Before Building the Avant-Garde of the Commons

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Weak connections are at the bedrock of social media and the marketing empire it protects. Geert Lovink's work over the last decade on 'organized networks' proposes organized strong connections as tools to embrace and generate a commons that not only consists of small-scale experiments but is a large-scale infrastructure. If the commons is to be saved from the neoliberal fate of the Internet, we must consider those around us, and how to work closely with them towards a shared reality that is not governed by the oppressive regimes we claim to dispel.

'Power is invisible, until you provoke it.'[1] – GFK

'Bread and circuses for everyone, *wealthfare* for the elites and welfare for the restless disenfranchised.' – ZeroHedge

'"Rock stars" are arrogant narcissists. Plumbers keep us all from getting cholera. Build functional infrastructure. Be a plumber.' – Molly Sauter

'We live in the golden age of ignoring smart people.' – Zak Smith

'We lost the fight for the Internet. But the battle against central authority remains.' – Peter Sunde

'We may be decentralized and disagree on a lot of topics amongst ourselves, but operations are always carefully coordinated.' – Anonymous

Operating inside the contexts of technology, media activism, and Internet politics, the 'commons' is finally turning into a hotly debated topic outside of theory and activist circles. Code is shaping our world, and its architecture is voluntary and plastic. However, written by geeks and engineers this code is anything but God-given, let alone neutral. Where do the underlying ideas come from and how are we going to accelerate the transition? Who is taking the lead?

What seems highly conceptual and speculative one day locks in millions (if not billions) moments later. Everyone who witnessed the late '90s schism between free software and open source will know what's at stake with the concept of the commons. Will we have a reformist pro-business commons and a marginal, radical and politically correct one? Ideas matter – and this is now the case with the commons. Discussion outcomes matter. And if the crucial commons are increasingly technological, who's in charge of the law, when 'code is law'? Will the debate on the nature and architecture of commons in the end fall into the hands of lawyers? How do we turn the commons into a lively and diverse political strategy that brings people together in order to reinvent public infrastructure?

This essay addresses two issues: the search to come up with a workable definition of the commons, and the question as to who's going to design it. I propose a reinvention of the

(artistic) avant-garde notion as 'organized networks', a concept I have worked on over the past decade with my Sydney friend, media theorist Ned Rossiter. [2] The argument here is to move away from idealistic notions of 'what we have in common' towards a materialistic understanding of real existing commons as both small-scale experiments and large-scale infrastructure. This is matched with a twenty-first century organization model that is capable to 'invent the future' and come up with workable concepts (running code) within a post-capitalist framework that is strong enough to obstruct the inevitable: the all-too-predictable and depressing appropriation machine. Whereas most artists, activists, designers and researchers have so far focused on laboratory scale in(ter)ventions, discussions in various contexts show that it is now time to scale-up and remove the neoliberal privatization dominance over infrastructure.

From Common(s) to Infrastructure

Let's work our way through the multitude of terms and definitions, from commonwealth (Michael Hardt / Antonio Negri), 'the common', to community and commonism. To be honest, I was never attracted to any of them. As an autonomous anarchist I have always preferred working within smaller social units, from friendships and groups to networks and movements. I am neither a liberal who believes in copyright reform, nor a communist who believes in the Gosplan. As children of the Age of Difference my generation grew up in the shadow of the disastrous communes, with their gurus and Total Sharing Experience, from joints and food to partners and income, under the close guidance of this or that religion or ideology. Despite this dark side of the 'tyranny of informality' I preferred the openness of networks and movements over the closed totality of The Group and related 'folk politics'. I never read my own refusal or inability to scale-up as a personal drama. Instead, I was – and remain – a strong believer in a diverse ecology of interconnected autonomous DIY infrastructures that function as a blueprint for larger public initiatives in the near future. The 'islands in the net' (Bruce Sterling) at the time function as future labs and as defensive shields to preserve subversive practices, depending on local politics.

Coming of age in the 1970s, communism was no longer a promise but a harsh reality for billions, a most boring form of dictatorship that had to disappear before anything else could flourish. We simply had to sit in the waiting room of history and keep on deconstructing power-as-such. 'Macht kaputt was uns kaputt macht' [destroy what destroys us] was not a mere slogan. There was, and still is, a lot in this world that had to be demolished (an unpopular thought in these times of compulsory positive thinking). Monopolies are there to be smashed (also Google and Facebook), not to be taken over. Institutions did not have the wrong leadership, it was the global size of operations that had to be questioned. Acquisitions and mergers have to be prevented at all costs as quantity doesn't flip over into quality.

The surprising, in retrospect inevitable implosion of the Soviet bloc in 1989 was celebrated as a true liberation and not at all experienced as 'the final defeat of the left'. As a result I never supported the reintroduction of 'communism' as advocated by Slavoj Ziz ek, Jodi Dean and others. [3] The trauma that had to be overcome by restaging it was entirely theirs. In my opinion this was a stillborn meme that was soon to be forgotten. With the exception of a few groups, communism would never become 'cool' amongst hipsters (even compared to a surge in sympathy for 'socialism' perhaps due to its linguistic affinity with social media). The collective memory of authoritarian central committees, the culture of spies, traitors, double agents and commissars that infiltrate and take over and destroy social movements and coalitions simply sits too deep, no matter how well-meant the theoretical exercises by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri to connect the 'common' with a future form of communism. [4]

What we have in common cannot be discussed without the element of liberation – and (individual) liberty. Freedom means being liberated from the limiting social norms of the

'communalis'. Such a definition of freedom is, in the conservative-politically correct context of the early twenty-first century, often discredited as individualist and capitalist. However, from an activist perspective this is not at all the issue. The liberation of the tribe, mob or gang called family, village or factory makes way for experiments with yet unknown shapes of the social such as the 'free association of peers'. How can we build long-term commitment in relations that can overcome boredom and routine, a culture that is open for change, outside of legal frameworks?

With the theoretical debate about 'communism' set to one side, small-scale 'minoritarian' practices built up over the past decade that ignore top-down debates in society-at-large have created real existing commons. Think of free software, Wikipedia and Creative Commons (the alternative copyright license, mostly used for music and publications). Or all the initiatives that the P2P Foundation lists on its impressive web resource. [5] Creative Commons is a reformist approach inside intellectual property law – and thus a domain of lawyers. As Gary Hall notices in his *Pirate Philosophy*: 'Exponents of this understanding of copyright have been able to form a "coalition of experts with the legal access and resources" to mount a powerful campaign that frequently overshadows often more interesting and radical approaches.' [6] Agreed, 'copyleft' [7] goes further than Creative Commons. [8] However, it is a still legal contract and in the end also forces its legal will upon others, ultimately with the Power of the Law, threatening with repressive sanctions. Another approach in comparison to Creative Commons would be Dmytri Kleiner and his band of Telekommunisten, which came up with the copy-farleft license. [9]

Ever since the rise of neoliberalism and the decline of the welfare state, the construction of infrastructure can no longer be taken for granted. This has lead to a dual (if not schizo) approach of the commons, which goes in two, distinctive directions: the grassroots bottom-up approach, in which commons is seen as a productive-utopian concept-in-the-making, and a renaissance of public infrastructures.

Over the years I've become a fan of the concept of the minimal commons, a set of implicit social practices and agreements that is so invisible, informal and direct, that it no longer needs lawyers and contracts (not even smart ones), a form of the social contract (meta-smart or uber-smart!) that drifts into the habitual realm, into the collective unconscious. As a lived reality it feels self-evident. This wouldn't mean that the element of trust has been eliminated (a techno-libertarian gesture that I never understood, let alone supported). Direct does not mean that we have nothing in common with the rest. What it does is liberate us from the repressive, inward-looking aspect of the constructive 'community' that is in constant need of reaffirmation.

A commons is ideally an infrastructure that can be taken for granted, just for now and should set us free. Commons should distance itself from 'identitarian' politics that so easily turn into a repressive force to keep the group, movement or party together. Good infrastructure is public, in common hands, and is enjoyed, not noticed. It is simply there, and it works. Once it is privatized it deteriorates, it becomes (too) expensive and may no longer be maintained.

The commons-as-concept is described in somewhat similar terms by Lauren Berlant. Her question is what a commons means in times when things fall apart, break down. According to Berlant, 'the commons is an action concept that acknowledges a broken world and the survival ethics of a transformational infrastructure. This involves using the spaces of alterity within ambivalence.' [10] Commons are only beginnings. 'Through the commons the very concept of the public is being reinvented now, against, with, and from within the nation and capital.' The commons is not some utopia, Berlant continues, rather 'it points to what threatens to be unbearable not only in political and economic terms but in the scenes of mistrust that proceed with or without the heuristic of trust.' [11]

My ideal commons is not just self-evident infrastructure. At times it can also be a place of lively debate and disagreement. It is not a place of consensus. The commons I have in mind consists of dozens of fractions. It is a place where people gather and discuss, such as the recent occupations of public squares and universities across the globe. As Roberto Esposito writes, 'The Commons is a place where the interests of a large number of diverse groups … come together but also exist in a state of tension and conflict and are in fact often demonstrably incompatible and incommensurable.'[12] It is this aesthetic meta-structure that we can call the commons. It is both metaphysical (in terms of the law) and material.

Before Building a Commons Avant-Garde

Ever since the dark 1970s we've been hearing that the avant-garde is over, dead, history. Read as many art history catalogues about it as you like, but no one can bring it to life again. The avant-garde was an intrinsic part of a historical era and as this chapter has been closed, its ideas and approaches could never be resuscitated. The 'avant-garde is dead' is the art equivalent of Thatcher's 'There is no alternative.' Transcendence of mediation and art is no longer possible; we're stuck in the virtual cage, forever. There is no 'authentic communication' anymore. There's a beauty in the fall, that moment you lose yourself, but even that dissipates. Every event is already retweeted and part of the Facebook News Feed before the situation has fully unfolded. There is no original time / space experience possible of 'speaking with' before the representation of 'speaking to' sets in.

In Peter Bu rger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1973) the question of organization does not come up. By then theory had already turned into the history of things long gone. The generation of Bu rger had become academic outsiders. The avant-garde turned into an exclusive domain of literary scholars and art dealers. From now on the avant-garde was synonymous with 'modernism' and the experts were eager to reduce the subsequent styles and schools to stylistic techniques such as collage and montage. Theorists and critics internalized their role as aesthetic observers and apparently couldn't do more than summarize the pre-war debates between, in this case, Adorno and Lukacs and relate them back to Kant, Schiller and Hegel. An entire generation was socialized to study their own society through the real mirror of the nineteenth century, with major roles for Marx and Nietzsche. Bu rger is a prime example of this fashion. The idea to confront his theory of the avant-garde with the situationists (who dissolved in 1972), Conceptual Art, experiments in art and technology or minimal music were simply out of the question.

The turbulent follow-up of different schools, movements and groups that gathered and debated, wrote manifestoes and developed a common reference system in terms of aesthetics, had been disrupted for good. The sarcasm, cynicism and despair of the post-war years, the depression amidst the rise of totalitarian regimes was a primal energy that theory wasn't able to catch.

In the aftermath of the roaring '60s the historical chain got broken. There were plenty of experiments but most of them drifted towards pop culture with the aim to diffuse, slow down and relax. The military aspect of the avant-garde motive no longer appealed. The situationists, partisans of the supersession of art, were acutely aware of the fact that they were last descendants of the 'historical avant-garde'. The group explicitly played with the unavoidable desire to be forgotten. What counted was a radical negation of the presence and the abolition of memory and melancholy. Demoralize your fans – and friends, dissolve into nothing, withdraw to the zero position.

In his book on Guy Debord, *Revolution in the Service of Poetry*, Vincent Kaufmann declares that a situationist who reveals himself is suspect.

To truly be a situationist, one must forget situationism in general, and Debord in particular, whose desire for obscurity was fulfilled. Real revolutionaries know how to make themselves forgotten, disappear, lose themselves. Their fame resides only in their vocation for obscurity, the standard against which their subversive potential must be measured.[13]

All these insights were impossible to be taught in an art school or university seminar. Insurrection only rises from the shadows, a condition that needs to be created first. Obscurity is the a priori, the starting point of every heresy. Become the first and last guardian at once, organize the lived moment. These ideas had to be lived on the spot – and then forgotten.

In McKenzie Wark's 2011 retelling of the Situationist International (SI), *The Beach Beneath the Street*, he denies that the group was ever an artistic avant-garde in the first place. The chain had already broken.[14] The aim was to move beyond art, a practice that had to be overcome in a Hegelian sense through a 'brutal evolution'. The SI saw art merely as one of many creative practices. The ideal was to establish a multidisciplinary diversity inside the group, a goal aimed against the painters and their traditional exhibition strategies. Strictly following postmodern instructions, the aim was to excise the Baudrillardian aesthetics of disappearance. As Debord once said, 'the SI knew how to fight its own glory.'[15] Art could only be tolerated if it undermined the unique gesture.

Wark points to the death cult energy that comes with the repeated excommunication of SI members. 'Exclusion of living members meant social death.' The SI 'wrestled with the problem of how to make collective belonging meaningful, as something requiring some sacrifice. The possibility of exclusion made participation in the Situationist game meaningful.'[16]

The situationists soon disappeared into oblivion through a cloud of cigarette smoke and alcohol. They were to be replaced by postmodernism, an ahistorical condition that proclaimed diversity and fragmentation, in which, by definition, an avant-garde position was no longer possible. Vectors dissolved. Amidst all quotations and pastiches, who or what was to follow a leading aesthetic school anyway? Wisely, Conceptual Art no longer presented itself as avant-garde; it refrained from making claims outside of the art system itself.

In our distant understanding of the 'historical' avant-garde movements, these were membership organizations, cliques of friends that hung out in the same cafes and at the same openings. The stories of expulsions of the SI are numerous – and notorious. It produces a strong suggestion that there must have been something at stake. The SI leader Debord ran the network as if it were a Trotskyist sect. Forty years later, Saskia Sassen gave expulsions another meaning and context.[17]

Since the 2008 global financial crisis, expulsions no longer refer to the correct set of beliefs but to banks who disown and evict house owners who can no longer pay their mortgages. These days, it rarely happens that a member is removed from an organization. We're addressed as users, not members. The same can be said of those who get fired from their jobs. Nowadays, one's contract simply expires (in the same way as the rent contract terminates and is no longer renewed). People aren't fired, they 'lose' their jobs. For tomorrow's avant-garde it is therefore a strategic question of how (not) to deal with membership and how to design internal commitment. How can we overcome the user status? In today's social media society, it is the weak that is symbolic for all social relationships. We have yet to design how strong ties operate, or define an alternative to the strong-weak binary. This is the domain of the organized networks, a concept that has been around since 2006 and whose time has yet to come. While these experiments with strong ties are under way, we will see a natural erosion of Facebook's weak ties as the dominance of the intrusive social media platforms come to an end.

If it is not going to be the art market with it dealers, collectors and gallerists, nor the curator class who are running the global biennales then who are going to organize the visual arts as a critical practice? In the past this task used to be taken up by networks of artists, magazines and journals. Today, many look at websites like *e-flux* and *Hyperallergic* to take up this task (in the same way as *Artforum* and *Texte zur Kunst* were influential in the 1990s). It is editorial decisions that steer the global conversations – that's at least the premise here. One of the problems in this is the decline in influence of (print) journals, zines, pamphlets and text in general, leading to the thesis that theory and criticism are such niche activities, dominated by academics, that they are no longer capable to mobilize any organizational capacity outside of their own small (yet global) circles. Others, such as writer / artist / activist Greg Sholette, co-editor of *Collectivism after Modernism* from 2007, [18] have looked at the organizational potential of art collectives. Can networks take up this role, and if so, what architectures should they have? Or should we rather take the issue approach and focus on controversies in society, such as the trajectory from Occupy and Debt Jubilees to #blacklivesmatter?

The question of organization cannot merely be discussed under the rubric of the institution-as-such. This would inevitably lead us into the dead-end street of bureaucracy that eats up its own children. A twenty-first century avant-garde is neither working for the Party, nor for the Institution (called contemporary art) but is situated in a web of infrastructures that is necessary to secure collective and individual freedom. Institutions can only control discourse; they are incapable of producing new styles and trends (let alone producing Internet memes).

Avant-garde movements have never existed long enough to become institutions. In fact, today's number one paranoia, to become institutionalized, was never a problem in the past. Left to art historians, gallerists and cultural policymakers, collective units are split up into individual life stories that can better be marketed – and sold. Mind you, there is no situationist museum – and not even one for Surrealism. It would deserve to be burned down in the first place. In the past avant-garde groups called for a stop to administrating the past.

These days the challenge is to overcome the perpetual present. How can there be a dialectics in the real-time regime? Being a forerunner is a project with a clear sell-by date. How can a group or network achieve today's mission to 'destroy worlds' as 'Dark Deleuze' Andrew Culp coined it? [19] How can we de-familiarize ourselves with social media and transform it into a radically alien environment? We need to escape this cage and start again on a journey. This is one of the strong original Internet myths: surfing. This type of info de tournement is a form of alcoholic or psychedelic de rive. Web surfing may not be toxic but it certainly feels like a psychic journey...

We're spreading a dangerous message here. Today, organization is synonymous with terrorism. Organization is first of all a matter of organization of the self, to go out in the world and act. After 9 / 11 this is no longer an innocent move. To get organized puts officials on the highest stage of alert, ready to utilize violence. As many experienced in this age of *Minority Report*, it ain't no joke. That is why terrorists can no longer create cells and gather. Hiding after the fact is no longer possible. At best Takfiri terrorists remain silent and invisible, staying under the radar until they strike. After the Act, it is over for them. Every hit is a suicide attack, committed by 'lone wolves'. There is zero time for organic growth. What counts is the impact of violent meme. The lack of trial and error is compensated for by an indirect transmission of experiences via mainstream broadcast media. Networks may or may not exist. What does exist are shared experiences, a collective awareness with common references, YouTube videos, links on social media filled with body language and slogans, in short: memes.

Business Dictionary defines organization as 'a social unit of people that is structured and managed to meet a need or to pursue collective goals. All organizations have a management structure that determines relationships.' [20] Organization studies became a servant of the academic managerial class (and their bean counters). This has locked away vital knowledge. These days we cannot think of organization without management. There must be someone behind it, steering the wheel. The social (whoever that may be) cannot organize itself. There are only professional structures with an identifiable leadership structure.

What's on offer besides the motive of the dwarf standing on the shoulders of the giant and thus being able to see farther than the giant himself? *Inventing the Future* authors Nick Smicek and Alex Williams demand the founding of a think tank, whereas others have argued for a return to the Party. [21] The Democracy in Europe movement DiEM25, kicked off in early 2016 by the ex-Greek minister of finance Yannis Varoufakis, experiments with a mix of a Brussels lobby group, a translocal grassroots movement and a networked think tank. [22] Going beyond the twentieth century we need to do trial-and-error experiments with contemporary forms of organization that work. We need to find out if there's any future to the avant-garde mode. How can 'the social' take command in the age of social media? Can this only be done from inside the existing social networking sites or is an 'outside' position of small groups that can catalyse the exodus from the existing technologies of life? 'What the Situationists were struggling to achieve was a new kind of collective being, unlike both the Communists and previous avant-gardes such as the Letterists,' Wark remarks. How do such experiments look fifty years later? What is a collective being today if we want to go beyond the hegemonic libertarian premise of 'collective self-interest'? [23] How does recruitment work in an age in which membership is reduced to a technical routine of signing up and filling out a CAPTCHA, proving that you're not a bot? Can we still plot in secret? Is a Third Situationist International still possible in this age of accumulating urgencies, from right-wing populism and platform capitalism? Wark seems to suggest that Debord did everyone a favour in polarizing the question of creativity, 'by choosing paths, rather than allowing the movement to sink, like so many others, beneath the weight of its incoherence.' [24]

According to academic consensus, the avant-garde is an integral part of modernism and thus a thing of the past. As modernism, defined as a historical period, is long gone, we can be nostalgic about the fabulous lives of the irregulars, but we cannot bring it back to life. All we can do is quote from their artistic legacies, visit the retrospectives and dream of unlike encounters that radically shake up our everyday life. This is the historical postmodernist condition, a period we left behind at latest 2008, when the aggregation of global crises hit the surface and made an abrupt end to the joyous quotation fest. But seen from the current crisis in organizational structure, we cannot run from this issue so easily and expect that political parties, NGOs and Facebook are sufficient. They are not. We need artistic counter-models of the start-up, non-terrorist insurgency models, twenty-first century prototypes of the 'open conspiracy'. Bouncing off ideas against the avant-garde approach is merely one of many ways in order to invent new forms of organization that fit into our zeitgeist.

The argument here is that we need to see the avant-garde as a social organization and disconnect it from the question of beauty and modernity and its shock of the new. We no longer have scores to settle with past notions such as linear, chronological time, in which the avant-garde projects itself into an imaginary future. In a world dominated by the permanent present, it is the real-time regimes that we need to confront. What is a real-time avant-garde? Is it possible in the first place to bring players together and act in such a short time frame? Can we escape the permanent now in the first place? That's the 'present shock' described by Douglas Rushkoff in his book of the same title: 'If the end of the twentieth century can be characterized by futurism, the twenty-first can be defined by

presentism.' [25]

From an art perspective, the challenges are radically different from a century ago. The task is no longer to make 'anti-art' and to upset bourgeois society. Neither are l'art pour l'art and aestheticism the preferred antagonists. Autonomy is today's problem and solution at the same time, creating a whirlpool of opposing expectations in which pop culture and aesthetic singularity have to be achieved simultaneously. All artworks have to contain multiple layers of interpretation, which come with the presentation of the artwork, easy digestible by gallery owners, marketing experts, art critics and the audience. This makes it hard to restage the demand for 'self-criticism'. There is enough reflection, too many comments, and trolls. Online heresy is the new normal. Art bears no longer 'the unique stamp of Greek art,' as Peter Szondi once stated. [26] We live in a post-deconstructivist period, tired but still wired.

Everything is already a montage, with layers and layers of data, software, content, form and meaning stacked on top of each other. The 'destruction of coherence' that was experienced so strongly a century ago as a shock, is the new normal. Instead of creating yet another image (layer), our avant-garde will fight on the invisible and immaterial frontlines, from the shadows, as invisible networks, without links or likes or recommendations, working on 'data prevention'. As Debord already wrote, what revolutionairies can do is 'not bringing us up as a reference, forgetting us a little'. [27] That's the core, or the crystal (as Canetti said) of today's act of organization.

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Footnotes

1. See GFK, 'Power is invisible until you provoke it,' www.youtube.com.
2. The most recent texts on this topic are 'Occupy and the Politics of Organized Networks,' in Geert Lovink, *Social Media Abyss: Critical Internet Cultures and the Force of Negation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 182–204 and Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter, 'The Politics of Organized Networks,' in *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Anna Watkins Fisher, and Thomas Keenan, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 335–345.
3. See, for instance, Jodi Dean, *The Communist Horizon* (London: Verso, 2012).
4. Take the following quote: 'Sometimes, when a concept has been so corrupted, it seems one ought to abandon it and find another way to name what we desire. But instead, in this case at least, we find it better to struggle over the concept and insist on its proper meaning. At a pure conceptual level we could begin to define communism this way: what the private is to capitalism and what the public is to socialism, the common is to communism. But what does that mean? What would be an institution and government of the common?' Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonweath* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009) 209 and 273. One of many comments to make here could be on the rise of 'platform capitalism', which is based on the violation and exploitation of the private sphere, proving that today's capitalism has very little respect for 'the private'.
5. The term 'transition' is strategic in this context as it stresses the 'becoming' of commons. 'The Commons Transition Platform is a database of practical experiences and policy proposals aimed toward achieving a more humane and environmentally grounded mode of societal organization. Basing a civil society on the Commons (including the collaborative stewardship of our shared resources) would enable a more egalitarian, just, and environmentally stable society.' See www.p2pfoundation.net and in particular www.commonstransition.org .
6. Gary Hall, *Pirate Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 20.
7. A definition of copyleft goes like this: 'The right to freely use, modify, copy, and share software, works of art, etc., on the condition that these rights be granted to all subsequent users or owners.' See www.dictionary.com.
8. For a background on the 'commons' idea in Creative Commons, see Lawrence Lessig, *The Future of Ideas, the Fate of the Commons in a Connected World* (New York: Random House, 2001), written in the same period as the founding of the US non-profit organization. In 2015 CC passed the 1 billion licensed works mark.
9. See www.telekommunisten.net, www.networkcultures.org and the discussion on wiki.p2pfoundation.net.
10. Lauren Berlant, *The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times*, in *Society and Space* 34, no. 3 (2016): 399.
11. Ibid., 408.
12. Quoted in Gary Hall, *Pirate Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 8.
13. Vincent Kaufmann, *Revolution in the Service of Poetry* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 202.
14. If we follow Gu nther Anders and Elias Canetti (a thesis further theorized by Jean Baudrillard), this is because we moved beyond 'point omega', symbolized by Auschwitz and Hiroshima, which made it impossible to return to normal after World War II. The common sense of chronology with linear lines in history was broken. SI was radical enough to embody this insight – and act upon it. It became a 'question of the generations' (Bernard Stiegler) to what extent we're still living in the shadow of this omega point. The 'Shoah business' is doing its best to keep memories alive. Has memory already lost its symbolic relevance and turned into empty rituals? Strong demarcation points such as 1989, 2001 and 2008 tend to overshadow the lessons of 1945. This also has implications for the avant-garde concept.
15. Quoted in McKenzie Wark, *The Beach Beneath the Street* (New York: Verso, 2011), 67.
16. Both quotes from ibid., 65.

17. According to Saskia Sassen, we live in a phase 'marked by expulsions – from life projects and livelihoods, from membership, from the social contract at the center of liberal democracy.' Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions, Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 29.
18. See www.gregorysholette.com.
19. See www.andrewculp.org.
20. See www.businessdictionary.com.
21. See Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (London: Verso, 2015).
22. See www.diem25.org.
23. Phrase used by Don and Alex Tapscott in their airport bestseller *Blockchain Revolution: How the Technology Behind Bitcoin is Changing Money, Business and the World* (London: Portfolio Penguin, 2016), 280, where they point at the contradiction of the blockchain platform Ethereum, which is 'unabashedly individualistic and private and yet depends on a large, distributed community.'
24. McKenzie Wark, *The Beach*, 121.
25. Douglas Rushkoff, *Present Shock* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 3.
26. Peter Szondi, *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 305 quoted in Peter Bu rger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 92.
27. Guy Debord, *Internationale situationiste* 12 (September 1969): 83.

Tags

Activism, Commons, Media Society

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