FREEPORT 1: ANATOMIES OF A BLACK BOX
Critical Cartography of the Internet and beyond

with Vladan Joler (SHARE Lab)

Anatomies of a black box is a laboratory about mapping contemporary complex systems and infrastructures of exploitation. Taking Joler and Crawford's "Anatomy of an AI system" as the starting point, you will be led into a roller coaster trip through the simple internet packet delivery system, following with Facebook's sophisticated algorithmic factory, and going even deeper into fashionable corporate devices that actually operate as planetary-scale systems of knowledge extraction under the futurist label of machine learning and the likes.

As 21st century cartographers, you will be encouraged to journey both in time and space: from deep time of mineral formation to the fast future of dystopian social media, from the nano scale of battery molecules to the planetary scale of contemporary production and distribution supply chains. As a matter of fact, the main purpose of this laboratory is finding ways to represent such a scaling issue, focusing on either the big or the tiny, either the slow or the superfast.

The "Anatomy of an AI system" conceptual map will then appear as a narrative strategy that reduces complexity, magnifies details, follows narrative trails, or establishes links where apparently there is none. You will take from there, using your skills to dive, for instance, into site-specific research or follow the lifespan of one specific element. In the process you may find new lenses to focus on invisible phenomena or, on the contrary, zoom out and draw a whole new cosmo-technological cartography.

Mapping will be explored as a form of non-linear poetry or storytelling, where both technical tools (such as network graphs, metadata analysis, patent investigations, interface scraping) and a conceptual approach (assemblages, maps of errors, approximations, biases, faults, fallacies and vulnerabilities) will be necessary.

Led by Vladan Joler, professor at the Academy of Arts of the University of Novi Sad and founder of SHARE Foundation. He is leading SHARE Lab, a research and investigation lab that explores the technical and social aspects of algorithmic transparency, digital labor exploitation, invisible infrastructures, and technological black boxes.
https://labs.rs/en/
https://anatomyof.ai/
https://nooscope.ai/

Curated by Bani Brusadin, co-curator of Matadero's own Tentacular festival and co-founder, together with artists Eva & Franco Mattes, of The Influencers, a festival of unconventional art, communication guerrilla and radical entertainment (CCCB Barcelona, 2004 - 2019). He teaches courses related to art production, digital cultures, technology and

society at the University of Barcelona, Elisava Design School and Esdi.
https://theinfluencers.org/bani-brusadin

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Schedule:

The basic schedule of shared online activities will be: Wednesday and Thursday, from 11.00 (sharp) to 13.00, with just a few exceptions.

Detailed calendar of sessions:

- Wed, Nov 4 - 11am
- Thu, Nov 5 - 11am
- Wed, Nov 11 - 11am
- Thu, Nov 12 - 11am
- Wed, Nov 18 - 11am
- Thu, Nov 19 - 11am
- Wed, Nov 25 - 11am
- November 26 - 28: Tentacular festival online sessions
- Wed, December 2 - 11am
- Thu, December 3 - 11am
- Wed, December 9 / Thu 10 - 11am

Format & instructions:

The whole program takes place both on and offline and it is open to people from anywhere.

Online work = syncing:

As a general rule, **Anatomies of a Black Box** is not going to be a screen intensive program and participants will spend limited, yet quality time while online. The online sessions in the calendar are shared moments with short lectures, explanations of tools, questions and answers, but also chatting and exchanging impressions, ideas, and feedback.

Online sessions will be devoted to:

- Intro & warm-up session

- Tools and strategies sessions: What's an Anatomy of an AI System? - From single packet to planetary scale surveillance systems - Facebook Algorithmic Factory

- Work sessions & follow-up: participants cases, advice, doubts

- Informal sessions: chatting, exchange of ideas, screenings, chilling out together

- Tentacular online conference (November 26 - 28)

- Feedback sessions: mentoring of participants' work

Offline work = your contribution:

The program is aimed at getting participants to observe their own environment (online and offline, indifferently), find inspiration in other participants' reports, create (images, methods, performances, devices, stories, platforms, etc.), and then share the results with the rest of the gang.

Examples of specific tasks to be performed autonomously / locally:

- Assignments, exercises, challenges

- Observation, exploration, and research tasks

- Reading tasks

- Drafting or developing a project proposal

Available seats:

This lab is designed for 10 small teams of participants, which we call "nodes". You are warmly encouraged to apply as a team. Check the FAQ for more details.

Price:

The participation fee for each "node" or team of participants is 80 €
Team applications will get priority, but you may still apply as an individual.
Students, unemployed or retired people may apply for a 50% discount if they will provide valid documentation of their status (discounted fee applies only to individuals, not teams).

Technical requirements:

You will use the skills and devices you're already familiar with.
We will discuss later some specific tools for coordination, online conferencing, sharing, etc.

Signing up:

https://form.jotform.com/202712432607346

We warmly recommend you to sign up as a team (which can be between 2 and 5 people). Teams can be either an existing collective / work team, or a group of people who are joining forces for the occasion. Participating as a team will make face-to-face work possible and learning from online sessions easier and more rewarding. Please remember that a good team includes people with different skills and points of view. The participation fee for a team is the same as for an individual (80€).

If you have any question, send us an email: freeport1@mataderomadrid.org

Applications will close on October 25th and we will let you know in the following couple of days.

Registration will be completed only after paying the fee according to the instructions we will send you.

Language:

Mostly English. Spanish, English, or Catalan with the program coordinator.

Certificate of attendance:

Matadero will issue a certificate of attendance at the end of the program.

FAQ

- **You say that this is an online and offline laboratory. What does that mean, exactly?**
  It means that we will have some online shared moments (see online sessions above) while the rest of the time you will work with your team in person, if possible. Each team's autonomous work is key to make this laboratory happen.

- **Are there any required skills to participate?**
  No specific expertise is necessary to attend this program, and yet some basic skills with digital creation technologies will definitely help, as well as familiarity with either art making, video making, design, journalism, activism, or critical engineering. The purpose of FREEPORT is to circulate ideas, tools and tactics to accelerate creative practices in any of those fields.

- **I'm no expert in the topic of this laboratory, yet I'm passionate about it and I have a few ideas. Should I apply?**
  Absolutely! The key aspect of this program will be mixing up creative people with different backgrounds, strong motivations and – why not? – wild ideas. That's why experienced artists or designers are welcome to join, as well as creators with a shorter or incipient career, including undergraduate and postgraduate students.
  If you are not sure whether your profile fits in this program, please let us know in your application email and we'll try and give you an opinion.

- **You encourage participants to apply as a "node" or small team. What does that mean?**
  The participants in this hybrid decentralized lab will be "nodes", that is: small teams, preferably teams whose members will be able to meet in person. We may not be allowed to have all of you working in the same room due to the pandemic, but you may still be able to meet in person with your team.

- **So, what should a "node" look like?**
  A "node" should be a small team of 2 to 5 people. A node can be either an existing collective, studio or work team, or just a group of people that join forces for the occasion. The best nodes/teams may be the ones with a mix of different skills (visuals, graphic design, writing, tech, performance, etc. etc.)

- **I don't have a team, can I still apply as an individual?**
  Yes, but if your application will be successful you will be warmly encouraged to work in a team with others.

- **What kind of output should I expect? How will this lab help me in my work or research?**
  The output of this program really depends on you. Our purpose is to assist in the development of your ideas, both new or rooted in your previous projects. We will encourage discovery and unconventional paths in research and creation. So, if you already have some ideas but no specific plan about them, after this program you may

be able to design a first draft to turn them into an art/design/critical technology project. Or, if you are already developing a project, after this program you may be able to update it, evolve it or make it stronger.

- **Will you support the production of output?**
  We will consider your proposal and if it is consistent with the topic and objective of the lab we will be ready to cover some basic production expenses.

- **Is there a waiting list for those who have not been selected?**
  Yes! If there will be the chance to include more applicants, people on the waiting list will be notified immediately as soon as there will be a free seat in the workshop.

- **Should I attend all online sessions?**
  It's highly recommended. If possible, at least one person of each node/team should attend online sessions. If you'll miss half or more of the first three weeks you will not have the chance to get feedback about your work and showcase it in the final sessions.