Extending the Dialogue on the Technosphere

“The other project was, a scheme for entirely abolishing all words whatsoever”
— Jonathan Swift, Gulliver’s Travels

It is with warmth, appreciation, and exuberance that continent. presents a new issue which extends the dialogue on the technosphere. “The Technosphere” is Peter Haff’s term for the planetary-scale networks of transport, information, energy, and media operating at a scale that we can now compare with geologic and climatic forces. It is a term, aligning with discourses about the Anthropocene, that helps characterise and describe an earth enwrapped and forever reworked by the human modulations and amplifications of matter and energy.

We have made here a publication that contends with the constellations of technical objects that bind and populate, frustrate and articulate our lives and desires. It is not just a publication on these matters, “on” being an English language preposition that gives ambiguous expression and poise to both the content, construction and foundations of this endeavour. It is an issue not just composed of words and pictures.

This, our current issue, comprises a set of technical media objects of boundary and translation: 1) an online uniform resource locator (URL) that has led you to this web page, 2) the single channel video shown here and its accompanying index, 3) a projected version of this video installed at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) in Berlin for the 1948 Unbound event, 4) a “Document Studio” for this same event realised in the Haus to capture and trace representations and contracts, texts and images, published references, and printed matter emerging from discussions and presentations. Welcome, dear reader, to our little corner of the technosphere.
continent. (a.k.a., “The Harry Tuttle of Online Publishing”) thinks of itself as a vehicle for research and scholarship by other means. As such we try with each issue to detourne and modulate the assumptions of the ‘back’ and ‘front’ stages of publishing. We also seek to render palpable the hands, eyes, minds and care that go into these endeavours.

During the Anthropocene Curriculum, Campus April 2016: The Technosphere Issue at HKW, we were fortunate and favoured to have recorded paired encounters, discussions and interviews with some of the accomplished participants. The audio recordings we made there are vibrant and full of the life of thought, they are charged by the collective and individual experiences of an intensive ten-day seminar and workshop series that comprised the event.

The single channel video-as-issue is based on these materials, echoing the different voices that were captured and transcribed. At the same time, it is an attempt to abstract from the situated relationality of these conversations, that is consciously kept and hopefully saved in the raw format of the transcripts we have provided for download below, dear reader.

In Gulliver’s Travels Jonathan Swift describes a project at the Academy of Lagado, where scholars carry around bags full of things to show each other, in order to have conversations together. It is “a scheme for entirely abolishing all words whatsoever”, a language that speaks with, through and by things. Within our practice of publishing-as public-making and the sharing of knowledge, rather than abolishing words, “extending the dialogue” has required us to open our eyes and ears not only to the Other but also to other forms of being, other forms of language, to the a/verbal, im/material utterances of the things and existences that the technosphere spills out and provides. We find this extension necessary given the itinerary of technospheric endeavours at HKW, such as the 1948 Unbound event happening in December 2017, and upcoming foci on lifeforms.

We meditate here on the technology of language and the use of language technologies, in the production, mediation and publication
of culture(s). From the nascence of information theory (1948), approaches to language have become increasingly analysed, tokenized, fragmented, resampled, cut-up, and (mis) interpreted. Words are irreversibly erased and omitted, predicted and interpolated—as is done when transcribing the spoken voice to the typed page. In trying to capture the essence of a conversation do we not sometimes miss what has been said, let alone what must remain unsaid? What role is played by the pauses in the ceaseless transmissions that mark our contemporary situation? Can we listen to these anew? And what relationships hold in the process of lo(o)sing words, as a poietic strategy of interposition?

Gratitude is extended, as well, to our discussion partners: Peter Galison, Claire Pentecost and John Tresch, Heather Davis and Gregory T. Cushman, Pinar Yoldas and Jonathan Cohrs, Yuk Hui and Sasha Engelmann, Brian Holmes and Daniel Niles, Keith Breckenridge and Regine Debatty, Jürgen Renn and Manfred Laubichler, Jacob Gaboury and Sascha Pohflepp, Bernd Scherer and Katrin Klingan.

Thanks also the people of Vorbrenner.org—especially Magdalena Dreschke and Carmen Sulzenbacher—for inviting us to a residency at Freies Theater Innsbruck, where we we able to realize our performative transcription workshop and capture the materials for the video.

We are indebted to the Technosphere Project Team at Haus der Kulturen der Welt: Katrin Klingan, Johanna Schindler, Christoph Rosol and Nick Houde for inviting, inspiring and hosting us again and again over the past three years.

And thank you, dear reader, for your kind attentions.
A
acceleration Claire Pentecost/John Tresch, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Africa Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Peter Galison, Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
algorithm Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
analogy Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
alien, alienation Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
animist, animism Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
appropriation Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
archaic Claire Pentecost/John Tresch

B
biblical Peter Galison
biology Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Peter Galison, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
body Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch, Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles
brain Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp

C
camera Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles
capitalism Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
casino Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles
category Peter Galison, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
change Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Peter Galison, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
Chicago Claire Pentecost/John Tresch, Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles
cigar Peter Galison
cloud Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
collective Claire Pentecost/John Tresch, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
colonialism, post-colonialism Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
commercial, commercialization Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
complex, complexity Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
concreteness Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan
containment Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Peter Galison
continuum Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan
contradiction Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
control Claire Pentecost/John Tresch, Peter Galison, Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty
conversation Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp

D
dance Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann
Deathstar Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
deconstruction, deconstructivism Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan
definition, define, defining Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn
disappearance Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
disconnection Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
dispossession Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
discussion Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Peter Galison, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch

continentcontinent.cc
M
machine Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Keith
Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Bernd Scherer/
Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp,
Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
Macy Conferences (→ 1948) Jacob Gaboury/
Sascha Pohflepp
maintenance Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
master, mastery Keith Breckenridge/Regine
Debatty, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
metabolism Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Jacob
Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory
T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
metaphor Peter Galison, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha
Pohflepp
metaphysical Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Heather
Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
microscope Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
military Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Jacob
Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Claire Pentecost/John
Tresch
monocompass (→ Google) Claire Pentecost/John
Tresch
more than one Claire Pentecost/John Tresch

N
nature Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Yuk Hui/Sasha
Engelmann, Peter Galison, Manfred Laubichler/
Jürgen Renn, Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty,
Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/
Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory T.
Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
neoliberal, neoliberalism Claire Pentecost/John
Tresch, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Bernd Scherer/
Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
network Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather
Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Brian Holmes/Daniel
Niles, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Manfred
Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Bernd Scherer/Katrin
Klingan
nightmare Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Claire
Pentecost/John Tresch
1948 Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Noosphere Claire Pentecost/John Tresch

O
object Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Yuk Hui/Sasha
Engelmann, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Manfred
Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Bernd Scherer/Katrin
Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp,
Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire
Pentecost/John Tresch
Omega point Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
outside Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Brian Holmes/
Daniel Niles, Peter Galison, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha
Pohflepp

P
paper Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Jacob Gaboury/
Sascha Pohflepp
pedestrians Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty
plastic Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Jacob
Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
player Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan
plutonium Peter Galison, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha
Pohflepp
poesie Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan
police Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Yuk Hui/Sasha
Engelmann, Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty
political, politics Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Peter
Galison, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Keith
Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Bernd Scherer/
Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp,
Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire
Pentecost/John Tresch
pop rocks Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
privacy Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Jacob
Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
products Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Claire
Pentecost/John Tresch, Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles,
Peter Galison
psychosis Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann

Q
quantum mechanics Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen
Renn

R
rabbit holing Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty
radical Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Claire
Pentecost/John Tresch
Rapa Nui Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
reality Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Yuk Hui/Sasha
Engelmann, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn,
Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/
Gregory T. Cushman
relation, relationship Heather Davis/Gregory
T. Cushman, Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Yuk
Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Peter Galison, Keith
Breckenridge/Regine Debatty, Bernd Scherer/
Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp,
Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire
Pentecost/John Tresch
rooms Claire Pentecost/John Tresch

continentcontinent.cc
rules Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman

S
scale Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Peter Galison, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
scenario (→ future) Peter Galison, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
sensitivity Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
science fiction, Sci-Fi Peter Galison, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
silence Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Keith Breckenridge/Regine DeBatty, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
social Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Peter Galison, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Keith Breckenridge/Regine DeBatty, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
socialist, socialism Keith Breckenridge/Regine DeBatty, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Peter Galison, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
soil Peter Galison, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
species Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
 speculative, speculation Peter Galison, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
start Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan
subject, subjectivity Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
sublime Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
surveillance Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Peter Galison, Keith Breckenridge/Regine DeBatty
synchronization Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann
system Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Peter Galison, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Keith Breckenridge/Regine DeBatty, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch

T
techné (τέχνη) Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
teleological thrust Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
tension Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
thing (→ object) Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Peter Galison, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Keith Breckenridge/Regine DeBatty, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
Tinder (→ Eugenics) Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
tool Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Keith Breckenridge/Regine DeBatty, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
trap Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs

U
Uber Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
uncertainty Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
unfold Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Bentecost/John Tresch
urgency Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
utopia Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch

W
weapon, weaponized Peter Galison, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
weird Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp (moment), Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs
wilderness Peter Galison
words Bernd Scherer/Katrin Klingan, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Claire Pentecost/John Tresch

Y
years Pinar Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Peter Galison, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman, Manfred Laubichler/Jürgen Renn, Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Keith Breckenridge/Regine DeBatty,
INDEX OF PROPER NAMES

Bergson, Henri Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
Bostrom, Nick Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Bush, George W. Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Bratton, Benjamin H. Jacob Gaboury/
Sascha Pohflepp
Chung, Wendy Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Descola, Philippe Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann
Easterling, Keller Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Fischer, Eugen Keith Breckenridge/Regine Debatty
Haff, Peter Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann, Pinar
Yoldas/Jonathan Cohrs, Jacob Gaboury/Sascha
Pohflepp, Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman,
Claire Pentecost/John Tresch,
Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles
Halpern, Orit Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Hansen, Mark Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Kant, Immanuel Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann
Kircher, Athanasius Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Knorr Cetina, Karin Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles,
Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
Latour, Bruno Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman,
Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann
Licklider, J. C. R. Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Marx, Karl Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles,
Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
McCarthy, Cormac Manfred Laubichler/
Jürgen Renn
McKenzie, Donald Keith Breckenridge/Regine
Debatty, Brian Holmes/Daniel Niles
McLuhan, Marshall Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
Morone, Jennifer Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Nixon, Rob Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
Poe, Edgar Allen Claire Pentecost/John Tresch
Sloterdijk, Peter Yuk Hui/Sasha Engelmann,
Jacob Gaboury/Sascha Pohflepp
Swift, Jonathan Letter from the Editors
Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre Claire Pentecost/
John Tresch
Todd, Zoe Heather Davis/Gregory T. Cushman
Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo Heather Davis/
Gregory T. Cushman
Whitehead, Alfred North Yuk Hui/
Sasha Engelmann