Digital Humanism in Action

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From where do I speak?

- ## Feminist epistemology
  - Explores how knowledge is situated, shaped by social contexts, particularly gender, and challenges "neutral" perspectives by valuing diverse standpoints and experiences, aiming for more inclusive, socially just ways of knowing.

- ## Science and Technology Studies (STS)
  - Examine how science and technology shape, and are shaped by, society, culture, and politics. Explores the social, historical, and ethical dimensions of scientific knowledge and technological innovation, and issues like power, authority, institutionalisation…

- ## Postdigital Posthumanism ;-)
  - Views technology as inseparably intertwined with human existence, emphasizing a world beyond dualities where human and non-human, organic and technological entities co-evolve in complex, interconnected systems.

Kulle, Daniel/Lund, Cornelia/Schmidt, Oliver/Ziegenhagen, David: „Welcome to Post-Digital Culture: A Short Introduction." ———: *Post-digital culture*, http://www.post-digital-culture.org.Haraway, D. J. (1985). A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century. In Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature (pp. 149–181). Routledge.; Hayles, N. K. (1999). How we became posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics. University of Chicago Press.; Braidotti, R. (2013). The posthuman. John Wiley & Sons.

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From Vision to Practice…

YAY ☺

Akteure, Instrumente und Themen für eine Digital Humanism Initiative in Wien

Studie im Auftrag der Stadt Wien Magistratsabteilung 23

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Katja Mayer & Michael Strassnig

The Digital Humanism Initiative in Vienna

A Report based on our Exploratory Study Commissioned by the City of Vienna

Judith Fritz,
Nino Tomaschek
(Hrsg.)

Digitaler Humanismus
Menschliche Werte
in der virtuellen Welt

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48159 Münster   Fax +49 (0)2 51 – 2 65 04-26   order@waxmann.com   Further book information here.
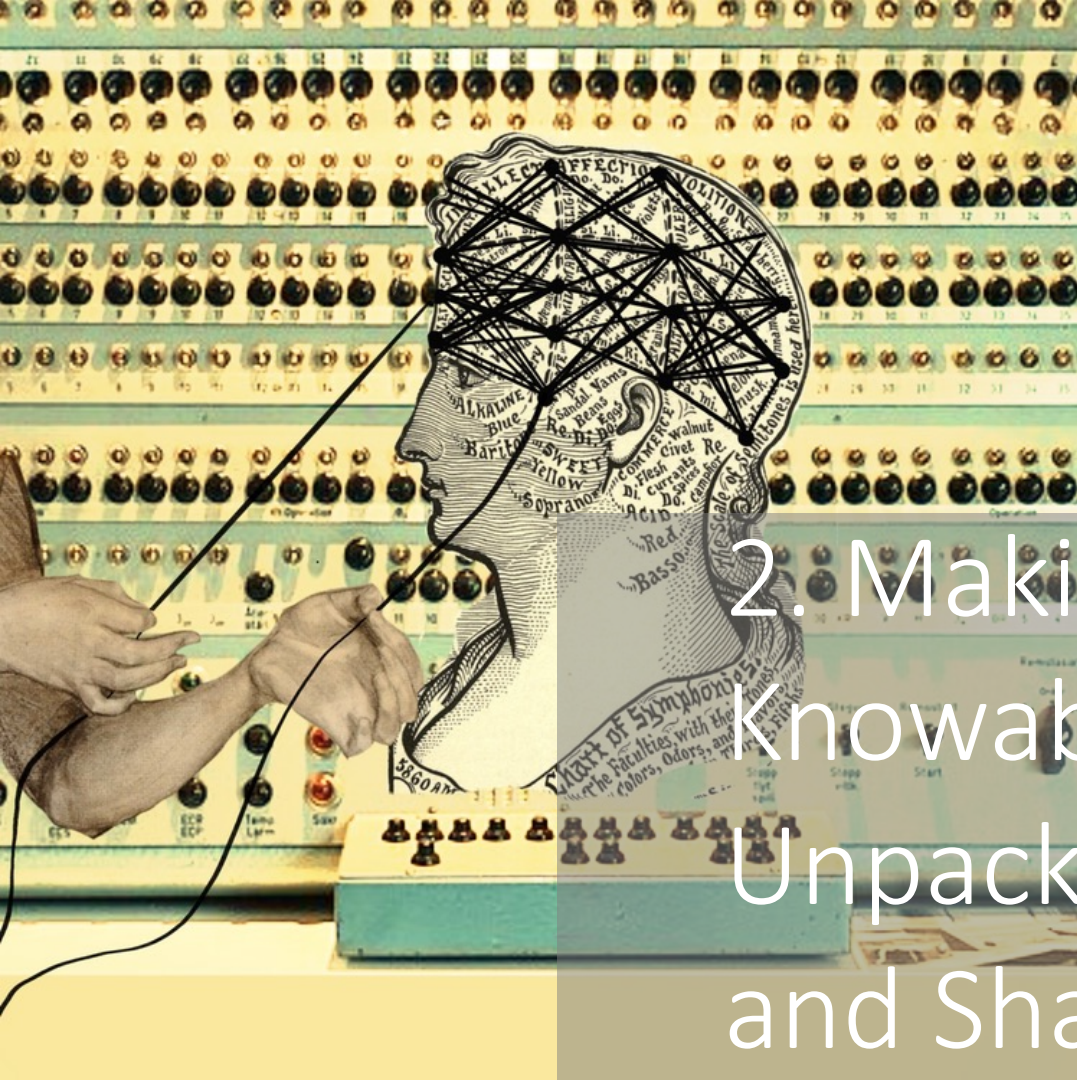
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What does Digital Humanism look like in action?

What does it mean, concretely, for the design, governance, and everyday experience of socio-technical systems?

1. Beyond abstraction:
Digital Humanism as situated practice

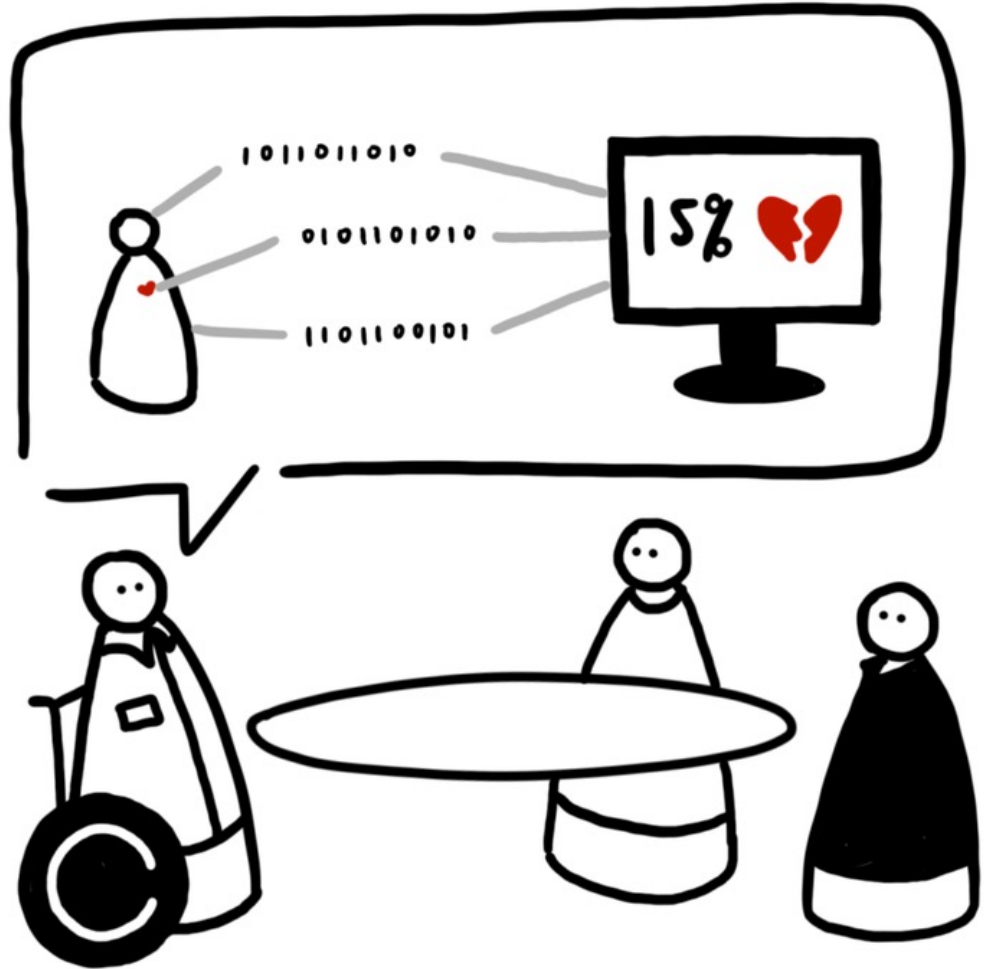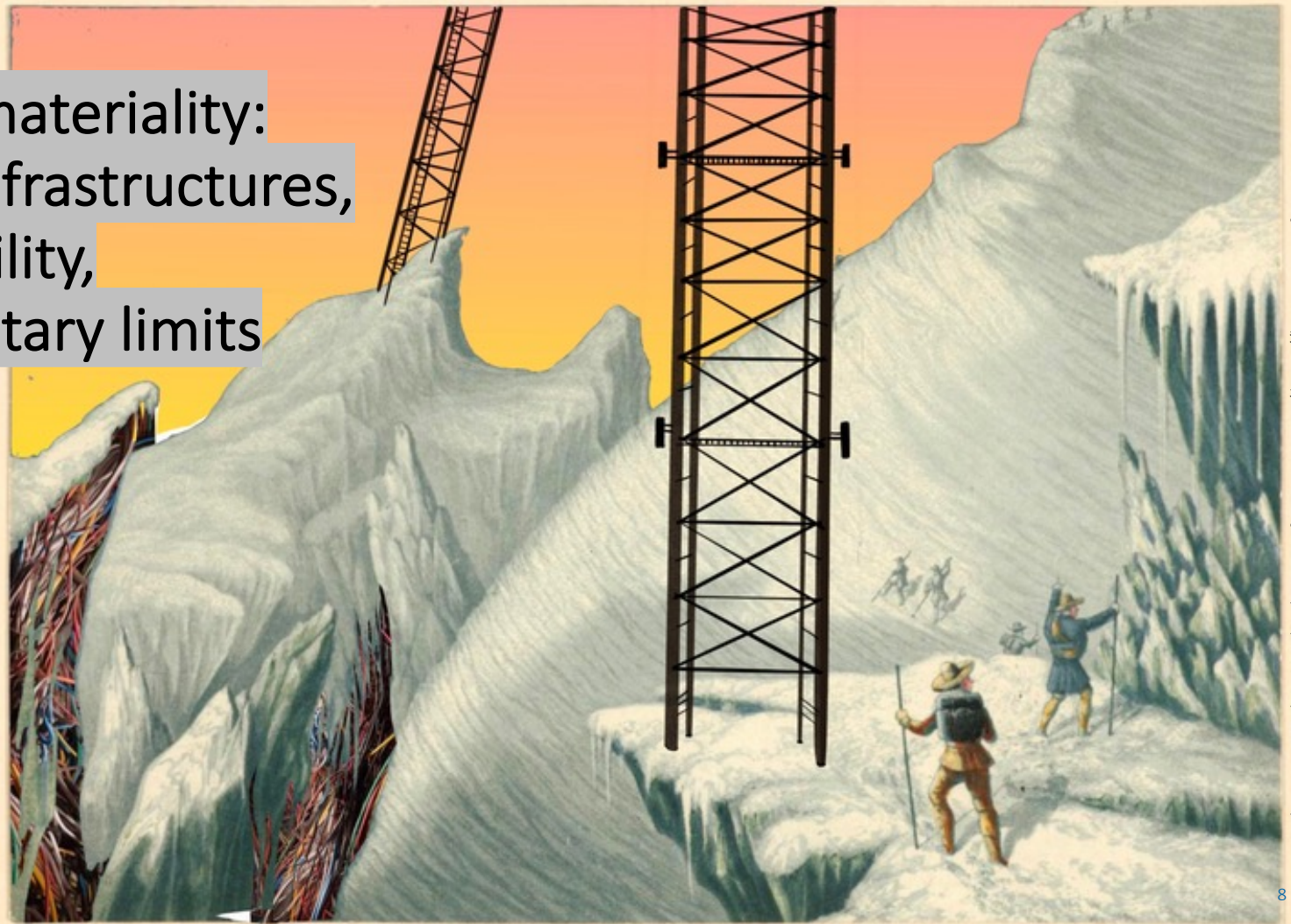Technology is society made durable.
(Bruno Latour)

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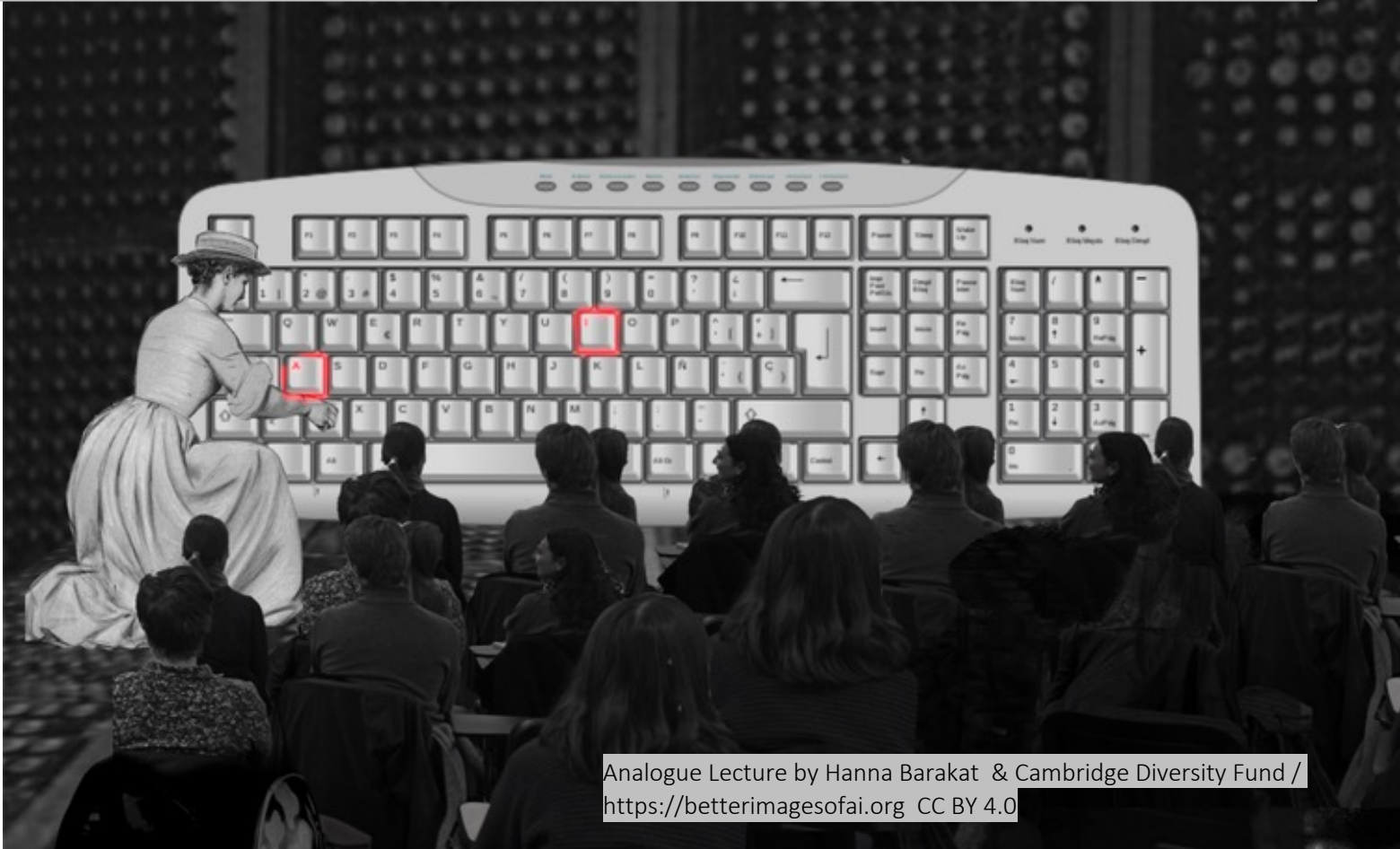2. Making Systems Knowable: Practices of Unpacking, Translating, and Sharing

3. Democracy, fairness, and the politics of design

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4. Socio-materiality:
Spaces, infrastructures,
sustainability,
and planetary limits

5. Diversity, inclusion, and the cultural life of digital systems

6. Inter-/Pluri-/Transdisciplinarity beyond rhetoric

7. Persistent Frictions:
Where Tensions and Uncertainties Remain

Digital Humanism is still Humanism

Deceptive Dialogues by Nadia Nadesan & Digit
CC BY 4.0 https://betterimagesofai.org /
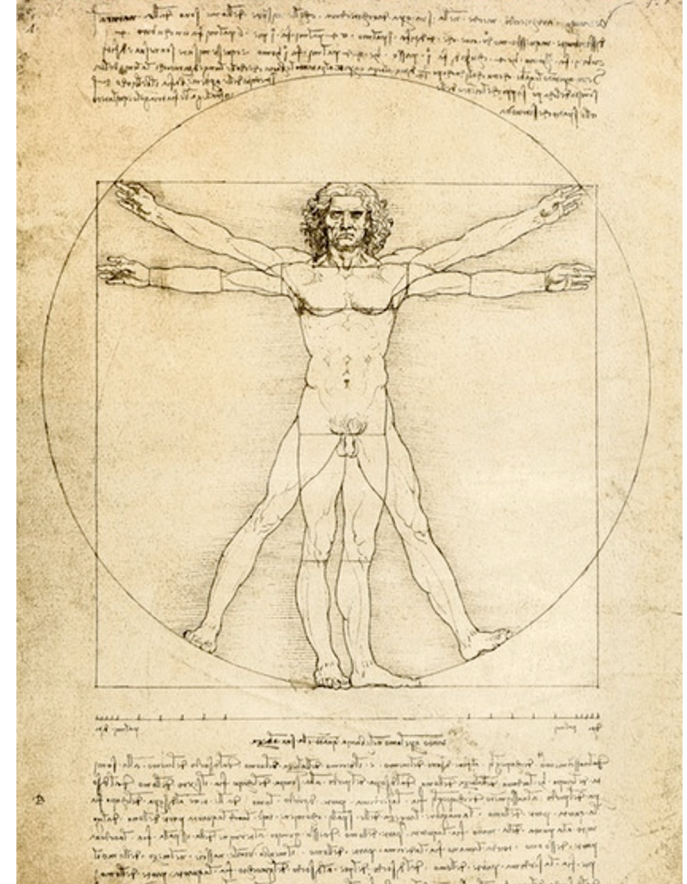
The Humanism Multiple

Historic phases:

Aristocratic Humanism (Renaissance): Rediscovery of classical antiquity, emphasis on human potential and reason.

Bourgeois Humanism (18th–19th Century): Exploration of diverse cultures, challenge to Eurocentrism, and celebration of individuality.

Democratic Humanism (20th Century): Study of all human cultures, cultural relativism, and inclusivity. Human Rights.

Digital Humanism (21st Century): Integration of cultural heritage and technology, recognition of digital as a new global culture.

Mayer, Katja et al. (2019): Akteure, Instrumente und Themen für eine Digital Humanism Initiative in Wien.

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Leonardo da Vinci 1490: homo vitruvianus

Malevich: Suprematistische compositie (met acht rode rechthoeken) 1915

Humanism Critiques

- **Marxist Critique**: Criticises humanism's individualism and neglect of material conditions. Argues it obscures class struggle and reinforces capitalist ideology.
- **Anti-Enlightenment Critique:** Criticises rationalism and universalism for enabling domination.
- **Feminist Critique:** Points out humanism's androcentrism and privileging of male, Western experiences. Calls for inclusion of diverse gender perspectives.
- **Postcolonial Critique:** Exposes Euro-centric bias in humanism's "universal" ideals. Advocates for a decolonisation of humanist thought.
- **Posthumanist Critique:** Challenges human exceptionalism and anthropocentrism. Emphasises interconnectedness of humans, non-humans, and environments.
- **Technocratic Critique:** Questions humanism's focus on agency in an AI-driven world. Highlights the challenge of hybrid human-machine realities.
- …..

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Digital Humanism by action, not by title…..

TRUTH IN TECH
THESE WOMEN TRIED TO WARN US ABOUT AI
Today the risks of artificial intelligence are clear — but the warning signs have been there all along

By LORENA O'NEIL
Photographs by Gioncarlo Valentine
AUGUST 12, 2023

Timnit Gebru, Rumman Chowdhury, Safiya Noble, Seeta Peña Gangadharan, and Joy Buolamwini (from left) https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/women-warnings-ai-danger-risk-before-chatgpt-1234804367/

Individuals or initiatives embodying the principles of DH such as prioritising ethical technology development, inclusivity, and social responsibility — without explicitly using the term.

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Photo: Climate Camp Ireland

In Action:

Digital Humanism as Epistemic Activism?

The projects show a Digital Humanism that:

- asks difficult questions about norms, fairness, participation, and power;

- recognizes the materiality and ecological footprint of digital systems;

- values diversity not as decoration but as constitutive of democratic life and scientific knowledge production;

- and treats interdisciplinarity as a collaborative journey rather than a checkbox.

Digital Humanism is....

... a way of working.

A way of noticing.

A way of caring.

A way of intervening.