Abstract for *Our Transhuman Futures*

Title: Wearable Technology, Digital Life and Our Proposed Transhumanist Futures

By Isabel Pedersen

In her book *Ready to Wear: A Rhetoric of Wearable Computers and Reality-Shifting Media*, Isabel Pedersen argues that our technological futures are framed as imminent through what she calls a "continuum of embodiment." Over the past fifteen years, global cultures have thoroughly adopted smartphone technology. This swift transformation has made the concept of wearable computers and, ultimately, the idea of implantable devices all the more believable through prevailing rhetorics. Increasingly, commercial wearable technology proposes a euphoric vision of the future. The Goggle Glass Explorer's project (2012 – 2015) celebrated a lifestyle that involved skydiving, tours through Manhattan by cultured flaneurs, and visits to fashion runways. Charged with millennial rhetoric that still views technology as a savior, much wearable technology serves the transhumanist vision that humanity can and should evolve (physically, culturally, and existentially) beyond an essential notion of the category "human". However, transhumanism simultaneously goads society with an alluring sense of fear. Pedersen's talk also asks if transhumanism – theory, practice, and predictive vision – springs from our fears over the *end of the human*. Do we embrace transhumanism and posthumanism, as Rosi Braidotti asks "because a great deal of its inter-connections are negative and based on a shared sense of vulnerability and fear of imminent catastrophes"? The rhetoric surrounding wearable computers is fuelled by popular culture, including film (e.g., Iron Man, Elysium, Pacific Rim), television (e.g., Star Trek, Intelligence, Almost Human), gaming (e.g., Deus Ex), comic books (e.g., Iron Man) and literature, all of which socialize society to embrace ideas that terrify us and previously seemed impossible. Drawing on case studies and Decimal Lab projects surrounding brain-computer interfaces, bionic contact lenses, exoskeletons and emergent concepts surrounding computer-based implantables, this talk invites the audience to consider wearables now but also in the future. It discusses how fictional scenarios, social media, and digital culture impact people's lives. However, it also dives into the rhetorical motives surrounding inventors' ambitions that end up entrenched in the devices we are asked to use and the ways we consider our own identity.