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# CLANDESTINE TALKS SURPLUS ————

)

Hello from the grotto.

## 24TH NOVEMBER 2021

)	Okay.	Francelle Cane	
0	Okay.	Ludwig Engel	/
	Oray.	Hannes Grassegger	*
)	So, good afternoon, everyone.	Marija Maric	0
*	Hello.	Markus Miessen	)

Hello, I'm Markus Miessen, architect and writer, based at the University of Luxembourg and I'm here with four fantastic other individuals, who I think they will briefly introduce themselves and then we will jump into the reality of the conversation.

/ All right. We do a round, I guess, which no one can see but us.

I'm Ludwig Engel, I'm the Director of Studio for Immediate Spaces at Sandberg Instituut, which is part of the Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. And I'm a futurologist and urbanist.

Hello, my name is Francelle Cane. I am an architect and I am currently a PhD candidate, doctoral researcher, at the University of Luxembourg.

I also work as a curator, which I also do from time to time. And yes, I think this is all. I am pretty much interested in the topics revolving around the man-altered landscape, climate change, and spatial policies.

- ★ My name is Hannes Grassegger. I'm an investigative tech reporter based in Zurich, which is a town in Switzerland. And I'm trained as an economist and I'm a family father of two kids.
- O Hi, my name is Marija Maric. I'm an architect and a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Luxembourg; And I am interested in the questions of real estate, architecture, and media.
- Pantastic. So, thanks again for being here. Maybe I'm just going to say a couple of words, how we ended up in this particular configuration. So, when Drell asked me to be part of this, I proposed a couple of names, which I thought were particularly interesting in the context of also what we are looking at the moment in the context of our program at the University of Luxembourg. And, so, my own research is circling around issues of participation and cultures of assembly. And, at the moment, we are setting actually up a platform, a virtual platform and physical platform, that is supposed to research issues around cultures of assembly in Esch. Which, for those of you who don't know, it's a city in Southern Luxembourg, and in those platform setups, we will be dealing with questions around institution buildings, special politics, special governments, and justice.

And, so, this is, I think, kind of interesting in the context of also the particular setup of this series of talks and particularly the issue of surplus. And also, especially in the context of the exhibition that's currently at *Mudam Art and The Economics of The Digital Age*. So, one thing that I thought could be interesting, maybe to just kick off the conversation, would be to think about surplus also in terms of surplus publics. So, what this means in terms of virtual social spaces and platforms and, therefore, governance. And I thought I should start with Hannes, since we've been talking about this before, and maybe to talk a little bit about the issue of digital platforms and information architecture, which is something that you've been working on quite a lot and questions of e-territory and governance.

\* Yeah. So, I think we are about to enter a new period of our life and, in the digital era, where, basically, most of our lifetime and, probably also the income we earn, will be spent in the digital. Meaning, We will basically become digital first beings. And, so, if you look at it, and I've been for like the last 10 years, I've been exploring digital spaces. If you look at the spaces that we are currently spending our time in, most of them are more or less archaically governed spaces, meaning that what we can see there and how we can interact to other people is governed according to a, more or less, pyramidal governmental model. Meaning there's an owner of the system, or a system admin, defining the rules for the platform or the search engine or the site that you're visiting. Then there's an army, or a couple of moderators, that work on executing these rules. And then there's, us, the users, profiles, user accounts, that have no inherent rights. And so, if we think of the digital as the primary place where our life is happening, we are entering a situation where we are basically deprived of many rights and many abilities.

And, even more than that, we are also potentially deprived of perceiving reality in a more or less unregulated way. If you think of how a platform is able to decide what you, as a user, the information that you get, and this is where we are coming to the idea of information architecture. Information architecture, for me, is the idea of what kind of information are you going to be able to receive, and probably also send on a platform and also how are you going to be able to interact with others or the platform, right?

And so this is information architecture, and think of it, like, think of, you know, think of the difference between going to Twitter or Telegram or Instagram or Facebook. You have different options of what you can do, what you can see, what you can send. And you have a different set of rules that are set of how you can behave and exploit the potentials that are offered, right?

So... And these rules, and this is where we come to platform governance. These rules, the platform governance is what manages the information architecture. So, underlying the information architecture, there is information governance and, as I said, the governmental scheme is pyramidal. And it doesn't see users as a form of sovereign entities. So, we are more or less economic subjects perhaps, but not on a rights-based level.

And that also, for me as an economist, I'm also talking about property rights, meaning, on a platform, I don't even have the right to own myself, meaning I can be deleted at any time. And for no reason and there's not even a right that I get the information why I'm deleted. And so, all these rules were made, and all these concepts were made, in a world and for a world that didn't think of the digital as a permanent long term future, that we are about to live in forever and be a world where, it was easy to kind of like switch platforms, where it wouldn't actually matter if you get your account deleted, right?

And now that we are about to enter, and I'm concluding, a world where we will basically be digital first and live most of our daytime, probably even in virtual environments, such as the one Mark Zuckerberg was recently promoting as Metaverse. Then we have to consider if this form of platform governance has to be rebuilt and how, also, the world that we are going to build has to be shaped in terms of information architecture. And this is also why I'm participating as an external, and I'm very proud to be participating as an external PhD student, at Markus' chair, because I'm trying to learn from you as architects and city planners and futurologists, what we can draw and learn from the lessons about governance in the physical space. Because they have not yet been applied to the digital. It is pretty naïve and pretty archaic, what is there. Out there.

- And I have a question regarding this. So, a couple of years ago, you published a super interesting book called *Das Kapital'bin ich*. And, so now, there seems to be some kind of, I don't know if this is fair to say, but some kind of like spatial turn in your work. So, also you just said that you, you hope for some kind of input from, let's say spatial experts on this issue, but could you describe a little bit more, what do you think has changed since you wrote this book and how is this kind of issue of platforming-informing this interest now?
- tion was when Elena Schütz, from *Something Fantastic*, asked me what would be a hallway in the digital world. Meaning a space where you accidentally bump into people, you're basically probably within a context, right, and institutional context, but you can... There's also certain exits and entries, and... That was one thing. And then there's this idea of... Think of a physical wall and how architecture is actually information architecture.

So, a wall does not only separate spaces, right? A wall could help you to separate the public from the private space, just by blocking the information, who is behind that wall, right? So, it creates privacy. Then you put in a window, so, a certain amount of information, let's say visual information, can pass, but you can't access because there's no door, right? Enter a door. Right. Most of the architecture is actually already information architecture, in many ways.

Because it's shaping the societal configurations that happen within and externally. Right? And to what degree has this already been formalized and understood within architectural theory.

I wonder, and I'm trying to explore. I was thinking about walls, basically, because we talk of information architecture and systems architecture in discussing digital topics. For years, I've been trying to reach out to architects asking them, like, "How do you guys, with all your experience in designing spaces, right? How do you apply this currently?" Because, what happens, is that the spaces we live in today are mostly for like 12 hours of my day. I'm like online, right? So, the space I actually live in is a digital place.

And there's people talking of architecture of that place, but these are not architects. These are not architects. So, architects, basically, have lost their role and their say in creating the spaces that we live in. And that was super interesting to me as well.

O Yes. I think this is very interesting. Also, I was recently looking into the question of architectural expertise in the Metaverse. There are a lot of platforms emerging in that domain, operating on the blockchain technology, which, if we return to the question of platform governance, opens up a lot of interesting questions.

But speaking of the role of architects, I also stumbled upon the information that, for instance, in Decentraland, which is one such iteration of the Metaverse, a digital platform that stimulates virtual reality real estate trading, land speculation, et cetera. There is a company, it's called Republic Realm, they call themselves real estate developers and they describe their expertise as something between architectural and urban planning, cryptocurrency brokerage, and event makers. So, these kind of spaces and practices also reshuffle architectural knowledge and architectural expertise in a way. So, I think it's interesting to also look from this perspective, not just the spatial characteristics of the Metaverse, but also who designs these spaces and what do they mean for the society?

\* Yes. And, actually, I have to get back to your question. Like it is, it is been for... So, my book, in 2014, was referring to a feudalist regime, right. That we are living in a feudalist system, in the digital space.

Think of the banning. You get banned from a platform, right. Think of the idea of leaders and followers and so on. Think of the total autocracy of the platform owners, right. But, from that, came the idea of living in some sort of like medieval city, right. And, then, as I actually live in Switzerland, in sort of like ancient concrete structures, right, I sometimes marvel about how these structures have evolved into a system where we have, like, public squares, public infrastructure and hospitals and streets and public administration overseeing these places that grew as anarchic, and probably as feudalist later on, as the digital spaces. So, there's like a ton of physical references and also churches are super inspiring to me but I would like to talk about this later, probably.

Maybe Marija, could you also say something about how this material, that you just talked about, also touches on questions around digital commons, maybe?

O Yes. The question of surplus is kind of super relevant there. I mean, these, let's say early platforms, at least this is my initial conclusion from the research I did so far, they operate on this ambition of blockchain technology that promises to abandon precisely what you describe as a feudal system of platform capitalism. This is part of the narrative around blockchain which assumes distribution of value and information without the center, right?

These narratives promise an ultimately decentralized system of information transfer, but what these platforms actually do in reality, is that they often function as some kind of vulgar translation of land and real estate speculative practices that we have on the ground, into the digital domains.

So, in a way, blockchain technology often ends up legitimizing these practices. At the same time, it opens up an opportunity to rethink the notion of commons. For me, it seems like a tipping point question. But, I think it's super important to follow the development of these platforms in the future to rethink them through the term of commons.

I mean, the way they function today, they definitely do not tackle in any way the notion of commons, right? So, we need to ask what is public in and about these platforms. Is the public organized around the summary of consumers and consumer experiences? We need to ask and rethink what is the community in the digital domain? And then, also, what are the public spaces for these digital communities?

In physical space, square used to be the ideal embodiment of surplus. It creates something additional, a surplus, from the mere social interaction it enables. I wonder what would be the parallel to the square as an urban typology, in the digital space, where, the way it functions right now, are often organized to host the consumers or people who seek personal experience. I wonder how is the notion of the public embodied in these virtual reality platforms.

- \* And that's... Think about it, is there any public square in the digital?
- / No, of course not. I mean I don't know how... Should I start my sermon now, already?
- Yes, please.

I think like one of the major things that we need to discuss is surplus, is a super physical word in its meaning. Not, you know, because I think in the digital world, there is no surplus as every bit gathered has the potential to become of future value. Or you could also say everything in the digital is surplus as data generation surpasses the capitalist logic of value in the now, sort of, you know, kind of packing it into futures. So, I think the idea of the surplus itself is a very, very physical thing. And I... And maybe, we, in the more architectural discourse, are also a bit romantic about this, especially with public squares, because we also know how public squares is also just an instrument to guide, surveil, and form public and public opinion.

But, of course, the idea of this, of the surplus in the physical, is much more easily graspable, in a sense. I would even, I would kind of extend on Marija's... I also... I mean, Hannes, you can't see it listening to it, but his eyebrows are already indicating that the no surplus in the digital will be challenged later on. But I think there's one reference which could be of importance when we think of this because the "Plus" principle by Lacaton & Vassal which they build with, does something else.

### Please explain.

/ Yes, yes. I'll explain. I think it's exciting because what it does is... Jean-Philippe, in a conversation we had some time ago, he said, "Well, look, you need to empower everyone to be a host. You need to design apartments in a way that everyone can throw a dinner party at their place. So, we tried to design apartments that are large enough for everyone to be a host."

And they call that the "Plus" principle. The idea that they still build really cheap, or the cheapest way possible, but that they are not investing in communal spaces, but they're investing in the enlargement of private spaces. This comes with, like, you know, rethinking paradigms of how to live. For example, there is room depth of more than 20 meters. No, normally won't say, you can't have more than 12, then it gets too dark and no one can live there anymore. But what happens, then, if you have 12 meter deep rooms, you usually have the entrance point exactly at the darkest spot, but then you store everything in the brightest spot. This is why you have all these beautiful renders filled with trash because you always enter from the middle.

So, if you have a really large room, you can reorientate the entire idea of how you live and store everything, where everything is already dark, where you don't want to be in the first place. But that is only possible if you rethink the idea of a room that can be much deeper than you would usually have in a housing state. So, I... And there is a certain empowerment of this surplus because you literally give back agency to everyone to design their part of the platform, in the architectural context.

#### \* Right.

/ And I, you know, I'm not saying I know how to translate that into the digital realms, but I think it's super important that this is something that is still in debate in, in the physical architectural discourse. And that is still something that when we talk about commons, about community spaces, about how to come together, it's also a bit of outsiders position. You know, not to say we need to collectivize and come together, but to separate and keep close to each other.

There's... Just another example up to Maliq Simone, Singaporean ethnographer, whose analysis of the Jakarta... Let's say-

★ City planner. 6

/ And he is not like of the cityscape, where, you know, hardcore religious positions and hardcore progressive LGBT groups literally crash in the same spaces. But instead of separating them, they keep culture of distance within vicinity in. And, because of the contested spaces, they can't go anywhere else. They all have to meet in the same spaces.

- And how do these spaces look like, in that-
- Like, for example, in in one case he gives, is a parking deck below residential areas, where everyone comes down to but there's no car parking, but that's actually the only sort of public space everyone can access. And you have queer community and hardcore religious community on the same level and they observe each other, they are not interacting with each other, but they are observing each other thus creating a sense of, you know, living together.
- ★ I think it's super interesting that you describe it like this, because your question of what do these spaces look like, it's a question that reappears in this whole discourse around this transition from, let's say, physical spaces into virtual spaces. But I think this, your example Ludwig, is really fantastic, because it shows that it's actually not about how the space looks but how the space is organized or governed. And, in this sense, this is actually the translation to the virtual, because it's all about protocols. No?

#### O Right.

- ★ I mean, if I understand correctly from also what you are looking into, in terms of your research project, this... Maybe you can say something about this, the kind of idea of a liberal kind of platform that, I mean, I don't know. Maybe you describe.
- Yes. So, the question that I asked Ludwig, about how it looks like, is because I have learned, as a reporter, that especially for our listeners and readers, it is crucial to get like examples, if they want to follow ideas and visual ideas. And that's also what, like, you would see in the Metaverse marketing. It's, basically, mostly visuals that people start to understand these things. But, as I understand your Jakarta example, for instance, there is a huge space with non-declared... There's no declaration of different fractions on that space, right? So, they have to figure out their own sovereign places, right? You're saying-

### / Exactly.

They're in one corner and they're in the other, and there's no police probably patrolling. So, and this is why I'm asking for... You're absolutely right, there is two ways that democracy can happen, right? Democracy can happen on the level that it is sort of like granted by a king, who hands over a certain amount of sovereignty to its subjects, just as in Luxembourg, for example.

But, there's another way where the people own the country and they start to define the rules collectively. First, constitutionally, probably, and then translating into direct laws. And I live in Switzerland where, actually, we constantly change our constitution, right? We are constantly editing the code of our society, that's the way we live, and we even do it on local levels. So, we have great problems actually in translating and even in moving around in Switzerland because local laws are so different. It's much more than tax laws, it's about out the schooling and so on and so on. But all this happens on an even higher idea and that would translate in a technical language into protocol.

What is behind the constitution that we've created and that we are still constantly editing? What is behind the laws that in the shared democratic platform, or cooperative platform I am imagining, we, all users, are able to edit the platform laws. You cannot be deleted or excluded from participating in editing the roles. If tech-people speak about open protocols, they mean a system like e-mail where many different companies have built their own mail system, but they can interact because they follow the same technological specifications in order to be interoperable. They follow the same protocol, right? So you can mail from Gmail to Yahoo and so on. And that is the prototype for a post-platform ideology. It's protocols, not platforms, right?

That's a discourse within technology for the last 15 years and the blockchain culture specifically refers to this idea of protocols, not platforms and I would love to learn what you think about it. They're starting to develop systems that could host their own platforms but for example, on the premise, and that's crucial about the blockchain. On the premise that there's no power that can single handedly delete or modify something fundamental. That's a core element that is widely misunderstood and not appreciated enough. The idea of creating digital money includes the idea that there's no single entity that can delete or confiscate someone's digital coins somewhere. It's not only about being able to not copy it and so on. And so this sets in stone, one of the preconditions for building a protocol that would enable a democratic participatory system that we have a technology now, or a protocol now that would help us.

Yes, actually, moving from the status of a believable user to a something like self-sovereignty, or that is sovereign in a way that only itself can decide to kill itself. Right? Probably not even that. That's something we... Is that suicide. I've never thought about that one, actually. What is a suicide in the blockchain? Am I able to even delete my Ether? Make them disappear? I don't think so.

O This is very interesting. It always depends on how technology is used, and who has the power to use it. When we talk about blockchain technology in isolation, then we can clearly outline its democratic potential. But then when we see how real estate industry uses blockchain technology today, what it does, it actually just perpetuates the status quo, and even existing inequalities, and all this under the name of 'smartness'. Right? So in this context, the decentralization becomes a promise that legitimizes profit-making practices.

Platform is always curated by somebody, in the end of the day. So I think there is no full disappearance of the center. For example, in Decentraland, the company who founded the platform, calls itself 'The Curator'.

In reality, all the information that is stored on the platform, including all the NFTs of ownership of land, or real estate developments there, all the digital property, is stored on a centralized server. So in the end of the day, when we look at this, it appears that Web 3.0 paradigm, which builds upon the failed promises of Web 2.0, constructed on the notion that with the rise of social media and a possibility to express yourself, we will reach ultimate democracy, already shows space for manipulation.

Web 3.0 is building on the idea of abandoning the centrality of the platform, and instead this very blurry promise of decentralization comes in, in which I am very interested. I'm just wondering, what are the limits of this promise? When we see how it works in reality, we often see translation and mirroring of governance and politics that we already have on the ground, into the digital sphere. I always kind of like to return to the idea that technology means nothing unless we give it a meaning and use it in a certain way. So it always depends on the who, no? Who has the right to use it? Who is using the means of production? So who has the power over the tools?

Actually, I think there is a quite related question that emerges from the tangible world that we know, especially from our Western point of view that we kind of all share here. It's about the archiving. What happens with this data? How do we archive it since oral archiving or transcribed, written archival is maybe no longer this kind of elements that we can go back to and really dig into to kind of somehow read the collective history or the shared collective memories also. And I don't know if one of you... Maybe this is my ignorance talking also a bit, because this is a whole world also that I'm step by step discovering, but I think this is one kind of the core subjects actually. Since we were talking also about the commons and everything, this is the question of remembering, memory, yes.

O The question of archive relates to the question of value. How, and what is valuable in space in which everything is there to catch the attention. These platforms that we are mentioning, they are a perfect spatialization of the attention economy. When value is something so fluid and so movable in terms of attention, the question becomes how do we archive the digital world, and how do we define value in this domain?

I mean, just one thing to add. In modernism, we had the discussion between the build and nature. There's a supposedly famous quote by Meese that, "nature belongs to the outsid". So there's not even one flower in a Meese building because nature is outside. We have a separation between nature and men.

O Culture.

And I think this sort of... Also sometimes we are sort of reflexively engaging again into this dualism. We're separating between the physical and the digital and I just have a clever quote because I would probably not come up with something like that. But Nathan Jergeson, social media theorist, he says, "The notion of the offline as real and authentic is a recent invention corresponding with the rise of the online. If we can fix this fall separation and view the digital and physical as unmatched, we will understand that what we do while connected is inseparable from what we do when disconnected." But I think that's sort of a link to Francelle's question about what do we archive? Because I think, if we treat these two entities separately as being archived in different ways, we exactly lose what was actually happening right now. Because there is not oral history on the one side and digital bits flowing around on the other side and these two entities need different archival systems. Is this enmeshed of these two that now needs to be archived?

★ That's a fascinating thought. I think we have to be more specific. I'm rather talking about the pre-digital as the IRL, right? It's a before networked information. Before constantly available networked digital information, right? So that's my point of comparison. It's not the offline world, because I do believe that we are in a enmeshed post-internet situation, since the advent of connected handheld devices and whatever. You are absolutely right. These are not separable rooms, right? Or spaces and so on. And that's exactly what is inspiring my thinking of applying spatial knowledge and spatial practices on this new and meshed situation. Right? Because I do actually think what happens offline or online and offline is totally the same, in a way, or totally correlated. And that even makes it more important to think about the questions of information architecture and governance systems.

Right? And that's the sole reason that I think these spaces are connected, but what I find interesting is, I've never thought about what is the idea of nature if we talk about online, right? And one thing that just came to me, when you were speaking and probably this idea is not solid, is like nature, the strange wild things that are still online, we are not yet in an embodied situation, right? We're not yet in an embodied digital situation so it's mostly cognitive. So it's mostly things that people like, say forms of communication and the nature from the perspective of a platform owner like Facebook, whatever, would be wild, untamable things that people are doing. Right? Think of shitstorms. Right? And that's also probably, what I would see as closest to a public space. Because things are happening that are beyond the pre-planned order of things.

- It's not curated. Yes.
- It's not curated because they have not yet developed the instruments to sort of, manage the platform when things like that thing happening. And this is also what I'm doing in my journalistic practice. Currently, I'm looking at these Facebook leaks that Francis Haugen has helped put in the public space. And what you see there is a ton of qualified engineers, architects, or so-called architects and developers trying to manage these unforeseeable almost, like wild natural phenomena.

Right? So here we have nature and how do you call the... Right? And the build, right? I'm sorry.

/ No, no, no.

O I mean, the digital also reminds us that nature is a construct. I would say that this is also where the translation takes place. This reminds me of a very nice article by McKenzie Wark where he delves into another book by Matteo Bittanti, who made research based on the Reddit comments that were discussing the appearance of yellows, homeless Sims in the SimCity game, and the problem of their non-belonging in this super organized and curated space in which all the land is owned by someone. He looked into the debates and the way the community of the SimCity tried to manage the problem of homelessness, and all the proposals to solve this problem, like building a wall around the homeless Sims and then burning them, or the introduction of the SimCity police, et cetera. This reference came to my mind as an example of wild imagination of order and ownership in the digital sphere.

- ★ How do you spell... What's the books name?
- O I can share afterwards. Matteo Bittanti is the author. Unfortunately, I forgot the title of the book.
- **★** B or P?
- O Bittanti, B-I-T-T-A-N-T-I. Bittanti.

I think this idea of, just because Sim is almost close to a real city, I would quickly, I mean... When I started thinking about the term surplus, it's not only a term that speaks of anthropy and access and all that, but it's also a term that speaks of a certain generosity that kind comes out of unplanned mismanagement. No? Like an army surplus store offers something that is not being put in use by the ones who contracted it to be produced and they channel it into a sort of non-existing market because there is no demand, but on the very low end. So they actually end up selling something for way less than it's actually worth, creating an iconic uniform for the ones who are protesting the system. It's beautiful. How a surplus system within a city becomes also the symbol for the protest against what creates this surplus. And the city in itself is also this sort of very, anthropic, not well managed place that allows for all these irregularities.

It allows for constant shit storms without being deleted. Which, at least... I mean, as you put as a disclaimer, luckily for our discussion, in a central European context. I'm not trying to argue globally here. But this makes it also so tough. I think from a European perspective, to understand these platforms that kind of want to prevent you from having a constant shitstorm, because that sort of also has on that 'raison d'être' of being part of a city. That this constant friction is being there.

And just sorry to... I mean, maybe there's something for a discussion there, but one thing I thought was so crazy that I saw a headline in the last days where it said UAE, United Emirates to create first nonprofit city.

And it was an idea that it was sort of, a philanthropic endeavor, creating a city that wouldn't run on its economy, but just be sort of a nice cultural add-on. But I think this is at the heart of what a city is or should be. And so I'm kind of intrigued by this transfer now, how to get that into the digital realms.

\* So that's super interesting... What you're criticizing here is that it cannot be a city if it's just centrally owned and planned, right? Because just the mere idea of the city is that people come there and make certain places their own and they build on top of each other. And then, right? So we do not yet have cities if we don't have property and so probably, we should quickly define what WEB 3 is because we are constantly referring to it. WEB 1 is the idea of the old internet, you set up a Website, right? Basically you can go there to read something. WEB 2 is like, "oh, you can now comment on the Website" leading to Facebook. There's interaction online, right? So it's read and write. It's communication. And then WEB 3 is the idea of, hey, just like in Web one, you have your own space, right? Plus the benefit of communication. In WEB 3 you communicate and own.

That's the promise of WEB 3. That will be the promise of now here's the land. And they're actually, as you said, Marija, they're literally referring to stars and galaxies as in the case of Urbit and many other systems where they're actually selling land right now, there's a land grab happening.

- O Yes.
- And yeah.
- I mean, maybe in order to pick up the audience, could you maybe explain from your point of view, the difference between community governance online and opposed to Zuckerberg's metaverse speech?
- O Sorry, can you repeat the question?
- So, because we talked before, I mean, this was not part of this conversation, but about the metaverse speech by Zuckerberg.
- So the metaverse speech is, did you watch it, Marija?
- O I saw it. Yeah.
- \* So probably you go ahead...
- O I would say he doesn't really reveal a lot.

The speech is really like a one long advertisement. I mean, what I got from this speech, is there is a platform called Horizon that will manage Facebook's Metaverse. The Metaverse would take place probably in the next five to 10 years, so it is still a speculative project. The first iteration of the Metaverse and the Horizon will be called Horizon Home. So the first thing they plan to do, and I think this brings us back to the beginning of the discussion is to allow the people to build their own space, or virtual home, as a trigger to move to this new platform. For me, this was an important insight, but when it comes to the questions of governance and community, these aspects are still vague in his talk. I mean, Facebook is running the platform, that's clear. Actually its Meta, the new company they are creating. When it comes to community, this is discussed more in terms of how can we sit in common virtual space and consume the content. So, I don't know if I can extract something more meaningful than that from the talk that I heard. Maybe-

That's a brilliant summary. So for like 90 minutes, Mark Zuckerberg is more or less showing just the surface layer that includes many, more or less spatial things, right? So it shows us rooms and bodies and people and now you can do things that you can't do, like flying around and switching your physical appearance and stuff like that. But as we said, the core promise of Web 3 was not that we have fancy surfaces, but the promise was that we would be able to own a thing. Right? And so there's not much talk, as you said, about the governance and about ownership, but two references. So one reference is that he's saying we want to create portability, meaning that if you are in the, let's say Meta metaverse and you move over to visit your friend in the Twitter space, and you have some digital clothing that you bought, you want to bring it over? So think about you having a fixed avatar that you're taking over to the other place. I mean, these are all ridiculous ideas. People will laugh about that. So hardly in five years, but just the first step into a future is always trying to translate the old media shapes into the next thing. Right? So here, Zuckerberg goes and promises portability, but it's not yet clear who sets the preconditions for the portability. Who will define the rules? And then there's a thing. So it's an empty idea of Web 3, he's promising.

And so as a journalist, I'm used to look at what is the word a person uses most often? I always count. And in that presentation, it's the word 'creator'. It's a niche word. Most of you don't even know what a creator is. I didn't know it that much as well, but creators are people who materially live from digital artifacts in some way. Steve Bannon is a creator of negative online sentiment, right? And mass movements. Or an influencer is a creator of a certain feeling for a fellowship, right? People who produce software programs could be creators, an online journalist is a creator, right? So Zuckerberg's constantly saying, hey, this will be a world for creators. Meaning he's acknowledging that there is a new economic model that has risen on Web 2, where people depend and live from digital artifacts. And for these people, Facebook is something like the Soviet Union. These are startup folks and they don't want their stuff to get deleted just because Facebook changed as some sort of politics, right?

Or disallowed because they're against their political thing. So what Facebook is doing now and promising to build the next platform or rather protocol, if he's promising to have portability is just like the Soviet Union at its hate of saying to the free who now know how to create value online, "Hey guys, come live here. It's so beautiful. I have built a super great theme park and you guys can have your own." It's the same model that he has had before. It's like offering you the free row house to live in. And he captures all the surplus value. Meaning everything surplus in this digital world is a pretty interesting phenomenon because you are building something if you are online and you are absolutely not able to capture the value of it. Only the platform can capture the value.

For example, YouTube can display ads, right? And they decide how much of a share you get and then you get demonetized just as we saw in the case of OnlyFans, the other platform that suddenly started to withdraw prostitutes, probably they wanted to delete a lot of sex workers that are on the platform just for some reason. Right? And so there was this situation where they would all lose their income. These are creators, right? And so it cost a huge shitstorm from the creators on OnlyFans. And that's the archetypal situation that Facebook is planning to recreate on the new system. Create a place where it owns all property rights. And that's also... Basically what he's trying to do is, he's bribing the new class of creators and we soon will be creators ourselves.

He's trying to bribe them with his multi-billion dollars investment, into a land of milk and honey where he still owns the property rights. And the question is whether these other blockchain and Web 3 builders will be able to provide an alternative digital land. One that feels equally good and well, or at least decently well, a place where they're basically not offering a nice row house. They're just offering some wild moony terrain, with no plants on it or nothing. Right? And we'll create this move there or into the nice row house. And that's why he's appealing to creators all the time. And it's all based on this underlying premise of Web 3 and governance and so on.

- So this would entail that you are part of the design process of the protocol, or not?
- \* Right. So there's no offer to become part of the governance. For Metaverse governance in the video, Zuckerberg simply calls in his paid servant Nick Clegg. A former politician now on Mark's payroll and he asks him, how will we manage the safety? Yeah, he answers, "We'll take care of that." Okay. And then he cuts him out, actually, that's the funniest part of it, after like two or three minutes. And then governance is gone. It is another autocratic model, clearly.
- ☐ Where somehow the data architects are kind of like the 'governmental architects' of this new world also: at the same time, establishing both rules in terms of spatial policy, but also, maybe some kind of communication policy, since they will already constraint these places, right?

- ★ Yeah. He's just appointing them. It's his company, they're on his payroll, right?
- So, there will be no change whatsoever, somehow just an illusion?
- O I think what Facebook is proposing is not groundbreaking, meaning the model they're proposing. If you want to have a glimpse of how Metaverse works, you can look into Sandbox or Decentraland, or many other platforms who came before them. So we are talking about a project that goes on for two decades.

But I think the power of Facebook lies in two things. First of all, in the sheer number of their existing users. There're two billion users of Facebook, if I am not mistaken. When you just think of this pool of people who are already networked into the system of this platform, it's the biggest capital a company could have.

- \* Actually, three and a half billion.
- O Three and a half?
- ★ If you combine WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, it's three and a half monthly average users.
- O Fascinating. The second, Facebook's power is not just in the platform itself, but in the entire set of other applications it entails. So, what's important about the Facebook's Metaverse is the scale and the resources they have. And that's why I think that when they announce Metaverse, it becomes clear that it's not just a temporary hype or a buzzword that will disappear. At least, that's how it seems. When such a large company with so many users actually decides to switch to this domain, to make this kind of turn, then it also means that there will be potential followers to this move.

But, speaking of governance, as soon as you have a corporation that leads and creates the entire virtual world and a platform that runs it, it's very clear how it's going to work. My question only becomes once we really start operating in this space, how will we work on the commons and the public? Is it possible to actually have the commons when tools are owned by somebody else? And when governance is already predefined by an existing entity, in this case, a corporation? Or do digital commons require a different starting point? For me, it's always very tricky to think these relations.

Yeah. And one could be quite negative or already on a dystopian outlook. Now, if you consider this path saying you look at the history of social movements and utopias that tried to imagine ways and protocols to implement ideas of comments...

O I was referring to that, but please go ahead. Yeah. I was referring more to the platforms that kind of preceded, but please go ahead.

Yeah, no, and so I think, again, it feels that we are already at a point where the system, whatever that is, has already usurped these energies into framing them as part of their reflux, sort of what is being washed back by pushing something out. So this is already part again of the narrative.

think you're right, but in a short to medium term perspective, and that's what we all have actually lost throughout the last 20 or 30 years of our lifetime, where we've experienced the rapid technological development. We are, probably at the start of an evolutionary step in the history of mankind, where we are becoming these more connected beings. The network is becoming embodied slightly more and more. Power over information flows is power over people. But now these ideas are emerging that we could have some sort of communal governance, communal ownership structures of the information network.

I mean, maybe that brings me to something that is sort of at heart of what I'm currently excited about. Sorry to bring that in. But I think for the last 10 years, I have sort of lost interest in architecture as a space designing entity more and more, because I felt it was so toothless, and even the slight excitement with Keller Easterling's Active Form where you at least grasp that there could be something architectural and all that, I don't know. But I think there is a quality in design that excites me again, which comes a bit out of the idea of pre-figurative politics.

The idea that you would be able to install a physical base of people collaborating as living together as an exclave within the existing system, prefiguring a future that would be better in one way or the other, but not putting it into a distance, or into a dream, or into a narrative that is there to approach, but to actually try it out in the present. But not in the hippy sense of going to the countryside and installing your own commune, but staying inside the existing society and kind of performing this coming society within the society.

And you're probably not going to follow me on the example I give you now, but I think Zuccotti Park as an epitome of occupy was such a strong, spatial movement that it actually created new forms of interaction online and offline. But it wasn't going to the countryside, having someone with a little bit of money to spare and trying to keep up the good mood until someone turned foul and turned the whole idea into a dystopia.

But really kind of, I'm super idealizing this concept, but you had the wall street broker going to work every day and seeing these people practicing their ways of teaching, being with each other, actually living, not protesting his way of living, but actually showing an actual alternative to this way of living right there. I'm not saying this lifestyle is good, this lifestyle is bad, but I'm saying there is a potentiality of a spatial designer of someone who can actually help manifest these spaces, help activate and program these spaces to make this sort of parallel universes that are still deeply entrenched with the existing system, real.

- There's actually a really interesting image that comes to mind in the context of what you were saying, which was Tahrir Square when they took the first drone shots, actually, because usually you would see footage on the street level and it basically looked pretty chaotic, typical kind of protest footage. And the moment that you see it from above, you actually realize that it's super curated, almost functionalist city with different kind of parts of content and interaction. So, I thought it was super interesting.
- ★ Just to, for everybody who's not like 30 years and older, what was Zuccotti Park?
- / You're so mean?
- No, that would be my editor asking me.
- / I'm a digital grandad.
- ★ Great example, but probably nobody knows it anymore. Could you just quickly describe so that I get you correctly? What was Zuccotti Park?
- / Zuccotti Park was the Occupies Movement base camp in New York City.
- ★ When was that?
- / That's a good question. '14, '15 maybe.
- No, I think '10, maybe.
- O I think it was '11 but I'm not 100% sure. I'll check.
- / Yeah. Okay.
- We have to do some googling now.
- / Wow. Okay.
- ★ It's even earlier, I think, in 2009.
- / Okay, now I get your question. I didn't think it was that much in the past.
- Right. And so what was special about what happened at Zuccotti Park, and this again goes back to the question of protocols, governance, information architecture-
- O '11.
- **′** '11.

★ 2011? Great. So Occupy started in 2009 and Zuccotti was like the climax of the Occupy Street Protest Movement, right?

#### In New York.

- ★ In New York city. Right. And what they had was this wonderful language that help them to coordinate non-hierarchically, right? And make decisions as a community in a group. Is that what you're referring to?
- I'm actually not referring so much to the way they communicated, although that was what has been afterwards imitated. And I think also informed a lot of progressive communication cultures or how cultures of assembly actually are organized. But I also meant that in order to sustain it in Zuccotti Park, there was a lot of what usually you would have quite support infrastructure.

#### Wow.

- / There was daycare, there was medical care, there was food provision, there was psychological aid, there was basically everything one would need in order to be able to be a protestor. But through all that, the idea of being part of that and protesting through care work, protesting through cooking. All that suddenly became an idea of how a small community could actually do help each other.
- That's brilliant because this refers, you've raised a question of decentralization. The system you described in Zuccotti Park helped the protestors disconnect from central powers. This is why they set it up. So they couldn't get blocked by the centralized power structures, right? They wouldn't depend on the hospital to accept them because they had their own medic service, right? Just for as an example. And so there's this notion of decentralization and it seems to be a spatial notion. I'm not sure if the word is even spatial or not, right? But there's Nathan Schneider, a researcher at Colorado University. And so, Nathan was one of those occupy activists and he was a reporter as well, like an activist reporter, I think. And he became this, like a scholarly analyst of community governor and decentralization.

And he put out a paper, what do you actually mean by decentralization? So if you think of a de-central system, you guys know this much better than me, I guess, right? But I read this and I thought, "yeah, that's what I'm actually feeling." There's like a model where you have no dominating nodes in the system, right? And that's important when we discuss, for example, many of these... I was looking at Polkadot recently. And Polkadot is, they have their own blockchain, and they offer coins, and they have a currency, and you can build things on Polkadot. And it's been made by one of the Ethereum co-founders Gavin Wood. And they have like a participatory governance structure. But in that governance structure, the people who make the laws are basically, there's just like 10 people in the structure. And these are the founders of Polkadot.

There's an election system, but actually nobody's using it because it's probably built by some layman people who think about politics, but they have probably no fundamental knowledge of how to build a participatory voting structure that actually makes those people using Polkadot or building on Polkadot, participate in the governance as well. And this can be used as a trap, "Hey guys, here we are, here's your decentralized system just come in" actually it's centralized.

- / Yeah.
- Because it makes it hard to vote by intent. So, that's the openness.
- The Wikipedia promise, no?
- Yeah. And so this is the design question, right.
- / But I would quickly, just be before it's lost, I mean, the decentralization aspect is one definitely of, but I think another one is much more powerful because the decentralization aspect, you could also say has been true to every utopian commune ever built. Because well, they all tried to be self-sustainable, stepping out the system most of the time geographically, and it is sort of always, it was always an idea to step out of the system, become self-sustainable, to not be dependent on the system anymore, and come up with something new and then maybe find more followers that would also all drop out of the system. And you can do it left and right. You can do it with Fourier and you can do it with Ayn Rand, doesn't matter. That always works like that. But I think the most important moment is where the neighbors of Zuccotti Park start bringing in medical aids and food where the neighbors of the sealed off Hong Kong University go and provide food to the protesting students every time the police tries to come in and crack them.

And so, that it's not decentralized in a way that it's somewhere else, but that it actually has these spillover moments where suddenly the law abiding citizens feel their duty to abide the law, is actually to support these. You know what I mean? And this is the powerful moment. It's not this moment of autonomy. It's this moment of where actually something is so strong as a counter model that you feel you want to be part of that.

- O This is almost a hack, in a way, no?
- ) So structurally yeah. Structurally it's decentralized, but still anchored within civil society. Right?
- Yeah. And that's, that's what I think this pre figurative idea, kind of is truly, truly intriguing where it's not just this utopian speculation where everything is possible or this super realistic analysis of all the regulations and instruments that work at hand to form, but where these actually collide and the one spills over into the other. I'm not much further with that thought.

- ★ But that would actually, that would actually that, I don't know.
- O Isn't this Easterling's Active Form? How would you, for example, connect this to what she writes about?
- I think in a way her Active Form also stems a bit from this pre figurative politics that comes out of the post Occupy experience. So I think it's all in a bit in the same bubble. But I think the Active Form with Easterling is always, sort of in at least how I feel it works best is to say, well, we have all these instruments available and we actively use them to claim our design that to claim authorship on the design and that we don't have this sort of, architects can't design anything anymore, it's gone. But that there's actually an agency within that. And I think with this prefiguration, it's a bit less driven by the forensics of today's analysis. It's a bit more on the speculative side. It's a bit more like Dan Raby style, where you would actually, through new forum and through new material, would also find new ideas of how to construct and program.
- \* But isn't that the...
- / Yeah, I don't know. Is it?
- O I was also thinking of... you know her book Extrastatecraft, of course? And the last chapter of the book called An Expanded Activist Repertoire in Infrastructure Space.
- / Whose book?
- Keller Easterling.
- \* Extrastatecraft.
- O Yes. So, the last chapter. In regards to what we discussed, she lists strategies such as a hack, a gift, a joke, etc. I mean, to make a connection with what you were talking, I think what she also has in mind is thinking beyond design as a fixed statement. So when we talk about architecture, we can start thinking of tools that could replicate and hack the system, and which have the potential to multiply in a way. For instance, a joke, a joke spreads, as a meme it travels incredibly fast.

Can jokes bring down government? I mean, that's also super nice reference. I think what she does very nicely in that book is to extend the imaginary of what is architectural design toolbox, no? So it's not just models, drawings and buildings, but it's also creating a 'virus' that could spread itself around. The way you were talking about the Occupy Movement, the value you were describing, is, I think relatable to that. It's about creating infrastructure that has the capacity to extend itself.

/ Yeah?

O Replicates itself. Yes.

/ But I, and yes absolutely a hundred percent true, and it actually helps me to think a bit further what I feel it could also entail. Because the hack, or the reframing, or the idea that you would somehow use the forces within the system for another activism, that is kind of, I think the clear strategy that we have all chosen, or established as a practice in the last decade, I would say. No way you really say, okay, working on the system always means working in the systems, but how can I re-channel the money to whatever wants. So simple example, we had, for the German pavilion this year in Venice, we had a specific budget for a catalog. So we channeled all that budget into a homeless newspaper. The homeless newspaper works that it has ads, which then allows the newspaper to be given out for free to homeless people.

And the homeless people can sell it and get their money. So, we basically channeled the money through that. The catalog became the homeless newspaper, which was given out for free because we had paid for it already. So the homeless could get that money for their own. So, no, it's just like, maybe that's a hack. No, in a way we kind of just use the system. But I always thought that you somehow need to separate idea and action, like the classic Manheim Utopian studies on every Utopia is totalitarian because as soon as you tell someone how to think, it means you occupy the truth and you have to be wrong. You can be the most positive and caring human being. You are wrong because you say that's the truth. And so, I always thought, okay, it needs to be separate.

The one needs to be put into another future, into another time. It needs to be a narrative that can be used for action, all that. But this prefiguration, I thought, but if you really establish a complete system within the larger framework, if you're not only hacking the other system, if you're not only kind of sucking the energy out of the enemy, but you're actually creating a positive nucleus or a nucleus of other energy, that would really change the conversation also about the power of speculative ideas.

- \* Yeah. But-
- / That's, yeah. But I think I said it, like I just came to that thought with your question. So I'm not, yeah. I don't know if it holds up the next five minutes.
- \* And that's I think where we are actually now. So, I really do not like the meta haven joke you just showed. Can jokes bring down governments.
- / Yeah.
- Because, bringing down governments appears to be one of the easier tasks of our days. I'm fed up with the idea of subversion and counterculture and all of these things that I implied. So, I think the paradigm shift, and this is also why I'm interested in architecture, is from hack to builder.

And so the utopia that I'm interested in is not the pre-formulated configuration, which is a more or less always totalitarian thing.

But rather to hand out, people sort of like the sand from which they can form their version of the future, that totally is just different from the centralized top down structure that is about to get implemented even more forcefully.

This I believe is necessary as it is not just a theoretical threat we are in. It is a serious thing that is happening now. If the most moneyed company in the history of mankind run by one person is trying to capture even more of our life, because an embodied VR space will mean more data has to be captured, about like your physical life and its context, all of that. And it's regulated and owned by mostly one person in the case of Meta. And its social services have such an impact on politics.

So it's not about bringing down governments. The government is down already. There's a new government and it doesn't even see itself as a government. Doesn't take on responsibility. It's just saying we are a company. That's beyond the power structures reflected by the pyramids of the early Big States, like in Mexico or Egypt. We are at a worse point – the most powerful act unhinged.

So what I loved about your idea is, I understand the prefigurative now as not just handing out the stones and the sand and the ground and these things so people can build. Is that correct? Is that the idea of pre figurative?

- ) But who is handing out the stone?
- / Yeah. Exactly. I mean, it's not that someone, some entity, some philanthropic entity is handing out the stones, but it's actually a group of people that finds that they have sand, stone and element X.
- So that's the blockchain people.
- / And they're actually doing it. They're actually trying to set up something with what they have got.
- So, that would be Sam Hart, who's in Berlin right now with Interchain and Cosmos, right? These are the more community oriented crypto builders... Have you heard about these guys?
- O No, I did not.
- ) So this is based on trust.
- What?
- It's a question, is it based on trust?
- ★ What do you mean by, "based on trust?"

- I That you trust him, or her, or a group of people to be giving out-
- Now what they have is some sort of like open source software.
- O Yes.
- \* And it's a blockchain.
- ) Yeah.
- ★ It's a variation on the whole blockchain theme and you can basically build any kind of digital thing from that. And even set up a fund where they use some assets they have to support you in building things they might find meaningful. So they basically, they say, "Hey look, here's the physical formula of the sand. Here's the sand. And here's some building stones." You can copy and use it, it's digital. And then if interchain as a team think it's a good idea, they support you becoming a builder. So the paradigm again, from a hacker to a builder, right? There's another thing called DeSo, which used to be called BitClout, it's by a former Google engineer.

It's a decentralized social network. So formerly, blockchains were not really able, technically, to host social networks. Meaning you couldn't really build like a Facebook thing on a community owned and governed blockchain. And so DeSo, a blockchain, but there comes another problem. But its hard to evaluate for me. I'm a person interested in that thing, but I'm not a software developer. And this is where the trust issue comes in.

- O The problem of literacy you mean.
- # Illiteracy demands I trust the developers. And they might be wrong, even the best ones. For example, Vitalik Buterin, who created Ethereum, the blueprint for a blockchain that people can use to build many different products and services, had not anticipated the great fork event, where he himself had to step in after a giant hack. A trustless system, whose entire claim it was that there are no central power figures, all of a sudden needed someone to lead the thing out of a messy situation nobody had imagined beforehand.

He had never thought about himself being properly the king of the realm, but because the technology is so complex and there was an unforeseeable question, they suddenly had to ask him for help.

And so the leader had to step up and then they, people have to trust the leader. And so I don't see how we could get out of that power problem with technology that demands literacy.

O Yeah.

)	Or maybe not an individual leader, but a techno elite let's say.
opei to ev	Yes. And I would say that it's not the matter of finding the exact answer, but er really offering the kind of multiplicity of answers. When you talk about the n source software, you're practically talking about the tools that are available verybody. This could be the core of the idea of the commons, right? You cannot ern if you don't have the resources that are available or tools that are available.
	And also knowledge to transmit literacy.
And is ve	Exactly. I think this is crucial. But I want to return to what Ludwig was describlt's not just about the formula of how things start, but how they're maintained. I think this temporal dimension and dimension of community and care, this try important. There is a very good article on this topic, written by a common of ours, Dubravka Sekulic. I think it is titled <i>What can urban commons learn in the free software hackers?</i>
*	How is that guy called?
0	It's a girl. It's not a guy.
/	No.
)	Folk.
/	No.
*	Okay. Again, please.
0	I'm happy to say it's a woman.
*	Yeah.
0	Dubravka Sekulic.
*	Dubravka?
pret poin com	Dubravka Sekulic. The title is okay I can maybe google it. It's <i>What can an commons learn from the free software hackers</i> . I'm sorry is I am misintering the title, but you will find the article. And I think what she very successfully its out to in this text, is this notion of community and maintenance around amons in the digital. So it's not just about providing the means, but it's about bing the 'virus', the spreading, the infrastructure. In this case, we are talking

about community as an infrastructure, that will maintain the knowledge and the skills, and this is another layer, which is crucial. So, not just a model, but also how

it persists over time.

- ★ I was...
- O Go ahead.

★ I was talking about this with Marcus before. So I was talking about the churches. I'm interested in churches and the church, there's this institution, for example, for the Duomo in Milano called La Fabbrica. And it's the company that is in charge of maintaining. And back then they were in charge of, for example, how do you call it, stone, where they gathered the stone and organized workers and so on. And that company exists since 1380 and they are still around. And that's basically an analogy to the software community, right?

And so that still, even in open systems, is a problem. So if we think of the strangeness of the Signal founder, Moxie Marlinspike, the guy who's basically the head of, or goto person when it comes to Signal, the messaging service, right? Or Richard Stallman at GNU licenses, these are complicated characters. Even the Wikipedia co-founder, right. We used to make jokes about him like 15 years ago, Jimbo Wales. So there are these people who have superior knowledge, and sometimes they have superior access rights. Even within Wikipedia, there's a special function called the Jimmy Wales function that nobody has, but him, and I don't know how to get out of that trap actually.

**)** But I think it's interesting, like maintenance. I mean, bringing up maintenance. I think it's also a question of on the one hand responsibility, which also touches onto this kind of Wikipedia phenomenon and also ongoing involvement.

- O Yes.
- And, when we met many years ago in LA, and when we were writing about this Wikipedia and also the pirate party at the time and liquid democracy. I mean, that's also really, a question of on the one hand responsibility, but also on the other hand scale, and this question of whether you actually always at every point, want to involve everyone. And yeah, so it's complicated.
- / But I think the question of maintenance and care can also be helped through technology. Just, maybe that's also, what I'm referring to now is most of the research that we did for the 2038 pavilion in Venice, where we ask experts from various fields to imagine that they came through a couple of crises and we just made it, it's not great, but it's also not as bad as we had imagined. And what does this world look like? And there's one example of a forest that self-manages itself. And that through technology becomes an active agent and is able to actually have-
- O Rights.
- / People maintain it, but not to what the people think it needs, but to what it needs to become a successful actor within the economic system. So the wood, so the forest can sell part of its produce to then hire others, to reforest other stuff.

*	What's that talk about the people who do-	
/	Tara Zero.	
*	Tara?	
/	Tara Zero.	
*	Tara. And who's behind that?	
/	In this case, actually guys.	
*	Who, which guys? Like, what-	
/	It's just a speculative idea. They're not, it's not a company.	
0	It's called 'environmental personhood'. It's a legal term.	
/	Yeah.	
0	It's a legal concept. Environmental personhood.	
/ And it also, I mean, there is this story of the Cologne, of the Dom in Cologne that owns itself. So the Kölner Dom is not owned by the church or by the city, but it's actually owned by itself. So there's contracts that the dome takes to maintain itself. I think it's-		
*	So it's a DAO.	
/	Maybe, I don't know.	
*	It's a decentralized autonomous organization.	
/	Yes. Well, if, so the current dome is that already. And I think that's-	
*	On paper.	
/	On paper.	
مالہ		
*	Since when?	
* /	Since whenever, whenever.	

Well, it's not a thousand years old, I reckon, but it's yeah. Ever since.

And so I think there is, that is one idea how to also overcome this conundrum. If you give the network the agency and not the founders of the network there, something could change.

And maybe another quick addendum to that, we talked with Vint Cerf and one of the chief technical officers at Google, about how to imagine 2038 and there came up the idea of individual autonomous personal Al's. So that everyone would be enhanced by their own personal Al that could also be disconnected, or stays, as we voluntarily disconnect it from the larger network, but it's still a support infrastructure for the individual to smooth access to the collective network.

- ★ There is a friend of mine called Jonathan Ledgard he's trying to set up a monetization scheme for animals. His idea is that every animal would automatically register on some kind of blockchain. And then animals could compensate their predators for not killing them, for example. Meaning we would have a total registry of all animal beings and a separate currency that flows between.
- / I would really fear for the clever wasps to pay off all the birds.
- O Welcome to the world in which the man is 'finally' taking over the control of everything-
- \* It's called Interspecies money and Interspecies currency, if you want to Google it.
- O Yeah definitely.
- \* I'm super interested, what did you say it's called? Tara Zero personhood?
- O Environmental personhood.
- ★ It's basically the same idea, I guess. I totally think it's a mess.
- O Yeah. I think it is-
- \* I think it's messy. I don't-

Even the idea of identity

- O Yes.
- For example, does an ant have any sort of identity.
- O Yes, yes. And also the management, the way we try to bring natural subjects into the kind of human-made management system. I think it's also very bizarre. But environmental entities, for example a river or a forest, which are an ecosystem—this ecosystem is more complex. It can exist next to indigenous communities.

For example, there was a river in New Zealand I think, which was also a subject of environmental personhood legal process. This suggests that, when you talk about management, we need to also give rights to the communities which live together with and from nature

So, it's not just about managing the river in the legal sphere, but it's also fighting for the rights of the indigenous communities, to reclaim their environments, both politically, economically, et cetera. When we talk about putting animals on a blockchain, it sounds a bit scary to me. I don't know what others think. I would certainly like to find out more what this is about. But coming back to what Ludwig was saying you were mentioning the dome in Cologne, right?

/ In Cologne.

O Cologne. Yes. I don't know if you saw, there is a project at ETH Zurich, which created a lot of media attention. It's called NO1S1, and it outlines the first self-owned house, practically.

They designed a small meditation hub that is registered in the property register of Switzerland with its own NFT address, its own digital address. And the whole idea is about the house generating rent, generating its own funds, which could be used for repair, maintenance, et cetera. Sounds very interesting, no? But as soon as you try to dig in and try to really understand how this could work on a larger scale, 1,000 questions appear. Always when we see something that tends to present itself as a model, it opens up the question of who finances it, who sets the stones in a way? How do you start such a network? I don't know if any of you knows the project? No? Okay.

- \* But that's the DAO thing-
- O Exactly.
- ★ That Vitalik Buterin talked about. And that is actually based on a book by science fiction writer, Daniel Suarez, who wrote a fascinating trilogy called *Daemon*. And it's about somebody who set up, it's a person that could be the Google founder. He basically gets killed and his program starts to set up a scheme.
- O Yes, yes.
- ★ But I mean, I don't know anything about this project, but to me, just from what you're explaining, it sounds like it's not necessarily a counter project? As, for example, like a counter platform, but maybe more similar to the way that let's say, if you have solar panels in your garden or on your roof, that you can also, I mean, you can run your own system essentially if you want to, but you can also feed back into the system. Is this the case or not?
- O I'm not sure this is the case.

Maybe I didn't grasp the project fully, but the way I understood it this is a kind of a model house. You could imagine a network of houses that own themselves. Actually, there are a lot of similarities to how corporatives function. So I don't see that the technology there is really groundbreaking, but for me, it was quite mind-boggling to also hear there is a house that owns itself and all the questions this opens up. The questions of maintenance, for instance, then actually the first question that comes to my mind is this separation between the building and the land, right? This creates even a bigger gap between the two. You can build a house, the house can own itself. But then what about the question of land. How complex actually this is.

/	But I think that it all, it has a pre-figurative quality in that way, that it has its own
enti	ty. It creates its own system, but of course its relevance only becomes appar-
ent	in direct comparison with the surrounding.

- O Yeah, exactly.
- / So I think that's, that's super important.
- \* So I was just opening the inter-species money pitch-
- O Yes.
- And the story is actually quite beautiful. We were talking about the place of nature in the digital world, right. And that's actually the starting point for that project. So the digital age has far removed us from nature. That's the assumption. And so the idea to assign monetary value in a capitalist reality to the natural world actually turns that natural world into a force. That's the argument. And it's just, so there would be a very big amount of money, meaning power and it's beyond man's scope, so to say. And that would help bring us, because the author's fear is that we are actually in an existential threat situation, existential risk situation here right now with climate change and so on and so on. And it's even aggravated by the digital space, because it has removed us further from the biological world, let's say. And so how can we bring it in by giving it money, digital money, and a system that enables it to use that money for its own purposes, right. That's, I think is the starting point. Just, just, yeah.
- O We come to money as power again, no? Which is reality, I guess.
- / Yeah.
- O Ludwig, maybe you know more about the Beecoin project, which was part of the German pavilion in Venice? I cannot-
- \* Reecoin
- O Beecoin. I cannot remember exactly, well, how it worked, but-

/	It's also,
0	It's similar.
/	Yes.
0	Similar system. Yes.
/	Yeah. And it's also-
	The activity of bees generate value. And then if you care for your beehive, re contributing to the value that then goes to the care for the bees more genly? Something like this.
sud take And a gi	Exactly, it's a big allegory in a way. And it's also, again, like the idea that you ld really, the sort of, there was a bit of a I think a couple of years ago there was denly this misunderstanding of caring for the planet would mean to actually the non-human actor's perspective. Trying like, I'm a rat now. I'm a tree now. then everyone was referring to Bruno Latour's parliament of things, imagining ant theater where a giraffe and a lamppost server farm and an anthill would ate on how to live together.
) now	I mean, isn't this what's still happening at like 50% of the art schools right.
/	I wasn't-
)	Sorry.
thes And tive eco	Yes. I would say yes, but there was, but to come to an understanding that it's cally human expertise about these processes that would actually help bring in see perspectives. That of course makes a very big, that's a very big difference. This is sort of also with the Beecoins, it's sort of bringing in a human perspecton the healthy development of this ecosystem as part of the health of a larger system, which is then boiled down to a manageable size and thus can be reinuced into mending our broken system.  I Love it, but here's the economist speaking. If you compare to a perfect
worl	d, right? You'll always be sad about the options at hand. So economists basi-

cally compare to where we are now and isn't even your shitty Beecoin better than

But that's sort of the basic proposition of 2038. Yes. That all these ideas are

where we are? That's the basic question...

being presented as actual outcomes in the now instead of-

/	2038 dot x y zed.
*	And who's behind it, is it again, BMW sponsoring it or Shell this time?
/	German, the German government is behind it. It's the, yeah-
*	Just wonderful, wonderful.
	And it's an amazing, it's a huge research team of about 60 to 80 individuals worked on the German pavilion over the last two years, in very different roles. o, very decentralized, also very-
<b>□</b> mar	Yes, because there are not only Germans, actually. There are not only Gernapeople that worked on it.
/	I think there's, yeah, but there's at least some German people as well.
0	In case the government is listening to us.
	No, I think they were very irritated by the whole thing. Like to propose a post onal post pavilion that wouldn't show anything in Venice, but only online? That very confusing.
)	For whom?
/	For the ministry.
)	Ah.
-	Because you basically enter the pavilion and it's an empty pavilion. And the thing that you find there is QR codes, then you use your smartphone, and then basically enter the world of 2038.
<b>/</b> whe	Yeah. Either virtually you go to the cloud pavilion or you watch all the videos are everyone tells you how everything became as it is now.
)	So, what's the new Athens then?

That's the wonderful moment we are living in right now. So as stupid as it seems, we are like pre-Athens or we are like early Athens right now when it comes to creating this, encompassing, digital, physical, community governed platform. It's beautiful. We are like, just about to discover, "oh democracy might be a potential." And we could potentially build it. And it's like the first arenas that we are building now. It's ironic that it might emerge from this money-focused blockchain world. And sadly it's still very, very early. I think Ludwig is right, we will see, first of all, we will see the metaverse

going large, before we build something decent collectively? Is that what you think?

/	As a futurologist I'm a radical optimist, so no, of course not. We'll see some-
thin	a else.

- ) Okay. Yeah. Thank you so much. All of you. And see you in tomorrow land.
- O Thank you.
- ) Thanks bye-bye.
- O Bye.