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## ***All-Aligned: Rethinking Affective Digital Power through Algorithmic Flags and Participative Software Art***

**Abstract:** This paper presents *All-Aligned (Svesvrstani)*, a participatory algorithmic art project that generates digital flags through user-defined inputs. As an open-source system for automated vexillology, it visualizes how algorithmic infrastructures construct, commodify, and modulate digital identities. Rooted in a post-Yugoslav context but addressing global dynamics, the project asks how algorithmically generated flags can function as ideological and aesthetic constructs – both reflecting and critiquing identity formation under surveillance capitalism. Through a series of public exhibitions and workshops, *All-Aligned* reveals the platformization of selfhood and the affective economy of engagement. Yet, it also opens space for resistance: by exposing its logic and inviting co-creation, it transforms algorithmic profiling into critical play. Positioned within the lineage of tactical media art, *All-Aligned* reclaims generative computational aesthetics as a site for collective agency and ideological experimentation.

**Keywords:** generative art; affective computing; identity and ideology; post-socialist aesthetics; surveillance capitalism; vexillology.

### **Introduction**

*Surveillance capitalism unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data.*

— Shoshana Zuboff

Flags have long served as instruments of alignment. As early as the 5th century BC, Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*: “On the field of battle, words cannot be heard distinctly... banners and flags are used.”<sup>1</sup> Over time, flags evolved from tools of military signaling into symbols of feudal power and later, under the Eurocentric Westphalian system, into icons of nation-building projects.

<sup>1</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Leicester, England: Allandale Online Publishing, 2010), 27–28.

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In the era of digital capitalism, flags are no longer limited to territory or statehood. They function as symbolic proxies in culture wars and identity marketing – flattened into signs of belonging, weaponized by affective propaganda, and absorbed into the logic of surveillance capitalism.<sup>2</sup> As identities become increasingly shaped by data-driven infrastructures, flags too are categorized, ranked, and optimized for engagement.

*All-Aligned* (*Svesvrstani* in Serbian)<sup>3</sup> was conceived in this context. It is a participatory software art project that generates algorithmic flags based on user-defined parameters. By exposing and inviting interaction with the mechanics of algorithmic identity construction, it reflects and critiques how identities are commodified, modularized, and aestheticized under digital capitalism. Launched during the “They: Live” artist-in-residency program,<sup>4</sup> it was developed across workshops, exhibitions, and talks in several Balkan and European cities. Rooted in a post-socialist, post-Yugoslav context, the project also reflects on symbolic sovereignty and economic dependency. It suggests that what happened to Yugoslavia in the 1990s – material plundering legitimized by identity wars – now seems to be playing out globally, only this time powered by artificial intelligence.

The following sections outline the project’s generative logic (*How*), participatory framework (*What*), and its broader ideological implications (*Why*).

## The How: technological foundations

*Only the holder the flag fits into. No flag.*

— Rumi یمور دمحم نی دل الالاج

As software technology for generative flag design, *All-Aligned* represents a classic AI system rather than a neural network-driven one. It employs a rule-based, semantic, expert system architecture, drawing from the expertise of vexillologists – flag designers who specialize in the symbolic and aesthetic language of flags. Additionally, *All-Aligned* embodies principles of affective computing,<sup>5</sup> recognizing that flags are intensely emotional cultural artifacts, designed to evoke identities, ideologies, and allegiances.

*All-Aligned*’s software combines Python for back-end logic (i.e. the functionality “under the hood”) with JavaScript, HTML, and CSS for the front end (i.e. the design we see and use). It uses statistical mappings to connect concepts – like “anarchist”, “socialist”, “pirate”, “Yugoslav”, etc. – to visual elements such as colors, layouts, and symbols, generating algorithmic flag designs.

<sup>2</sup> Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (London, England: Profile Books, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Uroš Krčadinac, *All-Aligned*. Accessed January 21, 2025. <https://krcadinac.com/all-aligned>.

<sup>4</sup> Lorenzo Torres, Maida Gruden, and Andrija Stojanović, eds., *They: Live. Exploring Student Lives Through Photography, Oral History and Context-Based Art* (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2024).

<sup>5</sup> Rosalind Picard, *Affective Computing* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997).

Users engage with the system directly through the online generator.<sup>6</sup> They can combine and configure multiple parameters to create unique flags that represent hybrid identities. For example, a user could generate a flag that is 0.8 anarchist and 0.99 African or a flag that is 0.6 Nordic and 0.77 Yugoslav (Figure 1). This customization is facilitated through an interface with adjustable sliders for each concept. The interface is simple and accessible, inviting an iterative process of exploration and critical reflection.

Each concept is linked to specific design elements via JSON configuration files, assigning weights to layouts, colors, and symbols based on their relevance. A weight of 1 means strong association, 0 is neutral, and –1 suggests exclusion. For example, the “anarchist” concept prioritizes black and red colors, diagonal bicolor layouts, and anarchist symbols, while also considering related motifs like “communism” and “libertarianism” at lower weights.

Other mappings include:

- “Serbian” – tricolors, double-headed eagle, Cyrillic script;
- “love” – hearts, circular shapes, red/pink tones;
- “socialist” – geometric layouts, red stars; and
- “antivax” – chaotic forms, crossed-out syringes, green/black tones.

Mappings were refined from Web searches and curated manually. Currently, ~100 concepts and thousands of SVG symbols are included, based on workshops in Belgrade and beyond.<sup>7</sup> Flag layouts follow vexillological sources like Whitney Smith<sup>8</sup> and Alfred Znamierowski,<sup>9</sup> covering numerous standard formats and informing probabilities for layout and color combinations.

As a novel software technology, *All-Aligned* is free and proudly open-source,<sup>10</sup> published under the GNU General Public License v3.0.<sup>11</sup> It reflects our vision of AI as a shared resource – a socially owned common good rather than a privatized tool of corporate exploitation.

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<sup>6</sup> Uroš Krčadinac, *All-Aligned Flag Generator*. Accessed January 21, 2025. <https://krcadinac.com/all-aligned/generator>.

<sup>7</sup> Lorenzo Torres, Maida Gruden, and Andrija Stojanović, eds., *They: Live. Exploring Student Lives Through Photography, Oral History and Context-Based Art* (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2024).

<sup>8</sup> Whitney Smith, *Flags Through the Ages and Across the World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Znamierowski, *The World Encyclopedia of Flags: The Definitive Guide to International Flags, Banners, Standards and Ensigns* (London: Lorenz Books, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> The *All-Aligned* software project is freely available on GitHub: <https://github.com/parthenocissus/allaligned-svesvrstani>. Accessed January 21, 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Free Software Foundation, GNU General Public License, Version 3.0, June 29, 2007, <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-3.0.en.html>.

## The What: exhibitions and workshops

*It is not the wind that moves; it is not the flag  
that moves; it is your mind that moves.*

— Mumonkan 無門關

The foundational *All-Aligned* workshop took place in Belgrade's Student City in 2022 (Figure 2). The workshop was part of the artist-in-residence program "They: Live – Student Lives Revealed Through Context-Based Art Practices"<sup>12</sup>, a transnational program supported by Creative Europe and Serbia's Ministry of Culture. Taking place across Belgrade, Madrid, Rijeka, Podgorica, and Novi Sad, the program invited artists and curators to immerse themselves in student communities. In Belgrade, the residency was led by artist Uroš Krčadinac and curator Lav Mrenović, in collaboration with coordinators Maida Gruden and Andrija Stojanović.

During the workshops, several hundred students used a generator to create new flags (Figure 3). Many of the participants were international students from Africa, Latin America, and Asia, whose presence in Belgrade is a part of the legacy of the Yugoslav *Non-Aligned Movement*. This connection inspired the name "All-Aligned."

Using the *All-Aligned* interface, student participants repeatedly generated flags, iterating until they discovered the one that would serve as an emblem of themselves, reflecting who they were as "identity consumers." We then asked them, "Why is this flag yours?" These are some of their answers (with flags presented in Figure 4):

1. "Because it calms me."
2. "Because it's Christian enough, Serbian enough."
3. "Because I feel insecure as a triangle standing on its tip."
4. "Because that part in the middle is so feminine!"
5. "Because of my Africa and the Non-Aligned that brought me to Belgrade."
6. "Because NATO exploited religious and ethnic identities to colonize the Balkans."
7. "Because it is trans-dervish."
8. "Because I simply like it. As if I even know why I like something, why I identify with something?"

The residency culminated in an exhibition at the SCCC Gallery in June 2022, showcasing the flags and inviting critical reflection on identity and ideological interpellation. Following this, the project expanded to solo exhibitions in Rijeka, Zagreb, Cetinje, and Sarajevo. Highlights included a performance at SCCC with director Ana Pinter and a workshop in Cetinje (Figure 5). *All-Aligned* continued through artist talks and presentations in Vienna, Ljubljana, Budapest, Banjaluka, and concluded with a final event at Juan Carlos University in Madrid.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Lorenzo Torres, Maida Gruden, and Andrija Stojanović, eds., *They: Live. Exploring Student Lives Through Photography, Oral History and Context-Based Art* (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2024).

<sup>13</sup> Additional details about the exhibitions and workshops, along with photographs, are available on the *All-Aligned* website: <https://krccadinac.com/all-aligned/exhibitions>.

## The Why: ideas and implications

*Identity is a bone to gnaw they give you before  
they peel you to the bare skin.*

— Boris Buden

The *All-Aligned* project emerges from a current historical moment: one in which identity has been hollowed out, aestheticized, and transformed into a commodity by digital capitalism. In this context, flags are no longer mere emblems of nationhood or resistance. They function as *affective interfaces* – designed not to unify but to segment, provoke, and optimize engagement. *All-Aligned* exposes how algorithmic governance – the use of data-driven, automated decision-making systems to regulate and shape social processes – fragments identity into commodified profiles and digital pseudo-nations optimized for exchange in the marketplace. These identities offer the illusion of uniqueness or community while operating within prestructured categories that serve economic ends.

This section explores how algorithmically generated flags, as both symbolic and participatory objects, serve a dual function: they reflect the structures of identity commodification under surveillance capitalism, and simultaneously offer a critical site for aesthetic resistance and collective agency. Because of the project's participatory nature and transparent generative mechanism, the flags produced by *All-Aligned* do not simply represent identities. Instead, they interrogate and fracture the ideological apparatuses that produce them.

### *I. Algorithmic identities, proficity, and ideology*

Shoshana Zuboff defined surveillance capitalism as the unilateral appropriation of human experience as free raw material for behavioral prediction and economic gain.<sup>14</sup> In this model, identity becomes not a process of self-articulation, but a *data profile* shaped by digital infrastructures whose goal is not emancipation but for-profit optimization. This results in a condition Hans-Georg Moeller terms *proficity*.<sup>15</sup> In proficity, digital identities are shaped by external validation rather than intrinsic authenticity. Profiles operate as marketable entities, crafted not through personal expression but through algorithmic curation. The subject's sense of self is always mediated by systems of evaluation and platformized recognition.<sup>16</sup>

Algorithmically generated flags, as explored through *All-Aligned*, inhabit this terrain of proficity. Each flag is composed from a matrix of design elements – colors,

<sup>14</sup> Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (London, England: Profile Books, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul J. D'Ambrosio, *You and Your Profile: Identity After Authenticity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

<sup>16</sup> Moeller, drawing on both Niklas Luhmann's systems theory and Taoist philosophy, views digital society as an interconnected whole. He is sceptical towards the notion of a stable, essential, reified self.

symbols, layouts – mapped to concepts like “Serbian”, “libertarian”, “student”, etc. These are weighted through semantic associations to generate a visual representation of identity. But unlike typical algorithmic identity systems, *All-Aligned* does not conceal its mappings. It makes them visible and malleable. The user becomes an active participant in the generation of their own semiotic identity. No longer a passive subject of algorithmic profiling, they act as co-author in a symbolic game of self-positioning – enabling them to see how their affinities are constructed and, if so inclined, interrogate them.

And yet, *All-Aligned* remains entangled in the logic it seeks to subvert. As one participant noted: “*Because I simply like it. As if I even know why I like something, why I identify with something?*” This reveals the ambivalence of identification in digital capitalism: even when choice feels personal, the options are pre-curated by aesthetic and ideological norms. *All-Aligned* simultaneously stages and exposes the ideological interpellation of the digital subject – in line with Althusser’s theory of ideology, which emphasizes how ideological apparatuses interpellate individuals, transforming them into subjects that willingly accept their roles within the social structure. Ideology itself, in Althusser’s terms, refers to “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence”<sup>17</sup>. The flag – a *par excellence* symbol of ideology – becomes a mirror not just of what we are, but of how we are made to be.

## II. Post-Yugoslav sovereignty and algorithmic interpellation

This dialectic of reflection and critique is especially potent in the post-socialist, post-Yugoslav context from which *All-Aligned* emerges. As Rastko Močnik argues, the disintegration of Yugoslavia resulted in new national identities that were asserted symbolically – through flags and anthems – but enacted within a condition of deep economic dependency on the imperial centre.<sup>18</sup> National identities served as both a tool and a distraction. Flags and cultural emblems reinforced a sense of unity, yet beneath this façade, the region was integrated into the global capitalist order as a subject within the semi-periphery.

Močnik likens the post-Yugoslav nations to “self-imposed bantustans”,<sup>19</sup> where identitarian sovereignty is a self-defeating performative act. The flag thus becomes an empty signifier – an ideological veil obscuring the global logic of capitalist extraction. We find this bait-and-switch emblematic of digital capitalism’s core mechanisms: algorithmic systems commodify users’ identities – fragmenting, alienating, and reducing them to marketable data – all while centralizing economic power into the hands of a few powerful tech corporations.

<sup>17</sup> Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” trans. Ben Brewster, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Press, 1971), 162.

<sup>18</sup> Rastko Močnik, *Tri teorije: institucija, nacija, država* (Ljubljana: 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Rastko Močnik, “Social Change in the Balkans,” *Eurozine*, 2003.



This is a global process. As Dyer-Witheford argues in *Inhuman Power*, AI extends Lenin's theory of imperialism by embedding systemic domination into digital infrastructures.<sup>20</sup> Economic power remains concentrated in the global core, but now peripheral regions become sites of a new type of extraction – through digital labor, data harvesting, and algorithmic control. Furthermore, Kwame Nkrumah's extended critique of neo-colonialism echoes this: foreign capital exploits rather than develops the periphery.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, surveillance capitalism uses social media as a Trojan Horse, turning “innocuous” identity production into a profit engine for Big Tech.

As Boris Buden writes, the collapse of Yugoslavia marked not only a geopolitical shift but a rupture in collective memory, the past being rewritten to justify the new neoliberal-capitalist order.<sup>22</sup> The ideological function of nationalism in post-Yugoslavia, according to Buden, served to obscure the material consequences of capitalist restructuring. As *All-Aligned* suggests, AI-driven culture wars today obscure the economic realities of surveillance capitalism. Selfhood is no longer rooted in history, materiality, or collective struggle but in algorithmically mediated profiles. History disappears, replaced by data. The subject becomes a statistical echo of past behavior.

In *All-Aligned*, this post-Yugoslav contradiction is not just a background context. It is the methodological core. The very act of generating endless hybrid flags – Afro-Balkan, Serbo-libertarian, NATO-incel, queer-dervish – draws attention to the manufactured nature of identity, exposing how in digital capitalism political subjectivities get produced through symbolic manipulation rather than collective human agency. *All-Aligned* seeks to universalize the Yugoslav and Serbian experience in order to reveal how contemporary identity formation is shaped by structural forces akin to those that drove the Yugoslav wars and privatizations. The difference is now, the logic is global and automated. One might argue that the new fascism emerges from AI slot machines and random number generators.<sup>23</sup>

### III. Affective machines and the war for attention

*All-Aligned* also functions as a critique of the affective dimension of digital capitalism. As Facebook's algorithm demonstrated by ranking “angry” reactions as five times more valuable than “likes”, platforms systematically prioritize and amplify outrage and other negative affects, reinforcing identity-based polarization as a means of optimizing user engagement.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, manipulative UX design exploit users' af-

<sup>20</sup> Nick Dyer-Witheford, Atle Mikkola Kjosen, and James Steinhoff, *Inhuman Power: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1966).

<sup>22</sup> Boris Buden, “The Post-Yugoslavian Condition of Institutional Critique,” *Transversal*, February 2008, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0208/buden/en>.

<sup>23</sup> One of the informal slogans of the *All-Aligned* project was “For random – ready!” (“Za random spremni!” in Serbo-Croatian), a wordplay on “For homeland – ready!” (“Za dom spremni!”), the fascist Croatian-Ustaša slogan from the Second World War.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremy B. Merrill and Will Oremus, “Five Points for Anger, One for a ‘Like’: How Facebook's Formula Fostered Rage and Misinformation,” *The Washington Post*, October 26, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/10/26/facebook-angry-emoji-algorithm/>.

fective neurochemical responses, such as dopamine feedback loops, to shape behavior and maintain engagement.<sup>25</sup> The physiological basis of cognition within the nervous system is being exploited in order to further entrench users in cycles of emotional interaction. Algorithmic systems do not simply categorize users. They modulate their emotional states for behavioral prediction and economic gain.

Flags, as emotional aesthetic artifacts, are ideally suited to this task. They condense affect, ideology, and belonging into a single geometric image. The nationalist flag does not *explain* a country; it *feels* like a country. It is a visual trigger for allegiance. In *All-Aligned*, this dynamic is both replicated and deconstructed. Participants feel drawn to certain flags – for their symmetry, their shapes, their colors, their connotations – and then asked: “*Why is this flag yours?*” The resulting answers are affective and ambiguous. Some invoke calmness, others insecurity or irony, heritage, outrage or pride. The process forces a confrontation between feeling and ideology: not only *what* we identify with, but *why*.

Moreover, the project stages this confrontation within a system of affective computing. The flag generator mimics the affective logic of algorithmic identity platforms. It maps concepts to symbols in a way that recalls how machine learning models map user behavior to probabilistic recommendations. Yet unlike commercial systems, *All-Aligned* makes this mapping explicit. It invites users to play with the system, to adjust the sliders, to experiment with their aesthetic positionality. In doing so, it converts Zuboff’s extraction imperative of AI into a space of critical play.

#### *IV. Participatory algorithmic art as ideological cartography*

This ambivalent function – of both enacting and exposing algorithmic identity – places *All-Aligned* within a lineage of tactical media art. As Hito Steyerl argues, algorithmic systems do not merely represent the world. They *generate* ideological formations. AI is not a mirror but a world-builder. In her formulation, we are witnessing the “aestheticization of politics by computational means”<sup>26</sup>. In this context, algorithmic flags are no longer passive symbols but active agents of ideological production.

Fredric Jameson helps contextualize this further. In his reading, postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism: a condition in which aesthetics serve not to disrupt power but to lubricate it. The flattening of history, the collapse of authenticity, the proliferation of surface – these are not bugs but core features of the contemporary aesthetic economy.<sup>27</sup> *All-Aligned* resists this logic by making the flattening visible. Its algorithm does not claim artistic genius. It shows its rules. It makes us look at the logic of production. It asks us to identify with what identifies us.

<sup>25</sup> Darija Medić, “Toxic Agents of the Attention Economy,” in *Coding the Gaze: Technology, Art and Society: Feminist Perspectives*, 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Hito Steyerl, “Mean Images,” *New Left Review* 140/141 (March–June 2023).

<sup>27</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).



Joanna Zylinska deepens this critique by warning against the fetishization of AI aesthetics. In her analysis, many generative art projects replicate the same visual tropes – GANs trained on classical paintings, abstract flows of data-as-sublime – without challenging the infrastructural or ideological systems in which AI operates. Zylinska calls for an aesthetic reworlding, a practice that not only uses AI but reimagines the world it reflects.<sup>28</sup> *All-Aligned* aligns with this idea. It does not treat AI as a mystical painter, but as a social technology – a grammar for constructing identities, allegiances, and affective attachments.

At a deeper level, *All-Aligned* can be seen as an exercise in counter-cartography. Much like Vladan Joler's *Anatomy of AI*,<sup>29</sup> which maps the planetary-scale infrastructure of algorithmic capitalism, *All-Aligned* maps the symbolic terrain of identity production. But instead of tracing supply chains, it traces emotional, ideological, and cultural coordinates. Each flag is a node in this map – a crystallization of affective affiliation shaped by aesthetic rules.

In doing so, the project disrupts the illusion of autonomy in digital identity. As the work of Dejan Grba has shown, algorithmic systems present themselves as objective or neutral while encoding deep ideological assumptions.<sup>30</sup> *All-Aligned* lays these assumptions bare. It shows that to generate a flag is to navigate a landscape of inherited signs and imposed choices. Even creativity here is structured – but not fixed. It can be bent, played with, reconfigured, *hacked*.

This makes *All-Aligned* a form of participatory critique. It does not deliver a singular message but opens a space for ideological experimentation. In contrast to systems that profile users invisibly, it demands that users profile themselves – and reflect on the process. This reflexivity is key. It transforms what would otherwise be aesthetic consumption into aesthetic *cognition*. The flag becomes not a brand of the self, but a question: *What am I aligning with and who benefits from this alignment?*

### V. Identity, contradiction, and catharsis

The final implication of *All-Aligned* lies in its embrace of contradiction and paradox. As previously mentioned, the name *All-Aligned* plays on the legacy of the *Non-Aligned* – an anti-imperialist, anti-Cold War movement born in Belgrade. The Non-Aligned Movement rejected binary divisions of global power, just as *All-Aligned* challenges the dualistic logics of algorithmic capitalist governance. Much like AI, capitalism itself functions as a massive computational machine in which individuals act as neurons, processing and optimizing market behaviors within a logic that demands efficiency, quantification, and predictability. In this system, contradiction as such must be eliminated. This mechanistic rationalism is why AI has become capitalism's

<sup>28</sup> Joanna Zylinska, *AI Art: Machine Visions and Warped Dreams* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> Vladan Joler and Kate Crawford, *Anatomy of an AI System* (2018), <https://anatomyof.ai/>.

<sup>30</sup> Dejan Grba, "The Mechanical Turkness: Tactical Media Art and the Critique of Corporate AI", in *Navigating the Digital Age: An In-Depth Exploration into the Intersection of Modern Technologies and Societal Transformation* (Belgrade: Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, 2024).

ideal cognitive tool. It reinforces a world where only the computable is deemed real, and where all that is computable is commodified – bought, sold, and accumulated like points in a game.

However, there are alternative ways to conceptualize reality – such as Hegelian dialectics, Marxist dialectics, Madhyamaka paradoxical logics, and contemporary paraconsistent logics. Hegel's dialectic views identity as an ever-evolving historical process shaped by contradiction and transformation,<sup>31</sup> while Marxist dialectics grounds this dynamic in material conditions, emphasizing that social interactions determine consciousness and that contradictions emerge not just in thought, but within the structures of economic and political life.<sup>32</sup> Madhyamaka philosophy proposes a fourfold logic in which statements can be simultaneously true, false, both, and neither – destabilizing any essential notion of self.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, paraconsistent logics allow contradictions to coexist without collapse.<sup>34</sup> *All-Aligned* draws from this spirit of non-classical logics: it enables users to be at once aligned with a flag, against it, non-aligned, and – *all-aligned*.

This is not just a philosophical gesture. It has political stakes. By staging contradiction rather than resolving it, the project resists the reductive, either/or structures of digital profiling and capitalist rationality. It reveals identity not as a fixed thing that can be represented via a fixed flag, but as a shifting, generative process – plural, unstable, and resistant to capture. In doing so, the project challenges the computational imperative to sort people and things into discrete, marketable categories.

This is perhaps why the project has resonated with so many participants. Despite its technical structure and theoretical ambitions, it is ultimately a labour of emotions. It does not only critique the systems that produce us. It lets us *feel* our way through them. As curator Adna Muslija writes, “The level of awareness of the ideological and algorithmic background is finally followed by the understanding of what makes us subjects – the power to *feel*.”<sup>35</sup> This feeling is not a weakness. It is a method. It transforms digital data back into human experience.

<sup>31</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 20.

<sup>33</sup> Nāgārjuna, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, trans. Jay L. Garfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Adna Muslija, “Regulated Interpellation,” in *All-Aligned Exhibition Catalogue*, Manifesto Gallery, Sarajevo, Summer 2023, <https://krcadinac.com/all-aligned/essays/adna/>.

## Conclusion

*Finally – and this goes for the capitalists  
too – an inhuman power rules over everything.*

— Karl Marx

In an age where AI shapes everything, *All-Aligned* reveals the aesthetic and ideological forces behind algorithmic selfhood. What began as a tool for automated flag design evolved into a critical investigation of how digital identities are produced, commodified, and governed by surveillance capitalism. The flags generated are more than visual artifacts. They serve as critiques, exposing the fractures and biases embedded in identity-making systems.

Set in a post-Yugoslav context, *All-Aligned* draws parallels between the symbolic sovereignty of the new Balkan states and their economic dependency under neoliberalism. Just as these nations raised new flags while surrendering material autonomy, today's users craft curated digital selves within platforms that extract value from their choices. Despite its interactive interface, the system often reinforces structural constraints, reducing selfhood to data optimized for engagement and profit.

But *All-Aligned* is also an experiment in resistance. Through open-source tools, workshops, and exhibitions across the region, it reclaims algorithmic aesthetics as a space for reflection. It invites users to see AI not as control, but as a medium for collective imagination.

The project's most powerful moment came not through code, but through catastrophe. A week after the Belgrade exhibition opened, a torrential flood ravaged the gallery, destroying equipment and flags (Figure 6). Yet this loss felt strangely liberating. The climate-gone-feral had dismantled our constructs and technological affectations. While we spoke of generative algorithms, had we overlooked that nature and society are generative too?

It was then that we recalled a comment left by a student from Belgrade's Student City after generating her flag. When we asked, "Why is this flag yours?" she replied: "Because I am trying to create a new system during this apocalypse."

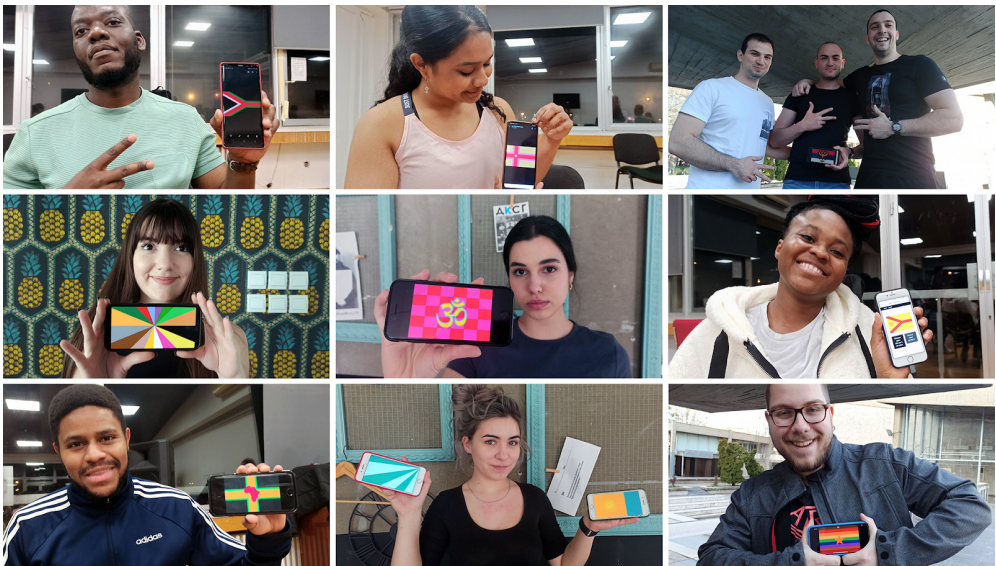


**Figure 1.** *All-Aligned Flag Generator*. Every time a user presses the generate button, a new set of flags are generated. An example of the Afro-anarchist flag set (up) and Nordic-Yugoslav flag set (below).





**Figure 2.** *All-Aligned* exhibitions in Rijeka, Croatia (Fillodrammatica Gallery, Drugo More); Cetinje, Montenegro (Miroslav Dado Đurić Gallery, Fluid Design Forum); Belgrade, Serbia (SCCC Gallery, “They: Live” artist-in-residence programme); and Zagreb, Croatia (Miroslav Kraljević Gallery, GMK, Kontejner), left to right, top to bottom.



**Figure 3.** Student participants of *All-Aligned* workshops in the Belgrade's Student City.

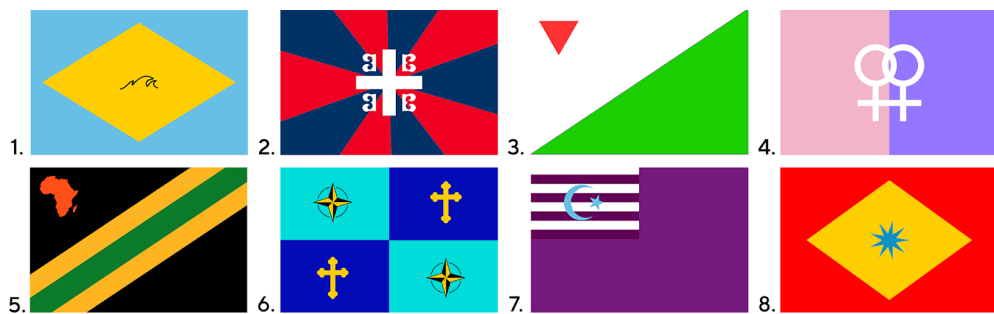


Figure 4. Examples of generated flags.



Figure 5. Left: *The All-Aligned in Movement* public performance, SCCC, Belgrade (September, 2022); right: *Algorithmic Flag Workshop* at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cetinje, Montenegro (Spring, 2023).

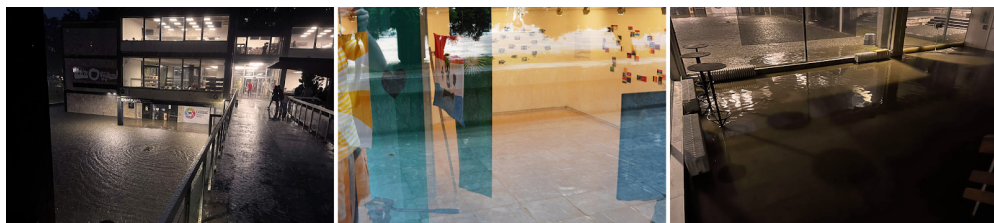


Figure 6. The flood of the SCCC Gallery (June, 2022).



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