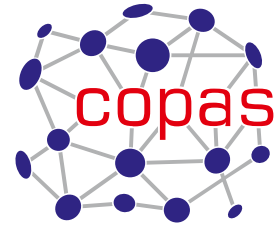


Call for Papers

Dis/Connection: Relations, Interactions, Disruptions

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This special issue intends to showcase the variety of themes which the concepts of connection and disconnection encompass and to contribute to literary and cultural research on why, how, and in which contexts dis/connection takes place. Scholars have long attempted to define the concept of connection. For performer and poet Kae Tempest, for instance, “[c]onnection is the feeling of landing in the present tense. Fully immersed in whatever occupies you, paying close attention to the details of experience. Characterized by an awareness of your minuteness in the scheme of things. A feeling of being absolutely located.”¹ Echoing Tempest, Alexander Spirkin posits that connection combines temporal and spatial aspects; it is not necessarily based on ideas of agency or control and leaves room for positive or negative connotations.² Connection itself can thus happen unintentionally but can also be strategically used to further one’s agenda. For instance, it can be political, social, or technological. One can connect across political party lines, in one’s own social circles, or over the internet in order to combat loneliness or organize social, cultural, and political movements.

Paralleling the discourse around connection, the term disconnection has been widely discussed in fields such as media studies as well as post-humanism and eco-criticism. Human disconnection from nature through technological advances stands in contrast to movements of “[d]igital detoxing.”³ Individuals and collectives dis/connect transnationally. Points of disconnection can be found all throughout polarized US culture—both contemporary and historical. Social, cultural, and political gaps based on conspiracy theories, the Global War on Terror, gun policies, and stances on immigration policies, to only name a few, continue to divide the US. Thus, more research is needed to underscore why these ideological differences exist and how they can be overcome.

The complex relationship between the two phenomena of connection and disconnection, too, is worth exploring. People are linked through narratives of the past, through shared identities and shared trauma. A shared disconnection from a certain group or agenda can result in forming communities outside of set social and cultural norms. The overlap between connection and disconnection is prevalent in digital realms like social media platforms. While these spaces have become hubs of shared identity building, the trend to disconnect from electronic devices is gaining traction. Even outside of digital spaces, considerations around dis/connection have become more topical than ever in recent years. The pandemic has made clear that instances and feelings of dis/connection in personal relationships or corporate environments continue to shape individual encounters as well as long-term community building.⁴ Thus, while dis/connecting “may be a personal choice,” it is also “collaborative

¹ Tempest, Kae. *On Connection*. Faber & Faber, 2021, p. 5.

² Spirkin, Alexander. “Dialectical Materialism.” *Themes in Soviet Marxist Philosophy: Selected Articles from the ‘Filosofskaja Enciklopedija,’* edited by T. J. Blakeley, Springer Netherlands, 1975, pp. 5–47. *Springer Link*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-1873-9_2, p. 86.

³ See Kesebir, Selin, and Pelin Kesebir. “A Growing Disconnection From Nature Is Evident in Cultural Products.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2017, pp. 258–69.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616662473>; Moe, Hallvard, and Ole Jacob Madsen. “Understanding Digital Disconnection beyond Media Studies.” *Convergence*, vol. 27, no. 6, 2021, pp. 1584–98. *SAGE Journals*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211048969>, p. 1587.

⁴ Treré, Emiliano. “Intensification, Discovery and Abandonment: Unearthing Global Ecologies of Dis/Connection in Pandemic Times.” *Convergence*, vol. 27, no. 6, 2021, pp. 1663–77. *SAGE Journals*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211036804>.

work” between individuals.⁵ This opens up questions on how dis/connection is experienced in everyday life, in relationships, at work, or with one’s own body, and how one dis/connects to and from others. Examples of how literary and cultural studies’ approaches relate to dis/connection span from digital dis/connection to mental dis/connection, spatial dis/connections such as public transportation networks, the dis/connection between human and nature, and more.⁶

This special issue aims to highlight specific characteristics of dis/connection and to link them to broader systems, movements, or concepts. We seek abstracts investigating the act of dis/connecting, its prerequisites and its impact, as well as how the state of dis/connection facilitates feelings of belonging or separation, especially as it pertains to American Studies. This issue seeks to examine how people “design, develop, and sustain” relationships and connections.⁷ Hence, instances of disruption, interactions between different entities, and the setting and traversing of boundaries influencing these elements are of particular interest to us. We especially encourage abstracts that investigate dis/connection in regard to power relations, autonomy, and agency. In order to further theorize the academic discourse on dis/connection, we invite contributions spanning a wide range of topics, including submissions concerned with past, present, and future dis/connections. We welcome interdisciplinary approaches, comparative writing, as well as case studies in American Studies.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Dis/connecting from and to nature (e.g. ecocritical approaches)
- Dis/connecting during epidemics or pandemics (e.g. HIV/AIDS epidemic, Covid-19)
- Dis/connections with regard to mental health and well-being
- Opportunities and challenges of social media (e.g. activism, formation of creative hubs)
- Movements focused on slowing down and doing nothing (i.e. quiet quitting)
- Dis/connection from certain spaces (e.g. urban studies approaches)
- Polarizing dis/connections (e.g. in the political arena)
- Dis/connections during instances of political turmoil or times of war
- Dis/connecting over time (e.g. generational divides, shared pasts)
- Transnationalities (e.g. borders, diasporas, displacement)
- Identity building (through shared dis/connections)
- Community work and community building (especially regarding subcultures)
- Affective dis/connections

To contribute to this issue, send a 300–500-word abstract, along with your paper’s title and a brief bio, to copas@dgfa.de and COPAS@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de by March 8th, 2024. Submissions will be reviewed by the guest editors as well as the COPAS editorial board. Contributors will be notified by March 22nd, 2024. Full papers of 5,000-8,000 words will be due by July 5th, 2024. Articles will go through an open peer-review process. The special issue is scheduled for open-access publication in early 2025.

⁵ Figueiras, Rita, and Maria José Brites. “Connecting the Individual and the Other in Disconnection Studies.” *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2022, pp. 837–47. *SAGE Journal*.

⁶ See Treré, Emiliano, et al. “The Limits and Boundaries of Digital Disconnection.” *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2020, pp. 605–09. *SAGE Journals*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720922054>; Karp, David A. *Speaking of Sadness: Depression, Disconnection, and the Meanings of Illness*. Oxford University Press, 2017; Saif, Muhammad Atiullah, et al. “Public Transport Accessibility: A Literature Review.” *Periodica Polytechnica Transportation Engineering*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2019, pp. 36–43. <https://doi.org/10.3311/PPtr.12072>; Kellert, Stephen R. *Building for Life: Designing and Understanding the Human-Nature Connection*. Island Press, 2012.

⁷ Kellert, Stephen R. *Building for Life: Designing and Understanding the Human-Nature Connection*. Island Press, 2012, p. 6.