The Politics of Connectivity: Between Celebratory and Critical Approaches
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THE POLITICS OF CONNECTIVITY: BETWEEN CELEBRATORY AND CRITICAL APPROACHES

Abstract: This paper discusses the role of connectivity in networked artworks and performances, and attempts a critical approach towards the condition of connectivity. As a starting point, three artworks will be discussed as the main case studies: the online project Xenakis Networked Performance Marathon 2022; 2023Eleusis Mystery 91_Magnetic Dance in Elefsina European Capital of Culture, and; Spaces of Reflection offline PirateBox network in the 10th Berlin Biennale. Among the theoretical tools used here Deleuze and Guattari’s aesthetic theories can be traced, as well as more contemporary reflections on networks and the omnipotence of connectivity today. Furthermore, the role of institutions, funding operators and corporations will be examined in regard to their agency and intentions.

Keywords: performance, live coding, connectivity, network, telematic, geo-location, offline.

Introduction

Connectivity through today’s technological possibilities is often seen as the holy grail of contemporary artistic production. Very briefly, connectivity is everywhere: the Internet, fast communication, data exchange and transfer, social networks, interactive media, and interactivity in general. The literature on connectivity spans from before the Frankfurt School (Adorno 1991), with mass culture
at its core, through Marshall McLuhan (1962, 21) and the foretelling global village, to rapid contemporary developments and the corresponding plethora of media theory and aesthetics. It is a fact that we have the ability, more than ever before, to connect online and in total synchronicity, so as to produce artistic works together, regardless of our geographical location and time zone. The issue of simultaneous creation is appealing and interesting, creating the new “participatory” on a global scale. Furthermore, the process of synchronicity creates online communities that are carved together in creative adventures, constituting a global (artistic) village (McLuhan 1962, 21). Certainly such exigences existed previously, but the simultaneity of these projects nowadays creates global and universal artistic fermentations, ready to produce international artistic currents, and exchanges of knowledge and practice in total fusion.

However, things have become much more complex since Pierre Lévy (2001, passim) celebrated the new possibilities, tools and forms created through the democratization of information. By affirming that “systems of governments still use molar technologies of communication” and that “administration is most frequently based on traditional management techniques” (Lévy 1997, 60) the author had in mind earlier stages of the Internet and computational technologies. But today connectivity is recaptured by the assemblages of power in every aspect of everyday life. Connectivity has been transformed from a tactic of connection and communication to a strategy of surveillance, biopolitics, and profiling. In this system of connectivity, we have all become products, profiles, customers and content creators, regardless of our intentions.

In this article, I wish to study three cases of artistic connectivity, on the one hand while understanding and sharing their celebratory agency, and on the other by critiquing the effectiveness or usefulness of this connectivity in contemporary art. Although my point is critical throughout the text, I did participate in these projects, with great involvement, both as a creator and as an organizer. The reason for my critical approach is not so much to highlight the negative aspects of the projects. On the contrary: I wish to reflect on issues that concern me, issues pivotal to technological art. Exploring these issues can make us improve our relationship with technological art making, not on a pedantic level concerning others, but in a self-critical mood concerning ourselves. In short, here I attempt a reflection on projects in which I have participated, choices I have made and stances I chose along the way. But self-criticism, the awareness of our own positionality, the thorough study of our affect and effect as artists and researchers, is, in my opinion and at this moment in my life, a rich way to enrich thoughts and actions further. Finally, as the stakes are social art, I believe that the only honest thing to do is to constantly question the impact of one’s artistic production and the engagement of society at large in it. My critical disposition stems from my willingness to continue to create and explore the consequences of that creation.
Three case studies

While being both a theorist and artist, and as I have contributed to the production of all three of these works, with different involvement each time, I must state here that the conclusions of this article will be mixed and intertwined, as my own positionality lies between the two approaches. I stand in between the two methodological and conceptual propositions, as a dilemma between good intentions and internal contradictions. The study of these cases comes from an autoethnographic perspective, as my entire artistic career revolves around technology and its combination with art.

This combination is of course not new. From Leonardo Da Vinci’s early technologies, to Wassily Kandinsky’s microscope paintings, tape music, bioart, the whole history of art in short, the relation between creation and technological possibilities has always been a point of intersection, inspiration and experimentation. Mass media and electrical inventions augmented this convergence. Technological advancements in past centuries have helped to design and implement more general communication systems. The idea of a computer network was proposed in 1961 by Leonard Kleinrock, in his doctoral thesis proposal on the flow of information to large-scale communication networks (Kleinrock 1961). This idea led to Project ARPANET, a larger networking project based on a survey of the U.S. Department of Defense in the 1960s, under the leadership of Robert Taylor and Lawrence Roberts. ARPANET quickly became the starting point for the development of a hypernet, in which individual networks could be connected to a network of networks. Over the next decade, several countries and educational institutions would put a lot of effort into implementing various communication protocols: packet switches, NPL network, ARPANET, Merit network, CYCLADES and Telnet. The Internet Protocol suite (TCP / IP) developed by Robert E. Kahn and Vint Cerf in the 1970s combined protocols from ARPANET and from the French CYCLADES project by Louis Pouzin. Slowly, the idea of networking was to be found everywhere, from the war industry to artistic production, education, and entertainment.

The case studies studied here are based on this connectivity, online information exchange and networking in the field of contemporary art. Through their study we will be able to explore the artists’ intentions, their relationship to the history of networks, their participation in contemporary theoretical and artistic dialogues, and their position in relation to connectivity in the artistic creation, presentation and promotion of artwork. They will serve as an occasion for reflection on the role of technology in contemporary aesthetic theories and artistic creations.
First, the project **XNPM22 Xenakis Networked Performance Marathon 2022** took place on December 16th 2022, and was an homage to the Greek pioneer composer and thinker Iannis Xenakis, as an event dedicated to his memory, his work, and his reflections on science and technology. The work was available both on site in Athens Conservatory, and online through live streaming\(^3\) of 8 hours in total, and was created in the framework of the centenary celebrations for the birth of Iannis Xenakis, by the Performative Environments Arts Research Lab (PEARL) at the Department of Audiovisual Arts of the Ionian University, in collaboration with Athens Conservatory and the Meta-Xenakis Meetings consortium. During this marathon, works were performed simultaneously at the Athens Conservatory, as well as in other places worldwide. Control data were transmitted through the Internet, resulting in coordinated sound and dance performances between different locations. It included sound and performance data from live coders, score creators, instrumental performers, dancers, and installation artists working with many media formats, while the main data format was Open Sound Control (OSC) broadcasting via OscGroups, with parallel video streaming. Participating performers were located in different parts of the world, while performances took place on the stage of Athens Conservatory.

A commentary on connectivity is worth starting from this project, as indeed the project is the epitome of connectivity. It managed to bring together numerous artists, programmers, composers, technicians and performers from all over the world, who performed the works in real time and remotely, with simultaneous participation of other artists on site, connected via the Internet.

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2 Xenakis Networked Performance Marathon 2022 team consisted of:


2. The Athens Conservatory, namely Niko Athinaios: Overall Coordination and Direction at Athens Conservatory, Lila Zafeiropoulou: Choreographic Supervision and Concept, Stella Kourbana: Coordination with Meta-Xenakis Consortium, Katerina Tsioukra: Press and online presence,


4. Independent collaborators, namely Dimitra Kousteridou, Georgios Diapoulis, Stefano Kalonaris.

It is impossible to mention the description of each project individually, as more than 50 performers, technicians, composers and artists participated in the networked marathon, very often with several roles each. Initially, the project was an ambitious undertaking which largely achieved its purpose. On the one hand, the timing of the project around the 100th anniversary of the birth of Iannis Xenakis gives a significance to its realization by the Athens Conservatory and the PEARL laboratory of the Department of Audiovisual Arts of the Ionian University. Conceptually, this synchronicity and connectivity would have appealed to Xenakis, based on his work and texts, through the political, cosmic and technological connotations he gave to both.

Furthermore, the creation of this online community was indeed emphasized throughout the media and social networks promotion of the project, as well as in the introductions by the organizers. However, more concrete reflections on connectivity were not evident in the core of the presentations. Even the artworks that addressed the struggles of contemporary humans and societies did not mention top-down connectivity and how it could possibly contribute to those struggles, or the tyranny of constant and omnipresent networking in any way. Connectivity appeared with the connotation of the ethically “good”, as an impressive achievement that artists are experimenting with in order to explore new technological possibilities. This viewpoint resulted in works using connectivity without ever thematizing it. On the one hand, it makes sense to use all media available rather than problematizing them in absolute terms. On the other hand, there were projects which clearly could elaborate more on a critical perspective, and possibly would have done so if there was room for this to be addressed further. Beyond all of the above, the project managed to resonate and address, as well as raise issues of connectivity, with the presence and absence of dialogue around this condition.

As for the second case study, things are quite different. The artistic project Mystery 91_Magnetic Dance\textsuperscript{4} carried out its first turnover in the context of the actions of the Elefsina Cultural Capital and the Spring Forward Festival, under the artistic supervision and guidance of Iannis Zannos and the production and supervision of the company To Aesthate G.P. The project is a series of digital art events that concern the communication of body and technology through remote communication: the dancers’ body is connected with a computer through sensors while it transfers movement data online, as well as to remote users between them. It is based on the idea of embodiment and embodied action, telematic

\textsuperscript{4} The work is part of 2023Elevsis Cultural Capital of Europe and was introduced to the public in an open rehearsal attached to the Spring Forward Festival. The artistic team is: Iannis Zannos | with the participation of Natali Mandila, Tasos Pappas-Petridis, Jun Takahashi and Asayo Hisai, Haruka Hirayama (composer/computer music professor), Hideaki Isobe (sound artist), and Akoo.o sound art team.
improvisational creation, telepresence in the technologically territorialized and reterritorialized space of the Internet, as well as the relationship of human and machine as a single body. The project is informed by innovative technologies that combine the logic of open source and the free, creative sharing of media and tools, through the logic of copyleft. The main goal is to connect the cultural importance of Ancient Eleusis, as the place where the Eleusinian Mysteries were performed, with new practices of performing digital arts through open source and performance practices. It approaches the cultural dimensions of technology sharing practices in a free and open way, through the prism of performative practices of artistic expression. Lastly, a series of geo-located audio walks were created for the entire city of Elefsina by the Akoo.o team, connecting the aural history and reality of the city with the sound outcome of the performances.

On a technical level, a sensor system was created and supported for tests with audio and graphical environments to establish operational control of programming environments for telematic use of a prototype wearable-wireless sensor system. The goal was to ensure control, processing and transfer of data to other devices in order to produce sound and graphic environments’ remote collaboration. More specifically, this prototype wearable sensor system was installed to send data from sensors that combine a 3-axis gyroscope, a 3-axis accelerometer, as well as eight buttons for selecting sounds and graphic environments to remote servers (Agiomirgianakis 2021). This way, the dancers were producing the sound themselves, translating movement into sound, or manipulating the parameters of pre-chosen sounds.

In this project connectivity happens on the ground. Even though the data came and went through remote servers, all the dancers and composers were in the same place. This connectivity was in fact an “aesthetic connectivity”, pertaining more to the connection between human and technology, body and spirit, composition and embodied practice. It would not refer to the connection of people or a community of artists, as was the case in the previous work, rather to the intercommunication of different artistic disciplines within the same artwork. Thus, the dancers become improvisers on the very music they compose, while the composers control the sonic qualities based on the body and movement of the Other, as an embodied co-creator of abstract concepts.

Even this purely aesthetic level is useful and has a political dimension, which need not be overlooked. “Aesthetic connectivity” changes the way we see art, both from the inside and as an audience. It reduces the boundaries between audience and performer, between man and machine, between sound and movement, and between artwork and everyday life. But at the same time, thoughts arise about how obvious this process becomes to the audience watching this process, how apparent it becomes to them what is happening on stage. Does the audience really understand the technological and conceptual connection be-
between idea and implementation, or is it indifferent / unintelligible / inaccessible to them, even when it is happening in front of their eyes? Does it matter to the audience when they are watching the play? How does the audience perceive the technological connections if they don’t read the text that accompanies the action? Here, questions are raised about public access in relation to the conceptual and technological framing of the artistic work, and the popularization of artistic research.

Finally, the last case study is the project *Spaces for Reflection*5 which was presented in the context of the educational activities of the 10th Berlin Biennal. Although the broader project was multidisciplinary and concerned the constructive critique of institutions and mega-exhibitions, the offline network sub-project that will be used here as a case study is the most relevant to the topic of this article. Among the various workshops, presentations, discussions and artistic interventions, Spaces for Reflection decided to use and include a detailed discussion on PirateBox during the Berlin and Athens Biennials, by setting up an offline network in the two spaces and engaging in dialogue with visitors and participants. To do this we set up a router with PirateBox code, an opensource code that is inserted into the router and creates an offline network, or local network. On this network people could only connect locally, meaning it has no international reach. The reach was the KW building and the surrounding streets. At the same time, there were open discussions with the public at organized times and days, but also with various visitors on a one-to-one basis.

The group decided to use the PirateBox code, but, instead of buying a ready-made router as suggested on the PirateBox site, a Raspberry Pi was easier to be found and coded accordingly at that time. The group was inspired and guided

5 Spaces of reflection was a collective project that included reflective thought and action about artistic mediation. Students, artists and researchers coexisted as part of a permanent intervention that explored “the perception of visitors and the possibilities of public participation in mega-exhibitions of contemporary art”, from Documenta14 to the 10th Berlin Biennale, We don’t need another hero, and the 6th Athens Biennale, ANTI. The group was formed at the initiative of Mona Jas between students from the Kunsthochschule Weißensee and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, artists from Athens and Berlin and researchers from the Documenta14 chorus group. The first meeting took place at Goethe Institut Athen and the group created its own dynamic through networking and various meetings in Athens and Berlin. The group presented its work at the 10th Berlin Biennale to the KW Institute for Contemporary Art Kunst-Werke studiolo in August 2018 (organized by Mona Jas and the artistic mediation and education department of the 10th Berlin Biennale), as well as at the 6th Athens Biennial at the Esperia Palace (organized by Eva Giannakopoulou in a co-production of the Athens Biennale and the Goethe Institut Athen). The team of Spaces of Reflection consisted of various artists and researchers: Jasmeen Adeoshun, Magdalena Beger, Vivien Emmanouilidou, Sofia Grigoriadou, Maria Janus, Alexia Manzano, Dana Papachristou, Harriet Rabe von Froreich, Yorgos Samantas, Liz Stumpf, Simon Bejerholm Villadsen, Myrto Vratsanou, Silke Wittig, and visitors Giannis Sarris, Simon Johnson and Mattin. https://bb10.berlinbiennale.de/calendar/spaces-of-reflection.
to use PirateBox by artist Giannis Sarris who had also used it as part of Documenta14, curated by Adam Szymczyk, for the performance Social Dissonance by Mattin. Raspberry Pi programming was successful with the invaluable help of programmer, game designer and artist Simon Johnson.

PirateBox, as an offline network has ceased to exist, although the code remains free. Matthias Strubel started working on PirateBox in 2011 as an open source project. By 2019 Matthias Strubel had gradually left the program, although the blog hasn’t yet ceased to exist online. The reasons for his decision are many. As he explains: “in the year 2016 FCC changed the rules about firmware security, resulting in more locked router firmware, HTTPS everywhere is kicking PirateBox’ butt with the redirect everywhere, all the technical enhancements for user security made us go one step back, […] , the amount of spam increased tremendously” (ibid.). Although the forum is closed and some services will eventually stop, their space in GitHub, “a provider of internet hosting for software development”, will stay online and there is also a call for volunteers to take over the project, while there is an active reddit post.

During both of the Spaces for Reflection presentations in Berlin and Athens, an offline network was available to visitors and participants to facilitate connectivity through the router. Each visitor could select the network from the device’s network list, connect and browse the local network environment. This platform included a simple chat and provided facilities for uploading photos and sharing files, as well as for simultaneous communication and editing. In addition, the group organized presentations, demonstrations and discussions around the theme of the use of this network and the reason for their choice to set it up and make it available in such a context. The offline network created was very useful throughout the exhibition as it was used to store images, exchange opinions, and upload an illustrative bibliography, which helped all other Spaces for Reflection activities. But the most interesting point was the discussions that followed the interventions. Most visitors could not see the usefulness of this network and why it could replace a website or a closed group on a social network. Some believed that a closed group of participants in a communication app like WhatsApp, Messenger or Trello would do the same job. Finally, there was a great deal of suspicion about their data entry when interacting with the network offline. This made them suspicious of what they could write or download on the network chat, as they were worried that their actions would remain stored on the Raspberry Pi.

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6 PirateBox remains on the internet as a read only forum, last accessed on April 5th 2023 https://forum.piratebox.cc/read.php?9,23070.
7 https://www.reddit.com/r/Piratebox/.
In this case, the connectivity of the local network was complementary to the connectivity properties available analogously or without any technological mediation. One of the most legitimate questions from the audience during the discussion was “why should we initiate a dialogue on the offline chat if we are already in the same room”. The argument was that the local network created an archive, so each visitor could not only chat in space but also in time: be informed about previous visitors; leave a message for future ones; or create an active library. Finally, participants were very suspicious about the fate of their data: They felt that the lack of a regulatory context made them feel vulnerable, and they believed that companies like Google, Facebook and others actually act under a regulatory context that protects them from theft or malicious use of their data.

**Captured and recaptured**

When talking about the network and connectivity, we can look back on the Deleuzian and Guattarian notions of the rhizome. Indeed this theoretical juxtaposition is very widespread. But is the Internet always a rhizome? Does the principle of connection and heterogeneity apply in all networked conditions? Can all the points of the network be connected with each other (Deleuze 1987, 13) like a rhizome, and does the principle of multiplicity always apply (ibid., 14)? As the only unity a rhizome can acquire comes from the signification and subjectification, then we could say that the Internet is a different kind of connective condition, that may or may not be [overcoded – surcoder] (ibid., 15). The fact that this type of connectivity often requires a dominant unity, from corporate regulations and servers to straightforward content control, renders the Internet a structure that is characterized depending on the use. What is most interesting to me in this article is whether or not connectivity can contain and nurture lines of flights. And ultimately, if the network itself is capable of enabling the creation of new rhizomes through accommodation, tolerance and reinforcement of lines of flights. Could it be that the Internet connectivity rhizome is a consolidated-rhizomatic form that appropriates the properties of the rhizome, while depriving all connective conditions of their agency and dynamic?

Lines of flight are powerful drives that are released from a network, whether this network follows arborescent structures or rhizomatic connections. Indeed the Internet consists of lines as a rhizome does (ibid: 16), and contains numerous overlayering lines. But these lines require subjectification, organization and the consolidation of subjects or the formation of multiplicities. We could affirm that the internet corresponds with the rhizomatic principle of the asignifying rupture (ibid: 16) and the principle of cartography (ibid., 20). Moreover, it is constructed by lines of segmentarity, according to which “it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc.” (ibid., 16-17) and it is based
on multiplicities (ibid., 20). But on the other hand, it often creates dualism and dichotomy, while it sometimes lacks multiple entries. The most important part is that it often requires a centralized power, while the produced lines of flight in fact lack meaningful possibilities of “flight”.

We could not deny that the Internet is a powerful agent of change, and that it has the potential to be a war machine precisely insofar as it maps out “a plane of consistency, a creative line of flight, a smooth space of displacement” (ibid., 422-423). The Internet could potentially facilitate the creation of other rhizomes, and it has done so in many cases. On a theoretical level, its lines of flight or deterritorialization possibilities can create multiplicities and change their nature to connect with others (ibid., 16). Through new technological forms and possibilities, there could be a nomad art as itinerant, minor, ambulant art and science collision (ibid., 372), constituting a war machine, acting against the apparatuses of capture and dominant practices. The common line of flight of the weapon and the tool (ibid., 398) could be reinforced through networked connectivity in contemporary art.

However, the outcome depends on the relevant agency. Art can also turn into a war machine of minor form that favors the requirement of the asubjective, of the asignifying and the anorganic (ibid., 279). But, a mere line of flight is never enough: Space can be re-striated, lines of flight can lead to points of consolidation, nomadism can be left meaningless, and the war machine can be used by the power assemblages it originally escaped from. An ambulant and minor artistic gesture is in constant danger of being appropriated by the apparatuses of capture, to form the establishment of a new empire (ibid., 436). The state apparatus can capture the war machine or turn it against itself and the artists. It is thus a requirement of artistic connectivity in general not to create assemblages of power corresponding or identical to those it “flew away from”, by losing its speed and its smooth space to the advantage of the consolidated and the striated in its royal form.

What is the sedentary today, and what perils of recapture does art face today, and in particular in the aforementioned artworks? In these case studies, all of the artworks had the exigence of using rhizomatic connectivity and of creating minor art. The question is how recapturing works in these cases, what is centralized power here, and how does it affect our lives as artists, creators or audiences. In my opinion, when all these practices [DIY, open source, freeware] become appropriated by large institutions, corporations, or funding mechanisms, then they lose the dynamic of their creation in the first place. They are utilized by institutions as free tools that assert their position within a generalized media mediation, as royal art versus nomad and minor art, as well as in creating artistic empires. At the same time, as artists we eventually become testers of technologies, regardless of our intentions, before they are used as tools of generalized
surveillance and digital governance. Conditions are thus created where lines of flight become recaptured, stop “fleeing / flying” and remain in a sedentary and established condition. Eventually, as has always been the case in the history of art, we are urged to invent other lines of flight, new and ever fugitive. The story may go on forever, but this realization in the contemporary technological environment takes on additional meanings: Art can function as a weapon and tool against arborescent and sedentary structures, who are consolidated so as to lead to generalized digital and inherently oppressive mediations, and this is an opportunity that shouldn’t be lost.

**Conclusion**

While contributing to a wide-ranging discourse on the aesthetics of our time, the aforementioned perspectives regarding the radical potential within the arts should not be regarded as fixed standpoints. They are not presented here merely as opposition to the discussed case studies, solely from a critical standpoint. To some extent, the aforementioned artworks have effectively highlighted “the potential of technology to support international collaboration in artistic creation, to create works that are performed live in multiple venues simultaneously regardless of distance, using new experimental media that allow for direct communication and exchange of musical data,” as stated in the project description of XNPM22 on the conservatory’s YouTube channel. However, the critique arises precisely from these accomplishments. Is connectivity alone sufficient? Does the mere existence of connectivity warrant a celebratory stance? Can we rely on its presence to discern transformative changes and radical necessities in our era?

In my perspective, the potential of connectivity today is not inherently revolutionary, considering its extensive utilization by the harshest aspects of capitalism and prevailing economic policies. We cannot solely celebrate the technical capabilities of widespread connectivity, as the practices of crowdsourcing within networks contribute significantly to pervasive surveillance and constant lifelogging (Puar 2017: 4). It also fuels anxiety, which has become the dominant effect of contemporary capitalism (Institute for Precarious Consciousness 2014), and plays a role in global digital governance. These aspects represent the epitome of connectivity in today’s context, serving as the primary strategies of power structures. The incorporation of connectivity into undermining the influence of these power structures may depend on our ability to critically select and reflect upon the tools and weapons (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, 403) we employ for this

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8 Description of the networked performance XNPM22, online last accessed January 21st 2023 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flCT-nLDXDu.
purpose. We can perceive a threat in connectivity and recognize the network as a system of weaponry (Galloway & Thacker 2007, 16). Present-day political regimes are sustained through their relationship with networks, while “networked power is based on a dialectic between two opposing tendencies: one radically distributes control into autonomous locales; the other focuses control into rigidly defined hierarchies” (ibid., 19). Building upon Galloway and Thacker’s ideas, the notion of connectivity is so highly valued today that it is increasingly challenging to identify places or objects that do not, in some way, conform to a networking framework (ibid., 26). In summary, the “digital logic of combinatorial difference is now used as a tool of governance” (Culp 2022, 83), rendering connectivity a “techno-utopian business strategy that braids the physical with the virtual to create a sociopolitical empire of difference” (ibid.).

However, we must not overlook the cooperative intention evident in the aforementioned case studies. These projects clearly aimed to establish a connection between art and technology by following a shared trajectory of both the weapon and the tool, dispersing expertise and artistic inspiration on a global scale. This collective trajectory of the weapon and the tool brought together “subterranean, aerial, submarine technicians, who belong more or less to the world order, but who involuntarily invent and amass virtual charges of knowledge and action that are usable by others, minute but easily acquired for new assemblages” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, 403). All three projects aspired to share technological knowledge, create a remote community of artists, and foster synergies. And that is not an insignificant or irrelevant endeavor. However, it is only meaningful when the objective is driven by existing subversive imperatives, evading centralized power structures and utilizing connectivity “to propose that an understanding of the control mechanisms within networks needs to be as polydimensional as networks are themselves” (Galloway & Thacker 2007, 63). It is undeniable that connectivity brings together ideas, thinkers, artists, and technicians from around the world, but it alone does not make a work radical. In other words, connectivity is not sufficient to reinforce subversive practices that could dismantle the existing political, social, urban, scientific, artistic, and ideological frameworks that all participating artists undoubtedly uphold in these case studies.

It is indeed useful to have new tools and possibilities available for artistic creation, but a critical stance is required. Mere experimentation is not good enough to cover today’s needs, when connectivity is used by everyone, be it nomadic self-managed and cooperative communities, or royal institutions, power assemblages and artistic empires. Art can no longer function as a playground of producing new sounds, movements, or colors. These experimentations could have been useful for the previous century, but the “honeymoon” with technology is over. We know how art and technology can both be used as weapons and as tools
by power assemblages, we know what’s at stake, and wondering whether it can be used in an “art pour l’art” or “technology for technology’s sake” cannot be valid today in contemporary aesthetics. Though technological media have infinite possibility, the objective remains to create collaborative spaces, non-hierarchical and anorganic. The challenge is not a mere democratization of the media, it is instead an attempt to reclaim the means of production, a social advancement from mere cogs of crowdsourcing ubiquitous lifelogging systems to active agents of co-creation in our own terms. And to do so, connectivity as a condition is not enough.

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THE POLITICS OF CONNECTIVITY:
BETWEEN CELEBRATORY AND CRITICAL APPROACHES

(summary)

This paper delves into the role of connectivity in networked artworks and performances, adopting a critical approach towards its implications. The discussion revolves around three main case studies: the Xenakis Networked Performance Marathon 2022 online project, the 2023 Eleusis Mystery 91_Magnetic Dance in Elefsina European Capital of Culture, and the Spaces of Reflection offline PirateBox network in the 10th Berlin Biennale. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as Deleuze and Guattari’s aesthetic theories and contemporary reflections on networks, the paper explores the omnipotence of connectivity in today’s society. It also examines the influence of institutions, funding operators, and corporations on artistic connectivity, focusing on their agency and intentions.

Connectivity, facilitated by technological advancements, is often regarded as the cornerstone of contemporary artistic production. It encompasses various aspects such as the Internet, fast communication, data exchange, social networks, interactive media, and interactivity in general. Today, we have unprecedented opportunities to connect and collaborate online, regardless of geographical boundaries or time zones. The allure of simultaneous creation and the participatory nature of global connectivity have given rise to online communities and a sense of a global artistic village.

However, the landscape of connectivity has become increasingly complex as connectivity has evolved from a means of connection and communication to a tool of surveillance, biopolitics, and profiling. The paper aims to critically examine three cases of artistic connectivity while acknowledging celebratory aspects. The author’s participation in these projects as both a creator and organizer fuels the critical perspective. By engaging in self-criticism and scrutinizing their own positionality, the author hopes to enhance their relationship with technological art and generate a more profound understanding of the consequences of artistic creation.

The potential of connectivity in contemporary society is not inherently revolutionary, as it has been extensively employed by capitalist systems and prevailing economic policies. While widespread connectivity offers technical capabilities, it also contributes to pervasive surveillance, constant lifelogging, anxiety, and global digital governance. Connectivity has been incorporated into the strategies of power structures, transform-
ing it into a means of control. To counterbalance these dynamics, critical selection and reflection on the tools and weapons employed become crucial.

It is essential to acknowledge the cooperative intentions embedded in the examined case studies. But, while this endeavor holds significance, it only becomes meaningful when driven by subversive imperatives, evading centralized power structures. Connectivity alone does not guarantee radicality; it requires subversive practices that challenge existing political, social, urban, scientific, artistic, and ideological frameworks upheld by participating artists in the case studies. This paper provides a critical exploration of connectivity in networked artworks and performances. It highlights the complexities and implications associated with connectivity, emphasizing the need for self-criticism, awareness of positionality, and an understanding of the consequences of artistic result. While connectivity offers immense possibilities for collaboration and knowledge exchange, its transformative potential can only be fully realized when employed as a subversive force against dominant power structures.