

“We are all in this together” – Connectivity and Community in Isolation

ASCA Workshop 2021

June 23-25 (Wed to Fri), 2021

University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Confirmed keynote speakers

- Prof. dr. Lance Bennett, University of Washington
- Dr. Alexandra Segerberg, Uppsala University
- Prof. dr. Iris van der Tuin, Utrecht University

As our global crisis continues, it seems that the social order and our sense of self is changing. We celebrate family birthdays via Skype, demonstrate for social justice on Instagram, and visit art exhibitions in Animal Crossing; meanwhile, we are condemned to living twenty-four hours a day with our partners, roommates or alone, in a home turned office, habituated to uncertainty and fear. Through this experience, we have become keenly aware of both digital technologies' previously untapped potentialities for connecting us and their seemingly unbridgeable boundaries; we are learning to live in and with entrapment, experiencing both unprecedented distance and closeness.

How can we mourn, how can we protest, how can we engage deeply, when we cannot show up with our bodies, when we cannot step out of our homes? As David Harvey stated in 'We need a collective response to the collective dilemma of coronavirus': "I am in a frustrating position of personal isolation, at a moment when the time calls for collective forms of action."

We want to use this moment to start thinking about how to overcome or reconfigure distancing and isolation from the perspective of embodied connectivity and the embodiment of connectivity. Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) studies on social connectivity shed insightful light on people's civic and political participation with digital media as organizing agents. In today's world, apart from mass protests, connectivity pervades our everyday practices. More than a logic to organize and

coordinate online actions, it is increasingly intertwined with our offline world, including our affectivity and bodily experiences. As Van Dijck has stated (2013), the layer of platforms influences human interaction on an individual and a community level, as well as on a larger societal level, as online and offline worlds are increasingly interpenetrating (p. 4). How does embodiment, in its entanglement with connectivity, prompt us to rethink ourselves and our societies for the future ‘new normal’?

In the 2021 ASCA workshop, we seek to interrogate the notions of connectivity and community in all facets of society – both empirically and theoretically – through four broad, interconnected themes: 1. technology, 2. mobility, 3. activism, 4. creativity. We zoom in on these four themes to reimagine power structures, technological infrastructures, and social systems, and to explore what we may learn from the creative forms of embodied connectivity and embodiment of connectivity we encounter as we move into the future. We welcome papers from all fields within the humanities and social sciences, including artistic research.

Submit

Please submit your abstract (max. 300 words) and bio (max. 100 words) via the [submission form](#) by 30 November 2020.

We intend to hold the workshop in the physical space of Amsterdam, but if this is not possible due to COVID-19 related restrictions, the workshop will take place in online or hybrid form. In any case, we are going to try our best to find creative ways to connect, to communicate, and to be together.

Themes

1. Technology

How is sociality affected by and how does it in turn affect rising technologies and platforms such as TikTok, Zoom, 5G, and virtual reality? How are technologies used or adapted to support the emergence of a stay-at-home economy? What roles do technologies play in supporting or thwarting connectivity in times of crisis? Who is included and who is excluded in mediated connectivity? In what ways are social identities and communities determined by the technological tools that sustain them, and how is the future of technological connectivity imagined?

2. Mobility

How are subjectivities redetermined by (im)mobility? Who is excluded when governments restrict mobility? How does a lack of mobility change the definition of what it means to connect? What forms of mobility between physical and virtual communities have been developed? What can we learn from the relation between (im)mobility and connectivity for the globalized world of the future?

3. Activism

In what ways is activism changing in these times of crisis, when the possibility to make embodied connections is limited? What ways have activism movements found to get around those limitations? What role do online platforms play in supporting activist communities in times of a pandemic? How do online protests and bodily protests in the street connect with each other? What forms of intersectional activism have been able to grow?

4. Creativity

How have cultural institutions, artists, performers and content creators been able to form, sustain, or improve connections with their communities when meeting in person was not possible? What roles can cultural institutions play in providing online places for respite or engagement? What new forms of being together are conceptualized through creative encounters?

The 2021 ASCA International Workshop is organized by Lok Yee Wong (yveswly@gmail.com) and Jori Snels (j.snels@uva.nl).