"Framing Complexity" – An Essay in Squaring the Circle

Anna Wiehl
University of Bayreuth
Prelude or: "The Century of Complexity"

- How can we deal with ambiguities, uncertainties, plurivocality and subjectivity and diverging truths?
- To what extent is an embrace of complexity enriching, and where are aesthetic, cognitive or affective limits to it?
- Which role do networking and networkedness play in this context? How do they affect the epistemological and ontological status of evolving documentary practices?
- What changes if complexity is rendered experiential in embodied and emplaced interaction?
- And finally: what contribution can we as media scholars make?
Prelude or: "The Century of Complexity"

- Complexity – a (not) so new phenomenon?
  precedencies in other disciplines and / or media history, social history, art history or the history of technology

- Complexity affects now all aspects of our lives
Complexity, Representation and Abstraction – A Multi-Dimensional Approach

"The keys to coping with complexity are to be found in two aspects of understanding. First is the design of the thing itself that determines its understandability. Does it have an underlying logic, a foundation that, once mastered, makes everything fall into place? Second is our own set of abilities and skills: Have we taken the time and effort to understand and master the structure?

**Understandability and understanding: two critical keys to mastery.**"

(Norman 2011, pp. 4–5)
Defining Complexity

"Complexity is a property of open systems that consist of a large number of diverse, interacting components, often called agents. Complex systems can be distinguished from other systems by seven features:

connectivity, autonomy of agents, emergent behaviour, non-equilibrium, nonlinearity, self-organisation and co-evolution."

(Rzevski 2015, pp. 191–192)
Defining Complexity

connectivity
autonomy of agents
emergent behavior
non-equilibrium
nonlinearity
self-organisation
co-evolution
Defining Complexity

connectivity
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autonomy of agents
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emergent behavior
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non-equilibrium
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nonlinearity
Defining Complexity

self-organisation
Defining Complexity

co-evolution
Defining Complexity

co-evolution

Filming Revolution will be updated and relaunched in 2018 by Stanford University Press.

Please come back soon.
“The dictionary definition for “complexity” suggests things with many intricate and interrelated parts […]. The definition for “complicated” includes as a secondary meaning “confusing”, which is what I am concerned with in my definition of that word. I use the word “complex” to describe the state of the world, the tasks we do, and the tools we use to deal with them. I use the word “complicated” or “confused” to describe the psychological state of a person in attempting to understand, use, or interact with something in the world. […] “complicated” means “puzzling complexity.”

(Norman 2011, pp. 2–4)
Complexity as Challenge – Complexity as Opportunity

We basically need two things to cope with complexity:

- good design
- and
- literacy
Experiencing Complexity in Digital Documentary: Jonathan Harris' Network Effect
YOUR TIME HERE IS LIMITED

From your IP address, we see you live in The United States, where the average life expectancy is 78.4 years — so after 7.84 minutes (7:50), your access will be blocked for a day, so you can get back to your life.
/slēp/

1. Sleeping is going to not be easy tonight.
   7 July, 2015 12:53 am — Monique on Twitter

2. Sleeping is so hard when you can't stop thinking. ||
   7 July, 2015 12:49 am — Arabian Beauty ♔ on Twitter

3. Sleeping is as hard as understanding physics right now
   7 July, 2015 12:44 am — ♦DEER BOY♦ on Twitter

4. Sleeping is my thang, maar dat heb ik al gedaan
   7 July, 2015 12:15 am — iah on Twitter

5. Sleeping is stressful because i dream about work and then when im awake i lay there ...
   7 July, 2015 12:06 am — James on Twitter

6. Sleeping is seriously my way out from problems I'm too annoyed to deal with
   7 July, 2015 12:03 am — de la torre on Twitter

7. Sleeping is nice, you forget everything for a little while.”
   6 July, 2015 1:16 pm — All_A on Twitter

8. Sleeping is never a thing but slow internet connection will always be a thing!
   6 July, 2015 1:08 pm — arceffidoza on Twitter

9. Sleeping is your drug, your bed is your dealer and your alarm clock is the police.
   6 July, 2015 12:55 pm — IoT Updates Bot on Twitter

Source: Sentences from Twitter containing “sleeping is”
Conclusion
or opening the field

Complexity

"not as a nuisance which needs to be quickly reduced to simple elements and rules, but instead as the source of life – something that is essential for the healthy existence and evolution of natural, biological and social systems."

(Manovich 2010, p. 346)


Wrap Up Day 1

- Story is a great tool to solve the problem of the death of knowledge.
- Sharing stories as distributing knowledge → work together in efficient ways.
- Information changes by being shared.
- "Inventions by accident", aka 'evolution'.
- "Stories are like songs" – "Stories are like pills" (it changes what people think if the pill is taken).
- "Stories are programs".
- "Stories can change the behaviour."
Wrap Up Day 1

- CSF – Current Contemporary Story Format
  - creating conflict requires extremes
  - work with extremes, i.e. put the focus on differences instead of seeing similarities → this prevents us from seeing patterns

- democracy is attacked by the CSF!
- "new interest in the complexity of the normal"
- !! a question of focus !!
- ?? the normal – the standardized ?? NO!!! not necessarily!!
- if we have a larger variety of storytelling we have an enriched view of the world!
"Materialist philosophies describe the world as a complicated tangle of human and non human, sentient and non sentient things, all of which have agency. This agency is understood as the capacity of things to do. Because things act all amongst themselves in a myriad of ways, quite apart from us, what results is characterised variously as a meshwork (Ingold), actor–network (Latour), entanglement (Barad), or even an assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari). [...]"

{Miles 2017: 12-13}
What then, do we talk about when we want to talk about an interactive documentary?

One answer that I am proposing, which emerges from the intuition that materialist philosophy provides a significant methodology for interactive documentary, is to talk about what comes to matter for any interactive documentary. This ‘coming to matter’, which is indebted to Latour’s idea of ‘matters of concern’ (Latour, pp. 87-120 passim), includes those things we think matter for interactive documentary in relation to what might be its story, truth claims, and work as nonfiction. But, as importantly, it also needs to include the deliberate consideration of how an interactive documentary makes these visible things come to matter by what all its many other parts are doing, for it is in the agency of these other parts that an interactive documentary can be made to matter at all.

{Miles 2017: 12-13}