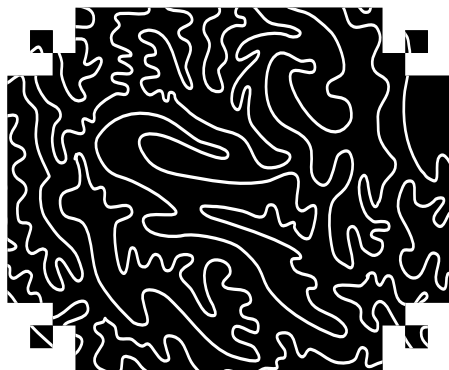


FINDING OUR WAY

Gathered and edited by Marie LeBlanc Flanagan



T E C H T E C H T E C H

FINDING OUR WAY is a compilation of contributions from coresearchers on Ada X's Tech Tech Tech project. Together we are exploring alternatives to the tech giants for artists and artist-run centers. ✨

To create this zine, I organized and ran a series of short cowriting workshops where we gathered together online for ~60 minutes to share problems we each are facing as well as solutions we have uncovered. The structure of “problem” and “solution” is here to support us in our writing, not to constrain us. Solutions can be understood as explorations, ideas, of places for expression.

The final page is for you to make your contribution.

Thank you for being here with us.

Marie LeBlanc Flanagan

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I am Prakash Krishnan

I am loose ephemera housed in a brown body, artist-researcher, cultural mediator, at the end of a Saturn return.

I study art and media with a focus on digital diasporic networks and disability justice.

The Problem

The problem is the interlacing between my phone's memory and my own. If I haven't taken souvenirs in the form of photos, calendar events, messages, or reminders, important moments become lost to me. Life online is too many connections, is information overload: news cycles and celeb tea, new babies and dogs, jobs and degrees, vacations and birthdays and anniversaries. Once I scroll past, retention drops to zero. To be present in the [digital] moment is to be everywhere at once, and to log out is to be exiled from the city of connections.

A Solution

I have tried to break up with my phone. To instead build relationships to objects, feelings, memory IRL detached from digital traces/data points (photos, text messages, etc.). Thought process: if there are no traces, and I value this relationship, I will be forced to

- ✦ ✦ ✦ reconfigure my orientation toward, and
- ✦ rely on, my own internal storage and security of memory.

Yet, in doing so, I've forgotten important dates, birthdays, plans, conversations, commitments. Whole encounters are lost because we didn't exchange @usernames, and now I can't remember so-and-so's name and how we met.

I'm working now on modifying my relationship to digital documentation to find a working equilibrium. A note-taking-journaling approach using my own methodology and an asocial platform to record my thoughts to come back to. Something not public, not shared, without notifications, but that I know is always there. ✨

I mute notifications and log out once overwhelmed. I've transitioned from SMS to voice notes and regularly declutter and reorganize my photos, making sure to tag ones to come back to. Precious moments with friends, flowers, hot selfies.

Finding a fluid,
individualized
approach that
appropriates
the affordances
of digital
documentation.

✧ *I am Crystal Chan*

As a writer and editor, I illuminate, mediate. I facilitate storytelling projects: often digital, decolonial, and by Indigenous creators. As a connector between authors, artists, web developers, filmmakers, and between forms, catalogues, and labels, communication is key. Clarity is key.

The Problem

Which is why you'd expect me to be organized. If you walked into my home—you wouldn't be shocked. It's tidy. But if you wander into my digital home, you'll find an antique store of data: piled up in dusty towers, ready to topple over and crush you.

Every few weeks I try something else to keep my digital home neat: idiosyncratic colour coding, weird file naming, a new app that promises to fix things. After a few days, I get overwhelmed.

Later, nothing makes sense. I pay money. I hire the digital equivalent of a 1-800-take-my-junk truck and my "ephemeral" data sits in a tech giant storage locker. Who owns that data? Me? Really? data? Me? Really

A Solution

At work, I've learned to respect cultural protocols, beyond the copyrights required by law. Data requires sovereignty, attribution, and context. The audio recording of an Indigenous Matriarch is sacred. The film of a dancer in regalia raises as many questions about ownership as the blanket in the film, stolen and sitting in a museum.





Where is your data stored in the world, by whom, and who has access to it? What is the balance between the open-source u/dys-topia of “everything available for all” and respectful stewardship?

I challenge my colonized mind to see animals, plants, stones as beings. Why not data? We find creative ways to mesh and reshape existing, open-source, customizable platforms to build new pathways (ex: Reciprocal Research Network / Local Contexts).

A week and a half ago there was a death in my family. I dropped everything. I slept in my grandparents’ empty bed. The shelf
✦ ✦ ✦ held photo albums. There aren’t many.
✦ My grandparents lovingly curated the mementos. What is important, is kept.

The selection criteria is personal. Follows your own spirit and rule. Each remaining photo is preserved with loving care in an album: an offering and a gift, for current and future kin.

How do I treat my digital belongings with the same care? Like physical objects, digital ✦ objects deserve our protection, our responsibility, and our tenderness.

I am Remina Greenfield

I am a researcher and artist interested in the hybrid possibilities that can emerge from coordination between living things and computational systems. In my work, I explore ways to think about technology through an ecological and biological lens.

The Problem

There's no transparency about the lifespan of digital objects, data that exists online, etc. Me says: If our technologies followed a more ecological model, we would have more transparency about when and how our online data or personas will decay or disappear. .

At some point in my young adult life, it began to dawn on me just how many traces of myself had been smeared over various profiles, blogs, university websites, etc. Especially as a student you are encouraged to post your work as a way to benefit universities and institutions before you really know what it means to have this early work made public.



There are certain cultural myths about technological immortality, for instance that one could live indefinitely on a server. However, which digital fragments of us will become part of an archive or dataset for a company is actually completely out of our control.

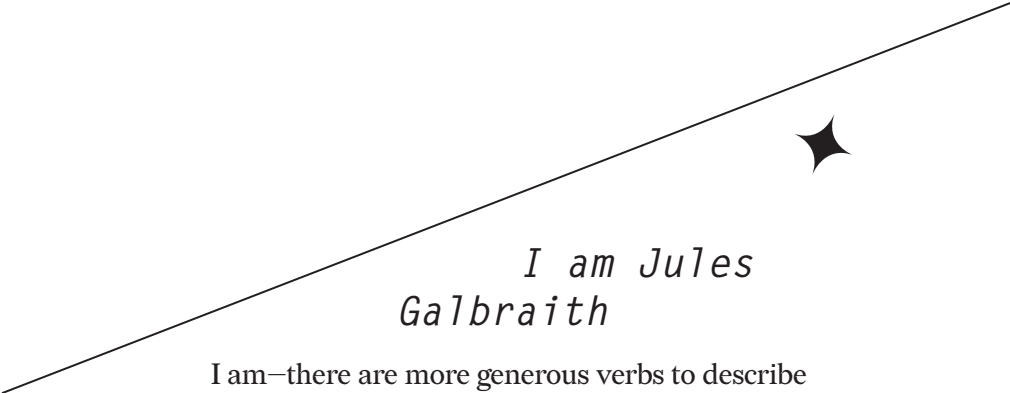
✧ *A Solution?*

I went through the process of hunting down and erasing most of my digital traces. Some of this was easy to do - simply deleting a profile or closing an account. However, other materials were more difficult as I had to go through a 3rd party to get certain things taken down. Another detail is that this process was erasing only what was external on these various sites. I wouldn't know what pieces of data are kept by the various tech companies and to what ends they would be used. At some point you feel like you are being haunted by past versions of yourself and not allowed to progress through the normal growth and evolution process.

This process was by no means a solution, but a personal experience of the difficulties trying to metabolize one's online presence. I find poetic resonance in rights that exist in other countries such as the "right to disappear" or the "right to be forgotten." What about the right not to live forever? To be allowed to enter a deeper ecological life cycle.

I started an entire artist
practice about what
metabolism - including
decay - might look like in
a computational system, but
inspired by and drawing
from biological
processes.





I am Jules Galbraith

I am—there are more generous verbs to describe a way of being (of belonging) to the world; I love. I am diffuse, without hard edges, only directions. I write—I make myself known, I make my tendencies known, I lend my memories to language and let them circulate as gifts, as gnats, as seeds with wings.

The Problem

The problem is that the platform does not share. The problem is the platform makes itself an end, rather than a means. For years I kept FB for the events—but the feed is polluted now, uninteresting, clogged with ads. I don't check it anymore. IG is more sly. "I can't mute them, they post event flyers sometimes."

I want to connect IRL, I want to go out, dance, arrange to see friends. Event roundups in local papers don't cut it anymore. I need access—I need to follow—I need to know what's happening. But I also need my time back. Getting offline is the pretext the platform uses to loop me back in.

A Solution?

Last year, I thought to myself—I miss bulletin boards. I miss posters. The event flyer is far from lost as an art form—now, though, we need to reckon with IG compression, ensure legibility. Small text is a bad idea, trite design predominates, subtleties get lost. 500 x 500 px is too crunched, inelegant, for my 8.5 x 11 heart.

I bought “flyerzone.fun”, set up a submission email, offered to host any event flyers swimming around, described it as the digital equivalent of a telephone pole covered in worn-out tape and staples. It didn’t really take off (I’m not rich in online clout, was freshly back on the scene. I’ve forgotten the email password.)

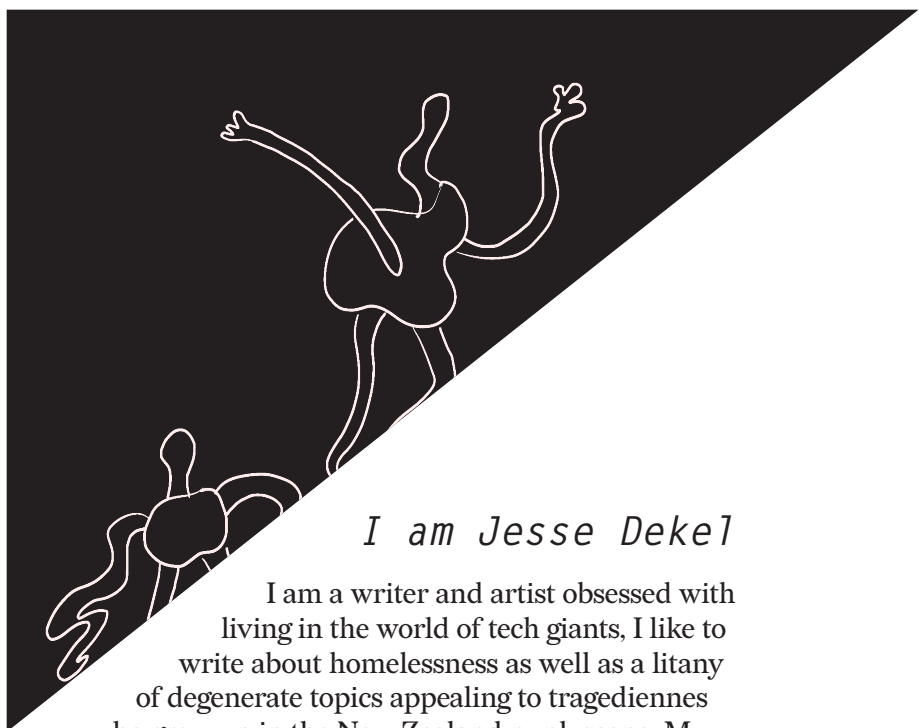
There were security concerns, as well—couldn’t anyone access the site? Couldn’t cops see it? I figured—flyers are public too—it’s a matter of where attention is directed. Whatever.

Lately, group Telegrams have been founded. I went out dancing and at 5am was handed a small card with a bit.ly link. Invite-only private chat, but large scale. Flyers are submitted weekly—all events are covered. I have it muted, but remember to check.

The HTML energy isn’t there (what if Telegram gets bought out?) But the desire to connect—off platform—is.

Independently hosted
sites. Invite-only,
encrypted chat
groups. Word! Of!
Mouth!





I am Jesse Deke1

I am a writer and artist obsessed with living in the world of tech giants, I like to write about homelessness as well as a litany of degenerate topics appealing to tragediennes who grew up in the New Zealand punk scene. My interests include shoplifting from record stores.

The Problem

The problem is the first thing I do in the morning is pick up my phone. The problem of dealing with the social devastation that comes with living amongst tech giants is my brain doesn't work properly,

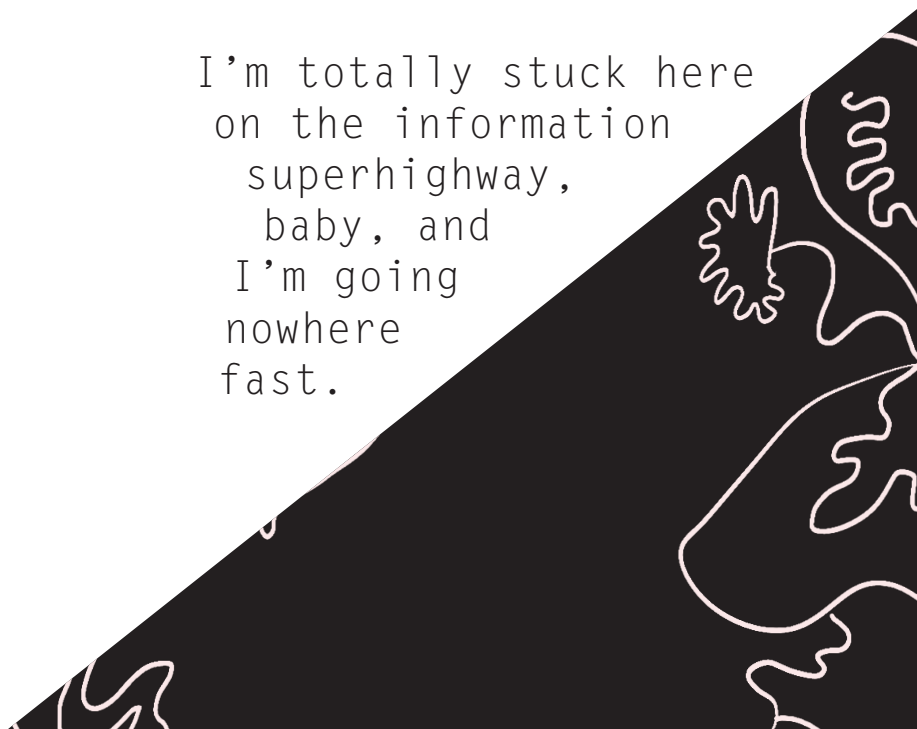
♦ ♦ ♦
♦ I stare at my phone 6 hours a day and it feels so awful. And if you're under 30 most of your life has been like this. It's completely eviscerated any semblence of 'accessibility' in the Uberized gig economy to any working class person and fixated itself on an underclass that doesn't have access. Techies are also gentrifiers - the 21st century yuppies.

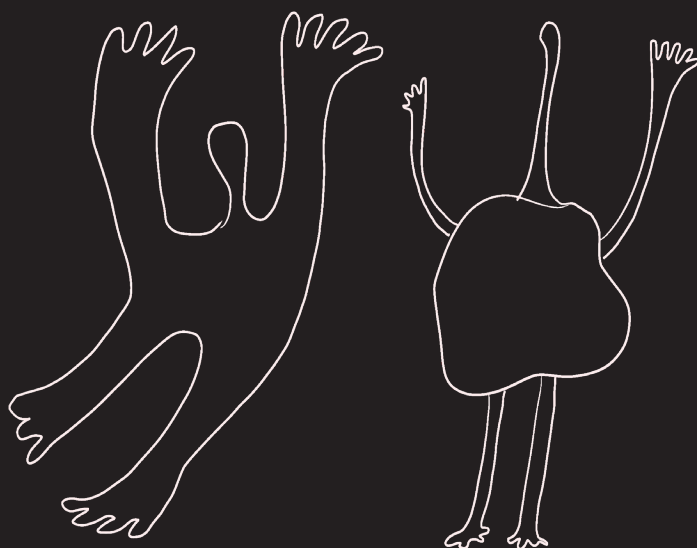
A Solution?



I try to teach myself not to obsess over social media, and actively try to suppress the urge to keep extremely up to date with news and takes. None of this has ever worked. I try to go on walks and enjoy the company of others and know people that I have absolutely zero shared digital footprint with (impossible). I also go on app-breaks, which feels so pathetic to put into words, but I don't know what else I can do. I tried that trick where you turn your phone monochromatic so your brain doesn't fire the same dopamine receptors that bright flashy lights excite, but I can only do that for about a day max, and then I need the colour again to see something. It reminds me of what people say the problem with quitting smoking is, it's trying to quit an anxiety created by itself. I'm addicted to my phone and it's the most socially acceptable addiction out there, despite everyone sharing the same hatred for it.

I'm totally stuck here
on the information
superhighway,
baby, and
I'm going
nowhere
fast.





I am Kat Hutton



I am a social scientist and an artist. I work as a freelance researcher who helps companies prepare and innovate for a sustainable future.

My academic background is centered around well-being, in the field of medical anthropology. And my creative focus is inspired by cultures of labour, particularly farming and fruit-picking in the Okanagan Valley, BC.

The Problem?

The problem I have with technology is time-based. Each interface, and series of prompts and decisions one makes in each app, has a corresponding time-frame,

and temporal reality. The way that I perceive time, especially when using very addictive apps like Instagram, is what has become most problematic for me. I feel that living in this time-frame, that is ultimately determined by pace-of-chemical-addiction, feels very bad for my productivity - in fact, it creates a pole around action/inaction. This object-time emphasizes a distinct lack of action, in relation to my passive consumption. This is not good for self-esteem, it encourages envy and self-pitying.

A Solution?

In order to solve our addiction to apps, many people delete them. Facebook, for example, many people delete for a time, but relapse. I wanted to leave room for visiting friends' pages and photos *if I want to*.



I kept Facebook, but unfollowed everything, so that I no longer have a feed. This has essentially weaned me off the Facebook feed, prompts, and endless chemical reward circuit. It has left room for my own autonomy to decide whether I would like to navigate Facebook to find a particular thing, rather than have the algorithm offer me items based on most-emotionally-drastic-from-the-next.

Unfollowing everything is initially time-consuming. But deliberately curating my apps and eliminating addictive feeds increased my virtual autonomy and I think it's ultimately helped my well-being in the long run.

The older
generations are
uniquely vulnerable
to these detrimental
cycles.

I am Natasha Chuk

I am a writer, scholar, educator, and stubborn overthinker who operates in a state of in-betweenness. My identity is situated between broad categories, which informs my research interests: perception, language, and the creative potential of technologies. I write about and spend a great deal of time with visual media, like photography, moving images, and most things that require participant interaction. I relish my privacy.

The Problem?

One of the problems with most technologies – apps, websites, creative software – is they are designed to get to «know» users. Low-level predictive analytics seem to be embedded in everything, which translates as the system trying to anticipate my next move, or worse, making a suggestion for it.

This is a kind of soft surveillance, in that my actions are being observed, studied, and assessed. It interferes with my freedom to create, to take a chance, to follow my instincts. It tries to categorize where a category may not exist, preventing new ideas, combinations, and forms to emerge.

Even if this isn't technically the case, it feels that way from a creative standpoint. Email does this. Social media apps do this. Text editing software does this. My next move, and maybe my next idea, seems to be ushered in by software design. Merely using the software in question engenders a kind of thinking through and with its design.





A *Solution?*

I used to try to write by hand, then copy my words onto a digital «page». While time consuming, it's satisfying to code switch between two different mediated systems. My hand, pen, and paper produce some ideas, and transitioning to typing and using text editing software forces an internal editing process, filtering out weaknesses and developing and refining my ideas. My work seems to encounter both a different writer and reader during this process. I also move between digital "pages". I'm always taking notes on my phone. I like to import that gibberish into a working document to impose a glitch effect between them. But writing itself is shaped by other, perhaps more uncontrollable problems. The sheer access to information—useful, inspiring, supportive, as well as competing and distracting—extends and contracts my thinking process in ways I'm not always prepared to manage. I respond well to deadlines, preventing me from straying, but information overload feels unavoidable. I'd rather not contribute to it. The analog habits I maintain help keep me grounded, providing materiality for what I write in what would otherwise feel like endlessly streaming lines of text.

Mixing analog
with digital
feels disruptive
and the best
way to fuel my
creativity.

I am Sarah Choukah

I am somewhere in between
a failed engineer,
someone who moonlights as
someone who moonlights as an artist,
and a very imaginative snail.

I collect loose threads of all kinds while
wondering how they fit in the overall patchwork.
Sometimes I try to weave some threads together
through technology and art. I'm trying to get
comfortable with leaving a lot of thread unused,
just in case.

The Problem?

Every app I use thinks it's the only app I use.
The problem is with apps that come across as
especially egotistical and selfish beings. And
every giant thinks it's the only giant. Tech giants
don't like to hang out with each other. They
compete all the time, to the death if possible, like
a Game of Thrones saga gone very very wrong
because every house thinks it's got the throne.
This makes me feel very scattered and awful.
Egotist apps think I'll be using them forever.
Parts of my brain, neurons, fire goodness and
crazy ideas that find their way in this little
database that is closed off to me if I stop paying
membership. Or that offers impractical ways to
export. Of course I can. Or that gets wiped
out with the newest update, or that didn't
autosave even though it told me it would.

A Solution



I try to avoid the psychopathic apps, and instead use modest and humble programs. Apps that are made by one or two people who put effort in making something simple and efficient, something that will try and hold on a little more to my ever disoriented and wandering thoughts. Something that will accompany them on their scampering way.

I also try to make my own little garden of small solutions: a seed of note-taking here, another containing just a little culture of something, a few reminders perhaps. Other apps have drawings in them, and a lot more have music and sounds that I try not to mind too much losing.

I try to learn how to make my own apps so that I can create tiny little servers that are hospitable to the unconventional, the dreamy, anxious, apprehensive or hopeful little threads that line my brain.

I try to remake for myself this idea that the computer was once thought akin to a brain. But the person who theorized that kind of architecture was a brilliant math mastermind with permanent memory. I can't ignore the possibility that the model of the brain used for thinking of a computer's architecture at first was this man's brain. And I wonder what other computers are possible if we start to think of them from a neurodivergent brain's point of view.

I try to get comfortable with
loss, to get comfortable with
everything eventually catching
rust and moulting back into the
earth's mantle.





I am Shalaka Jadhav

I am a quickly-paced walker; mind-mapper, an urban planner holding restless curatorial intentions, dreaming up futures of belonging, craving a re-learning around how we listen with one another.

I ruminate over how to make a good cup of tea. I am remembering how to use the library again. I am nursing my first curry patta plant after years of buying them in bags at the groceries. I hope I can keep it alive for a long time.

The Problem

The problem is new to me. I love the strength that radiates when someone is grounded in their voice. I love my strength when I'm grounded in my voice. But today, I am tired of that strength. I repeat the same stories word-for-word when sharing updates about my day to make it easier to get through the details.

When once, repetition helped me remember, now it makes details even more slippery. I am overthinking and overthinking. I am talked out. The voice is detaching itself. The Voice. Not My Voice.

I am losing connection to place, but I respect the placefulness of the Internet. I love phone calls. I am tired of phone calls. I dim video calls and putz around on wooden laminate floors fussing with my things.



To remember the thingness that is flattened through small talk and pixelized faces. To remember sound again, and not have a sensitivity to someone's joyful laugh when it's screaming through an earphone.

A Solution

1. on sticky notes, write the script

let the script sprawl across tables, walls, glasses half-full.

2. practice the script with a friend

you both cry. you are holding each other's grief.

3. let the script guide the conversation

they misunderstand. you feel unwell. you know this is not helping, and the start of a new problem.

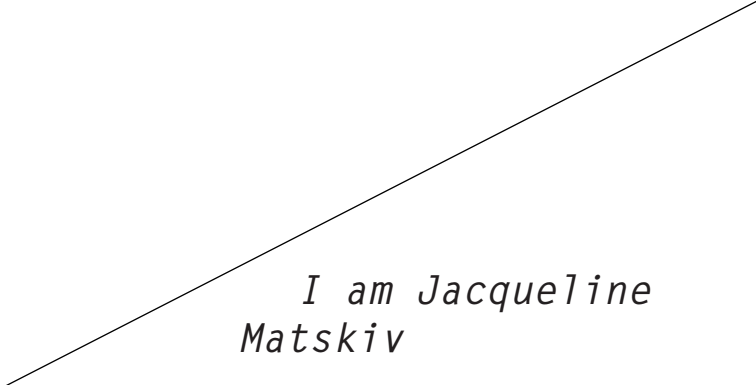
4. recover the failed attempt

disentangle from the mess.

To remember how to listen again is to grow past first conversations.

To remember how to listen again is to work with the people who make space with you.





I am Jacqueline Matskiv

I am reading on the train, and writing occasionally. I am a lover of the realist novel and wacky scholarship. I have recently emerged from a master's program in Media Studies, or two years of reading, thinking and writing about the Digital Ordinary under neoliberal biopower.

The Problem

The problem is all the paradoxes. It's the fact that I'm "opting out" sporadically after having opted in a long, long time ago. The problem is that my efforts to disengage, to delete or withhold data, to renegotiate the terms, are reconfigured into valuable behaviour metrics all the same.



The problem is my Instagram Ads—not that they know too much, but that what they know is not exactly right. But it's also not the platforms themselves so much as the habits and dependencies they've instilled in me, which persist no matter how much I intellectualize them.

A Solution

A lot of people talk about leaving--the great exodus of our social imaginary. But leaving has been repurposed into a solution for long-term living with our platforms; it's become a strategy for staying.

✦ Influencers and “lay users” alike take “digital cleanses” and return with increased vigor. Let’s face it: “farewell” posts get a lot of likes, and leaving for good isn’t a realistic option for those of us sustaining ourselves in digital economies.

The real solution probably has more to do with hacking and trolling and peer-to-peer models, but I’m not tech savvy enough to tell you—I use the toilet but I don’t know how it works.

My personal solution—that’s-not-a-solution has been trying to untangle the paradoxes in writing. I may be complicit, but at least I’m trying to understand what’s going on, right?

Fail in new ways
and put it down on
paper.

Look to the
tech-savvier for
instructions.



*I am
Frances Pope*

I am easy to make friends with, not
easy to pick a fight with. I mostly enjoy
moving, sounds, and words, and when all these things
intersect I feel like I'm dreaming. I write and translate
by day, and by night I'm a music journalist. I'm probably
typing away at my desk with my headphones on, making
a cup of tea, or out dancing.

The Problem

The problem's well documented. We open our laptops like
oyster shells while we're still bleary-eyed, brewing coffee.
The glow is bluer than our fuzzy brains would like. The
day jolts in shades of concentration, we stretch and yawn,
we clack at keyboards, we get distracted, we cross tasks
off a list. The sun slips. We start to think of noise, friends,
cash, sneakers, exits, beer, laughter, news, crushes, buses,
dark skies. We want Out. That isn't so much a problem
anymore. But what about the in between? We want to
look, read, explore, catch up, and everything's written,
everything hums through the screen, warm and setting
our nerves a-buzz. And me! I want to read about music
and sound, about artists and projects, about history and
movements and raves! And my head hurts.

A Solution?

A Solution is a to-and-fro, I think, we think, we're still
not sure. I went in to find a way out. I spent ninety British
pounds on a forcefield for my glasses, to banish blue light.

Then I searched out bits of paper. People who know a lot of things I don't know have made beautiful things – journals and zines, prints and pamphlets, collections of pastings, stapled. I sent my electronic payment a few ways, lived life for a week or two, and found padded envelopes on my parents' doormat. I was thrilled. I sat on the garden steps with my coffee mug staying warm in the un-leaf-shaded sun, and through cheap shoddy sunglasses I read page after page. I took a chunky music journal to the castle and lay around in the ruins, reading about a folk singer's broken relationship. I pored wide-eyed over colour combinations and unfamiliar fonts. I woke up on weekends and took my steam-whirling mug back to bed, tried not to splash white sheets, and read clean, chiselled write-ups like gems – looked through their colour spells at the weird effects of sound-into-language. I tapped out names on the screen I wanted to avoid, and the music woke me up. I shoved my phone under a blanket and scooped the pages

✧ ✧ ✧ back into my hands.
✧

If all day's
refracting words
through pixels, I
need the power-off
of paper and
pages,
alone.



I am seeley quest

I am a trans disabled artist,
organizer and environmentalist
from the US, in Montreal since 2017.
i worked in bookstores 12+ years in the
San Francisco Bay Area, and only began
carrying a cell phone in 2018, when accessing
smart phone mapping emerged as helpful in a new
city. i haven't yet joined social media.

The Problem

A problem i've encountered is the growth of designing
websites for Chrome, unstated assumptions that site
visitors will be using compatible browsers, and
no consideration for inaccessibility with other
browsers. Why isn't there a standard across web
design that all public site material must meet tests
of being browseable and without broken functional-
ities, with all browsers?

A Solution?

The lack of clear communications about what interfaces
are needed to access site materials has serious
consequences. For example, Canada's Immigration

Department, on one of its dozens of website pages, has a statement that ‘Chrome is recommended’—but it does not say, ‘the PDFs applicants must fill won’t load without a Chromium-based browser.’ When i see ‘recommended’ and not ‘required’ i go with my default choice, Firefox, because i hate Google. But i’ve found without the government website spelling out more clearly how to interface, that i couldn’t access and submit documents i needed to by a deadline, which affected my status as an aspiring immigrant and my available choices as a disabled person in precarity.



A way to navigate these barriers is to try Vivaldi browser—i researched a variety of Chromium forks and decided it has decent enough characteristics that i can use it minimally for a backup. Pages that require Chrome seem to render adequately with it. Another way to address it is to bring attention to the ‘powers that be’ in charge of coding and web decisions, and say the means of access must be broadened, and made fully clear.

If you need a Chrome
variant, try Vivaldi,
and keep calling for
more accessibility
and non-Google
reliance.





I am Agustina Isidori

I am Agustina. I come from a background in film studies and photography. I am, amongst other things, an artist from Argentina based in Montreal.

The Problem

The problem is I am having a hard time recognizing myself. What do I like? What do I want to watch? What do I wish to read? What do I care about? What events do I want to attend? Whose lives do I want to know about? Feeling overwhelmed, even lost sometimes.

I scroll and it tells me I care about things I don't even recognize. Who are these people? Why are they in my phone? What are they doing in my bed? Why do I wake up with them? Still, I get stuck, scrolling, distracting myself, scrolling...



A Solution?

Lately, I've found myself stuck on social media multiple times every day. And it gets worse when I'm feeling stressed, anxious, or feeling down. I tend to go there looking for a distraction.

It has become a daily choreography of distraction. I am working. Grab my phone. About to complete a task. Open a New Tab. Check my emails for the 10th time. Or about to make an important decision. Phone. Unlock screen. Instagram. Scroll. WhatsApp, new messages, must answer. Answer. Open a New Tab. Wait. What was I doing?

I am hiding behind these platforms. The result, besides wasting a lot of time, is that I end up consuming content that I don't even care about. I end up absorbed by whatever Instagram has decided for me. I don't even understand where these recommendations are coming from. That is not me.

I've tried searching for who I am, what do I like, who do I want to know about, where do I want to go. But it's a trap. Another problem. Then I get too much of it, I know too much about them, I only go to those places on a flat screen. It's confusing, it's overwhelming. Still. Scrolling.



Still looking for a
solution.

Grab my phone.

Open a New Tab.

Google, search:

...solution?

I am Liane Décary-Chen

I am an artist community organizer in the world of new tech. These days I am interested in social media algorithms and the ethical issues involved in their operation. I am also interested in tech-no-mysticism as a framework for exploring digital phenomena that exceed our understanding.

The Problem

The problem is I've trained my music streaming algorithm so much that its become better than me at scratching my musical itch. I'm concerned about the way in which it can modify individual and group behaviors at the whims of the people behind the scenes.

Streaming services are connected to large data collection networks that follow you through digital and physical space, which is pretty scary. I'm having a very difficult time untangling from the algorithm due to its emotional and digital hold on me as well as music streaming services' general omnipresence.

A Solution?

I've tried changing streaming services, but my concerns stay relatively the same, even on «indie» apps like Tidal. If I want to keep using music streaming services I'd probably start looking for curators who make playlists with specific intentions.





Like that I could
build a library I can
rely on through getting to
know people's musical taste.

Ultimately I'd like to develop these skills myself
and become better than the algorithm at playing
music for myself so I'll stop being drawn towards
it. Many of my friends are DJs and I'm excited to
start learning how to find new music and put sets
together. In the meantime, my main solution has
been to go back to listening albums.

At home I listen to CDs and when I'm on the go
I'm starting to carry either a cd player or mp3
player. It feels really nice to not be plugged into the
matrix. :-)

Returning to
previous methods of
listening to music:

CDs,
tapes,
mp3 players,
radio shows,
etc...

I am Marie LeBlanc Flanagan

I am working in the spaces between people and the dreamy regrowth of our relations through connection and play. I make playthings. I make spaces for people to find each other. I feel very alone. I've been hunched over my computer for the past two pandemic years, wondering what it means to work, to live, to play. I've been trying to let my body do what it needs to do.

The Problem

The problem is that my laptop feels smooth and soft, like skin. It is always there, when I am sad, when I am restless, when I am hungry for touch or learning. It gently vibrates under my palms, it sings, it shines with a moving rainbow of light. It was just a toy, at first. I underestimated the magic. It has braided and knotted and looped into me, unravelling the sweet brain nectar, unbinding me from the earth, replacing my own roots with something hard and permanent and unyielding.

A Solution

Oh I've tried. Meditation retreats. Self-control apps blocking feeds. Shame, restriction. No screens in bed. Deleting apps again. No screen Sundays, time-stretching into oblivion.

But my machine takes the shape of the hole, whatever shape the hole takes today. I shake in the hollow of my brain, hunched over, tethered to the electrical outlet. An animal, I am bound by these cords.



As a child, I read all night. Sometimes 2 or 3 books, reading until the sun rose. The machine pulls even stronger. I query, I get responses. I am invisible and also seen. Some days I unplug and let my machine die in my hands because it's the only way I know how to stop.



I scratch and bleed pen on paper. Pixels popped, screen shake out of body. I try sourcing the vessel and slipstreaming past consumer hunters. Adblockers running, only catching the decoys. Every phrase is memetic. Drifting in the void, I see a radar mirage but in it, the truth. But quick, a thread, the unwinding. The growth, our slowest, gentlest touch.

It isn't easy. It is easy. The winding and rebinding, the way the weave leads the way. Reciprocal emergence. Sister-hand mirrors me, we are bound and uncuttable. Revelation. And begin again.

These words are
coming from my
keyboard.

I am touching the
machine right
now.



✧ *I am Janaki Ranpura*

For more than two decades I have been working as a non-natural engineer designing ways to motivate people through inspiration rather than authority. I invent, make art, build, and code.

I have struggled for a while with the utopian promise of open-source technology and the too-frequent let-down of its reality. However, during the pandemic, I have come to a new positioning. (By “open source,” I mean design files that are posted on the internet with the intention of making them publicly usable.)

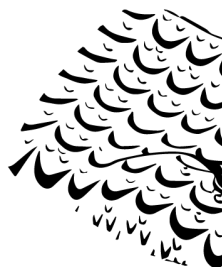
The Problem

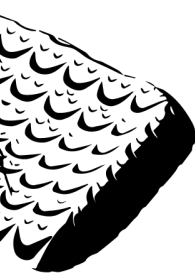
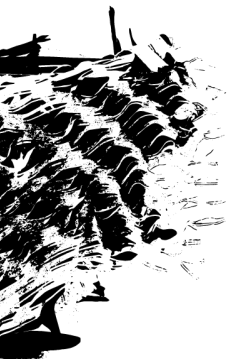
We need a non-corporate economics. Open source promises a system outside of current manufacturing throughputs. I do not accept the argument that corporations are legal persons with civil rights (Burwell v. Hobby Lobby, 2014). I am not alone. The mortgage crisis of 2008 deepened the divide between haves and have-nots in America and sparked a backlash against corporatist greed, given form by the Occupy Wall Street movement.

We are beginning to reject the idea that the intangibles of nature are consumables that can be assigned a dollar price. Open source, with its focus on freely shared data, is a proposition meant to provide an alternative to corporate value systems.

A Solution?

I worked in the largest Fab Lab in Europe, designing ridiculous things for the robots





to manufacture: a speaker that stuck out its tongue. A seat cushion that jiggled your bottom every 25 minutes. The director of the lab gave me a talking to.

Fab Labs have been advertised as sites of revolution, whose inventive local power could break the throttlehold of corporations. They have not lived up to this promise. But when the pandemic hit, Fab Labs across the world thrived as pinch hitters for local manufacturing of personal protective equipment, mostly face shields.

What if local fabrication labs served as sites to play, to practice invention when there is no reason to invent? Why not foster the social motivations that keep people engaged and limber for sudden action in times of need?

This could be a radical way of organizing infrastructure for manufacture: on-demand supply. This could eliminate the need to “sell product” that accumulates through the more common model of constant production. People would be on staff to play, with the shift in thinking that “play” means priming for action. Clowns riding spotted ponies turn into the cavalry.

Emergency response
can be primed
with play in
non-emergency
times.

I am Dawn Walker

I am a researcher and designer interested in creating internet infrastructures that are equitable and low carbon. I look at history, values and how we build tech in order to do so.

The Problem

The problem framing that helps me make sense of the current situation and where I think we should head is: Most people don't have the ability to make decisions about how the platforms and services they use are run, and how (or whether) their data and identity from using those things is used to make money and seek profits by tech giants.

Without this power and control, you see platforms that sell personal data or use it for advertising (Twitter), treat users like a science experiment without informed consent (Facebook/Meta), and allow racism, misogyny, and harassment to continue online because it would hurt profits to spend money to fix it (TikTok).



A Solution?

We need to try lots of new things to address the current situation, for me what is important is these approaches should aim to give power and control back to individuals and communities away from big tech. I am a member-worker of Hypha, a tech worker co-operative where we build technology that every member has a say in.

✦ Current examples I find inspiring: Mastodon, a federated social network where multiple different organizations and groups run the servers instead of a single company (think more email vs. twitter). Digital democracy's Mapeo which is built in close collaboration with indigenous partners in the Amazon and is a set of tools to create maps and community datasets that live on your phone or device instead of automatically adding the data to Google Maps. And co-operatively owned platforms for ridesharing (Drivers Coop), streaming (Resonate), music criticism (New Feeling), and more (see the Platform Co-operativism Consortium).

All these projects are exciting and deeply engaged building technologies that are accountable and situated. Yet they are the early seeds not a mature field. To truly take back technology for ourselves and/or defund big tech (<https://doi.org/10.21428/93b2c832.e0100a3f>) we will need a diversity of tactics and to devise new ways to work together.

We're just getting
started, but we can
build something
different so
long as we do it
together!





I am Julia Dyck

I am an artist, radio maker, hairdresser, hypnotist, and web development student. A wearer of many hats. I research the possible connections between the body, technology and consciousness. Alto in the choir. I question the boundaries between real and fantasy and I write sci-fi sometimes.

The Problem

I feel like I don't own my own memories. When I was 14 I got a digital camera and took photos of my friends at punk concerts, in the mall, at protests. I uploaded them to Photobucket to host them for posting on my Livejournal (where I fussed over the css endlessly to have the perfect LeTigre background). Fast-forward a couple years to the MySpace era and somehow all my photos are broken links. I was never able to recover my photos from Photobucket and those memories feel somehow lost, I have so few photos from those years. Fast-forward again and now Facebook owns all my photos, then Instagram.

A Solution?

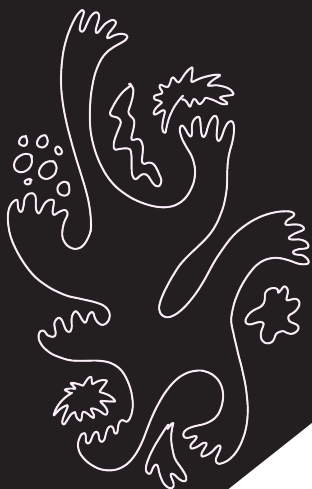
In high school I started getting back into disposable cameras, and then vintage 35mm cameras and I've shoot between 3 and 6 rolls of film a year since then. This has been the best way for me to capture the moments I know I want to remember. It stops me from over documenting and losing beautiful photos in a sea of selfies and



screenshots. I have boxes of prints in a filing cabinet and digital folders from each year on multiple harddrives. The quantity is manageable and they feel real. They're mine. If my Instagram gets hacked tomorrow or my Google Drive is somehow deleted, the photos will still be in my filing cabinet.

multiple
backups
always





I am Amélie Brindamour

I am a visual artist, cultural worker, and art teacher. I am fascinated by mushrooms, sea creatures, and inter-species relationships. I am a member of many communities: artist-run centers, an outdoors club, a mycology circle, etc. I believe in the power of softness.

The Problem

- Here's the story of how I find myself looking at
- ♦ ♦ ♦ Facebook or at design sites when I need to start
 - ♦ a task on the computer that I'm finding difficult,
 - or when I'm in the middle of a task and feeling
- tired. Yes, it's procrastination, but taking my mind off whatever I'm working on sometimes helps me «unblock» in order to continue my work. But other times I come across images that bring up unpleasant emotions: a wedding I wasn't invited to, old friends I miss, a colleague whose success provokes jealousy, etc. Being fairly nostalgic, I find it difficult to know what all the people I have ever met in my life are currently doing

A Solution?



When I take a couple weeks of vacation, like during the winter holidays, I stop looking at Facebook. Suddenly what other people are doing is less important, and the people I am with, the books and even the movies become more alive. I feel a sense of well-being and an unprecedented ability to concentrate. But when the vacation ends, after just a few weeks I start looking at Facebook again in my free time and when I'm working on the computer. The problem is that like a slot machine, 1 time out of 20 the information is relevant and helps me in my personal and professional life, but 19 times out of 20 it does not. That's what keeps me addicted. If there were an application that allowed you to select only the kinds of post you really want to see, it would save us all a lot of time.

The best solution for when I'm working would be to just get up and walk around for 2 minutes in the available space.





I am Chahinez Bensari

I am passionate about artistic expression in all its forms, especially design and technology and their impacts on community and culture. I am a writer, researcher and visual artist. I have a background in critical science and technology (STS) as well as in cultural studies and cinema.



The Problem

The more I use social networks, the less I feel my needs are understood. It's counterintuitive, right? I feel like Instagram, Twitter, and Google rely on 1) a few purchases I've made 2) some listening or monitoring (IRL and cross-platform) to build a profile of who I am that... misses me completely. I believe we are more than what we buy. Although the companies marketing these technologies

say they can make our lives easier by learning about us and our interests, they mostly recommend products, rather than opportunities to explore those interests.

A Solution

At first I was using the «I am not interested in this» feature offered by Twitter and Instagram. But instead of then showing me content that appealed to me, they offered me almost identical content, just from different creators.

The solution I'm using now is the opposite: trying to actively search for more content that matches my interests and isn't attached to a product. And especially, to diversify these searches in the hopes of diversifying my feed.



Another solution I would like to explore soon is to «confuse» or disrupt the algorithm by searching for «random» topics which are less aligned with my current interests. I'd like to recapture the curiosity, fun and randomness that made me fall in love with the internet.

I use curiosity
to push the
algorithm towards
chance, new
horizons and,
most of all,
pleasure.

I am Goldjian

I am an artist who practices performance, drawing, writing, and video dance. I facilitate collective processes like conflict resolution, immersive mind maps, and open forums. I, also, have spent too much time in front of a computer for the last 15 years, so I'm trying to be there differently, to approach from underneath, from inside, elsewhere and less often.

The problem?

Over 2 years the world moved its life online. As a person who loves spatial contours, I have developed various disorders. Mood disorders of course, but also nausea, dizziness, migraines and cold sweats. Zoom has become the number one enemy of my vagal system. Its logo, colors, functionalities, its capacities to record and capture, all of it communicates monopolization. Where I really lost my footing, my heart palpitating, was in witnessing house arrest evolve into the relocation to 2-inch windows online. My body didn't know where to put itself anymore, or how to read, how to receive and transmit everything it needs to co-regulate.

A solution ?

First, I ritualized these bizarre meetings. I set up a dedicated space and dressed accordingly, with my spaceship pilot kit I prepared for launch every call. The game got lost as the meetings went on. I tried to redirect people to free alternatives, jitsi (open.meet), appear.in becoming whereby. As





my backdrop I
installed a map of
feminist servers I had made
during a residency in Austria.

I insisted on including our bodies, on seeing
worlds beyond the browser windows. I described
my symptoms to colleagues, the sweats, the
mounting panic. I tried closing my eyes and closing
windows, using only my ears.

I took long walks: 4 hours in the forest for 1 hour
of work online. I initiated park bench meetings,
with a big thermos, distancing protocols, blankets,
and hand warmers, to endure -20 degrees. I wrote
about nausea, migraines, and the no-gravity
planets they take me across. I wondered if I
was somatizing my rejection of work. I claimed
my somatizations. I announced to the working
world that I was reincorporating (re-bodying,
un-corpse-ing) and would no longer surrender
myself to Zoom. I can find myself only as much as
I can escape the screens and cameras. Sometimes,
however, I take pleasure in submerging myself in a
projection, if my whole body is welcome.

Overcome with vertigo, my
vagal system treated Zoom
calls as an assault. To stay
connected with other humans,
I doubled down on the body
itself and the exploration
of open space.



I am AM Trépanier

I grew up in a house with pink bricks, on a street named for a missionary and a semi-aquatic mammal, where we had a computer, in the basement, connected to the internet. Today, I am interested in modes of transmission between people, in the ways we manage to mobilize ourselves, as well as in the tools that allow for such convergences.

The Problem

The problem has to do with how security as a concept is defined. Tech giants have understood it through the lens of legality, obscuring the fact that laws can oppress some for the «safety» of others. Whatever does not fall within the norm becomes a threat, likely dangerous. For the past few years Facebook has been requiring its users to use their legal name on its platform. And for the past few months, I've been struggling to somehow change my name to the one I actually use in my daily life.

A Solution?

I've certainly tried, without success. I realized that self-determination does not conform well to the rigid and opaque structure of a platform like Facebook, where authentication and the cataloguing of consumer profiles takes precedence over the affirmation of identity.

It is not me who gives myself a name in these spaces, but rather they who assess me in order to better process and measure who I am. The



communication of the name I'm using instead happens via my email signatures, personal website, publications, biographical texts. It also involves attentive friends who take the time to ask me what I prefer to be called; it's a process that requires time, commitment, and is shaped by use and active listening. And I cannot find an interlocutor in the platform's architecture. It is a one-way conversation, a faulty entry in a script being processed by the algorithm. Unexpected capital letters do not begin a dialogue. I don't have the energy available to deal with customer service: so, it's a foregone conclusion.



I learned to let go,
to tell myself that I
cannot rely on these
spaces-platforms
built in accordance
with the ruling
norms-to be places of
emancipation. Those
exist elsewhere.



✧ *I am Stéphanie Lagueux*

I am an artist and cultural worker, a curious digital tinkerer. I've worked at Ada X since 2001 and have seen giants emerge to replace others smaller but no less greedy...

The Problem

In my research on alternatives and that of Ada X we have chosen to use a free and open-source platform, Mozilla Hubs, for our virtual education project. And with our desire for independence and autonomy, and in order to provide more flexibility to the artists we work with, we have chosen to manage our own server, at a greater operating cost - the price of independence ;) Among the available options, we realized that we don't really have a choice but to use Amazon's server, the only one to offer technical support.

A Solution?

With the setup costs already incurred and the project timeline slipping away, we will have to continue our development with these platforms despite the dichotomy of our approach: working with both the valiant open source software and the evil giant's server. And paying our hard-earned cash to the giant after all. Will our data and that of the artists be better protected in this context? I have to confess, I didn't have time to read all the words in the dozens of links that I browsed during the configuration of the system; time is short, we have to launch Allo Ada soon,





to get some works installed and welcome
the public! In a semi-free country under the
half-shut gaze of the giant...

My solution is
in process, I
keep hoping
that time
will reveal new
answers, that
others will
forge ahead
to illuminate
the way and
to migrate us
from the land
of giants to
the land of
independence, yet
another time...

I am



*The Problem (a problem I have encountered
living in the time of tech giants)*



A Solution?



T H A N K Y O U

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To you, reader, for making these words come alive.

Ada
—x



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