Dissensual Places

THREE SCENES FROM THE EVERYDAY
OF NETWORKED MEDIA

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WITH 2 MODELS AND 3 DESIGNS.

Scene II

WITH 3 MODELS AND 3 DESIGNS.

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WITH 1 MODEL AND 4 DESIGNS.

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Prologue

Of all the scenes that networked media offer, liking is at once the most exemplary and the most restricted: it is seen as a one-sided action, a passive choice made by one person with regards to the choice of another. A click or touch aimed at something created by clicking or touching.

At least, that is what we are used to, that it is an action consisting of bilateral choices at best. Yet how can that be? As media, networks are built on decision-making, choices that we never get to see. The reasons for this are many: it would be too much, too confusing, not manageable. But for whom are these good reasons?

In the following scenes of liking, these reasons are ignored. Not because there is nothing to them, but because they are held to not account for how these places work, play and choose. Those words are not precise of course, but that is also the point: none are, while all might.

To be less vague: all scenes actually happened. I liked something. It does not matter what that was, the act was always the same. It is my hope that the diversity of the presented models and designs show how networked places are shared with other decision-makers. Ones that, purely by seeing them, might remake the places.

The Actors

User

The most oblivious actor in these scenes, yet one of the most influential. Is capable of influencing an entire scene with little action.

Event

A sporadic computational appearance, prompting Synthetic and confounding Control. Is not reducible to pre-defined lines.

Contagion

The lone actor not capable of being designed. Nearly invisible force, yet shaping all scenes in one way or another.

Computation

The workforce amongst the actors, taking all steps necessary for anything to occur at all. Is exposed to Control and Contagion.

Control

Constantly attempting to keep everything in balance—meaning what it considers to be the best balance. Has a hard time.

Synthetic

The actor always seeking to be put into relation with User. Somewhat tragic, as it never does so without disappearing.

USER, Scene III.]

COMPUTATION, Scene II.]

EVENT, Scene III.]

CONTROL, Scene I.]

CONTAGION, Scene II.]

SYNTHETIC, Scene I.]

STAGE (*above*), COMMON DESIGN (*below*);
Scene I.]

Scene I

*Being the liking of a post on
March 15th in a period of inter-
action with a networked media
interface lasting 4.62 seconds.*

MODEL
INSTANCE OF LIKING,
Scene I.]

On March 15th I liked a post on a social media platform.

It took me 1.81 seconds to navigate towards it, and click the icon.

10,051 users had already done this before me.

I then tarried, circling my cursor over other options of action, without going ahead with any.

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MODEL
A USER'S PART IN LIKING,
Scene I.]

DESIGN
CONTROL,
Scene I.]

In the period of 4.62 seconds, I had scrolled vertically; therefore my profile, groups and other immediates were temporarily out of reach.

[Instead, the left of the screen was empty except for the mellow blue-ish grey of the background-colour.]

MODEL
CONTROL,
Scene I.]

ALTERNATIVE MODEL
TRAJECTORY OF INTERACTION,
Scene I.]

The top, which stayed in place despite scrolling, was a bar in a rich blue, letting me search the platform and informing on direct connections of others to me.

The right side was occupied by my recording tool, which replaced the usual assembly of users that are associated with me.

These I normally could have communicated with.

[The middle, reaching from top to bottom and filling about a third of the screen, was occupied by the feed, showing similarly juxtaposed images and sentences of users.]

ALTERNATIVE MODEL
TRAJECTORY OF LIKING,
Scene I.]

DESIGN
ALL IN PLAY,
Scene I.]

DESIGN
COMPUTATIONS,
Scene I.]

—

The object of my like was an online comic strip of considerable popularity.

It contained an image of the strip, with a link that would have taken me to the comic's website.

Despite liking this post, I had no intention of following where it would take me.

Satisfied with the comic strip itself, I was looking forward to the next good one.

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STAGE (*above*), COMMON DESIGN (*below*);
Scene II.]

Scene II

*Being the liking of a post on June
20th in a period of interaction
with a networked media interface
lasting 11.24 seconds.*

On June 20th I liked a post on a social media platform. It took me 8.15 seconds to navigate towards it, and click the icon.

Four users had already done this before me.

I then tarried, circling my cursor over other options of action, without going ahead with any.

DESIGN
CONTROL, Scene II.]

MODEL
INSTANCE OF LIKING, Scene II.]

MODEL
INSTANCE OF LIKING,
Scene II.]

DESIGN
INSTANCE OF LIKING,
Scene II.]

Within the period of 11.24 seconds, I had scrolled vertically; therefore my profile, groups and other immediates were temporarily out of reach.

[Instead, the left of the screen was empty except for the mellow blue-ish grey of the background-colour.]

The top, which stayed in place despite scrolling, was a bar in a rich blue, letting me search the platform and informing on direct connections of others to me.

The right side showed an assembly of users either online like me, or absent for various amounts of time.

These I could have communicated with.

[The middle, reaching from top to bottom and filling about a third of the screen, was occupied by the feed, showing similarly juxtaposed images and sentences of users].

The object of my like was an educational offer, not a personal statement or media object.

ALTERNATIVE MODEL
INSTANCE OF LIKING,
Scene II.]

ALTERNATIVE MODEL
TRAJECTORY OF INTERACTION,
Scene II.]

MODEL (*left*), DESIGN (*above*)
CONTROL OF UNKNOWN ACTIVITY,
Scene II.]

—

It contained an illustrated link, taking me somewhere else, where I would presumably have found a form to fill out and boxes to tick.

Despite liking this offer, I had no intention of following where it would take me.

I liked what it said about the user who provided it.

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STAGE (*above*), COMMON DESIGN (*below*);
Scene III.]

Scene III

*Being the liking of a post on June
29th in a period of interaction
with a networked media interface
lasting 10.09 seconds.*

On June 29th I liked a post on a social media platform.

It took me 4.58 seconds to navigate towards it, and click the icon.

Eight users had already done this before me.

I then tarried, circling my cursor over other options of action, without going ahead with any.

MODEL
DEVELOPING A SYNTHETIC,
Scene III.]

MODEL
BUILDING A MODEL,
Scene III.]

MODEL
INSTANCE OF LIKING,
Scene III.]

I had not scrolled or otherwise altered the initial appearance of the interface within the period of 10.09 seconds.

Therefore, the left of the screen was filled by my immediates, such as groups I belong to or games I played at some point.

[The rest of the left was bathed in the mellow blue-ish grey of the background-colour.]

The top was a bar in a rich blue, letting me search the platform and informing on direct connections of others to me.

The right side showed an assembly of users either online like me, or absent for various amounts of time.

These I could have communicated with.

*[The middle, reaching from top to bottom
and filling about a third of the screen, was
occupied by the feed, presumably con-
taining similarly juxtaposed images and
sentences of users.]*

The top of the feed provided options for me
to enter the feed of others by posting content
myself.

*[To the upper right of the feed and
extending halfway towards the bottom of
the screen, upcoming events and birthdays
and sponsored content was displayed.]*

DESIGN
CONTROL,
Scene III.]

MODEL
BUILDING A MODEL,
Scene III.]

—

The object of my like was a humorous image posted by the user-account of a sports magazine.

It contained the image itself, a comment on it, and a link to the original source of it: a user of another networked media platform. After liking the post, which showed the magazine's good sense of humor, the platform provided what it thought comparable objects for liking beneath it.

These, I noticed, were only tangibly related to the post, being associated with sports. I did not like any of them.

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DESIGN
ALL IN PLAY,
Scene III.]

Epilogue

All scenes have the same plot: there is a communicated object—an image, a statement, a combination—and a choice made that this is something of worth. Yet its setting teems with choices beyond those in the plot, the countless arrangements of space, light, time, opportunity.

On the pages that preceed this statement, the divide between these choices was taken away. What that means is not clear, what was left was not like what happened after all. Liking does not mean liking abstract shapes. But liking amongst unknown choices is not liking either, it is acknowledging without knowledge.

So when the arrangements of space, light, time, and opportunity are not a matter of subterranean algorithmic pulses but a presence in a shared realm of agency, what is a choice? It is not a naive user, or a capitalist wager, or a rational smoothness; at least I do not think so.

It is a proposition of the universality of translations that occur between all acting entities. But again, what does that mean? Nothing much without action. This might follow, or it might not. Yet if the processes of translation are not shared amongst all actors, liking will (most likely) never mean anything ever again. More is to come.

Imprint

»Dissensual Places« is a concept
stemming from a research project.
It was developed during my Masters
of Research in Arts and Cultural
Research at the University of Brighton.

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