



Perspectives

As a way of perspective, I look for the possibility of voice since my material throughout the dissertation is primarily critical, illuminating how the agency of the human subject is compromised. I turn to the “dark” angles of computational media, where users misbehave and by consequence are muted or silenced, and ask about the constitution of subjectivity and voice through and with the technology within these sites. I briefly present pro-anorexic fora as an example of such a sequestered mileu, which can accommodate unruly bodies and voices.

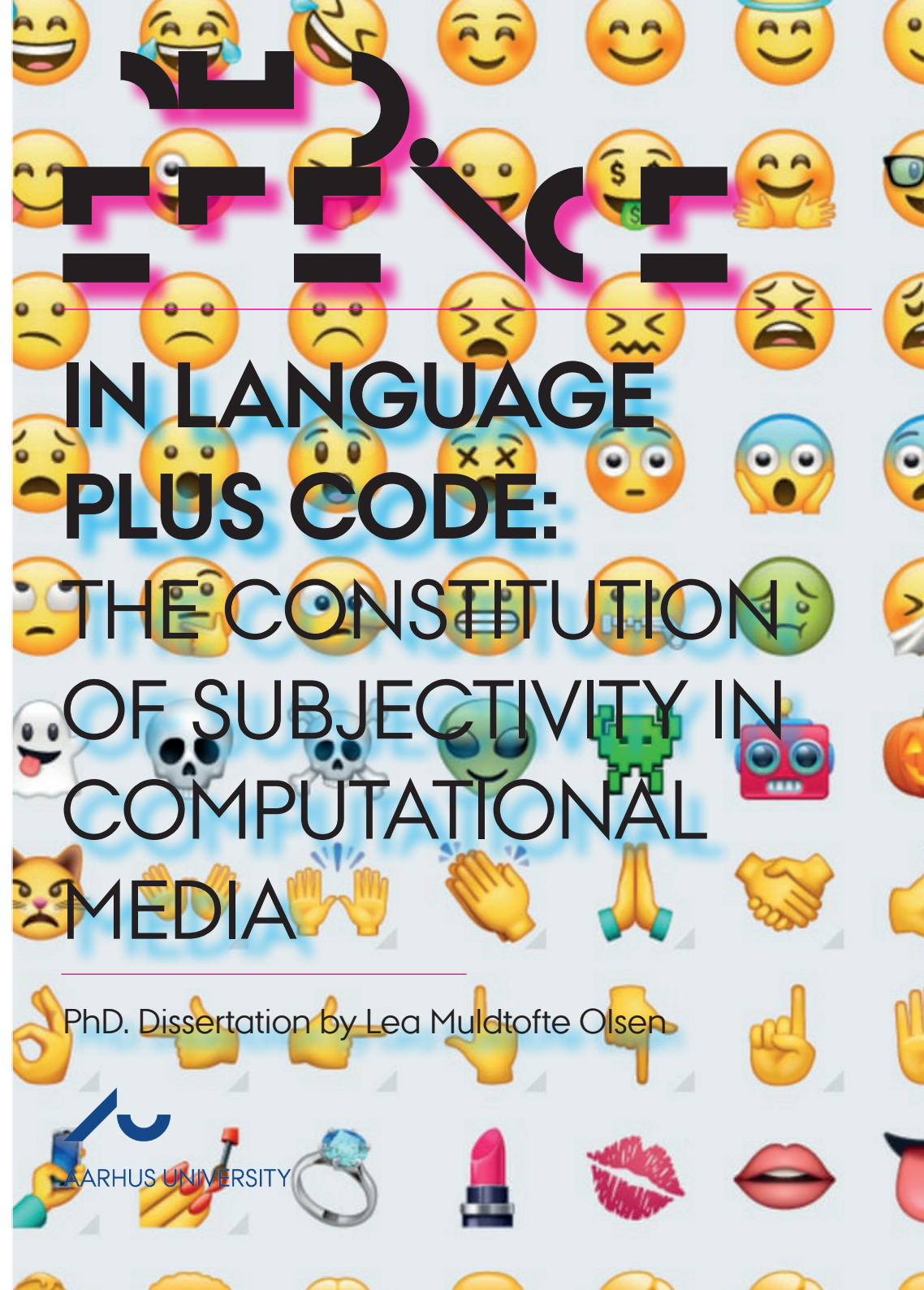
Time and Place for the defence

21. december, 2018, 12.30 – 15.30.
Kasernen, building 1584, room 124.

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PhD. Dissertation by Lea Muldtofte Olsen

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IN LANGUAGE PLUS CODE: THE CONSTITU- TION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN COMPUTATIONAL MEDIA

Summary of the main points of PhD dissertation In Language Plus Code: the constitution of subjectivity in computational media by Lea Muldtofte Olsen, School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University.

The dissertation focuses on the human subject, understood as the everyday-user of computational media, and what conditions for processes of subjectivation the use of this media give rise to. With a specific focus on subjectivity in language, I address this concern by aiming at bridging enunciation theory, semiotics and post-structuralist thinking with computational media theory in order to develop a vocabulary capable of describing the human subjects that inhabit computational media's two systems; language and computer code.

Computerized language

The premise of this dissertation is that computers are forcing us to reconsider what we think we know about language, and in this light, we need to expand our understanding of what language is and how it works and what it does, when we are dealing with computer media. From this point of departure, this dissertation applies theories and methods, which treats language and semiotics in order to investigate, what happens, when language is enmeshed with computer operations.

The computerized speaking human subject

Further, this research sets out to develop an approach to understanding how the human subject is constituted through computational media. By looking at this media as symbolic processes, constitutive for implicit and explicit participation, I employ an (expanded) linguistic and semiotic approach to investigate how signs – from signaletic material in the computer to signs in the interface – are intervening in the user of this media.

The contribution

I attempt to develop an analytical approach to access computational media and its influence on its users by establishing a vocabulary around computational media's two systems, language and computer code. I call these two registers the semantic and the sub-semantic, and I investigate what kind of explanatory force these two concepts have in treating human subjectivity, when practiced in analyses on contemporary digital cultural phenomena - including artistic experiments or works of art, Amazon recommendations as well as the overly familiar Like-button, and digital self-harm.

Conclusion

This dissertation illuminates use of computational media from different angles with a special focus on how the human is enacting and enacted upon connected to the sign operations within this media. Through a combination of linguistic theory with philosophy and media theory, applied to a range of examples within computational culture, I have suggested a lens, which critically unearths the double architecture of computational media and how these two different system intervene in the human subject.