

In the evening hours of May 6 2009 five blokes of the [nettime](#) circle gathered in a Skype conference call to discuss the whereabouts of [tactical media](#) in the age of the financial meltdown. Brian Holmes, Graham Harwood, Konrad Becker, Florian Schneider and me were invited by [Marko Peljhan](#) to (remotely) discuss in front of a Ljubljana audience that attended the launch of a special issue of the [Slovenian performing arts magazine Maska](#) on tactical media. The name of the was STRATEGIES AGAINST CONTROL LOOPS — SOME PEOPLE AND MOMENTS OF TACTICAL REALITY. The issue was edited by Marko Peljhan, Mojca Puncer and Katja Praznik. The video/webcam didn't work but the audio connections remained remarkably stable—in the 90 minutes session no one dropped out! SI/US artist Marko Peljhan was looking for synergy and convergence. We suffer from 'undercomplexity'. According to Brian Holmes (Chicago) tactical media weren't just about discourse but also about touch and aesthetics. "What's on the agenda now is the deepening of tactical media." During the 1990s there was too much emphasis on tools and practice. The "dark side of the Net" was left out. Graham Harwood (South End) remarked that there are UK activists that positively avoid the Network. There are travelers that change their surnames every week. Transsexual groups no longer publish their meeting places on the Net anymore.

In the post-89 period the Internet was about autonomy and empowerment. What should be put on the table now is the question of ownership. The Net has become inseparable from the society of control. In the past tools had no owners, but with Facebook, MySpace and Google, this has all changed. In the 90s the tools were easy to squat. Within the corporate Web 2.0 environment that's no longer possible. Cheap and dirty appropriation of technology doesn't make sense anymore. It therefore becomes necessary to, again, build up counter-networks in the shadows of the System. We also need to re-assess the relationships between geeks, artists and activists. Compared to the days of [Hacking-in-Progress](#) (1997), programmers are becoming absent. Their 'conceptual hegemony' in Web 2.0 is even more limited compared to the dotcom days and their work is getting outsourced anyway. This could also be a reason why perhaps some geeks tend to the populist right. We need to counter these dangers and get into 'strategies of invisibility' in order to focus on larger projects (such as network architectures to overcome the Internet). The resistance needs to think long term. It is no longer interesting to 'tactically' create turbulence within the system. I emphasized the limits of speed politics here. In the light of Twitter, what's the use for activists of even faster, shorter and fragmented

exchanges?

We spent a considerable part of the discussion on the question how to reframe networks and Web 2.0 as military and corporate projects. What mistakes did we make in this respect? Brian Holmes: “Just-in-time networks have a military origin and also a financial and corporate history that we need to uncover.” Graham Harwood stressed the roots of networks in scientific management, going back to the computers of the early 1950s. What Web 2.0 expresses is the “financialization of the everyday life.” Self-organization of humans exists, but it’s something else. It is not to be found on the Web. If you do politics you have to think of people. We cannot talk about networking in general. And about the computer. Florian Schneider objected, saying that neither the military or the corporations invented Linux or Web 2.0. The crucial difference here is subjectivity. Konrad Becker disagreed. The army uses LSD. There are New Age battalions. We overestimate the autonomous perspective of “just doing”. In this light, what does it mean we if call for a return to the local and to “subcultures”? Small local groups operate on a modest and precise level. They are no longer so homogenizing like the megalomaniac Indymedia and Pirate Bay platforms. For Graham it was important to go back to the space of art where you can explore these conditions. All agreed that reflection was necessary. But how to turn reflection into expression, Brian asked. The danger here is one of latency. Much of the networking efforts, and their alternatives, are inwards looking. We need to escape the limiting cult of self-representation here. We closed with the observation that ‘gardening’ is happening in a variety of localities, worldwide. For Marko the contradictions in a place like California are coming together in the landscape. The garden as a reintroduction of territory. It can become part of a larger movement to build cultural corridors.