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# Digital Auratic Reproducibility: Ubiquitous Ethnographies and Communicational Metropolis

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## 1. Introduction

Ethnography as method has been changing in recent years for many reasons and in different cultural contexts. Bororo, Xavante or Kayapò – if I focus exclusively Brazilian cultures with whom I've been doing research in a "native" fieldwork – are increasingly involved on presenting their rituals by themselves through digital technologies; the same is occurring inside urban youth cultures and their self-production on music, street art, style or expanded design and so on, whose languages are understandable only through their autonomous visions and reflections; transurbanism is their ethnographic fluid context (Mudler: 2002). This accelerated trans-cultural process is spreading out new kinds of subjectivities as well as diasporic citizenship through digital communication.



Fig. 1. Bluewallberlin (Blu: 2011)

The fundamental concept of differentiated and positioned *self-representation* is emerging, regarding a growing number of (native-migrant-urban-digital) subjects: a mutant scenario is producing the most radical challenge for our discipline (Turner:1978, Canevacci:2008). Thus,

pluralized ethnographies and disseminated self-representations are the keywords I shall initially discuss.

The classical *space-and-time* concepts were radically changing at the end of XX century ever since the diffusion of “glocal” cultures (see Robertson:1995, Bryan S.Turner: 2010, Appadurai: 1986); now, an expanded digital interconnectivity is upholding *ubiquity* as an emerging concept which produces an accelerated and horizontal floating process concerning space-time; a fragmented flux of segmented spaces/times is connected, crossed and assembled within innovative and disturbing references on identity, genre, labor, roots, territory.

It becomes possible to connect the diffusion of such a different kind of digital ubiquity to a historical concept in the Marx's theory: the *division of labor*. This concept, together with the *commodities fetishisms*, was a basic political concept in his research on capitalist production and cultural alienation of the working class. These are two Marxian concepts I'll use adapting them in a transformed meaning considering contemporary communicational context. Perhaps now, due to digital cultures diffusion, the traditional *social* division of labor has become the contemporary *communicational* division of labor. We've been watching growing contradictions in each and every local person's desire, capacity and involvement while using digital cultures in a creative way.

Self-representation is a key-word to understand such a process, in which nobody wants to delegate to another professional the right to represent him/herself. Each person has the narrative power and not only the one of being narrated, but as well a desire to frame a story and not to be framed into a story. Between the one who has the power of communicate and the one who has the impotence of being communicated there is a conflict, a political conflict, a communicational conflict, increased on the visible digital technologies diffusion. In this conflict, there are growing political contrasts, aporias and contradictions between the *horizontalisation* of multividual performative practices and the *verticalization* of dominant economic global power. Everybody wants to create his/her own narrative stories; consequently, an emerging political conflict embodies the transformative visions and practices on communication: a dualistic opposition between who frames and who is framed, who communicate and who is communicated, who represents and who is represented is now more problematic and conflictive due to the general interconnectivity diffusions based on trans-urban and trans-ethnic multividuals creative attitude. So, the problematic modern concept of “mass” is melting in the pixel-air.

Contemporary politics is communicational politics. The communicational division of labor is becoming politically conflictual and has been extended in many fragmented subjectivities and cultures. Even classical concepts, such as the Marxian differences between *work* and *labor*, are inadequate. If the first one is alienated, repetitive and oppressive, the second one is free and self-determined but still work-oriented; so, I prefer a reformulation of the Latin word *opus* bringing a creative open-ended composition, mixing consumer production, aesthetics cultures, performative communication which are expressed inside/outside the structural system of production.

Ubiquity is a de-centered liberation of spaces and times. *Spacetimes*.

Another concept I'd like to stress is the one of *composition*. Composition as a simultaneous trans-narrative and trans-sensorial mix-media expression which would represent research in

its manifestation and process. The hegemonic form of representation through writing is not adequate to contemporary digital challenge. Composition is a process of writing (essay, ethno-poetic, fiction), visual (ad, ideogram, design, photos, movie etc.), sonic (music, silence, noise), through a philosophical and ethnographical elaboration of another classic concept: the *montage*.

Now, let me stress montage as a performing method - not only external - internal to any frame (see, Mann: 2003, Benjamin: 1982, Bateson: 1958). In a symphony, different instruments are playing all together (or partially separated). One can appreciate the melodic individuality of a single violin, the separated orchestra as a group and the music as a contrastive whole. It is possible to apply an *ethnographic composition* through different narratives, fictions or essays *fluxes*: an ethnographic composition of separated and connected instruments, which proposes a *divergent symmetry* between performative composition and research experiences. This polyphonic and ubiquitous composition is emerging from the context and the method, crossing communicational metropolis and digital cultures.

This ethnographic research may be connected and composed through visual or performative arts, urban or "native" visions and behaviors, transurban movements, elaborating a processual montage of *mutant opus* emerging from the meta-fetishistic and metamorphic panoramas of *body-corpse*. The shifting border between human being and things, subjects and objects, bodies or commodities - live and dead. *Facticity* - in the Adorno's sense - is a transit between objects, things, commodities ... and pixel (Canevacci:2007).

Following Thomas Mann as an innovative anthropologist: "Talking about myself, my desire to clarify is the method of montage (...). It is strange: my relations with music are quiet famous, I always know how to make of literature a sort of musical composition, I feel myself as a half-musician, I had transferred inside romance the musical textual technique" (2003:13-15). And so it will be for ethnography composition, stressing the internal montage as important as the external one and the ubiquity as a material/immaterial simultaneity. D.A.R.

## 2. Simultaneity, chronotopos, ubiquity

I would like to reanalyze the concept of *simultaneity* elaborated by Italian Futurists at the beginning of the XX century and its connection with a disturbing vision of transurban performance. This vanguard was involved with perturbative sensorialities determined by the metropolitan context. Futurists fell in love with these uncanny techno-sensorialities beyond any nostalgia for the past. From such a chaotic traffic, the Marinetti's concept of *simultaneity* (1921) was emerging and unifying artistic or popular differences on styles and behavior. A car, a human being or a dog were in the same time in different spaces; a Painter, an Architect, a Poet or a Musician had to approach *perturbative* dissonance through simultaneity in order to transform it in Art. At the beginning of that century, a historical subject was emerging together with the changing patterns of transurban experiences: a subject-performer inspired and fascinated by the disorienting *fluxes* of bodies, communication, and technology along those fragmented metropolitan contexts.

The Futurists were theorizing *simultaneity* and applying it on Visual Arts (painting, sculpture, architecture) and on the Performing Arts, in which poetry, music, stories were presented just *simultaneously* at public events. Concerning these conceptual choices, futurists

were the first vanguard that loved metropolis as opposed to the countryside nostalgia and to the moon glow tedium: on the contrary, simultaneities were emerging from urban landscape dissonance, multiple images co-presence, desires for *bodyscape* extensions, passions for mechanical noise. The metropolitan experience were mixing machines and bodies. In my point of view, simultaneity represents only the ubiquity “material side”. Its pervasive behavior in the everyday life is influenced by the rising cinema, in which the montage was a radical visual innovation while expressed through an optical contiguity among autonomous narrative segments. For the futurists, simultaneity is an aesthetic experience of fragmented codes floating between metropolis and technology; it is the expressive pulse towards assembled images or liberated words (Marinetti’s *parolibere*, phrases without any *consecutio*) being possible thanks to a simultaneous subject: the *futuristic subjectivity*. Those artists were trained to look at the space extended flexibility into the mobile time observed along multi-sensorial urban panoramas. Such training is a poetical initiation towards a future *simultaneous* to the present while being indifferent to the past. Iconic/sonic movements are emerging on the road, crossing the atelier window and then located on the painter canvas or on a musician score. *Simultaneously...*

There are contiguities and differences between *simultaneity* and *ubiquity*. The last concept has a long symbolic history as well as a theological meaning when touching an “ubiquitous God”. Yet I would like to stress how digital culture has been empirically modifying such kind of notion from an ethnographic point of view - an ethnography applied to digital cultures has to modify concepts, paradigms, fieldworks, methodologies and writing. *Ubiquity* is a *diasporic concept* beyond any mono-discipline and any self-oriented division of knowledge (university, department, faculty). Ubiquity is a *sensorial concept* applied to expanded individual experiences along digital cultures, artistic styles, expressive behaviors. If the web experiences are *ubiquitous*, then communicational *ubiquities* are characterizing the internet space-time relationship and the performative “everyday life” as a meta-communicational context: the context of the context.

One other difference between simultaneity and ubiquity is connected to territory. The sensorial experience of simultaneity is related to the specific territory of the urban space as a chaotic and creative context. The sensorial experiences of ubiquity are contemporaneously material and immaterial; in my compositive project, they are *material-immaterial* as digital cultures are blowing through the symbolic hyphen.

*Ubiquity is beyond any dualism of space and time male and female, material and immaterial, nature and culture, labor and work, body and soul. Ubiquity is the ontology of the sacred spreading out in the air of pixel.*

In my interpretation, ubiquity is connected with *visual fetishisms* (a different version of traditional fetishism which comes beyond religions, reifications, and perversions). *Meta-fetishism* is the immanence of the sacred and the uncanny in a subject and object mix, thing and body, commodity and corpse, skin and screen. Ubiquity is an ungovernable *body-corpse*, a constant transition between living body and dead corpse; in Adorno’s sense, ubiquity is *incomprehensible*: it cannot be “comprehended” - i.e., grasped, cached, fixed - into the identity principle of logics. Ubiquity is imagination mixed to technology: an ubiquitous doll embodied by Rilke’s *ding-seele* (*thing-soul* in his poem (1999)). Ubiquities are connecting the transurban experiences with the multi-sensorialities of digital cultures: from its mutant interiorities, the odd concept of *multividual* is spreading out. It is worth noting that “individual” is a Latin

translation of the Greek term for *atomon*, the indivisible; now the *in-* prefix may be replaced by *multi-* in order to express the multitude of *egos* ("eus" or "ii") inside the same subject.

From an ethnography oriented in these floating-and-fragmented digital panoramic cultures, the *ubiquitous multividual self-representation* is mixing *observer* and *observed*, *emic* and *etic*, *researcher* and *researched*. In the expression process of my research and from such metamorphic fetishisms emerges the concept *Digital Auratic Reproducibility (DAR)*. The as friendly as hardly contrast between Adorno and Benjamin - on technologies, revolution, reification, aesthetics - shall be faced by the following empirical and theoretical statement: performing arts, expanded design, digital communication or decentralized subjects are morphing the *aura* into *reproducibility* and vice versa. *Meta-fetishisms* and *meta-morphing* are doing the immanent body-corpse connection through synth-ethic biology in the bio-art perspectives (Hauser: 2005).

*DAR*: This concept of ubiquity - connecting digital fieldwork and diasporic ethnography - has been moving between different disciplines aiming in elaborating contextual methodologies of research and innovative styles of composition. It seems to me that the immanent concept of ubiquity - unrest even in front of itself - is disseminating in a web *modus operandis* as it has been experiencing expanded design. The web is ubiquitous and ubiquity is going to portray multividual subjectivities at the same time that it mixes internet space-time relationships and, obviously, social network.

There are affinities and differences between the Michail Bakhtin concept of *chronotopos* (an original physical word treating a space-time mix) and *ubiquity*. If polyphony manifests different instruments or voices simultaneous presence, regulated in western culture by harmony, Bakhtin transformed the polyphony-chronotopos relationship in a methodological interpretation upon nineteenth-century romance. Polyphony had approached a form of writing in which spacetime presents a connective dynamic (chronotopos), and where the hero was not only the center of the novel, but also the projective personality of the author, while all the other characters were linguistic and psychological peripheries (*monologism*). Following Bakhtin, only with Dostojewski the hero becomes no longer a monological projection of the author, but each character develops its own linguistic and psychological autonomy. Dostojewski brought decentralized styles for each person - everyone with discursive and psychological autonomy; so, "the hero and the author" were presenting a polyphonic narrative pattern, by Dostojewski, created in order to multiply characters and styles of representation (1988).

If chronotopos and polyphony are the prerequisite for the decentralized development of literature, in which any subjectivity have his/her psycho-linguistic autonomy within their irreducible individualities, the same methodological perspective should be applied in the anthropological research. For this reason, Bakhtin's polyphonic chronotopos has influenced a significant part of Anthropologists researchers. For me, it is possible to say the same about Pessoa's concept of *heteronomy*, whose vision should have an even more significant ethnographic perspective, as it decentralizes not only the "heroes" narrative identities, but also the unquiet subjectivity of the author (*desassossego*), who assumes different names and styles for writing and feeling.

Now, I would like to connect Marinetti's simultaneity, Bakhtin's polyphony, Pessoa's heteronomy to the meaning of digital ubiquity moving beyond the futuristic materiality, the

plurality of Dostojewski characters or of the writer identity. Perhaps the philosophical or theological version for *ubiquity* derives from its traditional meaning the one that refers to the abstract concept or invisible being. *Ubiquity is the ontology of the sacred*. It is a tension beyond any dualistic distinction on human logics and also beyond the institution of religion - both interested in the orthodox control of theory and behavior.

Ubiquity is not the result of an empirical experience along urban life as simultaneity or literary writing as chronotopos or heteronomy; on the contrary, it belongs to a visionary perception that come to affirm the transitory condition of human beings as constantly observable from the divine glance, from which it is nowhere impossible to escape, as this ubiquitous divinity reaches everyone everywhere. *Ubiquity is material/immaterial in his sensorial and logic immanence*. It is one of the first concepts that expresses tension beyond dualism, as well as beyond human condition. It is simplified by binary oppositions, whose undoubted practical function is still the domain of traditional alliance between *ratio* and *realism*. *Ubiquity is incomprehensible, uncontrollable, undetermined*. It is outside of political control, mono-logical rationality, linear space-temporal determination, fixed identity.

*Ubiquity is the potential imagination linked to sensorial technology.*

Recently, a new vision of ethnography has been developed showing affinity to what precedes. Cultural exchanges between different cultures, which in the past have been seen as dissolution of "native" *tristes* tropical cultures, has been constantly growing according to the continuous remixing by syncretisms more than homologation by "entropic" dissolution. The ethnographer is not only a trained anthropologist who applies some established procedures. Having said that, the *field* has been expanded into diasporic simultaneity, digital polyphony, multividual heteronomy, a field always further connected to the material/immaterial ubiquity. The ubiquitous ethnography requires to be penetrated and specified. My researcher identity do not remain identical to myself while in different contexts, but it performs simultaneously diagonal relations and methodologies within different *glocal* areas - less geographically characterized and more subjectively involved. Identities are more flexible and mutant, plural and unstable, relating in the same frame to different entities or contexts: ubiquitous identities. The eye is now trained to decode discordant or differentiated coexisting symbols (written, visual, musical, mixed codes) and to interact according to different modalities. The ethnographer glance is practiced - more than participant observation - as an observing observation into the screen, through his/her *eyesfull body*.

Space-time coordinates tend to become superfluous or better in a continuous movement. A subjective multividuality based on the ubiquitous experience is expanding. Even researchers are placed under ubiquity, immersed in their personal experience in relation with the others. Yet, these *others* are ubiquitous, in the sense that they are living where and once their digital system is activated. This experience doesn't mean a dematerialization of interpersonal relationships; it attests a complex network (or *geophilia*) of optical connections and body-corpse imaginations which moves the immobility of any subject. The psychological implications are obvious, it would require a specific research and, initially, also a self-search by the subject-ethnographer who experiences this accelerated uneasiness. The *multividual* concept manifests him/herself in those ubiquitous connections. Ethnography is a pattern which connects fragments of space/time without a specified identification or, better, multiplying temporary identities. *The multividual is the subjective experience of an ubiquitous ethnography.*

An *internal montage* shows this condition. While the traditional external montage joined fragments of stories logically or spatially separated, the internal one – helped by digital morphing and anticipated by analogical *collage* – multiplies the coexisting images for each frame. *Internal montage expands the optical perception of simultaneity, the narrative polyphonies of chronotopos, and the heteronomy experience of ubiquity.* The internal montage incorporates the ubiquity along the pixel air atmosphere and towards a multi-sequential composition beyond the monological ethnographic writing.

The Anglo-Iraqi Architect Zaha Hadid is an ubiquitous philosopher who invents present/future scenarios. It is necessary to interrogate her works, to observe them and to dialogue with every detail expressed by her post-Euclidian forms, to read her interviews or statements about a different rationality and optical sensitivity emerging from her works. I take as an example her project «Performing Arts Center on Saadiyat Island” (Abu Dhabi): the structure becomes a flexible theatre mutant as a performance, an archi-performatica: «an emerging sculptural form from the linear intersection of pedestrian paths within the cultural district, gradually developing into a growing organism that sprouts to subsequent network of branches” (www. Performing Arts Center Abu Dhabi).

Human routes are producing an emotional design by imaginary walking transfigured into organic network intersections, in a *body-corpse* mixing alive and dead, bodies and things, organic and inorganic: “As it winds through the site, the architecture increases in complexity, building up height and depth and achieving multiple summits in the body housing performance spaces, which spring from the structure like fruits on a vine and face westward, toward the water”. The space becomes performative, the wind which crosses the site attracts similar looks, an eyesfull body is listening to the multiplicity of sounds. "The concert hall is above the lower four theatres, allowing daylight into its interior and dramatic views of the sea and city skyline from the huge window behind the stage. Local lobbies for each theatre are orientated towards the sea to give each visitor a constant visual contact with their surroundings”. I suggest to read again the unforgettable notes described by Nietzsche evocating the architectural philosophy of a Greek theater, in which the subject who assists the tragedy feels every sensoriality expanded towards the astonishing cosmic landscape around. An ubiquitous ethnographer should direct a sensitive attention for this woman who is a constructivist philosopher; her architectural visionary glances are anticipating the processes of displaced transurban sensorialities. She is a contemporary philosopher who reveals the present-future, before and better the classical academic authors usually quoted. Philosophy is outside philosophy; as well as anthropology is outside contemporary anthropology. *That’s why ubiquity – crossing and mixing disciplines, knowledges, spaces/times – is an ethnographic experience.*

### **3. Auratic serialities: Benjamin/Adorno and Warhol**

Here I’ll provoke an ubiquitous encounter between Bateson’s cybernetic anticipations and Benjamin’s reproducible reflections on these polyphonic scenarios. The incomparable cities *storyteller* developed a methodological affinity with the ecology of mind maestro.

As known, Benjamin elaborates a famous essay on technical reproducibility in dialectical conflict with the “aura”, so political art by popular classes is a challenge against the aristocratic-bourgeois class structure as well as fascist communication aesthetisation. As technology is a constitutive part of arts, cinema, photography and the emerging visual arts –

by becoming reproducible – it can inspire a revolutionary turning point in the diffusion of their products.

Subsequently, and with an entirely independent itinerary, the art of Andy Warhol addresses *seriality* in a way akin to Benjamin's *reproducibility* and different from Adorno's *massification*. There was political and theoretical tensions between these two Frankfurt School friends: Adorno responded to Benjamin's essay laying on art reproducibility with a book about the reification of listening. He presents a scenario in which massified technologies – rather than liberation under the banner of reproducibility – would increase mass reification and authoritarian personality. These divergent point of views regarding technology and culture could never be resolved between the two of them and perhaps will never be by none of their followers. My hypothesis is that the ubiquitous digital communication may face and transform their opposition – based on the Hegel-Marx dialectics – through another vision of thought beyond synthesis, dichotomies, and also beyond any dialectics.

Ignoring that method, Warhol operates not in synthesizing, but in *syncretizing* the two friends *in pop seriality*. Doing so, he dissolves the dialectic contradiction on reproducible or massification. His art expresses a sensual fetishism through a commodification of mass icons and through the dissemination of their empty symbolisms inside *impure signs*. Assimilating Mao, Marilyn and Campbell, he ambiguously excites and intoxicates their political, sexualized, commercialized global power. After him, the dialectics between auratic or massified arts have no sense. Pop art penetrates the serial body of goods, selects the most diffuse mass media icons, dislocates empty commodities and symbol through the expansion of serial-reproducible-massified icons. Paradoxally, Warhol – as an ironic-erotic-iconic neo-dandy – unifies Adorno and Benjamin. He crosses the XIX century flaneur parisien and XX century newyorker dandy; he creates the analogical reproducibility of auratic serialities.

*Reproducibility, massification, and serialization* are intertwined, flowing and conflicting together. In the same time, Warhol is conditioned by mass culture from which he depends: pop art does not exist without analogical mass media. The actual scenario is quiet different: digital technology expands communication in a decentred and autonomous potentiality inside the traditional media and even more outside of them. Internet subtracts the initial *mass* from the traditional media, beyond massified, reproducible or serializable media: the web affirms “a media”, *one singular-plural media* that incorporates a series of operationalities, previously differentiated and now unified in a single instrument. This singular-plural media is helping a *multividual subjectivity* connecting experiential logics, emotional researches, and compositional results. Perhaps the same concept of media is obsolete.

Going further, the concept of *Fake* – presenting another meaning in a classic movie – is now emerging from the air of pixels where generalist mass media are dissolving: *fake* doesn't mean false (not-true) anymore, but rather is exploring meanings beyond the true-false dualist opposition. If art can really escape from this dialectical trap, it will be through digital arts which are multiplying such fake powers. Orson Welles presents this dissolution in one of his last films – *F for Fake* (1974) – where the prospects of an auratically reproducible *fake-being* is expanding uncanny cultures as well as and fluid identities beyond the true-false dichotomy<sup>1</sup>. Such a fake-scenario is irresistibly growing from the body-corpse of digital cultures: *D.A.R.*

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<sup>1</sup> I tried to applied this concept – *Fake-in-China* – in contemporary Chinese cultures and communication (Canevacci:2011)

Now, some interweaves of digital arts and visual communication offer inedited perspectives. A transitive generation of artists, designers, architects, musicians and *pirates* are shaping performative works of arts initially inside the mass media's core (the so called *avant pop*, see McCaffery, 1995) and now in a very indy way. Therefore, instead of dialectic opposition between aura and reproducibility, the digital articulations mix these perspectives that, instead of dichotomic, became syncretistic, polyphonic, and diasporic. A *reproducible auratic communication* emerges from digital cultures *beyond* the dualism of analogical technologies (and philosophies). A musical, a novel or an artistic piece connected to a social network can remain in its "auratic" expressive autonomy as well as can be available for endless mutations and decentralized reproducibility. Instead of collective art, there are *connective artists*. For this reason, the *copyright* crisis is becoming a political-economic, cultural-communicational, legal-technological conflict that characterizes the contemporary political condition.

In this sense, the itineraries from cultural industry – discussed with anticipated passion by Benjamin and Adorno – to digital communication will encourage an unsuspected tendency for my hypothesis: *the digital culture crosses and mixes auratic aesthetics and technical reproducibility*.

Instead of an oppositional dualism between bourgeois aura and working class reproducibility (between reification and identification), the digital syncretizes reproducibility and aura. This *reproducible aura* – which is an aporia for dialectical thinking – expresses liberationist manifestations for a digital communication in which the ethnographical method is challenged by performative compositions. In fact, this decentralized mix of horizontal technologies and diasporic subjectivity makes any visual product consumable anywhere and potentially modifiable by everyone.

*Digital communication is irreproducible and reproducible at the same spacetime. DAR is ubiquitous*

This transit dissolves the ties with the social classes structure that Benjamin still identified with objectivity: form one side, bourgeois-aristocratic and worker-proletarian from the other. That aesthetic modern solidification of the concept of *aura* – the usability of the work of art in a given time and context (the *hic et nunc*) – is now offered along the digital innovations for the experience of every ubiquitous artist or glocal teenager.

#### **4. Ubiquitous case studies: Björk, FakePress, Transurbanism**

Now I'll present some case studies emerging from different artistic areas in order to introduce an initial ethnographic research on empirical DAR experiments.

##### **4.1 Björk**

She creates musical and visual compositions. She is a songwriter, a composer and an artist. "It will be a fantastic century", says Björk – "We are lucky to live at the beginning of a humanistic revolution and unification with nature thanks to technologies". Her last artistic work – *Biophilia* – more than an album is a space full of experiences In-App. Ten songs via iPhone and iPad, elaborated by an Apple tablet and influenced by experience design, will help any person to create a new version of the trace: this platform allows to explore the physical forces of nature in a tridimensional interconnectivity, from the atom to cosmos.

Musicians are playing computer and an iPad is checking the *sharpsichord*, an instrument invented by Björk, half carillon and half harp. The *Guardian* wrote that *Biophilia* is equivalent to the Opera or Cinema invention. For me, it is an excellent example of DAR productive application. This *opus* is an applied philosophy.

#### 4.2 FakePress

*FakePress* is an experimental group that is exploring and introducing *Augmented Reality* themes, describing the approaches used in the creation of digital layers of information, expression and communication which are seamlessly integrated with the physical world and which allow for independent, free, autonomous representation and enactment of our points of view on reality. They are exploring the multiple definitions which can be given to the concept of *Augmented Reality*, starting from the more philosophical and ethnographic ones and arriving to the ones which are more oriented to art, business, activism, marketing and communication. The idea of being able to create additional layers of accessible information stratified on top of our ordinary reality, expressing multiple points of view and approaches to the world, became clear and suggested scenarios and ideas.



Fig. 2. REFF

They presented a “complete software kit that has been used in the following parts of the workshop, including tools dedicated to the creation of AR applications for mobile devices and the development frameworks that allow for the creation of ubiquitously accessible content. The workshop’s objective was to understand the *possibilities* offered by *ubiquitous publishing* techniques and methodologies and to *produce an end-to-end project* that would have been published at the end of the workshop. Thus, we introduced the project to be developed: an *Augmented Reality Movie*. We introduced the idea of being able to create a new kind of cinematographic experience. Classic Cinema proposes a linear storyline (even in those cases in which directors and screenwriters experiment, as in movies such as *Memento* or *Inception*, the experience offered by Cinema is a linear one) which is the product of a single point of view: the movie camera is a single eye onto a time/space using characters, locations and events to propose a single perspective”.

Following this connective group, their idea of an *Augmented Reality Movie* proposes a model which is radically different from this. “In an AR movie the storyline unfolds in non-linear ways, across a series of different points of view, in a time dis-continuum which can include synchronicity, atemporality, and simultaneity”. The *Augmented Context* can be imagined under a variety of forms:

“People are imagined to use Smartphone, stickers with QRcodes disseminated in the architectural space, urban furniture and signage providing information and instructions on how to access the AR content, stenciled QRcodes, sounds, signs, billboards and anything that can be imagined as placed in the physical space to offer information and awareness about the presence of the augmented content. In the same spacetime and through a *MACME platform*, realtime information (coming from databases and/or social networks) and instructions on the access and usage of the mobile app needed to access the AR Experience, opportunities for interaction, allowing people to comment and describe their experience and to interconnect with other previous visitors” (FakePress Publishing)

In their work, *MACME* allows using a WordPress CMS creating cross medial content, including text, video, sounds, and social media, and to automatically generate it in versions which are suitable for printing, attaching, packaging, putting on stickers, t-shirts and any objects or location onto which a QRcode can be attached.

In a few words, **DAR** is a practical experience of copy-left political and aesthetical subjects that are subverting the traditional way to project, realize, communicate, consume. “Multiple subjects provide their own point of view on the story/subject/plot of the AR Movie. To do this they produce content designed to be placed in space using some form of AR Content Management System (CMS)”. This scenario opens up an incredible amount of opportunities for ethnographic investigation and discussion. Among these are a multiplicity of points of view is creating a narrative which is not intended for sequential, linear viewing, and which is enacted each time in a different way according to how the viewer traverses space, and so this narrative is involving a no-ending number of points of views. Their fundamental idea is not the reproduction of a linear narrative structure, but a new form of expression involving spatially disseminated elements of expression, knowledge, information and interactivity, they call it “*emergent environmental narrative*”.

*Digital is auratically reproducible.*

### 4.3 Transurbanism

The transformation of the industrial city into an ubiquitous metropolis is the context within which it is necessary to set the ethnographic gaze. The digital culture experiences applied on web sites, design, architecture, music, fashion, advertising; the end of fixed work and the affirmation of fluid identities; the performative subjectivities on consumption and aesthetics; the diasporic individualities crossing and mixing places, spaces, interstices; the hybridization processes changing *glocal* fragments; the political acceleration of visual communication: all these qualitative indicators are spreading the melting and dissonant transition toward the *ubiquitous metropolis*.

This metropolis *dissolves society* with its dualistic dialectic and the centrality of industrialist work; it *crushes culture* in its homogeneous sense into syncretistic fluid mixtures; it *dilates communication*, which melts “all that is solid” in the *pixel air*. Instead of using inadequate terminology (post-modern above all), the most interesting explorations between anthropology and architecture identify the ubiquitous context where bodies and spaces are mixed in a *transurbanism* process (Koohlaas: 2001, Mulder: 2002). This transformation is based on the already perturbative and now normalized body-corpse panoramas along metropolitan areas and on the possibilities for a new subject (“multividual”) to transit into

interstices, producing transitive metropolises and ubiquitous identities. The ubiquitous metropolis is *materialimmaterial*.

The links between digital technologies and body-corpse styles release *diasporic identities, technological syncretisms, dissonant soundscape, visual imaginations, iconic oralities*. This pulsing metropolis shuffles public-private, nature-culture, organic-inorganic, familiar-stranger in addition to binary simplifications, philosophic-religious universalisms, anthropologic structuralisms, and interpretative neutralism. In transurban processual practices, the change – the *transit* – transforms the city into an ubiquitous metropolis. Industrial production is not the economic-political center that frames civil society: the *culture-consumption-communication* triptych dissolves the traditional concept of society, fluidifies territories, marriages, works, genders, generations, ethnicity.

*Trans-urbanism* alters the conditions of classical geometrical perspective. Hence the ethnographic glance desires every detail and the *body-corpse/location* dialogical relationship is the privileged indicator: the *polyphonic methodologies* is looking for empirical attractors transiting between panoramic bodies and places-spaces-interstices. For an anthropology of metropolis, the empirical research flows beyond Euclidean forms and toward an expanded design, connecting advertising, soundscape, body-corpse, fashion&styles, street arts, digital skin-screen.

In my hypothesis, the identities are constructed, modified, and pluralized within this connective process, where the links between body and metropolis delineate potential post-human affinities. Transurban ethnography is a training to observe and be observed, to apply a *be-seen* method as an *eyesfull body*<sup>2</sup>; it puts focus on *attractors*, as qualitative indicators of visual codes with a high fetishist value that absorb the attention and *fix* the gaze in a challenge to *decipher* the proliferation of mini-symbols, a semi-uncanny charade; it moves the fieldwork from the center/peripheries dialectics to ubiquitous interstices, where *non-minority minorities* are going to anticipate styles and behaviors that are becoming “temporary majorities” in their respective cultural contexts.

Here I selected a final transurban focus of my empirical research where the keyword is the ubiquity glance. My aim is to connect the architects Herzog&De Meuron - who are changing the experience for a performative metropolis - to the industrial music group Throbbing Gristle, who anticipated such kind of ubiquitous experiences inside the interstices of the emerging communicational metropolis. So, my excursus selects three locations in London as empirical indicators of the process from disused industrial areas to the pulsing ubiquitous metropolis.

This first image is a dislocated classic factory, which industrial architecture configures the control of the people working there. It frames spaces and humans to determine times and methods, bodies and wages. This *flyer* anticipated the post-industrial phase and was designed by musicians that *felt* the times-are-in-a-changing before politicians or social scientists. Since the beginning of the 1980's, a fragment of British punk - *Throbbing Gristle* - selected the dead factory as the compositive space for *industrial* music. Their dissonant

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<sup>2</sup> The English translation of my expression “farsi vedere” is difficult: I mean the process of an *optical methodology*, training an ethnographic way to look transforming the whole body of a person “into a gaze”, the making of him/her-self a body-eye, a re-flexive gaze.

ethnographic soundscape presents a challenge for any fixed identity or discipline - and a creative process for ubiquitous displacements. Work tools and sites are transformed into musical instruments and panoramas. Dissonant acoustic sensorialities were emerging from these Tayloristic experiences with sonic noise for eXtreme subjectivity. Multisensorial soundscapes incorporated atypical spaces and instruments; a pulsing body *felt* through dissonant beauty of flaky walls, dusty floors, abandoned machines. Industrial work was no longer the political center that gave meaning to everything else and became industrial sound. Performatic instances embodied by restless subjectivities were moving toward an *activism* that invaded the locations of "working time" transformed in "interstices of desire".

In the second image, the *dead factory* located in the center of London is gentrified and becomes the *Tate Modern*, one of the most significant space for contemporary art. *Tate Modern* leads the metamorphosis from the industrial city to the communicational metropolis, thanks to its opens spaces where works of arts become performances and consumption. The *Tate* does not have windows like factory or shopping center: all the observations must be addressed within and not outside. Looking at the photo, it can be noted that the architectural structure is a classical industrialist design, which geometrical perspective was framing the workers inside and the citizens outside. The affinity between architecture and subjectivity is perceivable: the factory requires a fixed, repetitive, homogeneous identity and so it constructs the workers identity.

*Tate1* is already insufficient, thus the same architects - Herzog&De Meuron - have designed the *Tate2*: an ubiquitous architectural choices attesting the transition from the industrial era to the communicational metropolis.

By observing the project *Tate2*, the transitive process is activated and the various *post* (- industrial or -modern) become obsolete: an *ubiquitous being* - a syncretic and polyphonic, meta-morphic and meta-fetishist "building" - expands irregular, diagonal, dissonant facets. Every floor is different from any others both in a horizontal synchrony and in a vertical diachrony, every partial identity is diversified and contiguous, this montage of fragmented and transitive identities configures a musical composition, a score to be listened and expanded in any level. Another geometry is emerging *beyond* the Euclidean one - and also beyond the industrialist society or the worker identity. Perhaps the concept of *opus* or *opera* can designate such a mutant sensitive experience - more than work or labor - as the creation of the artifices/ architect subject. Such a "being" is favoring the desire for self-expression in any visitor who is experimenting the extension of diagonal conceptual spacetimes and digital techno-syncretisms. So the subject-visitor identity is challenged toward an astonished multi-faceted identity: a dialogical score between multiple "beings" - architecture and visitor beings - is manifesting an irreducible composition to the classical geometrical politics. Digital is not just technology: it is a logical-expressive potentiality that induces flows of fragmented subjectivity to emerge, disperse, montage in fluxes of pixel air.

Identities centralize the geometrical process toward trans-urbanism as a communicational conflict. The concept of identity was founded on precise and fixed roots: an identity connected for all the life through to a steady job, indissoluble marriage, familiar country, dualistic sexuality, a well-defined generation. Work-love-country-aging define one identity within an unmovable frame. Now all of this is diluted in constant changing identities that is favoring the possibility to live multiplicities of work, sexual, spatial, generational statuses.

The *multividual* is a communicational subject that lives together with unquiet montage of *egos* in conflict with traditional psycho-political schemes.

Tate2 is an auratic-reproducible multividual, similar to the fluctuating identities of transurban subjects: both are producing a compositive metropolis among ubiquitous spaces.

The sequence of these three architectural beings is changing the relationships between politics and party, work and desire, communication and society, writing and languages. The industrialist frontal perspective of the *Tate1* is a symptom of a social science locked in an empty factory together with as the Fordist “scientific” methodology developed from its body. Oblique, diagonal, unquiet multi-perspectives are emerging weaving simultaneous assemblies of asymmetric codes. Architectural and human subjectivities are dialoguing through dissonant polyphonies. From these ubiquitous flows, noises and landscapes, aesthetics and styles, performance and design can be experimented in ethnographic compositions based on sensorial concepts.

Tate2 is an ubiquitous being and every floor is a dissonant montage of co-present multilevel identities.



Fig. 3. Flyer - Tate Modern 1 - Tate Modern 2

*Digital cultures performs an auratic reproducibility.*

This *auratic-reproducible montage* is an indicator for interpreting the cultural changes in contemporary arts and styles. It favors a paradigmatic shift with respect to the past. That's why, investigating this process, it is necessary to modify methods and narrative compositions. It delineates a transitive dimension of identities, cultures and subjectivities, where such emerging concepts – as digital syncretisms, visual fetishisms, diasporic self-representation, communicational metropolis - could be applied to such dissonant scenarios. An ubiquitous ethnography applied to sonic landscapes (*soundscape*), fashion body-corpse, expanded designers or post-Euclidean architects becomes necessary to experiment different compositional logics and multi-sensorial narrative components.

## 5. Schismogenesis and feedback: Bateson and Wiener

The history of digital culture is interwoven with anthropology. The reference is Gregory Bateson: in the interview done by Steward Brand together with Margaret Mead entitled *For the love of God, Margaret!* (2001), Gregory presents his choice to collaborate with Wiener in 1946,

extending anthropology to cybernetics since the beginning. So my question is why George Marcus, a Bateson's intense interpreter, did not write about Gregory's relationship with cybernetics, risking to reproduce the dichotomy between the so called *two cultures*. The reason lies in the indifference for *Writing Culture* scholars to the emerging digital cultures that were changing everyday experiences, global economies, and communicational languages.

Bateson developed the term *schismogenesis* in his initial ethnographic research (*Naven*): during interaction processes, there are self-correction mechanisms inside a culture in order to restrain conflictual relations and even disunions. For this concept, he was involved by Wiener to participate to his research group, because his *feedback* model (or retroaction that Wiener was developing) presented a complex affinity with schismogenetic self-correction cultural mechanisms. This connection between schismogenesis and feedback represents a challenge for complexity paradigm crossing sciences and cultures: an alliance that becomes even more significant for our hypothesis, as both Bateson and Wiener criticize those cyberneticists that isolate *input-output*. Says Bateson: "The essence of Wiener's cybernetics was that the science is the science of the whole circuit. (...) And you're not really concerned with an input-output, but with the events within the bigger circuit, and you are *part of* the bigger circuit. The engineer is outside the box and Wiener is inside the box...*I'm inside the box*" (2001:135).

For him, epistemic and ethnographic problems were unresolved by informatics who were projecting software and engineering processing outside of the "box". For an anthropological point of view, ethnographers *should* stay inside this metaphoric box as they are part of a reflective research that surrounds and connects every subject on the fieldwork. This statement introduces the actual reflections on self-representation and focalizes the connections of cyber-communication and web-ethnography as a basic fieldwork. There is an urgent desire and also an epistemic need to connect epistemology and ethnography, involving researchers in the flows of digital communication. An innovative alliance or, better, a reciprocal interpenetration may be produced between current informatics - often living in self-referential worlds like some anthropologists - in order to favor progressive solutions toward web models beyond the binary logic of current software. Another problem is how it is possible to dissolve the strict relation between authoritarian economic power and an horizontal web research, exploring multi-logical and multi-sensorial communicational processes.

Digital communication is crossing and mixing informatics and ethnography.

In this very specific way, von Foerster answers to a suggestion of Margaret Mead: "what we need now is a description of the 'describer'; or, in other words, we need a theory of the observer" (2001:152). That is what should still be put inside the box today: the ethnographic and informatics describers, both producing research *with* (and not *on*) all of the subjects involved in the process. The "description-of-the-describer" is an epistemic, communicational and political breakpoint that involves every researcher in an explorative compositional process. The task of changing the Internet arises from infusions between anthropology and cybernetics - between ethnography and the web: *the description of the describer*.

This initial self-corrective mechanisms of cybernetics is transiting into contemporary digital cultures and web communication; such a self-regulating transmission of informations along the circuits will favor a *digital auratic reproducibility*, beyond any classical dialectic: *D.A.R*

In his afterword of 1958, Bateson explain: "How to string together data is what I mean for interpretations" (1988:264). That's the reason why for George Marcus " *Naven* is one of the first experiment in modern ethnography (...). His common idea of text construction is to string together a set of separate essays dealing with different themes or interpretations of the same subject" (1988 :192). Also for the other co-editor of *Writing Culture*, James Clifford, *Naven* is a critical change: "The cuts and sutures of the research process are left visible ; there is no smoothing over or blending of the work's raw data into a homogeneous representation. To write ethnographies on the model of collage would be to avoid the portrayal of cultures as organic wholes or as unified, realistic worlds subject to a continuous explanatory discourse" (1988 :146).

I'll try to connect not only Bateson and Wiener, but also *Naven* and *Balinese Character*: an attempt to focus on the same ritual with different perspective and a textual montage of writing, filming, photographing. "No one has been photographed at the height of Gregory (...). I have never seen any book that even comes close to *Balinese Character*" (Mead, 2001:144). That's the point: the method as a montage was experimented before in the Balinese fieldwork and after in New York, where Bateson and Mead did the final composition through a documentary (*Trance and Drama in Bali*) and a book (*Balinese Character*) full of sequences of photos for any partial cultural trait. Such influent compositions involved experimental musicians, ethnographers, video-artists, filmmakers. In Bateson, ubiquity is a way of research and living, of writing and visualizing. His neo-animism is determined by a deep expansions between different being; his ecological mind was an expansion of the ego out of the border of a human skin, animal fur, bast of a tree, dust of earth. Bateson's ecology of mind represents an attempt of favor a continuous retroactive transit between human being, a forest of sequoia, a flying butterfly and a participant Leica.

Finally, I'll present another possible "strange connection" between Gregory Bateson, Thomas Mann and Walter Benjamin, based on the montage imperative. An epistemic transit between Bateson's neo-animist ecology, Benjamin's immanent metaphysic and T.Mann's aesthetical literature. In a letter from Pacific Palisade, Thomas Mann wrote to Adorno: "What I'm trying to explicit, commenting myself, is my method as montage, that is crossing all my book (*Doctor Faustus*, NdA) in a singular and quiet irritant way" (2003:13). It is a deep epistolary exchange between the two exiled men as well as between Benjamin in Paris and Adorno in California. In a note on *Passegen-Werk*, Benjamin wrote: "The method of this work: literary montage" (1982:595). The method as a montage is a possible philosophical key-word through which disciplines are crossed and become ubiquitous. *Simultaneity-Chronotopos-Ubiquity*, *Digital-Auratic-Reproducibility*, *Multividual Transurbanism*, *Method-as-Montage* are sensorial concepts through which my ethnographic composition is an attempt of transfiguring our fieldwork and the way of representing our research beyond the "writing culture" attempt.

Bateson scientific formation was totally different from these German authors, anyway his afterword, Mann's letter, Benjamin's note are offering ubiquitous methodologies expressed before, during and after the research: *how to assemble data - the method is the montage - literary montage*. So a stratified process of knowledge and composition is emerging through divergent points of analysis and expression. An ubiquitous ethnography may create a partial meta-montage and a dissonant interpenetration of Tomas Mann, Benjamin, Adorno,

Warhol, von Foster, Bateson, Wiener, Mead, Bakhtin, Zaha Hadid...and waiting for Herzog/DeMeuron performative Tate2, where an auratic reproducibility may be transfigured in an expanded sonic design.

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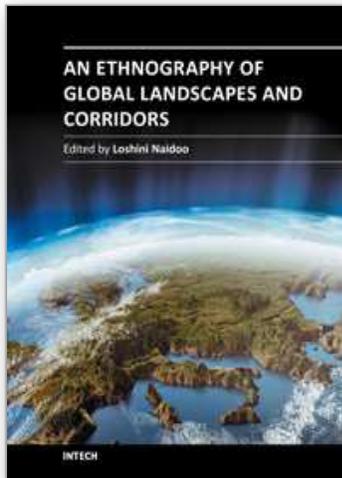
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## **An Ethnography of Global Landscapes and Corridors**

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The chapters presented in this book draw on ethnography as a methodology in a variety of disciplines, including education, management, design, marketing, ecology and scientific contexts, illustrating the value of a qualitative approach to research design. The chapters discuss the use of traditional ethnographic methods, such as immersion, observation and interview, as well as innovative ethnographical methods which have been influenced by the new digital culture. The latter challenges notions of identity, field and traditional culture such that people are able to represent themselves in the research process rather than be represented. New approaches to ethnography also examine the use and implication of images in representation as well as critically examining the role and impact of the researcher in the process.

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