

## Cultures of Algorithms

Invite & programme

Date	12 September 2018	With	Adam Greenfield
Time	11.00 - 17.00		
Place	Newspeak House		
City	London		
Format	Study Day		

Contemporary society is traversed at every level by the software-encoded rules generically known as “algorithms.” Algorithms determine whether or not we’ll be offered a job, or a loan, or a place at school. They guide the route and mode of transit we take on our way to and from work. They drive the disposition and posture of police on our streets, and if we should happen to run afoul of those police, strongly shape just what it is we’ll experience as we make our way through the criminal justice system. They shape what we wear, what we watch, what we listen to, what kind of answers we’re offered when we ask questions, possibly even who we woke up next to this morning. Together, their field of operation is little short of total.

And yet, for all their tremendous power to condition our life choices and chances, very few of us understand algorithms — neither where they come from, nor how they do their work in the world, nor even necessarily what they are. The aim of this one-day workshop is to trace the material effects of these seemingly immaterial actors from a variety of different disciplinary perspectives, and to share what it is we know about their origin, purpose, function and impact on our lives.

For the purposes of this conversation, we have chosen to emphasize three different aspects of our encounter with algorithms: their **poetics**, **kinaesthetics** and **politics**.

By “**poetics**,” we mean a consideration for an emergent algorithmic aesthetic in art, design, literature and craft, and especially the ways in which algorithmic systems begin to suggest the metaphors through which we explain and contextualize everyday experiences. By “**kinaesthetics**,” we mean the ways in which algorithms and machine-learning systems capture, understand, represent or condition the human body’s movement through urban space. And by “**politics**,” we mean the ways in which algorithmic systems condition, constrain or determine collective choice, especially with regard to the allocation of power.

We hope you’ll join us in central London on September 12th to discuss these facets of algorithmic experience with us, share the way you approach them in your work, help us generate greater insight into the ways in which our lives are presently conditioned by them, and suggest effective points of intervention for those with a mind to seek change. We’re especially interested in your perspective if you work as an artist, or otherwise consciously use the expressive dimension of emergent technologies to communicate experience, as we believe your work plays a critical role in helping a broader public understand the capabilities, implications and limits of the technologies that already do so much to condition our lives.

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## Agenda

### 11.00 Introduction and housekeeping

#### 11.15 Session 1 | The Poetics of Algorithmic Culture

Topics to be discussed might include James Bridle's putative "New Aesthetic"; the legibility (for humans) of spaces and objects designed procedurally/parametrically; the drift into other expressive media of terminology originating in the study of algorithmic systems; and dimensions of the algorithmic sublime and uncanny. Three 10-15-minute presentations and discussion.

### 12.15 Coffee

#### 12.30 Session 2 | The Kineasthetics of Algorithmic Culture

Here we'll treat aspects of the algorithmic capture and regulation of bodily experience: techniques of face recognition, gait recognition, etc.; the abandonment of traditional choreographic notation in characterizing the movement of the human body through space, and possible new approaches to doing same; pattern recognition and the characterization of stereotyped human gestures; and crowd detection, crowd-size and footfall analysis, and their use in the design of urban space. Three 10-15-minute presentations and discussion.

### 13.30 Lunch

#### 14.30 Session 3 | The Politics of Algorithmic Culture

By "politics," we mean the ways in which the systems described and discussed condition, constrain or determine collective choice, especially with regard to the allocation of power. Topics might include decision-support systems; credit-scoring systems and their use as tools of discipline; new modes of association or collective action based on blockchain technologies; and China's "social credit" system and its implications for networked authoritarianism elsewhere. Three 10-15-minute presentations and discussion.

### 15.30 Coffee

#### 15.45 Session 4 | General discussion: Algorithms, activism and the arts

### 16.45 Wrap-up and next steps

### 17.00 Ends

### 18.00 Join us for dinner if you can