Arts & Humanities in digital transition

CONFERENCE | 6-7 July 2023 | NOVA UNIVERSITY OF LISBON

Venue: Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities | Nova Institute of Communication

Transformations stemming from digital technologies are growing with every passing decade, even if the newness of new media is gradually fading. In the idea of digital transition, a feeling of disruption is intertwined with that of inevitability and becoming, mixing voluntarism and the design of the artificial with new evolutionary narratives. Between a persistent post-historical atmosphere and the spectre of an era of extinctions, the certainty of a generalised digital transition stands out as an inescapable path towards the future. A path where not only capitalism but also the insufficiently acknowledged co-evolution of nature and technique would definitely take the place of history itself. The question concerning the digital (Krämer, 2018; Hui, 2019; Galloway, 2021), which has just only started, is crucial for understanding the deep anthropological, ecological and cosmological crisis (Latour, 2021) of the present and resisting a one-way universalization sense of technology. This crisis makes it urgent that we prefigure and care about possible futures but also that we concern ourselves with the digital (Stiegler 2010, 2019) and critically explore its relationship with different temporalities and *transits*, as well as its *transformative, transgressive and translation* possibilities.

The generalisation of computation and algorithms and the planetarisation of information networks and infrastructures reveal the breadth and capillarity of the
digital transition involving the domains of physicality, life, and the human, and their various interactions. The crossovers between cybernetics and environmental sciences, molecular biology and informatics, neurology and robotics expand our knowledge of the human and lead, at the same time, to the questioning of the centrality of the Anthropos in all of his/her dimensions – agency, production, perception and cognition.

In the humanities, the digital has mostly been seen as the post-media or metamedia stage of media history (Kittler 1997, Bolter&Groosin 2000, Manovich 2005), and often as a culmination point of the long history of the symbolic and the alphabets (Kittler, 2009; Krämer, 2018), allowing us to expect changes as fundamental as those related to the beginning of language in human history. Most importantly, media theory, digital studies and the philosophy of technology have long been the source of a crucial anthropological questioning (Stiegler, 1984; Kittler, 1997; Hayles, 1999) that has shown the co-constitution of the human and its technological milieu. This kind of questioning is also central to ecological thought, in which the human is equally defined by its interactions with the environment and with the non-human. That is why media theory and ecological thought coincide today in the claim of a post-humanist turn of the humanities. Accordingly, one of the main challenges of the post-humanities (Braidotti, 2019) will be that of helping to form a critical cosmology that will be able to include a techno-ecology of the digital, which is also a cognitive ecology or an “ecology of spirit” (Stiegler), in the general ecology (Stiegler 2010; Hörl, 2013; Hayles 2017).

The initiative of this conference is indebted to the paths opened up by the digital humanities and digital arts in recent decades, but also to a reflection that increasingly exceeds the specificity of each of these fields. The increasing interest and discussion about the cognitive and epistemological implications of the widespread use of AI and computational methodologies have cast new themes around DH themselves (Burdwick et al. I, 2016, Berry and Fagerjord, 2017; Dobson, 2019). Likewise, reflection on creativity and the digital has long gone beyond the genealogy of media and procedural art to think how the digital is penetrating aesthetic, affective and political experience, as well as creative and collaborative practices in ways more fundamental or also indirect (Zielinski, 2006; Bishop, 2012; Weibel, 2019). Thus, the scope proposed by this conference is that of a broad epistemic, cultural, political and artistic reflection on the transformation of knowledge, creativity, praxis, literacies, cultural techniques and institutions in an era increasingly characterized by the distribution of capabilities and agencies between
humans and technology.

Adding to a new stage of the industrialisation of culture and the arts, we are now witnessing the emergence of an industry of knowledge built on the accumulation of data, AI and machine learning, automatic analysis and information visualisation (Negri & Vercellone, 2008; Boutang, 2012; Zuboff, 2019; Manovich, 2021). The new cognitive industries threaten to trigger a general dispossession of cognitive practices, learning and “savoir vivre” (Stiegler, 2019), and the replacement of the civic mission of institutions and practices related to knowledge transmission by infrastructures, platforms and algorithms (Bratton, 2016; Srnicek, 2016). However, the digital condition and the new cognitive ecology allows, in turn, for a deepening and dissemination of knowledge on a scale that is unprecedented in human history, the strengthening of diverse forms of connectivity and collaboration (Castells, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2017) and, for the first time, the sharing of a common language between sciences, humanities and arts.

Establishing a political cosmology and ecology for the digital transition emerges as a new task of critical thought, a fundamental epistemic, cultural and creative task of the humanities and the arts in the XXI century. This call invites participation in this task by tackling topics such as, and not restricted to, the ones below. In addition, in homage to the intellectual legacy of Bernard Stiegler, one of the most influential thinkers of the digital condition and the relationship between culture and technique, a specific exploration of themes from his extensive work will also be welcomed.

- Digitality, post-digital and digital transition
- Tecno-ecology, digital ecology and cognitive ecology
- Post-human and post-humanities
- Digital Humanities, theory, methodologies and practices
- Digital arts, post-media aesthetics and artivism
- Cognitive and creative economy and industries
- AI, Machine Learning and automation
- Digital literacies
- The university and the digital
- Bernard Siegler’s thought for the digital age (mnemotechnics, general organology and digital technologies; pharmacology and care; disruption and bifurcation; etc.)
Please submit abstracts for individual papers (max. 300 words) with presentation title, up to 5 keywords, your name, affiliation, email address and a short biographical note (max. 100 words; the biographical note should be submitted annexed as a pdf file on easychair). Proposals should be written in English.

Submit your proposal on https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=ahdt2023

Deadline for submissions: 6th March, 2023
Notification of acceptance: 30th March, 2023

Early bid inscription: 15th April, 2023
Deadline for inscription: 30th April, 2023

Inscription fee: 200 euros
Early bid fee: 120 euros

Publication: Full papers are invited to be submitted to a special edition of a Scopus Indexed Journal

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