Hesselberth, P. (2022). Withdrawal and disconnection in times of quarantine. I K.O. Eliassen, A. Ogundipe & Ø. Prytz (red.), *Estetiske praksiser i den digitale produksjonens tidsalder* (s. 553–576). Fagbokforlaget. DOI: https://doi.org/10.55669/oa140516

Withdrawal and disconnection in times of quarantine

Pepita Hesselberth

«This has been the decade of disconnection,» ran one headline from *The Times* on December 30, 2019.[1] Examples range from digital detoxes to Quit Facebook Day, from Brexit to France's Gilets Jaunes, from Elon Musk's envisioned exit to Mars to the upsurge in yoga and wellness retreats. In a culture obsessed with social networking, participation, and connectivity, the possibility that one might «opt out,» «exit,» «unplug,» «disconnect,» or «withdraw» came to be a burgeoning preoccupation in the 2010s and showed no signs of abating. But the era of disconnection came to a screeching halt in March 2020, when SARS-CoV-2, commonly known simply as «the coronavirus,» started to ravage the globe, and governments worldwide, in an attempt to contain the virus or at least «flatten the curve,» began to impose various forms of quarantine and lockdown measures.

This situation, in many ways, runs contrary to the phenomena I have addressed in my project *Disconnectivity in the Digital Age*, which started in 2016 and is now slowly drawing to a close. The aim there

1 Foges 2019.

was to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the cultural and socio-political implications of voluntary disconnectivity, understood as the psychic, socioeconomic, and/or political *withdrawal* from mainstream forms of connectivity. The project began by reflecting on the public and scholarly debates on strategies of media avoidance, media refusal, and media disruption. Then it studied other forms of disconnection and withdrawal, whether actually practiced or simply longed for, such as the «digital detox» and its historical precedents,[2] the present surge in off-the-grid living initiatives,[3] the leaving academia debate,[4] the idea of therapeutic disconnection and the notion of «retreat,»[5] and the politics of withdrawal more generally.[6] While these phenomena vary greatly, they converge in that they all signal a widely shared contemporary gesture of withdrawal – a desire to take some distance from the frenetic present, to divest oneself from the status quo (again: whether this desire is acted upon or not). The logic of quarantine and lockdown, invested in keeping the rhythms of late capitalism beating (albeit at a later stage), seems diametrically opposed to such a gesture of withdrawal.[7] Yet, as I hope to show, the logic of quarantine and lockdown has reinvigorated the paradox of dis/connectivity in curious ways. Let me note a few observations.

At the time of writing, winter 2021–22, we are nearly a year into the pandemic. In much of the world public gatherings remain prohibited, social (read: physical) distancing and remote work have become the «new normal,» and education largely takes place from home. Even more severe lockdowns loom, potentially, in part due to the arrival of more

2 Hesselberth 2018; Hesselberth 2021a.
3 Hesselberth 2019.
4 Hesselberth 2020.
5 Hesselberth 2021b.
6 Hesselberth & de Bloois 2020b; Hesselberth & de Bloois (red.) 2020a.
7 Hesselberth & de Bloois 2020b: 10. Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, expectedly, has criticized the lockdowns and closures as a form of techno-medical despotism representative of «the new regime of biosecurity» for precisely this reason. See Agamben 2020, 2021.

contagious and possibly deadlier coronavirus variants. While the lockdowns have urged (if not forced) entire (parts of) populations to retreat, disconnect, and withdraw from the public sphere (most often into their homes), at the same time, and ironically, these measures have also prohibited people from accessing their usual outlets of retreat, disconnection, and withdrawal[8] – the gym, the streets, the wellness retreat. Overcrowded natural resorts and construction markets, a rediscovery of local tourism, and pandemic booms in inline skating and rollerblading number amongst the consequences of the contemporary situation.[9]

By the first few months of the pandemic, the vast majority of the cultural sphere in the global West had moved *online*, evident in a new normal of Zoom birthday parties, Skype get-togethers, FaceTime happy hours, and Whereby sharing circles. Forced to temporarily suspend in-person social gatherings, or so it seems, people began reinventing social life using digital tools. «The Coronavirus Ended the Screen-Time Debate. Screens Won,» ran a *New York Times* headline on March 31, 2020.[10] Indeed, many of us have been keen to throw off the shackles of screen-time guilt (if only for the duration of the pandemic shutdown) so that we can stay in touch with friends and family, maintain some sense of a social life, or simply to stay fit and/or employed. But the digital surge has also supercharged existing trends towards more online shopping, more remote (e-)learning, and even more flexible working conditions. It comes as no surprise, then, that the lockdowns have revived, if not intensified, the discussion on the «right to disconnect» – the controversial law, and according to Wikipedia, proposed human right that was the original point of departure for my project in 2016.[11]

---

8 For a more specific commentary on the relation between free time and the fantasy of disconnection and withdrawal, see Hesselberth 2021b.

9 See for example ABC New 2020; Segura 2020; (or out of your window).

10 Bowles 2020.

11 This for example becomes clear from a recent campaign launched by the European trade union federation, UNI Europa, advocating the right to disconnect. See UNI Europa 2020.

The overall mindset of both the quarantine and the digital surge, however, has seemingly from the outset been one that seeks to maintain business as usual and uphold «normalcy» as much as possible, albeit in real time (as opposed to in real life). Yet one cannot help but observe how the initial lockdowns were readily hailed, perhaps most notably by those working in academia, as a welcome interruption, a much-needed break from the congested (work)flow of everyday life under the conditions of neoliberalism: the ever-present attention economy, the packed hours, the endless social obligations, the commutes and frequent flying, the infinite admin, the always-on culture, the overall consumerism and, more generally, the lack of human scale in all of the above. As Bruno Latour has pointedly remarked, there is an «unforeseen coincidence between a general confinement and a period of Lent»: doing nothing and having nowhere to go *can* be a great opportunity to turn inwards and reflect on what is good and what is not (albeit only for a happy few).[12]

In public discourse, the pandemic triggered similarly contradictory responses. On the far left, the event was soon cast as a testament to a world – an ecology and a social-economic system – already damaged and corrupted (the environment, the inequality, the state, the media!) as well as an «opportunity to push back.»[13] There are «lessons to be learned» Kathrine N. Hayles, for example, wrote in April 2020: «Notwithstanding its devastating effects, the pandemic invites us to think new thoughts, try out novel ideas, and suggest formulations that can lead to better futures for us and for the more-than-human organisms with which we share the planet.»[14] Meanwhile, commentaries on the far

12 Latour 2020: 25. Indeed, doing nothing and having nowhere to go *can* be a great opportunity to turn inwards and reflect on what is good and what not, albeit only for a happy few. For, as many have pointed out before me, self-isolation, social distancing and quarantine are a privilege not everyone can afford. See D'Eramo 2020; Bonhomme 2020; Mbembe 2020.

13 The quote Klein's 2020 but the examples are numerous and include essays by Žižek 2020, Berardi 2020; with Petrossiants 2020, Butler 2020, and many others.

14 Hayles 2020: 72.

right reveal a different kind of dis/connect. As soon as the pandemic struck the world, speculations and online falsehoods about what *really* was going on (with China, 5G wireless technology, the economy, the virus, masks, state control, et cetera) went viral; conspiracy theories still abound. In addition, the sterner lockdowns of late 2020 and early 2021 in Europe and elsewhere prompted demonstrations, even violent protests across the global West that are fueled as much by ideological fury as by fears of economic destitution.

In this article, I will reflect on the paradox of dis/connectivity during COVID-19 by looking – paradoxically perhaps – at some of the new *online* platforms and gestures of social, political, and cultural withdrawal and disconnection emerging out of the present situation. In particular, I will look into, first, the phenomenon of COVID boredom and the rise of the quarantine meme; second, the «online super-spreader» and the hashtag #ikdoenietmeermee (#I-no-longer-participate); and finally, Zoom aesthetics and the present surge of online (meditation) retreats. In «Discourses on Disconnectivity,»[15] I stake a claim for the importance of considering the discourses on dis/connectivity as a structuring paradox through which the limits of our current «culture of connectivity» are forcefully negotiated. The article is not intended to be theoretical; it aims, above all, to speculate on what remains of the paradox of dis/connectivity in the time of COVID-19, when people find themselves increasingly disconnected from the flow of everyday life and yet are coerced to connect through online media in unprecedented ways.[16]

---

15 The term «paradox of dis/connectivity» is derived from Hesselberth 2017, and has been a common thread.

16 For a literary overview on the «discourses on disconnectivity» bridging various strands within the fields of media studies, sociology, and continental philosophy see Hesselberth 2017. Since its publication, a number of groundbreaking publications have come out on the topic bridging yet more fields, including (but certainly not limited to) Tero Karppi's *Disconnect: Facebook's Affective Bonds* (2018); Trine Syvertsen's *Digital Detox: The Politics of Disconnection* (2020); Urs Stäheli's *Sociologie der Entnetzung* (2021) and the volume *Disentangled: Geographies of Disconnection* edited by Janson and Adams (2021). It falls beyond the scope of this article to do these publications justice here.

COVID boredom and the rise and fall of the «days of quarantine» meme

Of all the memes that started to trickle in on my phone a few days into the first Dutch lockdown, the short videos counting the «days of quarantine» are, to me, amongst the most interesting.

> *1e dia de quarentena [first day of quarantine]*
> A medium long shot from below of an interior space, a living room perhaps, facing a sliding door that gives access to an adjacent busy kitchen. Entry from the bottom right of the screen: a grown man wearing a swimsuit crawling on his belly on a skateboard; pause. Re-entry from the left: now dressed as a cyclist, he rides a tricycle; pause. Re-entry from the right: he sprints in running gear.[17]
>
> *Segundo Dia Casa [second day at home]*
> A tall, long-haired man wearing tight pants, a white turtleneck, sunglasses, and a set of headphones bends over a gas stove spinning the burners, turning the knobs, and flashing the hood light to the sound of a pulsing beat.[18]
>
> *Dia 3 [day 3]*
> A sock-gloved hand that looks like something halfway between a snake and a Pac-Man figure looms in front of an urban window, seizing cars that pass by, making arcade sounds with every catch.[19]
>
> *Dia 4 [day 4]*
> A man sits on a couch reading a magazine when the voice of a youngster pierces the room: «Papa, Papa.» He quickly grabs a piece of

17 Unable to retrieve.
18 Romero 2020.
19 Eastcoast78 2020.

cardboard and flips it in front of him. Thus blended perfectly with the couch, the man appears absent. A girl enters: She sighs «Oh no…», and off she goes again.[20]

Day 5 of Quarantine.
A close-up of a chubby tattooed guy wearing nothing but a yellow hat and covered partially by a towel. He rhythmically swings a coin in front of the camera lens, then steps back, mouths a cigarette and drops the towel, swinging his junk in sync with the pendulum that comically preserves his modesty.[21]

Nach 2 Wochen Quarantäne im Zimmertal [after two weeks of quarantine in Zimmertal]
A young man in a dressing gown on a veranda dully stirs a spoon in his breakfast cup. The birds sing. From his cup: the sound of a cowbell, then, to his dull surprise, from his mouth: the bellowing of a cow.[22]

What these memes, however different, share is their implicit linkage of self-isolation to boredom. «During the pandemic,» Julian Jason Haladyn writes in *The Conversation*,[23] «'boredom' has become a code word for any experience in which people feel disconnected, when life appears meaningless or uninteresting.» Indeed, many of us will be familiar with the experience of time abruptly slowing down during the initial phase of the first lockdown – an experience that, one French study shows, cannot be explained by the levels of perceived stress and anxiety attributable to the virus outbreak. Rather, this sort of condition seems to have been triggered above all by a felt increase of free-time

20 Unable to retrieve. (This is the original video. The video in fact pre-dates the Covid-19 outbreak but started to go viral with changing headers counting days of quarantine when the lockdowns went into effect.)
21 Unable to retrieve.
22 Vol.at 2020.
23 Haladyn 2021.

boredom, experienced as a mind-numbing state of suspension[24] but also a prompt for varied forms of creativity, humor, and playfulness. Indeed, both online and offline, people report feeling increasingly stuck in a *Groundhog Day* haze: having too much time on our hands, lacking meaningful activities to engage in, every day of lockdown feeling the same, and we look for ways to break the spell. The future uncertain, life itself seems to have been put on hold. To cope with the heightened state of distraction that comes with the pandemic, searching for some remedy, we tend to engage in work, Irina Dumitrescu and Caleb Smith observe in «Demons of Distraction,»[25] that we know was once fundamental: «Cloistered away like so many monks, we seek solace in regularity [scheduled activities], rituals of community [Zoom socials], and working with our hands [we bake bread, we craft, we garden].»[26] The challenge, still, is our own restlessness – the monk's *acedia*: «a feeling of being unhappy in one's place that could spiral into downright depression.» Unfortunately, Fernandez and Matt[27] argue, today's culture and technologies have left us ill-equipped to deal with the situation.

Indeed, if boredom marks «a crisis of agency»[28] and «signals deficits in attention and meaning,»[29] then COVID boredom manifests these features in unprecedented ways. Frustrated by our inability to pay attention, we *want* to engage but have lost interest in what we can engage in, James Golby argues. Bored by our own boredom, he claims, we have now «emerged, apathetically, into post-boredom.»[30] Haladyn makes a similar claim:

24 Droit-Volet mfl. 2020.
25 Dumitrescu & Smith 2020.
26 The examples added in footnotes are mine, but also recur throughout the text.
27 Fernandez & Matt 2019; 2020.
28 Danckert & Eastwood 2020: 48.
29 Westgate 2019.
30 Golby 2020.

> To solve the problem of our boredom we add layers to the things we are already doing. If bingeing a TV program feels pointless, we start bingeing several programs simultaneously. We engage in more – more watching, more buying, more rethinking our lives – to hyper-stimulate ourselves. But the ironic effect of these added activities seems to be more boredom.[31]

Where Haladyn links COVID boredom to clinical depression, for me the diagnosis «bored-out»[32] seems apt: a mental state of stress and suffering caused by a lack of intellectual and creative stimuli and satisfaction, which in turn prompts subjects to overcompensate by (playing at) being busy.[33]

Back in March 2020, however, everyone was still trying to combat COVID boredom with productive self-improvement activities in lockdown, resulting in entire genres of memes being spawned. The «days of quarantine» memes stand out here in their conspicuous and playful *flaunting* of the boredom on display. The activities engaged in are in utter jest: skits and silly reenactments (day 1, day 2), pointless pastimes (day 3, day 5), and performances of weary withdrawal (day 4 and after 2 weeks). The memes are emblematic of the paradox of dis/connectivity in more than one sense. After all, the activities shown are anything but pointless and disconnected (here in the sense of being stuck, cut off from the world). Clearly staged to be circulated online, the conspicuous flaunting of boredom and disconnection must be understood within our current «culture of connectivity.»[34] It is here that the memes signal another form of disconnection, understood as withdrawal or world-weariness. For, as Dumitrescu and Smith point out, since human attention has become a resource that can

31 Haladyn 2021.
32 Werder & Rothlin 2008.
33 To this I would add: it takes a «burnout society,» as theorized by Han 2015, to land in a collective state of *bore-out*.
34 Dijck 2013.

be economically exploited (e.g., in the form of the «free labor»[35] we provide to media overlords such as Google and Facebook by «clicking» and «liking» – which turns our work into data, and thus surplus value), it has become increasingly more attractive to engage in work that is markedly unproductive, indeed pointless. Within this context, the actions displayed in the «days of quarantine» memes find «another use as a steadying anchor.» Its work, so to speak, «serves as a therapeutics of attention»[36] while still being part and parcel of the attention economy. Lastly, the «days of quarantine» memes can be seen to dis/connect in another way, as they beget and fortify a sense of solidarity and togetherness, of being bored *together*. Here the «days of quarantine» memes can be likened to the pandemic dance boom. The boom started when a series of memes from quarantined Italians singing and dancing on their balconies during lockdown started to go viral. Next came the video of the dancers of the Opera National de Paris, who performed to Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* from their homes. The pandemic dance boom peaked with the *Jerusalemma* dance challenge and its many spin-offs (perhaps *the* best symbol of worldwide dis/connection during the first months of the pandemic). These memes, like the «days of quarantine» memes, convey and speak to a sense of solidarity and unity much longed for around that time – a sense of (still) being connected in being disconnected.

Online super-spreaders: conspiracy theories, anti-lockdown protests and the hashtag #ikdoenietmeermee

Another manifestation in public discourse of the paradox of dis/connectivity is what has come to be known as «COVID-19 misinformation

35 Terranova 2000.
36 Dumitrescu & Smith 2020.

super-spreaders»: conspiracy theories, false stories, and hoaxes expressing mistrust towards, opposition to, and/or a categorical refusal to go along with the containment measures imposed by the established political order or the establishment more generally. Examples are numerous and rarely generic,[37] but a particularly striking example from the Netherlands will suffice here.

In September 2020 the Netherlands was startled by a group of «dissident» influencers, who, all at once and seemingly without warning, launched a coordinated campaign across each of their Instagram and YouTube channels disputing the COVID-19 containment measures under the hashtag #ikdoenietmeermee (#I-no-longer-_participate). The launch followed an eventful week. The infection rate had just started to rise again, prompting the government to announce new regional measures limiting group size and the operating hours of bars and restaurants. Even so, soccer fans were allowed back into the stadiums again, as it was the start of a new soccer season. Soon images of exuberant fans started to go viral. Asked for a response when shown these viral videos on public television, the Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte, the leader of the liberal-conservative VVD, somewhat impatiently stated: «Just don't do it. It's utterly stupid. We won't get the virus under control this way. [...] Just shut up, sit down and watch the game. And don't shout. It's possible.»[38] The #ikdoenietmeermee campaign was launched that same evening. In a series of identical video messages lasting a few seconds and posted on social media, about 70 influencers and other «famous Dutch persons» were shown voicing the statement:

> Only *together* can we get the government under control.

37 See for instance McDonald N.d. for a topic range and list of accounts spreading misinformation about COVID-19 on Twitter.

38 «Je moet het gewoon niet doen, het is heel dom, want hiermee krijgen we het virus niet onder controle. Vandaag lopen de aantallen ook weer op. Gewoon je bek houden als je er zit en naar de wedstrijd kijken. En niet schreeuwen. Het is te doen.»

I no longer participate.

Free the people.[39]

The statement is an obvious distortion of the state's COVID campaign slogan «only together can we get the *virus* under control» (italics added). The protest came with a long list of questions and a demand for more «clarity, honesty, and transparency» with regard to the government's policies related to COVID-19 and its attempted containment of the virus. Some even added a disgruntled exclamation of anticipatory defiance: «No, I am not 'shutting up'!»

Though ultimately deemed a failure (for reasons that will become clear below), the #ikdoenietmeermee campaign triggered quite a controversy that is worth a brief look here. In the days after its launch, the campaign was met with outrage and disbelief amongst politicians and scientists, followers and fellow influencers, healthcare workers and those afflicted with COVID-19 alike. Even so-called mainstream media outlets responded. The daily late-night talk show *Jinek* invited Famke Louise, one of the influencers involved in the campaign, onto the program; soon Louise would, in her own words, be «designated as a potential spokesperson» for the campaign. With her at the table was Diederik Gommers, head of the Dutch Association of Intensive Care and member of the Dutch Outbreak Management Team (OMT). Where Louise drew harsh criticism in the days that followed for her admittedly weak appearance on the show, Gommers visibly took note of the frustration underpinning her gesture of refusal and withdrawal. He later stated that the conversation had been «a wake-up call,» prompting him «to start thinking very critically about how we [the OMT] are going to do this differently from now on.»[40] Meanwhile, the daily news-

39 «Alleen *samen* krijgen we de overheid onder controle | *Ik* doe niet meer mee | *Free the people.*» [switch to English in the original, translation mine].

40 Wagemans 2020.

paper *NRC Handelsblad*[41] had disclosed that the campaign was not a spontaneous action (as it had seemed) but in fact had emerged from a WhatsApp group hosted by Willem Engel, figurehead of the conspiracist citizens' initiative Viruswaarheid («virus truth») formerly known as Viruswaanzin («virus madness»). Engels, the journalists suggested, had been trying to mobilize Dutch celebrities on behalf of his cause for some time. In what stands out for me as one of the most remarkable episodes in viral media history, in less than 48 hours Famke Louise and most of the other «dissident» influencers had withdrawn their statement of withdrawal. Some did so furtively, whereas others, like Louise, made public statements. Using her Instagram account to broadcast the message, she declared that it had never been her intention to be disrespectful or promote civil disobedience, and although she was still «full of questions,» she now felt she had to take responsibility and retract her support for the campaign. Meanwhile, Gommers announced that the conversation had inspired him to open his first Instagram account (an instant hit),[42] launching an initiative, together with Louise, dedicated to answering critical questions from youth feeling infuriated and disconnected in the midst of the COVID crisis.

While the example of the hashtag #ikdoenietmeermee is markedly specific, a few generalizations can be made about the paradox of dis/connectivity in times of mass quarantine. First, the tone the campaign speaks to, and is characteristic of, is the conspiracist tone and misinformation undergirding most of the anti-lockdown protests. While it may seem counterintuitive to consider such viral events as a form of disconnection, they nonetheless signal a withdrawal of sorts. The hashtag reads: «I no longer wish to participate [in the status quo] and thus disconnect.» Disconnection, here, is understood not so much in terms of our online or offline behavior, but rather more in the political sense, with Agamben, as a retreat (or withdrawal) from what

41 Kouwenhoven & Heck 2020.
42 Gommers n.d.

we assume «the political» to be.[43] Crucial to such a gesture of withdrawal is that the disconnect (from the world) often signals a desire to rearticulate our attachment and thus connection to it, albeit often in a different form. These two features are not unrelated. For second, and significantly, the disconnection or withdrawal invoked by the campaign reflects an analogous shift that took place long before the «dissident» influencers took the stage in mainstream media. While the channels of YouTube and Instagram influencers can hardly be considered alternative media in any strict sense of the phrase, their popularity as resources for news and (mis)information are indicative of a changing media landscape in which social media platforms have introduced a process of marginalization for (traditional) mainstream media, at least for some groups of people, including members of younger generations, and have made the «fringe» mainstream. This I consider to be a second dis/connect.

Zoom aesthetics and the online mediation retreat

Of all the teleconferencing platforms emergent due to the new reality of «social distancing» (or «physical distancing»), Zoom has seen the most dramatic uptake. In the period from December 2019 to March 2020 alone, the platform grew from 10 million to 200 million daily users, and its user base continued to increase over the course of 2020.[44] By the end of 2020, the application topped Apple's lists of most downloaded non-game apps for both the iPhone and the iPad.[45] Originally designed for remote working and intra-company communications, the platform grew exponentially when Zoom Video Communications decided to open up its base-level free accounts to run for 24 hours (instead of

43 Agamben 2016.
44 Konrad 2020.
45 Cawley 2020.

40 minutes) – a moment that coincided with the introduction of the first lockdowns. The platform turned into a social media platform almost overnight, as «employees and students who were directed to use Zoom by their organizations and institutions opted to stay on the platform at the end of the working or learning day.»[46] No longer just used for day-to-day work-related communications, the platform has since been used for cocktail and dinner parties, book clubs, yoga classes, church congregations, nursery meet-ups, even weddings. It also has become the go-to platform to facilitate the present surge of online yoga and meditation initiatives and virtual retreats.

On Tuesday, November 17, 2020, I entered a five-day silent meditation retreat organized by a Buddhist meditation center in the tradition of Plum Village called, in Dutch, *De Maanhoeve* (the moon farm), which I have visited many times. The resort's quiet meditation hall usually accommodates up to 50 people, and its gorgeous Zen garden has offered many visitors a sense of inner peace. This time around, however, the retreat was to take place online, offered free of charge via Zoom. Indeed, since the beginning of the pandemic, mindfulness and meditation centers around the global West have embraced online technologies to offer «coronavirus support.» As Wim and Ida of De Maanhoeve observe on their website, «many people are deeply affected by the consequences of the presence of the coronavirus.»[47] Given such conditions, they state, a retreat may cater to our need to *do* something, while simultaneously offering us a chance to pay attention to the stress and anxiety that are triggered by these strange lockdown times.

Admittedly, I was skeptical at first. The idea that the retreat was to take place online appears incommensurable with the notion of retreat itself.[48] We go online to disconnect from our daily routines using the

46 Gat 2020.

47 Unable to retrieve (translation mine).

48 On the controversy of the notion of «retreat» in the neoliberal context, see Hesselberth 2021c.

same tools that are largely constitutive of those routines. We seek to withdraw from the pressures of our performance-oriented society and the current economy of attention,[49] and in a crushing leveling of differences, we can do so only from the same space, sitting in the same chair and looking at the exact same sort of proportioned screen that now mediates everything else we do. We vow to nurture inner growth and to reflect deeply in order to change ourselves and the world around us, and yet, online, a click of a button (or an intrusive notification) away, email is calling, as is the nonstop livestream of pandemic news. We seek to connect more profoundly to ourselves and to others by practicing mindfulness in a community, but within the digital realm of Zoom, those others are reduced to a grid of faces with minimal variation, creating an aesthetic often likened to the opening credits of the American sitcom *The Brady Bunch* (1969–1974) or the long-running game show *Hollywood Squares*, an interface that is now emblematic of our new digital working lives. Meanwhile, everyone is suffering from Zoom Fatigue, a phenomenon described by Jena Lee[50] as «the tiredness, worry, or burnout associated with overusing virtual platforms of communication» that by April 2020 was so common that the term started to trend on Google.[51] Today, one can find countless online self-help (!) instructions on how to avoid the fatigue that drains you and yet stay connected and – above all – employed.

To my surprise, however, the online retreat worked wonderfully well, to the extent that one can ever say a meditation retreat «works» – for what is «to work,» after all, if the practice is not to direct, not to aim one's strength, to do nothing, to just sit. In part, I suspect, its efficacy

49 In the «attention economy» human attention is treated as a scare commodity, a resource that can economically be exploited. See for instance Crawford 2016 and Davenport & Beck 2001.

50 Lee 2020. I believe it was Wolf 2020 who coined the term. Also see, for example, Jackson-Wright in *Wired* 2020, Jiang on *BBC Worklife* 2020, and Sander and Bauman on *TED Ideas* 2020.

51 Zoom fatigue.

had to do with the simple fact that most of the participants were already well versed in the practice of meditation. The commitment to participate fully, here, wielded a stick: the daily schedule of activities was designed to help participants spend their days in mindful meditation, unburdened by the question of what to do next. But, of course, discipline was demanded. During breaks, email, instant messages, and the COVID-19 news feed would be looming – all within reach on the devices that participants are usually encouraged to leave behind or at least switch off at the start of a retreat but that were now indispensable. Also within reach was the bulk of daily chores: making breakfast, cooking dinner, doing the dishes, laundry, tidying up – where such responsibilities are generally taken out of the hands of participants in on-site retreats, here they continued unabated. And yet, as Zoom's aesthetics of minimal variation (the grid) undeniably instilled a sense of relative anonymity, the simple fact that we, the participants, spent so many hours together in silent meditation, while occasionally listening to what one another shared, mobilized a sense of community, even if the screen did not and cannot fill the void of not being able to practice in an in-person setting.[52]

So, if the retreat, as I have argued elsewhere,[53] can be seen as one of the central figures of the paradox of dis/connectivity that marks our times, then the *online* retreat *in a time of quarantine* is now a tripartite figure of this paradox. Indeed, there is something remarkable about going on a retreat when everyone is ordered to remain self-isolated – to isolate in a time of collective isolation, so to speak. Catherine Malabou's reflections on this redoubled quarantine (which, like Jean

52 I entered the retreat together with my wife who was then nine months pregnant and due to deliver on Thursday the 19th. We dropped out of the retreat on the evening of the 21st: contractions had started. At 4:22 A.M. the next morning our son was born. When we returned to share our news during the closing session, nearly everyone was crying. This is what our son was born into: a changed world, a strange world, a dis/connected world – a community in retreat, open hearts abound.

53 Hesselberth 2021c.

Jacques Rousseau, whose reflections on his exile Malabou extensively draws upon, she finds in writing) are worth citing here at some length. Quarantine, Malabou writes, «is only tolerable if you quarantine from it – if you quarantine within the quarantine and from it at the same time, so to speak.»[54] It is solitude, she argues, that makes confinement bearable. To take refuge in the island within the self. «Such,» Malabou continues, «is perhaps the most difficult challenge in a lockdown situation: to clear a space where one can be on one's own while already separated from the community.»[55] The online retreat, I suggest, may offer such an opportunity to clear a space to be on one's own, even if, or arguably precisely because, it is practiced in a community at a distance. As Malabou writes: «Social distance is never powerful enough to strip one from what remains of the social in the distance.»[56] In fact, she writes, «it is necessary to know how to find society within oneself in order to understand what politics means. [...] an epochė, a suspension, a bracketing of sociality, is sometimes the only access to alterity, a way to feel close to all the isolated people on Earth.»[57] This is precisely how Joost de Bloois and I have theorized the «politics of withdrawal»: to renounce the world in order to reconnect and reconstruct.[58]

Coda

As I have argued, lockdown and the ensuing digital surge fit the (re) current reinvention of the neoliberal «order of reason»[59] – commonly known as third-wave neoliberalism – all too well. As the discourse of necessity reigns ever more supreme, the containment measures

54 Malabou 2020.
55 Malabou 2020.
56 Malabou 2020.
57 Malabou 2020.
58 Hesselberth & de Bloois 2020b: 3.
59 Brown 2017: 49.

seem to be directed, above all, towards defending the pre-crisis *status quo ante* in the name of necessity and the common good. It is for this reason that it is so important to pay heed to the gestures of withdrawal or disconnection discussed above, however grand or minute, online or in «real life,» and whether or not they accrue dramatic density. The conspicuous boredom displayed in the days of quarantine memes, the concerns expressed in the non-event of the I-no-longer-participate campaign, or the disconnect/reconnect sought after in the online retreat: all are clear manifestations of the paradox of dis/connectivity in continuous effect during a time of quarantine. It is in the perceived tension between the two that our new (digital) reality is taking shape and continues to be negotiated. These phenomena *matter*, I hope to have shown, because they reveal potential fissures in our existing reality, instances of in-operativeness in the known forms of sociality (enacted or searched for) – and it is in and through these fissures that change *may* take place.[60]

References and sources

ABC News (2020, July 30). *Roller skating makes a comeback during COVID-19* [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HyzBJqaAoQ&ab_channel=ABCNews

Agamben, G. (2016). *The Use of Bodies*. Stanford University Press.

Agamben, G. (2020, May 15). Biosecurity and Politics. *Medium*. https://d-dean.medium.com/biosecurity-and-politics-giorgio-agamben-396f9ab3b6f4

Agamben, G. (2021). *Where Are We Now? The Epidemic as Politics*. Eris Press.

Berardi, F. (2020, March 18). Diary of the psycho-deflation. *Verso*. https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4600-bifo-diary-of-the-psycho-deflation

60 This article was made possible with the generous support of Arts Council Norway and the Leiden Centre for the Arts in Society. I thank Jim Gibbons and the (anonymous) reviewers of this volume for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

Bonhomme, E. (2020, May 18). COVID-19 and Inequality: The Racialization of Pandemic. *International Science Council*. https://council.science/current/blog/covid-19-and-inequality-the-racialization-of-pandemics/

Bowles, N. (2020, March 31). Coronavirus Ended the Screen-Time Debate. Screens Won. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/31/technology/coronavirus-screen-time.html

Brown, W. (2017). *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Reprint edition). Zone Books.

Butler, J. (2020, March 30). Capitalism Has its Limits. *Verso*. https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4603-capitalism-has-its-limits

Cawley, C. (2020, December 7). Zoom Is Apple's Most Downloaded App of 2020. *Tech.co*. https://tech.co/news/zoom-apple-most-downloaded

Crawford, M.B. (2016). *The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction* (Reprint edition). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Danckert, J. & Eastwood, J.D. (2020). *Out of My Skull: The Psychology of Boredom*. Harvard University Press.

Davenport, T.H. & Beck, J.C. (2001). *The Attention Economy: Understanding the New Currency of Business*. Harvard Business Review Press.

D'Eramo, M. (2020). The Philosopher's Epidemic. *New Left Review, 122*, 23–28.

Droit-Volet, S., Gil, S., Martinelli, N., Andant, N., Clinchamps, M., Parreira, L., Rouffiac, K., Dambrun, M., Huguet, P., Dubuis, B., Pereira, B., COVISTRESS network, Bouillon, J.-B. & Dutheil, F. (2020). Time and Covid-19 stress in the lockdown situation: Time free, «Dying» of boredom and sadness. *PLOS ONE, 15*(8), e0236465. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0236465

Dumitrescu, I. & Smith, C. (2020, April 22). The Demon of Distraction. *In the Moment*. https://critinq.wordpress.com/2020/04/22/the-demon-of-distraction/

Eastcoast78 (2020, February 17). *My Pet Sock Eating Cars* [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fOqE8ToGEY&ab_channel=eastcoast78

Fernandez, L. & Matt, S.J. (2019). *Bored, Lonely, Angry, Stupid: Changing Feelings about Technology, from the Telegraph to Twitter* (Illustrated edition). Harvard University Press.

Fernandez, L. & Matt, S.J. (2020, August 2). Americans' inability to cope with boredom is spurring the spread of coronavirus. *Salon*. https://www.salon.com/2020/08/02/how-americans-inability-to-cope-with-boredom-is-spurring-the-spread-of-coronavirus/

Foges, C. (2019, December 30). This has been the decade of disconnection. *The Times*. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/this-has-been-the-decade-of-disconnection-cw50zvxwb

Gat, O. (2020, April 23). The Aesthetics of Zoom. *Frieze*. https://www.frieze.com/article/aesthetics-zoom

Golby, J. (2020, December 2). Covid has shown me what lies beyond boredom: post-boredom. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/dec/02/covid-boredom-lockdown

Gommers, D. [@diederikgommers] (n.d.). *Posts* [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved June 27, 2022 from https://www.instagram.com/diederikgommers/

Haladyn, J.J. (2021, February 7). Depressed or bored? How COVID-boredom intensifies the fear of missing out. *The Conversation*. http://theconversation.com/depressed-or-bored-how-covid-boredom-intensifies-the-fear-of-missing-out-153037

Han, B.-C. (2015). *The Burnout Society*. Stanford University Press.

Hayles, N.K. (2020). Novel Corona: Posthuman Virus. *Critical Inquiry, 47*(S2), S68–S72. https://doi.org/10.1086/711439

Hesselberth, P. (2017). Discourses on disconnectivity and the right to disconnect. *New Media & Society, 20*(5), 1994–2010. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817711449

Hesselberth, P. (2018). Connect, Disconnect, Reconnect: Historicizing the Current Gesture towards Disconnectivity, from the Plug-in Drug to the Digital Detox. *Cinema&Cie: International Film Studies Journal, 18*(30), 105–114. https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/cinemaetcie/article/view/16586

Hesselberth, P. (2019). The Grid as Structuring Paradox: A Case of Tiny Living. *Soapbox, 1*(2), 119–138.

Hesselberth, P. (2020). On Leaving Academia and the Need to Take Refuge. In P. Hesselberth & J. De Bloois (red.), *Politics of Withdrawal: Media, Arts, Theory* (pp. 147–160). Rowman & Littlefield Pub.

Hesselberth, P. (2021a). Detox. In N.B. Thylstrup, D. Agostinho, A. Ring, C. D'Ignazio & K. Veel (red.), *Uncertain Archives: Critical Keywords for Big Data*. The MIT Press.

Hesselberth, P. (2021b). Retreat Culture and Therapeutic Disconnection. In A. Jansson & P.C. Adams (red.), *Disentangling: The Geographies of Digital Disconnection* (pp. 253–272). Oxford University Press.

Hesselberth, P. (2021c). Therapeutic Disconnection: Retreat Culture and the Mindfulness Trap. In A. Jansson & P.C. Adams (red.), *Disentangling: Geographies of Digital Disconnection*. Oxford University Press.

Hesselberth, P. & de Bloois, J. (red.) (2020a). *Politics of Withdrawal: Media, Arts, Theory*. Rowman & Littlefield Pub.

Hesselberth, P. & de Bloois, J. (2020b). Towards a Politics of Withdrawal? In P. Hesselberth & J. De Bloois (red.), *Politics of Withdrawal: Media, Arts, Theory* (pp. 1–12). Rowman & Littlefield Pub.

Jackson-Wright, Q. (2020, October 14). How to Beat Zoom Fatigue – and Set Healthy Boundaries. *Wired*. https://www.wired.com/story/how-to-fight-zoom-fatigue/

Jansson, A. & Adams, P.C. (red.) (2021). *Disentangling: The Geographies of Digital Disconnection*. Oxford University Press.

Jiang, M. (2020, April 22). The reason Zoom calls drain your energy. *BBC.* https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200421-why-zoom-video-chats-are-so-exhausting

Karppi, T. (2018). *Disconnect: Facebook's Affective Bonds*. University of Minnesota press.

Klein, N. (2020, March 16). Coronavirus Capitalism – and How to Beat It. *The Intercept*. https://theintercept.com/2020/03/16/coronavirus-capitalism/

Konrad, A. (2020, May 30). All Eyes On Zoom: How The At-Home Era's Breakout Tool Is Coping With Surging Demand – And Scrutiny. *Forbes*.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexkonrad/2020/04/03/all-eyes-on-zoom-how-the-at-home-eras-breakout-tool-is-coping-with-surging-demand-and-scrutiny/?sh=6606edb57f30

Kouwenhoven, A. & Heck, W. (2020, September 22). Actiegroep Viruswaarheid betrokken bij anticorona-campagne van BN'ers. *NRC Handelsblad*. https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2020/09/22/actiegroep-viruswaarheid-betrokken-bij-anticorona-campagne-van-bners-a4013086

Latour, B. (2020). Is This a Dress Rehearsal? *Critical Inquiry, 47*(S2), 25–27. https://doi.org/10.1086/711428

Lee, J. (2020, November 17). A Neuropsychological Exploration of Zoom Fatigue. *Psychiatric Times*. https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/psychological-exploration-zoom-fatigue

Malabou, C. (2020, March 23). To Quarantine from Quarantine: Rousseau, Robinson Crusoe, and «I». *In the Moment*. https://criting.wordpress.com/2020/03/23/to-quarantine-from-quarantine-rousseau-robinson-crusoe-and-i/

Mbembe, A. (2020, April 13). The Universal Right to Breathe. *In the Moment*. https://criting.wordpress.com/2020/04/13/the-universal-right-to-breathe/

McDonald, K. (n.d.). Twitter Super-Spreaders. NewsGuard. Retrieved February 28, 2021 from https://www.newsguardtech.com/twitter-super-spreaders/

Petrossiants, A. & Berardi, F. (2020, June 5). Pandemic and the Reset of the Global Machine. *Strelka Mag*. https://strelkamag.com/en/article/franco-bifo-berardi-pandemic-and-the-reset-of-the-global-machine

Romero, J.R. (2020, March 15). *Mi segundo día en casa* [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnnCSDOOgk4&ab_channel=joseramonromero

Sander, L. & Bauman, O. (2020, May 19). Zoom fatigue is real – here's why video calls are so draining. *Ted*. https://ideas.ted.com/zoom-fatigue-is-real-heres-why-video-calls-are-so-draining/

Segura, M. (2020, April 7). *I Bought Rollerblade's For The Corona* [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLRHBblhsAI&ab_channel=MelissaSegura

Stäheli, U. (2021, March 7). *Soziologie der Entnetzung*. Suhrkamp Verlag.

Syvertsen, T. (2020). *Digital Detox: The Politics of Disconnecting*. Emerald.

Terranova, T. (2000). Free Labor. *Social Text, 18*(2), 33–58. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-18-2_63-33

UNI Europa (2020, June 17). Covid-19 intensifies the need for the right to disconnect. https://www.uni-europa.org/news/covid-19-intensifies-the-need-for-the-right-to-disconnect/

Vol.at (2020, March 16). Nach zwei Wochen Quarantäne im Zillertal. https://www.vol.at/nach-zwei-wochen-quarantaene-im-zillertal/6556774

Wagemans, M. (2020, September 24). Diederik Gommers noemt tv-optreden Famke Louise «een wake-up call». *WNL*. https://wnl.tv/2020/09/24/diederik-gommers-noemt-tv-optreden-famke-louise-een-wake-up-call/

Werder, P. & Rothlin, P.R. (2008). *Boreout! Overcoming Workplace Demotivation*. Kogan Page.

Westgate, E.C. (2019). Why Boredom Is Interesting. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 29*(1), 33–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721419884309

Wolf, C.R. (2020, May 14). Virtual Platforms Are Helpful Tools but Can Add to Our Stress. *Psychology Today*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-desk-the-mental-health-lawyer/202005/virtual-platforms-are-helpful-tools-can-add-our-stress

Žižek, S. (2020). *Pandemic! COVID-19 Shakes the World*. Polity Press.

Zoom fatigue. https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?q=zoom%20fatigue

Forfatteromtaler

Ellen Foyn Bruun er førsteamanuensis i drama og teater ved Institutt for kunst- og medievitenskap, NTNU Trondheim. Hun har bred teatervitenskapelig og kunstnerisk forskningserfaring med særlig nedslag i anvendte scenekunstpraksiser og relasjon til kontekst, stemmearbeid og teknologi, og møtepunkter mellom teater og helse.

Knut Ove Eliassen er professor i litteraturvitenskap ved NTNU. Seneste utgivelser: *Strandens topologier*, *Kultur og klasse*, vol. 48 (130) (red. K.O. Eliassen, C. Meiner & C. Messelt), *Europeisk litteratur fra Columbus til Kant. Bind 3. Samfunnet*, (red. K.O. Eliassen & A. Fastrup, 2019), *Contested Qualities* (red. K.O. Eliassen, J.F. Hovden & Ø. Prytz, 2018) og *Foucaults begreper* (2016). Eliassen har skrevet artikler om blant annet maritim litteratur, mediehistorie, litteratur og teknologi, opplysningstid og det tjuende århundrets franske filosofi. Han har oversatt Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard og Kittler.

Ida Eritsland er utdannet moteviter fra Stockholms Universitet. Hun jobber som foreleser i moteteori og -historie ved Kunsthøyskolen i Oslo (KHiO) og OsloMet. Eritsland har skrevet journalistikk og kommentarer om mote og vært aktiv i diskursen om feltet i mange år, blant annet for medier som Dagens Næringsliv, Aftenposten og NRK.

Lykke Harmony Alara Guanio-Uluru er professor i litteratur ved Høgskulen på Vestlandet. Hun er interessert i litteraturens samfunnsrolle og forsker særlig på forholdet mellom litteratur, etikk og estetikk i populære tekster, med vekt på fantasy, transmediale tekster og dataspill. Hun er forfatter av *Ethics and Form in Fantasy Literature: Tolkien, Rowling and Meyer* (2015) og medredaktør av *Ecocritical Perspectives on Children's Texts and Cultures: Nordic Dialogues* (2018) og *Plants in Children's and Young Adult Literature* (2021).

Aina Landsverk Hagen er forsker 1 ved Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet (AFI), OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet og sosialantropolog med doktorgrad på kollektiv kreativitet fra Universitetet i Oslo. Hagen har publisert flere bøker, artikler og rapporter om byutvikling, medvirkning, etnografisk metode, kreativitet og ytringsfrihet. Hun er opptatt av å utvikle og eksperimentere med samfunnsvitenskapelige metoder, samt av å jobbe med innovasjon og organisasjonsutvikling som aksjonsforsker.

Pepita Hesselberth er universitetslektor i digitale medier og medieteori ved Leiden universitet. Hun leder Netherlands Institute of Cultural Analysis (NICA). Hun har blant annet utgitt monografien *Cinematic Chonotopes* (Bloomsbury 2014) og er medredaktør for blant annet *Compact Cinematics* (Bloomsbury 2016), *Legibility in the Age of Signs and Machines* (Brill 2018), og *Politics of Withdrawal* (Rowman & Litttlefield, 2021). Hun jobber for tiden med sluttfasen av forskningsprosjektet *Disconnectivity in the Digital Age*.

Ingeborg Hjorth er faglig leder ved Falstadsenteret. Hun er kunsthistoriker og kulturminneforsker med doktorgrad fra NTNU på en avhandling om den nasjonale minnestedsprosessen etter 22. juli 2011. Hennes forskningsinteresser omfatter minnekultur og minnepolitikk, historiedidaktikk og museologi, med særlig vekt på kunstens rolle i kollektive minneprosesser.

Ole Marius Hylland er utdannet kulturhistoriker fra Universitetet i Oslo og har siden 2008 arbeidet ved Telemarksforsking, nå som seniorforsker. Han har skrevet artikler, bøker og rapporter om en rekke kulturpolitiske og kulturhistoriske emner, og han har særlig konsentrert seg om museumspolitikk, digitalisering og scenekunstfeltet.

Per Israelson er postdoktor og forsker ved Institutionen för Kultur och Estetik (IKE), Stockholms universitet. Israelson disputerte i 2017 med avhandlingen *Ecologies of the Imagination: Theorizing the participatory aeshtetics of the fantastic*. Han virker også som kritiker, frilansskribent og redaktør. Israelsons forskningsinteresse ligger først og fremst innenfor serieteori, medieøkologi og postdigital estetikk og kultur.

Håvard Kiberg er stipendiat ved Høyskolen Kristiania og Universitetet i Bergen. Kiberg forsker på forholdet mellom musikk og media, og jobber for tiden med en doktorgradsavhandling om hvordan den norske musikkbransjen responderer på økonomiske, organisatoriske og kulturelle endringer knyttet til digitale strømmeplattformer.

Yngvar Kjus er førsteamanuensis ved Institutt for musikkvitenskap, Universitetet i Oslo. Kjus arbeider innenfor fagfeltet musikk og medier. Han har forsket på møter mellom medieteknologi og musikkultur og har blant annet skrevet boken *Live and Recorded: Music Experience in the Digital Millennium* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Ingvild Hagen Kjørholt er førsteamanuensis i litteraturdidaktikk ved NTNU, Institutt for lærerutdanning, og prosjektleder ved Falstadsenteret. Kjørholt har blant annet forsket på fransk 1700-tallslitteratur og litteraturens virkningshistorie, og har sine forskningsinteresser innenfor feltene litteraturhistorie og minnestudier.

Bård Kleppe er seniorforsker ved Telemarkforsking. Kleppe har forsket på kulturpolitikk og kulturliv siden 2008. Han har gjennomført og ledet

en rekke forskningsprosjekter om kulturpolitikk, kunstneres arbeidsvilkår, museumsorganisering, scenekunstfeltet, musikkfeltet og kunstformidling for barn og unge.

Tore Vagn Lid er regissør og forfatter og professor ved Institutt for kunst og medievitenskap ved NTNU. Han er også kunstnerisk leder av Transiteatret-Bergen og har vært professor i regi og dramaturgi ved Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo. Hans kunstneriske forskningsinteresse handler særlig om dramaturgisk utvidelse av teaterrommet som et refleksivt, kritisk erfaringsrom. Blant de siste arbeidene er *Kunsten å lage en felle*, *Tolvskillingsoperaen* og *03:08.38. Tilstander av unntak*.

Sara Berge Lorenzen er prosjektrådgiver ved Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet (AFI), OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet. Hun har en mastergrad i sosialantropologi fra Universitetet i Oslo med feltarbeid i New Delhi, hvor hun skrev om hvordan unge i India bruker digitale medier til å fremme endring i samfunnet. På AFI er hun involvert i en rekke ulike prosjekter som tar for seg metodeutvikling og innovasjon innen by- og stedsutvikling, ungdomsmedvirkning, organisasjonslæring og folkeforskning.

Insa Müller er førsteamanuensis i kulturminneforvaltning ved Institutt for historiske og klassiske studier, NTNU, og spesialrådgiver for samfunnsdialog ved Stiklestad Nasjonale Kultursenter. Hennes forskningsinteresser ligger i skjæringsfeltet mellom museologi, kulturarvstudier, minnestudier, historiedidaktikk og digital kulturarv. Hun er særlig opptatt av å koble forskning og praksisutvikling i kulturarvsfeltet.

Anne Ogundipe er seniorrådgiver i Kulturrådets avdeling for kulturanalyse. Som kunst- og medieforsker, med en ph.d. i estetiske fag fra NTNU, har hun forsket på estetiske, kulturelle og sosiale aspekter ved digitaliseringen, særlig knyttet til praksiser og uttrykksformer i det visuelle kunstfeltet og til formidling i museumssektoren.

Elena Pérez er førsteamanuensis i drama og teater ved Institutt for kunst- og medievitenskap ved NTNU Trondheim. Hun har en doktorgrad i scenekunst og teknologi, hvor hun i avhandlingen undersøkte det kreative potensial i digitale medier i scenekunsten. Hennes forskningsprofil er tverrfaglig i skjæringspunktet mellom scenekunst og andre kunstformer og fagfelt.

Øyvind Prytz er prosjektleder i Kulturrådets avdeling for kulturanalyse. Han har en ph.d. i allmenn litteraturvitenskap fra NTNU. Han har blant annet forsket på digitalisering på litteraturfeltet og har utgitt boken *Litteratur i en digital tid* (2016). Han var prosjektleder for Kulturrådets forskningsprogram Kunst, kultur og kvalitet og medredaktør for *Kvalitetsforståelser. Kvalitetsbegrepet i samtidens kunst og kultur*, *Kvalitetsforhandlinger. Kvalitetsbegrepet i samtidens kunst og kultur* og *Contested Qualities. Negotiating Value in Arts and Culture*.

Hans Kristian Strandstuen Rustad er professor i nordisk litteratur ved Universitetet i Oslo. Han har skrevet en avhandling om litterære hypertekster (2008), utgitt bøkene *Fotopoetikk. Om dikt og fotografi i norsk lyrikk* (2017), *Digital litteratur. En innføring* (2012) og *Digtopplæsning. Former og fællesskaber* (2022, sammen med Louise Mønster og Michael Kallesøe Schmidt). Han har også redigert en rekke bøker om nordisk poesi og om digital fiksjon.

Eivind Røssaak er dr. philos. og forsker i Nasjonalbibliotekets forskningsavdeling. Utvalgte publikasjoner: *Memory in Motion: Archives, Technology, and the Social*, Amsterdam University Press, 2017; «Surveillance Capitalism», Critical Inquiry 47/1, 2020; «Infrastruktur» i J. Lund og U. Schmidt (red.): *Medieæstetik: En introduktion*, Samfundsliteratur, 2020; *Kunst som deling, delingens kunst* Fagbokforlaget, 2020; *Mangfold i spill: Digitalisering av kultur og medier i Norge,* Universitetsforlaget, 2021, og «Stordataens skjulte narrativer», NLVT 25/1, 2022.

Synne Skjulstad har en ph.d. i medievitenskap fra UiO og er førsteamanuensis ved Westerdals institutt for kreativitet, fortelling og design ved Høyskolen Kristiania, hvor hun forsker på visuell kommunikasjon og estetikk i møte med digitale kommunikasjonsteknologier, de siste årene med vekt på motefeltet. Skjulstad har publisert i en rekke internasjonale tidsskrift og antologier, blant annet *Fashion Theory, International Journal of Fashion Studies* og *Digital Creativity*.

Hendrik Storstein Spilker er professor i mediesosiologi ved Institutt for sosiologi og statsvitenskap ved NTNU. Spilker er forfatter av flere bøker, blant annet *Digital Music Distribution* (Routledge 2019), og han har de senere årene publisert en rekke artikler om internetts utvikling, digitale plattformer og strømmerevolusjonen.

Anette Homlong Storeide, ph.d., er forsker ved Falstadsenteret og forsker II ved HL-senteret, med krigshistorie, minnestedspedagogikk og minnepolitiske problemstillinger som spesialfelt.

Susanne Østby Sæther, ph.d., er kurator for fotografi og mediekunst ved Henie Onstad Kunstsenter. Sæthers forskningsfelt er samtidig kamerabasert kunst og medieestetikk, med vekt på forholdet mellom kunst, teknologi og medier. Sæther har publisert en rekke forskningsartikler, bøker og katalogtekster nasjonalt og internasjonalt, inkludert *Screen Space Reconfigured* (red., Amsterdam University Press 2020) og *Why Photography?* (co-red., Skira Editore 2020).

Nanna Bonde Thylstrup er lektor ved Institut for ledelse, samfund og kommunikation ved Copenhagen Business School. Hun interesserer seg for de kulturelle, politiske og etiske dimensjonene ved digitalisering og maskinlæring. Hun har tidligere utgitt *Uncertain Archives: Critical Keywords for Big Data* (red.) og *The Politics of Mass Digitization*, begge på MIT Press.

Ingrid M. Tolstad er seniorforsker ved Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet (AFI), OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet. Hun er sosialantropolog, med en ph.d. i musikkvitenskap om popmusikalske samarbeid mellom svenske og russiske aktører. Hennes forskningsarbeid og -interesser er særlig konsentrert rundt musikk- og kulturfeltet og inkluderer temaer som kulhet, kreative prosesser, kommersiell låtskriving, studioetnografi, musikkproduksjon, digitalisering, medvirkning, talentutvikling og omorganisering.

Caroline Ugelstad, ph.d., er sjefskurator og leder av kunstfaglig avdeling ved Henie Onstad Kunstsenter. Ugelstads forskningsfelt er avantgarden og neoavantgarden, med vekt på historiografi og forholdet mellom kunst og hverdagsliv. Ugelstad er utdannet fra Courtauld Institute of Art og Universitetet i Oslo, og hun har kuratert en rekke utstillinger, som *Niki de Saint Phalle* (2022), *Guadalupe Maravilla – Sound Botánica* (2022), *Merz! Flux! Pop!* (2021) på Henie Onstad Kunstsenter.