



Relational Technologies Technological Relations

An interdisciplinary assembly on existential challenges of AI and biometrics

Friday, February 7 - Sunday, March 2, 2025, Färgfabriken, Stockholm

Opening hours: Tuesday-Sunday, 11am-4pm

Technology has always been with us, making us who we are. It has shaped our relationships with each other and with the world around us since humanity's beginning. However, the recent acceleration in the development of computing technologies, increasingly driven by automated algorithms and artificial intelligence, has reconfigured many of these relationships in unprecedented ways.

Machine-based, AI-driven quantification and biometric measurement of human and non-human lives, behaviors, and practices are just some examples that prompt us to ask: In today's techno-cultures, how do we relate to each other and our shared environments on personal, social, environmental, and even existential levels? How do technologies—and those who shape them from front to back—negotiate, mediate, and manipulate these relationships?

Relational Technologies, Technological Relations emerged from discussions held as part of a research project titled *BioMe: Existential Challenges and Ethical Imperatives of Biometric AI in Everyday Lifeworlds*, led by Professor Amanda Lagerkvist at Uppsala University. The project's central aim has been to investigate the experiential range of encounters with these technologies, focusing on their possibilities, challenges and vulnerabilities, in order to examine the urgent ethical imperatives they pose for a networked humanity.

This event marks the conclusion of the BioMe project by focusing on how artists, critical media practitioners, and other creative individuals and collectives engage both practically and conceptually with automation, surveillance, life-measuring technologies, and the biometrically orchestrated realities of everyday life.

Through diverse perspectives on relationality, the presented works, talks, and workshops engage with the current technological condition. Using different media and forms of expression, invited artists interrogate the current hype around DNA analysis services, shed light on the opaque logic of Netflix content categorization algorithms, highlight links between modern and historical anthropometric systems, question border-control technologies, experiment with generative AI, and reconnect with the biodiverse forms of intelligence to return to basic questions about who we are.

Curator: Jacek Smolicki & the Uppsala Hub for Digital Existence, in collaboration with Färgfabriken. The BioMe project and this concluding event are part of the WASP-HS program, funded by the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation and the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation. The featured image comes from DNA at Play, by Maria Hellström Reimer and Tania Ruiz

PROGRAM FOR THE OPENING WEEKEND

Exhibiting artists and weekend program contributors:

Joanna Zylinska, Linda Hilfling Ritasdatter, Kristoffer Gansing, Maria Hellström Reimer, Tania Ruiz, Mary Maggic, Mahmoud Keshavarz, Pedro Oliveira, Matilda Tudor, Amanda Lagerkvist, Maria Rogg, Max Björverud, and Jacek Smolicki.

Friday, February 7

5pm: Vernissage: Opening of the exhibition and a short introduction to the event and weekend program.

6pm: Keynote: Joanna Zylinska: ***Bio-AI: Hybrid Ecologies, Buggy Ontologies***

7pm: beverages and drinks

7:30pm-9pm: Panel discussion: *Relating to and through technologies in artistic research*

Joanna Zylinska, Linda Hilfling Ritasdatter, Kristoffer Gansing, Maria Hellström Reimer, Tania Ruiz, Mary Maggic, Mahmoud Keshavarz, Pedro Oliveira, Max Björverud, moderated by Jacek Smolicki.

Saturday, February 8

11:30am-3pm: Workshop: Mary Maggic

Workshopology: The Land Is in our Bodies

Concrete and iron, sanitization, privatization, and a logics of accumulation and nonrenewable expansion characterize the colonial

projects of urbanity that have long fragmented our bodies from the body of the planet. In response, Indigenous writer and activist of the Amazon, Ailton Krenak, calls for an epistemological rebellion in the form of *florestania* (combining “forest” with “belonging”), a collaboration with and defence of forests and the production of life itself. What we can learn from the concept of *florestania* as people born and living in capitalist urbanity is that there is still a forest living within us, rights to be extended to non-human life, and an ancestral knowledge to create our futures. Using the permeability of the body as a somatic technology for knowledge and relation-making, we can reconnect to our planetary wounds, producing love and life from our own wounds of alienation. As the body of the Amazon undergoes a constant transformation, we too have no other choice but to transform.

We will begin with a presentation of being in workshopology with the rainforest, and later situate ourselves in a terraformed landscape outside of the venue, where we will be working intimately with waste materials, in addition to an exercise with blindfolds. Please come well-hydrated in comfortable, weather-appropriate clothes, and with stories of world-creation to share.

Due to limited number of spots (max 12), please, register by February 7, 5pm by sending an email to jacek.smolicki@im.uu.se

11:30am -1pm: Talk: Maria Hellström Reimer and Tania Ruiz:

DNA at Play. Flows of facts and fictions in the field of recreational genetics

There is today a growing market for so called “direct-to-consumer recreational DNA” services. Today, an increasing number of multinational biogenetic corporations provide screening and storage of your DNA for a fee. Legal in Sweden but banned in France, these services are frequently set up as social platforms, often with a focus on genealogy. In exchange for your DNA, the platforms offer what is presented as evidence-based access to your ancestry. The overarching business idea, however, is the accumulation of genetic material for further use, whether medical, demographic, or forensic. Through an interdisciplinary, arts-oriented, action research approach, DNA at Play focuses on and intervenes with the complex representational practices – storytelling, AI-generated animation, data visualization etc. – that sustain these services. Drawing attention to the proliferation of biometric technologies and the commodification of genetic data, the aim is to explore how these services might affect our perception of history, identity, and belonging.

2pm-3pm: Talk: A Video Store After the End of the World (Linda Hilfling Ritasdatter and Kristoffer Gansing):

The Great Netflix

Are you in the mood for something goofy, quirky, or swoon-worthy? Join us for a talk by *A Video Store After the End of the World*, where they will

discuss the broader implications of their project, The Great Netflix, for material speculation on future media infrastructures. After the talk, you too can become a caretaker of one of the mood-categorized VHS data packages, continuously produced as part of The Great Netflix's process of reverse-extracting media from streaming platform to VHS tape.

3pm-4pm: Discussion: Mary Maggic and Maria Rogg:

Biohacking as existential knowing

What does it mean to co-author, co-perform and, finally, co-exist in relation with digital technology? And how can *the body* help us to find out? This conversation connects Mary Maggic's Workshopology: The Land Is in our Bodies with the event's focus on relational technologies, to explore them from different standpoints and fields. Reflecting how biohacking and other somatic techniques can be mobilized for knowledge and relation-making, we discuss the possibilities and risks of relational techno-logics and intimacy with the human body. The talk starts as a dialogue which turns into a joint reflection and conversational Q&A.

Sunday, February 9

11:30am-1pm: Discussion: Matilda Tudor, Pedro Oliveira, and Mahmoud Keshavarz:

Border technologies and forging relations: a conversation

This conversation departs from the authors' studies, which examine the various ways authorities use technologies in identification processes. Drawing on empirical work with young asylum seekers undergoing medical age assessments in Sweden after 2017, Matilda Tudor will discuss the over-reliance on bodily data in contemporary migration systems. What does it mean to understand the singular human being, in general, and the temporal self, in particular, as a hyper-empirical medical unit? What types of ethical concerns do such procedures raise? Exploring how identification technologies have intertwined the notion of identity with practices of identification, Mahmoud Keshavarz will argue for the necessity of disentangling these two aspects by multiplying the ways individuals identify themselves in relation to collectives. Pedro Oliveira will focus on the relationship between voice and identity and how its reoccurrences in the developments of machine listening come to matter in border crossing and asylum cases today. Speaking from a position of an artist, he will share his thoughts on how voice can refuse to announce the body.

2pm-3pm: Closing notes and relations to come: Amanda Lagerkvist

Between February 10 and March 2, during the three weeks following the opening, we will host several workshops and presentations. See below.

Friday, February 14, 12pm-12:55pm, 1:20pm-2:15pm

Saturday, February 15, 11:30am-12:25pm and 1:30pm-2:25pm

Workshop: Brett Ascarelli:

Curriculum Vitae duet: playing with a "bio-metric" form to find feeling, relations and stories

You might think of the C.V. as a bio-metric, a way to describe your life to show how you measure up against other people. But what if you discard the measuring purpose of the C.V. and simply use this genre of writing to see what it can reveal to you about yourself in relation to others? In this creative workshop participants are invited to try out instructions to write a different kind of C.V., one that aims not to help them with their careers, but to uncover and celebrate the stories or histories that they share with someone or something else. The concept takes inspiration from an exercise by Rochelle Feinstein, published in *Draw it with your eyes closed: The art of the art assignment* (Paper Monument, 2012). At the end of the workshop, if you choose, you may take part in a brief survey for Brett Ascarelli's PhD research in Performative and Media-based practices at Stockholm University of the Arts.

Session: 55 minutes. Space is limited to 10 people at a time. To secure a spot, email the curator at jacek.smolicki@im.uu.se, at least 24 hours before. Otherwise, sign up when you arrive at Färgfabriken, space permitting. Come by yourself or with one other person, and be prepared to focus.

Saturday, February 22

1:30pm-4pm: Book presentation and launch: Olle Essvik, Lars Kristensen, and Robert Willim:

Dead, Alive, Mundane, Obsolete

This conversation takes its departure point from two recently published books, one exploring how and why technologies settle into the backgrounds of our lives, and the other, how artists counter-act such tendencies by creatively and critically reanimating even the most obsolete technologies.

In *Mundania* (Bristol University Press, 2024), Robert Willim suggests that we are amid yet another pivotal technological shift with AI and a range of digital technologies gradually getting integrated in people's lives. It goes from hype and heated debates to technologies being woven into the unnoticed fabric of daily routines, imaginaries, and practices. To understand this, he suggests, we need not only new knowledge but also new ways of imagining how technologies become ordinary. His proposal is to use the concept Mundania. What if we approach everyday life as a life in Mundania? What if we imagine that we all live in different variations of this realm? A realm characterized

by ambiguous circumstances. Here, emerging technologies are continuously made ordinary, while they also stay out of grasp and beyond control. In Mundania technologies become simultaneously banal and uncanny, ordinary and weird.

As Olle Essvik and Lars Kristensen suggest, their book *Dead & Alive: Reflections on Media / Art* (Rojal Press, 2024), is a result of trying to capture the disparate nature of dead media and to present it in yet another edited collection, but within a different casting form. To pursue their book project, they invited a range of international authors including Joanna Zylinska, Sarah Cook, Jesper Olsson among others, who bring different perspectives and approaches to artistic practices, media sociology and technological speculation. At first glance, these disparate contributions to the book might seem out of step, or sometimes even in collision, with each other. In the authors' words: "Readers of the book will no doubt find this disparity frustrating, or even irritating, but hopefully also exciting and dynamic. Art and technology can intertwine in many different ways, and we wanted to highlight this nature."

Register your participation by emailing jacek.smolicki@im.uu.se, at least 24 hours before.

Saturday, March 1

1:30pm-4pm: Workshop, lecture, listening session: Jacek Smolicki:

Voices as relations: On past, present and future modes of communing with artificial voices

In recent years, voice has become a central focus for many tech corporations and authorities worldwide. It has turned into an interface through which we are encouraged—or sometimes pressured—to communicate with computational devices, with each other, and even with those who are no longer with us. Moreover, voice is today one of the most intensively studied forms of biometric data, alongside fingerprints, retinal scans, and facial features. It is used for purposes such as remote access to websites and networks, healthcare and emergency services, digital document authentication, and identity verification at borders. However, the idea that we have suddenly entered a world dominated by voice-capturing and voice-generating technologies is misleading. In reality, we have been surrounded and influenced by technologically forged, mediated and distorted voices for far longer than we often acknowledge. Throughout our technical evolution, we have spoken to machines, heard them speak back, and even imagined voices in technologies that were conceived to be silent.

This presentation will explore deep relationships between voice and technologies, tracing a path from ancient imaginary inventions and mechanical automatons to early speaking machines, electronic voice phenomenon, contemporary voice assistants, voice cloning services, and so-called "deathbots." We will examine the existential anxieties these technologies have provoked throughout history and address some of the

pressing ethical challenges posed by current advancements in voice and computational technologies.

The session will include elements of a lecture, brief listening sessions, and a participatory situation aimed at exploring alternative ways of rethinking and connecting with voices—human, other-than-human, our own and those who are no longer with us.

Register your participation by emailing jacek.smolicki@im.uu.se, at least 24 hours before.

This workshop and presentation draws on Jacek Smolicki's exploration of creative and critical approaches to engaging with, resisting, and coexisting alongside voice technologies. It is part of *BioMe: Existential Challenges and Ethical Imperatives of Biometric AI in Everyday Lifeworlds*, a research project led by Professor Amanda Lagerkvist at Uppsala University and funded by WASP-HS between 2020 and 2025.

Biographies:

A Video Store After the End of the World is a project by Linda Hilfling Ritasdatter and Kristoffer Gansing, inaugurated as part of the first Trans★Feminist Digital Depletion Strike on the 8th of March 2023. This event brought together a transnational network of organisations, collectives and individuals in protest against cloud-based computing and its extractive logic. Hosted in a public park in Copenhagen, the initial video store collected more than 2000 home-recorded video tapes as a setting for a conversation on counter-cloud media infrastructures. By referring to the end of the world, the project does not suggest a coming apocalypse, but a hopeful living in or in spite of what Anna Tsing has called “capitalist ruins” that are already very much here. More information on the previous activities at <https://vhs.data.coop/>

Amanda Lagerkvist, Professor of Media and Communication Studies in the Department of Informatics and Media at Uppsala University and PI of the Hub for Digital Existence. As Wallenberg Academy Fellow (2014-2018) she founded the field of existential media studies. Her current work explores the existential dimensions of media technologies through lived experiences of biometrics; intersections of datafication, disability and selfhood; and the ambivalent AI imaginary and its relationship to both futures and endings. In her monograph, *Existential Media: A Media Theory of the Limit Situation* (OUP, 2022) she introduces Karl Jaspers' existential philosophy of limit situations for media theory.

Brett Ascarelli is a PhD candidate at Stockholm University of the Arts in Performative and Media-based practices. Her research interests include both instructions and audio documentary processes, and how they intersect.

Jacek Smolicki, PhD, is an interdisciplinary artist and researcher at the BioMe Project at the Department of Informatics and Media, Uppsala University. Committed to practice-oriented, artistic and design research methodologies, Smolicki explores temporal, existential and technological dimensions of listening, recording and archiving practices in human and more-than-human realms. His work is manifested through soundwalks, soundscape compositions, diverse forms of writing, and a/v installations. His research within the BioMe project concerns human and other-than-human voices in the context of obsolete and emerging technologies of capture. In 2020, as a Swedish Research Council postdoc grantee, he was affiliated with Simon Fraser University and in 2022/2023, he was a Fulbright visiting scholar at Harvard. He is a co-founder of the Walking Festival of Sound. His edited book *Soundwalking. Through Time, Space and Technologies* was published by Routledge in 2023.

Joanna Zylinska is an artist, writer, curator and Professor of Media Philosophy + Critical Digital Practice at King's College London. She is also a member of Creative AI Lab, a collaboration between King's and Serpentine Galleries. Zylinska is an author of a number of books, including *AI Art: Machine Visions and Warped Dreams* (Open Humanities Press, 2020, open access) and *Nonhuman Photography* (MIT Press, 2017). An advocate of 'radical open-access', she is an editor of the MEDIA : ART : WRITE : NOW book series for Open Humanities Press. Her art practice involves experimenting with different kinds of image-based media. In 2013 she was Artistic Director of Transitio_MX05 'Biomediations', the biggest Latin American new media festival, which took place in Mexico City. She is currently researching perception and cognition as boundary zones between human and machine intelligence, while trying to figure out what art 'after AI' will look like. Her latest book, *The Perception Machine: Our Photographic Future Between the Eye and AI*, came out from the MIT Press in November 2023 (open access).

Lars Kristensen teaches game development at University of Skövde. He is co-director of PlayLab, an intersectional platform for games, game technology and performing arts. Current research topics are Marxism and games and games as fine art.

Mahmoud Keshavarz is Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Uppsala University, Sweden. His work addresses the role of materiality, technology, and designing in mobility, migration, and bordering with a particular focus on the question of race, colonialism, and coloniality. He is author of *The Design Politics of Passport: Materiality, Immobility, and Dissent* (Bloomsbury 2019) and co-author of *Seeing Like a Smuggler: Borders from Below* (Pluto Press 2021).

Maria Hellström Reimer, professor in Design Theory and Practice at Malmö University, School of Arts and Communication. Trained as an artist Hellström Reimer holds a PhD in theoretical and applied aesthetics in landscape architecture. Her research is interdisciplinary, concerning questions of knowledge, value, and change. Since 2014 she is associated researcher with TEAMeD (Théorie, Éxperimentation, Arts, Media et Design) research group at Université de Paris 8.

Maria Rogg, PhD candidate at the BioMe Project at the Department of Informatics and Media, Uppsala University, has a background in participatory design invested to widen public access to design methodology and spur social change. In her academic work, Marie continues to explore design as a critical and existential inquiry to question and speculate upon social imaginaries, knowledge politics and norms at the intersection of (art) activism and media technology. Within BioMe and her doctoral dissertation project “Twists of the Smart Body. Biohacking as Existential Practice” she traces how the ethical limits and potentials of biometric AI are fleshed out through biohacking as an existential media practice. In the vein of collaborative research, Marie investigates how biohackers twist biometrics to intervene alternative and more response-able AI futures.

Mary Maggic is an artist and researcher whose practice revolves around workshopology and biohacking as critical sites of care and knowledge production that can move us beyond toxicity narratives and ecological ruins. Before cross-contaminating with the global community of biohackers and bioartists, Maggic spent their summers in the tropical jungles of Costa Rica and Honduras for biodiversity and conservation research. After completing their Masters at MIT Media Lab (Design Fiction research group), their project “Open Source Estrogen” was awarded Honorary Mention at the Prix Ars Electronica '17 in Hybrid Arts. In 2019, they completed a 10-month Fulbright residency in Yogyakarta, Indonesia investigating the relationship between Javanese mysticism and the plastic pollution crisis. Later, Maggic received the 2022 Knight Arts + Tech Fellowship for their continued dedication to public workshopology and site-specific world-making practices. Based in Vienna since 2017, they are a current member of the global network Hackteria: Open Source Biological Art and the Asian feminist collective Mai Ling.

Matilda Tudor, PhD and researcher in the Department of Informatics and Media at Uppsala University, is a media phenomenologist and feminist media researcher. Her work largely focuses on critical and minority perspectives on what it means to live with and through digital media and communication technologies in relation to the micro politics of everyday existence. It includes a particular interest in theories of embodiment and time-space relationships within the post-digital age. She currently explores experiences of medical age assessments in Swedish migration processes, and everyday automation within intimate human lifeworlds and perceptions of the future. She is the coordinator of the Uppsala Informatics and Media Hub for Digital Existence and the main coordinator of the DIGMEX network and its associated activities.

Max Björverud is a creative audio technologist working in the realm of audio and interaction art. His works range from noisy suitcases to robots, synthesizers, samplers, public installations, apps, and music. He has developed works for Swedish Institute, Tekniska Museet in Stockholm, Currents New Media Festival, BAM Brooklyn, File Festival among other museums and institutions.

Olle Essvik is an artist, publisher, and senior lecturer at HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg. The outcomes of his art practice are often books or publications where traditional materials and techniques like

bookbinding converge with code. Essvik also co-runs an experimental publishing house called Rojal.

Pedro Oliveira is a researcher and sound artist whose work is committed to an anticolonial study of listening and its material intersections with the violences of the European border. His work was exhibited and performed at the Akademie der Künste Berlin, Send/Receive Festival Winnipeg, CTM Festival, Festival Novas Frequências, Akademie Schloss Solitude, among others. He held fellowships at the Leuphana Institute for Advanced Studies, the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, and taught at the Humboldt University Berlin and Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf. Currently he is a guest faculty in Sound Studies and Sonic Arts at the Universität der Künste Berlin.

Robert Willim is an Associate Professor of Ethnology and a Senior Lecturer in Digital Cultures at Lund University. He is also active as an artist. This positions his work at the intersection of art and cultural analytical research. He has extended his research through electronic music, video essays, and installations. In recent years, he has used the concept of Mundania to explore and illustrate how emerging technologies intertwine with people's everyday lives and imaginaries. See more: www.mundania.se.

Tania Ruiz, born in Chile and raised in Colombia, Ruiz is a French visual artist, lecturer and researcher in visual arts, and member of the TEAMeD (Théorie, Expérimentation, Arts, Media et Design) research group at Université de Paris 8. Ruiz holds a PhD in Fine Arts and her primary focus is on issues related to art in the public realm. Her works include, among others, three major public art commissions, including a large permanent video-based artwork for Malmö Central Station.