Becoming Image

Perspectives on Digital Culture, Fashion and Technofeminism

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Abstract

Departing from a technofeminist perspective, Becoming Image, places the digital image in a broader context of modern and postmodern technological discourses and fashion. In four articles, the compilation dissertation expands a contemporary and imagistic tech discourse by questioning the ideology of "masculinity"—specifically the idea of it as a historically male domain. Through interviews, discourse analysis and feminist critique, as well as an interdisciplinary focus on digital media, the project investigates how everyday image practices open up for new embodied experiences. Focusing on women and social media, the articles examines the way material and immaterial aspects of images overlap in everyday life. Rather than artistic intention, emotions and basic human interaction often lie at heart of becoming image. Fashion is, however, highly present in this critical transformation. Not only as collaborative projects emerge out of combining new technologies and dress—such as using your smartphone to elevate your clothing—but also how fashion is a technology itself. Fashion highlights the body as medium, but fashion is also always (mostly) image.

Previous research around the digital image and its meaning has often stressed the banality of everyday image practices as taking selfies. However, these debates represent deeper cultural values and norms, which the dissertation reaches beyond. As women, and also queer and trans-people increasingly innovate and interfere with normative technological usage, it becomes evident that such groups have been excluded from communities organized around technological power and skill. As with language, technology and digital imagery are not neutral media. Women have hence been excluded—and been forced to use instruments and apps seemingly made for strict masculine purposes. Arguably, image practices such as selfies or image micro-blogging encourage women to “write” themselves out of a world they have not constructed themselves. Thus, Becoming Image simultaneously illuminates the structural and fundamental levels of technology and gender—while also suggesting new methodological and theoretical ways of studying and approaching digital media.

Keywords: Technology, Selfie, Embodiment, Tumblr, Memory, Instagram, Posthumanism
Article I

Article II
“Reblogging Fashion: Participatory Curation on Tumblr” (NMEDIAC. The Journal of New Media & Culture, Volume 9 (1), Winter 2013-14).

Article III
“The Subversive Selfie: Redefining the Mediated Subject” (Clothing Cultures, Volume 2 (1), December 1 2014, pp: 73-89, Intellect Ltd).

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Introduction

At the moment I wake up in the morning, I turn to screens to connect to the outside world. Through the image-sharing apps on my smartphone and social image blogs on my computer, a continuous mash-up of pictures flashes before my eyes for many hours each day. Images of politicians, selfies, TV shows, art, news, montages and remade celebrity pictures, street style, the interactive bird’s-eye view from satellites, the odd coincidences captured by Google Street View cameras, food, pets, and more selfies all mix together and form my perception of reality. When I upload an image myself, I tend to the tonality and mood of the picture. I chose a filter, sometimes from a specific filter app and spend time getting the picture right. If I post a selfie (a shared social media self-portrait) I desire to reach out, enable contact. I watch myself anew in a form of endless self-fashioning. Images are personal, yet implicit.

Although digital, most pictures floating around online are almost exclusively low resolution. They are not the glossy exclusive hyperrealities of digital cinema and LED television screens, but gritty copies in constant motion. Through the ever-changing contexts of different social media outlets, moving from smartphone to smartphone, from person to person, these images are constantly becoming, and I with them. Paradoxically then, as the everyday digital image circulates between mind and screen, the world becomes increasingly digital and computational. There is connection in images that are not my own and there is comfort in that connection to strangers. These images that are visited daily and hourly do not function as representation. It is a complex web of sociality that is mediated and arguably produced through the practices of making, sharing, consuming and reacting to digital images. The omnipresent nature of digital images introduces new ways of seeing. Have these practices on my phone and on my computer, in fact, become sociality itself? The principal argument of this dissertation is that we need to understand this process of viewing and producing digital images, but also what we might become when mental and material images converge through user-generated media.

This compilation dissertation places this digital debate in the broader context of modern and postmodern technological discourses, fashion and technofeminism. Fashion in particular plays a vital part in understanding digital images and intertwines with the digital image use in this dissertation on a theoretical, methodological and even a more literal level. As digital technol-
ogy and fashion develop in tandem, many collaborative projects emerge out of combining the two, such as using your smartphone to elevate your clothing through augmented reality (for example start-ups Print All Over Me, Mirror Mirror and Reify). Caroline Evans hints at this link by stating that the digital image, as well as the fashioned garment, “circulates in a contemporary economy as part of a network of signs, of which the actual garment is but one” (Evans in Bruzzi, 2013: 85). “There’s such a differentiation of digital media, so that fashion is now image, digital and communication” (Evans in Burley, 2013). As with fashion, digital images carry meaning within themselves, but also ideas larger than each individual picture. Fashion is not frozen, as are digital images “frozen to human eyes only” (Chun, 2011: 169).

Because digital images are communicated simultaneously, collectively and instantly, their “nearness” affects and defines the message itself (Calefato in Fortunati et al. 2003: 165). The nearness of speed becomes a nearness of bodies. Images, like fashion, become corporeality. As women, queer and trans people increasingly innovate and interfere with normative technological use, it becomes evident that these groups have been excluded from communities organised around technological power and skill, when in fact, all gender identities can use clothing as a corporeal technology to create new possibilities and narratives (Dunbar-Hester and Renninger, 2013: 10).

Fashion is highly present in understanding the body as the medium between self and image. The dual nature of fashion as both object and idea, links the digital image together with materialism. As Evans noted, the image is not “out there”, but is always becoming on a spectrum that the fashioned body helps us actualise and understand. As Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman emphasise, it is time to again focus on “lived material bodies and evolving corporeal practices” (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008: 3).

Many wearable technology designs and wearable cameras seem to strive to free our minds completely from our bodies, or at least to make our bodies pure information through continuously collecting data. Indeed, the digital (and the internet) itself is often thought of as communication without presence (Qian and Scott, 2007: 1430f). The digital self is thought to be inward-oriented and disembodied. On the flipside, an arguably increasing visuality, like posting pictures on Facebook and taking selfies, is often thought to threaten a sense of privacy, leaving us equally lost without bodies. Online magazine Sleek writes: “The fragmentary body has been interpreted by post-psychoanalytic feminist theory as representation of the objectification and violent dismantling of the (largely female) body” (Sleek team, 2015).

As the dichotomy between human and machine is increasingly blurred and as the concept of postdigitality, in which our existence is rapidly becoming completely digitized, is find-

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1 Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has described Facebook as a form of ”radical transparency”, suggesting that connections to other people then become more real (Raynes-Goldie, 2013).
ing its form, materialism (and new materialism) becomes a reaction to the
digital which is becoming more and more a given, and hence also more in-
visible. However, fashion and playing with surface is embodied skills, and
intertwined with small machines they converge into a cultural interface, blur-
ing fashion, media and technology concepts. “The real protagonist” Patrizia
Calefato notes, “the true subject and object of the late 20th-century techno-
logical revolution in the field of communication, is the human body. [...] 
Communication ‘sticks’ to the body, where it acts as both transformer and
transformed” (2003: 163). The body wears clothes, but also mobiles, wear-
able technology, microchips. The newest of the new coexists with the most
traditional garments (ibid.). Calefato uses Roland Barthes to point out that
fashion is a tool for (mass) communication articulated within a system of
traditional costume and a process of dressing. The clothed body thus be-
comes totally communicable, like a computer interface (Calefato, 2003:
163f). Clothes have increasingly become a site for exploring precisely where
digital images end and begin emotionally. Put differently, a garment without
a body and without context is difficult to comprehend fully. Approached
without movement or connection to moving selves, it becomes, as Elizabeth
Wilson argues, half-dead, even threatening (2003: 2). Reality become  im-
eges, not an interference with them. Images are urgent and trivial. They are
directly lived. Passing on a meme or a viral video not only means passing on
that particular entity, but also participating in a practice, a form, and an in-
terconnected process. By translating fashion and dress as image and network
then, I argue that the digital image practices examined in this dissertation can
be grounded in a field that manages to follow its seemingly arbitrary move-
ments.

Moreover, through Instagram and Tumblr, two focal points of media in
this dissertation, female bodies are represented that are not photoshopped,
waxed and perfect. Instead, images of alternative and marginalized bodies
explore femininity, identity and gender ideals and confront narcissism and
banality head on. Artists like Arvida Byström, Molly Soda, Alexandra Mar-
cella and Amalia Ulman use Instagram to challenge perceptions of feminini-
ty and self-acceptance in a discourse often fixated on labelling the millennial
generation as obsessed with self-identification. Again, the immediacy of
digital imagery in combination with social media arguably makes the images
a directly lived experience rather than representation. These artists, like me,
pose the question whether these images can be viewed differently and how.

This is also why I will not explicitly divide images into “art” or “every-
day” other than in descriptive terms as these aspects are not inherent in the
images or in the intent of the image producer. To discuss only the content or
aesthetic of a digital image, be it a selfie, a cute animal, a landscape or an
expressed art work, will not tell us all we need to know about the complex
and fluid lives of digital images. Instead, how it is created and shared and
where it is posted tells us as much about the picture as what it depicts. The
notion of amateur versus artist is constantly challenged and subverted, often
with a sense of humour. Using for example Instagram as your outlet further
challenges the “rooms” in which subversive and artistic dialogue can be
held. This user-oriented focus of this project will highlight a negotiation of
visuality and image culture desperately needed in order to deepen our under-
standing of a wider cultural landscape in flux. We create and look in a multi-
tude of ways and our exchange of images are less than perfect, in action as
well as in the lossy quality of image. They make noise and aggravate; yet
they are playful and highly political. One example is an image-maker using
her phone to capture evidence of something offensive or violent. Another is
the Microsoft app “How old do I look?” meant to be applied to selfies to
determine one’s “real age”, instead jokingly applied to fictional characters
such as Botticelli’s “The Birth of Venus” (according to the app she is sixty-
four years of age). Accordingly, when the attempt to try and fit communica-
tion to the shape of usefulness is made secondary, alternative forms of image
interaction are made possible where things can be multiple at once.

Paradoxically, one could argue that present surface politics (such as digi-
tal image practices and fashion) focus more on the personal and subjective
(Styles, 1998: 387). Indeed, Angela McRobbie points out that this post-
feminist individualism with its empowerment and choice, consent and partic-
ipation, has replaced actual feminism by making it seem redundant
(McRobbie, 2009: 13). Instead of feminism being a political movement, each
girl must chose and express what kind of life she wants to live. McRobbie
writes: “Articulations are therefore reversed, broken off, and the idea of a
new feminist political imagery becomes increasingly inconceivable” (2009:
26). However, what this dissertation shows is that digital imagery can indeed
be subversive and political, but only when moved beyond this individualistic
discourse. An important part of this process is acknowledging that visual
culture/cultures are gendered (and thereby political) to begin with and a cen-
tral aspect of this project is discovering underlying gaps discreetly interfier-
ing with our notion of neutral technologies. Consequently, I wish to over-
come simplification by not only bringing the body back into the conversa-
tion, but to also open up for problematising of images as a way to get beyond
dualisms. The merging of computers (and images) with their users is not a
futuristic sci-fi narrative, but a very present process existing and developing
a multidimensional reality right now. Here, I see the “I” as lying somewhere
in-between things, in-between mental and material images, online and off-
line, between consciousness and that which comes before. In this way, my
position when approaching my material connects to the affirmative feminism
of Rosi Braidotti. She instead employs a Deleuzian stance where the idea of
a single human subject is replaced by bodies and flows of affect (McRobbie,
2009: 159f). As will be evident, I do not, as Braidotti suggests, go so far as
to depart from girlhood altogether in order to find new kinds of female and
feminine subjectivities. I do however find it productive to see my material as
transformational. This means that emotional response, however fleeting, should be considered quite real because it occurs in-between things and in-between subjects. To exemplify, the art project of Factum Arte questions the notion put forth by Walter Benjamin and others that a copy can never replace an original art piece (as its aura is lost). By creating a digital facsimile of the vast sixteenth century art work “The Wedding at Cana” and placing it at its original location in Venice (whilst the original painting was removed over 200 years ago and hangs in The Louvre in Paris), something is arguably brought back to life. With a live projection by Peter Greenaway narrating the events described in the painting, a modern audience is able to understand and experience the actual meaning of the artwork, suggestively much more akin to the experience of the sixteenth century mind. Although critics thought it “devastating and ‘immoral’ if it claims to substitute the original, just like cloning human life”, the question still arises whether the facsimile actually captures more of the original aura than the highly restored and “mute” original at The Louvre. At the unveiling of the facsimile, people wept. The digital here, as object and as experience, arguably opens up for a kind of tiger’s leap, to use Benjamin’s phrase. By making references and narration available, we are able to understand what it must have felt like to see the painting in its original sixteenth Century context. The aura is not lost, but rather, it is shared and quite physical. Images here are embodied. So has a user in figure 1 combined two runners in a relay race with a text that suggests the hurried feeling of having no batteries left on your smartphone. Not only does the image provoke an emotion well known to many, but also that having a low battery on one’s phone in itself can cause anxiety. The image attempts to embody a feeling.
The motivation behind this project then is not only to bring a material realism to the fore in relation to the digital, particularly to images “born” digital and thus the practices connected to them, but also to point out that this realism need to begin with marginalised bodies. It also highlights a view on technological development that has substantial cultural and social blind spots. We predict cell phones and self-driving cars, but not women in the workplace (Vanderbildt, 2015). Taking material and emotional aspects into account further moves the debate beyond technology itself (for example gadgets rather than what that gadget brings). Following this mechanical focus, many technological inventions and futuristic ideas do not include women (Vanderbildt, 2015). To then use the smartphone camera for something as “banal” as a selfie underlines the difference between expectation and actual cultural change. Thus, to answer the question of what actually is the object of this study, it is not found in the what, but in the how, because where the
digital is already a default, what has lost much of its meaning and is instead replaced by a multilayered approach. Or as Deleuze puts it: “The question posed by desire is not ‘What does it mean?’ but rather ‘How does it work?’” (1986: 109). I am primarily looking at the way digital images are created, processed and mediated in different contexts in order to develop a general understanding of their place in contemporary Western culture. Images here are arguably a form of social glue. Visibility produces a kind of “intercorporeality”, reminding us that we belong to each other by belonging to a common visible world (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2011: 260). However, as with the masculinity of technology we take for granted, the viewpoint of images as distraction and inauthentic also manifests a certain worldview that excludes alternative forms of agency. Taking and sharing a selfie involves a complex affair of looking, by oneself, by others, inwards and outwards. It is often about being a (subjective) body in a public space, about taking up space and structuring a female subjectivity. For example, rebellion against conformity is often entangled with appearance, as in the Dirty Girls of the 1990s (Hope Allwood, 2015). Similarly, for many young women on Tumblr, embracing girlhood is largely about embracing their visual identity, and doing so, introducing a more diversified feminist agenda. The combination of fashion and digital imagery then becomes a highly effective way to debunk the idea that surface and substance are not mutually exclusive, but together form strong political expressions (Hope Allwood, 2015). In the sections to come, I will discuss how feminist technoscience, fashion, posthumanism, social media, materialism, philosophy of difference, image and memory come together to form deeper questions about alternative bodies, hidden or marginalized bodies or even new bodies, bodies not yet defined, bodies yet to be seen.

Lastly, how I write and approach the material of this dissertation reflects the bricolage thinking described above. Rather than viewing images as a distraction, my mind seems to work according to these digital movements. I fill in the gaps and find the references within and in between these images. I draw lines between image nodes rather than create and follow linear narratives. As will be discussed later, my methodological thinking is similarly grounded in this “referential” approach to my material. Combined with a type of critical image making practices which include myself as both a female and a social media user, the dissertation in some ways mirrors my movement online and on my smartphone, where sudden jumps and implicit references are a part of the research process.
Organisation of the Summary Chapter

This rest of the summary chapter will be structured in three major parts. In the first section, “About”, I will briefly present the four articles that form the foundation for the dissertation. This will provide an understanding of the themes and research areas that have contributed to my conclusions. Moreover, the “About” section also presents a discussion of theory, terminology and methodology used throughout the project. This part might appear less clear in its categories, as theory and method have overlapped throughout the process of research, which I will discuss further.

The next section of the summary chapter presents the major implications of the dissertation of which I have divided the discussion into two sections. The first section labelled “Themes” deals with an inner dialogue between the articles and me as a researcher. It reflects the dissertation process and how it has affected and been affected by the actual research subjects. This is also why the themes in some ways overlap with theory and methodology as it has developed over time. The second section of the conclusion is labelled “Tendencies” and argues for four tendencies that can be drawn from the articles combined with the project’s overall research problem. These four tendencies find and bring out what has been reoccurring throughout the project, both in terms of issues and explanations. They are the more clearly defined implications of the dissertation, although it should be noted that some of the arguments are found in the theoretical and methodological discussions as well.

Lastly, I will place the conclusions of the summary chapter in the context of the nearby future of digital image practices. As will be especially clear in the last article, images are increasingly breaking out of our screens, further blurring the concepts used in digital discourse. We are at the brink of what some have labelled the post-digital era (neighbouring concepts such as post-internet and the new aesthetic) where everyday life is so saturated with networks and digitality and thereby obscuring it, that it inspires a struggle to map, document and record the digital (Berry and Dieter, 2015: 5). It is a paradoxical state where “the digital” is everywhere, yet is driven by a revival of older media, such as cassette tapes, but also earlier aesthetic eras within Internet and computer history, such as software Windows 95 (ibid. 2015: 6).

The four articles have been written between 2011 and 2015, a period that has seen major changes in digital culture, technological development, communication and information resources, and the articles in different ways reflect this development in different ways. In many ways, user-centred content production, from Tumblr and YouTube to Open Source, has become the symbol of this transformation, and to have the articles focus on examples of this further roots them in this continuous and complex discourse.
The Articles

In the first article, I aim to link the past of archiving to the constant present of internet, social media and digital image practices. It is also my first attempt to locate the digital as a concept, which has been an undercurrent of sorts throughout the whole project. By looking at user based online archiving such as “Know Your Meme” and blogs on Tumblr, I want to move away from the formal and hegemonic structure of the traditional theory of the archive in favour of something more processual and dynamic. Although the archive in general could be viewed as always in motion, as a process of forgetting as well as remembering, I maintain an alternative perspective of a functional and often ephemeral practice that the web provides. This also means opening up to the collective resources of “amateurs”, rather than leaving archival processes only to the gatekeepers, insiders and the skilled. This networked archive, especially in spaces such as Tumblr, becomes a social and distributed endeavour that differs from the analogue and physical space of the traditional storage. Moreover, I relate the tension and exchange between flow and storage to fashion and dress. The garment, like the archive, needs to be alive and embodied to be fully comprehended. Thus, remembering gets a new understanding by shifting the focus from copy to access and from an archival corpus (an empty garment) to a living body.

The second article picks up where the first one left off. It turns the example of Tumblr into a focus for the whole text, and looks more closely at the blog platform through its central image practices. By interviewing both users and mass media representatives, as well as discussing the media discourse about the site, I discovered a complex web of factors together creating what Tumblr is. Fashion is both a methodological and theoretical driving force in framing the Tumblr experience. It is not only an explicit fashion community, but it is also a similar kind of longing machine, holding desire as a fundamental driving force behind blogging for many users. Another overlapping factor is the creative curation of one’s image central to each personal blog. By posting and reblogging digital images, a visual self of sorts is created and maintained, not unlike the individual dressing herself daily. Taste, style, dreams, fears, jokes and other types of information are communicated predominantly through these images, making each blog both intimate and interconnected. Additionally, the personal space of Tumblr is viewed through a feminist lens where young women express a certain amount of agency through creating a type of room of their own.

Through the specific image practices of young women on Tumblr, the third article goes even further in locating a specific, feminist experience in digital imagery, and it finds it in the selfie. Through both in-depth focus
group interviews and theoretical discussions on the concept of the selfie, I argue for an alternative approach in understanding its role in contemporary visual culture. By trying to step away from popular labels of the selfie as narcissistic or self-promoting, I instead argue that it, similar to Tumblr, provides a space for self-discovery not formerly available for young women. Because the selfie is both social and processual, both subject and object, it opens up for a doubleness that is productive. Moreover, by seeing one’s own face, over and over again, the individual gets to know herself as being seen rather than being looked at, precisely by putting her and other female realities on display. Thus, instead of creating a self-loathing culture of apparent perfection that trigger feelings of inferiority or alienation (Winter, 2013), I claim that this is indeed what a feminist viewpoint subverts. The maintained narcissistic self-objectification of selfies instead point to a structural notion of masculine logic. Inspired by Luce Irigaray (an influence on Braidotti), I wish to understand young women as a social collective in their own right. In the place of being a self-absorbed girl, we find a call for women to love and embrace each other and themselves. And because the selfie is fundamentally social (shared through social media channels like Instagram), it speaks to our own fundamental need for affirmation, which can only be done through others. We, and the young woman in particular, become through this constant re-articulation of the self, a self-fashioning that is necessary in giving an account of oneself. And like fashion, the selfie points out this process of constantly seeing oneself anew, in order to create coherence. Thus, the selfie is not only subversive, but also sensory, communicative and political.

The fourth and final article of the dissertation addresses digital surface politics further through wearable cameras. It uses fashion and feminist technoscience to find alternative approaches in understanding how our convergence with technology can create new subjects. By connecting this discussion to new materialism and memory, this article ties back to the first one. It also explores historical parallels with fashion and dress and the Renaissance notion of the extended mind to put the “newness” of lifelogging and wearable technology into perspective and re-contextualize it. By putting the body back into a discourse focused more on abstracting and quantifying it, I see wearable cameras rather as an enhancement of lived experience, opening up for different variations of both cognitive and sensory understanding of the self and the environment. Because these corporeal aspects are more chaotic and harder to measure, they are often seen as impure or irrelevant, which is yet another argument for discussing marginalized (female) bodies becoming with this technology. Technology and fashion have historically been closely connected, but because fashion is arguably viewed as a predominantly female sphere, and technology gendered masculine, the wearable technology discourse is crooked. What is actually new or different in our relation to technology and cameras becomes harder to pinpoint when we do not acknowledge how we have related to it in the past. Thus, the last article aims
to connect body, memory, dress and technology in ways that provide a more productive perspective of contemporary Western everyday technology.

Theoretical Perspectives

The main objective throughout the project has been exploration and openness rather than assumption, which is also partly what the dissertation themes discuss. As each article in a way represent a variation of digital mediation, including practices, objects, institutions and ideologies, the idea that one simple conclusion will suffice has never been the main objective (Berry and Dieter, 2015: 6f).

Because of this multilayered premise, the theoretical framework, predominantly that of fashion could be seen as a constellation of concepts and has been an important part of the intellectual dialogue throughout the dissertation. In this way, fashion points to cultural specificities such as sexuality, subjectivity or identity formation, but also helps define structural categorisations such as class, race or gender. It mirrors our fears and desires, it binds and liberates, it changes and subverts. It is mask and authenticity. It is also very much a technology, from material, machines and industry discourses, to technologies of the self (Evans, 2003: 6).

Fashion also has, historically and into present day, clear feminine connotations that within the context of this dissertation function as subversion. What is evident throughout the articles is that technological features are given different values depending on where they originate. The idea that things are presented as new, for example wearable technology, the overload of information in Western culture, the loss of creative work due to shared content online or other phenomena – must be balanced with historical parallels in order to make sense. So for example can the argument that our present day is saturated with images (on our computers and hard drives, in our phones, on our screens) be answered with a similar debate during the turn of the twentieth century, when analogue photography seemed to not only take over everyday life, but also seriously threaten art?

This is somewhat paradoxical, as fashion itself works according to the laws of newness and reinvention. However, because fashion has linked the body and the subject together with the collective and the cultural since its emergence, but always remained predominantly a feminine area (for good and for bad), it has become self-referential and self-reflexive. Technology on the other hand has changed dramatically relatively recently, from female material practice and production to male machines and modern manliness (Oldenziel, 1999). In a diverse and mutable image landscape, the inherent movement of fashion helps to make sense of these changes. Fashion reminds us that pleasure and anxiety, desire and alienation can exist simultaneously,
and be expressed simultaneously. The point again is to move away from the simplistic notion of the technology itself and towards a more complex system of values and meanings. Thus, to look at the drive and desire behind style and participation in fashion, as with digital image use, tells us so much more about “what may potentially fuel cultural, economic and ethical developments of the next century” (Radner and Smith, 2013: 284).

The making and thinking of images also inform fashion. Fashion as image and vision, and its participation in us creating ourselves as images, is arguably one of its fundamental characteristics. However, as images start to merge with our daily lives in unexpected ways, we have to open up for a discussion of ourselves as images, and what part fashion plays as these roles are reversed. In many ways, I have used fashion to subvert ideas about technology and digital imagery. As is particularly clear in article four, it has been necessary to break through conventions of why and how we use media in order for these complex processes to become clearer. Structures such as seeing wearable technology as predominantly masculine even though it has been part of fashion and dress for centuries distort our understanding of what technology (and digitality) is or what it can be. Similarly, as fashion is often either physical garment or abstract idea, a focus on bodies and sensory experience of images, mental or otherwise, arguably gives important balance to the discourse. Reading against the grain does not only apply to traditional ideological dynamics of technology and media, but also to more conventional associations with fashion as decorative, superficial, feminine, and its close relation to modernity. Thus, a defamiliarization of what is a given in visual and digital theory also leads to a demystification of the digital as something disembodied and immaterial.

Another vital part of the theoretical framework is keeping a posthumanist perspective to the material. As will be discussed, this has grown out of a need for not approaching technology in a modernistic, progressive, often masculine and privileged “humanist” way, in order to instead see digital image practices anew. As Michel Foucault notes that “what is called humanism has always been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science, or politics” (1984a: 44). Posthumanism instead leads us beyond more archaic notions of “human nature” on the one hand and the animate objects surrounding us on the other. Additionally, new materialist thinking further opens up for a reorientation of ourselves and the world around us. A common claim is the idea that things flow and affect, used here to explore the notion that the virtual can be the actual. Combined, this includes a more critical view on what is considered material and non-material, alive and not alive, impacting feminist thought.

It should also be stated that posthumanism here is not be confused with transhumanism, an overlapping but distinctly different movement more dedicated to how technology enhances the intellectual, physical and emotional capabilities of humanity (Wolfe, xiii). It is “an engineered evolution of the
Plain text: Humanism, and in some ways also transhumanism in its quest for the superhuman, are both studies of Man, which is why my posthumanistic approach is paired with technofeminism. David Hiley critiques Foucault by stating:

Humanism, as Foucault understood it, exhausts itself in an endless back and forth from one side to the other of man and his doubles: from man as the condition for the possibility of knowledge to man as himself an object in the empirical field; from man’s attempt to become intelligible to himself by making accessible the unthought that always eludes him because it is that which makes thought possible […] Humanism […] is warped and twisted forms of reflection (Hiley, 1985: 72).

Not only are these doubles not enough. Using female subjectivity as a starting point, Man as centre of the universe is less if not meaningless at all. Because female and alternative subjectivities has never been able to claim this place, it can also break the endless humanistic loop and the paradox of basing “the possibility of knowledge on limits to reason which deny it” is here instead aimed to be debunked (Foucault, 1970: 317f).

Thus, asking where we end and computers begin assumes a certain worldview. What I instead noticed throughout my project is that what I’m really doing is finding a way out of the humanism that the initial question assumes. Technology has been thought of as self-generative and devoid of human agency before, but each era is also different as this dissertation shows. At the turn of the last century, Ruth Oldenziel notes a shift from Victorian to modernist cultural grammar, where, in the technological context, prioritizing male engineers and professionalism became canon (1999: 43).

How one talks about technology, or the digital, formulates a specific knowledge and experience. Technology as an object and the machine as metaphor is still very much a key figure in present rhetoric, but parallel to this I also see other visions emerge that are self-contained but neither human nor machine, processual but not mechanically so. Here the concept of technofeminism (of feminist technoscience) focuses specifically on (Western) feminism and technology. It is the view that “objects and artefacts are no longer seen as separate from society, but as part of the social fabric that holds society together; they are never merely technical or social” (Wajcman, 2007: 293). Or, to point to the anonymity so valued by many Internet enthusiasts (and also put it in relation to the selfie): “For most of history, anonymous was a woman” (Virginia Woolf). Or, at least, not Man. Put differently, technofeminism acknowledges the relationship between technology and feminism and the fact that data collecting as well as materiality means something to gender and identity. However, the technofeminism discussed here has less to do with women in science and technology (although this lack is equally important to the field) and more to do with a productive view of
where non-masculine, non-modernist thinking can take us in a technology-centred culture. Bodies and technologies meet in digital image practices, and this matters (du Preez, 2009: xvii).

To bridge these theoretical perspectives with methodology, and as the project became increasingly technofeminist in approach, I progressively explored the idea of feminine writing or women’s writing (Écriture féminine) to complement my material (and analysis), primarily that of Luce Irigaray. Not unlike the technological debate, Hélène Cixous argues that “woman” has always been in a position of otherness in Western phallocentric culture (Cixous, 1976: 881). Feminine writing springs from this idea of the non-representational. As with the using the “femininity” of fashion and otherness in technological practices, feminine writing contributes to a deconstructive force that shakes the stability of the phallocentric and the humanist, allowing for more play (Klages, 2012: 49). Out of the four women often linked to this position, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Monique Wittig, I have used Irigaray’s thought most closely (Jones, 1985: 362). The reason for this is not only her arguments that women throughout history have been associated with nature and unthinking, as opposed to men associated with culture and thinking, and thus technology. She is also a central part of the idea of women defining and identifying themselves according to processes not based around male-centric ideas (see for example This Sex Which Is Not One, 1977). Evident specifically in the third article concerning selfies, women instead find a space where they can declare and define themselves as whatever they find appropriate and what roles they wish to fill. In tandem with feminine writing, although here understood through digital visual culture, I question the descriptions usually made of digital image practices such as selfies and instead contrast them with embodied experience, self-expression, self-representation and processes that do not necessarily have logic but action. Although the disciplines differ, I view the fundamental notions of a practice facilitating transformative identity politics being a common denominator, whether though semiotics, art, literature or fashion. Therefore, having a central part of the dissertation discussing femininity and feminism means writing myself into this tradition of feminist critique. How do I overcome a symbolic discourse, which tends to objectify the world? How do I separate and focus on these visual practices and give their practitioners agency without essentializing them? How do I write in and with the body whilst maintaining a distance as an investigating observer? Karolin Meunier describes this ambivalent space between openness and self-disclosure:

[It] is possible to experiment with the outsider perspective and introduce a position that is neither arbitrary nor controllable: not arbitrary because when dealing with one’s own speech one is not at the mercy of something complete-
ly foreign, and yet not controllable, because it is directed towards others and is part of a cultural dispositive (Meunier, 2012: 11).

The aim of this combined theory and analysis is for me not to find “typically female” visual practices, but rather, through a user-centred focus bring a plurality to the digital discourse. I am not arguing for a common female experience. Rather, I am saying that there is one at all and that what women produce is marginalized (along with non-heteronormative, non-white etc.). Being mindful of hierarchies as well as the unknown are reoccurring themes for me as a researcher in interdisciplinary and emerging fields, but also for digital culture at large. To take the position of struggle to begin with, and find productivity in it, has been a driving force behind my research, and as a female, feminist scholar. It is, in a way, a double theory of the subject, impersonal and very personal simultaneously.

Furthermore, both fashion and technology discourses seem to forget about their overlapping histories, continuing to implicitly divide technological devices with function from technological fashion that fashion designers have experimented with. Ruth Oldenziel writes: “Historians employ the nineteenth-century term ‘useful arts’ and the modern word ‘technology’ interchangeably, as if they were synonymous. [...] Rather than a neutral term, technology is itself part of a narrative production of modernism, in which men are the protagonists and women have been denied their part” (1999: 14). I have not picked a clear definition of the term for my dissertation, as I wish to keep an open mind and reach beyond dualisms of “is” or “is not”. What is obvious, as Oldenziel points out, is that an understanding for the word inevitably ties it together with gender. This is even more distinct when technology moves closer and closer to the body, making it impossible to ignore these given assumptions. Embodied knowledge is at the tip of our fingers (pun intended), yet it is being ignored because it has been gendered unfavourable.

Terminology, Methodology and Context

Working with feminist critique has been part of my methodology in that it connects the theoretical framework with the material. Collecting my material for each article has however been a more traditional undertaking. As much of the research on digital image practices and digital humanities work with quantitative research and big data, my motivation is user-oriented as this also follows the overall idea of an intimate study of our relationship to technology. This has been done mainly through interviews of different kinds. In the second article, I wanted to approach Tumblr users on their own terms, approaching them both as anonymous as well as asking for their participation via my own Tumblr. This resulted in four in depth interviews via email,
three with private users, named only by their blog names, and one with an editor for a big popular culture magazine representing the mass media presence (as this tension between corporation/mass media and the individual users/collective is inherent on the site). Moreover, the selection has been conducted dependent on material and platform. Thus, following the anonymity of Tumblr, those interviews were made via email (and anonymously) and in the context of the selfie, I used snowball sampling, asking acquaintances for individuals who post selfies regularly and would feel comfortable discussing it in a repeated focus group. The questions in all cases were open-ended and semi-structured enabling debate and difference of opinion, and I encouraged the respondents to elaborate and write/speak as much or as little as they preferred. I also interviewed people in some ways acquainted with each other to create a safe and relaxed atmosphere, as the topic at times got personal and even private, dealing for example with self-worth and body image. In this way, first-hand research adds an important user perspective on the perception of selfies (e.g. familiarity of social media, image practice, the gaze, value systems, sharing, openness and disagreements) to a discourse often heavily weighed down by opinion. However, the informative bits selected and cited are here used more as tangible examples as a means of advancing a philosophical argument, rather than empirical ‘evidence’ in support of the same, thus the informants’ thoughts are rather interwoven with feminist critique throughout the text.

To not lose sight of my material and the closeness to my user-oriented path I have also used discourse analysis as a type of “backdrop” to my thinking. Without finding myself too deep in ideology, it has been useful in understanding how my own scholarly discourse is influenced by social structure. Following the idea of feminine writing and feminist post-structuralism, I have not used Norman Fairclugh’s discourse analysis, but rather taken on a more feminist stance proposed by Michelle Lazar and others. It is important to note is that although many studies in Critical Discourse Analysis can have a gender focus, not all of them come from a feminist perspective. CDA might be a progressive project, but its founders are dominated by straight white cis-men. To have a feminist critical discourse analytical perspective here means recognising the phenomenon of “othering” vis-à-vis institutional power and hierarchies in discussing technology and fashion. It tells me how the objectives of my articles have been dealt with in mass media and literature and it also informs a more active stance towards gendered practices also being socially transformative and highlights discursive “embodied” identities. It is, as Lazar states, important to be “guided by feminist principles and insights in theorising and analysing the seemingly innocuous yet oppressive nature of gender as an omni-relevant category in many social practices” (Lazar, 2010: 143). For example, much of my initial understanding of selfies came from a direct opposition to how they were often debated in the media, situating the issue and a need for feminist debate. Within this dissertation,
discourse analysis cuts through theory, method and material. It is in a way my “praxis orientation” that also informs my feminine writing and shapes my theory (Lazar, 2007: 144ff).

Additionally, it is easy to forget that until a few decades ago the media were basically the mass media (Kearney, 2006: 2). Even what constitutes digital culture itself has changed over a twenty-year period (Lister, 2013). In 1992, when the Web was in its infancy and the first images were uploaded they took ages to download, much less share (Lister, 2013: 3). Nevertheless, with the user generated development of the Web 2.0 in 2002 combined with the development of the portable mini computer that is the smartphone, visual, social and media practices went through further dramatic changes and the digital image became more and more associated to something inherently networked. Moreover, because the smartphone is small, light and in most cases have cameras that are good enough for taking a wide variety of pictures, they are taking the place of digital cameras as the camera used most often by consumers (Eriksen, 2013). Yet, the popularity of the smartphone is also due to its immediacy as a communication and social media tool, turning it into something more than just a camera. With social image apps like Instagram, pictures have taken centre stage in digital culture and innovation in photography today often comes from software start-ups (rather than new hardware, which, again, privileges the smartphone). In 2014, the fastest growing social media platforms were all built around images. On the social media monitoring company Brandwatch, Iris Vermeren notes:

A study by Forrester [forrester.com] found that Instagram posts achieved a per-follower engagement rate of 4.21%. In other words, Instagram posts generate 120 times more engagement per follower than Twitter and 58 times more than Facebook! Instagram, Pinterest, Vine, Tumblr and Snapchat, all of these networks foresaw the importance of visual content and they grasped the opportunity (2015).

To make matters more complicated, every aspect of the Web as well as the apps on your smartphone constantly relate to each other and every slight difference in similar apps affect their use. For example, Internet news media site Buzzfeed is popular on social network site Facebook, but not on Twitter, where BBC instead is top rated (Sloane, 2014). Hybrid messaging services such as Snapchat, where you send images that vanish after a few seconds, serve 1.2 billion messages a day (Sloane 2014). Facebook, who not only bought Instagram, but also another messaging service called WhatsApp, now controls the 1.1 billion images shared daily between these services, compared to Snapchat’s 700 million (ibid.). It should be pointed out that although both Facebook and Instagram provide a possibility to post images, Facebook is a social network where you post links and other online materi-
als, create groups and events, images being only one of many things making up the site. Instagram is a way of sharing only pictures (and with the possibility of creating alternative personas, as you are not forced to provide your real name).

Lastly, the four articles all deal with different expressions of image practices, and in their own ways reflect the rapid changes this project has undergone and contextualising my project in this fast paced and fast changing media climate has been a continuous methodological issue. Social media platforms, sites, blogs and apps have come and gone and some of those exemplified in any of the articles are sure to have disappeared as of this writing. Others, like Tumblr, have followed me through the process, changed in their appearance and attitude, but also matured. According to Global Web Index, Tumblr’s active user base actually grew by 120% in the last six months of 2014 (while Facebook only grew 2%), a big part of this arguably due to its intuitive and image based features. Its overall resilience to ads (both company and user wise) is also an interesting direction to follow in terms of power relations, loyalty and monetization of users. Having said that, Tumblr is also a perfect example of a business model created for sharing. Although it might have plenty of good intentions, as a company, it still wants its traffic to keep growing. As an individual user, this means that you partake in its “sharing” economy, you are at some level exposed to advertisements and so forth, and this creates a level of socioeconomic conflict between user and corporation. However, by aspiring to transparency, Tumblr has managed to, if nothing else make as much of this conflict as visible as possible. Its terms of service is written in plain English, it provides community guidelines and the user owns her own pictures, although it also clearly stated that you set your images free to be shared (reblogged) on the site (Couts, 2012). Moreover, the tension between power and collective is evident also among users where instant gratification, emotional encounters and social justice constantly battle for influence. As I briefly mention in the second article, there is also plenty of adult content on Tumblr, an issue that is both highly problematic and highly profitable. Different Tumblr blogs also challenge this dichotomy altogether by blurring different concepts and subverting them (who, for example, gets to say what passes as art or obscenity?). Moreover, this multitude of alternatives and important nuances in image practices are also where questions should arise regarding class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and so on. Who has access is still by no means a given. Where I have pointed out that these nuances are vital (an image is never just an image), continuing research might advance these discussions to involve how differ-
ent expressions emerge precisely through choice of network or app. \(^2\) The goal here has largely been to comprehend and contextualise these complicated discourses in order to ask the right questions later on.

\(^2\) For example, a study from Pew Research Center suggests that middle and upper income teens tend to favour Instagram and Snapchat, while Facebook is more popular among lower income teens (Lenhart, 2015).
Dissertational Themes – Digital Proliferation and Reflexivity

To frame the dissertational research process further, two major movements have emerged which flow through the four articles. These two themes (or meta-themes) might be viewed as a deeper reflection on the constant state of flux that has underlined my research, as opposed to the following four strands that are meant to contribute to the overall technological, fashion and feminist discourses beyond this specific dissertation. They partly intersect with method and theoretical framework, and so I have chosen to separate themes and strands as the themes rather lead up to the implications of the strands. They is a description of the analytical process leading up to the final discussions.

The first theme, Digital Proliferation, is based in time, following the development and change in the main objectives during the course of the four and a half years. Reflexivity, the second theme, is circular and follows an implicit structure of the dissertation itself, and my part in it. In a way, these two movements intersect with methodology as they similarly address the meta-levels of the research, in tandem with my feminist critique. Thus, this section attempts to show transparency through a research process dealing with issues of both transdisciplinary as well as ever-changing media. Importantly, these two themes both relate to the body. However, where as the first theme describes a tendency towards the body as the digital and technology have developed through these four years, the second theme deal with concepts relating to the body and feminist critique such as embodiment, subjectivity, digitality and image, forcing me to go back and revisit concepts and discussions in order to better understand the final implications.

Digital Proliferation is linear and follows the four articles chronologically. It begins with the discourse on the archive in the first article, where I discuss the modernist idea of memory as stored outside the body and ourselves. Both analogue photography and digital images are at this point taken to be used in this way, the digital functioning primarily as an extension of the analogue. Not only does the digital image question this notion of memory through a suggested “throwaway” attitude towards everyday use of pictures. This more ephemeral consumption of images arguably leaks over into the discursive (and mass media) approach to the very medium, making digital images less worthy as memory function, compared to the analogue.
photograph. The digital become the worst of two worlds, arguably making us take more pictures but remember less as nothing is really saved for the future. This early in the project my own perceptions of images possibly working subversively are much like the glitches I describe in the first article. It is hinted in my interest for what happens when the digital is “seen”, in the very clash between the virtual and the physical.

As the dissertation moves into more specific use of digital images, primarily by looking at the microblog platform Tumblr, categories I have taken as a given are slowly starting to blur. For the users on Tumblr, images are not necessarily memories in the first place, but expansions of the self. By posting them in different variations and combinations on a personal blog, expressions of emotion, taste, attitude, aesthetic or pop cultural references are the primary function of images. They are social and communicative, and the notion of memory is in effect only secondary, by the platform automatically building an archive of each blog. Digital images on Tumblr then not only function as consumption or entertainment, but as conversations with the self. They are in dialogue. They flow and move, and with a simple click, an initial, instinctive feeling for a picture can save it on the user’s blog, thus becoming part of her personal collection and expression. As experience, the digital image in everyday life has started to move, from the “outside” to participating in the creation of the expressive self. They help build spaces of both private and shared rooms for being that are more instinctive.

This continuous, forward directed digital development clarifies its movement from outside to inside further through the selfie. If the digital image up till now has been used to express parts of the self, to engage in dialogue with the self and others, to become a form of dream that is rooted in very real emotion (not unlike fashion), the selfie instead becomes one with the individual. Through its continuous repetition in a shared social space, the selfie blurs the lines between looking-at-ness and being seen. As opposed to self-portraits, the selfie is essentially social, but also intimately connected to the subject’s emotional state. Moreover, its part in the digital movement towards the body is also grounded in the selfie as feminist critique. By looking at the selfie as based precisely in something material and bodily specific, I point to the importance of grounding the debate in experience and, subsequently, the on-going formation of the subject. More precisely, the selfie arguably confronts the hegemonic face by offering a space for self-discovery not previously accessible to women, and it does so by debunking the whole idea of surface and depth and questioning the modern hierarchical relationship between private and non-private spaces.

The last point (but by no means end point) for the first movement is the practice of wearable technology and wearable cameras (discussed in the final article). If a digital life is often linked to losing the body, an idea of moving around cyberspace without a body (a Cartesian body suggestively already separated from the mind) this Digital Proliferation theme instead focuses on
the implication of the body as the very vehicle for movement. This might sound obvious at first, but less so with relation to digitality and images. Yes, the wearable camera is mounted on the body, but discursively never becomes with the body. Conversely, I argue that the camera becomes embodied, and that this loss of actual user intervention, replaced with an automatic part of everyday life, alters the relationship between camera, vision, technology, image and the human body. I do not focus so much on technology and images just physically being located closer to our skin. Rather, it is the experience of our bodies as extended through these devices that I wish to bring to the fore. As image and body in similar ways overlap, fashion can again contribute to explaining this transcendence by creating a grey area where we are both, and none. In a more concrete sense, it is perhaps no coincidence that fashion has followed digital culture closely, and at times sped it up by combining the easily accessible and quick with self-expression and play. Similar to other institutions, everyday digital imagery have democratised fashion by making it possible for “ordinary” people to participate in the dialogue earlier only accessible to experts (Evans in Bruzzi and Church Gibson, 2013: 80). As Evans notes, fashion in many ways has become image (2013: 81). However, in an increasingly digitised world, and as has been evident in this theme, this also means a reaction “back” to body and artefact. Young artists and celebrities like mentioned Arvida Byström, Amandla Stendberg and Tavi Gevinson use their Instagram to bring focus to the female body3. Thus, by writing the project into an increasingly embodied material experience, this theme becomes both theoretical and methodological.

Finally, this first movement not only focuses on the body in relation to the digital, but it also poses the question of what kind of body is put in focus. This is what leads up to the two strands Female subjectivities and Embodiment which are discussed later (2 and 3).

The second theme or movement in the dissertation, labelled Reflexivity, is self-referential and connects the last article to the first. In other words, the fourth and final article answers many of the explorative wanderings of the first. In some cases, the themes and articles overlap, illuminating continuous pulses of concern throughout the dissertation. Rather than describing the digital development during the past five years, this theme deals more with the struggles I have had as a researcher, constantly renegotiating my understandings of the things I am studying. For example, looking back on the four articles, it surprised me that the body, so present at the end of the project, had already been established as an important concept very early on, although in a very different form. Where the first article pleads for a more dynamic approach to memory, body and media, these categorisations are still fairly

3 Another example is 14-year-old Willow Smith who caused controversy by wearing a t-shirt with breasts printed on in support for #freethenipple, a movement working against female censorship on social media platforms such as Instagram.
fixed. Instead, the last article implicitly explains how a dynamic approach can only take the discussion so far, if the categorisations themselves are not challenged. Instead, my role as a (female) researcher has forced me to rethink the very concepts I work with.

The circular movement is in itself also a response to the linear, a reminder that this dissertation deals with both, in dialogue. Even though this might seem contradictory, that tension is productive in understanding a complex web of processes. Jane Bennett’s concept of the unintentional underlines the project. Like me, she wishes to overcome the Kantian notion of treating human as an end in itself. Problems highlight the margins, the invisible walls we have to if not tear down, at least be aware of. Disruption, both in practice (using wearable cameras, taking selfies, creating archives, participating on blog platforms) and theory (writing about it here) challenges what we are able to “see”. And these disruptive elements can be non-human as well (Bennett, 2010: 107).

The first article uses the case of the digital archive to discuss the shift from analogue (material) to digital (non-material). It goes as far as noting how this move can go both ways and that the analogue and the digital are always in relation to each other. However, the fourth article, following the circular movement, points out how these lines are imaginary, and that we instead are in both, constantly becoming with the digital and the physical. Moreover, the dualisms applied to shine a light on the new and alternative ways to archive the ephemeral in article one, for example by polarising cultural institutions and amateur web users, get a deeper feminist critique in article four. The circular theme then takes the issue of the hegemonic gaze further, attempting to break even more with modernist, masculine thinking. It starts with a suggestion that the people who experiment and innovate do not have legislative power, and ends with a vivid evaluation of that very power.

The circular movement also deals with the idea of matter and embodiment, again more at a meta-level. It brings together the notion that images, as the archive, can be “not of the past”, and instead part of the everyday and lived experience. To view everyday digital imagery as “throwaway” suggests that there is something else more worth saving. Indeed, we are confronted with Raymond Bellour’s paradox, that even though we have images all around us, we no longer know what an image is (1996: 173). However, that also suggests that what is “lived” in the present has lesser value. This, in part, is the effect of the digital image’s disposition. Mark Hansen describes how photography, in opposition to the digital image, always has an inherent perspective, and is thereby always closely connected to human vision (2001: 58). Non-indexical digitality is made up of mathematical data, thus reconfiguring human vision itself. The digital image is abstract numbers, which means that the image itself is just one form the information can take (2001: 59). Because the digital image cannot be meaningfully isolated in this
In a purely technological sense, this argument might have quite a bit of bearing. In some senses, the digital image, because it is totally flexible, becomes without author and referent. This suggests a complete breakdown of what is image and not image. However, Hansen uses Bergson to point out the function of embodied prosthesis in dealing with this issue, noting that action and affect takes place within the body. A car is not just an instrument you sit in, but something you merge with (2001: 77f). But you might also have bodily memory of the familiarity of a specific car seat. Similarly, the body becomes the medium or mediator “between information and form (image) (Hansen, 2001: 78). Hansen finally establishes two fundamental characteristics of contemporary mediations of the image: on the one hand, the passage from interactivity to dynamic coupling with the image, and on the other hand, a fundamental shift in the "economy" of perception from vision to bodily affectivity (2001: 83).

In short, Hansen and Bellour argue that it is only the human reaction that gives form to information, and that we therefore must view the body as the very origin of the image in all its forms (2001: 83). Although this is true to some extent, and although it opens up to both a machinic vision as well as an embodied one, it still ends up putting the human at the centre of a fixed relation between human and computer. Instead, as a reply to these discussions, John Sutton and Kellie Williamson ask for a convergence between the human body and the machine:

Embodied memory in these contexts is firmly embedded in complex and idiosyncratic cultural settings, with unique social and historical backgrounds and norms. [---] If memory is embodied, it is also arguably situated and distributed (2014: 321).

This body that reacts and affects has to be questioned in its wholeness. At the time of the digital debate of Hansen and Bellour fifteen years ago, the postmodern and technofeminist approach was in a different place, and in terms of Internet years between then and now, a lifetime has passed. Judy Wajcman reminds us of the major changes feminist theories of technology have undergone in the last twenty years, from the fatalist notion of technology as reproducing patriarchy, to the liberating ideas of cyberfeminism in the 1990s, to today’s more integrated dialogue with science and a focus on feminist discourse itself (rather than seeing technology as the main agent)
(Wajcman, 2007: 277). Yet, embodiment itself has been a continuous issue within feminist discourse. The idea of complete disembodiment that cyberculture offered was a chance to undermine given categories. Online, you were free of gender, ethnicity, age, etcetera. For cyberfeminists, this early digital space was a place of freedom and liberation from a long tradition of being placed precisely in concepts of nature and body (rather than mind and technology) (Wajcman, 2004: 2ff). However, this perspective is not only in need of an intersectional analysis, which has been debated in the feminist movements that followed. It also in some ways played into the idea that freedom from embodiment is positive, that the body holds us back. And as digital culture has integrated itself increasingly in our lives, it has become apparent that the body is not going anywhere. In fact, as I discuss mainly in the last two articles, it is in this embodiment, in letting it take up space and express alternative ways of being, that there is productivity to be found. For me as a reflexive researcher during this project, it is similarly about a coming together of voices in dialogue, rather than finding one true agreement (Wajcman, 2004). It is a contribution to this dialogue, in method as well as material, taken, at its foundation, from a very personal place.

Additionally, the fact that there is a post-Internet discourse to take into account makes the digital an inherently slippery concept. However, while working through the digital image as well as the image of the digital, it is clear that it has perspective and that it is still dominated by a masculine vision. Or, to put it differently, the “amateurism” by which women, through
selfies, through blogging, through art, have to claim access to “technology” illustrates a narrative of technology (Oldenziel, 190). It shows that there is a “right” and a “wrong” way of approaching the digital (how?), the body (what body?) and the media in between (where?). The point of the articles here is that all these things – gender, sexuality, class, embodiment – matter in digital space. They all leave material traces. This means, that even though Hansen speaks of going back to the body to find a purpose for the digital image, the prerequisite for this movement is arguably still highly hierarchical and determined, if nothing else because the body itself is not problematized. My articles in different ways illuminate the complexity and movement of the digital and how it can be “noiseless, unambiguous, and precise – digital. But ‘digital’ does not always mean inhuman, or even electronic” (Maddalena and Packer, 2014: 2). Often, the digital is thought of as either one or the other, as affecting us with various conditions (for example “personal digital disorder”, Brindley 2009) or such a vast investment in the digital that we forget ourselves altogether. Note John Weaver’s description:

The digital image serves as a continued reminder that we live in a new period in which popular culture is playing a leading role in constructing reality and those people who understand the effects of popular culture in all dimensions of life will be better prepared to meet the challenges of the altered world that digital images are constructing one pixel at a time (2009: 21).

The point here is that the digital image does not create reality, we do. There is no one medium held account for this experience, but things in interaction. It might sound banal when stated, but is easily overlooked. Linking the digital debate to fashion and “simple pleasures” such as selfies arguably ground it in something quite intimate. When kids create t-shirts with iPhone text messages printed on them or make poetry out of Google searches, they are playing with concepts of reality and of embodying fleeting moments. Bellour labels this “the double helix” of the new image, in which signs and sensations, codes and bodies are inseparable (1999: 9 – 41). However, this concept seems to view imaging as converging with other representational practices, and finds actually locating the digital a focal point. In the articles of this project these issues have low, if any significance, as the users and practices researched arguably have a common understanding of the digital, both as a type of given sensitivity, but also more explicitly, by dealing with the digital as a technological practice. Linked to the idea of user culture is a step away from the debate around the digital as art. The double helix is mainly discussed within a discourse of painting, cinema and photography, areas that indeed overlap with my project but which need be reviewed in their own right. Again, the focus here is user oriented, sometimes dealing with all these areas, but also often in opposition. Arguably, the image practices looked at
here do not even relate to the concept of art in a sense that they cannot be understood purely according to their aesthetic significance. Hansen writes:

[The] image names the demarcation from computer vision of a supplementary aesthetic figure: no longer a function of the technical interface, the image is itself produced from, and indeed in, the processing of computer data by an embodied human perceiver (2001: 82).

If Hansen, Bellour and others discuss “spiritual” vision and tactile interface (Hansen, 2001: 83) I wish to redirect that to multiple visions. In the attempt to find these (indeed necessary) generalisations, large but marginalised groups are taken for granted. However, it is never a vision, a body. The theory that speaks of the body coming into play, is also, partly, the theory that tells us how that body comes into play correctly. Concerns about the deterritorialisation of the human subject is in my project not just taken as a given, but as an actual endeavour, if nothing else from the users themselves, because subjectivity itself needs to be put into question. There is a fundamental shift, but that shift has implicit direction (or objective), which is what a technofeminist approach challenges. Many debates on digitality and imaging are still gendered, and therefore cannot be used to incorporate all of digital discourse.
Strands of the dissertation

This next section deals with the implications of the articles. Rather than being final findings however, they are to be viewed as a platform where the dialogue between theory, method and material meet and form narrative data. These strands then are to be understood as what can be drawn out of the project and its implications and contributions for the overall digital discourse (rather than the meta-analysis of the two themes or movements discussed above). The four threads might seem slightly arbitrary, but have grown organically from the writing process and represent reoccurring struggles throughout the project, in content and theory as well as in method. They each represent a change or a movement within Western digital culture, and by conceptualising the digital like this the aim is to clarify its complexity. However, I do not wish to use these concepts to fix and determine as much as bring to the fore aspects of digital culture important to keep discussing and develop further.

Thus, drawing from the dissertation articles, I have found four overall strands tying the articles together in different ways: What is the digital image?, Selfing: Female Subjectivities, The Body and Embodiment in Digital Space and Doing Memory.

1. What is the digital image?

The most obvious topic running through all four articles is that of the digital itself. The aim of the dissertation has never been to pin down the essence of the digital, but rather what it does. As with its neighbouring term technology, the digital implies a myriad of different things together creating a complex discursive field. It is indeed a technology itself, but it is also a process, a description, knowledge, a set of aesthetics and practices, a science. It suggests political and economical instabilities (“The digital divide”). It is an era, a business, and so on. The digital image then, becomes a part of these generalisations and specifications; deceivingly malleable to whatever debate it becomes a part of. Throughout the dissertation then, “the digital” materialis-
es in the case studies, each time contributing in different ways to an understanding of the digital image, by undermining the craving to simplify it.

Initially, this meant writing the digital out of the photography discourse. Although none of the articles explicitly deals with this dualism, the practices studied are chosen to point out the digital as a medium in its own right, however close in similarity it might be to (analogue) photography at first glance. One major argument for this is the contextual quality of the image. Whether it is studied through online archiving, blog platforms such as Tumblr, selfies or wearable cameras, its function and experience shifts. Each aspect of the surrounding matters, from the chosen camera (a smartphone, the computer, a professional camera etc.) to its place of publication (if any). An image can mean one thing on an online news and social networking website such as Reddit or Gawker and quite another on Facebook. A news or paparazzi image can very quickly turn into a meme, shifting its communicative and social qualities instantly. An image can turn into a concept, a phenomena or an artwork often impossible to remove from the context of which it is created or remarks on. An image might mean something very specific and private for a Tumblr user, yet be shared and distributed throughout the platform and become many different things. In the case of the smartphone app “Snapchat”, it only lasts a few seconds all together, suggesting that the digital image is quite the opposite of the analogue.

To come back to Hansen, he, via Bergson, attempts to correlate the aesthetics of new media with a theory of embodiment (2004: 23). I too work towards perception as embodied. However, if these thoughts in some regard answer to William Mitchell’s notion of the digital image as a loss of visual truth and even faith in the image (1994), then I wish to take that argument one step further. With the everyday image practices of this project, the question is not whether the images can be trusted, as so many factors come into play in order for the image to make sense. The question is rather, if we are connected to images that are not our own, to machines we do not yet know, can we also have meaningful philosophical debates about them (Gamble, 2015)? Arguably, the framing of the digital image is one part of its characteristics because it needs to be done continuously. In turn, it matters who frames it. These aspects indeed opens up the inquiry on what it means to be human, and this is also why technofeminism, fashion and posthumanism connect so intimately with the debates of this project.

Another aspect of how digital discourse is struggling to grasp the full spectrum of the digital image relates to material categorisations, primarily the camera itself. Twenty years ago, Lev Manovich asked: “If we describe film-based images using such categories as depth of field, zoom, a shot or montage, what categories should be used to describe digital images?” (1995: 2). Manovich, and W. J. T. Mitchell before him, argue that the digital image dissolve these categories because all aspects of the image can be created using one medium, the virtual camera of the computer. Although this is true
in principle, the digital image has not calmly stayed within the computer, but
found even more variations of becoming than the analogue photograph, pri-
marily through that of the smartphone, which in turn has challenged a num-
ber of other ways in which we interact with screens and create images. In-
stead, genres become central in not seeing the digital as “one”. Consider the
eexample of Google Maps and Google Street View. Behind every map, there
is collected data, algorithms, and a deep and more complex map of the logic
of places—an internal map. Not only can the new maps be modified, aug-
mented, and layered. They can also be filled with new content, constantly
integrating them into a more organic, “living” web. The Internet, as culture,
given it is viewed from an intersectional perspective, is not “out there”, but
made and recreated in a constant process of doing, enmeshing humans, ma-
chines, bodies, and images. Google, once a search engine, now in effect me-
diates experience as well as data, blurring the boundaries between human
and machine memory. This one piece of mapping software is really a myriad
of functions, mashups, and networks in constant flux, such as We Tell Sto-
ries, which allows the user to follow the trail of six different fictional stories;
photographer Doug Rickard’s virtual road trip through the remote and for-
gotten places of the US; the dreamy photographs captured by Google Street
View and worked up by Aaron Hobson; the journalistic finds of Michael
Wolf in A Series of Unfortunate Events; the very popular project 9– eyes
(the original number of cameras on the Street View car rig, now 15) created
by artist Jon Rafman, which collects the odd, fantastic and often humorous
moments, or mistakes and glitches captured in Google Street View; or Mish-
ka Henner’s No Man’s Land, offering a more critical look at Google images
and their links to surveillance and voyeurism.

Moreover, Google Street View images are always recognisable via the
small interactive compass at the top left corner of the picture, made for navi-
gating the virtual landscape while searching. When specific Street View
images then circulate the web, for example on Tumblr, this little compass
provides implicit understanding of the image and consequently how we ex-
perience it. For instance, it tells us that the “author” is a number of automatic
cameras on top of a car, which often contextualise the images as very coin-
cidental and in flux. They “just happened”, and the little compass remind us
of this. Arguably, these types of images and the way they are used and re-
used are specific to the digital because of the overlapping of realities. In a
series called Street Ghosts, artist Paolo Cirio has searched Google Street
View for images with people in them, and then created life-size posters of
those people and plastered them on the location where the picture was taken.
The images become unbiased and personal at the same time. Virtual and
material. Cirio’s posters reminds us that everyplace we visit is multiple and
layered. They are spontaneous and yet they become contemplative. Argua-
bly, the digital becomes part of the way we view the images. To make some-
thing physical, like Cirio’s posters, highlight the sense of temporality and urgency of Google Street View.

Thus, subtle nuances make a digital image a combination of interpretation. Not only are there different “rooms” within the Web that contextualise the image (partly parallel to a photograph in a gallery, a newspaper or a photo album) but the image itself shifts because of this. It is also a type of digitality very different from the hyperreal and glossy perfection of high-resolution television and 3D movies. These everyday images are made to be used and handled. They are neither purely computer created nor are they photography. Furthermore, the often poor quality of these copies one of their characteristics. Manovich notes: “So rather than being an aberration, a flaw in the otherwise pure and perfect world of the digital, where even a single bit of information is never lost, lossy compression is increasingly becoming the very foundation of digital visual culture” (1995: 8). This poor image, as Hito Steyerl labels it, is a copy in motion, deteriorating as it accelerates (2009). “The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value” (ibid.). The poor image even, to Steyerl, “mocks the promises of digital culture” (ibid.). The point here is that quality is not the main concern, because the image itself is not the end product. The everyday digital image is a means, but the end is manifold. It does not matter whether they are “real” or “manipulated”, whether they are taken by a human or a car, because they illustrate life, not truth. Or, to stick my neck out, they have become part of Western life. As such, old notions of what is picture and reality, here and there, inside or outside, are not sufficient. They might not even make sense. The “lossy” quality of the poor image gives us something else in return. It provides a space for loosening up our ideas about where we end and begin, what is mental and what is material, realism and fantasy. These issues are not new of course. What the everyday digital image does is materialise and manifest them. Arguably, the digital image does not rupture the photographic image because they exist in parallel, not in dichotomy, constantly playing with their own concepts. Again, the mutation of the fashion object into “thought images” helps us to understand this visual shift. Evans notes that “the focus on image does not occlude ‘the real’ so much as recontextualise what ‘the real’ is in digital culture” (2013: 83). Vice versa it is evident that the image, especially the digital image, has a significant impact on commerce and culture. Because of this, a part of this tendency also implicitly deals with a media critique. As noted, the digital is tied up in a variety of branches and activities, each claiming their own definition of the term. At the same time as digital image is often considered less valuable, for example because of its poor resolution and its everyday connotations, the digital in other ways is the peak of innovation, precision, luxury and quality. The digital, as concept and technology, still tells of a division between amateur and
professional, but also of feminine and masculine, which brings us to the next theme of the dissertation.

2. Selfing: Female subjectivities

Both in the context of this dissertation as well as the wider digital discourse surrounding each article, fashion and technology has been assumed to be in some form of dualism. Designers and inventors of wearable technology and lifelogging often speak of pairing fashion with technology, as if they were and have always been two separate fields. Or as Steve Brown of Intel argues in a video on wearable technology: “fashion and technology are coming together, truly for the first time” (The Creators Project, “Make It Wearable”, Episode 3, 2014). To connect to this tendency, fashion is considered a predominantly feminine field, as opposed to technology and science, which makes these discursive separations quite gendered. However, as Oldenziel argues, there is nothing inherently male about technology (Oldenziel, 1999: 10). This strand instead points out the continuous links between technological change and gender relations. As seen in practices like blogging on Tumblr or taking selfies, there is an implicit notion that girls are visitors in the digital space, using technology “wrong”. Moreover, these types of aesthetic or self-caring practices (like selfies) are not considered useful, yet another example of division and gatekeeping. Or, to link this back to fashion: “modern definitions of technology determine why we enter bridges under the definition of technology, but consider bras as outside its domain” (Oldenziel, 1999: 18).

These classifications also relate to the idea of images as sensory experiences. Finding a space for female subjectivity through images also makes them more than abstract form. To focus on the specific individual experience of images makes it necessary to step away from a more scientific approach to how they are used. There are narratives within the digital that are excluded from the digital discourse. Each article of this dissertation finds examples of the subversive use of images, aiming to challenge linear modernist thinking and simplification of media use. In the digital archive, this takes its form of flow, temporality and the ephemeral, creating open platforms that question authority. For Tumblr, it is the visual space itself, the possibility of anonymity, of freedom to create and be creative in alternative ways. In the selfie, the subversion lies in being seen, not being looked at, to experience oneself as real. And with wearable cameras, it can be as simple as juxtaposing their (masculine) popularity within extreme sports with the domestic life of a housewife.
Yet, it is important to state that this dissertation does not take the feminist approach of being in opposition to technology, as this would only acknowledge technology as a masculine domain. Neither do the case studies take a “naturalist” viewpoint of being anti-technology. It does not attempt to claim feminist use of images as utopian, and the masculine world of technology as dystopian. Even the promise of technology as a possibility for women to transcend themselves (Donna Haraway’s cyborg being the most famous example) is not a fitting one, since this in many ways overlap with the modernist, progressive notion of technology as a kind of saviour and solution. Instead, this tendency of female (and alternative feminine) subjectivity takes a step away from old dualisms, as well as the polarity of online and offline identity. The point of creating a blog of visual dreams or fears, or of taking selfies, is about the dialogue and ambivalence they create. It is the emotional and creative investment in images and what effect they have on the individual as well as the collective that has a lasting effect on challenging conventional technology and its use.

This does not happen in a vacuum of course. Parallel to the writings of these four articles, popular culture and art has seen a return of feminist themes as well, making room for the girl already so prominent in different digital spaces. In everything from academic literature like Catherine Driscoll’s Girls (2002), selfie artists like Arvida Byström and Amalia Ulman and the poetics of Gurlesque (poetry and art focusing on the radical, grotesque and ugly in femininity) to pop culture magazines such as Spanish Ponytale, Swedish fanzine BBY, British Tender Journal, Dutch Girls Like Us and American zine Teenwitch, the focus is solely on the experience and creativity of young women and feminine/queer identity, often using a type of internet aesthetic popularised by sites such as Tumblr. What is often labelled “Girl culture” very much springs from the digital spaces created by young women, sharing and expressing these different aspects of girlhood. Here, images and text become performances of gender and sexuality, often with a deep interest in the corporeal (such as menstruation).

However, the clash between young women/girls and technological practices has not been smooth. By labelling young women who are featured on webcams “camgirls” (for example girls who create cooking tutorials on Youtube or the community Django Girls creating tutorials in software development) or young women who are great fans of a particular artist “fangirls”, an often mocking vocabulary of what they do as “nontechnical” is created (Kearney, 2006: 125). For reference, a young man creating a Youtube clip is not a “camboy”, a young male fan rarely a “fanboy”, because when young men show interest in technology or music, they participate in traditionally masculine activities. “Technology enters into our sexual identity” Cynthia Cockburn writes. “[F]emininity is incompatible with technological competence; to feel technically competent is to feel manly” (Cockburn, 1985: 12). However, to see pictures of girls and girls not only making media, but pro-
ducing whole areas privileging their generational identity, or any other part of their identity, before their gender, opens up the possibility of recoding and thereby disrupting the traditional acceptance imposed by outside sources (Rodriquez, 2001: 3).

Similarly, I do not shy away from the fact that many girls might find looking good or cool a stressful act or that they do not experience some type of pressure in constructing a desired image. However, as I discussed thoroughly in article three, the trouble with selfies seems to be that there is not enough of a existing vocabulary to comprehend what they can signify, collectively as well as individually. Whether selfies are linked to self-obsession, a cry for help, low self-esteem, even mental illness (Keating, 2014) these are all arguably illustrations of a deeper discursive issue. To use images to both seduce and contest creates a frustrating ambiguity for the observer. The selfie questions why we cannot accept a woman’s self-destruction, or any other practice for that matter, as strategic. It seems it can only be explained as self-hatred, of her body or herself (Kraus 2000: 27, 116, 128, 135). As I indicated in the digital image discussion earlier, a feminist approach to digital discourse opens up a queering, not only of the approach to the image, but, arguably also of Western consciousness.

Moreover, it points out the fact that there is room for more than one woman at a time, because she becomes multilayered, not a token. As she fashions herself, she mirrors the difficulty of presenting the self as a coherent entity, and yet, it is only through repetition that coherence can be obtained. The point is not to privilege girls’ creativity over their consumer behaviours, but instead show that these are interdependent (Kearney 2006: 8). Women reporting from their lives in this way create, as McRobbie states, a new kind of politics from the whole of everyday life (169). Emily Gould adds:

Why do women who aren’t afraid to humiliate themselves appal us so much, and why do we rush to find superficial reasons to dismiss them (‘she’s crazy’ ‘she’s a narcissist’ ‘she’s young’ ‘she’s a famewhore’)? I think in part because they pose a threat to the social order, which relies on women’s embarrassment to keep them either silent or writing in socially accepted modes (Gould in Nolan, 2011).

Instead then, this radical female and feminine “I” takes centre stage. But because this “I” is image, not text, its ambiguity and play with surface and depth gets even more prominent. It can be lack of self-worth and highly self-accountable at once. It is this freedom to be many things at once that makes the digital images, such as the selfie, such a difficult puzzle to solve, and within this dissertation creates a type of method, because it also negotiates the very feminism (feminisms) it wishes to exercise, from the ugliness and filth of the gurlesque, to the ethereal selfies on Instagram. They all pose
questions, which can be used methodologically as well as ideologically. Does femininity have to be lovable? Can surface politics (such as fashion or selfies) be confessional? Can pretending not also be authentic, the way masquerade balls in eighteenth century gardens opened up for completely classless encounters? It is important to note that the self-care discussed in this strand and, primarily, in article three, is a process without obvious effective end. The young woman does what she is expected to do, she presents herself as commodity.\(^4\) Yet, when she does it well, she is punished. Note Jennifer Pan’s description:

> [S]elf-care is one in which self-care is envisioned primarily as a means to rejuvenate us so that we’re able to work faster and harder—precisely the condition that has caused so much of our stress to begin with (2015).

By being generous with time and paying attention to detail, the young woman, in a way, twice undermines the way she is meant to perform. She is not effective “in the right way” in a capitalist society and she is using technology “wrong”. Because of this, she also sees things differently.

Again, fashion, style and appearance play a vital part in sharing experiences and emotions through social media. Arvida Byström notes the importance of context so fundamental to digital imagery, making these aspects make even more sense to its users and practitioners: “You can't just make ‘feminist art’ because feminism is more like a spectrum of things; it changes and depends on its context” (Byström in Jones, 2015). In Youth Online, Angela Thomas argues that:

> [I]dentity is a performance of fantasy and desire – a pursuit of being and becoming the image of this desire. In our lives, we perform our identities within the physical world, and this performance is constructed by numerous factors: the identity inscribed in our bodies such as gender, ethnicity and age; our individual personalities as evidenced through fashion sense, hairstyle and other bodily markings (tattoos, piercing, make-up); and our psychological make-up such as our mannerisms of walk and talk (Thomas 2007: 5).

Thus, fashion, image, body and feminist critique becomes networked emotion to a generation raised by the World Wide Web but very aware of their experiences as always embodied. Becoming image then is becoming feminine and is continuously constructed through desire, and the selfie arguably becomes quite a transformative act.

\(^4\) In ”The Young-Girl and the Selfie” (2013) Sarah Gram writes: “The flapper, the flaneuse, the hysteric — prior to the advent of consumer capitalism, the bodies of young women can be read as the bodies most useless to capitalism.”
3. The body and embodiment in digital space

The strand of femininity is intimately linked to corporeality and embodiment. Not only vision, but also the actual practice of making and sharing images are here experienced as highly meaningful. The digital image is often considered as abstract, disembodied both from both reality and from the physical body. It is often thought of as being cut off from the real world, as opposed to the photographic picture based on light, thus arguably making it real (Hadjioannou, 2008: 123). When you see a woman on a photograph, that woman is arguably real in time and space. In opposition, the rhetoric of the digital as disembodied, not only through the cybercultural strive to escape the limitations of our bodies, but also the opposite, to “detox” from the digital and return to the real and the natural, creates a problematic discourse of always dividing the digital from the physical, online from offline, mind and body, and, most importantly in this case, making the digital quite impersonal (Anderson and Stern, 2009: 118).

Contrary to this argument, the strand of embodiment examines the way these material and immaterial aspects overlap, and perhaps have never been separated completely. Instead of discussing the body either as text, or as something very material and fleshy, it is evident that the image practices of this dissertation deal with both. Initially, this is illustrated through the Tumblr blog of The Art of Google Books, publishing the tiny mistakes made when Google digitizes physical books. Small notes in the margin, obscured texts, books that were never checked out of the library (blank back matter) or the “selective autocorrect of employee’s fingertip” on a photographed page (accidental glitch art), the things that are turned into numbers and code suddenly and simultaneously become material and tangible. The blog’s creator, Krissy Wilson, calls this “re-photography”, but I would prefer to call these images sensory. Furthermore, as I discuss in article two regarding Tumblr, a similar corporeality is found in the emotional creation of blogs and sharing of pictures that goes beyond their aesthetic contents. Tumblr users speak of desires and dreams, about images speaking to them personally, about interconnectedness and freedom. Thus, the material aspect here lies in the specificity of each individual’s digital experience, in a specific digital space. Not only can the image be a very personal, or private affair. It also depends on the space in which it is presented. The digital then, as place and experience, is anything but impersonal and “belonging to no-body” (Anderson and Stern, 2009: 118). Instead, it becomes the condition for expressing the personal.

However, the body within the digital discourse is also approached in a more literal manner. As wearable technology and wearable cameras are mounted on the body, it is addressed directly. In the final article I stress the
paradox of media discussions on wearable cameras ironically forgetting this primary part of the wearable camera practice, namely the body itself. Even though this physical connection seems obvious, the futuristic strive for digital disembodiment, or loss of body, still shines through the wearable technology debate. For example, you can use the Apple Watch to check if you have a pulse. Luke Robert Mason writes on twitter: “To check you're not a Robotic Consumer of Apple Technology… You can even check you have a pulse // #Heartbeat #AppleEvent #AppleWatch” (March 9, 2015). This is ironic, since it seems to move towards us becoming more like robots, rather than humans understanding and being, feeling our pulse through our entire body.

This continuous division between mind and body is perhaps even more evident with regards to the female body. Yet, as discussed in the Selfing strand, rather than viewing the body as separate parts to be objectified and measured, a “girl in parts” (the abstract symbolization of the female body) I see the merging of cameras with clothing and skin as a way to find new ways of understanding embodiment that attempts to include the subject, a “whole” if you like (as opposed to perfection). Moreover, the point is not so much that we wish to look more like robots, but that it enables new approaches to otherness and sameness. Consequently, the strand of embodiment is an attempt to actually unite the subject with the body, something that has been split in two for centuries and very often lost in digital discourse.

All this embodiment and disembodiment could be causing quite a bit of body anxiety. Fashion and the abundance of images in the media have in the media suggestively created a negative body image, especially as the already thin ideal promoted through fashion models is being digitally enhanced to look unnaturally and impossibly perfect. The frustration then with women not having a voice is arguably not specific to art or health, but an overall issue of image practices (which of course goes further than gender). However, using the body to express this tension is a popular theme in feminist art as well as, I argue in this dissertation, through more everyday image practices. To clarify, this strand neither argues that we are the masters of technology, nor that we are its pawn. It does not position humans at the centre of media, but neither does it call for a “back to nature” approach. Out of control or in control are both insufficient solutions to the embodied practices found in these articles, and therefore the strand explores alternative relations to media and the digital. Thus, the digital body here is not a different body than the physical, sensory body. What Friedrich Kittler and others have discussed, namely the fear of being neutralised by our own tools, does not appear here. Rather, it is the opposite. It is body and image becoming with. One echoes the other, turning vision into a physical event, “a shift from an optical to a haptic mode of perception” (Hansen, 2001: 63). As will be clear in the next strand, seeing is closely connected to affection and memory, and should not be reduced to “mere” surface or representation. For example, in an article in
Wired Magazine Clive Thompson writes how “screenshots can be almost forensic, a way to prove to others that you’re really seeing the crazy stuff you’re seeing” (Thompson, 2015). “Screenshots lets you see other people’s screenworlds”, a type of “collaborative reading” developing organically (ibid.). As such, the virtual and the physical are not fixed and static, but seem to flow in and out of each other.

The embodiment of the digital is also found more factually. Certain Internet aesthetics and ways of communicating have migrated out of the screen and onto clothes. Artist Maurice Santiago’s project ”Growing Pains: Maturity and Innocence of Confessing First Love on Social Media” illustrates text messages on different social media printed on t-shirts. The small street style brand Mary Jane embroiders an iPhone text message on a cap, the text reading “I miss you (Read: 1: 43 AM)” (Figure 3). Artist Erin M. Riley reproduces selfies as tapestry. Her choice of medium as well as artistic object is of course of extra interest within the context of this dissertation, since both selfies and tapestry are regarded as less technological, or constructed as outside of the technological discourse. Other examples of embodied digital aesthetics include emoji prints, jewellery, physical art exploring the boundaries between online and offline, micro aesthetics dealing with 1990s Internet, memes, old media artefacts like CDs, minidiscs or cassettes or, vice versa, images exploring the material in garments or objects.
Arguably, this materialisation of the digital, that which James Bridle labels “The New Aesthetic”, could be seen as an effect of an increasingly digital world. As most mainstream media and consumer goods are becoming digitised, the digital becomes increasingly invisible and omnipresent. “New” technologies become, as Lev Manovich states, “an assumed part of everyday existence, something which does not seem to require much reflection” (Manovich, 2003: 13). However, this invisibility is selective and problematic, both in terms of who actually has access, but also in terms of genres. Embodifying the digital means constantly reflecting over the specificity of each medium and each choice of communication channel. Because of their subtle but distinctive variations, a picture on Snapchat is different than that of Instagram. Or one can copy and post a Snapchat image on Instagram or Tumblr (for example as a screenshot) but then you take the Snapchat sensibility along with the image, at the same time as you shift contexts. Different social
media have different expressions, and even though they are constantly mixed together and overlapping, their implicit differences matter. These nuances in turn have different functions for us, and with us, just like spaces away from the keyboard. In many ways, this discursive misunderstanding echoes the industrial notion that Nature suddenly provided us with a more pure, authentic experience than the busy and noisy life of the city. Timothy Morton writes: “Putting something called Nature on a pedestal and admiring it from afar does for the environment what patriarchy does for the figure of Woman. It is a paradoxical act of sadistic admiration” (2007: 5).

The point here, is that an understanding of image and media practices requires quite a bit of knowledge that in turn require the involvement of body as well as mind, because the medium and the images are material and multi-leveled as well as abstract. A smartphone can create a sense of information overload. So can a department store during the rush before Christmas. In the camera, the body has become a type of mediation through which we can (re)claim a subjective imaging of the world. It is not, I argue, an ideal cyber body (Morrison, 2008: 48). By shifting focus to the immediate and specific body, the wearable camera becomes a play between human and inhuman, presence and absence and of things floating “in and out” of our bodies. In this way, we are “in the loop”, continuously answering back to this active external entity. It is a type of techno-material situatedness (Richardson and Harper, 2006: 2). Consequently, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and so forth matter and become matter in the digital space.

4. Doing Memory

Whether associated with each other or challenged, photography and memory have a long history together. Photographs are in many ways still bearers of history, their indexicality evidence of their specific place in time and space. Photography has content, whereas the digital image often seems to be a memory without object. This would make the analogue photography quite material. Subsequently, the digital image in all its apparent immateriality has come to represent a type of oblivion, a representation of a phobia for that which seems ephemeral and ahistorical. However, I argue that the digital image has created a new aura not related to previous forms of images. This aura also involves a new understanding of memory. The focus here is not on machine memory, such as hard drives or the memory on your smartphone or digital camera, but on the memory created in interaction with the image. In article four, this is especially apparent as some practices of lifelogging and wearable cameras actively work towards renegotiating what memory is and
what it does. The article highlight the paradox where “the body is occupying
the foreground in the theory of perception, [but] gets relegated to the back-
ground in the theory of memory” (Moulard-Leonard, 2008: 31).

In the essay “The Implicit Body”, Nicole Anderson and Nathaniel Stern
argue that the body “has the capacity to engender a non-representational
experience that mixes affection, memory and perception in the emergence of
bodiliness” (117). What this means in relation to the digital image is that the
viewer is always merging with the image, not on the outside looking in. The
issue is that (analogue) photography has claimed this approach precisely
through representation. Simplified, the body has little place in the viewing of
a photograph. It is a mediation between physical picture and mind. To infil-
trate a discourse like wearable technology that relies so heavily on memory
(in everything from aiding patients with Alzheimer’s disease to muscle
memory control) yet confuses its qualities makes this strand more philosoph-
ical in character. In a way, this type of “outside” memory is more alien than
the practices explored in the articles of this thesis.

Instead, this theme attempts to reconnect vision, body and image and,
through this, find a view of memory as a living thing. It is time to again fo-
cus on “lived material bodies and evolving corporeal practices”, (Alaimo and
Hekman, 2008: 3). In article four, this is directly linked to the embodied
practices of fashion and wearable cameras. The mind alone, if we still up-
hold this Kantian distinction, cannot remember everything. Even if we often
think of memory as a specific place in the brain (or the neurons and cells in
the brain), memory is also outsourced to body and surroundings on a type of
pre-reflexive level. The potential of dress and technology close to the body
in aiding memory arguably has been overlooked in the continuous formation
of personhood and a sense of being-in-the-world. Instead of seeing memory
largely as storage, in archives or perhaps stored archives in the brain,
memory exercised through digital image practices expresses a more interac-
tive memory where environment and embodiment influence each other but
also where a constantly changing natural and cultural environment shapes
modes of thinking and feeling. On everything from more experimental ar-
chival practices to social media, memory is created with the image. It
stretches out, through space and through dialogue (visual, emotional, textu-
ral). We are arguably moving from copy to access, from an archival corpus
(an empty garment) to a living body. The glitches brought to the surface in
projects like “The Art of Google Books” (Tumblr) are our own lives con-
verging with the digital, representing the ambivalence of something that can
be manipulated and thoroughly inconsistent at the same time. Online, ar-
chival content, whether digitised or born digital, moves through different
spaces and places, constantly recontextualised by Internet users. For exam-
ple, by experimenting with memory and archiving, Tumblr provides an in-
teresting contrast to traditional memory institutions. On Tumblr, archival
content, classical art, historical events, rare video footage and much more,
are reused with new purposes. A light illustration of this might be a viral post by Mallory Ortberg called “Women Rejecting Marriage Proposals In Western Art History”, where classical paintings receive humorous captions connected to present everyday life. Not only are images of these paintings available to share online, but are also seen in new light. By making art accessible in this way, it blurs the boundaries between institution, interpretation and viewer/user. They, in a way, become like other digital images sent, received or posted on social media. Another similarly amusing but implicitly political example is the Tumblr “Gluten Free Museum”, where pictures of classical art, television, film and advertising are ridden of any cultural artefacts made from wheat.

A critique could very well be that this consumption of art history artefacts disrespects the artist or the original intent. On the other hand, it exposes art to (often) young viewers who would otherwise not necessarily experience it. Play comes before hierarchies, and canon often exists only to be torn down. Moreover, depending on one’s choice of stream (the blogs you follow), connections with actual museums and art institutions might later on fill in the gaps and re-introduce the paintings in their original settings, but then without an authoritative or excluding voice. Cultural memory then is not bound to a specific place, but interactive, and at the same time medium specific. In a quote from the second article, this is perfectly expressed:

Sometimes I find things that connect even more significantly than I ever could've hoped – which is incredibly pleasing because, for me at least, it speaks to our interconnectedness – that these individuals who have been creating their respective works of art over the centuries, have touched upon similar themes, photographed/drew/painted the same places – but it's always different because there was a different pair of eyes, a different mind and heart, behind each piece. That fascinates me to no end and keeps me blogging because I am always able to find something that somehow connects one post to another. I find it beautiful (Liquid Night, 2011).

This also overlaps with a focus on user perspective. Whether archives are created to rebuild collective, historical or individual memories, they are in the context of this project created through networks rather than hierarchies. Multiplication of images here means accessibility, not so much to pass it on to future generations, but for processing here and now. As others have noted (see for example Murray, 2008) the everyday digital image is less about rarefied moments of family life, and more about the fleeting displays of discovery, personal or otherwise. Furthermore, because of the accessible platforms available online, marginalised groups find ways to express cultural memories not always represented via memory institutions. An example of this is the American annual “Black History Month”, a remembrance of important people and events in the history of the African diaspora. Another
example is the Los Angeles County Museum of Art which has started using the Snapchat aesthetic and humour to promote and communicate their art collection to younger generations. Additionally, they will also receive Snapchats and curate user-generated snaps from the app’s new Geofilter feature (Probus, 2014). On sites like Tumblr, this observance is collectively discovered, discussed and shared by younger generations who do not necessarily participate in more official conversation. Moreover, as Erik Krupke writes on the PBS news site, social media has become a chance to learn about forgotten events and historical figures being left out of history. This type of more comprehensive historical initiative is collective, intersectional and participatory, and this connects the images and events further to the individual in the present (Krupke, 2015).

Analogous to the theme of embodiment, this theme also echoes feminist materialism. The being-in-the body on a moment-to-moment basis produces an un-self-sameness that counters the humanist quest for manly self-sameness and constancy. It also challenges certain ideas of what memory is and what we expect it to be. Things seem to be moving faster, at least in a discourse that presents the world as such. When “everything” is readily available, there is no time for contemplation. We seem occupied by screens which calls for “digital detox” and walks in the forest in search of tranquility. However, this is not the only way to understand image use. Arguably, the continuous visual practices also indicate the opposite: a longing. But the desire here is not so much for the content of the images, but for imagery itself. It is a way of doing reality (instead of “the past”), and as such, memory in digital image practice is more an effect than an intent. As is fittingly stated in Anderson and Stern: memory here becomes a mediation between perception and content. It is memory not yet subjected, but at the same time felt in the flesh (128f). Or, to quote Lois Lowry: “The worst part of holding the memories is not the pain. It’s the loneliness of it. Memories need to be shared” (The Giver).

The digital archive also forces us to think of what memory really means, and what kind we speak of in what context. Wendy Chun reminds us that:

The major characteristic of digital media is memory. Its ontology is defined by memory, from content to purpose, from hardware to software, from CD-ROMs to memory sticks, from RAM to ROM. Memory underlies the emergence of the computer as we now know it; the move from calculator to computer depended on “regenerative memory.” (2008: 154)

It is paradoxical then that so much of the archive and memory discourse around the digital has revolved around forgetting and loss (and viewing loss as a negative, which as I discussed in the digital image theme is more multi-layered and productive). In particular, the everyday image practices on sites
like Instagram or Facebook have come to define a way of not taking pictures for the future, therefore also not creating memories at all. On the one hand then, images need to be highly controlled by the individual, as the Internet never forgets, and the wrong picture posted on Facebook a year back can cause you to lose your job. On the other hand, continuous updates and new inventions threaten to wipe all digitally stored information clean, as warned by Google’s vice president Vint Cerf (Dartnell, “The digital black hole: will it delete your memories?”, 2015). Thus, the digital memory debate seem to be stuck in an endless loop of never and always forgetting, locking the individual in a state of perpetual confusion. Chun again:

[D]igital media with its memory was supposed to be the opposite of or the solution to television. That is, new-media scholars’ blindness to the similarities between new media and TV is ideological; it stems from an overriding belief in digital media as memory—and thus possibly memorable—and TV as liveness (Chun, 2008: 153). [---] Thus the scientific archive, rather than pointing us to the future, is trapping us in the past, making us repeat the present over and over again. Our product is burying us and the dream of linear additive progress is limiting what we may think (2008: 158)

Chun’s nod to Vannevar Bush’s “As we may think” (1945) points to this complexity perfectly, because it focuses on the may and answers a question of what the digital is with a firm “possibility”. Or, to use a more embodied cognition example, John Sutton and Kellie Williamson use Frederic Bartlett’s concept of an active and dynamic recall: “In his radical constructivism, Bartlett suggests that the unique contextual processes of retrieval sculpt not just the form or expression of a memory, but its very content” (2014: 316). As Bartlett describes how a successful backhand stroke in tennis “may be familiar in type but ‘absolutely new’ in detail, so can remembering events change belief systems and motivations. Again, the final article links this embodied remembering to dress and technology through historicising present masculine technological augmentation with earlier extensions of the body that were then considered feminine, perhaps most obvious in the comparison between the introduction of the wristwatch in the 1800s, then considered very feminine and today’s tech-futuristic, functional and masculine Apple Watch. However, historically, memory and cognition have been linked to body and dress. Sutton writes “[I]n the ‘cloth’ or ‘livery society’ of Renaissance England, clothes were ‘forms of memory that were transmitted’” (Sutton, 2007: 24). Thus, combining a long tradition of embodied memory through fashion and dress with not only the smart materials (or stimuli-responsive materials) of the twenty-first century, but also the more dynamic forms of remembering I have put forth in this strand, memory as static, logical progressive thought in a masculine modern body is challenged. Through image practices then, we should similarly continue to treat remem-
bering as an embodied skill. In dynamic self-organizing psychobiological systems like us, embodiment brings transformation (ibid.). Or as Sutton notes: “the human mind […] was always leaky, always seeping out of ‘the ancient fortress of skin and skull’” (Sutton, 2007: 20).

Lastly, remembering is often seen as a highly private experience. In an interview, photographer Alec Soth said: “Photography is a very lonely medium. There’s a kind of beautiful loneliness in voyeurism” (2011: 138). Yet digital pictures uploaded and posted on a social forum online are anything but lonely, and are possibly as productive in creating representations of physical reality as they are (passively) voyeuristic. Memory expressed through everyday digital imagery flows like fashion flows, evolving and is constantly reinterpreted.
Becoming Image – a Conclusion

The aim of this summary chapter has been to find general themes and patterns in the four articles and to discuss these in the wider context of digital culture, fashion and technofeminism. Through digital image practices, voices are coming forth that not only have not been properly heard before, but also do not play according to “old” and “new” media dichotomies. The digital, as it is used on the platforms investigated here, is as much a given as it is an end result. It is context, subject and object. As Berry and Dieter similarly argue, this also moves the focus away from events “on the screen”, questioning aspects of life rather, or as well as, questions of media (2015: 137). This is why digital imagery also means material culture in the way that it must include bodies and senses. Paradoxically then, to understand our physical selves, perhaps we first have to become digital? Becoming Image then means becoming self, becoming body, becoming feminine, becoming culture. However, it is also an emblem for the digital image itself being unfinished and uncategorised. It is becoming because it is contextual, a trickster yet always available to use, to bend and mould. As with fashion, we who use images become image, but in the process of becoming, they also become us, embodies us, are created by us. To view this relationship to images as productive and active is arguably also a central and continuous task of feminism.

At the beginning of this project, I myself seemed to have difficulties reaching beyond an idea of technology practices as anything else than either domination or entertainment. This however reveals a larger discursive system. What present-day image practices do is highly political, and should thus be understood through a political lens. Hence, a central aspect of my dissertation has been an attempt not only to make technology alternative in terms of approach, but also to feminise (and queer) it. What this means is through the four case studies, to drag digital image practices, thus also large pieces of present technology discourse, out of its loop and make it see itself anew. The project places attention to technological belonging and the fact that technology and bodies are always intermingling. It illustrates that these technological practices are actually changing gender relations. Or, seen through fashion, it reminds us that culture is realised through bodies of people and that there is a longing for being (in this case) in the image process. In my articles, there is no feminine fear of technology, no fear of change. Rather, there is an immense desire for technology.
Although the debate about the lack of women in certain specific areas of engineering, software development, programming etcetera are valid and very real, this does not exclude an increase of women and female subjects claiming technological and digital spaces as their own. Or, let me put it this way: if twentieth century inventions such as cars, bridges, planes and trains have become measures of men (Oldenziel, 1999: 11) what if digital image practices, camera phones and social media are, to a large extent, is an intervention in this heterosexual matrix and masculine technology discourse? Oldenziel writes:

Like the Greeks, who used dramatic devices to lower their gods onto the stage by a machine, our contemporary mythologies often produce women as goddesses whose lives are essentially off-stage, who appear to come from nowhere, and whose plots are engineered elsewhere. In this construction, women who enter the male-defined technical stage always look like amateurs (1999: 11f).

Conversely, in the twenty-first century setting of the Web, of social media, and most of all, of creating, using and consuming digital imagery, female subjects are amateurs no more. This radical shift for women to invest in media production and its impact on girls’ culture cannot be stressed enough, especially as it easily falls under the vocabulary of “wrong”. Kearny writes: “[T]hose female youth who insist on their authority to create and control their own representations, particularly representations that do not adhere to traditional notions of girlhood, exponentially multiply the subversive potential of female unruliness” (Kearny, 2013: 12). In a quite liberal interpretation, or perhaps continuation of women’s writing then, I suggest that image practices such as selfies or micro-blogging encourage women to “write” themselves out of a world they have not constructed themselves. As with language, technology and digital imagery are not neutral media, and as has been discussed, women have been excluded yet forced to use instruments seemingly only made for masculine purposes. Although the leap between disciplines is questionable, the effect this thought has on image practices is not. Note Cixous when she points to this lack of feminine corporeal expression:

Almost everything is yet to be written by women about femininity: about their sexuality, that is, its infinite and mobile complexity; about their eroticization, sudden turn-ons of a certain minuscule-immense area of their bodies; not about destiny, but about the adventure of such and such a drive, about trips, crossings, trudges, abrupt and gradual awakenings, discoveries of a zone at once timorous and soon to be forthright (1981: 256).
The desire for opening up spaces for new possibilities are similar, and as with dance or (written) language, I argue that images likewise can create gaps and flows in a manner that disrupt expectation of technology use.

Thus, throughout this project a central argument has been to challenge the terms describing practices that are often disregarded as narcissistic, mere copies or not interesting at all and lift them to incorporate as much substance and creative power as masculine subjects take for granted. Additionally, the “digital” feminism (or feminisms) of today have in turn created new energy in activism and art and arguably inspired a wide range of journalist voices, an explosion of new magazines and web ventures, some of which I have mentioned above.

Thus, the digital image practices researched here not only open up new embodied experiences. I believe that for many “image practitioners”, they are in part already implemented, and the debates regarding old dichotomies between reality and simulation or reality and screen become, if not wrong, at least odd divisions to make. And as fashion becomes image, image becomes body.

It is a complex visual grammar inhabiting everything from postmodern art to the most mundane everyday experiences. Regardless, the digital image annoys and upsets. It makes fun of all things sacred and serious. More often than not, it makes fun of itself. Most of all, it makes fun of mastery. By extension, this alternative take on digital image culture and its feminist postmodern implications might even attempt to let go of humanism, put it in a parenthesis and instead find new questions in unpredictable places.

Epilogue: The Post-Digital?

As of this writing, the smartphone is still the major bridge between the digital and the physical (if such a distinction can even be made). It is where the discussions of this summary chapter meet and are negotiated. Apps like Instagram almost exclusively exist on smartphones. However, as I argue in the final article, cameras have become increasingly embodied and atomized. A possible way for cameras to evolve is to become an even more intimate part of the body, seeing as we see, reacting to our emotions, covering our blind spots and remembering for us. The post-digital could then be viewed as a kind of “doing reality” rather than a state or a system. Parallel to this, computers and interfaces become increasingly human like, with 3D interfaces being one of the more notable developments. To explore the screen in depth, rather than in flat 2D rectangles (“like going from DOS to Windows”) will arguably alter our digital experience fundamentally (Medich, 2015). Com-
puters and interfaces “will help us leverage dimensionality, or space, just as we do in the real world” (ibid.).

Thus, as has been evident throughout the project, we use images not only to communicate with each other, but to bridge realities. They become us, and we become them. From this perspective, one could argue that everything around us is becoming digital in what is popularly referred to as the post-digital era, “[a]s if, because digital is everything, everything is already digital” (Sable, 2012). Some argue that because of its ubiquity, we are becoming increasingly disenchanted by the digital and are instead returning to historical media artefacts (Cramer, 2014). Some of the examples mentioned here of digital data becoming physical could then be viewed as post-digital, such as Erin Riley’s selfie tapestry or pixelated statues. Fashion and image even become embodied at times, as in the t-shirts with prints of teenage love messages sent on different social media platforms (Maurice Santiago, “Growing Pains: Maturity and Innocence of Confessing First Love on Social Media”, 2003 – present). In its more extreme arguments, the debate seems to (yet again) divide this into a dichotomy of digital big data versus neo-analogue “do-it-yourself” (Cramer, 2014). Claire Voon states that “faced with digital ubiquity, artists still cherish crafting materials” (2015). In the face of “masculine” technology versus “feminine” craftsmanship (or bridges and bras if you will) discussed earlier in this summary chapter, this reaction to the digital adds a discursive level to how we experience visual culture, and visual culture as material culture. In the introduction to his book “Postdigital Artisans”, Jonathan Openshaw unpacks this argument by writing that we live in

[a] world that has been reformulated by the digital moment, and where a digital mindset is inextricably entangled with our existence, whether or not the digital technology [emphasis his] is actually present (Openshaw in Voon, 2015).

In turn this would also mean that while we suggestively are not yet sure if we have fully entered a digital era, we are still, simultaneously, embracing its post-digital successor. Or as James Bridle calls the subtitle of his 2011 talk on The New Aesthetic: “I Have No Idea What Anything Is or What It Does Anymore” (2011).

What this dissertation can do is provide contemplation and context. Not only does it not limit itself to fashion or art for answers as to how we experience the digital, but instead attempt to blur the concepts altogether. It also bases its contribution on the everyday user who do not intentionally critique or celebrate the technological that surrounds her, but rather just do digital, not mindlessly but intuitively. For her, things coexist through embodiment and are dealt with, daily, through image practices on Instagram, Tumblr and
other places. On an exhibition called “After the Bit Rush – Design in a Post Digital Age”, artist Lucas Maassen states:

The digital revolution, the great Bit Rush, is over. The question whether something is analogue or digital does not matter anymore. Everything we do is influenced by digital technology. Just as air and water, the property of being digital is only noticed when it is not there, not when it is there (2011).

On the contrary I argue that even though, in theory, all could be considered equally digital, thus erasing the specificity out of each individual medium, it is certainly not dealt with that way in ordinary life. It is instead this very tension that is constantly negotiated. When we try ourselves as images, we discuss the digital and the post-digital. We make the discourses visible and become part of, so to speak, the bigger picture. Florian Cramer describes this “post-Snowden system” as a crisis in which we are neither digital nor post-digital (2015). I instead view these tensions between opposing theories as vitalising the feminist dialogue. If we might view the post-digital in relation to posthumanism and new materialism, we do not have to limit ourselves to (new) aesthetics and system crisis, but view them as parallel standpoints and movements in an ongoing process (Ferrando, 2013: 32). They all help define the human condition, but they need, in my opinion, a feminist perspective to get there. In Timothy Recuber’s words:

> [G]iven the available alternatives, let’s continue to struggle through our info guilt, keep talking it out, and not cede these moral, ethical, and normative questions [---] [W]e can work to develop a moral language to understand our online obligations to distant sufferers. If we don’t, then this language will be developed for us, in code, and in secret (2015).

In its extreme, it perhaps does not matter whether it is analogue or digital because if the question is wrong, we are still just going in circles. To instead understand difference is to open up to complexity in digital practices, not simplicity. It can also be suggested that the idea of post-digital (and post-Internet) is still mainly an art concept. Nevertheless, the thoughts exchanged in the post-digital art movement are relevant way beyond the white cube.

To sum up, rather than the digital image practices discussed in this dissertation embracing the disembodied, I propose we are embodying the digital. To fully understand this shift, we have to embrace the idea of uncertainty as a starting point. If digitality becomes our way of making sense of the world, we might also start talking about a kind of “Natural computing”, forcing us to think differently of us, technology, the body, the self and so forth. If I am to make a contribution to the post-digital, it lies in this experimental thinking, rather than simply asking if we are post-digital (yet).
gardless, the answer to the repeated claim that we take pictures instead of experiencing an event should be clear by now: the image is the event.
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Sammanfattning