mirrors 'the basic contradiction between the ruling class and the ruled class', between the consciousness industry and the controlled masses.<sup>8</sup>

According to Enzensberger, the division into producers and consumers is not inscribed into electronic media, but can be ascribed to the political, social and economic conditions of the capitalist system. In his argumentation, the Marxist phase model is clearly recognisable, according to which the continuously evolving forces of production (i.e. natural, technical, scientific, organisational and intellectual resources) are being trapped by the prevailing relations of production (i.e. relations of property, labour, distribution, circulation and consumption) and thus form a specific mode of production (e.g. bourgeois capitalism). So for Enzensberger it is obvious that electronic media are part of the economic-political structure, i.e. part of the material basis and not simply an outgrowth of the ideological superstructure:<sup>9</sup> 'With the development of the electronic media, the industry that shapes consciousness has become the pacemaker for the social and economic development of societies in the late industrial age'.<sup>10</sup> In order to free the emancipatory potential of the new productive forces from the dominant relations of production, a collective mode of production would be required that is oriented to the needs and interests of the masses. Given an often repeated, but usually insufficient critique of the emancipation hypotheses, it has to be said that Enzensberger is not simply talking about 'individual bricolage' (for instance in the basement hobby room of radio amateurs), but is underlining the importance of new organisational models:

Networklike communications models built on the principle of reversibility of circuits might give indications of how to overcome this situation: a mass newspaper, written and distributed by its readers, a video network of politically active groups.<sup>11</sup>

Key to his argumentation is not the mere proliferation of media technologies, but their activation through an autonomous use of media tools.

In his response, Jean Baudrillard shares Enzensberger's opinion that it is not enough to simply turn every receiver into a transmitter in order to break the power of ruling media structures. However, for Baudrillard the mere reversal of the communication process is also insufficient, because 'reversibility has nothing to do with reciprocity'.<sup>12</sup> According to Baudrillard,

the media structure itself prevents – regardless of the prevailing mode of production – any form of communication, because the apparatus transcends any ‘real exchange’ to the abstract level of the code. Transmitter and receiver can indeed change their position, but they thereby only reproduce the old pattern of communication, within which one can choose the code of the message and the other only has the choice to accept it or not. Hence, (electronic) media can not be (re-)appropriated for an emancipatory use. Instead Enzensberger calls for a replacement of the concept of (mass) media by one of radical immediacy:

The street is, in this sense, the alternative and subversive form of the mass media, since it isn’t, like the latter, an objectified support for answerless messages, a transmission system at a distance. It is the frayed space of the symbolic exchange of speech – ephemeral, mortal: a speech that is not reflected on the Platonic screen of the media.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, a true ‘revolution of signs’ can ultimately only occur outside of mass media, as Baudrillard attempts to show by the example of graffiti.<sup>14</sup> Only the direct ‘insurrection and eruption in the urban landscape as the site of the reproduction of the code’ allows a collective production that is able to prevent a separation between producers and consumers, between transmitters and receivers.<sup>15</sup>

According to Baudrillard, it is therefore no coincidence that the ‘media revolution’ has not taken place yet, because the possibility of such a revolution ‘presupposes an upheaval in the entire existing structure of the media.’<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, only singular ‘symbolic actions’ are possible, which may irritate the ruling system, but cannot overcome it. It is because of this quietism that Oliver Marchart sees in Baudrillard’s approach yet another version of the manipulation thesis, namely at the point ‘where criticism of ideology turns into subversive affirmation.’<sup>17</sup> This raises the question of political agency, which is not captured by a determinist definition of the media. Both the deep suspicion towards the manipulative power of the media (manipulation paradigm), as well as the wide-eyed hope of its emancipatory potential (emancipation paradigm) ultimately cleave to the idea that social change (positive or negative) can be directly derived from technological structures: ‘In both cases, however with reversed signs, the argumentation tends to “technicist” reductions.’<sup>18</sup> A way out of this quandary, according to Marchart, arises from a third paradigm of Marxist media theory: namely that of politics, which considers media as hegemonic apparatuses.

## Tactical Media – Second Disengagement

A non-deterministic theory of media tries to free itself from a manipulation paradigm beyond remedy, as well as from a too optimistic emancipation paradigm by emphasising the paradigm of politics. In this sense, it is no longer a question of whether the media by the nature of their construction are manipulative or emancipatory, but to what extent media can be understood as hegemonic apparatuses. Thus the media take on greater significance in this perspective: 'As hegemonic apparatuses of civil society they are both, terrain as well as means of self-assertion within a hegemonic struggle of position.'<sup>19</sup> What function they finally fulfil is never determined a priori, but arises from the 'trench warfare' over cultural hegemony. All the more, as media are transporting social knowledge (in terms of images, values, categories, classifications and lifestyles) and therefore contribute to the construction of hegemonic identity.<sup>20</sup> The concept of hegemony, coined by Antonio Gramsci, refers to a politically produced consensus that constitutes the common sense of a given historical period. Hegemony serves as a link between civil society (which rules through consent) and political society (which rules through force), leading to the well known formula: 'State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion.'<sup>21</sup> Control over the state's coercive apparatus (especially the police, the judiciary and the military) does not of itself guarantee the preservation of political power – rather, it requires the 'voluntary consent' of the subordinate population in order to consolidate power.

Hegemony therefore describes the ability of dominant groups or classes to establish their own interests so that they are ultimately considered as the general interest by subaltern groups and classes. Such a 'consent of the governed' implies either the explicit approval of existing social relations, ideas and practices or at least their passive acceptance. Nonetheless, this is not necessarily a harmonic balance of interests, but rather a 'condensation' of social struggles.<sup>22</sup> The resolution of these struggles takes place via social compromise, within which the relevant (i.e. articulated) interests are constantly renegotiated. Hence, the access to media technologies in order to articulate those interests takes on greater significance. Civil society becomes the preferred terrain on which hegemony arises, but it is also the place where counter-hegemonic concepts can evolve. It is in this regard that one can look on media as political instruments: 'The emancipatory (or the manipulative) therefore can be found in emancipatory (or manipulative) politics, not in the apparatus.'<sup>23</sup> This implies a shift in the question: what is of interest



Agitational propaganda train used to spread revolutionary ideas to far flung Russian countryside

is not the (optimistic or pessimistic) deduction of social practices from the technological structure, but rather the power relations within society.

An essential part of hegemonic power entails the ability to present the status quo as being without alternatives – whether people are content with it or simply give up hope, does not make a difference for the exercise of power.<sup>24</sup> The ruling hegemony materialises in state institutions and becomes the basis for legislative and executive decisions. Accordingly, the potential of emancipatory agency to challenge the discursive framework is as important as the ability to act on the institutional terrain itself. By implication, counter-hegemonic actions also cannot be represented by civil society as a whole because it is not located outside of the dominant state, but rather contributes (through media, associations, educational and cultural institutions, etc.) to its constitution and reproduction. Thus, alternative notions and ideas initially emerge in small sectors of civil society, not in its most powerful ones:

What matters is the criticism to which such an ideological complex is subjected by the first representatives of the new historical phase. This criticism makes possible a process of differentiation and change in the relative weight that the elements of the old ideologies used to possess. What was previously secondary and subordinate, or even incidental, is now taken to be primary – becomes the nucleus of a new ideological and theoretical complex. The old collective will dissolve into its contradictory elements since the subordinate ones develop socially, etc.<sup>25</sup>

The state and the general public remain significant areas of political struggle, but they are not necessarily at the centre of it. Counter-hegemonic agency is rather about a self-positioning in the wide field of hegemony.

Such an assertive self-positioning also was central to ‘tactical media’ – a new form of media criticism which, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, spread across Europe (and beyond). One of the ‘birthplaces’ of tactical media was the Amsterdam festival Next Five Minutes (N5M) where, in the early and mid-1990s, a new generation of internet activists encountered an older generation of radio and video activists leading to a shift of definition concerning media activism.<sup>26</sup> ‘The ABC of Tactical Media’, a quasi-manifesto written by David Garcia and Geert Lovink, states:

Tactical Media are what happens when the cheap >do it yourself< media, made possible by the revolution in consumer electronics and expanded forms of distribution (from public access cable to the internet) are exploited by groups and

individuals who feel aggrieved by or excluded from the wider culture. Tactical media do not just report events, as they are never impartial they always participate and it is this that more than anything separates them from mainstream media.<sup>27</sup>

This already points to the fact that in the struggle for hegemonic power a leading role was assigned to new media technologies in the 1990s. However, the idea of 'do it yourself' media is as old as 'community media' which emerged in the 1960s in order to represent social, cultural and ethnic minority interests. Particularly in the US, new legal requirements that obliged commercial cable TV-stations to reserve at least one channel for non-commercial programmes provided a technological and financial basis for independent broadcasting. And during the 1970s video technology developed apace, resulting in the so-called 'camcorder revolution' of the 1980s.<sup>28</sup>

In Europe, especially those places where a lively scene of 'pirate TV and radio stations' already existed (e.g. Amsterdam, Berlin, London, Bologna, Vienna but also Ljubljana and Riga), independent internet providers (such as the Digital City Amsterdam or the International City of Berlin) emerged with the introduction of the WWW in the mid-1990s. Because of these initiatives, as well as a further fall in the price of information and communication technologies (primarily the PC, but also cheaper net access), the internet was finally implemented as a mass medium. At that point, a new generation of media activists was born: 'They radicalised the ideas of community media by challenging everyone to produce their own media in support of their own political struggles.'<sup>29</sup> In this sense, one could speak of a second disengagement: while postmodern media theory of the 1980s (Baudrillard, Kittler, Bolz, etc.) turned away from a Marxist critique of ideology, the 1990s witnessed a rejection of this 'speculative media theory' in order to invent new emancipatory forms of counter-hegemonic agency.<sup>30</sup> This 'double disengagement' from a classical media theory which posits media as the tool of ideological programming therefore opened up a new theoretical perspective to the effect that it was no longer only about the reflection on media conditions, but rather about the co-creation of these conditions ('Media determine our situation' as Friedrich Kittler famously said). This is why Geert Lovink, one of the initiators of the N5M, writes in retrospect:

Jean Baudrillard's elaborations on simulation were useful in the 1980s when the media scape exploded. Approaching the millennium everything seemed simulated and Baudrillard's elaborations started to sound conservative and out of touch with the actual Internet reality.<sup>31</sup>





Radio Alice, free radio station broadcasting from Bologna in the late 1970s and closed by the carabinieri, 12 March 1977



In order to distinguish themselves from the academic critique of (mass) media, tactical media theorists considered their practices as 'digital micro-politics'.<sup>32</sup>

## Post-Media Strategies

Tactical media describe an ensemble of practices that are located at the intersection of art, theory, politics, culture, activism, technology and media. This pluralistic approach not only challenges the idea of specialisation but was indeed seen as a liberating process by tactical media activists in the 1990s: 'There was a feeling of relief that those involved in tactical media could be any kind of cultural hybrid. [...] Many felt liberated from having to present themselves to the public as a specialist in order to be experts.'<sup>33</sup> And as the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) note in their book on tactical media, it is precisely this 'aversion to boredom caused by redundant specialized activity' that urges people to challenge the existing order by creative means.<sup>34</sup> In this sense, tactical media are not limited solely to digital technology, but include all forms of old and new media in order to achieve counter-hegemonic goals. What is important in this context, is the collective appropriation of different media formats, in order to produce new forms of knowledge: '[R]ather than just doing critical reading and theorizing, [tactical media] practitioners go on to develop participatory events that demonstrate the critique through an experiential process.'<sup>35</sup> Tactical media therefore positions itself outside the traditional institutions (i.e. universities, academic research institutions, municipal museums, galleries, political foundations, cultural and media centres), not least because the generated knowledge should be used to challenge hierarchical structures and to open up new realms of possibilities beyond these institutions.<sup>36</sup>

The idea of a collective and non-institutionalised appropriation of media culture as well as the joint experimentation with new information and communication technologies has given rise to a (global) movement challenging dominant (media) structures:

For a brief time there was and continues to be a relief from capital's tyranny of specialization that forces us to perform as if we are a fixed set of relationships and characteristics, and to repress or strictly manage all other forms of desire and expression.<sup>37</sup>

In this context, CAE's concept of a 'liberating collective arrangement of enunciation' refers to the work of Félix Guattari who, in the 1980s, already nourished the hope that collective forms of articulation could replace the old passifying media structures. In accordance with a non-deterministic conception of media, he underlines the fact that the spur of change resides in social practices, not in the technological structure itself: 'Obviously, we cannot expect a miracle from these technologies: it will all depend, ultimately, on the capacity of groups of people to take hold of them, and apply them to appropriate ends.'<sup>38</sup> Linked to this statement is the question of whether and how self-organised networks can preserve their autonomy against mass media.<sup>39</sup> Acting contrarily to mass media, which tends to reproduce a consensual (i.e. normative) subjectivity, alternative media – according to Guattari – enable the creation of new modes of subjectivation: 'We are currently witnessing a mutation of subjectivity that perhaps surpasses the invention of writing, or the printing press, in importance.'<sup>40</sup> However, this new form of a 'computer-aided subjectivity' is not the simple result of technological change, but rather a manifestation of micro-politics that emerged in the wake of new media appropriation.<sup>41</sup>

Guattari considers the formation of these micro-politics as an immanent process of becoming, which itself should be experienced as a process of greater freedom. Similar to tactical media, Guattari's motivation is to escape the 'postmodern impasse.'<sup>42</sup> He is concerned with the possibility of an individual and collective (self-)positioning that can serve as a starting point for a new 'post-media era' in which 'the media will be reappropriated by a multitude of 'subject-groups.'<sup>43</sup> The proliferation of a media-based subjectivity therefore would not necessarily mean a further step towards the dissolution of the social (cf. Baudrillard), but could enable a recombination of social practices. Such a (re-)articulation of the social, which is opposed to postmodern quietism, refers to the fundamental openness of any 'social order' – even if this order is created by hegemonic strategies, it can never be completely constituted because of the continuing differences within the social.<sup>44</sup> This is why tactical media practices continue to play a crucial role, particularly since the 'strategic illusion vis-à-vis the media'<sup>45</sup> is just – according to Guattari – the most tangible symptom of a deeper crisis: 'The suggestive power of the theory of information has contributed to masking the importance of the enunciative dimensions of communication.'<sup>46</sup> Messages are not transmitted alone, rather their meaning depends on the interpretative framework of each recipient.

In addition to the physical structure of the media (i.e. its code), environmental, social and mental aspects now move to the centre of interest to master the current mass media crisis:<sup>47</sup> 'Across Guattari's three ecological registers, the environment, the social relation, and human subjectivity, technology plays an integral role in intensifying the crisis, but simultaneously the arena where new solutions must be found.'<sup>48</sup> In his essay on the 'legacies of tactical media' Eric Kluitenberg refers to the media ecological debate of the 1990s that came up through the engagement with Guattari's work. In this sense, the massive dissemination of digital networks and internet technologies opened up a new 'ecological' field, on which new forms of cooperation and exchange, production and distribution have emerged. Based on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'war machine', a systematic description of the media ecology was attempted:

The media ecology is a machine composed of several distinct levels: the levels of media and related tools and instruments; the level of tactics, in which individuals and media are integrated into formations; the level of strategy, in which the campaigns conducted by those formations acquire a unified political goal; and finally, the level of logistics, of procurement and supply networks, in which media practice is connected to the infrastructural and industrial resources that fuel it.<sup>49</sup>

And even though the tactical media of the 1990s were mainly characterised by their temporary nature, they did not act in a purely virtual space, but rather tried to implement opportunities, which were created by new media technologies, in real society. This meant, for instance, that the development of infrastructure (especially in the form of self-managed servers) was deemed important, in order to be able to support cultural, social and political initiatives.

This strategic direction distinguishes these early netpioneers from current (resistant) media practices. Today, digital media technologies have become more prevalent than ever before, and as a consequence, tactical media practices (like remixing, sharing and producing media content) have penetrated almost all aspects of everyday life: 'With the advent of commercial hosting companies for blogs or videos [...] it has become very simple to shoot, edit and distribute rich media to audiences large and small.'<sup>50</sup> However, most of the media infrastructure we are using is in the hands of a few companies, thus re-establishing the old model of mass media domination: 'At the same time, the commercial capture of the infrastructure is creating new bottlenecks where censorship and control of media can

and does function efficiently.’<sup>51</sup> In other words, the decentralisation of the means of production was accompanied by a centralisation of the relations of production. Due to this paradox, the interest in building up autonomous resources, networks and infrastructure has become more topical than ever. The point here is not so much to grow an alternative to conventional (mass) media, but rather to create one’s own media in order to rearticulate the hegemonic field. As Guattari telegraphed,

Refusing the status of the current media, combined with a search for new social interactivities, for an institutional creativity and an enrichment of values, would already constitute an important step on the way to a remaking of social practices.<sup>52</sup>

In order to be able to do so, a post-media strategy is required that considers media neither as external structure in terms of the manipulation or emancipation paradigm, nor as mere means in the struggle for political objectives, but as tools to shape our own everyday lives.

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## Footnotes

- 1 Joseph Vogl, ‘Becoming-Media. Galileo’s Telescope’, *Grey Room*, Fall 2007, no. 29, pp.14–25.
- 2 Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities...or the End of the Social*, New York, Semiotext(e), 1983, p.18
- 3 Ibid. p.44
- 4 One of the most prominent examples in this respect is Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s essay ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’ in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford University Press, 2002, which was published in the beginning of the 1940s. In it the two founders of the Frankfurt School identify (mass) media as part of the more broadly defined culture industries. In their view, culture industries are responsible for the industrial standardisation of the cultural field, therefore hindering the formation of autonomous individuals. Culture is reduced to advertising, i.e. the unquestioned acceptance of the existing situation: ‘It is not only the standardized mode of production of the culture industry which makes the individual illusory in its products. Individuals are tolerated only as far as their wholehearted identity with the universal is beyond question. [...] [O]nly because individuals are none but mere intersections of universal tendencies is it possible to reabsorb them smoothly into the universal’ (Horkheimer/Adorno 2002, p.124.). The reception of Adorno and Horkheimer’s work during the protests of 1968 had a great influence on the understanding of media technologies by leftist groups. In Germany particularly, the discussion was for a long time influenced by the idea that technology is the sole cause of instrumental domination, a fact that

- finally prevented any critical examination of these technologies; Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media', in *The New Media Reader*, Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (eds.), Cambridge/London, MIT Press, 2003, p.261-275.
- 5 Ibid. p.265
- 6 Ibid. p.262.
- 7 Bertolt Brecht, *The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication*, 1932, in Media.Art.Net, <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/source-text/8>
- 8 Ibid. p.262; The term 'consciousness industry' is basically in accord with the 'culture industry' (above).
- 9 The base-superstructure theorem is one of the essential concepts in Marxist theory, according to which the economic structure of a society (i.e. the totality of the relations of production which correspond to a certain development stage of the productive forces) provides the basis for the political, legal and ideological superstructure (i.e. the state and religious institutions, but also moral ideas). Thus, in 'The German Ideology – Ideology in General', (1844-46), Marx and Engels write about human consciousness: 'Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness no longer seem to be independent. They have no history or development. Rather, men who develop their material production and their material relationships alter their thinking and the products of their thinking along with their real existence. Consciousness does not determine life, but life determines consciousness. In the first view the starting point is consciousness taken as a living individual; in the second it is the real living individuals themselves as they exist in real life, and consciousness is considered only as their consciousness', in *Marx on Religion*, John Raines (ed.), Temple University Press, 2002, p.100. However, the relationship between base and superstructure, as Marx and Engels understood it, is not simply a causal relation, but a dialectical one.
- 10 Op. cit. p.261.
- 11 Ibid. p.267. As Noah Wardrip-Fruin notes in his brief introduction to Enzensberger's text, this passage resembles the concept of the 'rhizome' (cf. *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, University of Minnesota Press, 1987) with which Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari present an alternative model of knowledge production and representation of the world. The rhizome is based on the 'principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be', *ibid.*, p. 51. In the wake of the 'counter-globalisation movement' of the 1990s the rhizome then became a metaphor for the netlike information and organisation structure of the protests that made use of new media technologies: 'In this case, new media have been used both to support the alternative organization of a social movement (more a network than a hierarchy) and to provide a different model of media consumption', Wardrip-Fruin, in *ibid.*, p.260.
- 12 Jean Baudrillard, 'Requiem for the Media', *The New Media Reader*, *ibid.*, p.286.
- 13 Ibid. p.283.
- 14 Jean Baudrillard, 'KOOL KILLER ou l'insurrection par les signes', *Interférences* (No. 3), Fall 1975.
- 15 Ibid., p.80. In his essay 'Immediatism' Hakim Bey, whose concept of the 'Temporary Autonomous Zone' had a great impact on the youth and protest culture of the 1990s, claims something similar when he emphasises the importance of new forms of

- playful immediacy: 'Immediatism is not a movement in the sense of an aesthetic program. It depends on situation, not style or content, message or School. It may take the form of any kind of creative play which can be performed by two or more people, by and for themselves, face-to-face and together. In this sense it is like a game, and therefore certain rules may apply', Hakim Bey, T.A.Z. *The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, Autonomedia, 1991, p.10. Which kind of 'rules' these are, however, is not more fully explained.
- 16 Baudrillard, 'Requiem for the Media', op. cit., p.281.
  - 17 The author translated this and the following quotes by Oliver Marchart. Oliver Marchart, 'Marx und Medien – Eine Einführung' *Schröter*, Jens/Schwering, Gregor/Stäheli, Urs (ed.): *Media Marx. Ein Handbuch*, Bielefeld (transcript), 2006, pp.45–58.
  - 18 Ibid. p.52.
  - 19 Ibid., p.53.
  - 20 Stuart Hall, "'The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies', in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture – A Reader*, John Storey, (ed.), Essex: Pearson, p.124–155.
  - 21 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, New York: International Publishers, 1992, p.263.
  - 22 Cf. Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, London/New York: Verso, 2000.
  - 23 Marchart, op. cit., p.55.
  - 24 One may be reminded of Margaret Thatcher's famous statement 'There is no alternative' which underlined her belief that economic liberalism, free trade and a neoliberal globalisation are the best ways for modern societies to develop. In 1992 political scientist Francis Fukuyama published his book 'The End of History and the last Man' (Fukuyama 1992) in which he argued that free market capitalism – after the collapse of Real Socialism – is without any alternative.
  - 25 Gramsci, op. cit., p.195.
  - 26 The conference series Next Five Minutes (N5M), which focused on issues related to art, activism and new media technologies, took place four times in total: The first edition, held in January 1993, was still under the influence of the events that followed the collapse of Real Socialism in Central and East European countries. In March 1996, the second N5M dealt with the onset of the early internet boom. Just before the Kosovo conflict, in March 1999, the third N5M addressed the issues of modern media wars, as they had become apparent during the First Iraq War in 1991. The last edition of N5M, held in September 2003, examined the effects of 9/11 on social movements. Despite the far-reaching influence of N5M, the festival never had regularly scheduled meetings or an institutionalised structure. Cf. Geert Lovink, *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture*, New York/London: Routledge, 2008, p.187.
  - 27 David Garcia and Geert Lovink, 'The ABC of Tactical Media', nettime mailinglist, 1997.; <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9705/msg00096.html>. The term 'tactical media' refers directly to the analytical distinction made by Michel de Certeau, 'I call a 'strategy' the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment.' A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, 'clienteles', 'targets', or 'objects' of research). Political, economic, and scientific

- rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. I call a 'tactic', on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances.' See, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p.xix.
- 28 Felix Stalder, '30 Years of Tactical Media', in *Public Netbase: Non Stop Future. New Practices in Art and Media*, kuda.org (ed.), Frankfurt a. M.: Revolver, 2008, p.190-194.
- 29 Ibid., p.192.
- 30 Geert Lovink, *Dark Fiber. Tracking Critical Internet Culture*, Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 2002, p.23.
- 31 Ibid., p.266.
- 32 Ibid., p.255. According to Foucault, the 'microphysics of power' is relational, a power circulating between bodies, entities and institutions that cannot be fixed in terms of a specific system of rules. Hence, also the state is ultimately a manifestation of these power practices and contingent forces. Not only coercion and violence constitute the respective balance of power, but equally freedom, self-determination and consensual forms of action. Similar to Gramsci, Foucault states: 'I don't claim at all that the State apparatus is unimportant, but it seems to me that [...] power isn't localised in the State apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed.' See, Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interview and Other Writings 1972-1977*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, p.60.
- 33 Critical Art Ensemble, *Digital Resistance: Explorations in Tactical Media*, Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2001, p.5.
- 34 Ibid., p.6.
- 35 Ibid., p.8.
- 36 Lovink, *Dark Fibre*, op. cit., p.254.
- 37 Critical Art Ensemble, op. cit., p.6.
- 38 Félix Guattari, 'Remaking Social Practices', in *The Guattari Reader*, Gary Genosko (ed.), Oxford/Cambridge: Blackwell, p.262-272.
- 39 In particular, the autonomous radio stations of the 1970s and 1980s represent for Guattari an example of how 'collective assemblages of enunciation' can be produced and preserved. For instance, Radio Alice (1976-77), a collectively operated radio station in Bologna, adopted a two-fold strategy: on the one hand, the programme was created by as many groups and individuals as possible, on the other hand, these groups and individuals were not allowed to speak on the behalf of other groups or individuals – at the same time a universalisation of access and a singularisation of expression. Cf. Radio Alice, *Collective A/travers* (1977), Brooklyn: Pétroleuse Press.
- 40 Ibid., p.268.
- 41 Félix Guattari, 'The Three Ecologies', in *new formations* (No. 8), Summer 1989, p.133.
- 42 Félix Guattari, 'The Postmodern Impasse', in: Genosko, op. cit., pp.109-113.
- 43 Guattari, 'The Three Ecologies', op. cit., p.144.

- 44 Such a conception of the social considers social entities as generally open and indeterminate: None of them has absolute validity in the sense of establishing a social space or a structural moment which, in turn, could not again be undermined. Because 'in a closed system of relational identities, in which the meaning of each moment is absolutely fixed, there is no place whatsoever for a hegemonic practice.' See, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London/New York: Verso, p.134. It is crucial in this context that any kind of hegemonic power is ultimately constructed in a pragmatic way – power therefore is never essential, but relational.
- 45 Baudrillard, *Requiem for the Media*, op. cit., p.284.
- 46 Guattari, 'Remaking Social Practices', op. cit., p.266.
- 47 Recently this crisis became visible in the European protests against the 'Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement' (ACTA), a multinational treaty for the purpose of establishing international standards for intellectual property rights enforcement. For a big part of the so called 'internet-generation' this treaty was perceived as a direct attack on their way of life but also as a symptom of the corruptness of 'the' system as a whole. After decades of (more or less academic) debates about the status of intellectual property rights in the age of digital media, these protests finally brought tens of thousands of (mainly young) people onto the streets and marked a crucial point in the politicisation of this generation.
- 48 Eric Kluitenberg, 'Legacies of Tactical Media: The Tactics of Occupation: From Tompkins Square to Tahrir, Amsterdam' (Network Notebooks), 2011, p.21.  
[http://networkcultures.org/\\_uploads/NN5\\_EricKluitenberg.pdf](http://networkcultures.org/_uploads/NN5_EricKluitenberg.pdf)
- 49 Andreas Broeckmann, 'Tactical Media/Media Ecology', in N5M, 1995,  
<http://www.n5m.org/n5m2/media/texts/abroeck.html>
- 50 Felix Stalder, op. cit., p.193.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Guattari, 'Remaking Social Practices', op. cit., p.272.