

*HERE*

*AND*

*NOW?*

*TIONS*

*URGENT*

*ISHING*



# Here and Now? Explorations in Urgent Publishing

## COLOPHON

*Here and Now? Explorations in Urgent Publishing* presents the results of the two-year research project *Making Public*, led by the Institute of Network Cultures in collaboration with 1001 Publishers, Amateur Cities, Amsterdam University Press, ArtEZ University of the Arts, Hackers & Designers, Mind Design, Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, Open!, Open Set, Puntpixel, Studio BLT, Valiz, and Willem de Kooning Academy.

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Amsterdam University  
of Applied Sciences





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Previously written blog posts have been used in some of the chapters. We thank their authors for providing the groundwork for this publication. All blog posts are published on the Making Public website and can be found under References and Further Reading. Words that are underlined indicate titles or other references, which are also listed from page 123 on.



*INTRODUCTION:  
EXPLORATIONS  
IN URGENT  
PUBLISHING*



Finally, there it is: your hard-wrought publication that provides all the necessary facts and reflections on a topic that inflamed public debate... two years ago. Time passes quickly and people have moved on, leaving behind the rubbles of badly informed and heavily polarized discussions and an ever more self-referential and hyped-up mediasphere.

Or: there it is, a wide-spread debate on a topic you don't just care about passionately, but also know heaps about – urban design, political memes, technological biases; to name just a few examples – but why doesn't your highly topical and informed work catch the attention of the public eye? And what if you would want to set the agenda yourself, as a writer or publisher, as the editor of a journal or book series: how can you grab the attention in a saturated information landscape, where previously existing criteria for quality content seem to have been overthrown or have turned out to be inherently myopic themselves?

Questions such as these are what we set out to investigate in the two-year applied research project Making Public (SIA-RAAK-MKB-project Maak het publiek), a collaboration between a university for applied sciences, two art schools, various publishers from the arts and cultural domain, and studios for design and web-development.

Publishers have always played an important role in initiating and stimulating the public debate – a role that has changed radically over the past two decades. The cultural capital of publishers consists in making public reliable, original, and engaging information, but the time-consuming workflows that are part and parcel especially of smaller or niche presses make it increasingly hard for them to keep up. Despite the promises of the desktop publishing revolution and the immediacy of publishing on the web, acceleration and optimization did not speed up the publishing processes as much as hoped for.

Speeding up the printing and publishing process is by no means straightforward. It seems that all too often, any one of the three success factors in publishing that we identified – namely speed, quality, and positioning of the publication with an audience – could only be realized at the expense of the other two. For example, speeding up can mean a sacrifice on the side of quality because there is less time for editing, or a too heavy focus on quality can mean that the positioning of the publication with an audience will fall short and the speed of publication will undoubtedly suffer.

This puts pressure on the role of publishers as catalysts of public and cultural debates, and on their publications as hallmarks of quality. How can publishers keep making content available to the public in a prompt, appealing, and focused way?

What kind of innovations can help to present information in a timely manner, without losing out on quality and relevance? In this final publication of the Making Public project, we present strategies for such ‘urgent publishing’ practices. We hope to address both publishers and editors, as well as authors and those who work in the publishing field, whether in design, development, marketing, or research.

While digital technology has always held much promise, not in the least when it comes to publishing, it hasn’t always been able to deliver. Speeding up workflows, allowing for experimental formats, making other voices heard, and reaching new audiences: many of these promises remain for a large part just that: promises. This is caused by a variety of factors, many of them huge, from hyper-capitalist tech monopolies to the favoring of certain types of content by algorithms. But still there is potential waiting to be found. After a review of dozens of interesting projects, prototypes, and articles from the field of publishing, we decided to organize the research around three possible pathways to explore further: modular processes, automation, and hybrid formats. During the unfolding of the research, these led to the formulation of a concept that would direct and contextualize our efforts: ‘Urgent Publishing.’

What urgent publishing can mean, is the focus of the chapters to come. Important is that it pertains not only to speed but also to relevancy. It refers to both priority and tenacity, and so connects momentousness to determination. The three pillars of success that we defined – speed, quality, and positioning – thus gain a renewed foundation when based on the concept of urgency. In short, urgency goes beyond the ‘now’ and connects to the afterlife of a publication; it understands quality not just as logically consistent and well-proven arguments, but also as alternative content structures; and asks to view positioning a publication not as getting as many clicks or conversions as possible, but primarily as finding and engaging the readers who care. In other words, urgency means prolonging the life of a publication beyond short attention spans, challenging your readers to navigate and interact with content in different ways, and entrusting your content to the network.

Three separate groups worked on the development of prototypes and methods in the context of urgent publishing. They were loosely identified by type of publication: stand-alone book publishers, online platforms, and periodicals. Each group included two or more publishers, a designer, and a coder, who worked together in a horizontal manner right from the beginning. Thus the definition of the problem, the practical set-up of the research, and the formulation of the deliverables was done in an entirely interdisciplinary way.



During their work on prototypes and methods, each group identified key notions that guided their approach to urgent publishing during the project. These notions also structure their reflections further along in this publication: *Relations*, *Trust* and *Remediation*.



# *RELATIONS*

**Why have alternative ways of structuring content never truly taken off after the advent of digital publishing, even while the potential for formats other than the A-Z argument seems obvious? The ‘stand-alone group’ sought to investigate content structure, starting from the idea that adapting a different way of structuring materials in a publication implies an alternative way of thinking. This requires a different way of looking at content at the start of the publishing process, where authors, editors, and publishers work together on the concept of a publication. By cutting up content, and taking a cue from modular processes in digital publishing, different relations between the content elements become apparent. These relations make new structures and reading paths possible.**

**More about the key notion ‘relations’ will follow in chapter 4: ‘Upside Down, Inside Out: A Relational Approach to Content Structure’.**



*TRUST*

How can small online publishers benefit from each other's reach of niche audiences, and by doing so help the positioning of content beyond a platform's already established network of readers? One possibility is to refer readers to interesting content on other platforms. The 'platform group' worked on an algorithmic tool that allows online publishers to share semi-curated 'related articles' of others in their network. This goes beyond a regular recommendation algorithm that might reinforce a bubble of interests and moves towards the expansion of that bubble with content from other publishers. It creates a closer relationship between publishers and intentionally broadens readers' possibilities. Sharing both content and readers in such a network requires trust: between publishers who should be trusted to provide quality content and use a fair referencing system, and trust from readers who expect a certain quality.

More about the key notion 'trust' will follow in chapter 5: 'Platform-2-Platform: Network of Independent Publishers'.



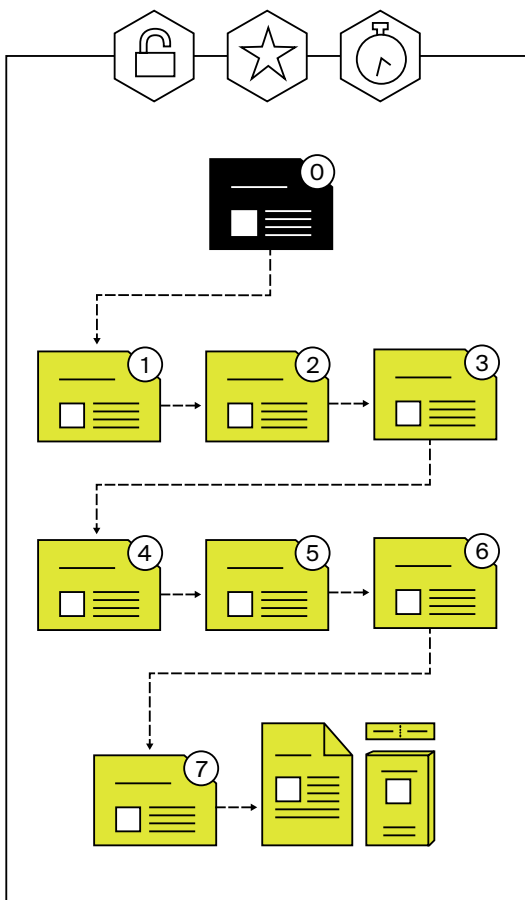
# *REMEDICATION*

**Acceleration does not only mean that information comes into the world at an ever-increasing speed, but also that it is forgotten again in no time. How can the ‘afterlife’ of research publications such as journal articles be prolonged? The ‘periodicals group’ has sought ways in which remediation of publications could not only prolong their relevance, but also allow for interaction of the reader with the content. Through the use of a tool that was developed for making a personal zine on the basis of a journal archive, the publication not only builds a sustainable afterlife, but also a sustainable relationship with the reader.**

**More about the key notion ‘remediation’ will follow in chapter 6: ‘Parasitizing the Afterlife: Positioning Through Remediation’.**


A final note on the format of this publication. While you are holding the paperback or the pdf of the paperback in your hands, *Here and Now? Explorations in Urgent Publishing* was first published as a newsletter between 26 March and 7 May 2020. Naturally, the results of an applied research project into new forms of publishing couldn't just leave it at a print publication and a pdf. We chose to take 'time' as a guiding principle for thinking up the digital publishing format, and together with designer Loes Claessens devised a way of time-released publishing which goes straight into the reader's inbox. Following our own urgent publishing principles, we put our trust in the networks of the collective partners in doing so. The intimate way of delivering these chapters could help to establish a feeling of urgency as we wish to see it: an urgency that is personal and situated, and that takes its time getting there, all the while not afraid to speak up about what matters most. We hope this printed edition will do the same.







**Before publishing this printed edition of *Here and Now? Explorations in Urgent Publishing* this publication was published via a newsletter.**





**The Making Public Collective**    
 [Here and Now?] Explorations in Urgent Publishing

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Here and Now? Explorations in Urgent Publishing. 07  
 Published: March 23, 2020 at 4:07 PM.  
*This read will take 2 minutes of your time.*

**DEAR READER,**

We hope to find you well in these trying times. Recently you've subscribed to:

[a semi-private, highly  
 exclusive, time-released  
 publishing experiment]

Welcome! Over the coming weeks, we'll distribute *Here and Now? Explorations in Urgent Publishing* straight to your inbox. First up is the Introduction, which you will receive coming Thursday.

What else to expect? We're happy to share the Table of Content with you:

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1. Introduction: Explorations in Urgent Publishing
2. Existing Tools, Best Practices, and What Readers Want
3. Urgent Publishing – The Conference
4. Upside Down, Inside Out: A Relational Approach to Content Structure
5. Platform-2-Platform: Network of Independent Publishing

**Announcement *Here and Now? Explorations in Urgent Publishing*.**



*EXISTING  
TOOLS, BEST  
PRACTICES,  
AND WHAT  
READERS WANT*



Just as in any other domain, there is a marketplace-slash-playground for digital tools for publishing. They promise revenue, reach, or a revolutionary change of workflows. In addition to such tools there is an art fair-slash-playground of hybrid projects that explore the materialities and conceptual or creative avenues of e-publications. During the Making Public project we collected and analyzed many of the existing tools and applications used in various stages of the publishing process, and examples of publications in different formats themselves. What do they have to offer to urgent publishing practices? What possible pitfalls, opportunities, and promising strategies do they reveal? Next to this comparative analysis of tools and collection of best practices, we conducted a survey among readers interested in arts and cultural publications, to get a sense of what expectations and wishes they have when it comes to publishing experiments.

In short, we found that existing tools may digitize parts of the publishing process but fail to innovate how the industry works. Often, they reinforce the status quo, for example when it comes to how revenues are made (advertising) or audience reach is measured (unique visitors). They might deliver on one of the three success

factors identified in this project – speed, positioning, and quality – but they don’t allow for other ways of defining these factors nor open up the discussion about their uses, two elements that seem to be important for urgent publishing. On the other hand, many best practices show what else is possible. They suggest different approaches to what speed, positioning, and quality might also mean, and so present paths for innovation not just of tools, but of meaning. However, these paths should be followed with some caution. Our survey shows that readers are often somewhat conservative although media-savvy in their reading habits. While they feel the need for publications that respond to urgent matters, this does not mean that they should do so in a way that leads too far from the message at hand. Urgency for these readers, lies in the *why* rather than the *how* of publishing a work.

Below, we will expand a bit more on these conclusions and highlight some examples. To read all the details and find all the references, please check the links to the blogposts in References and Further Reading.

### INNOVATIVE OR PRESERVING THE STATUS QUO?

Before starting to build our own prototypes and developing our own hybrid publishing methods, we looked at what was already available. We analyzed some thirty to forty tools and



applications directed at the publishing market that also had an open source or freemium model. They promise anything from efficiency and quality to smooth collaborations and peer review, community building, impact, and increased sales.

What we found is that most of these tools follow the drive towards datafication and quantification, for example when it comes to measuring and increasing impact. Examples are Mojo Reads, AltMetric, and GrowKudos. In some cases, they go so far as to equal metrics and quality of content. It was not evident how these tools would benefit our urgent publishing drive. Who do these tools primarily serve? Large-scale corporations and digital platforms, or publishers, authors, and readers? For smaller-scale publishers with a focus on high-quality information, this question is important. Tools should be able to help create cultural and not just economic capital and build communities around content or topics. It remains unclear how tools like these would manage to reach new audiences – and potentially also new authors – in a meaningful way. Are readers as interested in seeing statistics as publishers are? Can these apps help get the right publication to the right reader for the right reasons? Who decides what is ‘right’ in these cases? It seems impact should not be restricted to quantified measures, especially if we want to develop new ways of pursuing impact as well.

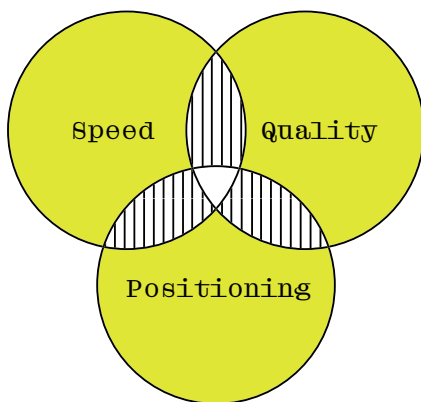
When it comes to tools and platforms that aim to facilitate collaboration, commenting, or other content-related work, such as Peerage of Science, Full Fact, or Hypothes.is, similar questions come to mind. Are they open to different workflows or do they command a strict use? If so, what does that use propagate? New tools often show a steep learning curve, and especially for small companies or teams this may prove too big a hurdle. Authors are often reluctant to change the tools they work with (usually Microsoft Word) and the editing process is not easily transposed elsewhere.

On a deeper level, the tools that we tested hardly seemed to rethink the materiality of the digital media that are available (such as epub or web-publication) or the contents (for example making different narrative structures possible). That is to say, they produce, propose, or prefer publications as we know them: static print books and e-books, or web texts with a low degree of interactivity. The tools analysis showed that for the purpose of urgent publishing, we would need to focus on openness, accessibility, and adaptability, on building communities rather than tracking stats, and on new forms for content instead of just optimizing the publishing process.

However, two of the tools tested deserve special attention: TopicGraph and Manifold. Manifold is a platform for publishing in a rich, modular, interactive, and collaborative way. It allows users to upload files in different formats

and lets them include different enhancements such as data, interactive design, audio, and video. It also caters to readers, who can use highlighting and commenting functions. TopicGraph is a tool for automated textual analysis of the contents of scholarly publications. It highlights recurrent key terms, tracks them throughout a publication, and so creates a page-to-page topic model. This not only provides valuable insights to readers and researchers; it is also extremely helpful for writers on the level of the content.

## BEST PRACTICES



The tools mostly seemed to want to preserve a status quo. Best practices however – whether publications, formats, publishing strategies, workflows, or activities – show what else may be possible. An ongoing search resulted in over

thirty examples. The selection criteria were for the practice to concern research content, have a critical and/or artistic perspective, have reach outside of academia, and be of high quality. The examples were divided according to the three success factors: speed, positioning, and quality. Below, we will highlight the most important points for each of these, with a focus on how they pertain to openness, accessibility, community, and content when pursuing these three factors:

- Speed
- Positioning
- Quality

### *Best Practices: Speed*

Two concepts provide a focus on speed that doesn't so much rely on accelerating the publishing process but foremost has an eye on content and community. First are 'curational' practices. Second is what can be called 'real time publishing'.

An example of the first is the [#syllabus](#). This evolved from an academic format to distribute reading materials for a class to more or less annotated, open, dynamic, multimedia collections of 'must-read' contents. It is a fast, easy, open, and hybrid way to disseminate content. The syllabus as a publication format has become known through activist circles like the [Women's Strike](#),

covering complex topics such as the US prison-industrial complex or rape culture. The syllabus thus provides a fast, collaborative way of disseminating research on urgent topics. It is easy to set up, for example as a link list, a page published on an existing platform, or a Google doc. Being mostly crowdsourced, it also helps build a community. It allows multi-format entries and is open to extension and adaptation; however, sustainability or archiving may prove a problem for these same reasons.

A way to manage the documentation of events or to organize input from diverse groups or participants is to set up a form of ‘real-time’ publishing. Examples are The Last Mass Mail, a newspaper that is produced, edited, designed, and printed at a Stockholm art fair, and Edit This Post, a means for producing audience-generated reviews of shows, concerts, or other events – written, edited, and printed on the spot. Benefits of such on-the-spot publishing practices, which couldn’t be performed without the aid of digital technologies, is that they are open to collaborative processes and engage directly with the prospective readers who may be made a part of the publication itself.

### *Best Practices: Positioning*

What could positioning a publication look like from an urgent publishing viewpoint? Again, we start with not focusing directly on metrics or the

marketing and communication flow of so-called engagement, but on finding audiences who are already engaged. Even niche audiences are usually larger than the audience that a publication already reaches on its own. Two concepts deserve attention.

The first is something we might call ‘publishing by surprise.’ One of the great annoyances of authors is that their work, which may be about topics of debates happening right here and now, have to deal with the traditional way publishers organize their PR: first announcing a publication, then doing the rounds of the bookshops, deciding on the print run, etc., which leaves the book to come out months or even a year later when the hot topic is already past its peak moment. Making something public can certainly be handled differently. Das Mag, a literary publishing house in the Netherlands, broke the long-standing tradition of first building a catalog of books-to-come before putting them out. Books come when they are ready. Why not take a cue from what is done in the music industry from time to time, where artists ‘drop’ new songs with just one day’s announcement, or none? In the age of streaming, printing on demand, and viral marketing, many options ask for experimentation.

Another example came from Clara Balaguer’s talk at the Urgent Publishing conference. She spoke about the habit in her publishing practice to print very few copies (25 or so), distribute those

very precisely among specific persons, and then to see what happens and decide how many to print next. ‘How many copies do you need to get your publication in the right hands?’ was the question she asked.

The idea of getting a publication in the hands of your intended audience, is one that keeps coming back. It is taking positioning most literally: bringing people together and placing the publication in their midst. The most concrete expression is the reading group. An interesting example from the Dutch language scene was offered by literary magazine *nY*, that discussed materials and related questions in a series of evenings with readers. Something similar was organized by STRP, who organized a reading group around the work of one of their speakers, bringing people together around a certain topic in the run-up to the talk. In this case, it was initiated by the event organization, but it might also be done in collaboration with publishers.

### *Best Practices: Quality Content*

Lastly, there are some notable concepts that have a different take on quality. Again, these provide new ways of pursuing openness and accessibility, community, and of course, quality content.

We start with several projects that revolve around ‘open books’: books that are opened up to readers before they have reached their final stage. Using the internet to break open the writing and


publishing process, including peer review, they step away from the single-author-knows-it-all-ideology. Sharing research in an earlier stage also makes for a timely publishing practice. An example is the Living Books About Life project from Open Humanities Press. Another example is MIT Press' BookBook, which is hosted on PubPub: an online publishing platform that allows for an open peer-reviewed process, interaction with readers in an early stage, and wide dissemination of research content.

Second, options pertaining to length deserve a mention. Hybrid publishing opens up a world of possibilities for 'shorter longform', such as books that range between 20,000-50,000 words. More experimental forms can come into play as well, like zines, pamphlets, and manifestos. On the other hand, short forms can be collected into a longer publication, like a Tumblr or Twitter feed that is archived, fixated, or transformed into a stand-alone publication or anthology. Using a shorter form can also speed up the publishing process.

A recurring idea that uses the short form to produce longer form publications is what can be called the 'chain reaction'. See for example Pervasive Labour Union Zine and NXS, which ask authors to respond to each other's contributions. This opens up many interesting questions and pathways, from multi-voiced writing to never-ending publications. Where to make the cut in



an ongoing publication and produce a (commodifiable) edition? A question that is relevant to the concept of open books as well.



### URGENT PUBLISHING SURVEY

At the mid-term of the project we presented some of these results to the intended audiences that the collaborating publishers address: readers of cultural, artistic, and research content. We asked how readers find new reading material, what formats they prefer, and how they evaluate certain experimental forms. In the first place, it was very obvious that people read both on paper and on their phones (also longread content) – it was not a question of either/or. But it turned out that while readers value experiments and innovations, they only do so when it doesn't cut in on the information given. Fancy multimedia or interaction design is not always appreciated. However, interviews with authors and contact with other readers were deemed valuable. More established means such as Q&As with authors, moderated discussion nights with specialists, and real-life reading groups still hold sway.

When it comes to finding stuff to read, content recommendation by acquaintances turned out to be most important in deciding what to read. Perhaps surprisingly, specialized websites such as review blogs, discussion

forums, publishers' websites, and digital newsletters are used more than social media. Also, careful curation of content is welcomed. The promise of quality implied in curation, authorship, face-to-face communication, and specialism seems to gain rather than lose appeal. In-depth analysis beyond the hype of the day therefore is not something to fear, but to embrace.

The survey was only held among a small and specialized group, and it would be interesting to see whether these findings hold up among a larger audience. As we had mostly readers who are familiar with the participating publishers respond, the results might suffer from confirmation bias. However, our best practices, coming from different countries and areas, show that such niche groups exist in many different places. It would mean a lot if these could find each other over content and in communities.

The screenshot displays the Manifold digital reading interface. At the top, a navigation bar includes a 'MENU' button, 'CONTENTS', and the book title 'Anti-Book'. The browser address bar shows 'manifold.umn.edu'. The main content area features the title 'Preface' and a paragraph of text. A right-hand sidebar contains several sections: 'Show the following:' with a pencil icon; 'HIGHLIGHTS' with a checkmark for 'Yours' and a dropdown for 'Others'; 'ANNOTATIONS' with a checkmark for 'Yours' and a dropdown for 'Others'; 'RESOURCES' with a cube icon and a checkmark for 'Show All'; and 'READING GROUPS' with a checkmark for 'Show All', 'My Private Annotations', and 'My Public Annotations'. At the bottom of the sidebar are 'SHOW ALL' and 'HIDE ALL' buttons. The text in the main area is as follows:

Books about books commonly introduce their content by reference to the object that r  
 in their hands, be it comprising bound printed paper or networked code and t  
 interface. This is a useful conceit, for it brings textual content and media form into a  
 resonance, soliciting an embodied and reflexive appreciation of that which tends othe  
 lost to the immersive flow of a book's words. I would not break with this practi  
 interference between textual content and media form is the stuff of *Anti-Book*. But I wil  
 a little, for such introductions can be too comforting, nestling the object in its reader'  
 habits when our time calls for a more troubling materiality.

Let me start with the title. A book's title serves a dual function. It introduces rea  
 text's theme, prefatory reference to which would normally assist in carrying reade  
 book's flow of text, but it also helps place the book in a market, an observation t  
 attention to more medial and structural features. As Franco Moretti writes of literary  
 sign, half ad, the title is where the novel as language meets the novel as commodity."<sup>[1]</sup> The title of

Manifold allows the user to highlight, annotate, and follow other readers. Screenshot: *Anti-Book* by Nicholas Thoburn.

[jstor-labs.github.io](#) | [Download book](#) | [page 17 of 59](#) | [#fringing](#) | [ASOU](#) | [CONTACT US](#)

[TopicGraph](#) TEXT

Herman Gorter: Poems of 18th A Selection  
 HERMAN GORTER  
 More

4 Stars  
 100% Positive  
 100% Positive  
 100% Positive

Topics of Contents

- Poetry
- Clouds
- Burial cists
- Language translation
- Fingers
- Tarts
- Sun
- Shoulder
- Tears
- Rhyme

**T**wee lampen schijnen,  
 de spiegel schemerblauwt, er schrijven  
 lichten in meubels rondom,  
 alle dingen zijn stom.

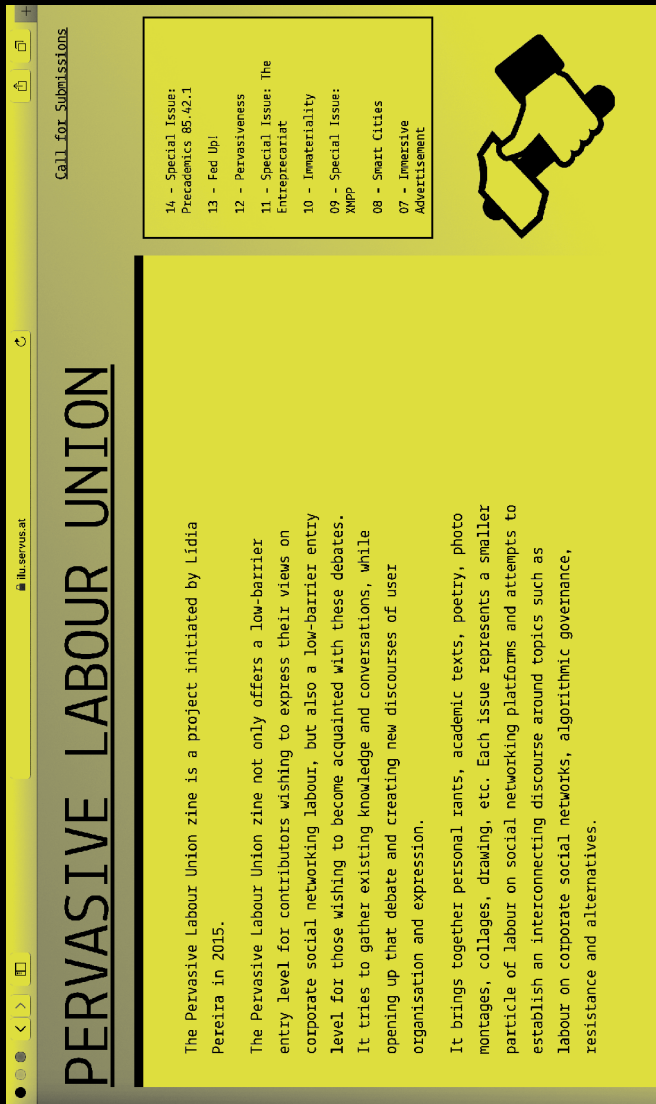
Ik hoor adem uit een vrouw  
 komen, ik wou  
 ik wou – ik zit zwaar en stil,  
 't is niets wat ik wil.

Hoor de idok rinkelklien,  
 hij telt de ooggenblikken.

TopicGraph offers data analysis of texts in a graphic interface.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [publicbooks.org](http://publicbooks.org). The page features a navigation menu with links for **ESSAYS**, **INTERVIEWS**, **SECTIONS**, **SERIES**, and **PARTNERS**. A prominent **Public Books** logo is displayed in a dark banner. Below the navigation, the article title **RAPE CULTURE SYLLABUS** is centered, with the date **10.15.2016** and the author **SYLLABUS** listed underneath. The main content area includes a photograph of a protest with a sign that reads **DON'T GET RAPED**. To the right of the image, the author's name **BY LAURA GUL KOWSKI** is shown, along with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Email. At the bottom of the page, there is a **GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER** section with a text input field labeled **Your Email:** and a **SIGN UP** button. A **PUBLIC BOOKS DATABASE** banner is also visible, featuring a laptop icon and the text **a catalog of open-access resources for scholars**.

An example of a Syllabus, published by Public Books.



# PERVASIVE LABOUR UNION

The Pervasive Labour Union zine is a project initiated by Lidia Pereira in 2015.

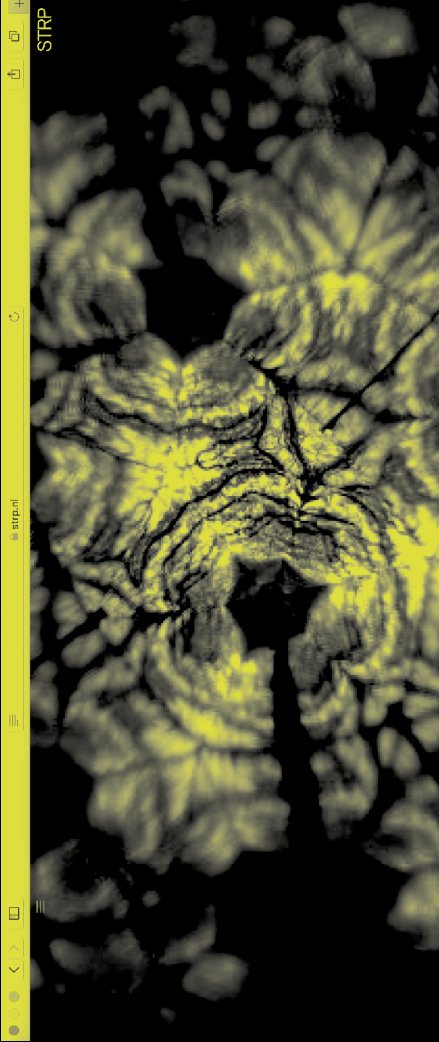
The Pervasive Labour Union zine not only offers a low-barrier entry level for contributors wishing to express their views on corporate social networking labour, but also a low-barrier entry level for those wishing to become acquainted with these debates. It tries to gather existing knowledge and conversations, while opening up that debate and creating new discourses of user organisation and expression.

It brings together personal rants, academic texts, poetry, photo montages, collages, drawing, etc. Each issue represents a smaller particle of labour on social networking platforms and attempts to establish an interconnecting discourse around topics such as labour on corporate social networks, algorithmic governance, resistance and alternatives.

- 14 - Special Issue: Precademics 85.42.1
- 13 - Fed Up!
- 12 - Pervasiveness
- 11 - Special Issue: The Entrepreneuriat
- 10 - Immateriality
- 09 - Special Issue: XMPP
- 08 - Smart Cities
- 07 - Immersive Advertisement



Screenshot of Pervasive Labour Union Zine, a project by Lidia Pereira.



# Timothy Morton Reading Group

Timothy Morton

9 December 2019, 6 & 20 January 2020 (19:30 – 21:00)

Read 'Being Ecological' together with us.

Morton's books are an invitation to start thinking in an associative, playful way. And what better than to do this together? With our reading group we can pause, think and discuss Morton's ideas together.

GENERAL  
PART OF  
→ AN EVENING WITH TIMOTHY  
MORTON

Leading up to his talk, STRP Eindhoven organized a reading group of philosopher Timothy Morton's work.





*URGENT  
PUBLISHING –  
THE CONFERENCE*





The twenty-first century has witnessed the liberation of publishing practices. Digital technologies have brought the printing press to the masses. Who gets to publish and when, the medium used, and the channels through which information is consumed have all changed drastically. A plethora of tools, applications, infrastructures, models, and hacks makes many futures of publishing possible. How to realize sustainable, high-quality alternatives within this domain? Questions like these were brought to the fore at the Urgent Publishing conference, which took place between 15 and 17 May, 2019. This free, three-day event welcomed researchers, students, artists, and publishers in Arnhem and Amsterdam for discussions, explorations, workshops, and experiments around publishing strategies in post-truth times.

### POST-TRUTH PUBLISHING

The common narrative about post-truth is this: public opinion is increasingly formed by emotion rather than objective facts and populists eagerly and successfully exploit social media's speediness and emotional appeal, using the ineffectiveness of well-balanced, slower-paced responses to their advantage. With this statement moderator

Florian Cramer (Willem de Kooning Academy) opened the Pre-Conference Night at the Academic Club in Amsterdam. How to counter misinformation and stimulate public debate in-between fast populism and slow academia? Discussing various counterstrategies, Morten Paul, Nikola Richter, Clara Balaguer, and Padmini Ray Murray set the tone for the conference.

Morten Paul and Nikola Richter historicized both the notion of post-truth and the traditionally slow response of scholarly means of communicating. Alternative facts and speedy publishing strategies have always been around: from far-right publishing of little magazines, periodicals, newspapers, and reading and study groups, to 16th to 18th century chapbooks – street literature that was cheaply produced to spread popular cultures widely. Post-truth is not so much a lack of truth, but rather a proliferation of truths and competing facts, according to Paul. Padmini Ray Murray pointed out that blaming social media does not bring anyone any further. In some parts of the world, even when social media activism is very ephemeral, it is often the only means for criticizing the status quo.

To meaningfully infiltrate debates the speakers suggested an awareness of the context and the situation in which publishing takes place, and their deployment into a critical publishing strategy. Examples ranged from personally placing 25 hard copies of a book in the right hands to

reviving chapbooks in EPUB format, engaging in troll wars and projecting lists of harassers on public buildings. Dealing with post-truth should always be about ‘more discussion’, never ‘more authority’. When and where are the discussions taking place, and who are involved? This first night of conversations left participants with a strong sense of urgency to make a variety of new and old publishing practices relevant, impactful, and lasting.

### WHAT PUBLISHING DOES

Situatedness and sensitivity to the specific context where publishing takes place appeared to be a recurring theme on the first full conference day as well. The first session, titled The Carrier Bag Theory of Non-Fiction, probed alternative formats and content structures. What forms do we need to tell an urgent story, or to tell a story urgently? How to dismantle the straightforward, authoritative narrative, whether it's departing from research or from post-truth politics?

Janneke Adema and Gary Hall proposed an alternative vision of modular publishing to counter existing, monologic practices. They formulated a critique of modularity, which cuts up cultural objects into smaller, less complex fragments that are easier to control and commodify, and tends to obscure the political, cultural, and social context from which a publication emerges. Culture in itself is not modular but is

being made modular in digital environments, primarily to satisfy the needs of the market. Modularity is closely interwoven with commodification. Starting from the post-humanities, they proposed instead to develop modes of gathering and combining research, shifting away from the focus on the published text as object and the individual author as subject, and focusing instead on the relationality of modules.

Lídia Pereira showcased her Pervasive Labour Union Zine that started as research into labor on social media platforms and later branched out into other subjects. It wouldn't be the only appearance of the zine as a preferred medium at the conference. According to Pereira, zines work towards discourse instead of definite conclusions, by offering a low-threshold entry level for contributors and readers. With each new edition building on the previous ones, the zine tries to gather existing knowledge and conversations, while opening up the debate and creating new discourses. Axel Andersson talked about another way of opening up publishing to other groups and illustrated the importance of locality in publishing with a project on the Stockholm's Supermarket Art Fair, where a newspaper written by visitors was edited, published, and printed on the spot.

In the discussion it came to the fore that when thinking about publishing as a situated and relational practice, it is an urgent matter where in the process cuts are made and to what ends, and

what is kept or lost in the process. Modular publishing can radically expand and open up the public sphere for critique, but only if it is aware of the relations with its context and the conditions under which publishing takes place. The question becomes not what publishing is, but what publishing does.

### ACTION!

Memes offer an extreme example of what publishing can do. However trivial and frivolous they may seem, they are indeed a very powerful means, as shown by their power to influence political campaigns and their outcomes. The session Memes as Means looked into the possibilities of memes as a publishing strategy. Bits of Freedom's Evelyn Austin talked about digital human rights such as freedom of publishing and distribution in the context of the EU's Article 13 copyright directive, which sometimes has been called a war on memes. The internet has always carried the promise to empower the powerless, and indeed it does empower. But as so often is the case with means of empowerment, it also empowers the already powerful even more. Austin showed many examples of how those in power hamper the communication of suppressed groups.

The way the web is developing may instil the desire to leave it behind and start all over somewhere else. But not all of us have the luxury of leaving the platforms. As was also made clear

on the opening night of the conference, for some to engage on these platforms is the only activist way forward. That this can actually be quite powerful was illustrated by Clara Balaguer and Isabel Löfgren, who gave examples of counter-memeing. As memes derive their power from the complex of relations they arise from and their ability to (quickly) form complex new relations, knowing how to tap into this can make memes into means to change things. In the end, democracy is not a given. We shouldn't surrender to the polarizing and lies-driven way of doing politics that is becoming dominant but start taking back initiative - and maybe even start to troll.

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Sidenote: If you decide to start trolling, please take care of yourself with help from these aphorisms from Clara Balaguer:

- Non-design facilitates speed and anyone can do it; political trolling is a ladylike-thing; from a place of privilege we need to engage in the trench wars; try to make the toxic environment a little less toxic; make sure to go to physical conventions and meetups, don't stick to fingertip activism!
- Trolling is exhausting and stressful and it can be harmful, so be conscious about



eating and drinking, it influences the troll experience.

- Learn when to stop.
- Learn how to exit the vortex.
- Confuse yourself.

## DO IT YOURSELF TOGETHER

When we shake off the idea of publication as a working towards a static object, we can start to look at other – social, emotional, material, and spiritual – aspects of publishing. In the last session of the conference, The Afterlife of Publications, Cristina Garriga, Karolien Buurman, Marc van Elburg, and Krista Jantowski each in their own way highlighted the importance for publishers to actively work on building relationships, to bridge the gap between authors, readers, and themselves, to build communities, and to collaborate within and outside of their own network.

The DIY culture of zines, as was presented by Marc van Elburg, is a good example of how by networking, sharing, reflecting, and responding to others a community or even a culture can arise from the circulation of knowledge. Zine culture, which grew up together with the internet, acted outside of commercial consumerist culture and therefore outside of conventions. While the 90s zine culture mostly migrated to the internet,

today's (feminist) zine making renaissance positions itself as an alternative to the internet (particularly, to blogging and social media). Often emphasizing the handmade, visual, and material qualities of its medium, this contemporary practice places importance on creating relations and community meetings in real life.

The networked culture of zines provides an example of how books or other publications can be more than simply a product and transform into knowledge carriers that bring people together and maintain their relevance over time. For makers and scholars, as Padmini Ray Murray urged, it is important to think about how to keep publications vital not only in the here and now. Language and concepts can help us think about the classification of knowledge, make us understand how the world is represented, and challenge us not to leave holes in our archives. The book, or any other publication, can serve as a catalyst for connection in the post-truth era, so we should fight harder to keep them from disappearing. The echoes of the afterlife will reverberate through new and renewed publishing strategies. In workshops and more informal discussions, this is what the participants set out to do on the third day of the conference.

### GET TO WORK

At the full, last day of the conference, the participants experimented with publishing strategies in

different workshops. In Say It Ain't So, a workshop organised by Amy Pickles and Cristina Cochior, participants played with sound to voice to speech making, recording, arranging, and announcing. The investigation into the question 'How can we disrupt the algorithmic tracking of our voices and language?', accumulated in a comedic ringtone performance. The workshop, All Sources Are Broken by Labor Neunzehn, showed participants how hypertext and print coexist. Playing with and adding to a navigable archive of collected reference material, they explored the deferred space between offline and online, its delay and decay. In the workshop organised by NXS: Surgencies - A Personal Protest Statement, participants created a collective lexicon of personal viewpoints towards the influence of the ubiquitous technology around us. By investigating and collectively mapping emotional responses to technology and their behavioral implications, the participants created personal protest statements that were published in the conference space. During the lunch break Florian Cramer and Roel Roscam Abbing talked about federated social networks, how they work, what they do, and what chances and pitfalls they present for the publishing domain. And XPUB students questioned understandings of networks, autonomy, online publishing, and social infrastructures.

The closing evening of the conference was held at Motel Spatie's and Zinedepo's #Synchronicity-ofparasites mini symposium.

The evening had been independently thought up and organized by van Marc van Elburg. Working with theories on the parasite as a metaphor for media culture, Marc found himself in a hotel in Ljubljana one day right next to an art space called P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. which he did not previously know of. This coincidence can be explained by the inherent synchronicity of parasites, which is probably why we (unknowingly) planned the conference on the same day! And harnessing parasitical power, we made the #Synchronicity-ofparasites symposium part of the Urgent Publishing program.



Urgent Publishing Conference day one.

# URGENT PUBLISHING

New MEMES  
AS MEANS

Strategies

FEDERATED POST-HUMANIST  
PUBLISHING WRITING

in Post-CRITICAL  
DESIGN

Truth Times

#SYNCHRONICITY  
OF PARASITES THE AFTER LIFE  
OF PUBLICATIONS

REGISTER FOR CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOPS IN  
AMSTERDAM AND ARNHEM:

[NETWORKCULTURES.ORG/URGENTPUBLISHING](http://NETWORKCULTURES.ORG/URGENTPUBLISHING)

# 15-17.05.2019

Admission is free. Registration required. #urgentpublishing

Conference poster designed by Loes Claessens.

The image is a screenshot of a Twitter post on a mobile device. At the top, the browser address bar shows 'twitter.com'. The Twitter navigation bar includes icons for home, search, notifications, messages, lists, profile, and a plus sign for more options. The tweet is from the account @INCamsterdam, posted on May 17, 2019. The text of the tweet reads: 'At Motel Spatie now Wilfried Houjebek on art, the financial market and how this relates to the parasitic #synchronicityofparasites #UrgentPublishing'. Below the text is a photograph of a man in a dark jacket standing in front of a whiteboard. The whiteboard has two columns of text: 'TRIP - SOCIAL' and 'TRIP - ECONOMIC'. The man is pointing at the board. The tweet has 1 retweet and 4 likes. At the bottom of the tweet, there is a small logo for 'Institute of Business' and a plus sign for more options.

twitter.com

#urgentpublishing

INCamsterdam @INCamsterdam · May 17, 2019

At Motel Spatie now Wilfried Houjebek on art, the financial market and how this relates to the parasitic #synchronicityofparasites #UrgentPublishing

TRIP - SOCIAL  
TRIP - ECONOMIC

1 retweet 4 likes

INCamsterdam @INCamsterdam · May 17, 2019

We've landed at the wonderful Motel Spatie in Presikhaaf and we're kicking off with the first talk by Anders Gullestad on Parasiting Parasites #UrgentPublishing

Institute of Business

#Synchronicityofparasites at Motel Spatie.





*UPSIDE DOWN,  
INSIDE OUT:  
A RELATIONAL  
APPROACH  
TO CONTENT  
STRUCTURE*







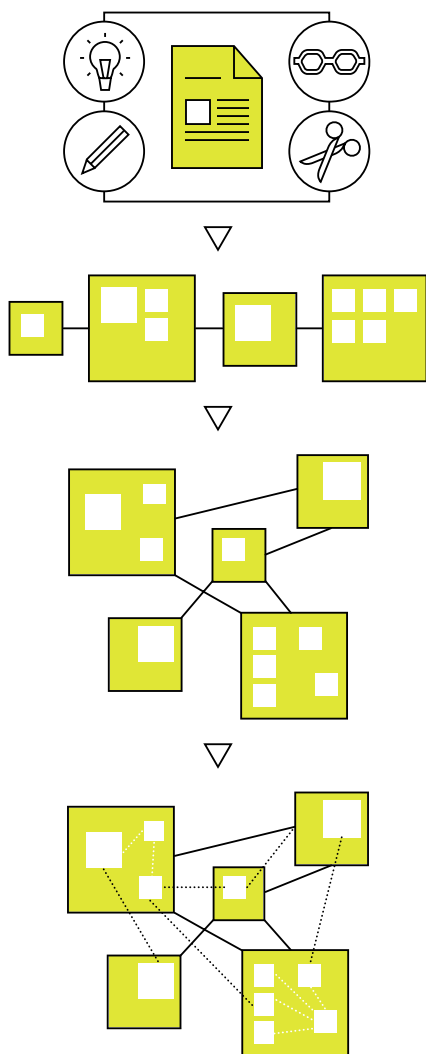
E-books as we know them tend to follow the standards formed by the history of the codex over the course of hundreds of years. They function like paper books but in digital form, with a cover, a half title page, and then starting on the first page with a table of contents or an introduction. Why should it be that way? As we know, the medium is the message. Couldn't the digital book be put to work to foster a different message?

New habits and societal demands translate into new forms and styles of writing and publishing, writes Amaranth Borsuk in The Book. Our age of ubiquitous media has confronted us with such new habits and demands. How can the book as a form respond? As Caleb Everett writes in Working on Our Thoughts: 'The electronic book – as represented by the prevailing format, the EPUB – is not only a vessel for text and images but a set of rules that determine how to edit, design, and read.' How then to develop a rule set that caters to a different way of writing and publishing, truly applying the options that digital technology has to offer? How can digital publishing open up to new styles of writing, editing, or even thinking?

These are some of the ambitious questions that led to the production of Upside Down Inside Out, consisting of a manual for restructuring content according to relations between content modules, and an extension of the tool Twine, which allows for the digital representation of such content relations. Here we will explain the concepts, backgrounds, and process that guided the research.

### THE STAND-ALONE GROUP

The group performing the research was made up of three publishers of ‘stand-alone books’, a web developer, a designer, and a researcher: Pia Pol from arts and theory publisher Valiz, Gert-Jan van Dijk from 1001 Publishers, Miriam Rasch from the Institute of Network Cultures, Marc de Bruijn from Puntpixel, Barbara Lateur from Studio BLT, and Kimmy Spreeuwenberg from the Willem de Kooning Academy. Many of the group also worked on the Digital Publishing Toolkit in 2013-2014, where tools for hybrid production workflows were conceived. Now we focused on the starting point of the publishing process, when the content of a publication takes shape.



From linear to multi-linear relations between modules.

## KEY NOTION: RELATIONS

A call for new forms of publishing has risen from society. But how should we interpret this call? Currently, there is ample talk of a loss of reliable information or of a shared understanding of facts and truths. Does this mean we should reach back to an imagined time when those might have seemed to exist? Or should we try to find other ways of presenting information; ways that allow more agency on the part of the reader, that resist the monolithic story line, and that show multiple perspectives without desperately seeking closure? We propose the latter. In our thinking about the possibilities of different narrative structures we were inspired by authors such as Ursula Le Guin, Tara McPherson, and Paul Soulellis (for an overview of the literature research, please read [From Modularity to Relationality: Other Forms of Writing, Thinking & Publishing](#)).

To get a grip on such different structures of content, we decided to work primarily on the beginning stages of the publishing process and thus on the role of the author and editor, rather than on the perception of the reader. How could different modes of structuring contents and building arguments be put into practice? We started out from the hypothesis that applying modular processes, such as is common in software development, could help conceive of new and exciting publishing forms and workflows. What would such modular strategies have to offer both for

rethinking formats and for conceiving methods to support that?

During the course of our research we found that modularity should be complemented with attention for relationality. Cutting up content into modules can only be the first step. Presenting information in a meaningful way requires the definition (albeit open and multiple) of possible relations between such modules. It is through this reflection on connections between modules that alternative forms become imaginable.

As such, relations came to be the most crucial topic of our research. Precisely the foregrounding of connections instead of single modules is what presented itself as urgent. It is in the relations between modules that the relevance of content is to be found, and importantly, it is via such relations that the urgency of a topic can be articulated. Moreover, relations do not only function on the level of content structure, they also apply to the connections between different persons and objects involved in the publishing process. Key to other ways of presenting information, we found, is to not just have an author proclaiming something but to start from the idea that the book is *doing* something, and that it should be allowed to do so. The reader plays an active part in that, supported by the design and interactive development of the publication. In this way, a focus on relations might also open up different means for positioning a publication.

## PROCESS

We started the research by looking into modularity as a technical process. Using the publications Ritual Manifesto (1001 Publishers) and The Responsible Object (Valiz) as case studies, we tried to imagine what a re-issue of these publications could look like, when made using a modular digital approach. We were interested in the possibilities of non-linear or multi-linear structures, while being aware that many experiments in this domain have been conducted with limited success over the past decades (see Non-linear Publication Tools). Could we have the reader engage with the material in a different, more open way? Would it be possible to approach the reader as an active and responsible partner, stepping away from the one-voice-tells-it-all manner that is still so persistent, especially in publishing research content?

After investigating existing tools for interactive storytelling and non-linear digital publications, we decided to take a deep dive into Scalar, an application that seemed promising for pursuing alternative content structures through modular publishing. Trying to transpose Ritual Manifesto and The Responsible Object to this digital authoring and publishing environment wasn't always easy. However, Scalar's ability to visualize relationships between elements of content taught us an important lesson about the editorial value of such visualizations. It provides



a distanced perspective on one's own content, bringing into view the (possible) relations between the elements of which the content consists. To put it differently, it provided an experience of distant reading on just a small set of data.

This way of thinking about and (literally) looking at the structure of content turned out to be pivotal for our aims. We realized that to arrive at new ways of reader interaction, we needed to think about new ways of presenting results and building an argument in the first place. This is why we decided not to focus on making an end product nor on reader experiences, but on the very beginning of the publishing process, where writers, editors, and publishers create, collect, and work on structuring content. We saw many opportunities for approaching this phase in a digital and modular way.

Zooming in on content structure – structure understood not as set in stone but as flexible and multiple – we made the first version of a manual conceived for users who want to approach their content in a different manner. It asked editors and writers to take an analog path; using paper and scissors to cut up their contents into modules and then visualizing the relationships between them. The feedback from our testers proved that this was especially helpful in providing a reflective look at their own content, forging new insights and connections that were invisible before. It became clear that foregrounding

relations specifically proved helpful to them. Again, the ‘view from a distance’ seemed to lead to a closer scrutiny of relationships in the material, often material they had written or edited themselves and therefore knew very well (see Visualizing a Publication’s Parts and Elements and the Relationships Between Them).

Our interest in the relations between modules was heightened by some of the talks at the Urgent Publishing conference. There, we came across other publishers and scholars who employed similar approaches. Especially fruitful was the talk of Janneke Adema and Gary Hall, and Lídia Pereira and Karolien Buurman (see also Panel Report: The Carrier Bag Theory of Non-Fiction). This motivated us to pursue the relational path further in the second half of the project, where we investigated possible digital parallels to our analog manual.

One of the great benefits of digital publishing is precisely that it is possible to use, specify, and make explicit different relationships between content elements. So, while the manual for analog tinkering already offered us insights and relevant results, we wanted to see if it would be possible to develop a digital prototype as well. To understand what criteria such a tool would have to meet and focusing on the editorial gains of reflecting on material in a modular and relational way, we analyzed existing tools for visualization and mapping. In our analysis we looked

at several characteristics of these tools that are valuable in a publishing process, such as:

- questions of open source, data storage, accessibility;
- questions of formats, multimedia, input and output options;
- and of course questions specific to our topic: modular handling of content, drawing relationships, and visualization.

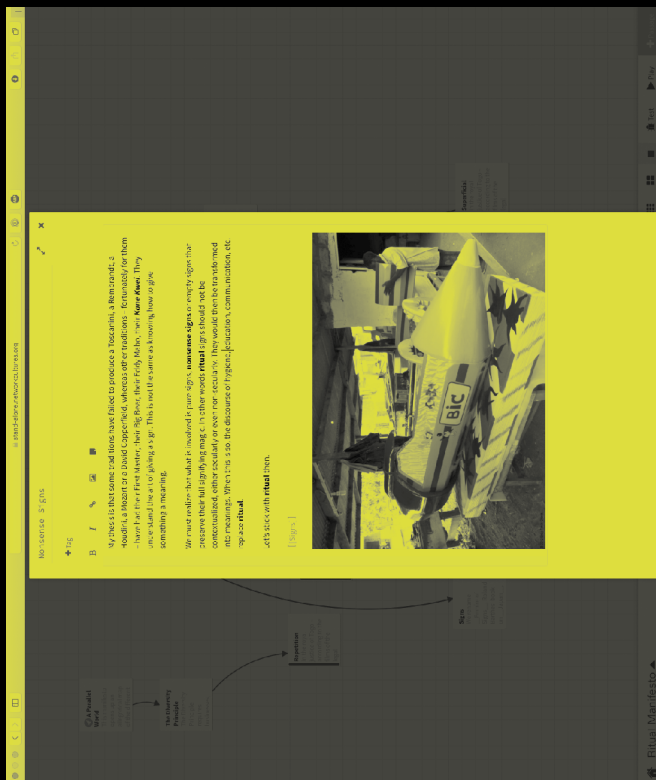
We concluded that a tool for our purposes should not only help us think through the material in a modular and relational way, but also give visual feedback on how the relationships work, and make it possible to communicate our findings to others in the publishing process. Our ideal tool would enable us to deliver content in a structured manner to a designer or developer. Since the open source tool Twine came closest to meeting these criteria, that's the tool that we developed further (see Organizing Content for a Modular Digital Publication).

In the final manual we describe three options in all for rethinking content, namely 'collage' (paper and scissors), the aforementioned Scalar, and Twine. A pdf of the manual called Upside Down Inside Out can be downloaded on the Making Public website. There you'll also find links to the Twine extension and its specifics.

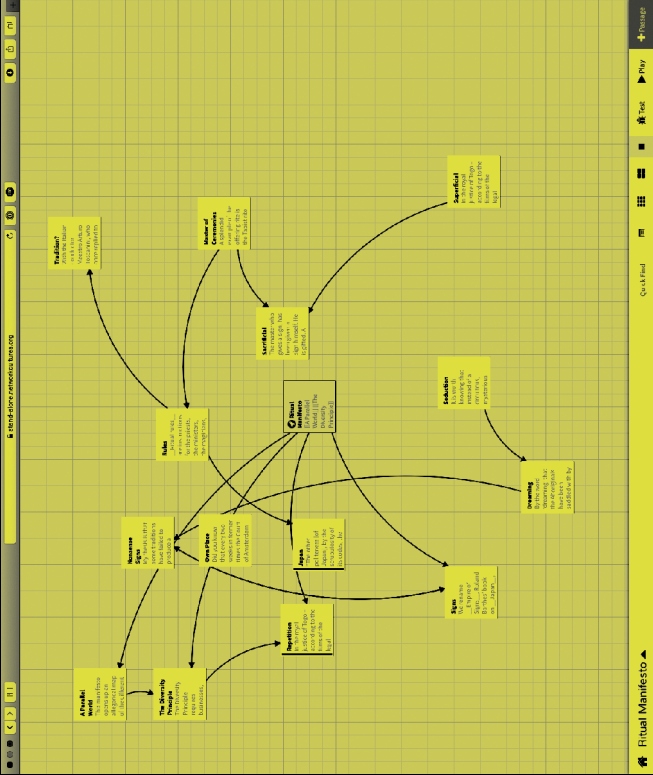
## CONCLUSION

Upside Down Inside Out is a manual for authors and editors who are fairly new to the possibilities of digital publishing and is meant to guide them in exploring the relational potential of their content. Finding relations, employing visualizations, and taking up a 'distant' yet intimate position vis-à-vis your content, are practical inroads to critically reflect on structure, meaning, and even thought itself. We hope this encourages authors, editors, publishers, and readers to (re)-consider what a book can do when it starts to engage with the outside world.





Screenshot from 'The Tool' showing the editor-interface of a specific part.



Screenshot from 'The Tool' showing an overview of different parts and their relationships in *Ritual Manifesto*.





*PLATFORM-2-  
PLATFORM:  
NETWORK OF  
INDEPENDENT  
PUBLISHERS*





Independent publishing platforms are often treasure troves of thought-provoking research, deep reflection, and gripping reads. But focusing as they do on providing high-quality content often means that these platforms have a slow publishing process, publish a limited number of items, and address niche audiences. Investing in reflection rather than newsworthy items also implies that speed is not their main driver. Such platforms are often small in size and human resources, and usually aren't able to afford advertising or other forms of paid visibility to increase their audiences. Having less content and smaller audiences in an era of rapidly updating timelines and of competing for attention proves an impossible combination.

### THE PLATFORMS GROUP

Our publishing platforms Amateur Cities, Open!, and Open Set share the above concerns: all being small, independent platforms, with slow publishing processes, focused on high quality, yet addressing a limited audience. Despite the difference in topics covered by each platform, commonalities can be identified in issues that touch upon creative practices, architecture and urbanism, social and political issues, and new media and technologies.

Instead of competing for attention, we decided to use the Making Public project as an opportunity to test the possibility of establishing an egalitarian network among the platforms involved, sharing the attention of our readers rather than trying to monopolize it. Our main research question became: How can we create meaningful relations between content items located on different publishing platforms? Our common goal was to provide relevant recommendations to our readers and enable them to navigate from platform to platform. That would also ensure that readers could gain access to more than just the content published on one platform alone, compensating for the lack of speed in providing new items. Our research question was eventually translated into the development of a digital prototype called Platform-2-Platform, which combines algorithmic recommendations and editorial decisionmaking in establishing deep links among content items hosted on all participating platforms.

The group carrying out the research consisted of three publishing platforms, two designers, a developer, and a researcher. Amateur Cities, represented by Cristina Ampatzidou and Ania Molenda, is a research-led publishing platform on urbanism, politics, and technology. Open!, represented by Jorinde Seijdel, is an online publication platform that fosters and disseminates experimental knowledge on art,

culture, and the public domain. Open Set, represented by Irina Shapiro, is an independent platform that promotes the social relevance of design and visual culture. During the project's first year, UNStudio was also part of the publishers' group. Niels Schrader and Martijn de Heer from Mind Design have been working on the interface design and André Fincato from Hackers & Designers has developed the matching algorithm. Inte Gloerich is a researcher from the Institute of Network Cultures. Silvio Lorusso has offered his input on various stages of the design and development process.

#### WHAT IS PLATFORM-2-PLATFORM?

A specific type of link that is connected in its very own way to speed, quality, and positioning is clickbait, a practice that occupied a large share of our discussions. Clickbait is a form of advertising that sometimes uses a thumbnail image and a hyperlink, designed in such a way as to attract the reader's attention to the content, which is usually sensationalized, exaggerated, or even misleading. The pervasiveness of clickbait makes it easily recognizable but also attests to its effectiveness. We asked: What are the characteristics of clickbait advertising and how could we adopt a similar language to offer and position high-quality external content?

In practical terms, the prototype we created suggests a selection of articles from the network's

platforms that, upon approval by the editors, are displayed as recommendations on the front-end of other participating platforms. The prototype is composed of two layers: a database collecting publishers' articles and a matching algorithm to suggest connections between them. A third layer is given by editors reviewing the algorithmic suggestions and deciding if the links are meaningful or not.

While the database collection is a fairly straightforward scraping process – where it is organized within specific semantics how articles are stored (e.g. which fields an article is composed of) – the matching algorithm requires more explanation (the tool is disseminated on the [Making Public website](#)).

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The basic diagram is as follows:

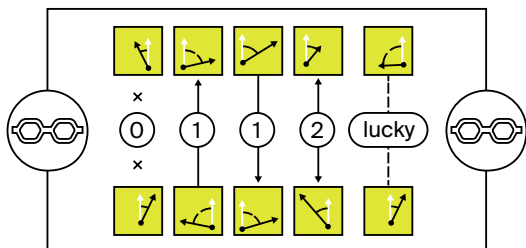
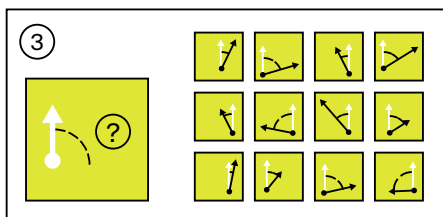
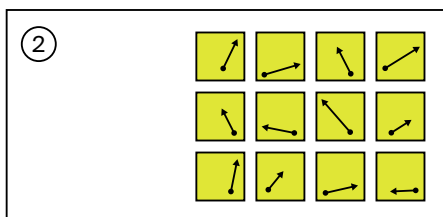
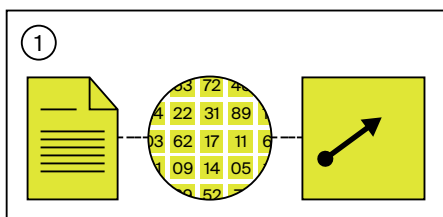
1. articles are transformed into vectors;
  2. a model of the algorithm is built upon this pool of articles;
  3. the article requesting matches is used as external vector and positioned in the model, in order to get a list of similar articles.
-

Let's unpack this:

1. A vector is a numerical representation of the content of the article: each article is first tokenized (turned into a list of words by stripping away common English words such as 'the', 'where', etc. as well as punctuation and anything else you want), then the remaining words are counted to get a vector representation of it (e.g. how many times each word appears in the article).
2. Currently the model combines all articles from the publishers, except those for which we ask article matches; the model is built by trying to match all articles with each other any number of times given. Every new attempt is built upon the previous one (training), the result of it is the model of the algorithm.
3. An 'external' article, which did not contribute to the training of the model, is added to it and then used to request matches that are 'most similar'; this is measured by cosine similarity: each vector has a direction and length, the cosine similarity is the angle between two vectors. The smaller the angle, the more similar they are according to the model. This allows to have vectors 'placed' in different areas of the model, as we compare by angle rather than distance.

The list of most similar articles comes back and the editor decides whether the connections are meaningful or not. The editor rates the matches and this feedback is stored in the database next to the articles. An option could be to use the review process done by the editors to influence the matching algorithm model and close the feedback loop.





Diagrammatic visualization of the matchmaking algorithm behind Platform-2-Platform.

## EDITOR-ALGORITHM COLLABORATION AND NETWORK TRUST

Compared to automated recommendation algorithms that suggest content based on readers' individual preferences and browsing history, Platform-2-Platform is an integral part of the editorial process. Before recommending content to their readers, the publishers are able to rate the relevance and quality of an automated suggestion. Only mutually approved matches between articles are displayed in the front end of the platforms' websites.

Contrary to marketing tools such as click-bait, Platform-2-Platform caters to the editor's need for control over external content, instead of attracting advertising clicks. The tool thus strengthens the position of editors instead of replacing them with an automated solution. Publishers are able to accept or reject suggestions, based not only on relevance, but also on expected quality standards and adherence to the curatorial and artistic vision of the platform. They can also assess the quality and relevance of the automated suggestions in order to improve the algorithm in the long run.

Participating in Platform-2-Platform implies an increased level of trust among the platforms involved. Making articles available to other platforms requires a certain level of confidence that these articles will appear in a suitable context. There is always the risk of

de-contextualization and appearing next to publications that might criticize or even undermine the linked article.

## THE FUTURE OF PLATFORM-2-PLATFORM

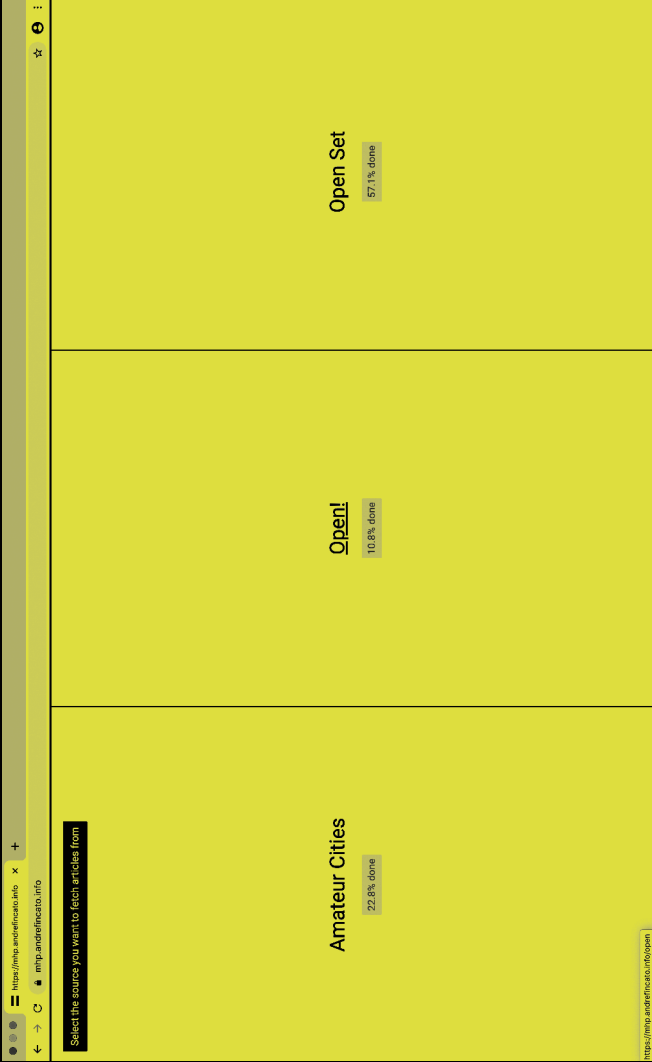
When testing the tool, it became clear that creating successful matches between articles is not an easy task. Despite a satisfactory number of positively rated matches, platform editors were often surprised by the algorithmic suggestions and struggled to understand what the connection was. In other instances, editors would identify links with articles not suggested by the algorithm. In any case, the testing process revealed both the difficulties in understanding how the algorithm works, as well as the potential of getting to know in depth the content of other platforms and creating meaningful connections between them.

All platforms participating in this research see the value of developing this tool further and implementing it on their websites. We also see the potential of expanding the network of Platform-2-Platform with other publishing platforms following similar editorial processes. Expanding the number of participating platforms does come with certain questions about network governance. We understand trust as the basis for sharing content within the network, as a risk-taking decision in collaboration, as well as a mark of solidarity

with the ethical position and attitude of the organizations and individuals who are involved in the network. However, trust is easy to achieve among a small group of participants, but much harder to maintain when the volume of available content becomes impossible to process. A federated peer network provides a potentially useful model to approach scale. While each publisher maintains full autonomy over their editorial and publishing strategy, by joining the federation, they commit to an open relation with the other members, to making their content available to others, and to hosting content by other publishers.



Clickbait advertising is pervasive and effective. Platform-2-Platform adapts this format to offer high quality content instead.



The portal for editors to confirm matches proposed by the algorithm.

Source article  
<https://mbo.andrefinancio.info/>

Publisher  
**open-set-reader**, 21 Dec 2019, source ↗

Title  
**A Truth to Deviate From**

Author  
 Esteban Gomez-Rossell

Tags  
[Archive-Memory](#) [Media](#) [Control](#) [Inequity](#) [Colonization](#) [Alternatives](#) [Futures](#) [Methods](#)

Abstract  
 No abstract found to scrape...

Body  
 In his lecture for Open Set Lab 2017, the artist linkNoam Toran discussed the transgressive potential of alternative narratives and para-literature, in the context of the vast audio-visual archive, where the lecture took place. He raised questions about how misreading and misinterpreting the archive in a conscious manner might result in the creation of fictions that allow for the generation of alternative perspectives, and a more complex understanding of reality.

Toran's work encompasses films, performances, exhibitions — the work is less about concrete results than it is about orchestrating situations through which themes, usually those that question social conformity, take voice through objects and narratives. Toran resists labeling himself as a critical designer or an artist, focusing instead on how his work can explore historical periods and objects, and their influences. He insists that memory and fiction are not really two things apart, and that the lines between them can blur to reveal new and unexpected perspectives.

Match suggestion 2: Fear of Missing Out

Publisher  
**online-open**, 22 Jul 2015, source ↗

Title  
**Fear of Missing Out**

Author  
 Brigitte van der Sande

Tags  
[Activism](#) [Image-Representation](#) [Media](#)

Abstract  
**Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)** at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London (29–31 May 2015) was the catchily but not always relevant title of a three-day event with an impressive line-up of artists, theorists and activists who mapped out the state of technological, social, political and artistic practices in the present-day postdigital reality.

Body  
**Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)** at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London (29–31 May 2015) was the catchily but not always relevant title of a three-day event with an impressive line-up of artists, theorists and activists who mapped out the state of technological, social, political and artistic practices in the present-day postdigital reality.

Postdigital is understood here not as a reality after the digital era, but as a critical examination and understanding of the consequences of the digital reality. The key question at FoMO was: "At a time when online and 'real life' worlds are indistinguishable, it appears that questions of how information is communicated and received, stored and shared, and by whom, remains a primary focus. If our postdigital lives are at odds with our image-based consumer culture and the excesses of the digital revolution, we ask, what choices do we have to

Select criteria for match

Title ✓ Author ✓ Tags ✓ Body text ✓ Get Matches

Algorithm match score **38.72%** Year rating **1 2 3 4 5** Match or no match **Yes / No**

The back-end of Platform-2-Platform, where editors are presented with algorithmic suggestions for recommended articles. Here, the editors confirm matches that they agree with.

open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain

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All images by Federico Antonini

1/2

Giulio Crispiani is an Italian visual artist and writer based in Amsterdam. She received a BFA from the Ceramics Department at Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam in 2019 and completed a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam in 2020. She is currently pursuing an MFA in Art Praxis at the Dutch Art Institute, Amheim. Crispiani's practice shows a stable trajectory moving from a base in the visual and object to the textual.

Platform 2 Platform - Network of Independent Publishing

openart.nl  
**A Truth to Deviate From**  
 Esteban Gomez-Rosell with Noam Toran  
 In his lecture for Open Set Lab 2017, the artist Noam Toran discussed the transgressive potential of alternative narratives and para-literature, in the context...

www.openart.nl  
**Contemporary Urban Paranoia**  
 Elisa Tangheroni  
 Why We Should Look into the Surveillance Camera

www.openart.nl  
**Continuous Monuments and Imaginable Alternatives**  
 Tobias Revel  
 In 1969, Superstudio, a radical Italian design group, made a proposal for what they called the 'Continuous Monument'. It was a homogeneous block of architecture th...

Year  
 Content type  
 Theme  
 Tag

Platform-2-Platform recommendations featured underneath an article on Open!







*PARASITIZING  
THE AFTERLIFE:  
POSITIONING  
THROUGH  
REMEDICATION*





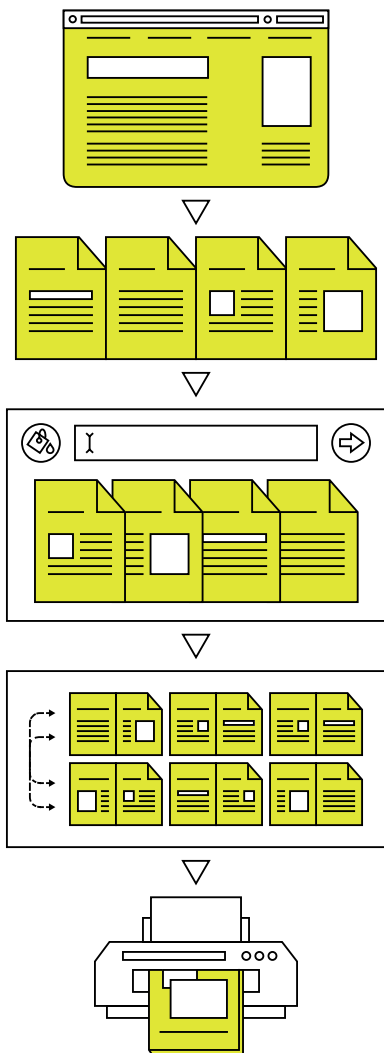
A lot of the older content in periodicals winds up in a metaphorical wasteland. Old content is often not easily accessible from a journal's homepage or it can only be found in (paper) issues that are no longer available. All the while, the content that is unavailable can still be very relevant for new and existing audiences. Most publishers will agree that there is still a lot to gain when it comes to the long-term positioning of their publications and the connection between the publisher, platform or publication, and the public. Therefore, the recurring question in our research has been: How can we prolong the afterlife of a publication, or, how can publishers prevent publications from taking permanent residence in the wasteland and instead give them new life?

### THE PERIODICALS GROUP

The periodicals group had a focus on journal publishers. Amsterdam University Press is a publisher of academic books, journals, and textbooks in the Humanities and Social Sciences that releases academic books and journals for Open Access immediately after publication. The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision is an institute in the field of media culture and audio-visual archiving. Sound and Vision publishes

two peer-reviewed, open access scholarly journals on the topics of media and television history and culture ([VIEW](#) and [TMG](#)) and maintains an online publishing repository for staff writings. ArtEZ Press is the publisher of ArtEZ University of the Arts. ArtEZ Press recently launched the online journal and platform [APRIA](#), which publishes high-impact essays and image and sound contributions that examine art and interventions of the arts in relation to science and society, and encourage dialogue around themes that are critical and urgent to the futures that we will live in.

As publishers of periodicals we all share a common goal, namely facilitating the exchange of knowledge and making research readily available to a wide audience. In many ways, we can say that we have achieved this goal by publishing innovative and high-quality research in our open access journals. However, we realize it is not enough to only make the research available, we must also ensure that we connect readers to the content most relevant to them.



Diagrammatic visualization of the Parazine tool.

## THE ACADEMIC ZINE

It can be difficult for publishers to compete in a digital space where content is produced at break-neck speed and where new is implicitly seen as better. For readers, however, it is an even bigger task to deal with the overload of notifications and social media accounts vying for their attention and engagement on a daily basis. So, how can we position our content in such a way that it can compete with the new and how can we keep our audience engaged and connected?

To start, we liked the idea of recontextualizing content, thereby highlighting new perspectives and connections to broaden the audience. However, recontextualizing alone only temporarily prolongs the afterlife. We needed to go one step further, which is how we came to value the idea of remediation. This is where we began toying with the medium of the zines, as a form of remediation of the journal that involves active participation of the reader. The idea of making an ‘academic zine’ of our content proved to be the most promising and interesting for accomplishing our goals.

Zines have a long history. They came to be known as non-commercial, anti-authoritarian, and handmade publications that depend heavily on network culture for their distribution. This seems to be in juxtaposition to what we know about academic publications. But, as Silvio Lorusso makes clear in his blog post



The Oxymoron of the Academic Zine, ‘zines have always played a role in spreading and popularising academic writing; think of Deleuze and Guattari, Michel Foucault and more recently Judith Butler.’

Using the format of the zine as a target for remediation means that we would be able to highlight old as well as new content. In addition, the format opens up vast opportunities for re-contextualizing and personalizing the existing content. The zine is not curated by the publishers, but rather by the readers, so they can create a publication that is uniquely relevant to their personal interests. The tool that we developed to this end, and the opportunities this tool creates for the reader, lets publishers distinguish themselves from their competition. It makes for a sustainable way of positioning the content and prolonging the content’s afterlife.

#### PARASITIC ZINE

During the Urgent Publishing conference, we were inspired by Marc van Elburg’s contribution Parasiting Zineculture. Marc van Elburg is an artist and zinester. He was the founder of experimental DIY noise theatre and zine library de Hondenkoekjesfabriek (The Dog Biscuit Factory), and a curator for Planetart. He is currently looking after the Zinedepo zinelibrary in Motel Spatie in Presikhaaf, Arnhem. In his talk he stated: ‘The zine today can be seen (...) as the

new materialism of online social networks. What I mean by new materialism is that a part of myself, my memory, my social networks is situated online, and it somehow seems to make sense that this virtual self is looking for some kind of representation in the real world.'

In other words, the concept of the zine does not only function as a way to position content, but for the reader it also works as a bridge between the digital and the real world, and as a way to save content that might have personal meaning for them. Van Elburg also elaborated on the concept of the parasite zine. Traditionally, a parasite zine would look to deconstruct classic hierarchies, such as male/female. But in this digital age, the parasite zine is a selective and binding agent. The virtual self that is looking for information can construct its own little habitat.

This idea of combining the academic and the parasitic zine, or parasitic publishing, resonated with us and inspired us to think of a tool that would allow readers to bypass the publisher's curation and remediate their own product by selecting from all available content. It was important for us to provide a different experience than what one could expect from simply browsing the website and printing the relevant publications. Zines are usually put together by hand and have low production costs. Inspired by these characteristics, we decided not only to make the zine printable as a booklet, but more significantly, to

force the reader to print it in order to properly read all the content. This has added value for the publishers as the zine can easily be shared, gifted, or used in classes.

### THE PARAZINE TOOL

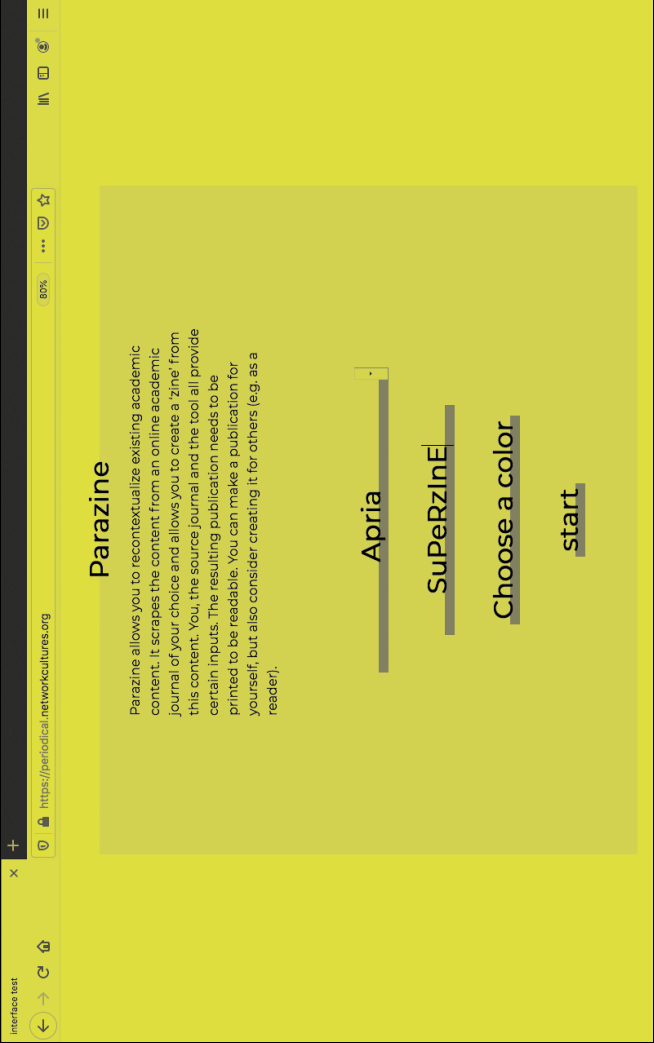
Our zine-making tool (which is disseminated on the Making Public website) has an interface that allows users to make their own selection of existing content from an online academic journal. This content is laid out according to an aesthetic that combines input from the user, from the journal, and from an algorithm, resulting in a zine-like experience. The laid-out content is then offered as a pdf that must be printed. We decided to go for a format that is influenced by all the parties involved rather than for a format that is completely curated by an algorithm, because we wanted the user to be able to curate content to their needs, while the publishers still retain some control over the content and design of the zine. So, the user makes a selection based on the tags that are set by the publisher in the journal, and the algorithm adds content based on a set of predesigned rules.

Developer Arjen Suijker designed the tool itself to be parasitic as well. The tool can be used on any WordPress site. The tool ‘scrapes’ the content from the front end without requiring access to the back end. This would make it relatively easy for other publishers to implement

the tool for their content. Designer Megan Hoogenboom has defined a set of rules that determine the design. The tool will also take into account the styling rules from the source journal as well as certain parameters set by the user. In that way, all parties involved make their mark on the resulting zine.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

During the development and test phase we became aware of several ways in which we could develop the tool further. In its current form the reader can use content from one publisher per zine. It would be interesting if the reader could choose from multiple publishers. To accomplish this, we have to research collaborative tagging, to prevent the reader being overwhelmed by innumerable tags. Then there is also the question of how to deal with dual language content. One of the options could be to add a filter option of sorts. As mentioned, the zine has to be printed in order to read it, so how to deal with non-textual content, such as videos and podcasts, is another issue. Such contributions are uniquely digital and cannot be remediated to a textual form. What kind of remediation options lie open for such hybrid contents, is a question that deserves further investigation.



Parazine webinterface: the user can give a title to the zine.



The user can compile their own zine by dragging articles to the right-hand pane.



THE SUPERZINT

# Luxurizing Pre-loved Clothes:

**Material and Functional Future of Fashion**

Book of Abstracts | International Fashion | The Material | The Future | The Virtual | The Visible | The Invisible | The Unseen | The Unheard | The Unfelt | The Unthought | The Unspoken | The Unwritten | The Unread | The Unseen | The Unheard | The Unfelt | The Unthought | The Unspoken | The Unwritten | The Unread

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# Elizabeth Losh on the #Hashtag

**Public Artifacts**

Book of Abstracts | International Fashion | The Material | The Future | The Virtual | The Visible | The Invisible | The Unseen | The Unheard | The Unfelt | The Unthought | The Unspoken | The Unwritten | The Unread

Public Artifacts is a podcast about digital thinking and the space of the archive. It features interviews with artists, designers, and researchers who explore the boundaries between digital and physical, virtual and real, and the ways in which these boundaries are being challenged. The podcast will feature personal stories and urgent research by ArtEZ students and staff, and recordings of ArtEZ sessions.

**Season 3, episode 1**

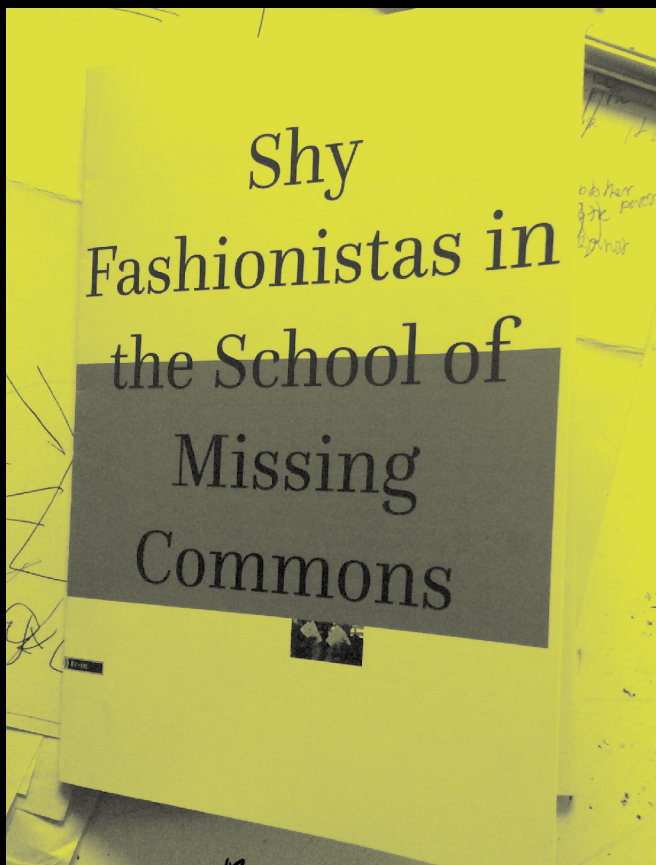
What is a hashtag for? In this episode, we explore the ways in which hashtags are used to create a sense of community and to share information. We will explore the ways in which hashtags are used to create a sense of community and to share information. We will explore the ways in which hashtags are used to create a sense of community and to share information.

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The generated pdf is designed to be printed in order to read it.



Zine made with the Parazine tool by Marc van Elburg.







*CONCLUSION:  
URGENT  
PUBLISHING  
AS SITUATED  
PRACTICE*





The Making Public project started with a question that is quite straightforward: How can publishers speed up their work and still uphold their own standards, so that they reach readers on the look-out for good information? How to balance the three factors of success – speed, quality, and positioning – so that they don't come at a cost to one another? During the course of the research the notion of time changed in character. Instead of sticking to measurable units such as weeks, months, years, and the 'now' of online publications, we started talking more and more about urgency. Urgency relates to the current moment, but reaches beyond the quick, and therefore, dirty. Urgency speaks of content next to speed, about relevance and messages, about being in the right place at the right moment, and *with the right thing in hand*.

Urgent publishing, it can be said, does not only relate to time but also to space. It is a situated practice. The three key notions that came out of the work of the three project groups show that urgency never comes on its own. It needs more than one actor. Relations, trust, and remediation all ask for more than one element to play the game, be it modules, publishers, or media. Whether links within the content are considered,

associations between platforms, or bonds that a publication can establish over time: it is connections all the way down. In this sense, urgency isn't just about moving fast but moving somewhere, it doesn't just speak up but speaks to and from a certain position. It doesn't just throw something out there but enters a space, somewhere local even if virtual.

When we talk about issues such as post-truth or fake news, the notion of urgency shows that it is not enough to think about interventions from the outside, about fact-checking, or target audiences. We are part of the debate already and shape it through our own practices, our writing, reading, and publishing habits. The way a publication exists is not unidirectional, as a linear time frame might suggest, but instead establishes connections in all kinds of directions.

One of the shared inspirations in the project can help show this: the parasite, as it was conceptualized during the Urgent Publishing conference at the #Synchronicityofparasites program and in the talk by Marc van Elburg. Although the parasite is usually viewed negatively it deserves more generous attention as well, following Michel Serres. Parasite and host can thrive because of each other – separating them could be a deadly undertaking. As such, the parasite opposes idealized conceptions of individuality, autonomy, and anthropocentrism, and asks us to consider the value of mutual relationships and networks instead.

This insight poured directly into the research that was going on in the groups and put its mark on what urgent publishing came to mean in practice. Instead of following a competitive logic, urgency calls for shared recognition and action. For urgency to be situated, it should develop into different forms of collaboration and interdependency that allow the members to flourish.

Under the influence of urgency both speed, quality, and positioning have changed meaning. To stimulate such viewpoints a focus on situatedness is pivotal. Emphasizing situatedness means clarifying the place that one occupies in relation to others. Openness and accessibility of networks, meaningful structures of contents, and building communities over time – characteristics that came from literature and desk research – all contribute to this. It is a matter of time, and space, to see how these will reflect back on the forms and contents of publications themselves.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

Doing exploratory, interdisciplinary, and applied research means that many questions come up during the process itself. Of course, many areas still remain open for further investigation. We will name some of them here.

Approaching the publishing process not primarily as a production workflow with a clear beginning and end, but rather as an ongoing process punctuated by events such as publication

ideas, releases, events, archives, etc., gives rise to many questions. When do you publish in such a situated publishing process, or in other words, when do you make a 'cut'? What happens when a publication is allowed to 'do' something rather than just be?

Some practical questions that came up with regard to the different tools and methods are:

- How to ensure that source material can flow from one phase in the publication process to the next (from writer to editor to publisher to designer to developer), when developing alternative content structures?
- How to sustain, grow, or define a network for sharing content? What governance does such a network demand?
- Would it be possible to combine content from multiple sources or languages in a zine (or something similar), and what does this mean for design, data storage, etc.?

Other questions coming out of the work on prototypes and methods had to do with their uses for analog publications and with readers' experiences. We hope to pick up some of these questions in follow-up projects.







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