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NECSUS

Editorial NECSUS – Spring 2023_#Ports

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The Spring 2023 issue of NECSUS features a special section exploring #Ports in media cultures. The port constitutes a geographic site enabling travel and trade which is also embedded in the larger digital culture in other ways. Our everyday experience of 'ports' encompasses not only interactions with waterfront places of labour and leisure but more broadly entry points connecting devices and their users to wider networks of information and commerce. Ports enable thinking about material processes of mediation, transport, and commodification, as well as the circulation of people, goods, and ideas. Guest editors María Vélez-Serna and Markus Stauff have assembled a selection of papers that aim to expand thinking about European media through the imaginary of the port as location and medium. In their introduction, they lay out the various social and imaginary, ecological, political,

and economic stakes tied to ports as infrastructural nodes. Accordingly, the contributions to this special section rely on a variety of infrastructural and materialist approaches in media studies, and shed light on practices of extractivism, bordering, and memory enacted in and through ports.

The section opens with an interview with Laleh Khalili, author of *Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula* (Verso, 2020), which discusses political, legal, economic, and aesthetic questions raised by ports and port cities, drawing attention to the very in/visibility of ports in both the realm of experience (of urban spaces, and of flows of commerce) and in modes of intellectual inquiry. The various research papers included in the special section take on ports as objects and subjects of mediation. In 'Ports as nodes in film logistics: Swedish film agent Oscar Rosenberg in the years after the First World War', Mats Björkin investigates the role of four Swedish ports (Gothenburg, Stockholm, Malmö, and Trelleborg) in the logistics of early-twentieth century film distribution, drawing on archival research across the collections of film distributor Oscar Rosenberg (spanning the years 1916 to 1930). In '"The shipyard is dead": Ports, memory, and left melancholy in contemporary French cinema',

Ben Scott focuses on the the representation of the port and the shipyard as narrative and cultural sites of political memory in French cinema, which reflect on processes of community disintegration and reconfiguration in the transition from the Fordist past to the neoliberal present. Scott's analysis ultimately evokes the port city on film as a site of reflection and renewal of the contested legacies of left-wing politics.

Stephen Turner's 'Port of call: The eyeline of the logistical image' discusses ports as complementary sites of trade and tourism, of movement of goods and consumer destination. This essay plays on the polysemy of 'port' as physical and digital infrastructure, elaborating on the displaced meaning as the aggregate logistical image that underpins the port as location. Through various media objects, Turner elaborates on the visual movement of goods and people animated by desire and consumption – a 'from-port-to-portal' libidinal economy. 'The use of sound and film as rebranding strategies in two Danish port cities' by Ida Sofie Gøtzsche Lange, Marieke van Hulst Pedersen, and Lea Holst Laursen looks at the rebranding of Struer and Hirtshals, two small port towns in Northern Denmark, through the investment in the former as a new hub for sound creative industries (leading to the renaming of

Struer as 'City of Sound') and the boosting of the latter as a site for film production, through bottom-up and institutional initiatives. The authors assess the potential of connecting local port cultures with transnational media industries in small city, small nation contexts. Finally, guest editors Vélez-Serna and Stauff curate a special selection of recent interdisciplinary research projects which expand the modes of mapping the relationship between ports and media. We invite you to explore its diverse contents.

The Features section presents explorations of infrastructures from even more varied perspectives. In 'From cloudy logic to logistical system: Algorimages, black boxes, and the socio-technical infrastructure of platforms', Leo Hansson Nilson thinks of digital images as 'algorimages' to foreground the *functions* they fulfil within socio-technical infrastructures. The author argues that the main function of algorimages is logistical, situating the social media platform Twitter in a history of logistical media (infrastructures) dating back to the 1970s. In 'Cinema and/as infrastructure in interwar avant-gardes and empire aviation documentaries', Anu Thapa looks at British Empire documentaries and European avant-garde cinema to argue that these two rather different genres share an

aesthetic of *aeriality*. Situating the argument in the field of infrastructure studies, Thapa shows that this aesthetic of aeriality helped organise a new mode of perception that ties aeriality to both infrastructure and modernity. In 'First person war: Helmet cameras between testimony and performance', Federico Selvini explores the role that helmet cameras play in recent mediations of warfare. Selvini shows how the helmet camera's prosthetic relation to the body and its first-person view together produce images that emphasise the perceiving body at risk and overwhelmed by constant stimuli. Selvini looks at the docu-series *Taking Fire* to show that the performative and testimonial quality of helmet camera imagery supports certain narratives of warfare.

Sebastián González Itier zooms out even further to understand the film festival circuit as an infrastructure in itself in his article 'National film festivals circuits in the Latin American sphere: Discussing film canon, film culture and cinephilia' – which also links to the Latin American focus of our festival review section. 'Girls will be boys in German silent cinema' by Laura Horak looks at women cross-dressed as men in German films made during the German Empire and the Weimar era. By placing these films in their historical contexts, Horak argues that, more than their international counterparts,

the German films place their cross-dressed figures in explicitly sexual situations, which allows them to present both alternative gender expressions and same-sex desire, albeit in an ambiguous manner. This issue also includes an interview with writer, curator, and activist B. Ruby Rich, conducted by Dagmar Brunow and Skadi Loist. Among other milestones, the author of *Chick Flicks* and *New Queer Cinema* looks back at her experience in building local film cultures and the friendships forged therein, and to the various forms of writing, programming, and activism that led to her seminal interventions in film feminism and queer cinema histories. This animated and insightful conversation with Rich unspools as a paean to film sociality and to the sociality of film culture in its many forms.

The audiovisual essay section in this issue is guest edited by Kevin B. Lee and Ariel Avissar. It explores the format of the desktop documentary as scholarly subjectivity. Following their introduction, there are five different works presented in the section: 'Desktop Documentary' by Johannes Binotto, 'With Camera in Hand, I was Alive' by Katie Bird, 'Double Exposures' by Brunella Tedesco-Barlocco, 'Indians from 1967: A Reaction' by Ritika Kaushik, and 'Some Thoughts Occasioned by Four

Desktops' by Ariel Avissar, which is an editorial response to the works that comprise the section. These audiovisual essays function as both examples and reflections on the affordances of desktop documentaries for media studies.

The festival review section has a special focus on festivals dedicated to and/or situated in Latin America. It contains reviews of Arquivo em Cartaz by Juliana Muylaert, DocsMX by Bianca Pires, and Havana Film Festival New York by Michelle Farrell. The book review section features two comparative reviews interested in cinema as space, and spaces of cinema. Sian Barber brings together cinematic experiences with ephemeral cinematic spaces through two recent books by María Vélez-Serna and Emma Pett. The review by Syeda Momina Masood traces Pakistan's cinematic past and its evolving present in two historiographic volumes by Vazira Zamindar & Asad Ali and Ali Nobil Ahmad & Ali Khan. In the exhibition review section the focus lies on earth as both artistic medium and conceptual approach through. The reviews include 'Becoming Geological: Imagining an affirmative otherwise' by Rick Dolphijn and Justyna Jakubiec, and 'An infinite exhibition fills the nave: Laurent Grasso's ANIMA' by Oksana Chefranova.

We are excited to announce that the Spring 2023 issue also includes the launch of a new section. To contribute to the visibility of data work in media studies and the humanities at large, the new Data Papers section, edited by Alexandra Schneider (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz) and Malte Hagener (Philipps-Universität Marburg), will feature one or more data papers in which the data set is published alongside a documentation and discussion. As the first contribution to this new section, Skadi Loist and Evgenia (Zhenya) Samoilova provide a detailed account of the dataset of the Film Circulation project at Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF in the data paper 'How to capture the festival network: Reflections on the Film Circulation datasets'. The call is open for contributions to this section in the Autumn 2023 issue. Until then, we look forward to your submissions across all sections. Enjoy reading the current issue.