A visual and contextual approach to the question 'what is *dis-*[1] order[2]?' as part of the conceptualisation process of the dis- order project

with Maud Constantin, Carina Erdmann, Mick Halsband, Gasthaus: Fermentation und Bacteria and Yael Wicki

Using Benjamin Bratton's words: "inventing and thinking with tools is part of the genesis of our species." The new standards technological development set, are the standards we humans want to set for ourselves.

The invention of the clock made us aware of a different time perception. Clock time was rising an adaptation and awareness of a new standard of how to spend and perceive human (life-)time. Whereas the impact the invention of industrial machines in the 19th century had, changed the (human) standard of precision, effectiveness and speed, while demanding smaller personal efforts.

Taking the computer as such a tool and the thereof created digital and virtual space as invention of our century to think with (in Bratton's sense), we ask: what are the new standards, possibilities and restrictions this new 'immaterial' territory provides? How do these new demands of technological development manifest and/or change the way we humans think about the notion of norm and exception, order and disorder in the society we part-take? The understanding of terms like order and disorder in themselves – in their manifestation – question the way society expects humans to be and to behave, what we define as norm and what as exception and why we do so.

[1]

Dis- is a prefix that produces a related word or an inflectional form of a word, through a turning point, a turning around of meaning, indicating, either reversal, negation, removal or release, sometimes through expressive intensive force.

[2]

Order is an entity, a separate, self-contained existence, a being, being in existence, an organization of a plural of elements, with an identity separate of it's members, with a life and drive of its own in an objective or conceptual reality.

Order is a concept of freedom from confused or unruly behaviour, conceived in the mind through thought and notion, generalized from particular instances, a taxonomy of a predetermined scheme, according to quality, value, or natural characteristics.

Order is a state, a condition of being, of mind or temperament, characterized by definite quantities, as well as a rank.

Order is a quality, an essential, distinguishing characteristic of nature. It is either an inherent feature or degree of excellence through an acquired skill or a logical proposition of gathering and arranging in preparation for a particular operation or effective use, by setting in sequence, relationship, or adjustment, imposing an orderly procedure rather than a fixed scheme in order to eliminate confusion.

(Both definitions, 1 and 2, are condensed and edited versions of the dictionary entries by Merriam-Webster online)

What is *dis-* order?:
Part 1: three starting investigations

SYNCHRONICLES by Carina Erdmann

It is hard to visualise, how unique individual perception of ones surrounding is, as we have worked hard to agree on a shared reality. As useful as this standardisation of reality may be for 'smooth business', the question: Who defines a standard? and does it make the others untrue? must be asked. Favouring complexity over simplicity, methods of making incoherencies graspable are explored.

Technology has developed to open up a multitude of perspectives: X-Ray, Radar, Infrared , Satellite or or microscopic imagery from inside our cells.

We are given the ability to penetrate surfaces, zoom in or out on subjects beyond the human scale and imitate alternate perceptions by for example bees or colourblind neighbours in the computer.

The eyes quickly adapted to visions, that go beyond their physical capacities, but also ones individual visual reality. 'Seeing' often serves as a metaphor for an understanding of some sort. It will also be the case asking the following question: Does technology let us see through others eyes? Beyond the visual extension can it also deepen an understanding of each others perspectives?

Questioning how such a simultaneity of visions may describe reality, will demand a closer look to the problems of defining reality, of separating subject and object of knowledge, of language's role, and of relativism and abstraction.

Finally and with the deliberate goal to overcome dualist definitions, the topic will be approached discussing visual and narrative methodologies, (e.g. the technique of layering images on top of another in photoshop as a visualisation of parallel realities) the visual metaphor, as a basis for a respectful sharing of no reality.

THE STANDARD AND ITS DEVIATIONS by Mick Halsband

Within the context suggested by Benjamin Bratton's 'thinking with tools', it seems clear we cannot escape the crucial significance of the digital realm to our thinking. Today we occupy and exercise the digital realm to not only extend our muscles but also our thoughts. But have we, in the process of augmenting ourselves through machines, also replicated our thinking patterns? Our rights and wrongs? Our ethics? Our normal and abnormal? Our order and dis-order?

In my text I would like to explore the human ordered through the mechanical realm, and most specifically the realm of algorithmic 'intelligence'. I would like to inquire as to how we mark our categories of normal and abnormal for a human realm, and whether these terms apply for machines. I would further inquire whether the normal-abnormal good-bad categories — when (aptly or inaptly) applied to the machine realm — produce new value of introspection: Not only within and upon the machine realm and machine intelligence, but rather new value onto the human realm and human intelligence.

It is my hope that the opportunities presented by such transhumanist thinking —

of the human through the Otherness of the machine — can gain new, dare I say better, glimpses into the uniqueness of the human.

A TOOL OF EMANCIPATION by Yael Wicki

There is a general understanding that people that don't fit into a certain behaviour pattern expected from society, have to be able to conform. Right there is a contradiction that is very similar to that one of sexual preferences. An expected norm / standardisation forcing people to bend towards a way of being and behaving that is not innate to them, their being. This conforming can be very closely linked to ways the colonising west was (and still is) expecting the rest of the world to conform to their understanding of how to be human, the understanding of concepts like 'being good', 'being right', 'being normal' heavily influenced by the so called achievements of the Enlightenment.

The question of what/who's order, what/who's rules we follow as society, who puts them into place and why, is a crucial one to understand the definition of human disorders in society. The definition of disorder in general is all about perception and perspective. A disorder for one specific system can be the definition of an advantage for another.

I want to introduce dis- order as a methodology of emancipation, a tool to question the norm, the ratio, its use in statistics and how it defines rules of the society we part-take. If we disregard what we are supposed to be able to do and just perceive what we can do, our way of navigating the space around us changes radically.

Carina Erdmann (* 1990 in Cologne, Germany) is an artist, curator, writer and currently following the classes of Josephine Pryde and Hito Steyerl at UdK Berlin DE. Her main focus lies on speculative narration of the non-human, being addressed in this years production 'The House of Stories' an immersive performance and sound installation featuring 10 writers + 10 performers on all 10 levels of the building at De Zwaan Auction House in Amsterdam, NL and the book publication of the therefor commissioned texts.
She is also a co-founder of Plain Hearty Fare, serving new creations inspired by traditions and nutritious mythologies, processing the contemporary through metabolic activities, mutating the documentation of the gatherings into fiction.

Mick Halsband is a Berlin based engineer, researcher and writer. His research focus lies at the intersections of media, philosophy, technology, science and economy, and explores futurism through approachable practices. For the tech industry, he had worked on mobile devices, flight simulators, computer vision for cinematography and applied data science and machine learning for trading algorithms, amongst others. In his not-for-profit work he was founder and editor of an online magazine for poetry and art in Tel Aviv and Jaffa. He is committed to the Blockchainhub cryptogovernance work group, as well as the Lensbased and RCPP groups at UDK.

Yael Wicki (*1985 in Zurich, CH) is an artistic and curatorial researcher, currently studying under Doreen Mende, Kodwo Eshun, Gene Ray at the CCC Research MA programme at HEAD-genéve. After being the curatorial assistant of Basak Senova for 'The Translation' exhibition in Zurich, and running the Art Space 'White Squat' with Marc Hunziker and Amos Bollag, she started curating larger group projects in order to bring in different points of view to one exhibition subject. Since her breakdown and border-line diagnose in 2013 she studies the role of mental health, understandings of norm(mation), rules, definitions and otherness in society, behaviour as well as in language. The aim is to question given positions and debating forms of emancipation thereof.