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<p style="text-align:center;">*Insectillect*: The Interface Between Insects and Technology</p>

While there are many metaphors used to relate insects and technology, such as the terms "bug" and "virus," there are also other, deeper connections that are occurring between the two. For example, the Internet is comprised of several independent entities (parts), which, when organized together, create a worldwide, publicly accessible network of information (a whole). Likewise, insects also achieve this "parts-to-whole" relation with "ant foraging, army ant swarming, wasp nest-building, and coordinated flashing among fireflies" (Networks, Swarms, Multitudes: Part Two 2). The swarms of the insect, like the networks of the Internet, operate as a "collection of disconnects" and "create an aggregate of local interactions that produce a global effect" (Networks, Swarms, Multitudes: Part Two 3). The question that arises then, is that if all swarms and networks are comprised of uncoordinating, uncommunicating entities, how is it that anything gets accomplished? While it seems that it may not be possible to determine the origin of such systems, a thorough examination of their current interworkings appears to offer a fresh, alternate approach to today's political structure. For a political structure, it seems, could be also classified as just another type of network or "multitude," similar to those of insects and technology.

In the new media artwork, *Insectillect*, the distinction between technology and animality is blurred in just this way. The insect "swarm" is illustrated by the random blinking, appearing, and disappearing of the insects. The link to their environment is what holds them together as a

collective group. The technological network is illustrated by the blinking as well, in addition to the computer material that the insects are made of. But a third network is also present: the actual video, *Insectillect*. The composition of the insect and the technology collectives working together "amorphously" have formed a new "whole" or "multitude" whose existence is dependent on the presence of the other two. The collective acts as an "uncoordinated morphous," or rather, "a grouping of singularities without one unifying principle" (Parikka 115).

But given this paradox of "detached engagements," how is it possible that such networks are able to accomplish anything? There appears to be "no central command, no unit or agent which is able to survey, oversee and control the entire swarm. Yet the actions of the swarm are directed, the movement motivated, and the pattern has a purpose" (Networks, Swarms, Multitudes: Part Two 5). The answer to this question seems to lie in the understanding of how each collective's whole (swarm and network), is reliant on its individual parts and vice versa. The collective does not prioritize over the individual, and the individuals are what comprise the whole. It is a "collective behavior instead of the static relationship between individual and group" (Networks, Swarms, Multitudes: Part Two 4). Accomplishing complicated tasks, therefore, is the result of a "highly differentiated collectivity of interacting agents" (Networks, Swarms, Multitudes: Part Two 4).

Insectillect seems to portray this concept quite accurately in the display of the insects' (animality's) relationship between themselves and the blinking, as well as their collection with the other like-minded (blinking) insects. Similarly, the technology (digitality) parts of *Insectillect* relate themselves to the recurrent, random blinking objects, and also work collectively with each other (insects, flowers, and ground) under the shared interest of such blinking. The way the individuals of the swarm and the network collectives form an ultimate, complex pattern, is

evidentiary that self-organization is more than an idealistic approach to politics, but rather, a probable alternative.

As a result, this type of pattern, formed by self-organization, raises questions concerning the need for sovereignty. For it seems that, if "'dumb' animals [can form] complicated 'intelligent' structures" (Networks, Politics, Swarms: Part Two 2), then the need for a traditional sovereignty could, no longer be necessary. A counter-argument to this might be the question of whether or not such "swarm intelligence" is attained via coincidence or "luck," however this seems like somewhat of a weak argument, given the increased research being performed on such network properties of biological life:

> "At the level of micro-organisms, researchers have shown how bacteria are able to sense their environment and each other using 'quorum sensing.' At the level molecular level, the study of post-genomic 'systems biology' has shifted the gene-centric study of life to the systems-wide level of metabolic and genetic networks" (Networks, Swarms, Multitudes: Part One 3).

In conclusion, while the existence of networks and swarms offer an alternative to the tradition of modern sovereignty, they are not necessarily against it. Similar to how these network and swarm collectives neither strictly rule themselves nor are ruled by another, they propose an alternative to the current body politic that is neither for sovereignty nor against it. In fact, a swarm or network could sway radically against sovereignty or for it, depending on what the whole of the collective's relations comprise. The reason being is that these collectives are constantly changing and being "renegotiated" (Networks, Swarms, Multitudes: Part One 1). The collectives are somewhat of "neutral mutations," making them the basis of fresh political ontologies that have yet to be fully explored.

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