Some Fragments of the Infowar Mailing List

Wie in den vergangenen zwei Jahren, so wurden auch die diesjährigen Vorbereitungen zum Ars Electronica-Symposium von einer Netzdiskussion begleitet. Das mit einem solchen Forum verbundene Anliegen ist es, ein diskursives Umfeld zu etablieren, das einerseits über die Dauer des Symposiums am 8. und 9. September in Linz hinaus besteht, andererseits aber auch für die Hierarchie festgeschriebener Ergebnisse noch im Vorfeld eine Herausforderung bedeutet. Die Diskussion kann sowohl im World Wide Web — http://www.aec.at/infowar/netsymposium — als auch durch Eintragung in die Mailingliste verfolgt werden; Beiträge an: infowar@aec.at

Der Netzdiskussion wurden die Eröffnungsstatements der drei wissenschaftlichen Berater, Friedrich Kittler, Georg Schöfbänker und Geert Lovink, die auch die Moderation übernommen hatten, vorangestellt.

As in the past two years, the preparations for this year's Ars Electronica Symposium have included an accompanying network discussion. The aim inherent in such a forum is to create a discursive environment that, on one hand, endures beyond the symposium taking place on September 8-9 in Linz but which, on the other hand, also represents a challenge to a hierarchy of pre-established conclusions during the time leading up to these deliberations. The discussion can be followed in the web at as well as by signing up on a mailing list. Send contributions to .

The network discussion is prefaced by the opening statements of its three scholarly advisors, Friedrich Kittler, Georg Schöfbänker and Geert Lovink, who also serve as moderators.

These statements and representative quotes selected by Geert Lovink.

Statements und repräsentative Zitate, deren Auswahl Geert Lovink besorgte.

http://www.aec.at/infowar/NETSYMPOSIUM/ARCH-EN/threads.html#00099

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The Selection

From: Jim Gasperini
Date: Thu, 5 Mar 1998 22:18:45 -0400:
It's hard to imagine the self-absorption that could allow someone to sit in Linz, Austria, a few hundred kilometres from a society recently destroyed by real War, and write such rubbish. To address one of the more coherent statements in a document remarkable for its profusion of absurdities:
Whereas, in the past, war was concerned with the conquering of territory, and later with the control of production capacities, war in the 21st century is entirely concerned with the acquisition and exercise of power over knowledge.
Tell that to the Bosnians, the Serbs, the Croatians, the Albanians. Tell it to the Rwandans, the Burundians, the Azerbaijanis, the Sri Lankans, the Iraqis, the Koreans, the Sierra Leonians, the Liberians, the Somalis, the Timorians. Tell it to those maimed by recent wars in Cambodia, Vietnam, El Salvador, Guatemala, and those still to be maimed by the millions of land mines still awaiting in the fields where they have no choice but to work.

From: Matthew Ostrowski
Date: Tue, 21 Apr 1998 22:04:20 -0400:
"What I find most interesting about the infowar premise is that the idea (and I believe the term 'infowar' itself) is a product of the Pentagon, which, in their scrambling for funding in the post cold-war era, found a whole new missle gap, the mythology of which has in turn been absorbed by such 'countercultural' institutions as Ars Electronica..."

From: antiorp@tezcat.com (=cw4t7abs)
Date: Thu, 16 Apr 1998 17:04:03 -0600:
dze f!ght 4 publ!k b2ndw!dd ag2!nzt r2t!ng z+eztemz + (.kkzelv) cenzorzh!p 4 akzesz 4 all + akzesz |2| all !n4m2t!on != onl+e 1 dfenz!v 1. dzere = zt!ll room 4 new open zt2nd2rdz + zoftw2re wh!ch != ownd by b!g komp2n!ez. dze oper2t!ng z+eztm l!nukz k2n b zeen az an ekz2mple aber alzo non.komerc!2l browzerz (dze fr2mz ov our m9ndz.).

From: Steve Mann
Date: Mon, 20 Apr 1998 00:08:46 -0400 (EDT):
Increasingly we are witnessing the emergence of "intelligent highways", "smart rooms", "smart floors", "smart ceilings", "smart toilets", "smart elevators", "smart lightswitches", etc.. However, a typical attribute of these "smart spaces" is that they were architected by someone other than the occupant. Thus the end--user of the space often does not have a full disclosure of the operational characteristics of the sensory apparatus and the flow of intelligence data from the sensory apparatus. What is proposed is a computational framework for individual personal empowerment. This framework involves the architecting of a new kind of personal space, through an apparatus that is owned, operated, and controlled by the occupant of that

space. In some sense, it is like a building, built for one occupant, and collapsed down around that one occupant.
While there will no doubt be more environmental intelligence than personal intelligence, there is at least the hope that there might be an end to the drastic imbalance between personal intelligence and environmental intelligence. The individual making a purchase in a department store may have several cameras pointing at him to make sure that if he removed merchandise without payment that there would be evidence that he did not pay for the item. However, in the future, he will have a means of collecting evidence that he did pay for the item, or a recorded statement of a clerk about the refund policy.

From: simon@babar.demon.co.uk (Simon Biggs)
Date: Fri, 17 Apr 1998 11:43:47 +0000:
I think what is most interesting here is not so much the use of this technology in war (it would be a surprise if the technology had not been developed and used for this purpose) but rather how the technology shifts its use and value in the post-Cold War scenario. After all, it was the Cold war that led to its development, but now we find that although that particular event is over the technology develops just as rapidly, even though there is no equivalently determined enemy or threat. I am not sure that InfoWar is a great name for what we are to talk about on this list.
It is a very emotive term, and the use of this type of technology (and the ideas that underly it) these days are less to do with "normal" ideas of war and much more to do with ideas of commerce (not that these things are necessarily very different or mutually exclusive).

From: zina@world.net (Zina Kaye)
Date: Sat, 25 Apr 1998 12:35:10 +1000:
As citizens of this time we seem to be dealing with two kinds to infowars. On one hand, the conventional military/boundary war. On the other, inter-corporate war which invokes national boundaries conveniently as a tactic. "Buyer and seller" seems to be the most useful paradigm, even over "profit and loss", making it easier. for example, for military observers to keep a check on what is going on, as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (www.sipri.se) proves. At least with buyer and seller we all know which box to check. And from the former binary the latter may be extrapolated. What kinds of buying stabilise what kind of relationship, or harm what other opportunity. The SIPRI web site is interesting in its treatment of economics, publishing reports that discuss financial concerns and a military budget's effect on a nation's future.

From: melinda rackham
Date: Mon, 27 Apr 1998 18:26:16 +1000:
"Infowar" initially evoked in me the "militarized heirarchical detached theory unrelenting linear purecode, get me outa here" response, but of course i've become completely desensitised to the term in a few short weeks. however im still rather reticent to engage in an arena defined as combat. must i attack or defend positions? what personal borders do i pat/con/trol? am i a subversive agent?, or am i a casualty? do i occupy multiple sites simultaneously? can i casually observe outside the kill zone?

From: infowar@aec.at
Date: Mon, 25 May 1998 15:16:34 -0700 (PDT):
REDMOND (BNN)--World leaders reacted with stunned silence as Microsoft Corp. (MSFT) conducted an underground nuclear test at a secret facility in eastern Washington state. The device, exploded at 9:22 am PDT (1622 GMT/12:22 pm EDT) today, was timed to coincide with talks between Microsoft and the US Department of Justice over possible antitrust action.
In Washington, President Clinton announced the US Government would boycott all Microsoft products indefinitely. Minutes later, the President reversed his decision. "We've tried sanctions since lunchtime, and they don't work," said the President. Instead, the administration will initiate a policy of "constructive engagement" with Microsoft.
Microsoft's Chief Technology Officer Nathan Myrhvold said the test justified Microsoft's recent acquisition of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation from the US Government. Not only did Microsoft acquire "kilograms of weapons grade plutonium" in the deal, said Myrhvold, "but we've finally found a place to dump those millions of unsold copies of Microsoft Bob." Myrhvold warned users not to replace Microsoft NT products with rival operating systems. "I can neither confirm nor deny the existence of a radioisotope thermoelectric generator inside of every Pentium II microprocessor," said Myrhvold, "but anyone who installs an OS written by a bunch of long-hairs on the Internet is going to get what they deserve."

From: infowar@aec.at
Date: Mon, 8 Jun 1998 09:33:42 +0200 (MET DST):
McLEAN, Virginia -- In the latest Pentagon alarm about the potential of cyberterrorism, a senior US Defense Department official told an industry-military forum today that teenage crackers pose a "real threat environment" to national security. Speaking to the Defense Modeling and Simulation Office Industry Days conference, Jacques Gansler, undersecretary of defense for acquisition and technology, said that in addition to using advanced computerized modeling and simulation techniques to help train pilots and tank drivers, and design and build warplanes and submarines, Pentagon war fighters must be able to fight information wars to achieve, as he put it, "total information superiority" for the United States.
Subject: INFOWAR: Back to the happy mileneum of Shi-Huang-Ti, Chinese emperor ordering the burning of books in order to set up a new dynasty....

From: Tjebbe van Tijen
Date: Fri, 10 Jul 1998 21:53:20 +0200
Television Banned in Afghanistan
The Taliban government outlaws possession of TV sets Updated: Jul 9 1998 12:32PM The revolution will not be televised -- at least not in Afghanistan. The Taliban government today banned TV, and gave Afghans 15 days to get rid of all sets and VCRs. After that, if the organization's enforcers find one in your house, it will be destroyed and you will be punished. (And in a country where women are beaten in the street if their bodies are not covered from head to toe, tuning in for your regular satellite dose of "Baywatch" may not be worth the pain.) Of course there hasn't been anything good on Afghan TV for some time -- the Taliban closed down the country's only TV station in 1996, for fear that the medium would corrupt society. So if you're looking for the remote in

an Afghan household, you're unlikely to find it in the couch cushions -- try digging up the back yard. -- Tony Karon