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'What is puberty, then?' Smartphones and Tumblr images as de/re-territorialisations in an upper secondary school classroom

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Manuscript title: “What is puberty, then?” Smartphones and Tumblr images as de/re-territorialisations in an upper secondary school classroom

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Abstract:

In this paper we seek an understanding of the part mobile phone use plays in the capitalist assemblages present in school classrooms. Capitalism is approached in the vein of Gilles Deleuze’s and Félix Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, through the continuous movement of de- and re-territorialisation. The empirical grounding is a wide study on mobile phone use conducted at an upper secondary school in Finland. A particular focus of this paper is one psychology lesson on puberty and the highlighting of ways in which territories such as puberty are challenged in the school life of young people through their mobile phone use in class. Analysing a student’s Tumblr photo stream, we show how smartphones challenge the existing territorialities in a classroom. We locate three central deterritorialising movements: in relation to the physical space of the classroom; to the affective space of the classroom; and to the notion of body in puberty. We conclude that mobile phone use simultaneously both matters to students intimately and channels flows of capitalism at school.

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”What is puberty, then?” Smartphones and Tumblr images as de/re-territorialisations in an upper secondary school classroom

”What must be compared in each case are the movements of deterritorialization and the processes of reterritorialization which appear in an assemblage.” (Deleuze & Parnet 2007, 134)

Intro

This paper presents a mapping of various de- and re-territorialisations taking place through students’ mobile phone use. The grounding of this mapping is a wide empirical study conducted at an upper secondary school in Finland. A particular focus of this paper is one psychology lesson on puberty. The objective is to highlight ways in which puberty materialises in the everyday school life of young people through their mobile phone use. The paper analyses ways in which phone use simultaneously both matters to students, and channels flows of capitalism at school.

The material grounding for the analyses and discussion in this paper is the recorded mobile phone use of one student, Maria. A particular focus is on her use of photoblog application Tumblr. Methodologically the research is ethnographic. Taking inspiration from Vinciane Despret (2015), the researchers seek to approach the phenomenon with openness and generative curiosity towards the not-yet-known. The venues in which puberty unfolds at school, in the classroom, and in the body, are filled with various escapes that confuse, complicate and conflict these spaces through the use of phones and the infiltrating flows of capitalism. This leaves the researchers conflicted and irritated; on one hand, ready to defend young people’s multimodal ways of taking control of their lives, and on the other hand recognising the subjectifying capitalist forces which permeate young people’s lives ubiquitously.

The article approaches capitalism in the vein of Gilles Deleuze’s and Félix Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, through continuous movements of de- and re-territorialisation. It looks at how life in classrooms is transversed by these movements. Along with Anna Tsing, the article proposes that contemporary capitalism could be analysed through *contaminations* that problematise the ideas of a pure inside or outside, and show on the one hand how we are made by our encounters, and on the other, how capitalism seeks to entwine itself into these encounters.

Methodology and Data Production

Inspired by Despret’s (2015) idea of research as visiting, as a work of persisting curiosity instead of knowing ahead, we wanted to approach mobile phone use in school, a phenomenon widely described and judged as detrimental (Barnwell 2016; Doward 2015). Despret encourages us to a practice of finding interest in things often deemed already known; and of asking questions which also interest the ones involved – opening up to what they find worthwhile and proceeding with that.

The ethnographic data was produced with the aim of gaining knowledge on the everyday school life of the student participants. We visited two Finnish upper-secondary schools, one in a small town in central Finland and the other in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Altogether seven students took part in the research as focus students whose school days and phone use were followed in total for 18 days during the years 2015-2016. The produced video ethnographic data consists of 113 hours of classroom recordings from 15 different taught subjects, and 18

hours of recess recordings. Two researchers accompanied each student, one following them with a video camera and the other mirroring their smartphone screen with a laptop. The focus students had an application on their smartphone that allowed us to see and record their smartphone screens during the school day. The application was student-controlled, offering them the possibility of turning the mirroring on and off whenever they wished. As researchers, this extraordinary access gave us a chance to visit the events unfolding on a smartphone during a school day. In this article, our empirical focus is one of the students, Maria, and 75 minutes of audio-visual material from one lesson.

Due to the intimate access students granted us on their phones, we wanted to carefully consider the ethical aspects of the research setup. In accordance to the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics (2009, 6-7), the personal consent of the students was adequate since they were all over the age of 15. All the parents were informed of the research and the schools granted us a permission to conduct the research. In addition to consenting to participate in the research and always having the opportunity to decide whether screen mirroring was engaged or not, the specific clips we wanted to analyse and use publicly were shown to the students. They then had the opportunity to decide whether those clips could be shown in public, or images from them published in articles. As for copyright, the nature of Tumblr makes it difficult to assign exact copyright. Images are shared by thousands of users who do not typically produce their own material but recirculate and rework existing images. As Renninger (2015) notes, Tumblr usually displays the name of the first poster of a given image as “source”. Where this information has been available, we have reproduced it. Adopting a practice suggested by Gonzales-Polledo (2016), we refer to the bloggers by their chosen usernames. However, all identifying information on Maria has been removed.

Analysing Data

In our data work we kept returning to a particular lesson and the images flicked through in one student’s Tumblr photo stream. We focused on *mobile phone use* rather than phones as objects, trusting Deleuze (1995) in that machines do not tell anything in themselves but need to be looked at as parts of assemblages; as parts of life in a world permeated and perforated by capitalism (Tsing 2015). On the lesson we analyse here, phone use functions as a *knot* (Ingold 2011) in our mapping of the assemblage composed of overlapping elements. Students, desks, classroom, teacher’s voice and speech, the national core curriculum and its rendering of psychology, images on the phone screen, discussions circling in the room, the researcher standing in the corner with a video camera, and another one recording the screen outside in the corridor all make up this assemblage. By analysing the material and discursive elements present during the lesson – and available to us at the moment of writing – we craft an understanding of the part mobile phone use plays in the capitalist assemblages present in schools.

Assemblages don’t just gather lifeways; they make them. Thinking through assemblage urges us to ask: How do gatherings sometimes become ‘happenings’ that is, greater than the sum of their parts? [...] Assemblages cannot hide from capital and the state; they are sites for watching how political economy works. If capitalism has no teleology, we need to see what comes together. (Tsing 2015, 23)

The images viewed from smartphones are considered as parts of the assemblage of a lesson. We logged the teacher’s speech with simultaneously appearing images from students’ mobile phone screens as well as with our own observations made during the lesson and from viewing the audio-visual materials. The themes and intensities picked up from this logging for this paper

are a selection that we present as highlighting phone use in schools as simultaneously liberating and heavily infused with capitalist flows of consumption.

Territorialisations as a Theory

In order to understand the forces at play within a given timespace, we have taken advantage of the idea of territoriality (Deleuze & Guattari 2003). In our understanding, territoriality has to do with the concrete or abstract building of a territory, claiming an area for being in a certain way. As a default, the territories within a classroom are claimed explicitly by the teacher and the institution they represent, or the power mechanisms of the school. At the same time, however, territories are constantly redefined and challenged, de-territorialised by students seeking spaces for being in other ways, for example. The particular territorial tugs and pulls we focus on in this paper circle around the territory of puberty, and how students de- and re-territorialise it with mobile phones. We approach the classroom through Deleuze & Guattari's (1987) concept of *assemblage* (fr. *agencement*), which gives an opportunity to see the classroom as a temporary collection of intersecting and shifting agencies and power relations – as something that is constantly on the move and of which this analysis can only offer a temporary freeze-frame.

In a school classroom territoriality resonates with disciplinary power mechanisms that seek to divide, organise, serialise and individualise (Foucault 1995; Deleuze 1995). As Foucault points out, in a disciplinary structure the ideal subject functions as a number in a series, interchangeable with others. With its straight rows and columns, and organised lines of sight, the classroom still operates according to disciplinary logics. In practice, this means for example that the teacher in front of the room can see everyone, and every student can see the teacher but not each other. Mobile phones challenge the existing territorialities in a classroom. Students using phones are continuously re-negotiating the boundaries of a classroom, connecting it with other important spaces of their lives. As Richardson (2014) points out, this changes balances of power, meaning for example that teachers have less control over the content circulated in the classroom. They have practically no way of knowing what happens on students' screens. Students themselves, on the other hand, often share their screens with each other and are broadly aware of the digital spaces the others inhabit. In this way, smartphones and social media have re-defined classroom spaces by introducing elements that are shared between the students, but not easily accessible to the teachers. The students have found common elements that the teachers are not familiar with – and often have no control over.

Our basic assumption is that there is friction between the territorialities framed by disciplinary power mechanisms and those introduced by mobile phones. In Deleuze's thinking, power works by organizing desire (Deleuze 2007, 125). In the assemblage of the classroom, desire is organised according to the disciplinary logics Foucault describes. De-territorialisation is the disruption of this organisation of desire. In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze & Guattari emphasise that capitalism functions by multiplying and enhancing desires, by liberating *but only to a certain extent*. This de-territorialisation, the breaking up of codes and norms always reaches a limit where it turns into re-territorialisation. To paraphrase Deleuze & Guattari's formulation, de-territorialised desires must be identified, codified and re-territorialised. You can have freedom of consumption, but not freedom from capitalism.

”Civilized modern societies are defined by processes of decoding and deterritorialisation. But *what they deterritorialise with one hand, they reterritorialise with the other.*” (Deleuze & Guattari 2003, 257, italics in original)

”Capitalism is continually surpassing its own limits, always deterritorializing further [...], but continually confronting limits and barriers that are interior and immanent to itself, and that, precisely because they are immanent, let themselves be overcome only provided they are reproduced on a wider scale (always more reterritorialization – local, world-wide, planetary).” (Deleuze & Guattari 2003, 259).

Capitalism hinges on breaking down boundaries and searching for new spaces to extend to. As Deleuze and Guattari (2003, 258) write, ”flows of capital would willingly dispatch themselves to the moon if the capitalist State were not there to bring them back to earth”. But capitalism cannot do without boundaries and borders. While it breaks them down in one place, it builds them back up in another. Today clear physical borders are losing their primacy and are substituted by amorphous digital or virtual borders and control zones that however can be just as restricting or deadly. In Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis, the continuous oscillation between movement and boundaries, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, is a central feature of capitalism that is always facing the following dilemma:

”What can be done so that the decoding and the deterritorialisation constitutive of the system do not make it flee through one end or another that would escape the axiomatic and throw the machine into a panic?” (Deleuze & Guattari 2003, 260)

In our case: how to make sure that the flow of desire and de-territorialisation away from the disciplinary classroom does not cause the whole system to explode and the students to completely abandon the classroom? From the viewpoint of the institutions, re-territorialisation is very much necessary. And, as Deleuze and Guattari often point out, de-territorialised desires can become chaotic, leading to suffering and what they call ”black holes” (Deleuze & Guattari 1994). Therefore, we do not want to speak against all reterritorialisations as such, but look at the ways they take place in this particular classroom assemblage.

We approach capitalism through the idea of *flows*. Instead of seeing capitalism as a constant field or in terms of inside/outside, a flow-centric approach focuses on movement and its modulation. This is evident in Foucault’s (2007) analysis on sovereign and disciplinary power, and what he calls mechanisms of security. According to Foucault, the novelty in mechanisms of security is that they do not seek to prevent movement or flows altogether, but to modulate them in order to minimise their negative and maximise their positive effects. Movement is considered inevitable and the objective is to let it happen while reaping possible benefits from the movement itself. Contemporary capitalist production has increasingly been said to focus on benefiting from processes that have originated elsewhere (Viren & Vähämäki 2016, Tsing 2015). Capitalist production increasingly does not – and perhaps even cannot – create the infrastructure that makes production possible, but flows through spaces created outside capitalist production, collecting surplus value. Tsing (2015, 63) calls this *salvage accumulation*: “taking advantage of value produced without capitalist control”. This offers a fruitful starting point also for the analysis of children’s’ classroom activities. While it is hardly possible to describe the school as being completely outside of capitalist control, neither can it be said to constitute a traditional site of production. We see the novelty of smartphone technologies precisely in their quest to attach themselves to children’s sociality and everyday lives, monetizing them in various ways. In this way, we aim to follow flows of capitalism in school space, entangling with students’ lives.

Deleuze & Guattari urge us to “make a map, not a tracing” (1987, 12). We have taken this as an encouragement to not seeking to replicate events, tracing them in order to create an exact copy, but to allow them their unique and singular nature which can be mapped with the proviso that a map is never an exact re-creation. Here, mapping gives us an opportunity to emphasise the lines and movements we find central, while recognising that we cannot capture the event in its entirety. What it shows in this particular instance is that students’ phone use coincides and overlaps with traditional school activities. In what follows, we locate some of these movements during a psychology lesson on puberty. Beginning with the straightforward physical classroom space and ending with the more complex pubertetic body, the movements set new communication technologies and disciplinary school mechanisms on a collision course.

De/re-territorialising the Physical Classroom Space

The very first movement of de/re-territorialisation that opened up to our visiting was perhaps the most obvious: the contesting and recreating of the physical classroom space. We are especially interested in the ways in which Maria expands the physical classroom space through her image flow.

In presenting our analysis, we have aimed to capture an effect of simultaneity typical to phone use in classrooms, where the screen contents students are using and producing often coincide or clash with other classroom events. We have wanted to preserve feelings of over-abundance and befuddlement – of being bombarded with competing and often contradictory information. To this effect, we have interweaved analysis with screen images and teacher’s speech on puberty.

Maria sits in the back row of a psychology classroom in a small town in Western Finland. It is March 2015 and there are about 15 students in this rectangular room. Students, 16 and 17 years old, sit by desks arranged into three queues, each of which has two desks next to each other. One of the long walls in the room has large windows with a view to a suburban residential area where one can see trees and houses. In the front of the class there is a projection board, in the back there are bookshelves. A researcher is standing by the side of the classroom with a video camera pointed at Maria. This particular psychology lesson lasts 75 minutes which students spend sitting squarely at their desks except for a ten-minute period of group discussion that takes place around the 30-minute mark. Looking at these elements inside and outside of the classroom that make up the territoriality of the lesson, we feel that the images in Maria’s Tumblr feed challenge them and express a different territoriality. Below we see some of the images: a colourful sunset; a summertime tropical lagoon; palm trees, the ocean and a beach hotel; and the turquoise surface of Endeavour Crater on Mars. (Figure 1)

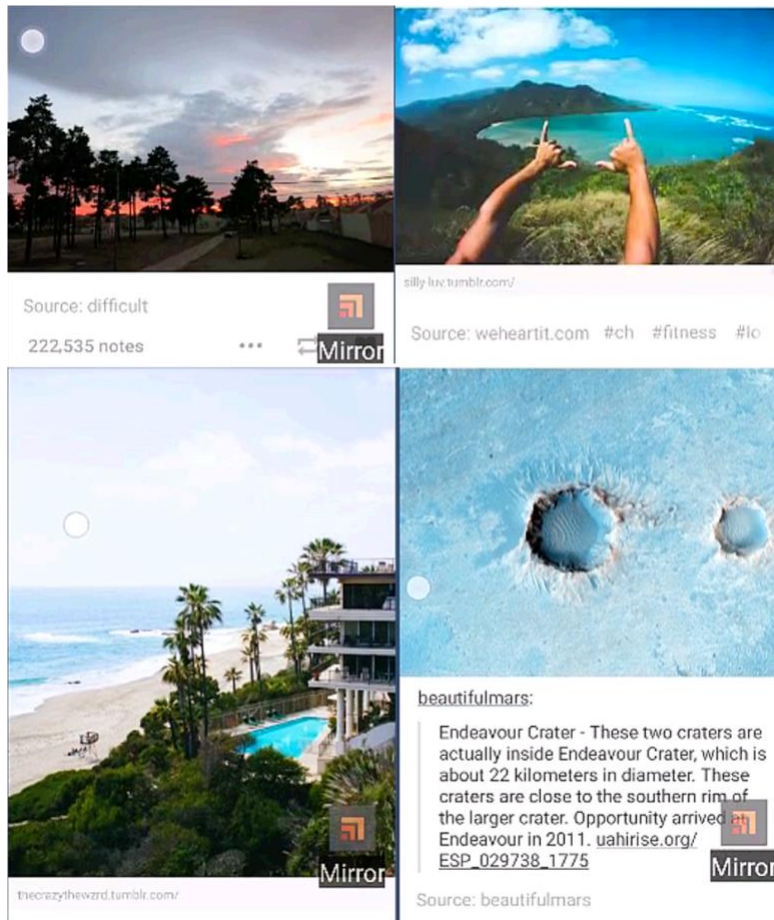


Figure 1: Sceneries in Maria's Tumblr feed. Source: difficult (top-left); weheartit.com (top-right); thecrazythewzrd (bottom-left); beautifulmars (bottom-right).

The images expand the still snowy, early spring temporality of Finland. Many are from popular tourist destinations, however containing no people. They show an empty space that can be appropriated for many purposes – a space without a definite use. The fact that the spaces can be used for anything sets them in contrast with school space that is *functional*. Chairs, tables, corridors, cafeterias, and classrooms are designed as means to specific ends. School life takes place in these functional spaces that the students pass through, moving from one to the next (Deleuze 2005). Maria's images offer a space of freedom, a de-territorialised space where things have not yet been set in place, inviting the viewer to fill the space with their own intentions.

The images are also images of consumption. They present locations as consumable, offering transparent and approachable sceneries. The pictures are sharp and well lit, portraying sceneries without mystery or hostility. Remarkably they also completely lack people and animate life, or anything that could push against an uncontrolled (consumer) freedom. The surroundings serve as a backdrop for the Western tourist who can go explore them as blank slates.

Reading the images together with concepts of de/re-territorialisation, we find forces that deterritorialise from school. They move towards a more open space, territories that are at once sunnier and warmer but also functionally less defined, spaces that are not marked and permeated by vectors of disciplinary power. These deterritorialising forces intertwine with reterritorialising movements that seek to bring the desire to get away back into the sphere of

consumption – the desire to flee is framed as an object that can be bought, as a trip that can offer an escape. This desire is reterritorialised towards one of the norms of contemporary Western life – the idea that travelling is good and leads to personal growth and cultural understanding (Greif 2016).

De-territorialising the Affective Classroom Space

After and during visiting the physical space of the classroom, we turned our attention to the de/re-territorialisations of the affective space. Massumi (2002) defines affect as something that moves between bodies, as an undefined virtuality. Affects are forces and impulses moving in the classroom, also hitting our bodies as researchers. We read quotes shared on Tumblr as affectual deterritorialisations and lines leading out of the classroom. In them, emerges a parallel space that is made possible by the logic of the web, to which one of the quotes alludes: "what if websites had closing hours". They don't, and so can be reached whenever, also during this psychology lesson. In school, timetables and schedules play a central role. Lessons start and end at specified times, and courses move forward in their pre-determined rhythm. The rhythms of the school are set in stone, but the accessibility of websites is fluid.

As Richardson (2014) notes, social media and smartphones often seek to destabilise the institutional form of disciplinary school that functions as the backdrop for also this lesson. We find parallel discourses on school and puberty emerging in the quotes Maria scrolls through. They transform the students from someone sitting in their individualised place to someone connecting outside the classroom with other students, sharing similar experiences. They express a shared desire and point to familiar effects of a disciplinary institution, such as the imposed mandate to enjoy learning. "Don't judge a book by its cover. My math textbook has a picture of someone enjoying themselves on it. I did not enjoy myself at all". The quote implies that there are also others out there who have not enjoyed themselves, and refuse to take joy from being forced to study. (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Quotes. Source: unknown (top-left); pokabu (top-right); sassystephy33 (bottom-left); sadbeautifultragic (bottom-right).

We also find the desire to drop out and to be free from the tediousness of school: "My grades are actually rly good for someone who has the urge to drop out of school every 25 min". The quote highlights typical aspects of being a 'professional pupil', to borrow from Elina Lahelma and Tuula Gordon (1997): the urge to be free, not being interested and still navigating successfully in the institution. A professional pupil is one who is sufficiently uninterested, but

also able to achieve good grades and not actually planning to drop out. In the next quote, a further deterritorialisation takes us to a graduation speech, to the final day of school, when one could finally expose how they really feel about the people they've been forced to get along with. In addition to being a typical effect of a disciplinary institution, the quote also evokes a powerlessness connected with childhood, of not being fully able to choose the people you spend your time with.

These deterritorialisations open up a shared affective space that re-negotiates school spatiality. Interestingly, as things take place on a social media platform, reterritorialisations of another kind are instantly put in motion. Tumblr has gained a special place amongst social media platforms because of its greater privacy. Renninger (2015) summarises features that are central to Tumblr's specificity: user profiles do not play a significant role; users seldom operate under their real names; the visual layout of the blogs can be modified; public follower lists are rare; textual searching is difficult; and comments are not visible to everyone. The information published, while being permanently available and easily replicable, is usually not tied to individual identities, unlike in most social media. Therefore "identities on Tumblr are often closeted, collective, obscured, or evanescent" (Renninger 2015, 1523). Tumblr has been seen as a popular site for various counterpublics, and an important vehicle for expression for feminists, LGBT or queer communities (Kanai 2017; Renninger 2015). In our school data, students also viewed Tumblr differently compared to other social media. With regard to Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat, Tumblr had less active users and those who did not use it, described it as slightly nerdish. On the other hand, others explicitly chose Tumblr because it gave them a possibility to express their interests in a more relaxed way.

While perhaps relying less on identities, Tumblr is based on an architecture where attention can be measured through the amount of circulation the posts receive, as Kanai (2017) points out. In general, as emphasised in earlier research (Fuchs 2014; Terranova 2006), social media platforms are based on their users' unpaid digital labour. Tumblr would be nothing without the content its users provide for free. The popularity of a platform and the affective bonds it creates can be turned into profit in two ways: directly, through advertising income, and indirectly, through the valuation of the company on the financial market (Arvidsson & Colleoni 2012). We could say that the collective shared experiences and affects are handed over to a corporation that can temporarily claim ownership of them, and seek to reterritorialise them into the popularity of its platform and increased market value of the company. This logic of turning crowd attention into corporate profit may partly help to explain how some internet companies (such as Snap) that persistently operate on a deficit can be so highly valued. However, the need to be the object of the crowd's affections entails intimate knowledge of its preferences. The companies engage in close surveillance of their users, carefully monitoring their daily activities and how the platforms are used. This intensifying surveillance has long been a major concern (Andrejevic 2002).

De/re-territorialising the Pubertetic Body

Our third de/re-territorialisation engages with corporeality. In the following, we seek to analyse the contradictory and competing ways the human body, specifically a teenage body in puberty, is approached and sketched out. During the lesson the teacher approaches puberty from the perspective of biological changes, hormonal levels and their relationship with nutrition. Simultaneously with this discourse, Maria introduces a different corporeality through her Tumblr stream – one that gives space for sexuality, desire, or pleasure that seem absent from the other discourse.

During the lesson, the teacher says much about the body, but as an image it remains invisible. The sole image of the body the teacher shows is a stick figure in a statistical slide. Despite being invisible, the body is constantly alluded to as something that is implicitly shared by all. However, while the teacher only talks about the body, Maria actively visualises it on her screen, creating a fascinating, corresponding imbalance. Throughout the lesson Maria visits images that offer different readings of bodies than the ones the teacher suggests. We approach this as her creating space for other kinds of bodies and other uses of bodies.

Re-negotiating the Space of the Body

The teacher frames puberty as the body's preparation for having children. Physical changes are placed in a cultural context that explains them in terms of childbearing and –rearing. The changes have a clear purpose in procreation and therefore puberty becomes produced as something that has a definite goal.

”Often we like to think that girls have developed waist, but it’s not really the waist that has changed but what is above and below it, that changes during puberty. And all these changes happen so that the body could prepare itself to be able to carry a child. What happens with hips is that they grow so that we can shelter a foetus. The back, arms, they all exist so you could take care of the baby.” (Teacher)

Explaining puberty in terms of procreation is not an uncommon approach, and it touches on important questions. However, at the same time it also defines the body strongly from the outside. Things happening in the body – in this case, the bodies the students are living in – are given fixed meanings. The body does not get stronger so that one could have fun with it or enjoy it, or for no reason, but because of a clear purpose: taking care of children. We find this especially interesting when comparing it to the bodies circulating on Maria's screen.



Figure 3. Desiring bodies. Source: Chicgarden (left); resign (right).

The first image shows a couple lying on a couch, smiling in each other's arms, the second a shirtless man and a woman clad in underpants and a small top kissing passionately with the man's arms around the woman's midriff. These are desiring bodies that hint at pleasure or sensuality. The same changes happening in puberty that the teacher mentioned above are also

hinted at in these pictures, but from a different angle. No babies are in these photos and the bodies exist for pleasure, desire, or enjoyment.

These bodies are used, but the use is not utilitarian. They do not want to conform to a purpose but exist for themselves. The bodies can be decorated, modified and enhanced with for example tattoos, which are a recurring theme in Maria's photo stream. Instead of carrying babies, bodies carry tattoos, and function as canvases for images. It is worth noting that tattoos carry a social stigma because they cannot be removed easily. Therefore, they can be seen as disturbing the pure and untouched functioning of a body only aiming at giving birth.

During the lesson, the teacher also approaches puberty as a phenomenon that is determined by hormones. As seen in the next excerpt, she discusses incidents where farm animals were given growth hormone and children eating them experienced an early start to puberty.

"Maybe 20 or 30 years ago there were reports that people ate a lot of chicken and they tried to grow the chicken as fast as possible. So, they added growth hormone to their feed, and then they noticed that a big number of young girls, six-, seven- and eight-year-olds started developing breasts. And there were also boys that got a man's body and their shoulders became wider, and women's sexual organs started to grow hair. Girls also got their periods very early, at the age of eight or nine. And then they found out that it was because they had gotten hormones through the meat and those had started their puberty."

In this discourse, hormones strictly determine what happens in the body. After the children accidentally digested growth hormones, puberty started automatically. The point the teacher is making is undeniably topical today as people become increasingly focused on nutrition, but it also produces other effects. The examples also serve to limit bodies' agencies and possibilities. In the teacher's discourse on puberty, the body is territorialised and exists in a narrow space. Metaphorically, it gets squeezed from two sides: on a macro-level, it is seen as fulfilling a pre-determined purpose of procreation and preservation of species. And on the other side, on a micro-level, the body is controlled and determined by hormones, which dictate its developments on a pre-conscious level. Between these two forces, Maria re-negotiates bodily space, deterritorialises to create agency for the body. In this Tumblr-smartphone-puberty-classroom assemblage she uses technology as an ally (Lee 2001; Ruckenstein 2010), an extension for creating space for other bodies. Even though the images might not be perfect and undoubtedly carry troubling discourses with them, they do open up and deterritorialise the space of what is possible for a body, of what a body can do. (Figure 4)



Figure 4: Bodies as canvases. Source: suicidesnowdon (left); brydiemack (right).

Discussion: Smartphones, Histories of Contamination and Flows of Capitalism

Maria's Tumblr feed contains pictures of sceneries, landscapes, tourist attractions, quotes sharing common experiences, bodies, clothes, makeup, phones, jewellery, and so on. What is common to them all is that they do *several things at once*. They are participants in a de-territorialising movement that leads out of the physical space of the classroom; extends its affective space; and questions the corporalities and uses of bodies circulating there. However, at the same time they also participate in a re-territorialising movement that presents places as objects of tourist travel; turns users' unpaid digital labour into shareholder value on social media platforms; and presents bodies as objects and vehicles of consumption. They offer an exit from the classroom, but also an invitation to a world of consumption. (figure 5)

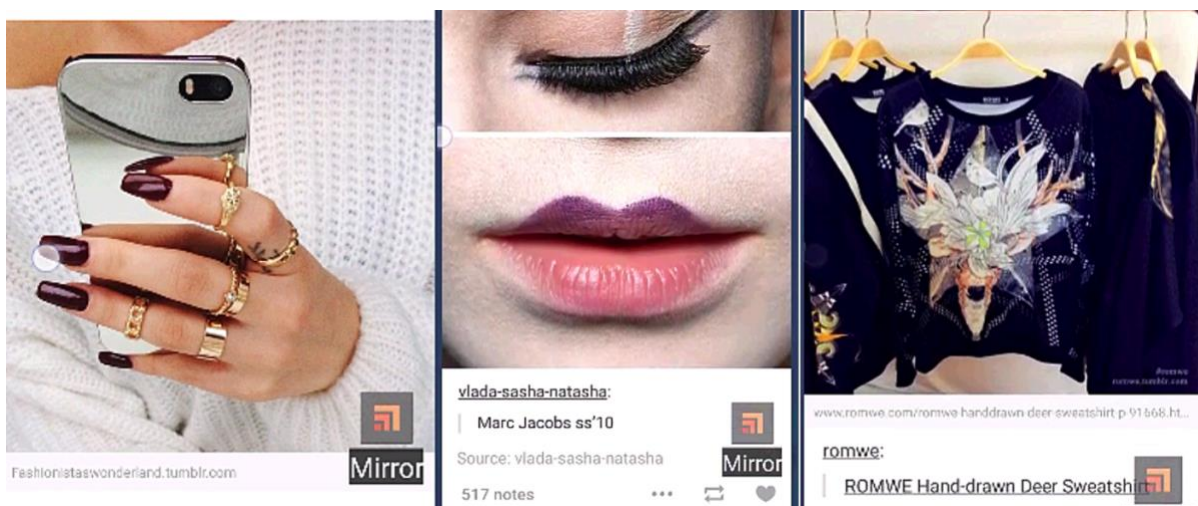


Figure 5. Objects of consumption. Source: Fashionistaswonderland (left); vlada-sasha-natasha (middle); unknown (right).

The images carry contradictions and the "commercialism" in them goes much deeper than in a traditional advertising imagery – it is wound into their very core. The division between content and advertisement provides no useful tools for analysis, because what both brands *and* users are searching for are the right kinds of moods and ambiances. Content with a suitable "vibe"

can start to function as a brand ambassador in a blink of an eye, without directly urging you to buy the product, as Monroe (2017) shows in an article on the contradictions of combining your lifestyle with brand promotion. As Vänskä writes, consumers gather around products and brands that they imagine representing their own ideals (Vänskä 2012, 75; Holt 2004). This is affective economy in a nutshell: the images carry affects that brands also want to share. De- and re-territorialising movements come together in the same objects.

As we noticed earlier, the de-territorialisations can lead out of the classroom but also re-territorialise on potential planes of consumption. The emerging deterritorialised spaces are constantly being reterritorialised. The images contain straightforward commercial cues, invitations to deterritorialise and reterritorialise through an object of consumption. We read this with Deleuze and Guattari's (2003, 257) description of capitalism in *Anti-Oedipus*: first the de-territorialisation of flows of desire, followed by their re-territorialisation to within the capitalist axiomatic.

It is simply not meaningful to differentiate with inside and outside, with good and bad, with enhanced agencies and further accelerated consumerism. In these images agency and consumption coincide. The capable agentic body is one that has capacity for consumption, and can at least potentially buy the objects in the pictures and participate in the economic circle. This creates a messy mixture, as is common in contemporary capitalism (Law 2004; Hohti 2016). Tsing writes about *contamination* as a way interrogating entangled worlds.

”We are contaminated by our encounters; they change who we are as we make way for others. [...] Everyone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option.” (Tsing 2015, 27)

One example of contamination is the so-called *California ideology* (Barbrook & Cameron 1995) that we carry around in our pockets in the form of smartphones. It is a strange hybrid-child of cold war military assemblage and counter-cultural post-war hippie movement (Dyson 2012) that blends ideas of freedom and creativity together with individualism, authority and the survival of the fittest. As such it is a perfect example of a rhizomatic assemblage that is now extensively present in the classroom.

Smartphones have become intricate machines of digital labour and consumer capitalism. Ever since the almost anarchic chaos of early internet began to be controlled by search algorithms (Buchanan 2009), all the way up to today, when majority of web traffic no longer comes from computers and web browsers, but instead from mobile devices and apps, the controlling, monitoring and commercial aspects of web have multiplied (Greenfield 2017). The user of an Android phone or an iPhone can never really leave a platform that collects data for someone like Google or Apple. Furthermore, we are troubled by the question of how independent can a technology be from the values of the people that have created it. As an example, Haider (2017) examines various cases from the development of machine learning and artificial intelligence in order to highlight xenophobic, outright racist and misogynist tendencies prevalent in today's technology.

Therefore, do these technologies possess means to overcome oppression and increase equality? Our own techno-optimism has often been shaken in front of this question which is getting harder and harder to answer. In this article, we've seen how de-territorialisation is constantly turning to re-territorialisation. However, the moment of de-territorialisation has obvious meaning and matters to the young people: the claiming of space on their own terms, with their own means – literally with devices they own – and so resisting the imposed labels and power mechanisms of

a nationally uniform institution such as school. Maria, for example, takes back the body that has been taken away from her by way of imposed labels. What we see is a battle over significations: what can the body signify, what can signify the body? Through the images Maria works to re-appropriate the body in the ways she sees it, while and through simultaneously becoming part of accelerating consumerism.

We conclude that there is no pure space but that we exist necessarily in a contaminated and ever evolving movement between various de- and re-territorialisations.

Conclusion: What is Puberty, Then?

”The great ruptures, the great oppositions, are always negotiable; but not the little crack, the imperceptible ruptures which come from the south. We say ’south’ without attaching any importance to this. We talk of south in order to mark a direction, which is different from that line of segments. But everyone has their south – it doesn’t matter where it is – that is, their line of slope or flight.” (Deleuze & Parnet 2007, 131-132)

”What is puberty then?” the teacher asks, rhetorically. And proceeds to lecture the young people about the phase of life they are seen to be going through. The ways in which the students respond, with their mobile phone use, can be seen as entirely appropriate with regard to the teacher’s question. Puberty as a territory is a social, cultural and medical construction, heavily dependent on the construct of developmental psychology, and often entirely imposed on the ones seen to be developing. But puberty is also about resistance and claiming life and ways of being through intense evaluation and suspicion towards the imposed territories. The students, with their mobile phone use, can be seen as complementing the teacher and making the lesson on puberty more dynamic and complex, as it should be.

In this article, we have discussed how smartphone use in the classroom de/re-territorialises everyday life at school, and particularly for this paper: puberty. Students’ phones open lines of communication and movement out from the classroom. They can act as allies for the students, and in some situations, may help to contextualise things happening in the class. This does not have to take the most obvious form of seeking missing information from Wikipedia or a web search, but can for example happen by sharing experiences with others or writing an underground counter script for the use of bodies the teacher presents.

Students’ mobile phone use can be viewed as an integral part of everyday life in schools, even during class. A part that is not simply good or bad but always both. A part, if understood and explored in this way, can contribute to the developing of school practices through recognising the ways in which students actively take part and shape their education. A part that also carries with it a capitalistic undertow, the resisting of which is an issue we can all participate in.

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