

The State of the Internet

A spatial analysis of *Autonomy Cube's* positioning in
contemporary Control Society



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Introduction

When I walked into the exhibition space of Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam in 2015, I immediately noticed a sculpture that was placed in the middle of the exhibition space. This sculpture turned out to be *Autonomy Cube*. *Autonomy Cube* is an artwork by artist Trevor Paglen and computer security researcher Jacob Appelbaum, created in 2014 and still on-going [fig. 1]. It consists of an electronic device placed on a pedestal, encased by a transparent cube. At first, the artwork appears to be a minimalist sculpture: a sleekly designed square form stripped to its essentials. But a closer look reveals the device inside to consist of four circuit boards connected to each other and to the network of the art space in which the sculpture is shown. Through this means, the cube functions as a Wi-Fi hotspot called 'Autonomy Cube', that allows every visitor of the exhibition space to connect to the internet. However, it does not give access to a normal internet connection, but to a Tor network; a network that anonymizes online internet traffic. This network consists of thousands of volunteer-run servers, that each function as a routing "node" in the network. *Autonomy Cube* is just one of them. In this way, the cube does not merely function as an independent hotspot that protects the data of users locally, but is part of an international network whereby it contributes to the protection of privacy of internet users from all over the world. This makes *Autonomy Cube* both a sculpture and a Tor relay. And it is exactly this tension within *Autonomy Cube*, between it being a sculpture and a Tor hotspot that I am interested in. Thereby the work goes beyond the more traditional notion of art as being an aesthetic object that transcends everyday life and that provides people with a sublime experience. Rather, the work really takes an active position in society. It does not transcend daily life and it does not merely give viewers of the artwork an aesthetic experience, but actively positions itself in the world outside of the gallery space.

The position *Autonomy Cube* takes in society mainly gets established through the Tor network it gives access to. The Tor network was released in 2002 and its main goal was, and still is, to anonymize data traffic of internet users in order to protect them against surveillance practices as executed by nation-states.¹ Through these practices states can track everything one does on the internet, which gives them a sense of control. This is being done by checking the content of data – for example through reading e-mail and chat conversations – and by tracking down the routes these data packets take across the internet. So, practices of state surveillance can track and gather both data and "metadata", that is, information about data. By both encrypting data and leading them through a random pathway of several Tor servers, instead of sending them directly from the source to its destination, the Tor network conceals both the exact content of and routes taken by the data.

¹ Website *Tor Project*: <<https://www.torproject.org/about/overview.html.en>> (accessed 26 September 2016).

The network thereby undermines surveillance practices as executed by states and challenges the political control states gain through these practices. By giving access to the Tor network, the cube then takes a position in what we have started to call “the society of control”.

The term “society of control” has been elaborately discussed by Gilles Deleuze in his 1992 article “Postscript on the Societies of Control”.² In this article Deleuze describes the society of control as being a society in which diverse projects together control and mobilize the behaviour of people. He specifically connects this development to the emergence of new technologies, such as computers. In the past couple of decades, governments of several nation-states have increasingly started to make use of these new computational technologies in order to gather people’s data – offline and online – on a massive scale. Thereby states can create databases of people worldwide in order to map their behaviour, which allows them to control people by intensively spying upon them. In 2013, whistleblower Edward Snowden has revealed the extensive nature of this contemporary society of control by leaking several state documents about surveillance activities executed by the National Security Agency (NSA) in the United States.³ These files, amongst other things, showed that NSA with its data-mining program PRISM collects massive amounts of online data via several third parties, among which Google and Amazon, often without their permission. Next to these practices of state surveillance, there are more and more commercial surveillance techniques that aim to collect data in order for corporations to improve their services or to increase sales. It could thus be stated that practices of state surveillance have been normalized; they have been adapted by several other institutions and social practices in society as well. In the contemporary control society, these diverse practices of online surveillance, varying from state surveillance to commercial surveillance, are all interwoven with one another. The control society then does not function as a panopticon, in which one centralized power has absolute control over a group of people, but is formed by a plethora of partial projects and initiatives that are each seeking for technological ways to govern and control individuals and populations.⁴

Importantly, Deleuze in his article discusses the control society from the perspective of space. He specifically describes the emergence of the society of control by outlining a development from a disciplined society, constituted by enclosed spaces, to a control society characterized by a more fragmented sense of space. In my view, the dispersed sense of space that underlies the society of control has to do with the emergence of the internet. The nation-state initially performed its

² Gilles Deleuze, ‘Postscript on the Societies of Control’, *October* 59 (1992), pp. 3-7.

³ Glenn Greenwald, Ewen MacAskill, Laura Poitras, ‘Edward Snowden: the whistleblower behind the NSA surveillance revelations’, website *The Guardian*: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/edward-snowden-nsa-whistleblower-surveillance>> (accessed 30 November 2016).

⁴ David Lyon, ‘Surveillance, Snowden, and Big Data: Capacities, consequences, critique’, *Big Data & Society* 1 (2014), no. 2, p. 6.

space as a stable, enclosed territory. However, the internet introduced a more open and borderless sense of space that connects people across state borders. The space of the internet has thereby destabilized the enclosed space of the nation's territory, which has led to a spatial confliction between the more traditional space of the state and the online space provided by the internet. I would like to argue that it is this complex spatial dynamic, between the bordered space of the state and the borderless space of the internet, that lies at the basis of the society of control. Although Deleuze has written his article prior to the widespread hegemony of the internet, he already states that: "Everywhere *surfing* has already replaced the older *sports*".⁵ I therefore interpret the emergence of the society of control, as described by Deleuze, in line with the emergence of the internet and its fusion with the state.

This thesis will specifically focus on the position *Autonomy Cube* takes within the contemporary society of control as elaborated by Deleuze. I will analyse this position of the cube from the perspective of space. This means that I will aim for an understanding of the position this artwork takes within the society in which it is situated by centralizing the spatial dynamic that underlies it. Throughout my thesis, I will therefore constantly outline the different spaces and phases of spatiality leading up to the emergence of the society of control. Thereby I will foreground the spatial evolution that characterizes the coming into being of the control society. From there on I will determine how *Autonomy Cube* seems to position itself within the sense of space that this society provides. My thesis consists of three parts. In the first part I will theorize the space in which the nation-state exists; its territory. I will specifically focus on the evolution this territory has undergone in the run up to the establishment of the control society. I aim to do this by outlining the three spatial phases national territories went through in this process: first I will describe the traditional performance of nation-states as enclosed and stable territories, after that I will go into the way in which the open space of the internet destabilizes this enclosed space of the state and finally I will elaborate on how the enclosed space of the nation-state and the destabilizing online space of the internet have intermingled in the society of control. This will allow me to grasp the spatial logic that underlies the society of control, in which states perform their spaces as flexible and open, but nonetheless as controlling and mobilizing. In the second part of my thesis I will examine the way in which *Autonomy Cube* positions itself within the spatial logic as described in the first chapter. I will do this by analysing the space of the art institution, in which the cube is situated, along the lines of the evolution of the nation-state as described before. Thereby I hope to show that the space of the art institution is one of the public spaces part of the nation-state and that it has thereby similarly developed itself in line with the logic of the control society. From there on I hope to theorize the way

⁵ Deleuze 1992 (footnote 2), p. 6.

in which *Autonomy Cube* engages with this development of both state and art institution. In the third, and last part of this thesis I would like to zoom in on the spatial dynamic that is at the basis of the society of control, between the more traditional notion of material space and the open-ended sense of online space. Therefore I will go into the way in which we position ourselves in space and how this has changed with the emergence of digitalization and the internet. I will do this by mapping the way in which our mode of being in space has transformed through the fluid and digitalized space that underlies the society of control. By mapping the transformation of space and our mode of being in this space ontologically, I hope to show the way the cube actively positions itself within it. This will allow me to further conceptualize the active position *Autonomy Cube* takes within the public space provided by the contemporary society of control.

Throughout my thesis I will make use of concepts and insights provided by several theoreticians, such as Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai, Chantal Mouffe, Krzysztof Ziarek and Nick Srnicek. I therefore have no singular theoretical framework, but rather a multitude of sources relevant to the description of several steps in the line of thought that I will establish in my thesis. All these sources are tied together by the above mentioned article 'Postscript on the Societies of Control' by Gilles Deleuze. Although this approach might seem slightly fragmented, in my view this very nature echoes the characteristics of the contemporary society of control, that manifests itself in a multitude of directions, constantly decentralizing and destabilizing those conceptions and positions that we used to consider stable and unchanging.

1. The Logic of National Territories

1.1 Performing Territories

In order to understand the logic of national territories and how these territories are destabilized by the online space of the internet, we first need to explicate the way in which nations – a group with ideas about nationhood – perform their territories. I will do this by going into the line of thought postcolonial author Homi Bhabha established in his text 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation', in which he approaches the performance of the unity of nation-states as revolving around the notion of time.

According to Bhabha, the nation-state performs itself as a unity through the creation of a univocal sense of time.⁶ This sense of time comes into being through the construction of a national narrative. This narrative is twofold. On the one hand, it is constituted by a history of the nation. The creation of this history serves to present the nation's origin, which justifies its authority as a whole. Such a historical narrative usually exists as a linear timeline, constructed of historical events that illustrate the nation's tradition. One could think of these national histories as the ones displayed in, for example, high school history books or national museums. According to Bhabha, these histories function as a national pedagogy that educates the people, through which they merely function as "objects" in a "nationalist pedagogy"; as passive objects confirming the nation's myth. On the other hand, contrary to the linear narrative of history, there is a more timeless narration of the nation. This timelessness functions to turn all signs one encounters in daily life into something that is emblematic for a national culture, in order to provide the myth of the nation with an ubiquitous presence. Within this process of signification the people are "subjects" actively performing the narrative of the nation. Bhabha describes this twofold national narrative, as linear and as timeless, as the "double time of the nation". This double time allows the nation to both present itself as a powerful unity and to monitor the people part of the nation, living within the borders of the state, to perform this coherence as naturally derived from a shared decent. Something that is made possible by the twofold direction this narration takes, toward an external construction of a national history and its internal dissemination, which creates a national bubble in which people automatically tend to interpret everything within the spirit of the nation.

However, the performance of a univocal time by the nation contains an impossibility. According to Bhabha, there is namely a split in the double time of the nation that emerges from the disconnection between the narrative as pedagogy and the way this is interpreted and performed by

⁶ Homi Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation' in: Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, London 1990, pp. 291-321.

people.⁷ People born within a certain nation-state with a specific national culture, will be more likely to interpret the signs they encounter in their daily life in correspondence to the national myth propagated by this nation. But, a large amount of the national population actually has another cultural background and will thus interpret these signs in another way, as distinct from the national narrative. Consequently, this part of the population will not be able to perform their lives in accordance with this narrative. This leads to a discrepancy between the way the nation presents its unifying myth and the numerous ways in which the people that are part of the nation act upon it.

Yet, many nations cover this instability within their time-space by concealing the nation's diversity. This is clearly elaborated by Michael J. Shapiro in his article 'National Times and Other Times: re-thinking citizenship', where he explains the nation-state as managing a historical narrative that would promote the shared descent of its citizens.⁸ Inspired by Bhabha, Shapiro considers the nation to create a univocal temporality in order to present itself as a stable unity. However, Shapiro explicitly examines this process through the concept of citizenship. He explains citizenship as not merely a spatial but also a temporal phenomenon, determined by the dominant temporality produced by the nation-state. This temporality is specifically executed through the construction of a national history. This history is propagated by the state through presenting its citizens as all having a shared cultural and historical background. In this sense, the nation performs a historically coherent sense of time that allows it to appear as a homogenous whole, in which everyone would have an equal sense of time and history. This univocal sense of time thus controls the personal histories of individuals and reduces them to the homogenous time presented by the nation. According to Shapiro, this is mainly being done by the narration of the national temporality through state documents, such as passports, journalist commentaries and official histories. These literary sources reduce the specificity of each individual to the overarching timeslot of the nation. This is for example the case with football players whose (other) cultural background is often ignored by the media, while their position in the national team is taken as an illustration for the nation's success story. The nation thereby functions as an identity-producing unity that places each citizen within its grand national narrative. Citizens then derive their identity from their assigned place within the national culture. In the meantime, "other stories" narrated by the "others" within the nation, are actively concealed and wiped off the national stage in order for the nation to maintain its coherent appearance. A concrete example of this mechanism concerns the activities of the Black Panther Party in the 1960's. The Black Panthers organised several demonstrations to address the struggles of black people in the United States. In order to repress this "other story" about America, the FBI

⁷ Bhabha 1990 (footnote 6), pp. 297-299.

⁸ Michael J. Shapiro, 'National Times and Other Times: Re-Thinking Citizenship.' *Cultural Studies* 14 (2000), nr. 1, pp. 79-98.

(Federal Bureau of Investigation) created rivalries between members of the party and shot its leader Fred Hampton. The goal of these actions, as described in an FBI report, was to “neutralize” the political power of the group.⁹ In this sense, the nation seems to quite literally eliminate those who voice an “other” narrative that is considered to challenge the dominant national one. It is thus through the denial of the heterogeneity of its people and through the exclusion of “other voices” that the nation is able to present itself as a homogenous unity, distinct from other nations.

It could thus be stated that the nation performs its territory through the construction of a univocal sense of time, from which a national narrative is created. A narrative that on the one hand serves to present the historical origins of the nation, and that on the other mobilizes its people to perform in accordance with this narrative. The people part of the nation, living within the borders of the state, will therefore experience its borders as a natural given, justified through the historical narratives presented to them and through their daily encounter with signs ‘emblematic’ for the nation-state on the other. The creation and dissemination of the national narrative thereby controls the actions of its citizens, by which the diversity among them is repressed – and sometimes even actively excluded. This allows the nation to perform itself as a homogenous unity. In this way, nation and state appear as naturally connected to each other, which implies a certain *closedness* of the nation-state.

⁹ Sam Green, Bill Siegel, *The Weather Underground*, documentary, New York (Indian Pictures) 2002.

1.2 The Internet: Disrupting Territories

In the former paragraph I described the way the nation performs its territory; by appearing as a homogenous unity, distinct from other nations, and kept together by the construction of a univocal temporality. This unity appears to have been disrupted by the emergence of the internet. Or more specifically, by the activities that take place within the online space of the internet.

Nick Morwood in his article 'The Translegality of Digital Nonspace: Digital Counterpower and its Representation' describes the disruption of the unity performed by the nation-state by going into the counter-power of digital space.¹⁰ He states that digital space is situated in a transnational space and thereby automatically in a translegal one as well. This means that the online space of the internet cannot be fixed according to the specific location of a nation-state. Rather, it moves across several states by which it also circumvents national jurisdiction. According to Morwood, the space of the internet is therefore located in a "juridical vacuum" or "anomie" in which the power of the sovereign is temporarily disrupted. The counter-power of online networks then specifically lies in the way they subvert the dominant power of the established order. Both counter-movements and the established order attempt to gain power. However, they do this in very different ways. Whereas the established order works in the field of "constituted power", that is power that is already created and in place, counter-power evolves from "constituting power", which points to the creation of a space or situation in which power can be taken up. Constituting power is preceded by a moment of resistance, during which an opposition to the ruling power comes into being, and one of insurrection, during which a collective realization emerges for the need of subverting the governing order. Counter-power, then, finds place in three phases which all work in the direction of creating a space that gives rise to a way of gaining power that counters the dominant order. Morwood thus articulates the counter-power of the online realm of the internet as opening up a translegal space, or juridical vacuum, by which it is able to evade and thereby to subvert the control of the regulating force of the nation-state.

An example of an online activity embodying the counter-power explicated by Morwood is Wikileaks: a website that allows people to anonymously post secret documents. Many documents posted on the Wikileaks webpage got picked up by newspaper reporters and spread rapidly throughout the internet. Several governments and companies whose files were intercepted and made public by the website, took legal actions. And it is exactly through these legal cases that the counter-power of the internet becomes apparent. After one case in 2008, when Julius Baer Bank filed a lawsuit at a U.S. court against Wikileaks because it had posted confidential documents –

¹⁰ Nick Morwood, 'The Translegality of Digital Nonspace: Digital Counter-Power and its Representation', in: Áine McGlynn, Kit Dobson (ed.), *Transnationalism, Activism, Art*, Toronto 2013, pp. 91-117.

mostly revealing tax evasion – the judge ordered to block the website in the United States.¹¹ Consequently, the URL address of Wikileaks was made inaccessible in America. However, the website never went completely offline. While the American URL address wikipedia.org did not give any results, its Belgium and German versions remained. This is because of the numerous servers the webpage has across the world. Servers that are located in several countries and therefore allow access to the website via several addresses – wikileaks.de, wikileaks.be or wikileaks.nl. These addresses are indirectly accessible within the United States as well. After the court discovered this, it concluded that no further measures could be taken as Wikileaks did not provide any American, or even physical presence from which any action could be compelled. The online realm of Wikileaks thus literally disrupts national jurisdiction by occupying the loopholes its system provides. It does this by creating a translegal space in which journalists or citizens can anonymously share information they would not be able to share within the legal boundaries of national legislation. The regulating force of nation-states is thereby bypassed and countered.

The “juridical vacuum” elaborated by Morwood, however, does not just contain a place without any law. Rather, it points to a space in which laws cannot be enforced by authorities, such as national governments.¹² As mentioned in the former section, the nation-state performs its territory by controlling its people. It does this by imposing its unifying narrative onto them. A narrative that is also given form to by the system of national jurisdiction. But, it is exactly this narrative that is circumvented by the translegal spaces opened up by the internet. Although the state attempts to impose its national narrative onto these online spaces – as we have seen with the case of Wikileaks – it fails to do so while it lacks the means to control them; the juridical systems presented by nation-states cannot seem to get a grip on online activities. The online juridical vacuums described by Morwood thus specifically disrupt the means by which the nation-state is able to control its nation – and thereby to preserve the national narrative it propagates to present itself as a unity. Instead, these spaces allow people to take matters into their own hands and to get rid of or even reveal the suppressing measures taken by the nation-state.

The disruption of the controlling force of the nation-state by the internet is further explained by Arjun Appadurai, who describes the movement of technology to actively disorganize the narrative of the nation. He states that the basis of this disruption lies in the increasing overlap of different “global flows” triggered by the movement of globalization. In his article ‘Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy’ Appadurai explicates several of these flows, or “scapes”, among which the ideoscape and the technoscape. The ideoscape would signify a series of interconnected images illustrating political ideologies and state power. An example of this would then be the chain

¹¹ Morwood 2013 (footnote 10), pp. 104-108.

¹² Morwood 2013 (footnote 10), p. 103.

of 'images' constituting the dominant national narrative of a state. The technoscape would point to the fluid configuration of technology that increasingly moves across "previous impervious boundaries", of which the transnational existence of the internet seems to be part as well. According to Appadurai, these scapes each have their own chaotic character and move across the globe with an increasing speed and reach. Because of this, they do not move in synchrony with each other, but rather, overlap and disjunct. In the case of the ideoscape and the technoscape, this means that the elements – images, narratives and terms – together forming the coherent ideoscape of a specific state get displaced by the global force of the technoscape. Or more specifically, the signs constituting a state ideology get disconnected from their location within this state as they are distributed across the world by the transnational reach of the internet. Consequently, the signs of different ideoscapes will merge together. People living in a nation will therefore get in touch with several state ideologies, not necessarily connected to the nation-state they are part of. The national narrative thereby loses its internal coherence, whereby the state loses control over its nation. This deterritorialization of national ideoscapes, triggered by the internet, then leads to a disconnection between nation – a group of people with similar ideas about nationhood – and state. According to Appadurai, nation-states therefore "find themselves pressed to stay open" in order to survive.¹³ By which he means that the enclosed system of signification offered by the narrative of the nation is cracked open by the free-floating movement of the internet. The performance of the state as an enclosed coherent unity then gets disrupted, whereby its centralized power is countered.

In short, the online space of the internet disrupts the territory of the nation-state by undermining the means it has to control its nation and thereby to appear as a demarcated stable whole. This is first of all being done by the creation of online juridical vacuums, by which the internet is able to bypass national jurisdiction – through which the nation-state is able to both control and narrate its nation. Furthermore, those elements that constitute and communicate the national narrative, through which its diverse nation is kept together, get fragmented and disseminated across the globe through the transnational reach of the internet. The internet therefore disrupts the unifying national narrative of the nation-state whereby the people part of a nation are incited to imagine a world beyond the borders of their state. In this way, nation and state are actively disconnected from each other by which the closedness of the nation-state as mentioned in the former section is now cracked *open*. The authoritarian power that the nation-state derives from its appearance as an enclosed unity therefore gets subverted by the existence of the internet.

¹³ Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.' In: Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minnesota 1996, pp. 27-43.

1.3 Reclaiming Territories

In the previous part I have suggested the subversion of the territory of the nation-state through the means of the counter-power of the online space that the internet provides. In this part, however, I will demonstrate that the state did not simply give up on its hegemony. Rather, it has attempted to reclaim power through surveillance practices and through governing the flows of techno-capital. While Morwood states that the realm of the internet functions as a counter-power, countering the power of the nation-state, he seems to have overlooked the way nation-states in the past decade have tried to reclaim their power by colonizing the space of the internet. Or, as the artist collective Metahaven observes: “The internet began as a place too complicated for nation-states to understand; it ended up, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, as a place only nation-states seem to understand”.¹⁴ The internet today thus does not merely operate as a counter-power, but reveals the extensive reach of the hegemony of the nation-state.

As has been described in the previous paragraphs, in the past decade the controlling practices of the nation-state have been bypassed by the space of the internet. This has to do, amongst other things, with the emergence of a large amount of data that flows through the digital realm with an incredible speed and flexibility. This makes it difficult for states to get a grip on online space. David Lyon in his article ‘Surveillance, Snowden, and Big Data: Capacities, consequences, critique’ terms this increase of digital data on the internet “Big Data”: the presence of a huge amount of user data on the internet, too complex for traditional digital tools to process.¹⁵ With the advent of online platforms, such as Google, Yahoo and, during the past ten years, social media platforms like Facebook, an increasing amount of data started to circulate on the internet. Most of these data come from information individuals posted online by making use of one of these platforms, such as the content of online chat conversations, email addresses or telephone numbers. Users insert these when they, for example, would like to buy a ticket for an event. In addition to this consciously added information, there are also other kinds of data present in the online realm of the internet, like those based on individual search behaviour on the internet and on the specific interests or preferences of people. These kinds of data are called metadata, or “data about data”.¹⁶ With more and more daily activities moving into the realm of the internet, such as banking, registering at a city council or even dating, an increasing part of people’s daily life takes place on the level of online data. This is what Lyon terms “datafication”: the way in which people and their

¹⁴ Metahaven, ‘Captives of the Cloud, Part III: All Tomorrow’s Clouds’, in: Julieta Aranda, Brian Kudan Wood, Anton Vidokle (ed.), *E-flux Journal. The Internet does not exist*, Berlin 2015, p. 246.

¹⁵ Lyon 2014 (footnote 4), pp. 1-13.

¹⁶ Lyon 2014 (footnote 4), p. 3.

actions increasingly get expressed in terms of data or digital information. Contemporary societies thereby get structured more and more according to the logic of digital data; flows of information and communication constantly move with an increasing flexibility in a variety of directions, organizing things both globally and of the microscopic level of digital codes. The emergence of big data thus reinvigorates the fluid and elastic infrastructure of the internet, through which a variety of information moves increasingly fast and smooth, free from state control.

However, the notion of the internet as a space in which data moves freely without being governed by any form of authoritarian power seems to be out-dated. Over the course of the past fifteen years the nation-state has developed several ways to reclaim the control it seemed to have lost through the transnational and “free” realm of the internet. It has mainly done this by expanding its surveillance techniques, through which the state has been able to restore its controlling power. In order to do this the state has, first of all, created several laws which enable it to enter the databases of numerous large technology companies, among which Google, Apple and Microsoft – circumventing the original privacy policy of these platforms. This became apparent, for example, in 2013 when it was revealed that the NSA (National Security Agency) in the United States demanded access to the databases of important cloud providers like Yahoo in order to execute its surveillance.¹⁷ Furthermore, states have engaged external corporations that assist the government with gathering data for its own database and that develop newer techniques to intercept internet traffic more sufficiently. Governmental authorities therefore have access to an immense amount of data produced by an enormous amount of people. This information, however, is not collected in order to track a specific suspicious person, but it is gathered before a target is determined in order to map social patterns and behaviour of *all* citizens. This mapping takes place in order to detect each and every possible threat. Lyon therefore speaks of a “mass surveillance” that targets everyone. And theoretician Gary T. Marx describes this as a new type of surveillance that no longer just focuses on “close observation of a suspected person”, but rather on “the use of technical means to extract or create personal data” in general.¹⁸ This massive form of state surveillance seems to control societies in a totalitarian way as it is able to control everyone, regardless of their degree of suspicion. Furthermore, because the state has access to almost every cloud provider or online database, it is able to control society through a high variety of online sources; via smartphones, online platforms like Google and Facebook *and* via third parties like telephone companies. Moreover, state authorities are able to track data in real-time, through which means they can literally follow every

¹⁷ In 2013 Edward Snowden former technical assistant for the CIA, leaked secret documents from the NSA, revealing their global surveillance programmes. These documents showed the collaboration of NSA with several internet and telecommunication companies.

¹⁸ Gary T. Marx, ‘What’s New about the “new Surveillance”?: Classifying for Change and Continuity’, *Knowledge, Technology & Policy* 17 (2004), no. 1, pp. 18-37.

step one takes on the internet. The presence of “Big Data” in the online realm of the internet thus intensifies state surveillance by increasing the speed and scope of these practices. In this sense, the controlling force of the nation-state appropriates the form of the flexible flows of data.

An important aspect of this “new surveillance”, evolved through the adoption of big data, is the lack of transparency about its organizational structure. This change, from transparency to opacity, is clearly illustrated by artist collective Metahaven in their text ‘Captives of the Cloud, Part III: All Tomorrow’s Clouds’ in which they describe the way general Keith Alexander, who was the director of the NSA until 2014, publicly presented himself.¹⁹ Alexander initially used to appear in full military attire, through which he emphasized his authoritarian power. Later, however, he only appeared in public wearing black t-shirts, by which he presented himself as an “invisible bureaucrat”. This transformation from visibility to invisibility is indicative of the way the controlling power of the state has changed over time. Whereas the nation-state used to present its ruling power through highly visible buildings, ceremonies or uniformed authorities, now it’s power becomes apparent through less visible legislation and meetings in secret. In the case of surveillance practices, this means that the programs and organizations through which information is intercepted become more and more invisible to the people whose data is gathered and analysed. While the daily lives of citizens become increasingly transparent, the controlling power of the state thus becomes increasingly opaque. This allows the state to intensify its control over its people, as they are not aware of the extent to which they are being spied upon. People then do not have the room to choose whether they entrust their data to (the interpretation of) national security agencies. Rather, this choice is made *for* them.

This transition from visible to invisible is reminiscent of the transformation of disciplined societies to controlled societies, as it is described by Gilles Deleuze in his article ‘Postscript on the Societies of Control’.²⁰ In this text he describes the notion of a disciplinary society that is constituted by distinct spaces of enclosure, or “molds”. Individuals within such a society move from one such an enclosed space to another. In the 19th century, for example, as soon as one had finished school one would start a new phase as a worker in a factory. After leaving one space one would thus enter another. All these enclosed molds have their own rules and laws, but they are analogous to each other; they exist next to each other as distinct unities. The logic of this disciplinary society is, however, vanishing. It slowly gets replaced by the logic of the “society of control”, which is formed by “ultrarapid forms of free-floating control”. The society of control does not consist of a number of molds with a solid form, but of modulations that constantly change shape. These self-deforming modulations shape themselves depending on the situation they are in, which makes them flexible

¹⁹ Metahaven 2015 (footnote 14), pp. 247-249.

²⁰ Deleuze 1992 (footnote 2), pp. 3-7.

and fluid. Furthermore, they do not have a fixed location in society, but are continuously moving through it. In this sense, they function as continuous forces of control. According to Deleuze, this type of control is formed by the technological devices we use. While the older disciplined societies of sovereignty made use of clocks and watches through which time and structure were dictated, the society of control is established by the use of computers, which give one access to the widespread network of the internet. The fluid infrastructure of this network, through which data move rapidly in a variety of directions, disperses the centralized power that is associated with the enclosed spaces of the disciplined society. The bordered unity of the nation-state, as being one of the enclosed spaces constitutive for the society of discipline, therefore gets fragmented as well. However, the state's controlling power does thereby not get disrupted. Rather, it becomes more extensive; it takes on another, more decentralized form, a new guise that is not connected to its appearance as a coherent unity but to the free-floating form of online data. This form is more refined and less visible than the centralized way of distributing power as it makes use of the same "dataficated" infrastructure that increasingly mobilizes the daily lives of people. In its urge for control the nation-state thus reclaims its hegemony through appropriating the fluid structure of online space. The territory of the nation-state thereby gets transformed from an enclosed space into a free-floating space with free-floating control, hard to recognize and even harder to escape from.

In summary, the territory of the nation-state, and thereby the power it derives from it, seems to be disrupted by the free flow of online data. But, it turns out that the nation-state reclaims this power through finding ways of controlling the fluidity of the infrastructure of the internet. It does this mainly by further developing its surveillance practices, that by governing the circulation of big data have extended their reach and flexibility. The control of the nation-state thereby takes on another, advanced facade that corresponds to the free-floating flows of data on the internet. This control deeply penetrates society as it moves through the same refined and flexible form as the digital infrastructure that increasingly informs and structures peoples' daily lives. The organizational structure behind the distribution of this control is therefore more difficult to recognize and to avoid. It could thus be stated that the implication of the online space of the internet on the territory of the nation-state is that it transformed the enclosed space of its territory into a dispersed space with its own free-floating control. This free-floating form of control is less transparent and has a wider reach than the centralized control that preceded it by which it is able to govern society in a more penetrative, and therefore more totalitarian way than ever before.

2. The position of *Autonomy Cube* within the territory of the Art Institution

2.1 The territory of the Art Institution

In the first chapter of my thesis I have shown the way in which the fluid space of the internet alters the enclosed territory of the nation-state; by not merely disrupting its unity, but rather by transforming the shape of its controlling power. In this chapter I would like to analyse the way in which *Autonomy Cube* positions itself within this development. I will do this by perceiving the art institution, in which the work is exhibited, along the lines of the evolution of the space of the nation-state as it is described above. From there on, I will theorize the way in which *Autonomy Cube* engages with this spatial development of both state and art institution. In order to do this I will first demonstrate the way in which the space of the art institution can be understood as its own autonomous territory, functioning according to the same logic as that of the nation-state.

Autonomy Cube is situated within a demarcated space; a particular space that exists within the white walls of the art institution. The artwork is shown on a pedestal and has the form of a cube, by which it appears as a minimalist sculpture, presented according to traditional modes of exhibiting art [fig. 2]. The pedestal is reminiscent of the way sculptures and artworks have been displayed in museums for decades as objects of value that should be objectively studied. This traditional view on perceiving art is something that minimalist sculptures are often associated with as they would embody pure and objective form, through which they would be isolated from more socio-political debates in the 'real world'.²¹ In this sense, Minimal Art would emphasize the notion of art as consisting of neutral objects that should be contemplated with aesthetic distance. The white cube, an archetypal exhibition space existing of white walls in which artworks can be shown neutrally, fits this approach towards art perfectly. Brian O'Doherty in his classic essay 'Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of an Exhibition Space' describes the white cube as a space with white walls, without windows through which the outside world can be sealed off.²² Art can thereby exist in its own world. This parallel world of art is not governed by the vicissitudes of time, but is, rather, timeless. The art institution thereby functions as a sort of vacuum in which artworks can be presented as distinct from the space and time in which they are created, through which their formal and aesthetic qualities are centralized. The art space of the white cube then is a demarcated space with its own logic, according to which the outside world is transcended and in which art is attributed a seemingly sacred position.

²¹ Wouter Davidts, 'Messy Minimalism. Voorbij de White Cube', *De Witte Raaf* 93 (2001), website *De Witte Raaf*: <<http://www.dewitteraaf.be/artikel/detail/nl/2351>> (accessed 5 November 2016).

²² Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of an Exhibition Space*, Los Angeles 1986³ (1976), pp. 14-15.

The notion of Minimal Art as an art form that mainly focuses on pure form, without any external references, validates this way of presenting art. By both appearing as a cube, which is the geometric figure of Minimal Art par excellence, and by taking up the term “cube” in its title, *Autonomy Cube* thus specifically refers to the model of the white cube, in which art can be shown autonomously.

The notion of the white cube as being a vacuum, presenting art as distinct from the outside world, corresponds to the way in which the nation performs its territory. As I elaborated in the first part of my thesis, the nation performs its territorial space by creating a unifying national narrative that would emphasize the cohesion amongst its people. This narrative works into two directions; the external creation of a historical narrative and the internal dissemination of signs that are part of this narrative through which everything one encounters is turned into something that is emblematic for a national culture. In this sense, a bubble of signification is created in which every citizen automatically tends to interpret things as supporting the nation’s myth. It is through this bubble that the nation is able to present itself as a coherent unity, distinct from other nations with different myths and ideologies. Just like the enclosed system of signification offered by national narratives, the model of the white cube also appears as an enclosed space that functions according to a specific narrative. O’Doherty compares this space of the gallery to Egyptian tomb chambers which functioned to preserve the eternal presence of the dead and to protect them from the passing of time.²³ Similarly, the white cube would present artworks as appearing outside of time whereby they would create a space of timelessness in which the eternal beauty of art could be preserved. The art institution thereby functions as an autonomous bubble in which art could be sheltered from the constant change and time in the real world. The narrative according to which the art institution appears as a vacuum for art then revolves around the notion of artworks as being aesthetic objects, transcending space and time. The white walls of the art institution materialize this narrative around art as they literally isolate art from society and as they provide a neutral context for the artworks through which their formal aspects can be emphasized. This incites visitors, entering the exhibition space, to automatically perceive the artworks on show in accordance with this myth around art. The specific presentation of art by the white cube then directs the way people contemplate art and withholds them from connecting art to the socio-political reality outside of the cube. Similar to the bubble of signification created by the narrative of the nation, the art institution then also creates an enclosed system of signification in which people cannot but interpret the artworks they encounter within the institution according to the myth it propagates. Just like the way in which the nation-state performs its territory, the art institution thus equally performs itself as an enclosed space – both by

²³ O’Doherty 1986 (footnote 22), pp. 8-9.

sheltering art from the constant change and time of the outside world and by offering an enclosed system of signification that directs the way in which visitors of the art institution perceive art.

Crucially, this enclosed space of the art institution holds on to a dominant mode of exhibiting art. It particularly presents artworks as aesthetic objects that should be displayed as distinct from the outside world. Thereby the art institution conceals the diversity amongst the different meanings art could obtain. The mechanism of repressing this diversity could be described according to the notion of hegemonic practice as elaborated by Chantal Mouffe in her book *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically*.²⁴ In this book Mouffe describes society as existing of all kinds of “hegemonies”, that are each formed through the sedimentation of social practices, through which social actions become institutionalized. In public space, several of these hegemonies confront each other. In this “hegemonic struggle”, as Mouffe calls it, dominant hegemonies repress other ones. This means that dominant hegemonies silence and obliterate other hegemonies in order to maintain in control. Within this context, the art institution can be considered a dominant hegemony as well, in the sense that it controls the way in which artworks are interpreted by its audience. The institution often explains artworks in accordance with the notion of art as containing a formal beauty that should be contemplated with aesthetic distance. Thereby an alternative interpretation of the works on display, in relation to the socio-political reality outside of the art institution for instance, is made more difficult. A concrete example of this mechanism is the presentation of indigenous art within art institutions. Indigenous artworks are often displayed as an illustration of the dominant narrative around art, through which their formal qualities are centralized.²⁵ However, the ritual function these works have within the indigenous communities in which they are created is thereby neglected and obscured. The art institution then reduces the signification of these artworks to its own narrative around art whereby it conceals the diverse ways in which art could be perceived – and the diverse possible meanings artworks could thereby obtain. This allows the institution to centralize its own dominant mode of looking at art and thereby to control the way in which art is interpreted by its public. This modus operandi of the art institution corresponds to the way in which the nation-state reduces the personal histories of individuals to the overarching narrative of the nation in order to narrate the coherence of its people. As elaborated in the previous chapter of this thesis, the state thereby conceals those biographies with an “other” cultural or ethnic background and subordinates them to the unifying myth of the nation. It can thus be stated that the art institution performs its space in accordance with the mechanisms by which the state performs its

²⁴ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically*, London/ New York 2013, pp. 87-94.

²⁵ The presentation of “primitive” artworks in the exhibition “*Primitivism” in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* from 1984 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York is a good example of this. For more information see: Hal Foster, ‘The “Primitive” Unconscious of Modern Art’, *October* 34 (1985), pp. 45-70.

territory. Both the nation-state and the art institution conceal a sense of diversity – amongst people and artworks – in order to control the process of signification and thereby to keep up their hegemony.

So, the art institution can be understood as a territory, comparable to the one of the nation-state, as it performs itself as an enclosed space that closes off the outside world. It presents itself as an autonomous space with its own logic. In accordance with this logic, the institution presents art as an aesthetic object, transcending reality. The institution thereby promotes a myth about art and art institutions as conserving eternal beauty, without referring to the world outside of the gallery space. This myth directs the way in which visitors interpret artworks. Many alternative ways of looking at art, distinct from this mythical narrative, are thus concealed in order to keep up the hegemony of the art institution. *Autonomy Cube*, by taking the form of a cube and taking up the term “cube” in its title, does not only refer to this discourse around this hegemony of the art institution but also takes a position within it. In the next paragraph I will further go into the way in which *Autonomy Cube* engages itself with this discourse.

2.2 Institutional Critique: disrupting the territory of the Art Institution

In the previous part I have described the way in which the space of the art institution performs its territory, in accordance to that of the nation-state. It does this by both being physically enclosed by the walls of the art institution and by offering an enclosed system of signification in which visitors cannot but interpret art in accordance with the logic the institution propagates. In this subchapter I will further theorize the way in which *Autonomy Cube* positions itself within this territorial space of the art institution. I will specifically do this by examining the way in which the cube relates to the artistic practice of “institutional critique”, that has often disrupted the enclosed space of the art institution.

Institutional critique is a term often used to describe an artistic practice that has as its main aim to disrupt and thereby to critique the enclosed character of the art institution. In the past, artists have done this through several means. The artist Marcel Broodthaers, for example, created his own fictional museum inside his studio, which allowed him to reflect on the ideological position of art institutions within society [fig. 3].²⁶ And Michael Asher placed architectural alterations within the exhibition space in order to highlight and undermine the institutions’ claims to being neutral aesthetic spaces [fig. 4].²⁷ In general, the practice of institutional critique attempts to lay bare the power structures that underlie the functioning of art institutions. By unveiling these elements of power, institutional critique discloses the art institution as not being isolated from society, but rather, as deriving its meaning from the socio-political reality in which it is situated. The notion of the space of the art institution as being a neutral place, distinct from the outside world thereby gets challenged. By making visible the connections between the art institution and the society outside of it, institutional critique thus breaches the institution’s enclosed character.

Autonomy Cube specifically taps into this history of Institutional Critique. This is, first of all, emphasized by artist Trevor Paglen himself, who describes his artwork as “being historically aligned with the history of institutional critique and people like Hans Haacke”.²⁸ The cube’s engagement with the discourse of institutional critique becomes even more apparent when one looks at the formal aspects of the artwork, which are very similar to Hans Haacke’s *Condensation Cube* from 1963-65 [fig. 5]. This piece by Haacke equally exists of a Plexiglas cube, often exhibited on a pedestal, but is different from *Autonomy Cube* as it is filled with water. The light that enters the cube

²⁶ Marcel Broodthaers did this with his work *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures* from 1972.

²⁷ Michael Asher did this with his piece *Installation* from 1970 at Pomona College, for which he reconfigured the interior space of a gallery after which he left the gallery open, without a door, 24 hours a day.

²⁸ Dylan Kerr, ‘Can an Artist Take on the Government (and Win)? A Q&A with Trevor Paglen’, website *Artspace*: <http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/art-bytes/trevor-paglen-interview-53096> (accessed 12 December 2016).

heats the air within it. This causes the water to condense, creating patterns of water drops against the walls of the box. The exact form these patterns take depends on the environment of the cube, that is, amongst other things, determined by the physical presence of visitors. The *Condensation Cube* thereby emphasizes the way in which the context of an artwork shapes its meaning and capacity. This challenges the idea of art as transcending the time and change inherent to the world in which it exists. Haacke's cube thus questions the logic of art institutions being neutral spaces in which art is presented as having fixed aesthetic qualities, independent of their context. It could then be stated that *Autonomy Cube*, by taking a form that is similar to the *Condensation Cube*, precisely refers to the genealogy of institutional critique and to its capacity of disrupting the institution's logic.

Besides the visual similarities with the *Condensation Cube*, *Autonomy Cube* also relates to Haacke's work on a more conceptual level. In order to understand this relation I will first elaborate on a number of artworks Haacke created later on in his oeuvre, consisting of several visitor polls. In the work *Gallery Goers' Birthplace and Residence Profile, Part I* from 1969-70, for example, Haacke asked gallery visitors in New York to mark both their birthplace and current residence on a large map of the city. This allowed him to show that the average gallery visitor lived in the more affluent areas of New York, and therefore belonged to the more privileged part of its population. Haacke thereby revealed the socio-political reality underlying the practices of art institutions, whereby their abstract neutrality could be questioned. In order to execute larger surveys that would give more demographic information about the museum-going public, Haacke later decided to computerize his polls. At Documenta 5 in 1972 he did this with the work *Documenta Visitors' Profile* that consisted of a questionnaire in several languages – English, German, French – that visitors could fill in. The answers were processed by a computer centre in Kassel after which they were printed out and placed within the exhibition space. The visitors of Documenta were thereby confronted with the lack of diversity – in class and culture – among them. Luke Skrebowski in his paper 'Feedback Forms and Flow Charts: Hans Haacke and the Retooling of the Contemporary Museum' describes this part of Haacke's art practice to be a form of "info-institutional critique": a form of institutional critique that critiques art institutions by disclosing information about them that would reveal the restricted socio-political position that underlies their practice and that of their public.²⁹ By revealing specific data about the art institution and its visitors, Haacke thus challenges the institution's appearance as being an unbiased place, functioning as a vacuum for art. The notion of the art institution as being isolated from society thereby gets countered, through which its sense of enclosedness gets cracked open.

In the meantime, however, works by Haacke that have critiqued the enclosed hegemony of art institutions through several means, have been co-opted by these very same institutes. This does

²⁹ Luke Skrebowski, 'An Opposite World is Possible: On Trevor Paglen and Jacob Appelbaum's *Autonomy Cube*', in: Trevor Paglen, Jacob Appelbaum (ed.), *Autonomy Cube*, Berlin 2016, p. 24.

not only become apparent through the physical incorporation of several of his artworks in the collections of established art spaces – Haacke's *Condensation Cube* is now part of the Tate Modern collection and his polls are regularly exhibited in established art institutes³⁰ – but in the case of Haacke's polls, it is also the method of criticism that has been co-opted by art institutions. According to Skrebowski, art institutions namely increasingly include the online feedback visitors share via digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter in their programming. Tate Modern, for example, has responded to several comments posted by people on Twitter about the Tate's lack of response to the London riots by immediately launching a film programme about the history of unrest in the City of London.³¹ The museum thereby presents itself as a reflexive and responsive institution that does not repress its political dimension, but rather, includes the diverse socio-political views expressed by its audience on the internet. Thereby the museum seems to have incorporated Haacke's info-institutional critique. This incorporation indicates a change in the way in which art institutions perform their territory. Whereas art institutions used to perform their space as being closed off from the socio-political reality outside of it, in order to present art as distinct from the time and space inherent to society, now they seem to have included this outside world. It could then be stated that the notion of the enclosed space of the white cube, as elaborated by O'Doherty in the 1970s and as taken as an entry-point in the former paragraph, is no longer entirely applicable. Instead, the art institution seems to have developed itself towards a more open space that integrates the society in which it exists. What remains, however, is the control the institution has over the behaviour of visitors. The external feedback that is gained through several digital channels is incorporated, but only in accordance with the technocratic format that lies at the basis of the institution's organization. This means that the online communication between the public and the institution is mainly used to gather data that will help the museum map the interest of their public in order to increase the number of visitors for the next event. Visitors are thereby mobilized into the direction of visiting the art institution. In this sense, the space of the art institution seems to be transformed from an enclosed space into an open space that is able to control its visitors in a more flexible way, through the widespread network of the internet. Thereby the space of the art institution seems to have developed itself in line with Deleuze's "society of control" on which I have elaborated in the first chapter of my thesis. The co-option of the artistic methodology of info-institutional critique thus makes apparent that the space of the art institution changed from an enclosed space to an open space with "free-floating control", indicative of the society of control.

³⁰ Haacke's polls were, for example, presented at the 56th Biennale in Venice, from May 9th until November 22nd 2015.

³¹ Max Dax, "'It's Time to Redefine the Term Failure": An Interview with Tate Modern's Chris Dercon', website *Electronic Beats*: <<http://www.electronicbeats.net/interview-chris-dercon/>> (accessed 12 December 2016).

It is within the context of the changed space of the art institution that *Autonomy Cube* conceptually relates to the info-institutional critique of Haacke. Both Haacke's visitor polls and *Autonomy Cube* use data about visitors of the art institution to disrupt the institution's hegemony. However, both artworks do this in very different ways. Whereas Haacke with his visitor polls reveals data about people as a way of critiquing the practice of the art institution, *Autonomy Cube* conceals them. *Autonomy Cube* namely allows visitors of the art institution to access the Tor network, which makes it possible for them to remain anonymous on the internet. Thereby the data of these visitors are not made visible, but instead, they are obscured. In my view, the difference between the ways in which these artworks work with data has to do with the fact that the space in which the art institution exists has evolved over time. While Haacke's polls attempted to critique the art institution in a time in which it presented itself as an enclosed space, distinct from the socio-political reality in which it was situated, Paglen's *Autonomy Cube* specifically critiques the art institution's widespread control that comes with it being a more open space. Haacke critiques the isolated character of the exhibition space by making visible the connections between the art institution and the society outside of it. In turn, *Autonomy Cube* goes against the extensive control of the institution as it disrupts the means through which the institution performs this control, that is by gathering data of visitors on the internet. The cube mainly does this by making these data anonymous. Just like Haacke's polls, the cube thus takes a critical position within the territory of the art institution. It could then be stated that *Autonomy cube* relates to the critical agenda of (info-)institutional critique, but that the cube practices its own critique in a radically different way.

In short, the relation of *Autonomy Cube* with the history of institutional critique becomes apparent through its visual similarities with the *Condensation Cube* by Hans Haacke, which is at the basis of the genre of institutional critique. Furthermore, Paglen's cube relates to the genre of institutional critique on a more conceptual level as it uses a methodology that is similar to Haacke's visitor polls; both works critique the art institution by making use of the data of visitors. However, whereas the polls disclose data as a way of critiquing the art institution, the cube actively conceals them. The two artworks both take a critical position within the territory of the art institution, but practice this critique in different ways. In my view, this has to do with the alteration of the space of the art institution from being enclosed to more open, with a more extensive control. The relation of *Autonomy Cube* with the practice of institutional critique thus reveals its critical position within the territory of the art institution, but also shows some specific differences in the way in which this critique is executed.

2.3 Institutional enhancement

In the former subchapter I have elaborated the way in which *Autonomy Cube* relates to the history of institutional critique, which has often disrupted the enclosed space of the art institution. This has allowed me to show that *Autonomy Cube* relates to the practice of institutional critique, but that it expresses its critique in a different way as it is situated in the contemporary context of its space; a more open space with extensive control that has developed itself in line with the society of control as described by Gilles Deleuze in his article 'Postscript on the Society of Control'. In this part I will go into the exact way in which *Autonomy Cube* positions itself within the contemporary context of the space of the art institution, and thereby within the context of Deleuze's control society. In doing so I will show that whereas Institutional Critique *opposes* itself towards the hegemony of the art institution, the cube *transforms* its space.

Theoretician Krzysztof Ziarek in his book *The Force of Art* writes about the position of art in a society in which control gets increasingly flexible and therefore has a larger reach.³² According to Ziarek this has to do with new technological developments, such as the internet. Ziarek's understanding of this digitalized society with new and advanced forms of power and control corresponds to Deleuze's society of control. But whereas Deleuze only goes into the mechanisms that constitute such a society as a whole, Ziarek specifically theorizes the role of art in it. Ziarek explains the "control" that is elaborated by Deleuze as being "power". He states that the term power does not merely refer to power relations such as domination or violence, but that it signifies a broader formative force. It can be seen as a network of intentional forces constituting being. Patterns within the operation of power can for example be production, mobilisation, efficiency and normalisation. Power is organized and structured by "technicity", which is the sum of public spaces, institutions and forms of relations through which flows of power are regulated and through which they are mobilized toward further increases in power. Because of new technological developments technicity has become more flexible through which it is able to organize power both on a larger scale and on a micro scale. New digital forms of communication, for example, can organize power globally *and* on the microscopic level of digital data. Ziarek therefore states that technicity, in the contemporary world, has been transformed into digitality: the organization of things in terms of programmable information such as digital codes and data that can be endlessly reprogrammed. This new digital form of technicity allows power to operate with an increasing velocity and intensity and to penetrate society as never before.

³² Krzysztof Ziarek, *The Force of Art*, Stanford 2004, pp. 60-65.

According to Ziarek, the role of art within this all is to offer a certain resistance to power.³³ With the increasing digitalization of power and technicity, however, power has become more fragmented and decentralized which makes it more difficult for art to offer resistance to power; art cannot critique power anymore by opposing itself to broadly understood manifestations of power, such as the elite and the government. Rather, art needs to critique power more radically. Ziarek articulates this radical resistance of art by defining art not as an object with aesthetic value, but as a transformative event, offering an alternative to power. Art is able to do this by transforming relations existing in power into “non-power”. Art does not do this by constituting forces, as would be the case with power, but by “aphesis”, which means “letting be”. This transformative force of art is what ontologically defines art as an *event* of non-power – where the event is formed by the continuous transformation of forces into “letting be” and thereby into non-power. Instead of opposing to a centralised power, art thus introduces an alternative way of relating through which the constitutive logic of power gets disrupted. According to Ziarek, the critical force of art specifically lies in revealing power and in opening up non-power.

Within the context of this thesis, the power described by Ziarek can be said to refer to the controlling force of the nation-state, that increasingly attempts to control its people and their behaviour by surveillance practices – through which the state can follow everything one does on the internet. The controlling force of the nation-state gets increasingly distributed through public spaces and organizations, of which the art institution is one. This for example becomes apparent when we look at the pressure for art institutions to have a high amount of visitors in order to receive funding from the state. Because of this pressure they create apps and online platforms through which visitors can post feedback and through which they can receive information about the museum’s programme on their smartphones and computers.³⁴ The data that are gathered in this sense, allow museums and art institutions to map the interest of their public in order to increase the number of visitors for the next event. In this way, the intensifying control of the nation-state determines the practices of art institutions more and more. It could then be stated that the control of the state functions as the “power” described by Ziarek. The space of the art institution organizes this control, and further disseminates it through digital means, by which it functions as part of what Ziarek describes to be technicity, or “digitality”.

When we perceive *Autonomy Cube* through the lens of Ziarek’s theory, it becomes apparent that the cube resists the notion of power as described above. Firstly, the cube does this by revealing

³³ Ziarek 2004 (footnote 32), pp. 169-176.

³⁴ For more information on the usage of apps and online platforms by museums and art institutions: Steve Lohr, ‘Museums Morph Digitally. The Met and Other Museums Morph into the Digital Age’, website *New York Times*: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/26/arts/artsspecial/the-met-and-other-museums-adapt-to-the-digital-age.html>> (accessed 15 May 2017).

the extent to which power is present within contemporary society. The work namely gives access to a Tor network, which is built to anonymize data so that internet users can remain invisible online. The Tor network thereby critiques surveillance practices through which the state spies upon and controls its people. But by placing this Tor network within the space of the art institution, *Autonomy Cube* shows that these surveillance practices have proceeded to determine the practices of art institutions as well; not only governments, but also art spaces gather people's online data. Visitors of the art institution are thereby confronted with the presence of surveillance techniques within the space they enter. By installing a Tor network in an exhibition space, *Autonomy Cube* thus draws attention to and discloses the extensive reach of the controlling force by which the nation-state keeps hold of its people. The cube thereby reveals both the "power", articulated by Ziarek, and the role of the art institution in distributing this power.

Autonomy Cube does not only disclose the extensive reach of power and the function of the art institution in disseminating this power, but also actively transforms "power" into "non-power". This transformation starts when the Tor network, to which the cube gives access, gets connected to the institution's internet connection. When this is being done, the space of the art institution immediately gets transformed from a space in which visitors are surveilled, controlled and mobilized by using their online data for commercial ends, to a space in which people are protected from surveillance practices of any kind. By installing the work in its exhibition space, the art institution thus literally "let's go" of the controlling force by which it usually organizes the behaviour of visitors. Thereby the institution gets disconnected from its usual function within power, in which it is incited to give in to the mobilization of visitors as propagated by the state, and instead, gets transformed in what Ziarek would term a realm of "non-power" in which people are left uncontrolled and free. *Autonomy Cube* thereby does not merely critique the hegemony of the art institution, but rather, functions as a form of "institutional enhancement", offering the institution the tools to restore its critical capacity.³⁵ The cube then does not oppose itself to the art institution, but transforms its space from within.

This transforming force of *Autonomy Cube* is specifically engendered by what Ziarek calls "aphesis" or "letting be". The cube does not regulate the behaviour of its audience and does not control the specific outcome of its project, but rather, lets it all be. *Autonomy Cube* offers the visitors of the exhibition space the opportunity to connect to the network it hosts, but does not oblige them to. People are also allowed to contemplate the artwork without making use of its function as a Tor hotspot. Furthermore, the Tor network itself, in opening up a space in which both people and their

³⁵ Nick Aikens, 'Autonomy Cube. Nick Aikens, Trevor Paglen', website *L'internationale*: <http://www.internationaleonline.org/research/alter_institutionality/71_autonomy_cube> (accessed 14 January 2017).

actions can remain anonymous, is difficult to control as well. As the many activities that take place on this network cannot be verified by state authorities, it is unclear what exactly happens on this part of the web. People may do things that perfectly fit within the legal borders of national jurisdiction, but criminal activities may take place there as well.³⁶ Installing, hosting or making use of a Tor network thus automatically means that one has to let go of any urge for regulation or control. By giving access to a Tor relay *Autonomy Cube* then forces the art institution to shift its focus from controlling everything that happens within its space to transposing this control to forms of agency beyond its own authority. The institution thereby provides a form of self-determination to both visitors and artworks, whereby its role as being a guardian of freedom of expression gets foregrounded again.

There are more artistic practices that apply dissident ways of using the internet as a way to transform the art institution from within. The Swiss artists' collective !Mediengruppe Bitnik for example did this with their work *Random Darknet Shopper* from 2014 [fig. 6]. This artwork consists of an automated online shopping bot that is programmed to randomly purchase products on the Darknet. These products are then sent to the art institution that exhibits the work, where they are unpacked and displayed in the exhibition space. The items that are delivered range from legal to illegal objects, such as packages of cocaine. Because it is unclear what kind of products the institution will receive and what the legal consequences of accepting and displaying them will be, the *Random Darknet Shopper* undermines the controlling mechanism of the art institution. By randomly selecting products and by doing this on the Dark Web the work embraces the notion of "letting be", through which it forces the art institution to let go of control and instead to rely on the random choices of the bot. Just like *Autonomy Cube* applies the possibilities offered by Tor, the *Random Darknet Shopper* uses the so-called Dark Web as a way to disconnect the art institution from the logic of "power" and to transform it into a space free from power and control; a space open for art to critique power by opening up "non-power".

In summary, the theory of Ziarek shows us that *Autonomy Cube* does not oppose itself to the authority of the art institution, as has often been the case with the genre of institutional critique, but that it transforms its space from within, enabling it to function as a more civic space. The cube does this by what Ziarek calls "aphesis", or "letting be" through which the institution's space gets disconnected from its function within "power" – that is the controlling logic by which the state keeps hold of its nation – and instead gets transformed into a more free space in which both art and people are allowed to critique and resist diverse forms of power. The installation of the Tor network

³⁶ For instance see: Kartikeyan S., 'The Tor Network: Privacy Protectors or Criminal Enablers?', website *Digisecrets*: <<http://www.digisecrets.com/web/the-tor-network-privacy-protectors-or-criminal-enablers/>> (accessed 12 May 2017).

by the cube plays a crucial role in this as the Tor network is intrinsically evasive of control. By giving access to this network within the space of the art institution, the cube thus expands the lack of control, inherent to Tor, to the institution's space. *Autonomy Cube* then positions itself in Deleuze's society of control by not critiquing the art institution itself, but by resisting the logic of the system it is part of. It does not oppose itself to broadly understood manifestations of power and control, of which the hegemony of the art institution is one example, but transforms the politics that are built into the institution's infrastructure. The cube thereby detaches the institution from the logic propagated by the control society and, instead, allows it the tools to restore its function as a space open for critical expression. The artwork thereby does not merely critique the art institution, but manifests itself as a form of 'Institutional enhancement'. *Autonomy Cube* then does not merely represent critique, but embodies it.

However, although a large part of Ziarek's theory perfectly captures the artistic and critical force of *Autonomy Cube*, there are also some frictions between this theory and the artwork. Ziarek defines art as opening up "non-power"; a realm in which forces are not actively formed and constituted, as would be the case with power, but in which they flow freely without a specific purpose. Art thereby introduces an alternative to "power", that constantly constitutes, mobilizes and directs being. When art would recede into power, Ziarek states, it would lose its critical capacity.³⁷ *Autonomy Cube* as an artwork, however, gives access to a Tor relay; a network that aims to mobilize people to make use of its connection, that strives to connect and include people in order to expand its scope.³⁸ The essence of Tor thereby seems to rearticulate the mobilizing and constitutive logic of power. By functioning as a Tor hotspot, *Autonomy Cube* does not seem to transform this mobilizing power of the network, but rather, enables it to further expand its powered practice. Thereby the work seems to internalize the notion of power in its project. This aspect of the cube conflicts with Ziarek's conceptualisation of art as exclusively being an event of non-power. Ziarek's theory thus reveals a tension within the work, between it being a tool to be used and it being an artwork. Yet, it is exactly this twofold aspect of the artwork through which it is able to resist contemporary forms of power and control from *within*, by placing itself not in opposition to, not along the side-lines of, but at the centre of the society of control. Since Ziarek describes art as an alternative to power, it cannot exist in or be known by our powered world. By metaphysically defining art as non-power, Ziarek thus seems to isolate art from society. Although Ziarek allows me to get an understanding of the internal dynamic of *Autonomy Cube*, his theory alone does not allow me to fully articulate the critical position this artwork takes *within* the contemporary control society – which is the main aim of this thesis.

³⁷ Ziarek 2004 (footnote 32), pp. 13-16.

³⁸ Website *Tor project* (footnote 1).

3. Spatiality

3.1 Being in Space: From Material to Digital Space

In the previous chapters it has become clear that the emergence of the internet has had far-reaching implications for the space in which the nation-state exists and, crucially, for the way in which the state maintains in control over this space. This has led to the coming into being of the society of control in which flows of control flow freely through the nation's dispersed space. This alteration in space has also led to an alteration of the public spaces part of the nation-state, specifically the space of the art institution. In the previous chapter I have outlined the way in which *Autonomy Cube* positions itself in the space of the art institution, and thereby in the control society in which it is situated. I have done this by reading the artwork through the lens of the theory of Krzysztof Ziarek. However, I came to the conclusion that Ziarek isolates art from society by defining it as exclusively being an event of non-power, distinct from our powered reality. Thereby Ziarek does not allow me to theorize the exact position of the cube *within* society, or more specifically, within the society of control. In this chapter, I will conceptualize the active position *Autonomy Cube* takes within contemporary control society by mapping the spatial dynamic that underlies it. Therefore I will specifically go into the way in which we position ourselves in (public) space and how this has changed with the emergence of digitalization and the internet. I will do this by mapping the way in which our mode of *being in space* has transformed through the fluid and digitalized space that underlies the society of control. By mapping the transformation of space and our mode of being in this space ontologically, I hope to show the way *Autonomy Cube* (actively) positions itself within it.

Gilles Deleuze (together with Félix Guattari) in the book *A Thousand Plateaus* conceptualizes different ways of being in space. He does this by going into the notions of “the smooth” and “the striated”.³⁹ The striated can be considered to signify a more centralized way of being in space in which one perceives space through fixed points and (geo)metrical determinations. The smooth, on the other hand, would then point to a more open-ended way of perceiving the space around us. It does not organize space according to static elements, but introduces an infinite sense of space that distributes a continuous variation. Whereas the striated separates the body from an external space, and theorizes it within an internal, closed space – that of the immobile home – the smooth theorizes the body within one open space, without dividing this space by inside, outside, internal or external. While the striated territorializes space, the smooth deterritorializes it, challenging the fixed points that constitute the striated by opening up a mode of in-between. Being in striated space then means

³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Transl. Brian Massumi, New York/ London 2004, pp. 523-551.

that one moves through space while subordinating things according to predetermined points and positions. On the other hand, being in smooth space signifies a way of being in space in which one experiences a continuous variation and a continuous development of form.

We could say that the way in which the nation-state initially performed its territory corresponds to Deleuze's notion of the striated. The territory of the nation-state has traditionally been performed by a mode of centralization. It presents itself as a closed space determined by static points and positions, such as borders. It forces people living within the borders of its state to perceive its territory according to prefixed notions about the structure of its space. This is, for instance, done by the construction of geographical maps that show the hierarchy of places and cities that constitute a country: the capital, the village, centre and periphery. The map plots known and unknown regions onto a grid, allowing one to navigate oneself through space. Travelling across a country then means that one would go from one point to another by predetermining a route with a fixed starting point and a fixed terminus. Being in the striated space of the territory of the nation-state thus does not allow one to move through it spontaneously, but incites one to do this in accordance with the grid of stable elements and trajectories that organize it. The logic by which the state performs its space is the logic of territorializing, the logic of annexing spaces and structuring them in consonance with the forms and elements that determine its own plane of organization. The territorial space of the nation-state is thus a striated space par excellence.

The emergence of the internet introduced a radically different way of being in space that can be understood in accordance with Deleuze's notion of the smooth. The digital realm of the internet is formed by free-floating flows of data that do not move in a specific direction; it is formed by the constant exchange of information via Twitter, Facebook or Email. These data do not simulate a movement of centralization, but rather, one of decentralization. Thereby the space of the internet deterritorializes the territorialized space produced by the nation-state. The realm of the internet continually changes as there is an incessant fluctuation of websites going offline while others are being born.⁴⁰ So, digital space is subjugated to an on-going variation in form, composition and size. There is a continuous change in the "surface" of the web; digital space does not know an inside or an outside, a beginning or an end, but creates a sense of continuity. Being in the digital realm provided by the internet therefore means that one is subject to a constant flux of data and information. It does not allow one to position oneself in space by structuring it according to stable objects and forms, but incites one to move along with the flexible dynamics, motions and forces that constitute it. It is impossible to navigate oneself through digital space by setting out a route along already formed material objects and benchmarks. Rather, one "surfs" with the free-floating flows of data

⁴⁰ Stephanie Pappas, 'How Big is the Internet, Really?', website *Live Science*: <https://www.livescience.com/54094-how-big-is-the-internet.html> (accessed 1 June 2017).

that allow new forms – websites, images, URL-codes – to come into being. Thereby the internet foregrounds a constant becoming of form. This deterritorializing dynamic of the internet unfolds the striation of national territories in smooth space. The digital realm provided by the internet can thereby be described as being a smooth space in nature.

However, it could be stated that in the past couple of decades the smooth and the striated have increasingly become intertwined with one another. This on the one hand has to do with the increasing striation of the smooth space provided by the internet and, on the other, with the smoothing of the striated, territorialized space produced by the nation-state. As I have described in the first chapter of this thesis, the nation-state has started to striate, or control, the internet by developing new forms of digital surveillance through which it is able to regulate and track online data traffic. These advanced forms of surveillance, however, have come into being because the state appropriated the smooth structure of online space – in order to reclaim its controlling power. By governing the circulation of online data, state surveillance has extended its reach and flexibility. The striating force of the state thereby does not manifest itself anymore as centralized and as situated in a demarcated territory, but has taken a more decentralized form, connected to the free-floating form of online data. The space of the nation-state thereby has been transformed from an enclosed territorialized space to a deterritorialized space with its own free-floating control. This space could be described as one that is striated very smoothly; a space that aims for striation, but with the flexible means provided by the smooth. This smooth striation leads to a complex dynamic in which flows of striation do not manifest themselves according to a stable grid of centralization, but rather, by a movement of constant decentralization. Because of this, it is difficult for people to determine their position in society; they cannot position themselves anymore in relation to stable and centralized notions of power, such as the government. But, they find themselves in a complex network in which flows of striation and control constantly move and overlap. Therefore people lose their overview of the way in which (public) space is organized and structured, which makes it hard for them to get an understanding of their position in this space. The fusion of the striated and the smooth, introduced by the intermingling of state control and the internet's infrastructure, thus complicates one's navigation in (public) space.

I would like to state that art can help us understand this complex sense of space we find ourselves in. Rick Dolphijn in his article 'The revelation of a world that was always already there: the creative act as occupation' describes this potential of art by stating that art can open up new worlds, new perceptual realities.⁴¹ Art can do this by "occupying" the world as we know it. Art territorializes

⁴¹ Rick Dolphijn, 'The Revelation of a World that was always already there: The creative act as an occupation', in: Braidotti, Rosi, Dolphijn, Rick (ed.), *This Deleuzian Century. Art, Activism, Life*, Leiden/ Boston 2015, pp. 185-206.

nature, after which it deterritorializes those concepts that structure and striate it. Thereby art undoes the categorizations that we usually tend to use to perceive the world around us. Or in other words, it “exhausts” striation. From there on art creates a new theory of abstraction through which a completely new world, or perceptual reality, arises. This artistic reality does not refer to a representation of anything outside the artwork itself. Rather, it is formed by the event of art itself, during which art captures and reveals those tendencies and concepts that we take for granted when conceiving the world. Thereby it brings to light those things that usually remain unheard and unseen; it shows us a world that was always already there but that we did not notice before. Crucially, art does not do this by critiquing, or opposing categories, but by affirming them. From there on it turns passive, subjective forces into creative ones. Dolphijn shortly mentions that in a world that is increasingly shaped by “the digital”, art can also occupy nature digitally. However, the exact way in which art could open up new perceptual fields departing from the digital is not clearly elaborated by Dolphijn. Furthermore, he does not explain what distinguishes the digital occupation of art from the material, or natural occupation of art.

Rather, Nick Srnicek in his paper ‘Computational Infrastructures and Aesthetics’ more specifically maps the role of aesthetics and art in allowing individuals to situate themselves within a larger structural, digitalized whole.⁴² He does this by theorizing art along the lines of the concept of “cognitive mapping”. Srnicek states that our contemporary world is formed by a global network of complex technological and neoliberal forces that we cannot grasp as they go far beyond our finite intellectual and cognitive capacities. He describes cognitive maps to be able to map this complex digitalized situation we find ourselves in, in order to make our own world comprehensible to ourselves. Art can create such maps by combining local and global perspectives. The local here refers to our everyday experience, and the global to the abstract image of the set of systems that constitutes our world as a whole. The local phenomenological perceptions function as material *for* the global structural map. By linking these two perspectives art creates a form of abstract knowledge that expands our own individual perspectives and experiences. It creates a structural image of the society we live in and connects it to our own perceptual reality, so that it is made cognitively accessible for us. However, when cognitive mapping limits itself to passive contemplation or representation, Srnicek states, it remains empty. It only takes on political significance when it “generates an active means for leveraging the dynamics of a system”.⁴³ Or in other words, art, through cognitive mapping, should not only aesthetically represent systems of power but should also make them amenable to change. It can do this by both *simulating* those forces that structure

⁴² Nick Srnicek, ‘Computational Infrastructures and Aesthetics’, in: Cox, C., Jaskey, J., Malik, S. (ed.), *Realism Materialism Art*, Berlin 2015, pp. 307-318.

⁴³ Srnicek 2015 (footnote 42), p. 310.

society, and from there on to manipulate or *modulate* them into an alternative system. Art then maps the overview of a complex system and thereby makes it open for transformation from within. In this sense, Srnicek considers art to have the capacity to design means to begin thinking and altering the dominant systems that structure and determine society. Art should create models that generate an understanding of how to take apart and rebuild these systems. In doing so, it can invite viewers to take part in the development of new ways to act upon and to navigate themselves through society. Srnicek thus describes art as mapping the systems that constitute contemporary society and from there on as making these systems amenable to modulation and action. Thereby he theorizes the active position that art can take within the increasingly complex public space we live in.

So, our mode of being in space has changed because of the intermingling of striated and smooth space. In contemporary public space forces and systems are not anymore predominantly striated or smooth, but are rather striated very smoothly. The fragmented and deterritorialized space that emerges in this sense, complicates people's capacity to navigate and position themselves in space. Art could help us understand this complex sense of space by affirming and simulating the forces that structure it and thereby by making them perceptible to us. Dolphijn states that art thereby can make visible unnoticed and unseen forces. But, Srnicek, more radically, states that art can actually modulate flows in the direction of the development of an alternative system. Contrary to Ziarek, whose theory I have discussed in the previous chapter, Srnicek then theorizes art at the center of society. Whereas Ziarek describes art as an event that exclusively exists within the realm of non-power, isolated from our powered society, Srnicek places art *within* society by giving art the agency to actively contribute to transforming and changing the dominant structures that determine public space. Instead of opening up a new form of relating, that cannot be recognized in terms of the logic of the society in which we are situated, Srnicek places art at the center of this logic and allows it to restructure and modulate it. Thereby Srnicek's conception of art allows me to conceptualize the position of art *within* society, or more specifically, within the society of control.

3.2 *Autonomy Cube*: Positioning in Space

In this part I will describe the way in which *Autonomy Cube* positions itself in the spatial dynamic that I have outlined above and how it thereby functions as a “cognitive map”, described by Nick Srnicek, that allows us to get an understanding of the complex (spatial) situation we find ourselves in. From there on I will theorize the active position *Autonomy Cube* takes within Gilles Deleuze’s notion of the society of control.

When we read *Autonomy Cube* through the notion of cognitive mapping, as elaborated by Srnicek, it becomes clear that the cube spatially maps the society of control in which it is situated. It does this by embodying the different aspects that together indicate the control society, by which it creates a global image of the situation we find ourselves in. The cube does this by giving access to a Tor network and by being situated in the space of an art institution. In this context, the global network of Tor specifically signifies the presence of the society of control, as it allows people to protect themselves from state surveillance. It does this by allowing them to remain anonymous online, through which they cannot be tracked by surveillance practices used by the state to control its people. *Autonomy Cube*, by placing this network within the space of the art institution, shows that the surveillance practices that together constitute the society of control, have proceeded to determine the practices of art institutions as well. Thereby the cube maps the extent to which the control society is present in our world; It shows us that not only governments, but also art spaces are involved with its controlling and surveilling logic. The artwork translates this global map of the extensive presence of the society of control to our local position within the art institution. The work mainly does this by taking the form of a sculpture that can be looked at. By visualizing the Tor network in the form of a minimalist sculpture, its worldwide network is made locally perceptible and accessible for us. Furthermore, its presence in the art institution makes us aware of the need for us to make use of Tor in order to protect ourselves from the – mostly invisible – surveillance techniques present in the public spaces we enter. It makes us aware of the far-reaching control that structures the society we live in. Thereby the artwork makes the complex essence of the control society cognitively graspable to visitors of the exhibition space. And it makes us understand our position within this society as being one of those citizens that is being surveilled. In this sense, *Autonomy Cube* connects the structural image of the control society we live in with our local phenomenological experience. It expands our perceptual reality by giving us an insight in our position in the increasingly complex public space we are in. The cube thereby maps the situation we are in and makes it cognitively accessible to us.

Autonomy Cube does not generate this cognitive map by immediately creating an alternative way of relating, that would challenge or reveal the dominant system in which it is situated. Rather, the cube first affirms the structures it is embedded in. It, first of all, does this by affirming the logic of the art institution, which is one of the public spaces part of the society of control, by taking the form of a more or less traditional sculpture, placed on a pedestal. The form of the artwork thereby does not critique, but rather, affirms the traditional function of art institutions and museums as places where one can contemplate art objects with a certain aesthetic distance. It affirms the hegemonic mode of presenting and looking at art, that is still propagated by many art institutions. Furthermore, it makes use of the infrastructure of the internet, which is the same infrastructure the control society uses to distribute its practices of control. It is namely through the development of digital and online surveillance techniques that different hegemonic practices part of this society have extended their reach and flexibility. By affirming these structures the cube appropriates the mechanisms that together form the society of control. It territorializes the fragmented and deterritorialized sense of space that underlies the control society. In terms of Dolphijn, it occupies the world as we know it. Or as Srnicek would have it, *Autonomy Cube* simulates those forces that constitute and structure the system we are part of.

However, *Autonomy Cube* does not leave it at that. After the simulation, occupation or affirmation of those tendencies and forces that lie at the basis of the society of control, the cube modulates them. The work does not leave these forces as they are, but redirects them into an alternative mode or system. The cube does not merely affirm the traditional hegemony of art institutions as being spaces where people can look at aesthetically formed objects. Rather, and as has been mentioned before in this thesis, the work modulates this hegemony in the direction of a transformation. By placing a Tor network within the exhibition space, the cube namely modifies the space of the art institution. It changes it from a space that aims to mobilize people's behaviour (through commercial surveillance techniques) to a free space that that allows people and artworks the room to freely express themselves without being controlled. Moreover, the cube does make use of the infrastructure of the internet, through which the control society distributes its control, but modulates this infrastructure as it adds a Tor encryption to it – through which people's (online) behaviour cannot be detected by the surveillance practices that constitute the society of control. The practices and mechanisms that are part of the society of control are thus being simulated by the cube, after which it manipulates or modulates them into a different direction. In this case, this is the direction of autonomy; the cube modifies both the art institution and the worldwide infrastructure of the internet into spaces that allow people to express themselves more freely, independent from the logic of the control society. Thereby the autonomy of these public spaces gets restored again.

From territorializing or occupying specific mechanisms that constitute the society of control, *Autonomy Cube* thus deterritorializes them into a potential alternative system that holds more space for freedom of expression and autonomy.

Autonomy Cube specifically invites viewers to take part in the modulation described above. It invites visitors of the art institution who contemplate the artwork to enter the space the cube provides: the virtual space of Tor in which one can remain anonymous online [fig. 7]. Thereby the cube allows people to take matters into their own hands. It introduces them with a network that is there for them to use, and that is there for them to reclaim their freedom of expression – without this expression being tracked and mapped out by surveillance techniques. The space *Autonomy Cube* gives access to then allows people to redirect external flows of control in the direction of self-determination. The work does not impose a vision onto a public but provides people with the possibility to take action themselves. By making use of the Tor network and perhaps by deciding to host a Tor relay in the future, through which Tor could expand its reach, people can rebuild and reorganize the structures that constitute society themselves, the cube here only provides the space for them to do so. The artwork thus presents people the means to reshape the world they are living in and incites them to think of new ways to act upon the political reality of this world. Thereby the cube envisions a possible future system. In connecting the structural imagine of the society we are in with our local position in it, and in envisioning possible new ways to alter the logic of this society, *Autonomy Cube* functions as an interface, connecting the global to the local, translating the intelligible into the practical. The aesthetics of *Autonomy Cube* then lie in its mediation between the complex dynamics that lie at the basis of the society of control and the possible ways in which we could act upon and alter them.

It could thus be stated that *Autonomy Cube* maps and makes visible the society of control by installing a Tor network in the space of the art institution. Thereby it makes this society open for transformation from within. It especially invites visitors of the art institution to take part in and to contribute to this transformation by thinking about and actually making use of the Tor network. *Autonomy Cube* is able to do this as it plays with the mechanisms that are at the basis of the society of control. It affirms, or simulates them after which it modulates them into an alternative system. By first affirming certain practices part of the control society, *Autonomy Cube* does not represent anything outside itself but actually embodies reality. The cube embodies the infrastructure of the internet by functioning as a hotspot that visitors of the art institution can actually use. From there on it manipulates this infrastructure as it adds a Tor encryption to it. The artwork then uses the same infrastructure that is at the core of the contemporary control society in order to manipulate and alter it from within. *Autonomy Cube* positions itself in the society of control by not representing it,

but by actively contributing to rebuilding and restructuring those aspects that are at the center of its logic. It does not withdraw from the dominant logic that constitutes it, but attempts to reorganize and reformulate this logic. The cube is thereby not at the side-lines of, but takes a position *within* the society of control. It functions as an interface, bringing together the larger structural map of those forces that constitute the contemporary control society and manipulating these forces in such a way that they are made amenable to change. The cube makes this modulation perceptible to people who contemplate the artwork through which they are invited to further bring it into practice. *Autonomy Cube*, by installing a Tor hotspot in the space of the art institution and by presenting it to us in the form of a sculpture, then actively creates a condition for us to understand and change our position in the contemporary control society we are situated in.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have made an attempt to show the way in which the artwork *Autonomy Cube* positions itself in the contemporary control society, as theorized by Gilles Deleuze in his famous article 'Postscript on the Societies of Control'. I have done this by outlining the complex spatial dynamic that lies at the basis of the society of control. Therefore I have first theorized the space of the nation-state, its territory, that forms the core of the society of control. In order to map the space of the state, I have conceptualized three different phases its territory went through in the run up to the emergence of the society of control: its performance as an enclosed territory, performing itself according to a univocal sense of time provided by the construction of a national narrative, the disruption of this territorial unity of the state by the online space of the internet and, lastly, the confliction of the internet's open space and the state's natural urge for control in the control society. This has led me to conclude that although the digital space of the internet at first disrupts the enclosed and unifying space of the state, and thereby also the power it derives from it, in the control society the state reclaims its power by finding ways to control the fluidity of the infrastructure of the internet. It does this mainly by further developing its surveillance practices, that by governing the circulation of big data have extended their reach and flexibility. The control of the nation-state thereby takes on another advanced façade that corresponds to the free-floating flows of data on the internet. Thereby the territory of the nation-state had transformed from an enclosed space to a dispersed space with its own free-floating control.

In the second chapter of my thesis I have theorized the art institution, in which *Autonomy Cube* is situated, along the lines of the aforementioned spatial development of the territory of the state. This has allowed me to show that from performing its space as an enclosed space, exhibiting art as distinct from the world outside of the gallery, the space of the art institution has transformed into a more open space that incorporates feedback from people outside via digital platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. By making use of commercial surveillance techniques and by launching other digital tools such as apps, art institutions have developed themselves in accordance with the logic of the control society, in which people's data are gathered in order to mobilize them and control their behaviour. Thereby it could be stated that the art institution is one of the spaces part of the nation-state, that functions according to the overarching logic of the society of control. *Autonomy Cube* positions itself within this development by taking a critical position towards the hegemony of the art institution, inspired by the discourse of institutional critique. The cube does this by not merely opposing itself to the institution's enclosed hegemony, but by transforming its space from within, restoring the institution's function as being a space open for critical expression for both

people and artworks. The cube does this by installing a Tor relay in the institution's space through which the control practiced by the art institution gets disrupted. The cube then positions itself in the society of control by not critiquing the art institution, but by resisting the logic of the system it is part of. The artwork thereby detaches the institution from the overarching logic propagated by the control society. It thus does not oppose itself to broadly understood manifestations of power and control, such as the hegemony of the art institution, but transforms the politics that are built into the institution's infrastructure.

In the third part of my thesis I have more elaborately mapped the spatial dynamic that underlies the control society, formed by the confliction between the fluid, decentralizing infrastructure of the internet and the more traditional stable sense of space provided by the state. Thereby I came to the conclusion that the spatiality underlying the contemporary control society is striated very smoothly; it is structured by the controlling logic propagated by the state, but with the flexible means provided by the infrastructure of the internet. Because of this, it is difficult for people to determine their position in society as they find themselves in a complex network in which forces of control constantly move and overlap. People therefore lose their overview of the way in which public space is organized, which makes it hard for them to get an understanding of their position in it. *Autonomy Cube* here helps people comprehend the complex spatial situation they find themselves in as it maps the implications of the society of control and makes it cognitively accessible to people in the art institution. The cognitive map the cube creates by placing a Tor network within the art institution in the form of a sculpture, reveals the ubiquity of the control society and makes people realize it is about them; they are each one of those people that are spied upon. Through the Tor network, the artwork presents them possible new ways to act upon the political reality in which they are situated. The cube then does not withdraw from the logic of the society of control, but positions itself at the center of this logic in order to rebuild and modulate it from within. *Autonomy Cube* then does not merely aesthetically represent the world it is situated in. Rather, it is part of this world and part of the political reality that shapes it. In this sense, the cube goes beyond the more traditional notion of art as an aesthetic object representing reality. Rather, the artwork embodies reality and actively positions itself in it. Deleuze, while describing the coming into being of the society of control, states that: "There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons." I would like to state that *Autonomy Cube*, as an artwork that goes beyond our traditional understanding of art, could be considered to be one of those new weapons that does not only challenge, but actively restructure the logic of the society of control we are situated in. It is namely this artwork, and the active position it takes in society, that incited me to think that an overall shift might have occurred in the ontological framework of art; a shift from being representative and

existing in a parallel world to being more active and taking a more directly engaged position in society – an ontological shift provoked by the transformation in space, from static and stable to decentralizing and dynamic.

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Fig. 1: Trevor Paglen, Jacob Appelbaum, *Autonomy Cube*, 2014, Plexiglas box with computer components. Photo: <<http://res.cloudinary.com/bombmagazine/image/upload/v1456779998/109007209-02292016-paglen-bomb-05.jpg>> (accessed 26 June 2017).



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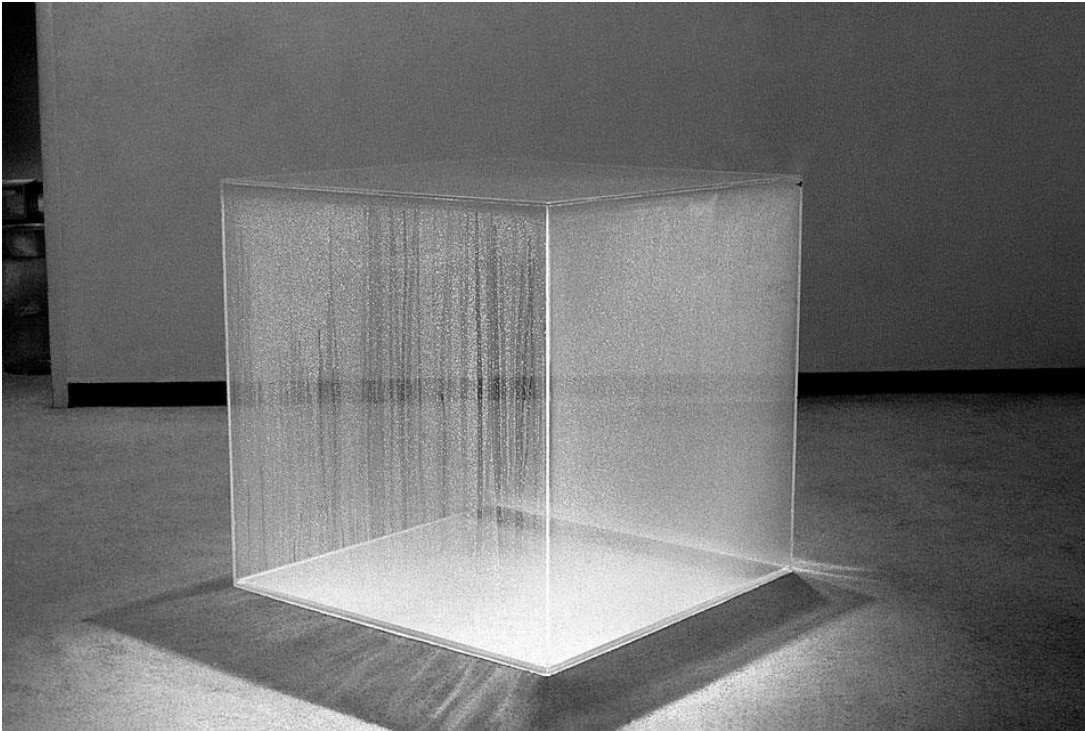


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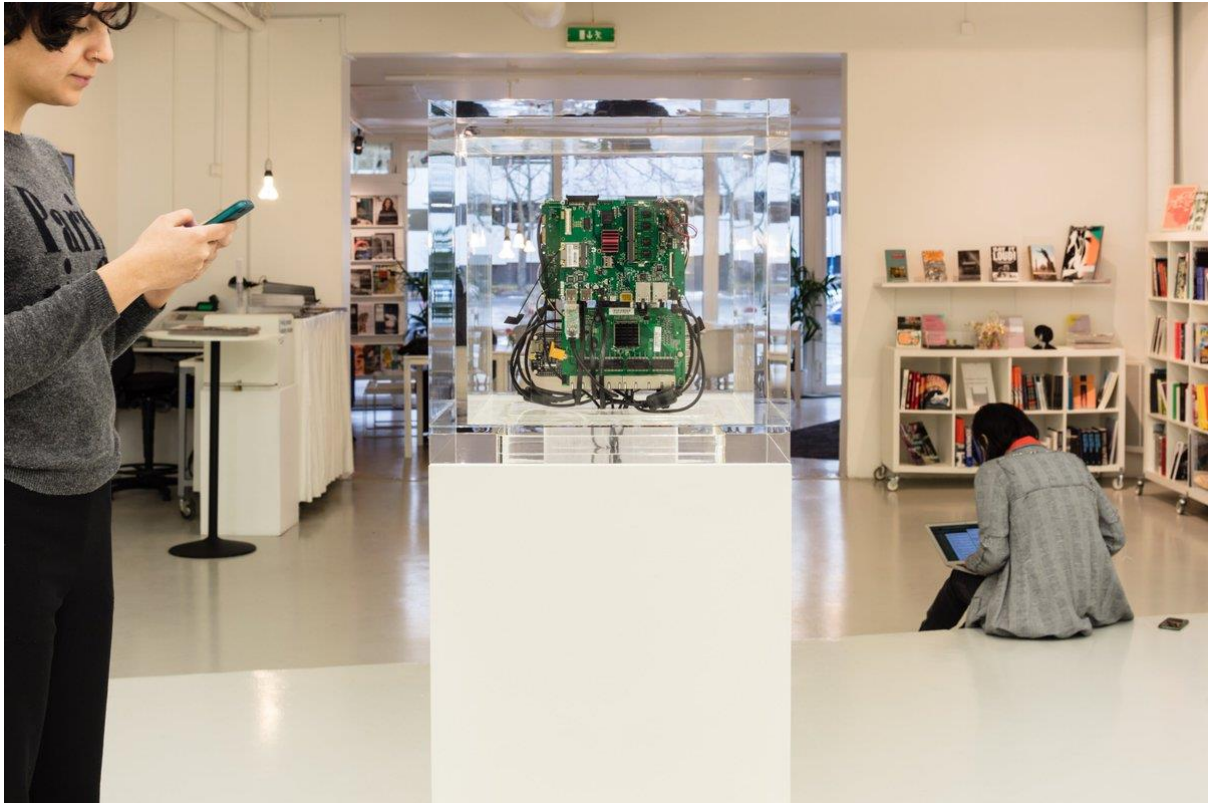


Fig. 7: Trevor Paglen, Jacob Appelbaum, *Autonomy Cube*, 2014, Plexiglas box with computer components, exhibition view at Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm. Photo: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/C4dpfQWMAAWCtn.jpg> (accessed 26 June 2017).