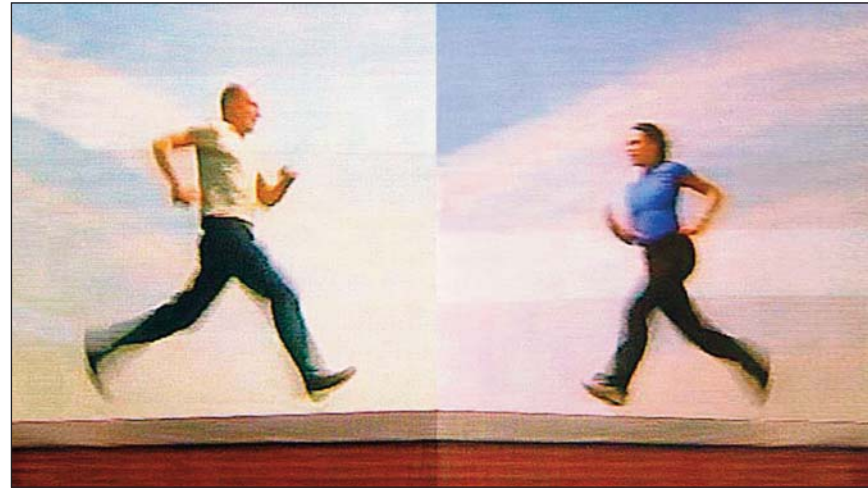# KAREN LANCEL / HERMEN MAAT
Tele_Trust

Karen Lancel and Hermen Maat design objects, projections and digital networks to create 'meeting places' in city public spaces. These 'meeting places' are designed as seductive, visual performances, processes and installations. Each 'meeting place' or 'social sculpture' functions as an artistic 'social lab' in which the artists invite their audience as co-researchers. The audience is invited to experiment and play with social technologies; and to reflect on their perception of the city, and their experience of body, presence, identity and community.

Through their artworks Lancel and Maat research contemporary social systems in a mediated society; in smart cities and augmented/immersive spaces. For every 'meeting place' they deconstruct existing communication technologies and strategies; and design a new innovative montage of physical and virtual interaction. The 'meeting places' are shown internationally in dynamic public spaces such as museums, squares, theatre halls, trains stations; among others in the cities of Seoul, New York, Melbourne, Shanghai, Istanbul, Paris, London, Amsterdam. Through audience interaction Lancel and Maat show social portraits of urban mediated life.

www.lancelmaat.nl

TELE_TRUST

How do we trust each other online? Do you need to see my eyes to trust me? Or do we need to touch each other? How do we trust each other as networking bodies?
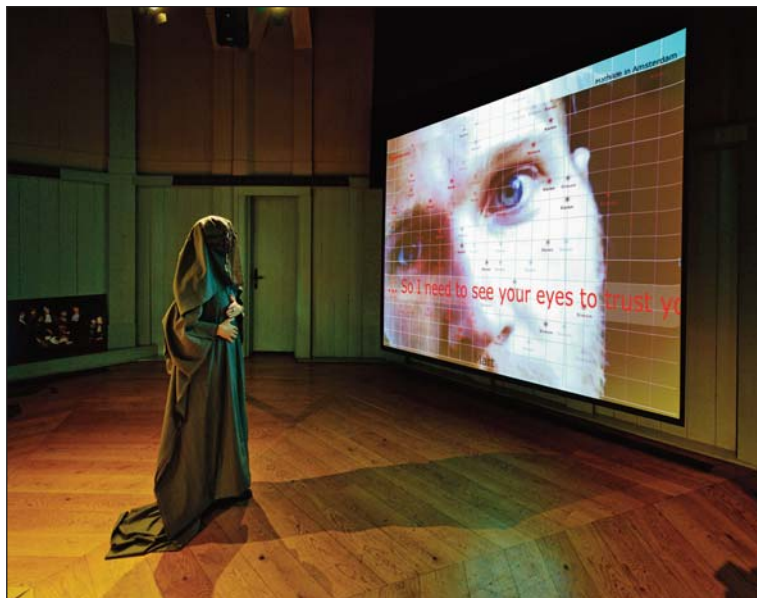

TELE_TRUST @ De Waag, Society for Old & New Media Amsterdam.
Photo: Pieter Kers

In Tele_Trust the artists create meeting places to research new parameters for online trust: "In Tele-Trust we are faced with a paradox: while we increasingly demand transparency in our changing social eco-system, we also cover our bodies with personal communication technology. Tele_Trust is a visual and poetic examination of emotional and social tension in contemporary hybrid cities, in the areas of visibility, presence, privacy and trust.

Tele_Trust exists out of a series internationally shown performances, installations, video works, meetings, drawing models.

In the performance and installation the artists invite the audience explore a series of interactive DataVeils. These DataVeils are embodied interfaces for 'scanning online trust'. Various DataVeils together form an innovative, semi-compatible social system.

Through audience use of a DataVeil, the artists gather knowledge from different geographical, social-political and networked cultures on the establishing of privacy and trust worldwide: creating an engaging agora on the notion of trust.

data-veil

connects you wireless realtime with others in the network
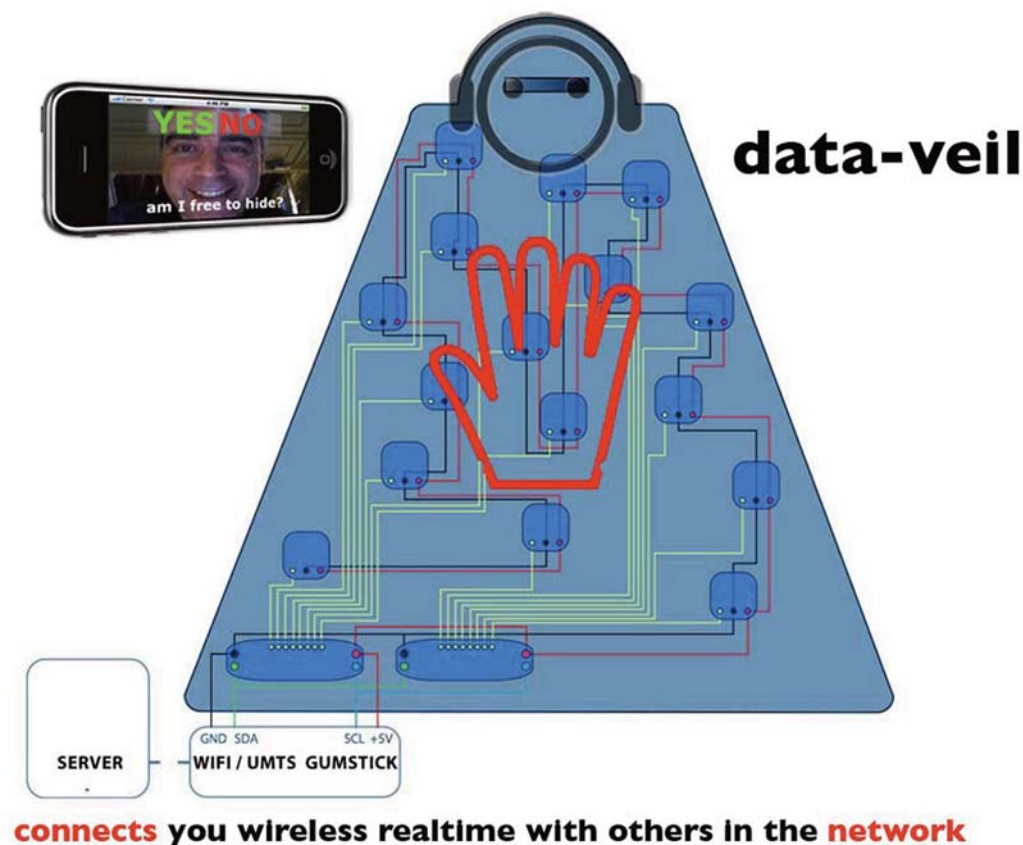
Performance:

DIALOGUE BETWEEN A DATAVEIL AND A SMARTPHONE

DESIGN DATA-VEIL
Tele_Trust networked performance takes place in dynamic semi-public spaces, like train station, square, museum. Here the audience is invited to wear an interactive DataVeil.

The full-body DataVeil is Gender neutral, and One size fits all. Its design combines visual elements from both Eastern and Western traditions, taking its inspiration from the monks' habit, the burqa, Darth Vader and the 'trustworthy' chalk-stripe business suit.

THE DATAVEIL IS INTERACTIVE
The DataVeil functions as a second skin, a membrane. Flexible, invisible touch sensors woven in the veils' smart fabric, transform your body into an intuitive tangible interface. By touching your body in the DataVeil you connect with other people in the network. You meet strangers online on their smartphones.

DIALOGUE WITH SMARTPHONE
By gently caressing their screens, anonymous smartphone users can unveil your face online. In a tangible, intimate body experience and real time audio, you share emotions and statements of trust, about the questions: Am I here with you? Who is watching who? Who is controlling who? In what identity - and in whose body?

DATABASE
In an ongoing process user generated content from various social-geographical cultures is added to a database. Stories from different cities weave together in to an exchanging narrative – everyone can wear a DataVeil.

Free TELE_TRUST smartphone app.

TELE_TRUST Toolbox:

10 Steps to Create your own Networking Body!

The toolbox exists out of texts and pictograms.

PICTOGRAM NAVIGATION
The pictograms function as a guide to explore Tele_Trust. These pictograms are signs for communicating in public space. They are transformations of the regulatory pictograms that lead us through functional spaces such as airports, factories and train stations. They refer to Otto Neurath's 'isotype' pictograms, which he designed to be controlling symbols for a modern world. But rather than seeking to control purpose, the Tele_Trust pictograms invite you for an experience.

They are about the social experience of our hybrid bodies in smart cities.

The Tele_Trust Toolbox is initially developed for the RTRSRCH Journal of ARTI research group (the Art Practice and Development research group) of Amsterdam School of the Arts.

1. What Dialogue?

We constantly use our mobile phones and internet to meet while on a distance. How does this affect the way we trust each other to be 'really' there?
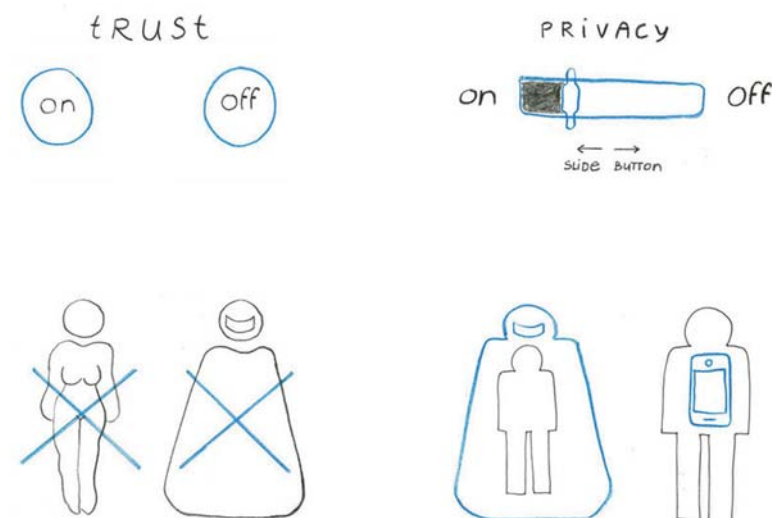
Everybody is a networked society specialist. In the context of social media platforms such as Facebook, where trust is defined in absolutist terms (friend or foe), we need to reassess the gradation of privacy levels we can select to experience more subtly defined, sensitive relationships.
Is it acceptable to be invisible on the Internet? Who is watching you now?

The current policy on transparency in public space means it is not acceptable to be invisible, to be untraceable. Yet neither is it acceptable to be dressed in a burqa (or to be naked, for that matter) in physical public space. Playing hide and seek we meet worldwide using integrated mobile technology, making contact with the other through a 'digital DataVeil':

WHO IS TOUCHING YOU NOW?

2. What Community?

How can I play with online trust? How does my body trust you online?
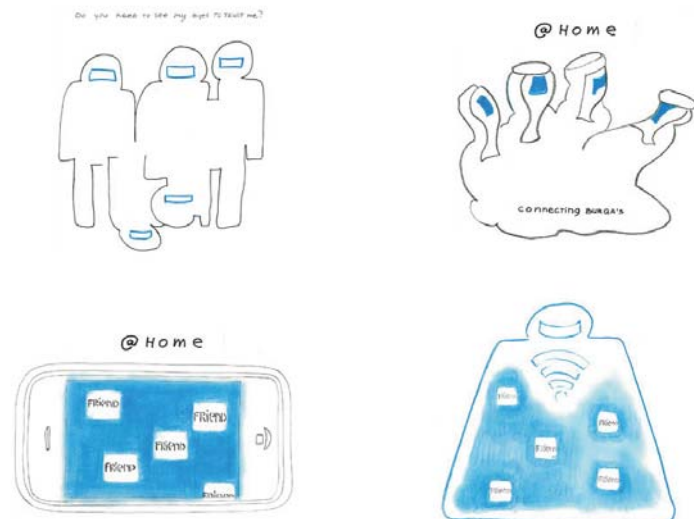How can I use 'trust buttons'?

Questions can be instruments to share, doubt, feel. Tele_Trust can be described as a 'question generator'. Looking for short, inviting questions, we internationally organise meetings for designing new 'questions for online trust'. In 2009-2010 meetings took place in Istanbul, Shanghai, Groningen, Banff (Canada), Amersfoort; and a Socratic Dialogue in Amsterdam.

How can I visualize 'being together online'?
How you feel together online?
What do I need to do for you to distrust me online?
Is trust an a priori truth when meeting online?
What possibilities are there for an embodied, networked feedback?
Can I trust the screen system?

HOW CAN I USE MY TRUST BUTTONS?

3. What Interaction?

The DataVeil is a body interface for a networked identity. It is our respond to the commercially driven aim to turn our social bodies and identities into functional and transparent 'products'.
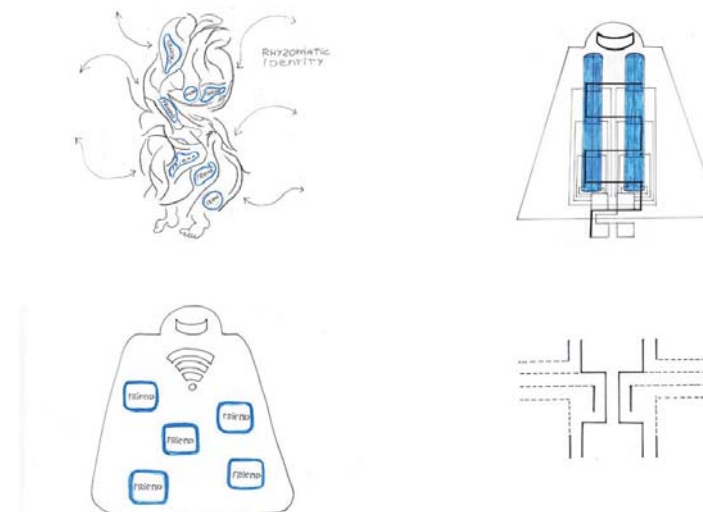
'The most direct form of communication is undoubtedly touching. Make your body lie is difficult. However, while media extend the body in space and time, they prevent us from touching. Media create a world without touching, a body-less existence.' (In: 'On media theorie' by Arjen Mulder).

Buttons or Body?
The full body DataVeil is a sensitive body interface for public spaces. Itl is a gender neutral, one size fits all, intimate interactive body space. The DataVeil functions as a 'second skin' covered with touch sensors. The sensors are soft and flexible conductive threads, woven invisibly into the DataVeil's smart fabric. They are woven so as to create a pattern of 'touch zones'. The humidity of the skin of a hand touching two threads simultaneously completes a circuit and activates a wireless connection to a database.
The DataVeil is an intuitive interface. The touch zones are traceable, but not controllable. They invite you to navigate and explore your body as an interface. To move your the hands slowly and feeling not sensors, but body warmth.

When you touch your body in the DataVeil, you trigger the database. You subsequently hear an anonymous voice making a statement. You can hear this voice in the private sphere of your DataVeil headset. Due to your intimate touching, the voice sounds as if it was performed by your own body.

DO YOU NEED TO TOUCH ME TO TRUST ME?

4. What Face?

Privacy Design: a full-body DataVeil to wear in city public spaces.


Visual design parameters:
– One-size-fits-all.
– Gender-neutral.
– Beautiful fabric which is comfortable and inviting to the touch.
– From inside out you can scan everybody around; from outside in you seem unidentifiable.

There are SIX DATA_VEILS. For each DataVeil, we combined visual elements of full-body garments from Eastern and Western traditions. The designs were inspired by the monks' habit, the burqa, and Darth Vader. The fabric used is traditionally used for business suits (chalk stripe, 98% wool 2% elasthane). The design of the DataVeils was completed in collaboration with Amsterdam fashion designer AZIZ. In the DataVeil we invite to meet and share diverse cultural, time-based and media-driven interpretations and stories, referring to the question:

Do you need to see my eyes to trust me?

5. What Ritual?

Script for hosting a DataVeil wearer:
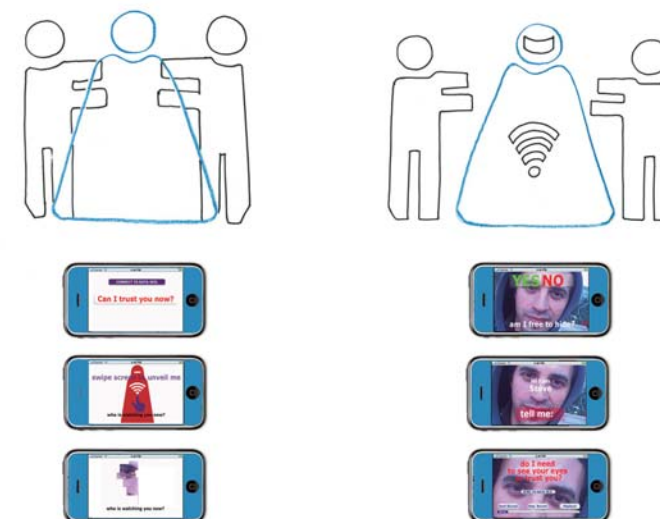
1. Put on the DataVeil.
Place the DataVeil carefully on a clean floor. Have the participant step into it. Two people lift the DataVeil around the shoulders and fasten the buttons, and place the veil over the participant's face.

2. To enter the DataVeil community.
Host: 'When your face is covered with the veil, you will still see us but we will no longer be able to see you – your face will be invisible. So before we close the veil over your head, we will first make a picture and send it to our online database. From that moment you will become unidentifiable in the physical space and your portrait will become available for viewing in the network. When the audience around you caress their smartphone screens, they will make your face visible, 'unveiling' your face online. Once you have fully appeared on their screen, a question appears: 'Do I need to see your eyes to trust you?' The audience member then uses his or her smartphone to make a statement about trust. This statement is sent to the online database; and becomes audible in the DataVeil headset. As soon as you start searching your body, you hear these voices as if they come from your own intimate body.'

3. Hosts accompagny the DataVeil wearers during their explorations in their new physical and virtual domains.

It takes trust to enter a dataveil

6. What Network?

A Dialogue between smartphones and a DataVeil.
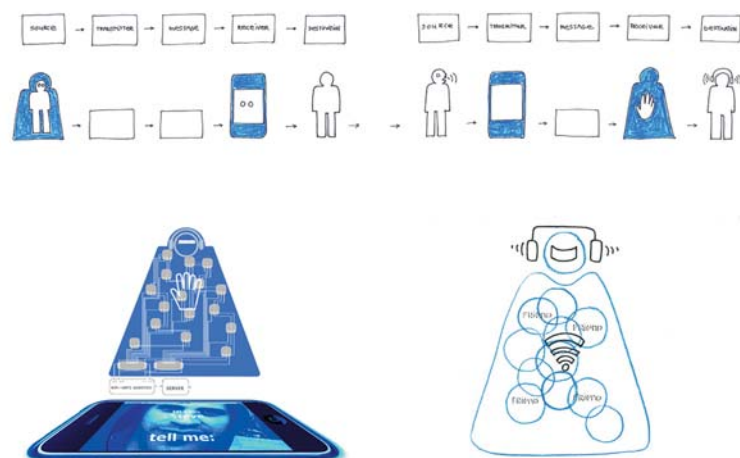
The performance is a ritual for a multi-actor-network. Together with the audience we research the awareness of presence in a social system 'in which people and communication technologies have agency'. We developed the Tele_Trust network through analyzing social interaction in physical public space and via various communication technologies. We deconstructed these forms of interaction and re-assembled them. This process resulted in a multi-sensory mediated communication system, best described as: 'a Dialogue between smart phones and a DataVeil'.

Agency in this system is performed by both: people (spectators, smart phone users, Data-Veil wearers); as well as by technology (webcams, smartphones & free app, a led screen, headsets, embodied interface ('DataVeil'), gumsticks and database) - all wirelessly connected. The multi-sensory exchange between all agents and platforms is developed in a combination of joomla, unix, javascript, MySQL, flash, WIFI, UMTS, and c++.

The performance is established through the exchange between all participants - who are either virtual or physically present. In the Tel_Trust system the online database has a central position. The database is fed by user generated content. During the performance each participant adds his or her portrait or statement. The database connects participants in the DataVeils and participants using their smartphones real time, worldwide.

'For these nodular subjects, 'disconnection' means 'amputation'. I am part of the networks and the networks are part of me…I link, therefore I am.' (William J. Mitchell, ME++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City.)

User-generated content is visible on the online database: http://www.teletrustlab.net

7. What Privacy?

REACTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS': At the touching moment that their faces are unveiled into the light, and after re-adapting to being exposed to the gaze of others around, participants told us:

'I could hear your voice in my skin. I remembered you remembering. My body is your body.' Jol in Banff, Canada.

'When I touch my body, I'm together with others, but when I hold off, I am alone.' Marion in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

'I'm not sure where I am, here or there, inside or outside; or they flew where you are – in what I see or in what I touch.' Jelani in Dunnedin, New Zealand.

'I felt safe inside. I love this power…. No one can see me watching. I can see it all. Like as if I were a walking surveillance monitor… As if I had a secret. Invulnerable.' Zoya in Amersfoort, The Netherlands.

'This veil reminds me that privacy is in the first psychological: privacy means you are allowed to think what you want to think.' Lu in Shanghai, China.

'At first I felt shy because this intimate touching is not an accepted code of behaviour in the public space. But as soon as I got disconnected through the lack of face-to-face contact with the people around me, I just forgot about that - and touching the comfortable woolen textile and warm body I got concentrated on these voices…' Marcus in Banff, Canada

'I base my trust on seeing your eyes – because your eyes are the mirror to your soul.' Germaine in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

'This touching is for real…. It feels like when I want to express myself in the street and I put a cover over my body – it seems I close myself off from the world around me but then I start dancing…' Benny in Dunedin, New Zealand.

My privacy is your command

8. What Hybrid City?

Performances and installations in city public space.
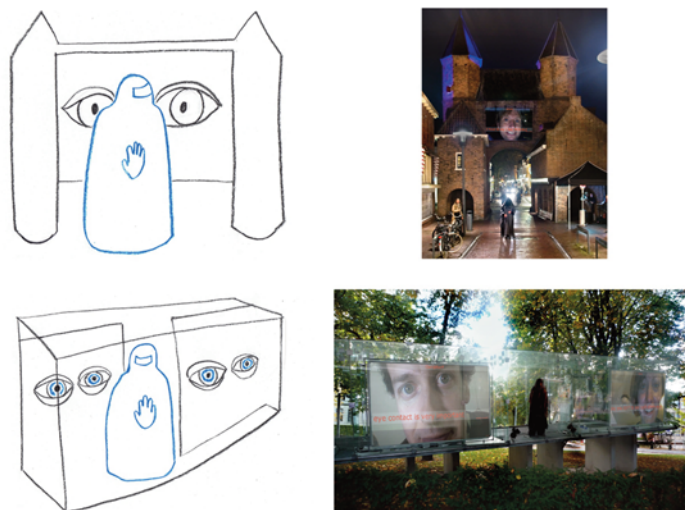
Picture 1 – Lumineus Amersfoort 2009
Inside the medieval architecture of the city wall one used to be safe. But nowadays, mobile control networks, such as RFID and smart phones, are attached to our bodies controlling us everywhere we go. By touching the body in the DataVeil, this audience member exposes his or her portrait between the medieval towers: and as a result the City Wall embodies a Virtual Guard.

Picture 2 – Tschumi Pavillion 2009
The Tschumi Pavillion is a transparent space in the city centre of Groningen. Here, the veiled body in the DataVeil contradicts the transparent architecture, but echoed the transparency of the network with its online, onscreen presence. The veiled body in the middle is a protagonist, with at both sides having antoganists on the screens. The screens unveil the protagonist's body as a networked, potentially multiple identity.

GET PRIVACY TO MANAGE YOUR IDENTITY

9. What Time Zone?

How does my body feel in an online 24/7 economy, in which day and night, future and past, merge in a permanent NOW? How does my body feel in this 'timeless time'?
In Tele_Trust tangible bodies connect in networked 'timeless time'.
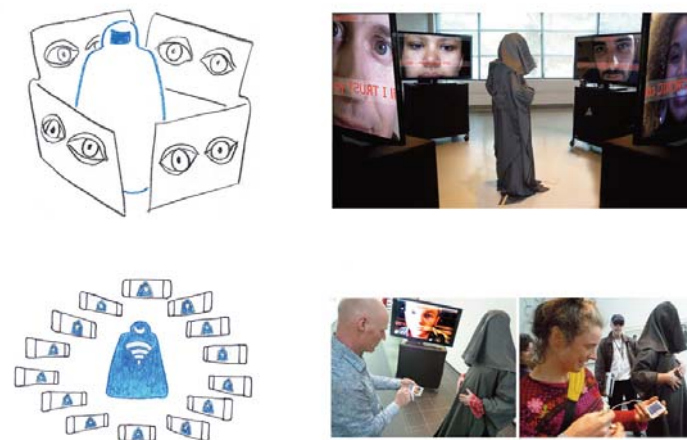
Central in the networked time of Tele-Trust is the database. During the performances the database is continuously fed with portraits of DataVeil wearers; and with readable / audible statements by smartphone users. Each time the database is triggered, it combines one of these portraits randomly with a statement. In this way, the personal portraits and statements are continuously relating to each other in different configurations. The combination of portraits and statements form temporal identities which are never fixed, but which are in a state of ungoing transformation. The statements and portraits are shown worldwide on smartphone screens and city public screen facades.
During ElectroSmog 2010 audience members simultaneously wore DataVeils in three different time zones: in Amsterdam, the Netherlands; in Dunedin, New Zealand and in Banff, Canada.
By touching their bodies in the DataVeil, participants connect real time with each other; in past and present various local time zones, both virtually and physically, merging various public spaces worldwide. Together, the DataVeils constitute a distributed community. Participants experience a very hybrid meeting; on the edge of being physically and virtually together.
'In emerging network culture, subjectivity is nodular...I do not have a fixed identity, nor do I exist as a discrete individual. My spatial and temporal coordinates are diffuse and indefinite.'
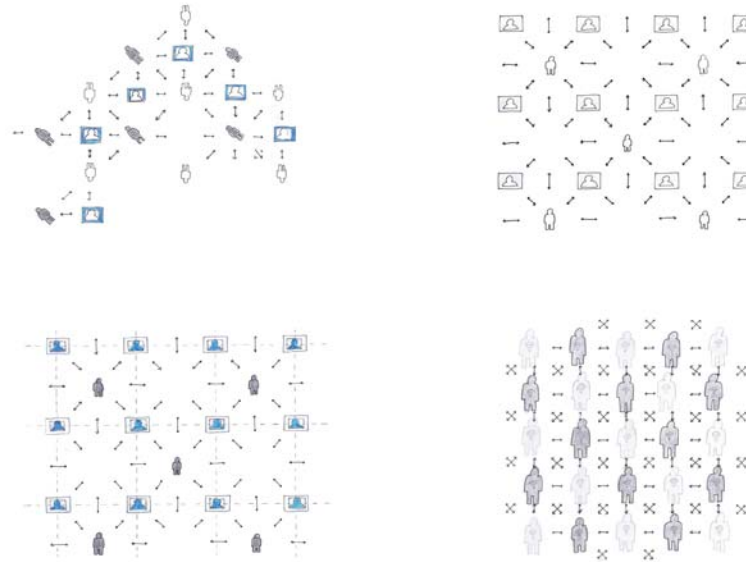(William J. Mitchell in ME++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City).

URBAN PUBLIC SPACE BECOMES MEDIATED PUBLIC.

10. What Presence?

Tele_Trust is a ritual for an absent body. Our tangible bodies are increasingly absent in physical space while we meet worldwide online. This continuous absence changes our social consiousness based on physicality.

Meeting the DataVeil.
In TELE_TRUST we design a physical encounter with a non-tangible persona. The DataVeil suggests absence, a negative presence manifesting itself in public space and staging the act of disappearing. Onlookers see a seeking entity absorbed by an interior world; this self-touching, veiled body evokes a sense of solitude. Seeing the person touching his or her body is both disturbing and beautiful. Once the person starts touching the DataVeil and appears online, the surrounding, gazing audience becomes engaged in this tangible body interface for scanning online trust.

WHO IS WATCHING YOU NOW?