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Reimagining Human Machine Relations Through Creative Methodologies

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In this presentation, we explore a mode of social inquiry that engages with the intertwined nature of human and machine relations through creative methodologies, particularly research-creation. We advocate for a kind of "sociology of machines" that moves beyond human-centered paradigms and acknowledges the fundamentality of nonhumans in general, and machines in particular, to sociality. Our work at the intersection of art and technology seeks out a lively research conduct that ludically treats machines, especially thinking and learning machines, as social others. This rather 'idiotic methodology'(Michael, 2012) allows us to raise questions about the nature of human machine relationality that normal modes of social inquiry cannot easily reveal or tap into. Building on the centrality of sense and affect for the development of conceptions, our approach employs research-creation practice (Loveless, 2012) to build the outlines of a social theory of machines that reimagines human-machine relations.

So far, the literature mainly focused on relations with machines that reproduce the dominant logic of our contemporary moment: as mass systems of extraction and exploitation (Zuboff, 2019); recursive loops, ladders, and links (Fourcade and Jones, 2020); or machine habitus that cannot but reproduce the existing social order (Airoldi, 2022). One question that is not asked as rigorously, however, is whether these technologies could facilitate different relations in the world; if they could produce different realities that cultivate around not notions of control, domination, and extraction, but freedom and novelty. We take up this challenge in this collaboration that creates sites of playful interactions with machines, exploring meaningful resonances between body-matter sensorium to inform a mode of social thinking that imaginatively engages with the world, and is empowered to inspire alternative visions of human machine relations.

Keywords: human-machine relations; research-creation; sociology of machines; posthuman methodologies; idiotic methodology

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