Scattered notes on the symposium of the ADAM project (October 2-3, 2014, MINES ParisTech). By Geert Lovink.

This final conference of the [French research project ADAM](#) was put together several years ago but certainly hadn't lost its relevance and foresight. The demand to defend and further develop distributed networks is still part of both libertarian and autonomous alternative discourses that claim to 'defend the internet'. This event brought together a rich multidisciplinary range of scholars that do critical work in this field. I only made few notes of the first session. I was interested in the opening speech as I had not yet had the chance to hear [Dominique Boullier](#)talking.

Wherever we go, we are promoting the distributed network principle (myself included), but what does this exactly mean? The angle in the case of the ADAM was primarily on Code is Law. Most of the speakers at this academic research event were legal scholars (such as Niva Elkin-Koren), an interesting mix of somewhat older experts and young scholars, a few of them from outside the social science field. Some of the issues: is there something like a "shared techno-legal responsibility", how do crowdsourced initiatives deal with their own 'dark sides'? Interesting detail here is that there a lot of interesting women working in this field, which at first glance looks a bit geeky-technical. Look out for Primavera De Filippi, Melanie Dulong de Rosnay and the organizer of the event, Francesca Musiani.

As a true Latourian Dominique Boullier ([SciencePo/medialab](#)) disagrees with the extension of distributed architectures principles to the realm of democracy in favour of the issue approach. There is a militant version of this and the technical/purist one. His speech started off with the historical example of minitel and its profitable self-operating services. This service had a centralized switch but would, in our current understanding, still be considered 'decentralized' from the users perspective. Next example he mentioned was BitTorrent and a proposed P2P architecture for virtual worlds such as Second Life and games.

Another experiment he did was an attempt to become a Bitcoin miner which Boullier had to abandon because he could no longer use his PC for any other purpose. There is no place for the 'free rider' in the Bitcoin context. These exchange systems are in all post-user. Torrent propaganda is often disguising the hidden centralized aspect of the actual data flows, presenting us a glossy modernist view of abstract, idealized processes. There is no actual map available. Using Sloterdijk and Harraway, Boullier develops a

'becoming within' as a cosmopolitan challenge. Working within the ideosyncratic framework of Latour (shut up and don't ask why something is suddenly cosmopolitan), Boullier proposes to combine the value of uncertainty with a culture of attachments (such as encrypted p2p darknets), still needing the protection of the community, in comparison to the detached decentralized p2p networks, the clien-server model and the mainframes. There is no place to discuss this (yet). My remark here: it is not a matter of regulation but to reimagine socialist planning, a five year plan for the networks.

Next in line was Utopia co-founder Nicolas Bertrand talking about a film transport network (tdcpb.org), explaining the practical problems in France to build a network between cinemas that are driven by values such as net neutrality, interoperability, free software, network decentralization and cultural diversity. The Scottish SAFE initiative (still under development) came to Paris to present their project which is all about self-encryption and self-authentication in an autonomous vault network. Harry Halpin (Wc3) debunked some of the 'outlandish' claims of SAFE (down with Scottish ambition!) in an effort to promote 'protocolarian solutions'.