



AUTOPOIESIS | ETHOPOIESIS: BIOCONVERGENT MEDIA IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERAL BIOPOLITICS

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Introduction

We are delighted to present the second part of our double issue of *MediaTropes* devoted to the theme of bioconvergence.

Together, the two issues¹ gather eleven contributions that variously address bioconvergence in two interlinked respects: on the one hand, as a phenomenon that has progressively and pervasively infiltrated the social field across a multitude of arenas; and, at the same time, as a critical theoretical frame—that is, as a means to describe and to interpret the convergence of media, technologies, and bodies across such representative sites as biomedicine, genomics, contemporary warfare, securitization, economics, informatics, entertainment, law, gender, and race.

The remit for contributions was to present a case study that might offer readers a salient instance of bioconvergence and provide an occasion to develop the concept itself as a critical-analytic tool for further research. We asked authors to treat bioconvergence as a generative problem, at once sociological, political, and technological. As editors, we suggested as a starting point that bioconvergence has become, at one and the same time, a pervasive set of social relations and a sedimented media trope and cultural referent. Thus, we see in the mediatized imaginary that biology, the natural environment, and human life are subjects of—and inescapably subject to—a technological *telos*. We proposed, moreover, that media representations provide a key site of cultural seduction and projective phantasy for processes of bioconvergent life, where technologies and bodies are, in their own right, mediated and mediating. Even dystopian visions tend to understand such convergence as inevitable, if not desirable. Media representations are, then, more than mimetic re-presentations of reality; if this view is by now commonsense, exactly *how* real bodies

¹ Vol. 1 can be accessed: <http://www.mediatropes.com/index.php/Mediatropes/issue/view/1229>.

converge across media and technologies in the narcotizing spectacles of neoliberalism is not a matter of common sense.

Each of the contributions that resulted engages in critical social descriptions of convergent media, technologies, and bodies as these are variously deployed and coalesce—in and as contemporary conceptions of *bios*, or life. They also demonstrate the interdisciplinary convergence of theories and methodologies, much as Sandra Harding describes the convergence of postcolonial and feminist philosophies of science and technology. In both postcolonial and feminist approaches, Harding (2009) argues, “the perspectives and interests of their particular constituencies are not well served by modern Western science and technology philosophies, policies, or practices” (p. 401). And yet, despite a shared political program, the ways in which these fields might profitably converge “feel[s] scattered and undertheorized” (ibid.). The prevailing conceptual framework of each, she suggests, remains intact, while a convergence and transformation of these frameworks is “necessary to fully engage with the full range of issues and innovative insights of both” (p. 402). The two special issues extend this principle beyond postcolonial and feminist science and technology studies to include media and communication studies, cultural studies, rhetoric, law and legal studies, sociology, security studies, health, and so on. These are or have become convergent disciplines in their own right, and a worthwhile dialogue is made possible when each brings situated knowledges, methodological strategies, and theories to bear on a common theme. In sum, the collection offers a novel critical purchase through the lens of convergence, when, for a moment, the conceptual frameworks of these respective disciplines are *undisciplined*, and we begin to see how they already convey the convergent—and oftentimes covert—“values” of a neoliberal ethic.

In particular, this collection of essays extends the helpful critique of convergence developed by James Hay and Nick Couldry (2011) in their special issue of *Cultural Studies*, “Rethinking Convergence/Culture.” Hay and Couldry identify

at least four ways that the expression ‘convergence’ has been deployed and its meaning solidified—as a description of new synergy (a ‘horizontal’ realignment) among media companies and industries, as the multiplication of ‘platforms’ for news and information, as a technological hybridity that has folded the uses of separate media into one another (e.g. watching a television broadcast on a cell phone), and as a new media aesthetic involving the mixing of documentary and non-documentary forms. (p. 473)

For our purposes, this approach too narrowly limits what Henry Jenkins (2006) has described as “convergence culture,” confining convergence to a particular understanding of media as information economy, operating across production, distribution, consumption, and increasingly, “prosumption.” While this work in media and cultural studies is important, and while many of the essays published here undoubtedly contribute to this field of research, the collection also offers a more capacious understanding of media as an aesthetic or mode of governmentality—a “conduct of conduct” in Foucault’s terms—that extends beyond the simple mixing of extant media forms. In other words, convergence is more than the sum of its parts: it is a gestalt, a rationality, articulating a sociopolitical imaginary out of (and into) sociopolitical relations. As Marshall McLuhan (1964) has remarked, “There is no *ceteris paribus* in the world of media and technology. Every extension or acceleration effects new configurations in the over-all situation at once” (p. 184). No *ceteris paribus*: all things are never equal. In other words, media technologies and innovations change the rules of the game and transform perception itself. In this respect, we sought to explore the convergence of (inter)disciplinary discourses, methodologies, semiotic practices, and theoretical perspectives—a ‘vertical’ as opposed to a ‘horizontal’ realignment, as it were. For these discourses, too, constitute media, which is to say, they too are normative forms that mediate (and remediate) informational “content,” navigate the power and politics of everyday life, and drive cultural production. The special issues cast their sights beyond the relation between Media Studies and Cultural Studies, then, to engage divergent disciplines whose traditional self-understanding has not immediately included the study of media and culture. To shift the “convergent” emphasis from a descriptive to a normative valence, seizing on bodies across divergent fields of research, is to refocus on the constitution of “life” through the problematic of bioconvergence.

“Convergence” is a strange term. It suggests movement, action, dislocation, and perhaps relocation. Does it make sense to speak of discrete or static phenomena that are ‘horizontally’ aligned yet somehow converge to produce something new? No doubt we speak of media, technologies, and bodies as if they represented distinct and singular phenomena, as if they were independent epistemological categories, able to be described on their own terms, existing on the same ontological plane. They occupy, more or less comfortably, grammatical subject-positions in our speech, and so seem to possess a kind of linguistic agency and auto-determination. We might say that media elicit particular effects that can be studied; technologies can be put to use to bring about new ways of observing and new bodies of knowledge; and that these bodies can be measured, classified, and variously analyzed. And yet, this

autonomy is fictive, tropic, a manner of speaking. It belies the ways that power operates in the interstices, below, above, between, and beyond its distinguishable, temporary iterations. For example, if we look to medicine, politics, law, ethics, war, work, education, and entertainment—and the manner in which these converge on and in life—we are dealing with social and cultural formations that are always already convergent across media, technologies, and bodies. Certainly, our analyses remain partial: *these* media, *these* technologies, *these* bodies, and *these* lives are sites of particular discoveries, here or there, and yet they surface for us deeper ways that their convergence might offer a new analytic. Analysis of convergent phenomena (as ‘horizontally’ aligned) calls for the resistant convergence of conceptual frameworks and methodologies (as ‘vertical’ or ‘transversal’ forces).

Bioconvergent Thematics

Internet surveillance has evolved into a shockingly extensive, robust and profitable surveillance architecture. (Schneier 2015)

1. Bioconvergence as social praxis

Across the collection are a number of overarching themes. The first concerns the scale and reach of bioconvergence as a social praxis. Thus we see transformations of economies that take myriad forms: high-frequency trading (Nadeson); the biomarkets of stem cells, ova, organs, and blood (Happe); and surveillance across end-user GPS technologies (military *dispositifs*), from roboticized warfare (Suchman) to digital activism (Summerhayes) to crowd-sourced self-defence (Beaton) to the cinematic conventions of political paranoia (Epstein & Steinberg). Similarly, we note transformations of political life, of biopolitics itself, in the convergence of media, catastrophe, and medicine (Diedrich); in genomic services (Kramer); in emergent neurocultural practices (Williams, Katz, & Martin); and in redefinitions of personhood in the modulations of obstetric law (Burgess) and in securitization at Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp (Federman & Holmes). To paraphrase the quotation from Schneier above, bioconvergent technology has evolved into a shockingly extensive, robust, and profitable *social* architecture, driven by, but also considerably exceeding, its surveillant dimensions.

All of these contexts demonstrate distinctively bioconvergent confluences of digitally-driven technological capacities, (dis)embodied agencies, and neoliberal economies. Indeed, even as all of the case studies

demonstrate the pervasive character of bioconvergent social relations, they also point to the significance of digital capacities, in particular, as primary drivers. Digitization has not only facilitated expansive (and expanding) modalities and instantiations of convergence, it has, in so doing, produced a distinctive social ethos, a particular culture of expectation and imaginative investment, and a transversal political economy in which value accrues to and through praxes of acceleration and amplification. Emergent in this context are new, and paradoxical, forms of biosociality. For example, the distributed gaze of drone warfare also facilitates the crowd-sourced networks of apps against rape, Google Earth in Darfur, and 23andMe.com. In the state of emergency and the state of terror, both, bioconvergent mediatization produces ungrievable lives and biocitizens alike—the reconstituted *Muselmänner* of Guantánamo; the medical casualties of Hurricane Katrina, articulated along socioeconomic and racialized axes; the de-realized figuration of Terri Schiavo, neither fully living nor dead; and the hyper-investment of unborn “persons” in the state of Kansas.

2. *Bioethos: Against ethics*

A second and related thematic arising across the collection concerns what might be termed *bioethos*. The Aristotelian understanding of ethos refers to habit and character. It is, in other words, a concept of culture and social conditions and of their inculcation through the iterative practices of individuals. Ethos can be distinguished from ethics, not only for the former’s conventional emphasis on an underlying logic or rationality, but for the latter’s conventional evocation of normative moralities, of principles enforced through regulatory instruments—of law, medicine, or social customs (see: Murray & Holmes 2009). (Bio)ethics implies systems, *dispositifs*, and acts that operate to convey and to normalize instantiations of rights or wrongs. Taken as a whole, the papers in this collection suggest significant contiguities between ethics and ethos across bioconvergent instantiations. These are, for example, effected through a pervasive expectation of instantaneity—of trade, of communications, of geopositioning, and of bodies themselves as their discrete locations and biometrics become increasingly digitized and networked. A second expectation is characterized by ephemerality—of knowledge as a “cloud,” as the invisible workings of capillary power made manifest, even as end-users, or end-effects, are catapulted into unprecedented focus. A third expectation is ubiquitous visibility—of being measured and monitored, analyzed, and interpellated by the logarithms of big data as potential “prosumers,” where production and consumption become indistinguishable. As both Kramer and Beaton note, respectively, the seductions of 23andMe.com—to be genomically revealed, diagnosed, and framed by a larger picture—and of apps that track us for fitness, for evidence of crimes against us, and as media that promise social justice and

the rule of law—become consuming, become the productive economies of biocitizenship and social capital. The paradox of digital deprivatization is that the *what's* of surveillance reflexively blur into the *who's*. The vantage point of 'smart' screens delivers multitudes; it constitutes multiple trajectories, blurring multiple agencies. Thus, as Federman and Holmes suggest, digital mediation means that the enemy-combatant inmates of Guantánamo can be repeatedly, pervasively stripped—the eye-objects of multiple publics. Bioconvergence does not solve the problem of attenuated function, it amplifies it in multiple, proliferative, 'vertical' convergences: in layers of nearly (but not quite) identical 'smart' technology, in layers of surveillance, in layers of political economy. It produces space-time triangulations that can stand-in for content, for the face, marking social existence and shepherding its extinction.

If the expectations of bioconvergent technologies comprise a broadening frame of cultural value, its apparatus constitutes the means of its assimilation, infinitely iterative, instantaneously purveyed, globalized in reach. Herein are two further orders of ethics. The first is what Steinberg (2015; forthcoming) elsewhere has referred to as imperatives of action, affect, and will. The second is in the Foucauldian sense, as care (see: Murray 2007). There is an urgency to the bioconvergent frame. It is a technology of consent, underwriting conversation, commerce, and crisis alike. It is also a mode and medium of attachment—of grievability and of its obverse, the sphere of social democracy and of trolls.

3. A specular ecology: The convergent episteme

A third overarching theme of the collection concerns the articulation of feeling and knowledge. This refers not only to the conditions of possibility that drive and derive from bioconvergent technologies, but to the conditions of their persuasion. On the one hand are addresses to the liberal human subject. Apps, for example, are forged on the twin conceits of individual sovereignty and of ownership. And yet the convergent ecology presumes a distributed agency, a superordinate specular power—to write oneself as a public being, to source oneself in crowds, to aggregate powerfully, to strip from distances without consequence, to conjure capital, to kill in effigy. A second address is to crisis, what might be termed, as suggested by Epstein and Steinberg, the Bourne seduction—vigilance as a heroic stance, as exculpatory, as escape, as a necessary violence.

Bios and Neoliberalism

The *bios* that emerges as a phenomenon of neoliberal bioconvergence, then, tends to take on a life of its own—as if it escaped discourse, existing in an

ontological kingdom beyond the vagaries of power and politics. And yet this “extra-discursivity” is an effect of convergence, making genealogical critique very difficult, masking a new domain of biopolitical governance that immunizes itself, convergently, from critique. If “life” is produced and constituted through convergent discourses, it is difficult to trace the threads. Bodies are scarcely distinguishable from the technologies that sustain them, impossible to represent in any unalloyed sense; media are by nature technological, embodied, and embodying; effects are interchangeably ideological and material, ideational and generative. If “life” seems to us the most immediate and self-evident good, so that we might speak of and in the name of “life itself,” this too is nevertheless a convergent phenomenon, a mode of production, a field of rhetorical address. Bioconvergence is a way of hiding or obfuscating vital and lethal powers, making the exercise of political and moral agency all the more attenuated. There are no longer actor-agents but nodes in convergent networks, or actants. In linguistics, an actant is defined as a noun phrase that functions as the agent of a verb—and the metaphor offers a grammar of social worlds. In Bruno Latour’s (2004) sense, actants are nonhuman entities that act on us, that do something to us, with us, or through us. Political and moral agency, the nostalgic domain of the liberal subject, yields to the assemblage.

And yet one paradox of neoliberal biopolitics is that while individual agents are dispossessed of their subjectivity and their moral and political agency is dispersed across convergent networks, we nevertheless *feel* as though our moral and political agency, our subjectivity, our lives, are being respected and fostered. This is the affective-productive ruse of neoliberal biopolitics. We become tied to our identities, and mistake this imprisoning identification for agency as we exercise the illusory and false agency of prosumption, which is driven in part by immersive media, what McLuhan so presciently termed “narcissus narcosis.” The paradoxical effect of neoliberal biopolitics is a heightened sense of individual responsibility—but one that is thoroughly mediatized and regulated, producing the illusion of freedom and democracy, while circumscribing and policing these terms ruthlessly.

Michel Foucault was among the first to note the discursive emergence of “life” as the convergence of sociopolitical discourses, called “biopolitics”:

the endeavor, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race. (2000, p. 73)

Here, Foucault claims that in modernity the “life” of the population increasingly comes to inform the ways that individuals are governed—as collectivities whose very lives and vital well-being are increasingly subject to governmental control, surveillance, regulation, segregation, health and welfare, pro-life policies, and improvement programs, through forecasts, education, and statistical measures, among others. Gradually, he claims, individuals are replaced by “biological processes” and individual lives are displaced by “species-life.” This ideology of “life” becomes a public morality, a moral orthopaedics that is soon internalized and perpetuated at the micro-level; as a form of biopower this ideology is invisibly taken up in the ways that individuals come to govern themselves, and live their lives.

In recent years, research in the social and human sciences has extended Foucault’s insight and has turned toward the *bios*. Biocapital, biovalue, biobanking, biosociality, biological citizenship, etc., all valuably build on Foucault’s theorizing of biopolitics. From this perspective, we can read myriad critical analyses of media, political economy, agribusiness, healthcare, the pharmaceutical industry, the insurance industry, and many others. These discourses are often “convergent”; that is, while studies may be situated in particular domains, they do not presume discrete categories in any strict sense. A robust exploration of each involves the others in complex and interconnected ways. For example, an understanding of health must take into account the production of global identities through globalization, since pharmaceutical research and testing frequently take place in the Global South and rely on technologies, networks, and informational and migrational flows that are enabled by global capital and transnational corporate structures. In turn, these relationships—through the inflection of political power, culture, and emergent identities—must themselves be assessed within the context of new digital media, the instantaneous exchange of information, advertising, and the communities that mobilize, often across great distances, to challenge or to exploit these conditions, from local grassroots organizations to the globalizing production of academic knowledge in the service of governmental and corporate knowledge-economy “stakeholders.” Certainly, these discussions often contest the meaning of *bios* or life, whether life is conceived as a natural category, a social production, or whether its “naturalness” is not itself socially and discursively constituted and occluded as “life itself.”

In a straightforward sense, then, it would be naïve to see in bioconvergence no more than a sum of tendencies in the ways that media, technologies, and bodies come together. Here, we might describe a directionality, a process of incorporation, and intersectionality among and between social bodies, institutions, and technological artefacts conceived at first

blush as discrete, independent, or even autonomous. One might offer limited genealogies of movements and minglings, or seek to account for emergent properties, where the whole somehow exceeds the sum of its parts. This might take place at the material level of social institutions and events. We might project ourselves into some past in order to track these movements and minglings, genealogically, or we might instead stand as a modest witness to processes currently underway.

But the essays gathered in these two issues suggest it is too late for such a naïve analysis. If bioconvergence is a *fait accompli*, there could be no wholesale return to an understanding of its constitutive parts, even though we might be equipped to trace some of their trajectories. Rather, bioconvergence now informs our worldview, and there is no turning back; there is no stable “place” of critique across our fugitive geositionings. Haraway’s cyborg has become quaint, not because it is impossible, but because it is quotidian; the cyborg, too, is a *fait accompli*, and along with this its revolutionary potential has dissolved. Haraway writes: “The cyborg is not subject to Foucault’s biopolitics; the cyborg simulates politics, a much more potent field of operations” (1991, p. 163). This is not quite true: cyborg politics are no longer simulacra—because all politics are cyborg politics, and all political forms simulacric. Haraway’s cyborg is no longer the “illegitimate child”; it has become naturalized, adopted, incorporated, and co-opted by the neoliberal economies it once rubbed against. Its revolutionary potential has been harnessed and deployed, unwittingly, against itself. The cyborg’s ambiguity is now thoroughly disambiguated; paradoxically, centralized forms of power have supplanted cyborg ambiguity.

The cyborg *is* now a subject of Foucault’s biopolitics. Indeed, the cyborg—the non-individuated networked “subjectivity” or “dividual”—has become *the* subject of biopolitics, the realization of a convergent norm through a dispersed agency that is no agent at all. The ambiguity of the cyborg has become incorporated—with all of the inflections of corporate life, entrepreneurialism, and the fictive, compliant, individualism that it produces. We have moved from Haraway’s quasi-utopian projection not directly to dystopian fantasies, but to an atopia, a no-place, in which it is now nearly impossible to gain a purchase on the historical present and its relations of power, or to imagine appropriate forms of critique. We do not have a sense of what to call our moment; there is no classification system. The cyborg was once a political category, one way to think about the politics of the body, of technology, of power, etc. But what Haraway saw as emergent is today “residual” (see: Williams 1977).

In 1989, Haraway could write: “Bodies, then, are not born; they are made. Bodies have been as thoroughly denaturalized as sign, context, and time. Late twentieth-century bodies do not grow from internal harmonic principles theorized within Romanticism” ([1989] 1991, p. 207). Twenty-five years later, living in the long shadows of neoliberalism, we might well wonder whether neoliberals are the new Romantics. We must ask how sign, context, and time once again appear to us as natural—as we discover within ourselves, quite by surprise, the internal harmonic principles from which life itself seems to flow. Under neoliberalism, then, we must ask how, and to what extent, bioconvergent media, bodies, and technologies offer up a new sign of life, a new life-sign. And how, and to what extent, these forms-of-life conform to neoliberal convergences.

Neoliberalism, Autopoiesis, Ethopoiesis

What are the creative or *poietic* valences of neoliberal bioconvergence today? What happens when we begin to conceive of life in terms of the liveliness of bioconvergent networks, as if these networks constituted a living system—a self-organizing or autopoietic machine? As N. Katherine Hayles (1999) writes, describing the principles first-wave cybernetics: “life and autopoiesis are coextensive with one another” (p. 138). We are drawn into and become inextricable parts of “self” replicating feedback loops. If the “self” is convergent with the anonymous forces that articulate across media, bodies, and technologies, these nevertheless produce the illusion of a life that is independent, free, and above all responsible. Responsible selfhood is enterprising: labour converges with life in neoliberal economies and valuations. We are “free” to construct ourselves within the closed system’s autopoietic terms. Autopoiesis becomes indistinguishable from ethopoiesis, which, to invoke Aristotle once again, comprises the ongoing self-reflexive work of an individual’s character (*ēthos*) and social habitus (*ethos*).

Ethics and ethos become contiguous under neoliberalism. “Ethical” life becomes defined by a neoliberal ethic, by moral imperatives or demands that are intimate. The intimate imperatives of neoliberal bioconvergence bear on an individual’s affect, action, and will. We are heroic; we aggressively submit to austerity measures; we define our citizenship through registers that appear as consensual, biocratic, even life-affirming. And yet these demands are ultimately material, embedded in and mediatized through the Internet of things, conveying modes of value, phantasmatic forms of identification. We embrace “normotics” (Bollas 1987), a pathological investment in normality, a desire to embody the norm almost as an article of faith, to believe *in* something, wilfully denying the

ambiguities of reality and the precariousness of human life. Spaces of ambiguity are collapsed and supplanted by the systemic “knowledge” of predictive rationality, risk-management, securitization, and then handed over to a cadre of “expert” service providers in the management of one’s own livingness. In this way one assures one’s public moral standing, assures one’s own salvation, as part of an emergent social contract informed at the nexus of capital and public morality. These material vectors are themselves convergent, modes of prosumption, technological processes, administration, institutionalization.

If the revelations of Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning show us anything, it is how this process escalates the tensions of late capitalism. Rather than expose the hidden workings of power, their revelations have been the occasion to reconsolidate the phantasy of sovereign power in its most repressive, yet familiar, forms. Federman and Holmes suggest that Guantánamo represents the false-consciousness of sovereignty, the “interiority” or “consciousness” of the state itself. Yet subtler technologies of control and securitization articulate with media and bodies in manners that are more palpably seductive, if not “salvific.”

Beaton’s contribution on apps against sex crimes suggests that security apps of this sort unintentionally responsabilize the end-user in ways that are not always empowering. Citizens are co-opted into a technological system in which they are encouraged to harness surveillance technologies for their own pre-emptive protection, as if participation in one’s own panoptic protection were a moral duty, as if innovations in public safety were coextensive with technological innovations. The feeling of security promised by these apps might prove illusory, since they extol the virtues of a convergent, crowd-sourced self, registered in intimate proximity through systems that fuel their own excesses and modes of co-optation. The fantasy is that these apps are merely “tools” in the service of individual agents. And yet they are not simply tools: they contribute to a grammar of social worlds; they subjectivate us in particular ways; they constitute an ethos, a habitus, and ultimately an ethic of moral social and political action. Individual agency and personal security are relocated across diffuse networks and technologies of biocitizenship, demonstrating how the traditional distinction between public and private life has been eroded by the circuits of prosumption and moral capital, in so-called real-time.

In May 2015, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Missouri released “Mobile Justice,” an app for Android and iPhone (<http://www.aclu-mo.org/your-rights/mobile-justice/>). The app’s website cites the Michael Brown murder in Ferguson, Missouri on 9 August 2014. It allows users to record

interactions with police, and to have these audio or video recordings sent automatically to the ACLU. It promises to give citizens a voice, to “witness” and to “report,” in the context of a citizen’s civil liberties. It is meant to save lives, and to hold the police accountable for their actions. And it is presented as an innovation in public safety. Herein is a proffered mode of empowered biocitizenship. How lives matter, how Black Lives Matter, requires documentary witness—handheld, ubiquitous, and focused on governmentality itself, its instantiated excesses, its flagrant abuses and crimes. Thus the architecture of social action becomes seductively, autopoietically, and inextricably mediatized: part of the denuding—empowering apparatus of ‘smart’.

The temporality of neoliberal convergence moves at the speed of light, not at the speed of life. Nadesan’s essay considers the bioconvergent dimensions of high-frequency stock and commodity trading, which is redefining the technologies of neoliberal capitalism. The informatic, almost autopoietic, distribution of wealth relies on deregulation, but ushers in its own rigged regulatory framework—the binary logics of powerful computerized and automated transactions well beyond the reach of ordinary citizens. Diedrich also suggests how time speeds up through the convergence of media and medicine in the temporality of catastrophe. She contrasts two seemingly divergent sites from 2005 (the case of Terri Schiavo and Hurricane Katrina), and analyzes the ways in which the mediatization of these two events serves to obfuscate the exercise of sovereign power. Both Nadesan’s and Diedrich’s contributions emphasize the ways in which neoliberal power operates in the temporality of crisis, normalizing the state of emergency as the new order of things. Summerhayes’s contribution also studies the state of emergency, turning to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur as this is mediatized through the digital-embodied *technos* of Google Earth. This technology fosters digital “disaster tourism,” where the end-user’s hyperreal point-of-view is constituted at a safe distance from those lives and bodies in crisis.

Post-Script

Convergence produces something new, a new form-of-life, a new understanding of life, much as Benedict Anderson (2006) explains in terms of a new community apropos of early print culture: “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community” (p. 58). While capitalism and print technology existed separately, together they created the conditions in and through which a new understanding of community and subjectivity could arise, albeit at the cost of linguistic diversity, and arguably, at the cost of

existing cultures themselves. In brief, the medium becomes the message. Such an approach is paradigmatic of what we understand as *critical media studies* at least since the age of McLuhan: “Media” is an interdisciplinary and convergent rubric that makes it possible to pursue comparative work to construct a composite picture of a culture by studying the ways information is organized and represented across many dimensions of cultural production—e.g., texts, images, architecture. Critical media theory and methods afford new insights than can help contextualize the information presented in texts by reference to principles, conventions, customs, genres, and traditions that combine to create the overall style of a culture in a particular epoch.

The eleven essays of this collection reflect a certain urgency. As we have suggested, they demonstrate how “life” (*bios*) is a convergent phenomenon, but they also complicate our understanding of convergence in the age of neoliberalism: ubiquitous mediatization, securitization, war, and speculative futures, increasingly lived out within a manmade ecological crisis. Neoliberalism surely pays much lip-service to interdisciplinarity (witness nearly every university strategic research plan), but it refashions disciplines and selectively orchestrates their convergence according to rapacious “free” market economies, privatization, deregulation, and an evacuation of the commons that was once the matrix of serious social science and humanities scholarship (see: Brown 2015, Chapter 6). Indeed, under the banner of academic Efficiency and Excellence (see: Halffman & Rader 2015), neoliberalism militates for the evacuation of the social sciences and humanities altogether, couched, of course, in the “fungible” logics of budgetary compressions, and the apotheosis of public–private “partnerships,” “innovation,” “commercializable outcomes,” knowledge economies and creative industries (see: Brouillette 2014, 2015). Under neoliberalism, media, technologies, and bodies converge on life to produce a conception of bare life, mere life, or life itself (*bloßes Leben*, to borrow a term from Walter Benjamin 1986, p. 299). The neoliberal interchangeability of “life” and “liberty” is captured by Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval: “to govern is not to govern *against* liberty, or *despite* it; it is to govern *through* liberty—that is, to actively exploit the freedom allowed individuals so that they end up conforming to certain norms of their own accord” (2013, p. 5). Neoliberalism becomes a kind of living logic, an ontologic, a hyperdriven rationality that embraces the spaces of everyday life, turning the *raison d'état* into a *raison d'être*. The essays here offer convergent meditations on the bioconvergent age, and a critique of its *modus operandi*, refusing to relinquish the value of the commons and community, and yet without capitulating to nostalgic paternalism, modern Western science and technology philosophies, policies, or practices.

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