

MEMEPROPAGANDA

By Silvia dal Dosso & Noel David Nicolaus (Clusterduck)

<https://vimeo.com/345462356>

While mainstream media and academia are still debating the importance of internet memes for contemporary communication, fringe groups on social platforms have been actively using them to reframe public discourse and influence elections. While most critics have been careful about overstating the importance of memes, some scholars have attempted to interpret memes as the emergence of a powerful language, capable of creating, subverting, and destroying symbols, narratives, and mythologies.

In order to assess the real impact of memes, extensive quantitative investigation seems crucial. Platform capitalism thrives on the extraction of value from data – the exact same data that researchers would desperately need in order to perform the aforementioned investigations. But this data, for the most part, is not accessible to researchers. Facebook seems particularly unwilling to cooperate with independent scholars, using the post-Cambridge Analytica sensibility for privacy and data as a pretext to deny access to its API.

Clusterduck is an interdisciplinary collective investigating digital subcultures and online communities. With their project #MEMEPROPAGANDA they focused on the growing political and social impact of memes. To conclude the research started with #MEMEPROPAGANDA, Clusterduck will focus on the role of social platforms for the creation, spreading and reception of memes, with an eye on the role of the most engaged online communities.

Silvia dal Dosso (IT) is a creative in the digital field and researcher of internet trends and subcultures. She wrote and directed *The 1 Up Fever* (2013), a mockumentary and transmedia operation about the use of Bitcoin in a phantomatic AR smartphone-based video-game inspired by Super Mario Bros. With Clusterduck she created #MEMEPROPAGANDA, an interactive exhibition built to create active engagement and awareness about the process of memetic propaganda. Her work has been screened as part of public lectures at Cineglobe Film Festival du CERN, IFFR Rotterdam, Tentacular Festival, Currents New Media Festival, S.a.L.E Dock for Venice Biennale and featured on Canal+, Motherboard, Rhizome, and others.

Noel David Nicolaus (DE) is an independent scholar and editor living and working in Berlin. As PhD student in Anthropology at Humboldt University Berlin, he researched trans-european mobility in the context of the Euro-crisis, with particular focus on the reshaping of citizenship. He has written for magazines and journals such as *Stadtaspekte* and *sub\urban*, and has been involved in local urban initiatives in Berlin, such as *Megaspreet* and *Stadt Neudenken*. He is currently working as an editor in Berlin. He is also part of the Digital Art Collective Clusterduck, an interdisciplinary group working at the crossroads of research, design, and filmmaking, aiming to investigate processes and actors behind digital creativity.

