# communication+1: Afterlives of Systems

Deadline: Nov 25, 2013

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Call for Papers
Afterlives of Systems

communication+1, Volume 3, 2014

Guest Editors: Christina Vagt, Florian Sprenger

This issue of communication+1 investigates the afterlives of systems since the early 20th century, following Aby Warburgs and Walter Benjamins historiographical concept of afterlife as the transformations and iterations a concept traverses to become productive at a specific moment in time. Under the impression of todays global crisis phenomena and the rise of an 'ecological paradigm' (Erich Hörl), we ask for papers that explore these afterlives from a historical or systematic perspective. We are interested in the promises, plausibilities and argumentative resources of system-oriented thinking, holistic or vitalistic worldviews and mechanistic approaches on different fields of knowledge during the 20th century and their current revival in the 21st century.

When system-oriented thinking emerged within biological contexts in the first half of the 20th century, it came along with universal pretensions: The concepts of ecosystems (Tansley) and general systems theory (von Bertalanffy) were both immersed in longstanding struggles between materialism and holism. From this context stemmed the rise of cybernetics and neocybernetics after the Second World War, which incorporated the principles of feedback and self-organization (Maturana/Varela/von Foerster/Luhmann). System-oriented thinking in the once-new fields of ecology, cybernetics, or systems theory itself seemed to offer an alternative to the futile opposition of mechanistic or atomistic perspective on the one side and holistic, organicistic or vitalistic perspectives on the other side. Nonetheless, underlying this institutionalization of system-oriented thought were diverse models of the relationship between a system and its parts, and alongside with that a renaissance of holistic concepts, e.g. holocoen (Friedrichs), biosphere (Vernadsky), noosphere (Teilhard de Chardin), synergetics

(Buckminster Fuller), or Gaia (Lovelock).

How do these debates and affective states survive and live on in today's discussions on new materialisms, object-oriented philosophies, media ecologies, or environmentalisms? Was the renaissance of holism in 20th century thought an effect of various system crisis, taking new media technologies such as television, computers, satellites and space shuttles as stabilizing 'cure' against dystopian future scenarios after World War II? Or should we understand the afterlives of systems within a broader perspective of new media induced models of subjectivity and agency that still have to be explored? Which role does the figure of the observer play in all this? Are there notions of systems in arts and architecture that are not incorporated in the historical struggles? What does it mean when materialisms today become holistic again? What is systemic in assemblages?

Please submit short proposals of no more than 500 words by November 25th, 2013 to afterlivesofsystems@gmail.com.
Upon invitation, full text submissions will be due March 31st, 2014, with expected publication in July, 2014. Although there is no set word limit, suggested length for the final submission is between 4500 and 7000 words.

About the Journal
The aim of communication +1 is to promote new approaches to and open new horizons in the study of communication from an interdisciplinary perspective. We are particularly committed to promoting research that seeks to constitute new areas of inquiry and to explore new frontiers of theoretical activities linking the study of communication to both established and emerging research programs in the humanities, social sciences, and arts. Other than the commitment to rigorous scholarship, communication +1 sets no specific agenda. Its primary objective is to create is a space for thoughtful experiments and for communicating these experiments.

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CFP: communication+1: Afterlives of Systems. In: ArtHist.net, Sep 9, 2013 (accessed Nov 12, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/5829>.