

Title: *Living Data and digital Humanities*

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Debating about postmodern condition of knowledge in post-industrial societies, Lyotard (1984) foresaw a computerized society and the move towards the translatability of knowledge into computer language, warning how everything else (non-translatable) would be soon abandoned. Reiterating this argument, Hui (2018) called for critical and urgent reading and redefining of digital records and future archives in the digital society. He suggested that a digital record is constituted and concretised as material by discursive and existential relations that taken together function as a persistent representation. The concerns of both authors reflect and resonate with my decade-long observation and pondering about the fate of archives and documentations of public institutions in Slovenia.

This research is concerned with anthropological understanding of the practical and conceptual ramifications of materialized knowledge after digitalization. It asks what is the future of knowledge saved in its datafied form in terms of the sustainability of material infrastructures, data architectures and energy and material resource consumption? The dissertation is attempting to answer these questions by attending to the role that digital data has in the lives of a group of linguists from Slovenia. It examines the world of lexicographic data production within the Fran Ramovš Institute of Slovenian Language of ZRC SAZU, attending to the manifold ways with which Fran Ramovš Institute linguists work with, evaluate, debate, create, share, co-create and live the data they are producing. It focuses on the anthropological understanding of the social and cultural contexts of knowledge production practices amongst linguists - the communicators of a particular kind and forms of knowledge. My aim is to illuminate various practical, ideological and conceptual ramifications that the richness and complexity of their lexicographic data, represented on the Fran web-portal, produce within a digital Humanities context. Analytically, the research examines ideas of openness, otherness and attunement that are supposedly embodied in the lexicographic data, as well as relations with the concepts of the unknown, ignorance and playfulness. The research is based on the ethnographic work conducted between October 2018 and March 2020, during which I have

been observing the Fran Ramovš Institute linguists at their offices, attending their institute section meetings and workshops, and conducting interviews with them.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has solidified selective practices of the digitalization and reshaping of work processes and social practices that could be datafied and transferred to virtuality. This granularization of the world that can be reconstructed on command from selected data increases the feeling of complexity. The question remains though: is this complexity a result of the digital or did the digital only make the complexity more visible and approachable? In the time after Lyotard wrote his work *Digital Humanities*, Open Access and Open Science were introduced as terms and international networks were formed to address complex questions that have been brought about by the digitalization of knowledge. Complementing and enabling these were other concepts of opennesses, such as open spaces, open source, open knowledge, open data, open code etc. This work observes the complexity of the contemporary ever-more-digitalised world through the *narratives of openness*, a term that I introduced to problematize and decolonise the vocabulary of the digitalization of knowledge. Within these narratives, I have explored complex issues of the morality of scientific openness (Munthe and Welin 1996), the public funding and ethics of scientific research (Luthar et al. 2004; Rabinow 1999; Proctor and Schiebinger 2008), interdisciplinarity and accountability (Strathern 2004a; Hall and Sanders 2015; Ravetz 2011) and how they address the legitimacy of science within society (Lyotard 1984). How do we know what we know? What role do cultural and social institutions play in producing and transferring knowledge? And what is the role of the institution of science in how knowledge is produced and distributed in the digital society?

To approach this problematic of complexity, I utilised Strathern's (2004b) concept of *partial connections*. With the tool of *scale*, I was able to focus on the group of linguists and how they relate to others through these connections. Actor-Network Theory (Mol 2010; Latour 2017; 2005) provided a blueprint for further thinking of these *associations of actors* (connections) as the *net-work(ing)* of linguists, data, words, concepts and ideas. How could I then approach these actors and understand them in their otherness? I continued by using the concept of the *amateur* (Mol 2010) to establish linguists as actors whose *rigour* is more than just professional (Ingold 2021). During observations of their work, I have seen how my respondents and colleagues debated lexicographic data and how they related that to other data, concepts and words. I understand data as the Other and have approached it from a phenomenological perspective and the concept of *attunement* (Throop 2018) and the *diaphoric ethics of nature* (Ošljaj 2000). Data is part of the world we inhabit, fluid partialities that

construct the otherness in us. Relatedly, otherness was also observed within myself as the author of this research. Combined with ethnography and theoretical perspectives, it was this experiential perspective that catalysed my thinking into an *anthropological knot* (Carrithers 2014).

The digital is an augment of humanity, an additional perspective. A place in a space where the human extends to. How it extends is through data and with data. Through language and with language. Finally, I have applied the concept of the *cyborg* (Haraway 2017) to Fran and framed it as a living entity. How does this entity establish correspondences with new entities or actors? Does it resonate differently with different othernesses? Does it represent lived *digital Humanities*? These are the questions that this dissertation hopes to anthropologically answer.