Leon Gurevitch
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
Wednesday, Sept. 28th, 2016 at 4 pm, SSMS 2135

Over the past few decades, the extensive digital visual effects (VFX) industries have arisen from the periphery of Hollywood’s traditional base in Los Angeles. As Hollywood visual effects production began to adopt computational processes, practices, and technologies, what started out as a branch of the IT and computer sciences industry became a hybrid. Neither “inside” the Hollywood studios, traditional financial structures, nor entirely “outside” the value chain attached to Hollywood’s film output, the VFX industry has functioned as networks of precarious creative industries offering work for hire on a film by film, contract by contract basis. All of this has led to an industry defined by the migration of labor that has dwarfed even traditional Hollywood production. This paper will consider the effects of precarious labor, migration and its implications for the future of a Global Hollywood—a construct increasingly governed by computational production pipelines. Central to this research has been both quantitative and qualitative research approaches that incorporates interviews with Movie, Games and Animation professionals (Pixar, Dreamworks, ILM, Weta Digital, Blizzard, Square Enix). Of special interest has been the role of big data migration visualization tools detailing the migration pathways of 80,000 digital image professionals (as pictured above). They include animators, coders, engineers and artists who have been working around the world for the past 30 years. Finally, this presentation examines the networked relationships between software, source code, skills migration and precarious labor in the Global VFX Industries.

Dr Leon Gurevitch is Associate Professor at Victoria University of Wellington’s School of Design and a Royal Society of New Zealand Research Scholar. Leon is an Associate Editor of Animation: A Disciplinary Journal and has published his work in Continuum Journal, The Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand, The Journal of Television and New Media, Senses of Cinema, among other journals and in numerous edited collections. Leon currently lectures undergraduate and graduate courses in the photographic arts, computational cultures, and the politics of systems design.