

## reSource Chat with Diana McCarty & Pit Schultz / reboot.fm

Pit Schultz is an author, artist, media activist, programmer and radio maker, who lives in Berlin. He is co-initiator, organiser and member of many projects like Botschaft e.V., nettime, Mikro e.V. Bootlab, backyardradio, Herbstradio, Artwiki, Datschradio and reboot.fm. Diana McCarty lives and works in Berlin. She is editor at reboot.fm, founder of the radia.fm network of cultural radios and co-moderator of the Faces list. She develops interdisciplinary projects, which connect the theory and practice of art, politics, media and digital culture.

**r: What is the general concept behind reboot.fm, and how do you connect it with your previous background?**

P: The general concept of reboot is in the name already. It started as an idea at the beginning of the 2000s, when the dot com crisis happened and a lot of programmers and people from the former net culture looked for ways to work together. We founded bootlab (what now is called a collapse space), [...] something like a hackerspace, but for cultural people, [...] in 2001. reboot.fm started as a project whose aim was to combine as many people as possible [around] this project, and the active people in and around the bootlab project. It was also meant as a combination old and new media, analogue and digital, the internet and the local culture. rebuilding a radio station from scratch with the internet as a backend, and many cultural groups in Berlin and elsewhere, needed a social software to organize the schedule and diversity. So it was a reboot of the radio.

D: reboot.fm grew out of that. I think what is important about bootlab was that it happened after the nineties: the nettime, extreme networking and traveling around the world, everyone was sort of finding their own tribe all this was extremely distributed, so you had all these locations getting networked and becoming more international. And then you had the Hybrid Workspace at DocumentaX, where for 100 days Pit was together with Geert Lovink and Thorsten Schilling. Pit and Thorsten came up with the idea of mikro lounge, which was something connected to the Hybrid Workspace there was

this desire to get local again, and bootlab grew out of that, so out of mikro lounge, which was also started the congress Wizards of OS for example – so that was somehow the meeting point for all those digital people in Berlin. Lots of them had never met each other before the mikro lounges, people like Inke Arns and Andy Müller Maguhn for example. It was a place where the art scene, the digital art scene, and the hacker scene got together, once a month in these very lowkey events in the WMF club. bootlab grew out of that scene, which was local but international – always staying very local but connecting a local set of scenes with international actions and discourses on copyright, gender, etc. So this was somehow the garden out of which reboot.fm grew.

P: reboot.fm was a way to reach the community around us not just through parties and events, but also through media projects, and to integrate them as producers and not just as consumers or visitors. We also had the vision to work with internetbased projects, but it was very difficult to integrate people just based on network culture. Radio was a good way to bring in a certain intensity of cultural production from different fields and to break certain paradigms of representation, which had to do with the interfaces of visual culture. [...] It was more like a vision to combine old and new media, which was quite common for the nettime projects, too, so to combine offline and online, paperbased production and online publishing. [...] There is also the aspect of time in radio: you can distribute time slots like you can share space. [...] So we developed this idea of a group schedule, which was

a elaborated model of collaborated filtering, and of how to let larger groups of experts decide about a radio programme. [...]

D: So this model was horizontal. What we had as a value was lots of connections with different social groups in Berlin, such as different club scenes. Pit had been in Berlin for a long time and was part of Botschaft e.V. that was the first generation of young artists working in Berlin on a high level. Pit, Natasha Sadr Haghighian, Christoph Keller, Florian Zeyfang, De:Bug Magazine, even the WMF Club all these connections were there. These were all old connections, and then there were also groups like Kanak Attak, Indymedia, or the historic Radio 100 in Berlin a heroic moment of one instance of preradio, which was really beautiful. In a way I was doing then what you are doing now with reSource: going out and asking people what they wanted from such a radio, what kind of programmes, who we should talk to, ... We had a trial with Juniradio in 2003, which was a cooperation with Kunstwerke, and it was an extension of Ersatz Radio, a project with Hannah Hurtzig and Anselm Franke. [...]

**r: Was it web radio at that time, or UKW?**

P: It was UKW radio. But we did web radio from early on Klubradio was streaming from different clubs in Berlin, also from the Loveparade, and later on an automatised livestreaming from larger clubs. From that technology we got the idea for the architecture to do web radio on air, so to use the web in between the studio and the transmitter [...]. This is what we have now at 88.4: a number of

groups streaming from different studios, [...] using the net to do types of editorials that are different to when you do normal radio programme. If you use the Internet you get more contributions. The 2000s were quite calm after 09/11 there was a kind of reversal of energies, and radio was a way to keep things alive and stay connected. This effect or 'cooling down' remained until around 2004 a culture of fear was prevailing, where people kept things more private and developed ideas. I think the whole web 2.0 revolution came out of this phase of rethinking the net issues. At that time MySpace was not there yet, broadcasting was not there yet.. it was a productive time where we had the idea to bring people together even if they were not visible in the public sphere anymore. So in the nineties there was much more energy in terms of activities after the calm period of the early 2000s, let's say from 2006, the energies changed again.

D: That different energy was also economical. I think that was the first wave of rising rents people suddenly really had to pay rent, had to pay bills, and had to get jobs. That kind of heyday of Berlin was over already in the 2000s [...]. In a way this closing down was partly pragmatic, and on the other hand there was a new moneyclub scene. [...] In the 2000s underground culture was really small and very fragmented – maybe more like it is now so what we did was connect something. [...] This was the beautiful thing about what happened in reboot.fm with the public space: people that were passing in and out and had not seen each other for years would reconnect. So after Juniradio we did reboot.fm we had money for

about one year, around 160.000 Euros through EU funds and the Kulturstiftung des Bundes. With this money we could pay ten people, the studio, the software so have a decent project. Out of those paid people, the ones that remained till now is Pit, Guido Plonski, myself. Of course, we still work with a lot of the same artists and groups.

**r: I would be interested in knowing how network structures work within your group.**

D: We did a lot of outreach in that time, and a lot of that is still relevant. So we have these people that are still part of the reboot.fm family, such as DJ Officer, Officer for example who is part of an extremely important underground from the eighties, but who is also connected to the East German pop band The toten Crackhuren im Kofferraum and their scene. So we have all these networks that bring in new people or new groups, and we have the old 'family members' of reboot.fm. Now there is Kotti & Co. for example: they are also old friends. Some of them were part of Kanak Attak they did not do shows for a while but now they are again. So it goes both ways: we are not a free radio where anybody can come, but we are rather open and if people want to do something we try to make space. [...] We don't look for individuals, we look for groups that are active and that do something in Berlin that we think deserves air space.

**r: So you always combine political and artistic issues. Do you also work with hackers, or cover hacking issues in your programme?**

D: We have Andrea Goetzke from newthinking, who is part of a larger group around re:publica.

**r: How many shows do you have?**

D: We have about 60 regular shows and around 100 people coming to the studio on a regular basis, [individuals and groups].

P: All together it is probably around 80 shows, as some are always on hold. There is always a percentage of shows that for some reason are either pausing for some time, or dropping out and then giving

the slot to someone else, but staying in the community. We like to think the studio as a meeting space [...].

D: We broadcast Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings on the shared channel 88,4. But it is quite a weak channel, so we also rely on podcasts. That is the model the city government for media MABB (Medienanstalt BerlinBrandenburg), divided up the former public access channels for radio between all these different radio groups. It is actually the same model that reboot.fm presented to MABB for a license, just run by the city. Before that we had temporary frequencies, three weeks, three months, etc.

P: We also had different transmitter towers where we put our own transmitters and licensed them. In 2006 we did a project called Radio 1:1, after that Herbstradio [...] temporary radio was always a model that we used, and in between we made podcasts. The community was used to have this kind of more event based, short phase activities. Now it is a legal model, but it is not independent. It is much better to have an own transmitter and an own infrastructure, your own way of promoting the things. Now after being institutionalised I think it is not as attractive as it would be, if we would run it based on an independent structure. We got much more feedback when we were independent because it was more direct – it was all about identification with the radio. Through the institutionalisation it lost a lot of its appeal, I would say – and FM also does not have the same role any more than what it had 10 years ago.

**r: Would you still define reboot.fm as related to the local art and media scene? Does this scene still exist?**

P: It depends... this scene has changed, the generations, the economics. The most consistent [part] about it is probably the myth of it in terms of some people still living it.[...]

D: Berlin was always a city of many centres. But now it's like each centre has so much going on. It's so niched driven. You have all these little bars, big clubs, and lots of tourists – something for everybody. In a way, I would say that the big question is how you identify the kind of affinities

that would make a network effective. There are a whole bunch of scenes in Neukölln that I don't follow so much. Some are interesting, some complete bullshit. How to find out what is interesting for me and the people I know?

P: There is free radio and there is public radio. At reboot.fm, before we have someone doing a radio show we look for something like a reputation it's not about giving public access to anybody who wants to do a programme. We want to give the possibility to reach out and make the artistic production that is done in the city and that is maybe not accessible for the audience – because there are so many niches, and many things remain hidden [...]. The production is already there, so to make a radio show is not too much work after that you can use it to reach out and become more trackable, and also as documentation. So there was always the idea of adding that to the artistic production outside of the radio. [...]

D: For example the naked guy – the one that often comes to talk about nudity on many public access television shows. We don't do this, we don't have this idea that anybody can come and do radio. Our programme is edited. And the editorial is open, but keeps a quite high level. [...]

P: Diversity is nothing that happens by itself. In social organisations, diversity is most often processed away. There is always a tendency of homogeneity – our homogeneity is probably the one of keeping a certain type of cultural production alive, a certain idea. At reboot.fm you see certain networks that [where] people know each other [offline or online] – so you can say that [it] is our homogeneity, but it is a pre-existing one. Diana then is taking care of the diversity this is something that you have to keep it alive, it is not coming just by itself.

D: Actually it is coming by the way we have done things. Half of our radio makers are women, another 35% have some kind of ethnic background, which in Germany is incredible. But we don't look for it it comes naturally, because we are already so networked, and because we are in different groups and have a kind of good name and are not all 'anti'. All the people and groups doing

radio are there because of what they do and what it means in the city.

**r: I came back to Berlin after three years and I really noticed some differences, like places that existed before, Bootlab, Tesla, they don't exist anymore. But still transmediale is a festival that is dealing with media and art. Do you think the media art scene is still alive or is gone after the net art? Do you see your radio as part of this crowd?**

P: I think that there are so many different tribes. Sometimes they are overlapping, sometimes they are identified as only DJs, only architects, and often there are a lot. It happens that the technology has been used in architecture art music for a while. I think there was a felt exclusivity for a scene of media activism and hacktivism. But now net culture is becoming popular culture, and anyone is able to join it. We have Facebook, Google, blogs. We have a total new face. The scene has totally changed. Or, it is now established. It's going fast, and seven years is one year in the old dot com time. So I saw this whole thing coming, and I thought, Ok, how do we deal with it? And probably it's good to look at the bigger waves, and not go for every little trend like locative media, and GPS chips. We have to see how the whole infrastructure is changing. I don't see the radical changes coming through technologies. Now it's about political issues, copyright, privacy. It's like MTV in the eighties, that's how it feels for me. I'm kind of against this culture of "let's do our own Facebook", they have very good developers, and it's not so easy to do your own Facebook. The beauty of this possibility of media activism is that in the DIY approach you can achieve a lot with certain skills. And now you have a nationalisation of network culture with cloud computing on a highly integrated level of implementation. It is probably not so much the ideas, but the skills made to implement Facebook, so it's ridiculous to think that you can do this without money. I think the battle has been lost on a certain level, and on another it has been won, because the issues are now political issues. I think the technologically driven innovation is not how I would do

it these days.

D: I would not even say that media is popular culture. It is mainstream. We are talking about the media scenes that came after the silicon graphics, after that scene of the high level media art in the eighties. And there were all these subcultures coming together being a kind of avantgarde. And now we are out of loop, and everyone has some kind of access, and they are using their apps and their tweeting. But what they are actually doing is quite boring. That is why I came back to this question about affinities. You build networks based on what you have in common. And what kind of ideas, goals and dreams you share. It is not about technology anymore. It is about what people do. The technology is not going to make anybody more interesting. You need interesting people. You need to find them, and see what they are doing.

P: I think that you have to emancipate from the identification with the technology. If it's really about culture, then it's on a level like you see in the dOCUMENTA, this kind of all together. It's part of the result of digital media: a high availability of content, mixing culture, art science, books, with TV, and music. Multiformat is the total standard format.

**r: I think it's a bit dangerous to just say that everything now is mainstream, because then you might fail to recognise what is happening today. So even if we are in a moment of mainstream I think our role is to find out what is new now. The same thing is valid for media art: maybe this is not just something that was happening in the past, but that is happening now, so people experimenting with new things and developments, which we should acknowledge.**

D: For me this is not the point, or the problem – it is more about finding those things and staying in contact. There are a lot of interesting things happening in Berlin, but I couldn't tie it to media culture. For a time there were those things happening that were bridging between media and art were super interesting, and I think now there are less of them, or seems less at least. [...]

P: It's not very interesting to do app art, the same like GPS art. These are sub waves that you can easily just skip. There is a longer wave, where copyright issues are now discussed on a level of cultural freedom. This is a big chance. This is a real change, a change in public discourse which was not there before. I think it's not about being adaptive to the situation, but about working more on a discursive level. Go back and find out what were the issues when copyright was discussed. Now it's time to bring them up. The chance is to do legal changes. I have nothing against these old ethics of hacker culture. However, I think that to make art out of your technological advantages as a hacker might be interesting, but there are a thousand other possibilities. The legitimisation in technology is probably not the most relevant, because it is so clear that everything is technological these days. You have to really contextualise your practice, and not just see it in the history of good old rock 'n' roll. Now it's time to really take a chance, and see how really successful net critic has become, but not fall into this kind of old evil 'we and them' (Zuckerberg). What I'm missing at the moment are some mechanisms of innovation which are not working anymore in other fields there is little demand of people coming with skills and copyright. Hackers are not giving the best answers at the moment. I wouldn't go to CCC congress to look for a good discussion on copyright, because they are too biased to defend ever existing P2P.

**r: Do you think that the current development of a network culture in Berlin is now happening more on an institutional level, or do you think it is still possible to create network projects in a more independent context, a kind of autonomous zone?**

P: The skills are there to know what the protocols can do, but I think the answers are not there. We are not going to save the world with Bitcoin. Bitcoin is already used by organised crime, this is a fact. It's more complex. Hackers tend to be very skillful on a technological level, but very naive and boyish on a political level. It gets really interesting when informed hackers that go to fight for political issues such as data preservation and really achieve

something – like Andy Müller Maguhn did by getting into Icann. I believe in a Facebook revolution, but on Facebook.

D: For me the question is what to network for? What brings you together? It was easy in the nineties, because we all had something to fight for. The fight has changed now the whole terrain of what is there to fight for has changed.

P: I'm totally positive about colabs spaces becoming something like a normal part of a city. This is not something avantgarde anymore, but there is part of the success.

D: I would say I feel much closer to net culture than to media art, but this is something that has got totally flattened out. Internet just became something that everyone uses. For example 'Make Capitalism History', a group of young activists, and their use of media – they do all of these different adusting tactics. So they are doing politics, but they are doing some of the most brilliant media work that I know, without being artists. [...] So media is not what they do, it just helps them do what they do – and what they do is politics.

P: The solution is civil action, not glorification of the outlaw like with Anonymous, this is part of the problem. We have to bring the idea of transparency into different processes.

**r: What do you mean with civil action? How would you see that being concretised here in Berlin?**

P: The situation of the artists in Berlin is really precarious, and it's becoming more and more precarious. This is already being discussed in Haben und Brauchen. How can it be made more sustainable, how can the work situation be improved? It's better to be an artist than to be unemployed. There are many issues which have little to do with network protocol, but of course how the network is organised could be part of the solution, for example in the minimum income discussion.

**r: How do you think the economic condition of the independent scene in Berlin could be improved? What model would you imagine?**

P: [...] Copyright is a big chance to raise money. There is a

very good discussion coming from AgDok, they are getting consultancy from iRights. iRights are one of the few media skilful consulting agencies in a kind of reformed copyright. And the AgDok just had a festival at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. They are already going in the right direction. Debates need to be started. It has been done before and there is really a need to sit together and discuss solutions. Not just come up with readymades.

**r: How are you dealing with these problems through the radio?**

D: What we do is support these groups and we help them do their work, and we also bring them together and link them to each other. [...] And the other thing is that we take a position within this – exactly because these are the same things that we are fighting for. The existence of the radio connects to our private existence. [...] It's no longer net culture, but net culture was never net culture. Basically that sort of first generation of radical net culture came from other scenes of DIY media productions. We have all these media now, and we have to use them. It's not about creating tools anymore, because they are already there. [...] You can do open source, but is it going to be usable in two more years? And that is the biggest question that goes back to money. How can you compete with You Tube? You cannot compete with those things, and why actually bother recreating them? Why not putting energy somewhere else? When we were doing software is because we had to, and now is kind of a hobby there is almost no need to make your own software now.

P: You see few platforms that matter. For example in contemporary art: there is a lot happening, and there is so much being done for the representation of this activity – and it is going so wrong. There is a lot of incompetence on the cultural field in terms of online projects, and probably there is need for consulting, for criti[cism]. How is the money for marketing being spent by the city government? So the question is how much of what makes Berlin attractive is really presented with this budget, and how much [is] rather destroyed through it. More research would have to be done on this, also by

looking at other cities and what they did wrong in dealing with tourism and massive international attraction. So much could be done better like all these projects taking place at Tempelhof. It's a good example on how to use space. [...] We are now in the phase where these things need to be questioned. I see many signs of early startup. People are coming up with business ideas before they are having an idea at all. I think we are in a late phase of what made Berlin really attractive. Now it's time to be sustainable and keep what is there alive. Before it's too late, and we turn into a zoo. This is the phase online media could do a lot reaching out, mapping what is there, making visible in an aggregating way. Some smart technological way of aggregating the content should be used. There should be a campaign to raise money for that. That is what Haben und Brauchen also needs to do. Besides, BBK needs to say we are part of the Berlin economy, and we need to cure our resources in order to continue to work. And if I see this situation in Vienna or even London, it's really the funding structures that are totally behind in Germany. You have to give up creative industries as a sector part of it is not going to be profitable.

**r: At transmediale we are trying to work on a model of networking through the reSource. But the question still remains of whom to aggregate, and for what. As you have many years of experience with our festival I would like to ask you what you think transmediale could do to improve this possibility of networking and bringing people together. What could be the role of the festival, and especially that of the reSource?**

D: I'm not sure if Berlin needs a local network. I think it needs to be relevant locally, but transmediale is a festival that happens once a year, and even if you do more events, the question is who are the publics there. I don't think that it is the job of transmediale to make all those groups more interesting. [...] But what I was shocked about at the first reSource meeting was that no one talks about what they actually do. I had no idea who those people were or what they do, all I know is that they want funding. [...]

P: It's good to have cultural

entrepreneurs coming in with new energy and ideas. I would not blame them, because I think that is where the input is coming from at the moment.

D: Yes, but their input at the meeting was their problems. I did not hear anything about what they do. So that was missing in the meeting, people presenting themselves. In the end that is the starting point. [...]

D: I think the crucial issue is how work gets compensated, and what kind of work is valued. And that is what got completely ruined in the last years. The problem is that there are no more journalists, and you don't have any more criticism especially in Germany, because everybody is a freelancer, and even if you are kind of critically writing about art and media, your partner is going to be doing publicly funded projects. So no one can say anything about anything – there is no more criticism. [...]

P: I think you have [a] big change [with] transmediale itself. In the future I see it as a cultural fair. The whole HKW would be [a] vibrant fair for project ideas, like a big flea market. That would be a motivation to take part in something transparent where we have a huge form of local exchange. Something like Überlebenskunst [...] tried to do [...], but they created it artificially [...]. Another project was the Elektronikfachmarkt. Good idea, but not enough audience. transmediale has the audience, so why not scale down the exhibition and expand on that level. The Dok format was really a use of the space, lots of projects happening. A huge resource is Lüneburg. Everyone is working there. How to make it visible? Make people join it? Turn it accessible? [...]

**r: So you would see it as a big open space, but how would you interact with the public?**

D: I think that Pit has always pushed this model of flea market, because the most important thing is that people share what they are doing. And they have access to their public but you would have a common public. [...]

D: What was interesting about the last reSource meeting is that you had the geeks, and the queer scene. I think you can

mix the things up more, force them. Find out what they have in common when issues get played out in ideological ways and from different perspectives. [...]

P: There is re:publica, there is the CCC congress, and I think that transmediale is in between and plays an important role, but it is often regarded as artcentered. It could be more centered around cultural production in a general sense, as media is being used by all these people, in one way or another. A common ground to use media, but then what is the social practice? It needs to position itself a bit against fashion weeks, this type of institutional creative industries to reflect the independent production. Instead of just asking them to make a project and give them money, [it] is more about the issues in common: sustainability, funding, models on how to work together on a more productive way. Haben und Brauchen is interesting, but it is not on a media level. [...]

**r: Do you want to suggest us questions and issues that you think we should bring to the next reSource event?**

P: Invite the people who are in charge at the city government the problem is there is money being spent on that level, and the money is not always spent in the best way. reboot.fm for example, we do work and we don't get recognised. The institutions that have the money, with them there is no dialogue. We could do nice advertising for Berlin, if they are open to allow us not only this Berlin festival type of production. One of the persons who are quite capable was Matthias Lilienthal from HAU. [...]

D: But this is not transmediale's job.

**r: We are an art festival and I think that this is important: art means politics, but also I don't think we can do political lobby. It's not really our job.**

D: I think there is already Haben Und Brachen, and to support them is already enough. It's not anymore about apps or open source. I think that the problem in Berlin is that people are not able to informally relate to each other. It is a new skill to learn how to be human again, to get off Facebook and back to real

life. I think it's a new way of communication, super professional, but it lacks the ability to go into something deeper, where there would be a point you can actually share information.

P: What I'm interested in now is the copyright debate, triggered by the Pirate Party, and representing the voice of artists. There is iRights, forthercosmic, but there are not enough artists in these groups. I'm missing the voices of artists in this debate, and also viable models. A lack of education of artists on what do free licenses mean. On the other hand there is probably a lot to gain, but in a longer period of time there is a possibility to raise money out of compensation schemes. And the other one is for reboot.fm, itself, how to get a sustainable funding. Where is the money coming from? This means cultural economy.