

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE
FAKULTA HUMANITNÍCH STUDIÍ
Department of Electronic Culture and Semiotics
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Bc. Simona Noera

Fluxusná Praha :

The Visual Communication as a Driving Force in the Culture of Hybrid Flows.

(The Ecology of Mind Applied to the Visual Context of Prague City)

Fluxusná Praha: Vizuelní Komunikace jako Zatahující Jev v Kultuře Hybridních Toků

Diplomová práce

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Josef Fulka Ph.D.

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Prohlášení

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V Praze dne 16.Zari 2011

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Abstrakt

Tato výzkumní práce by se chtěla zabývat o jako Batesonovi ekologický model může být aplikovaní a rozšíření na vizuální komunikace, účel je vyvodit mechanismy a vztahy který učiní náš svět jako energický a mezipřipojení sít v současné kultuře, která spočívá ve vizuální komunikaci, a navrhnout teorie toků . Chtěla bych dělit práce na dvou části. Po úvodě, v první části (teoretická) budu se zaměřit na důležité pojmy mé práci (Identita, Sociální tělo, architektonicky městské tělo, vztahy, ne-prostor, vizuální komunikace, střih, fetišismus vizuální zboží, vizuální antropologie, zápletka) přes autory jak Bateson, Canevacci, Simmel, Benjamin, Bataille, Baudelaire, Augé a další. V druhé části mé práce (výzkumná) bych nejprv prezentovala metodologický volbu která v tohle případě je dialogického typu (Bachtin), totiž vyprávěcí a hlasový tok který přes techniky střihu bude vytvořit polyfonní vyprávění a s tím bude prokázat moji hypotéza. Toto vyprávění bude zavedení s monografickým případem dokumentárního filmu, s názvem "Fluxusná Praha". Půjde tak o audiovizuální uchopení fluxusních toků. Zvuková složka bude taky speciálně nahrávána a hudebně sestříhaná podle ražení obrazů. Téma se tedy staví proti starším etnocentrickým teoriím.

Klíčová slova

vizuální antropologie, vizuální komunikace, městské tělo, fluxus, vizuální zboží

Abstract

This experimental research rises from the need to demonstrate how Bateson's ecological model can be applied and expanded to visual communication. The purpose is to draw the relationships and mechanisms that create for us the world as an energetic vibrant and interconnected network in the contemporary culture, which is mainly based on visual communication, pursuing the goal of suggesting a theory for the metropolitan flows. This study is intended to be developed in two parts and has an anthropological - even if interdisciplinary - imprinting. The first part (narratively theoretical) will be focused on the main concepts of my research (creation of identity and avatars, social body, the city architectural body, relationships, non-lieux, visual communication, in-between, editing - mounting - *bricolage*, goods visual fetishism, visual anthropology, pattern) through authors the likes of Bateson, Canevacci, Simmel, Benjamin, Bataille, Baudelaire, Augé and more. The second part of this Prague city behave exploration will be evinced through the dialogic methodology (cf. Bakhtin), namely the narrative flow of voices that with the editing technique will create a polyphonic narration, proving my hypothesis. This narration will be strongly supported by the monographic documentary film, titled "Fluxusná Praha" (entirely produced by me). In this way, I will try to audiovisually understand and show these flows in their streaming. The audio component, too is specially recorded and soundly edited to match the polyphonic goal of this narration. The theme is therefore in opposition to the obsolete ethnocentric theories.

Key-words

Visual Anthropology, Visual Communication, City Body, fluxus, Visual Goods

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*I know Prague, my mummy,
deep in the heart, and yet
no poet described her to me.*

Reiner Maria Rilke, *King Bohusch*

PART ONE

Intro

Kublai Kan s'era accorto che le città di Marco Polo s'assomigliavano, come se il passaggio dall'una all'altra non implicasse un viaggio ma uno scambio di elementi. Adesso, da ogni città che Marco gli descriveva, la mente del Gran Kan partiva per suo conto, e smontata la città pezzo per pezzo, la ricostruiva in un altro modo, sostituendo ingredienti, spostandoli, invertendoli.¹

Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili*

0.0 Fluxusná Praha

Fluxusná Praha is a project that came to my mind first a couple of years ago while I was travelling through the yellow B metro line of Prague city. Since I'm living here in Prague (it's now four years), I have always felt this kind of appealing attraction for the behaviour of the movement in this city. I imagine these types of travel experiences as flows that spread both from people (with their relationships) and from the structure of the transportation itself. What I'm researching *here & now* is the narration of the forms and the colours that these flows

¹ *Kublai Khan had noticed that Marco Polo's cities resembled one another, as if the passage from one to another involved not a journey but a change of elements. Now, from each city Marco described to him, the Great Khan's mind set out on its own, and after dismantling the city piece by piece, he reconstructed it in other ways, substituting components, shifting them, inverting them.* (translated from the Italian by William Weaver)

draw, creating a connective pattern which in my opinion is the city and its life.

This experimental research rises from the need to demonstrate how Bateson's ecological model can be applied and expanded to visual communication. The purpose is to draw the relationships and mechanisms that create for us the world as an energetic vibrant and interconnected network in the contemporary culture, which is mainly based on visual communication, pursuing the goal of suggesting a theory for the metropolitan flows. This study is intended to be developed in two parts and has an anthropological - even if interdisciplinary - imprinting. The first part (narratively theoretical) will be focused on the main concepts of my research (creation of identity and avatars, social body, the city architectural body, relationships, non-lieux, visual communication, in-between, editing - mounting - *bricolage*, goods visual fetishism, visual anthropology, pattern) through authors the likes of Bateson, Canevacci, Simmel, Baudrillard, Benjamin, Bataille, Baudelaire, Augé and more. The second part of this Prague city behave exploration will be evinced through the dialogic methodology (cf. Bakhtin), namely the narrative flow of voices that with the editing technique will create a polyphonic narration, proving my hypothesis. This narration will be strongly supported by the monographic documentary film, titled "Fluxusná Praha" (entirely produced by me). In this way, I will try to audiovisually understand and show these flows in their streaming. The audio component, too is specially recorded and soundly edited to match the polyphonic goal of this narration. The theme is therefore in opposition to the obsolete ethnocentric theories. As I have already mentioned the main hypothesis is founded on how the Bateson's ecological model can be applied and extended to the visual communication. And the methodology I've chosen to prove this is the dialogic one. In the experimental research it is particularly important for the scientist to ask about which method is better to be used. Personally, I've chosen this because I've already used it in my previous research for the

bachelor's degree and I think this is the best one for visual culture experimental reports.

In Lévi-Strauss' opinion “the subject can be detected only between the here and the elsewhere”², in the narrative ethnographic loop, which implicates the same observer to be part of his own observation. His field of knowledge - that is totally a social thing - must be externally recorded and must turn on the unit that includes a subjective understanding of the researched object. The use of such a process in knowing the others, shows the three-dimensionality of social acts, and the body, too is divided between both the object and the subject. In such cases, the ethnographic object is subordinate to the subjective ability to project outwards those fragments of the self that can never be reduced. In the nowadays cosmopolitan reality it is worth to use a strategy that first of all refers to a specific historical time, and it must value the new scapes³. The aim is to research cultural and globalized processes with a more extended and transdisciplinary manner. The problem of the autorepresentation is a symptom that wants to overstep the understanding of interpretation. To transform the text into a research field, so that its subjectivity gains a polyphonic nature, it's not enough to suppose just the dialogue. The dialogic methodology is a protection between the text and the interpretation, that allows the multiplication of subjectivities inside the text. In the indicated research these narrations (which have much in common with citations and the power that spreads from their collage, cf W. Benjamin) are collected in an audiovisual way. And this audiovisual document will be then presented in the textual part of this study. It will

² H.K.Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, 1994 trans. H.K.Bhabha, *I luoghi della cultura*, 2001 p. 209

³ The *scapes* intended here are the five global flows presented by Appadurai. Thinking with scapes lets extend the discourse to panoramas and shows its liquid and irregular shape. These points of views are deeply perspective, and their cases are historical, linguistic and political encounters for different actors. Appadurai describes the following panoramas: ethnoscapas; mediascapas; technoscapas; finanscapas; ideoscapas. (ref. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*, Minnesota University Press, 1996 trans. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernità in polvere*, Meltemi, 2003 pp. 48-65)

be the character and the narration of my research. On Fluxusná Praha blog⁴ it is possible to find the record of the different phases that concern this project.

I decided to call this aspect of Prague as *Fluxusná*, developing a hybrid adjective combined in a moment of poetic licence by the commingling of the Latin word *fluxus* (from: fluō fluxī, fluxus, fluere which means *to flow, stream*), and the Czech suffix “ná”, literally *The Flowing Prague*. Also inspired by the *Fluxus* Dada movement which is connected with the intermedia concept that claims the inherent art related to the most common gestures, dealing with the trespassing of the creative act into the everyday life flow. In relation to this artistic dissemination, Fluxusná Praha project was also presented last year in Prague club *2.Patro* as an interactive installation that let the people manipulate the selected but raw sounds and video clips of the project just passing through it. A real-time video-editing with choral participation. Two beamers and reactive webcams where installed one facing the other in a small corridor with a small discoball in the middle to let the projected image be more streaked, and the people who where passing by this place were moving those audiovisual clips creating a meta-movement with their own movement. Most of them probably didn't even notice that.

⁴ <http://fluxusnapraha.blogspot.com/>

An ecological theory views society as an organic structure; it examines how parts of micro (little) and macro (big) social systems are related to each other and then attempts to explain the behaviour of the parts in terms of these relationships.

DeFleur, Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of Mass Communication*

0.2 The Ecology of Mind

“Every unit that presents functioning characteristics of attempts and errors, will be legitimately called a mental system”⁵. Positioning our point of view totally inside the visual flows, in order to make the perceiving subject and the perceived object cast into an only pattern, we refer to Gregory Bateson's concept of “ecology of mind”. A notion that is strictly connected to the human skill of contemporaneously decode many different messages. The mind doesn't belong just to the human being, but is part of the whole ecosystem. The most radical attempt to overpass the old dualisms between spirit and matter and to fuse the nature with culture. ⁶According to Bateson this truth is a great one and so it has to be criticised. The challenge is to transform his ecology into an anti-ecology of mind and media, which has to be empirically verified onto the contemporary communicative flows and must be experimented with innovative forms (technologies) of representation.

If complex systems are structured in parts and articulated in layers connected each others by different relationships, reality appears to us structured and organised by layers,

⁵ G.Bateson, *Steps to An Ecology of Mind*, Chandler, 1972 trans. G.Bateson, *Verso un'Ecologia della Mente*, Adelphi, 1989 p. 477

⁶ M.Canevacci, *Antropologia della Comunicazione Visuale*, Meltemi, 2001 p.42

interconnected parts of matter, where complexity is measured by singular unit levels of the collection that belongs to that level. In Bateson opinion, the mental life is not bounded by the epidermis, outside which are many different information channels that have to be considered, including the messages they are delivering, as part of the mental system every time they are pertinent.⁷ This means that the human being is connected on a mental level with the source of his own informations through a specific medium, therefore the connective structure expands the mind into the external channels where the information travels. In the contemporary world the connective pattern comes true with the reproducible visual communication, whose channels and messages are immanent in respect to the mind of the planetary individual. The media has hence realized a real connective pattern by penetrating the internal audience channels linking the informations by the dilated interior concept of mind, the media patterns that interface between human and computer are ecological.⁸ The term *reproducible* necessarily introduces also the cybernetic concept, which as Norbert Wiener states it has to be related with the computer reproduction of the human intelligence. From this point of view this approach is important regarding the relevance given to the communication phenomenons to explain the intelligence. The six criteria that Bateson proposes to verify the existence of a mental process, expand the traditional mind concept over the human fact and can help to understand the unmechanical senders and receivers in a communicative process.⁹ He lists them in *Mind and Nature* (1979) and again in *Angels Fear* (1987):

(1) *A mind is an aggregate of interacting parts or components.* (2) *The interaction between parts of mind is triggered by difference.* (3) *Mental process*

⁷ G.Bateson, *Steps to An Ecology of Mind*, Chandler, 1972 p.324

⁸ M.Canevacci, *Antropologia della Comunicazione Visuale*, Meltemi, 2001 p.44

⁹ U.Volli, *Il Libro della Comunicazione*, il Saggiatore, 1994, p. 112

*requires collateral energy. (4) Mental process requires circular (or more complex) chains of determination. (5) In mental process, the effects of difference are to be regarded as transforms (i.e., coded versions of events which preceded them). (6) The description and classification of these processes of transformation disclose a hierarchy of logical types immanent in the phenomena.*¹⁰

Why use this approach for the city? Because this object is protean and ductile matter in continuous evolution. There are parts and components interacting each other, they produce differences and we can clearly say that the city experience and the metropolis idea correspond to all these six criteria, as we are going to see in the next pages. It is the ideal field for the anthropological research, a neverending source of cultures created in the interstices / in-betweens of the metropolitan pattern. The work “Subway Layout”¹¹ by the French artist Stephane Kyles realized in Prague 2007, combines into a subway layout installation the photographic and visual media to play with the subway architecture. Filming the line from the beginning to the end, movement, memory and speed are the variables to be played by a machine, that records and extends moments that normally just slide behind us, pictures, images and fractions of visual portions that make the view context of our journeys with public transportation. Through this installation it is possible to navigate the space that we don't usually see, thanks to the filmscanning elaborated by the computer the image stops and focuses exactly on that particulars that we don't usually take care about. The point at issue is: what are these shapes framed in a stopped moment? Aren't they exactly that drawing made by the people movement that I'm trying to explain?

¹⁰ G.Bateson, M.C. Bateson, *Angels Fear*, Bantam, 1988, p.18

¹¹ <http://kyles.subnetworks.org/> <http://gallery.ciant.cz/index.php?lang=en&node=110&id=15>

*As our bodies morph into cyborgs, the buildings that house them are also transforming. Increasingly, telecommunication systems replace circulation systems, and the solvent of digital information decomposes traditional building types. One by one, the familiar forms vanish. Then the residue of recombinant fragments yields up mutants.*¹²

With this sentence Mitchell débuts his fourth chapter of *City of Bits* (1995) "Recombinant the architecture", talking about the inescapable progress of the digital city and the consequent abandoning of old architectural typologies. From galleries to virtual museums, from hospitals to telemedicine, from jails to electronic control programs, from banks to ATMs, from shopping centres to the e-commerce, down to the generic and invasive category of networking, the defeat of hardware against software looks now as much certain as systematically announced. We don't have to be insiders to understand that the Stock Exchanges are territories that take advantages from the de-materialization processes. The old trading floors, symbolic places that architecture has always underlined, seem obliged to give away to more and more virtual trading places, diluted among computer nets and terminals, which are able to manage, through powerful electronic computers, financial transactions that otherwise would be impossible.¹³

To find these interstices is the aim of the anthropological research, says Massimo Canevacci, reminding us that the map that we are going to elaborate is the drawing of a structure that can never be fixed, a continuous movement that lets find in its folds the interstices in which the relationship between map and territory is always uncertain and unpredictable, leaning to a

¹² William J. Mitchell, *City of Bits*, MIT Press, 1995 web version available here: http://www-mitpress.mit.edu/e-books/City_of_Bits/Recombinant_Architecture/index.html

¹³ W. J. Mitchell, *City of Bits, Space, Place and the Infobahn*, MIT Press, 1995 ref. "Facade-Interface"

relationship of coincidence where the interstitial bodyscape fits together with body and space. Moreover according to Canevacci, *this interstice is part of the metropolitan experience, especially meaningful for those subjects who create mutant zones through their trespassing with a panoramic body that somatizes codes which are not yet invisible, but that can still produce some meaning.*¹⁴ These liminal zones called interstices are the cradles of a new concept of metropolis, that refuses the traditional centre-periphery model and that instead offers new multiple scenarios for desiring gazes that want to see, staying among these fractures and bodies lets open desiring glimmers of *corpographies*.¹⁵

First, that the individual, whether from a physiological or a psychological point of view, is a single organized entity, such that all its "parts" or "aspects" are mutually modifiable and mutually interacting; and second, that a community is like-wise organized in this sense.
Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*

0.3 A connective pattern

Places of transaction like the public transportation is, indicate the basic concept of movement of the people in a city. The Prague case is particular especially because of its efficiency, it is difficult to find somebody who could complain about this service. Among the people I've recorded for Fluxusná Praha, nobody did. Prague tram system is also one of the hugest in all Europe. Most of the people in this city use the public transportation, count on it and set up their meetings according to the transportation timetable. Besides, the same Simmel

¹⁴ M.Canevacci, *Una stupita fatticità*, Costa&Nolan, 2007, p.21

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

affirms more than a century ago, that the metropolitan life needs all the activities and interactions integrated in a punctual manner inside a rigid and over individual temporary scheme. The effects he has identified in the metropolitan life like *punctuality, calculability, exactness* that the modern life imposes to us, are in a strict relationship with its *money economy and intellectual nature*. “*These traits must also colour the contents of life and favour the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign traits and impulses which aim at determining the mode of life from within, instead of receiving the general and precisely schematized form of life from without*”.¹⁶

Bateson introduces another concept connected to the ecological system. The *Connective Pattern* as an experimental pattern of the representation, through the interconnection of different disciplines they connect each other by abstractive processes. Abstractions that are possible through the collage or the polyphony, multiplying the different points of view. Also, with the introduction of the *double bind*, he presents a concept which is applicable to different communicative processes and so it can be applied to the goods and the media, therefore to the visual communication anthropology. The origin of this concept has to be found in Bateson's studies about schizophrenia. He supports the idea that most of the mental disturbs are due to the incapability of a person to recognize and interpret the meta communicative messages (that have as object the communicative relationship) that should tell the person what kind of message it is. To this, he adds the incapability to issue meta-communicative messages (the classical example is the familiar relationship). It is possible to grab the double bind model from the familiar dynamic and apply it to the visual communication. Indeed, the meta-communication emanated among the new languages is more and more complexly made of codes that dances on a pattern that connects them and the audience finds problems in

¹⁶ G.Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, 1903 trans. G.Simmel, *La Metropoli e La Vita dello Spirito*, Armando Editore, 2004, p. 41

decoding in a non conflictual manner the various codes spread by these languages. This new reception is also released for people who don't know how to decode the communicative power and the interaction of these different codes, can produce a double bind. At the end, the acculturation to this new reception produces an anti-ecology of the mind.¹⁷

*The human body and the city one have progressively increased the signs diffusion on their surfaces surfing on the developing of visual scapes. Among the body, the urban and the video territories sets an unquiet isomorphism and the progressive mutism of symbols comes with a hyperloquacity of signs.*¹⁸

In *Polyphonic City* (1993) Canevacci speaks about the video-scapes as the top module for the inter-subjective communication. The concentration of offers and products in the city context multiplies the signs opening new scenarios and architectural configurations, simultaneously living side by side, creating an urban collage of video-scapes and non-places. The double direction expansion of the city modifies its perception and the shape of the views. And an affinity with the non-places can be found, all of them develop experiences that are contiguous with the cinematographic set. The real product offered is communication and the urban audience undergoes the identifier charm.¹⁹ Overlapping layers constitute our hypermediated reality, the message itself constructs the city architecture with its visual-scape. So multiplying all these messages we can finally see the circulation of information declared by Bateson to justify the six criteria. The exposition of our own signs on our bodies in a public environment produces a maximal communicative inflation applying its own anthropology where everybody

¹⁷ M.Canevacci, *Antropologia della Comunicazione Visuale*, Meltemi, 2002 pp. 46-49

¹⁸ M.Canevacci, *La Città Polifonica*, SEAM, 1997 p.50

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

acquires the status of a new kind of *flaneur*, an expression of the self oriented to the others produced by the multiplication of identifiers signs and symbols, a polysemic melt in a phantasmal and virtual world that accentuates the capabilities to decode of the clients.²⁰

*The city is interpreted and moulded by the video-scapes.*²¹

Therefore, Canevacci selects as the three main territories that compose the city scape, the *urban*, the *body* and the *video* one. On the other side, another anthropologist who made the city as the main object of his research, Marc Augé, defines the non-places in opposition to the anthropological places. The anthropological place is a symbolic and concrete construction of the space that cannot realize all the problems and contradictions of the social life, to which anyway refer all the ones who are placed in specific place by it. Because anthropology means the anthropology of *Others* anthropology, the anthropological place is at the same time a principle of meaning to those that live in it and a principle of intelligibility for those who are observing. In Augé opinion the anthropological places own an *identity*, a *relationship* and a *historical* character. The land register, the living rules, the neighbourhoods, the public spaces correspond for every human being to a segment of possibilities, prescriptions and interdictions of which content is at the same time spacial and social. Being born means to be born in a place, to be assigned to a residency. The place of birth is constitutive of the individual identity. In general, the space device is what express the group identity (the origins of a group are often different but the place identity founds and unifies it) but at the same time it is what the group must defend against external and internal threats, because the identity language could save the meaning (Identity). In one place can coexist different and singular elements of which it is not possible to deny the reciprocal relationships and the shared identity that give the occupation of the same shared place. The rules that assign i.e. the place of a child in a

²⁰ *Ibid.* p.52

²¹ *Ibid.* p.56

community, position that child in a configuration of whole in which he shares with the others the inscription to the ground (Relationship). The place has necessarily a historical character from the moment in which the identity and the relationship are conjugated defining a minimal stability. It is as much historical as the people who live in it can recognize references that are not objects of knowledge. The anthropological place is historical for those who live in it because it escapes the history as science (Historical).²²

Also, according to Augé the anthropological place is geometrical. We can assume this fact from the three simple spacial shapes that can be applied to the different institutional devices that constitute the elementary shapes of the social space: *line, line intersection and intersection point*. Concretely, we can speak about itineraries, axes or paths that lead from a place to another and that were traced by men, crosses in which they meet and join, of centres that define spaces and boundaries over which other men define themselves in relationship to other centres and spaces. The non-places are a product of the supermodern society, unable to integrate in itself the historical places that are trivialised and confined in marginal positions. Supermodernity intended as an evolution of postmodernism, refers to social, cultural, intellectual and economical phenomenons connected to the development of complex societies at the end of the last century, with a particular reference to the surpass of the postindustrial phase and to the diffusion of globalization. This needs an interdisciplinary thought. Characterised by three excesses (excess of events, space and ego), its condition offers an amazing observation field and it makes a great object for the anthropological research thanks to its own contradictions.²³

In the essay “*Space of Flows, Space of Places*”(2004), Manuel Castells remarks how much the mobility became the new dimension in the nowadays human work, this happened thanks

²² M. Augé, *Non-lieux*, Seuil, 1992 transl. M. Augé, *Non Luoghi*, Eleuthera, 1993, pp. 52-53

²³ *Ibid.* pp. 55

to the new possibility of moving in the physical space, but remaining connected with our communicative network. Castells sees in the space of the flows, the places and the entrances and the corridors that make possible the connection among the whole world, points that need to be interpreted as crossings of sociality. Therefore, the relationship with all these architectures like airports and stations, all these crossing paths are “The” urban experience of the everyday life of hundreds of millions of people. Also, (and here we can see a slight connection with Bateson and his studies on schizophrenia) Castells affirms that the urban life of the 21st Century has deeply changed because of the patriarchate crisis that is inexorably growing and that redefined the attitudes of the people creating a scheme completely opposite to the traditional one. Moreover, this pressure that has stressed the traditional family models and genders balance in the last centuries, has radically changed the rhythms of urban reality pushing the formalities of living and dwelling and moving to adapt to the individual complex exigences and interests of the people who share a physical space.²⁴

And if Augé evokes geometry, William J. Mitchell assures that there is no geometry in the *Net*, that is another place that we nowadays live. Despite of its precise and geometrical construction at a *bit* (information unit) level, the net links the users to non specific locations, by using physical hosts all around the world that we can not precisely locate (an e-mail can travel all around the world before it arrives on our computer, the speed of how the information travels can make us forget about that), we can hence say that we are in an ambient but we cannot describe its physical shape.²⁵ But at the same time, reality is showing us the particular remediation and application in our everyday urban life of electronic devices always connected and that allow a 24 hours connection. The space is not just entertainment but is also becoming

²⁴ M.Castells, *Space of Flows, Space of Places: Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Information Age*, Buell Lecture, 2004 in M. Castells, *La città delle reti*, Marsilio, 2004, pp.64-65

²⁵ W. J. Mitchell, *City of Bits, Space, Place and the Infobahn*, MIT Press, 1995 ref.“Spacial-Antispacial“

interactive and this so called “ambient” is covering our physical architectures expanding their functionality. It is a good example the interactive installation that the artist Keane²⁶ has set in a little city in Italy called Barga. With the help of the QR Code decoding technology, he was able to make the environment interactive by placing in many different places of Barca these little codes so that every time somebody passes by one of these spots, can easily get more informations.

In 1995 when Mitchell published *City of Bits*, he was describing the future of city travel as continuously involved in an information exchange among smart vehicles and smart roadway systems with the result for us, of knowing new ways to use the city. Forgetting our mental maps that combined with the landmarks supply us the orientation in the urban space, we are quickly changing our habits and therefore, with the integration of electronic devices, we are now delegating our ability to navigate the city to the artificial intelligence.²⁷ The fact is that these maps are moving from inside our heads into our smart electronic extensions and technology is becoming increasingly part of the mind, part of the connective pattern.

The representative patterns spread by the urban connective pattern are the multiplication of points of view captured by the researcher and the results of a research can not be distinguished from their expositions anymore.²⁸ Therefore the ability of crossing and trespassing, of fragmenting and multiplying and then coordinating the fragments in a dialogic way, *must inwardly contain – through the methodological fetishism – the skill to dissolve the reified visual aspects of the object*²⁹, experimenting new forms of narrations. *Because the*

²⁶ Article about Keane and iBarga project : <http://www.giornaledibarganews.com/2011/05/11/la-vera-verita-su-ibarga/>

²⁷ *Ibid.* „*Brains-Artificial Intelligence*“

²⁸ M.Canevacci, *Antropologia della Comunicazione Visuale*, Meltemi, 2002 p. 67

²⁹ *Ibid.* p.68

*visual pushes to the multiplication of communication patterns inside the respective cultures.*³⁰
In conclusion, I support Canevacci's conception of the *visual communication as that driving force of culture characterised by fragmented and juxtaposed flows that often create a hybrid pattern.*³¹

³⁰ *Ibid.* p.183

³¹ *Ibid.* p.265

Chapter I

I am me. I may look like you, but if you take a closer look you will realize that I am nothing like you at all. I am very different. I see things through a completely different perspective because in my life I had experiences that you didn't have, and I had feelings you didn't have, and I've lived places and seen places and experienced life from a completely different point of view than you have. I may be wearing the same shoes and the same haircut, but that gives you no right to have any preconceived notions about what I am or who I am.

Keith Haring, *Journals*

1.0 The creation of the ID

The *anthropophagous* movement that took place in Brazil at the end of the Twenties of the last century, is the expression of a syncretism that reclaims the existence of the body and that jestingly invite to devour. With this cannibal *Manifesto antropofágo*³², Oswald de Andrade proudly claims the beauty of his impure identity, grown in a colonised context as the *infernal mouth*³³ of Brazil is, breaking the individual taboo of the 20th century culture. The ingestion

³² Firstly published by Oswald de Andrade in *Revista de Antropofagia*, year 1st, May 1928

³³ *Boca infernal*, definition of *Nobrega* in Laura de Mello e Souza, *O Diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz*, Sao Paolo, Companhia das Letras, 1989, p.65

of the Other becomes a not understood paradox in which the power flips itself to its opposite, absorbing the sacred enemy – as states de Andrade – to transform it in a totem. An hostility act matured in the aggression of a real enemy, a devour that excesses as the way out from the symbolic-ritual and material own, opening to the negated otherness in the assimilation. Eat the other to soak up the enemy virtues –eating not just the body but even the soul –, then spit out the excess, incorporating the other in an embody that ends up like giving a body to the other.³⁴ The anxiety to recover an antagonist identity opposite to the European one, was the driving force that led de Andrade to write this manifesto, the oppression of the colonial heritage brought in the Brazilian cultural and literary circles the desire to get rid of it and the originality of this manifesto is in its ability to interpret the dynamics of the relationships among hegemonic and subordinated cultures. If identity shapes itself in the difference, de Andrade decides to show how every identity can reveal and express itself just in the continuous relationship with the other, staying in that interstice that connects the identical to the different and that founds in the body its liminal open metaphor. The reverse of the relationship to the dominant culture attempts to recover the original identity in the assimilation and embodiment of the external, the other, that already lives stably in our identity horizon.³⁵

In the contemporary world, we use the media to define our personal and cultural identity. The new media offer us new possibilities to define the self. Everytime our identity is mediated in this way, this identity is also *remediated*³⁶, seeing that we tend to interpret a single medium in a relationship with the past and present media. When we face media that operate mainly with the *transparent immediacy*, we see ourselves as a point of view immersed in a

³⁴ E.Finazzi-Agro, M.C. Pincherle, *La Cultura Cannibale*, Meltemi, 1999, p.82

³⁵ *Ibid.* p.86-87

³⁶ Remediation: The representation of a medium inside another. ~ Bolter&Grusin 1999

visual space that apparently has no continuity solutions. At the same time the *hypermediated logic* expresses a definition of the self with a main quality of interrelation and connection. The hypermediated self is a network of affiliations in a constant change while the interconnected self is constantly busy in destroying connections, faithful and interested to them till it abandons them and it can have a double life, a real and a cyberspace one. Both these selves suppose to achieve the self authenticity through the use of digital media. The hypermediated includes and multiplies the self of virtual reality, while the interconnected self is constituted by the self connected to the net and the various selves present in the network.³⁷

The autorepresentative wish comes from the desire of reality and it gives a meaning to our presence in this world. This non mediated relationship crosses from the emphasis given to the world as an object [*mimesis*] and to the audience as a subject [*expression*]. The digital media use both these attitudes [Virtual Reality and Ubiquitous Computing]³⁸ aiming to the immediacy, and in the digital experience the user interprets itself because it is a potential, quick succession of points of view. Equally happens in the hypermedia, where the user is defined as a succession of relationships with various applications, fluctuating between all these media, its identity is built up by these oscillations.³⁹ Transparent technologies could satisfy the immediacy wish, but this desire can not be completely satisfied as the mediation is not totally hidden and when the transparent media are not able to satisfy us, we need the opaques to experience ourselves. If immediacy could be possible, media wouldn't need to be

³⁷ J. D. Bolter, R. Grusin, Remediation. Understanding New Media, MIT press 1999 transl. J. D. Bolter, R. Grusin, Remediation, Guerini e Associati, 2002, p. 265-7

³⁸ *Virtual Reality*: the observer can access through a window to actively research the reality and to examine or manipulate the representation objects.

Ubiquitous Computing: the subjects stays in its place, while the representation objects come closer to be individually examined.

[definitions by Bolter&Grusin, *Ibid.* p.269]

³⁹ *Ibid.* p.270

part of the definition of ourselves.⁴⁰ This relationship we have with the media, how it affects in a reciprocal manner the behaviours, has produced a hybridization of these last ones, stereotyped in the lost of identity. And it is still the difference to make the creation of the identity possible. Even Bateson remarks the importance of the difference to realize an effective being. From saying that to produce a difference we need at least two somethings, Bateson arrives to the simple logical fact that each of these somethings if taken alone, is for our mind and perception a non-being, because “*it is not different from being, and not different from non-being [...], a sound of one hand clapping*”⁴¹. Therefore, to produce for example an information, the two juxtaposed entities must produce a difference between them that “*can be immanent in their mutual relationship*”.⁴² This understanding of the difference can be for sure applied to every kind of difference, and our identities are differences, too. It explains how it is possible to say that for example me, I exist because of the other and just the copresence of me and the other can realize that difference that justifies my existence. I am the other.

In the urban life, where millions of people cross their existences, surrounded by visual-scapes of digital devices, these differences multiply in an endless production and this fact probably helped and supported the slow recognition of a multicultural world, created exactly by the intensification of actions in a territory that becomes for the first time in the history of the human being, ended and crossable in few hours. As we are adaptable creatures, our progress lets us face a completely new scenario regarding the possibility to meet people from different cultures, and the progress is that we are now accustomed to the fact that we have relationships with these new urban diasporic subjects. Ryszard Kapuściński, in his third Viennese conference (2004), underlines that this spread of multicultural thinking, demands

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.270-1

⁴¹ G. Bateson, *Mind and Nature. A Necessary Unity*, New York, Dutton, 1979 p.49

⁴² *Ibid.*

strong and mature sense of identity, which in Europe and generally in the Western culture, is created by the use of symbols with which we need to identify ourselves, while for example in the African tradition, the identity is defined through the relatives bonds with the clan or the tribe. In any case, the definition of identity happens creating our relationship with the others and the migration flows to the city gave birth to a new kind of identity, hybrid.⁴³ Canevacci urges us to start explore new grammars and to begin to call the plural of *I* [me] as “*Is*”, getting our *I* into a plural thinking, a *multividual*, so that we can experience parts and pieces of subjectivity with a relative autonomy and difference, dethroning the principle of identity and favouring a syncretic principle of contradiction⁴⁴, and in order to way out the concentric concept of the One that leads directly to death. And if according to Simmel, culture produces itself through the process and the relationship and this happens in the place of the meeting, where takes place the interactions among individuals, we have to think beyond the community boundaries of the liquid modernity described by Bauman⁴⁵, because even if the utopia of the Western thought yearns for stability and prediction we live in a the world where relationships are totally unpredictable, and we should position ourselves in the condition to feel the panic of instability that becomes in turn pleasure, a harbour for departure heading to new itineraries. We can set free the plurals of *I* just through the drift of habits and suffering the philosophy of the moving, running after a hybrid disorder.⁴⁶

In the relationships signed by differences, the narrations of the subjects let us feel the ambivalence of a double iterative time that arouses a *principle of undecidability* in which the

⁴³ R. Kapuscinski, *Wykłady Wiedenskie* [I, II, III], 2004 in R. Kapuscinski, *L'Altro*, Feltrinelli, 2007, p. 38-9

⁴⁴ M. Canevacci, *Sincretismi*, Costa & Nolan, 2004, pp. 198-9

⁴⁵ According to Bauman, in the liquid modernity the community consolidates itself as the only solution to the feelings of insecurity and fragility of human relations, and it becomes the safe heaven to construct that identity, which gives the man everything he needs. The ethnic sense of membership is not subjected to negotiations, that on the contrary are the main acts in the meeting experience.

⁴⁶ M. Canevacci, *Sincretismi*, Costa & Nolan, 2004, p. 50

reader is placed in an undecidable space between desire and fulfilling, among neither the future, nor the present, but inbetween. In the negation and in the erasing appears the presence of the absent subject, present in its wildness and essential part of it.⁴⁷ In the border place the poetry texture and the identity textuality melt each other, creating therefore the identity in the difference and the otherness in the identity, which are both postmodern themes.

The need to go over the borders is what Jacques Derrida names “jettée”, literally translated with thrown, that is the pier that stretches out to the sea to welcome the boats. It is a term that Derrida uses to refer to the leaning out to the unknown and the uncertain, and at the same time, to the his duty to come back to the safe and institutionalised harbour against his will. *Every species constitute its own identity incorporating other identities by contamination, parasitism, graft, embodiment.*⁴⁸

Glissant shares Edward Said' s assertion according to which, identities do not exist, they are just imaginary constructions, and he widens this discourse maintaining that to conquer the world, it has been necessary to dream it first⁴⁹. Our conception of simultaneity spread in a wide period of time, connected of course with the development of the secular sciences. The time is recognized as what Benjamin names the “*messianic time*”, a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present. Benedict Anderson believes that this way of thinking, subtracts the meaning of the word “meanwhile”. Quoting Benjamin, he exposes the substitution of the medieval concept of *simultaneity-during-the-time* with the definition of “empty and homogeneous time”, where the simultaneity is ubiquitous and transverse to the

⁴⁷ H.K.Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, 1994 trans. H.K.Bhabha, *I luoghi della cultura*, 2001 p.81

⁴⁸ J. Derrida, *Some statements and truism about neologisms, newisms, postisisms, an other small seismisms in The States of Theory*, Columbia University Press, 1990, pp. 63-94 transl. J. Derrida, *Come non essere postmoderni*, Medusa, 2002 pp. 23-4

⁴⁹ E. Glissant, *Poétique de la relation*, Gallimard, 1990 transl. E. Glissant, *Poetics of relation*, Michigan University Press, 2006, p.100

time, beaten by synchrony and measured by clocks and calendars. He hence underlines the importance that such transformation had for the birth of the imagined communities of the nations.⁵⁰ Moreover, Bauman states that identities freely fluctuate and the duty of singular individuals is to catch them using own tools. The wish of identity finds its origin in the need of security, an ambiguous need. This emotive necessity floats freely in an undefined space, in an uncomfortably ambivalent environment that turns into an anxious and exhausting condition. Our epoch of liquid modernity, make unpopular the fixity and that identifications that unmodifyingly do not concede a second thought.⁵¹ Identity empower itself with the use of the name, the nominative as recognition, but apart from that, the idea of identity comes from the membership crisis and from the effort membership has primed to fill the fracture between what should be, and what is taking the reality to the parameters fixed by the idea, to make the reality look like the idea. To ask “Who are you” has a meaning just in case you know you can be something different from what you are, only if you have a choice that can be made real and only if you make something to consolidate it.

⁵⁰ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, 1991 transl. B Anderson, *Comunita Immaginate*, Manifestolibri, 2003, pp. 42-3

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 31

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.

Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, genealogy, history*

1.1 Social body / Anthropological body

In the section “*Integration and Disintegration of the Body*”, fourth subdivision of the one hundred plates with which Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead tried to present in a radically different manner their research on the Balinese character⁵², Bateson exposes us the meaning of the word *beroek*, which

*“is used by the Balinese to describe a corpse which is falling in pieces with decay. It is here used to epitomize the fantasy of the body as made of separate independent parts. This fantasy takes many forms, among others the notion that the body is like a puppet, just pinned together at the joints, and the same fantasy is closely linked with phenomena as ecstasy and trance”.*⁵³

⁵² G. Bateson, M. Mead, *Balinese Character. A Photographic Analysis*, Special Publications of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1942 digitalized version here: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015001879496>

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 91

An in the following plates are placed photographic pictures and the description of each, of the various stages of the trance performance called of the *sangiangs* dancers, where we can see the synthesis of what will bring Bateson to the ecology of the connective pattern. Briefly, in this photographic report we can see the actors performing this ritual: *the men* who hold *the puppets* -embodiment of divinities- and let them dance, but staring the gaze on the other side to demonstrate that the puppets are moving by themselves; the back of the puppets with the *strings* used to “animate” them and connected to the *sticks* that are in the men's hands; the *girls who touch the sticks and fall in trance*; the *women-assistants* who help in holding the puppets. A long syntagmatic chain exists between *man – stick – string – puppet – girl in trance – assistant*, says Canevacci, that put on communication the trans-individual external with the internal inter-individual. The I is not included in a singular part, but trips simultaneously through the whole chain, creating an ecological mind, the I is therefore not limited anymore by the epidermis but goes beyond through the information channels that in this case is the performance. The ecological mind of Bateson has the same function of the trance, that is to eliminate the berোক and to reconnect the many pieces of the one body⁵⁴.

Assuming the point of view of Robert Musil in *The Man Without Qualities*, Valeria Giordano states that the qualities of a person are not able to define it because these qualities exist independently, connected to the social roles that we are obliged to embody. Hence, it doesn't neither exist a solid subject because the body, at the same time that becomes present on the modernity stage, dematerializes itself. Moreover, the body is not tolerable as it is the place of the unknown and bizarre, it is able to record the disorder and mutations, anomalies and paradoxes, transforming them into wishes and illusions. It is therefore the site got flesh, where

⁵⁴ M.Canevacci, *Antropologia della Comunicazione Visuale*, Meltemi, 2002 p.76

the modernity show takes place connecting life to death, and this subject must pass through a long way to occupy a social place, achieving the self and the body in the relationship with the others, understanding the real meaning of actions and finally constructing its own social identity being able to make choices.⁵⁵ The character is its body.

In the urban environment the increasingly multivocal dislocation of transmetropolitan flows has produced, and still does it, a series of radical changes in the shape of the city as experience. The dynamics among our body and the many other metropolitan bodies are now fuzzing in a semiotic syncretism in the creation of visual-scapes. Consider i.e. the 18th Century building in Turin, Italy, near Corpus Domini square, where somebody installed at the middle of its corner a giant reproduction of a rounded ear piercing that bleeds from its wounds on the wall. Similar embodiment can be found in Prague at the corner of U Sv. Anny square, where the Czech artist David Černý grafted an embryo inside the gutter pipe that flanks the corner of the building, getting the embryo embodied by the gutter and setting free the genders and the fleshes. Or the famous Gehry's *Prague Dancing House* by the river Vltava, also called Ginger&Fred for its embodied architectural lines that have developed new perspectives at a body-architectural level of the metropolis. The human being and the city have mutually embodied so much each other, that the city is reproducing the human characters, and the humans are developing new kinds of character creating a circular feedback that lets them tightly cling to each other's body: the mind ecology through the connective pattern. The *Parkour* activity is the apotheosis of this phenomena, born in the early Eighties in France, it is a metropolitan discipline that pushes to overcome the physical barriers of the city (the so-called *architectural barriers*) and to adapt the movement of our body to the architectural structure.

⁵⁵ V. Giordano, *La Metropoli e Oltre: percorsi nel tempo e nello spazio della modernità*, Meltemi, 2005, pp. 67-8

In the metropolitan visual-scapes the body gains the apparent status of only referent in a world visually saturated by signs. And the boundaries are getting confused in an inextricable melange of reality and fantasy. The only final coherence we have, says Iain Chambers, is the fact that *constructing, modifying, changing, contesting or refusing the conditions of meaning in a flexible economy of representation, in which the only message appears as the medium or the image itself, the reader gets an ethic and political responsibility (that is not delegated anymore to the institutional reproduction of the moral common places) and that can finally become our choice and our responsibility.*⁵⁶

But still the desymbolizing process that influences the contemporary culture, makes the relationship among signifier and significant to coincide getting the *thing* not alienated but incorporated, and the isomorphism among body, city and video progressively spreads more and more signs on its surface. The body becomes a panorama that floats through the interstices of the communication metropolis body and it turns to scape, too. The resulting bodyscape is a temporary construction of the corps that in this subjective pragmatic expresses itself so that it is able to slip across the spaces of the interstices dissolving in the attraction of the location, making the body spacial. Canevacci reminds us, that a body wrapped by these interstitial panoramas is pushed by an immanent power to elaborate new perceptive systems, he calls them *sensoralia*, that is the modality used by specific bodyscapes to turn the dead zones that stay in the interstices into liminal zones, in a powerful transfiguration with a strong cosmetic attraction, which is erotic and which in Canevacci's thinking becomes *eroptica*, that is the erotic pervasivity that penetrates the eyes and punctures them entangling them in the locations. The importance to ethnographically research these subjects of the bodyscapes has to be found in the social aspects of this individual that decides not to be passive, but to actively

⁵⁶ I. Chambers, *Border Dialogues: Journey in Postmodernity*, Routledge, 1990 transl. Iain Chambers, *Dialoghi di Frontiera: Viaggi nella Postmodernita*, Liguori Editore, 1995 p.109

apply a spontaneous semiosis to its body, narrating its communicative mutations, a body that become story-teller of its own sensorial desires. Hence we can state that it is not the society that defines the borders of the bodyscapes, but the communication interwoven with its own sensorial wishes.⁵⁷ In the mimesis process the appearances of the worn images makes the exposed public image of the self always associated to bodies flowing into a contemporary editing, revealing in this mimesis the assimilation of the bodies.

The Red Sea of traffic parted at last, and we crossed into another oasis of trees and lawns and roses. In a few minutes we had climbed to a vantage point in the hills, and there was the city spread out beneath us. Rather disappointingly, it looked very like the city I had seen on other occasions. So far as I was concerned, transfiguration was proportional to distance. The nearer, the more divinely other. This vast, dim panorama was hardly different from itself.

Aldous Huxley, *The doors of perception*

1.2 *A metropolitan body*

Regarding the perception of the city, in the benjaminian fragment, we see Benjamin interpretation of Paris as the capital city of the 19th Century through the poetry of Baudelaire, in which he finds the transformation of the modern city where for the first time the human being is living in a changing space, therefore loses that sort of stability that the conception of

⁵⁷ M.Canevacci, *Una stupita fatticità*, Costa&Nolan, 2007 pp.17-8

place/location had till then. At this point, interpreting a city means to read the historically different layers of the urban space in which residuals can get closer to the observer, who recognize them as the signs of time discontinuity. Benjamin effort is to collect the meaning of these fragments and to reactualize them, that means to make them again effective through the imaginary, through the clash that these fragments have in the imaginary of the observer. In fact, Benjamin speaks about a *shock experience*, that is the series of continuous collisions that this figure has while walking and promenading through the city. And in this great research of Paris, he also introduces a sort of *awakening strategy*, as a matter of fact the fragments are these objects reduced in pieces, parts that wait for their awakening.

In his definition of *global city*, Castells tries to explain how it is possible that the metropolises we live in are made of physical spaces and electronic flows. When he says global city, he doesn't refer to a specific location, rather to the global articulation of particular segments taken from various metropolises and electronically connected aiming to build a control network of the whole planet. Therefore the global city is a specific shape that the space can assume, in opposition to the thought that sees it as a distinctive attribution of determined cities (London, New York, etc.) Moreover the contemporary cities are agglomerations of areas that have different dimensions and that are connected at different levels to the global networks and most of the neighbourhoods of the cities have a local character, rather than a global one.⁵⁸ The space of flows is deep-rooted in the space of place, and the new endless interactions with the online information systems, the wireless connection, make necessary the separation among these two spaces. The point at issue here is to guarantee a proper articulation between these two systems.

⁵⁸M.Castells, *Space of Flows, Space of Places: Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Information Age*, Buell Lecture, 2004 transl. in M. Castells, *La città delle reti*, Marsilio, 2004 p.58

An interesting representation of articulation of global and local flows can be found in *Metropia*, a Scandinavian co-produced movie animation directed by Tarik Saleh in 2009. In the next near Europe, year 2024, the economies of the world are collapsed and the nation-states don't exist anymore. The Trexx group connects all the major capitals of Europe through a huge underground system called The Metro, a great metaphor of European flows. With this network transportation, the isolation in which seemed to fall the humanity looks to be over, but a more subtle and invisible calamity is insinuating inside the minds of the people through the television screen and a “harmless” shampoo. In the daily routine of an average man in the desolating underground of the new Europe, we can easily recognize obvious references to 1984 by George Orwell, the represented society is constantly bombarded by TV and its fictitious world, its invisible cine-eye. With the use of a hybrid animation that joins real images with three-dimensional images the audience can slide on the everyday flows of a typical citizen of the new metropolis.

The particular metropolitan network that spread from the end of the 20th Century has changed the relationship centre-periphery relegating the local and territorial culture, especially in the traditional industry cities, to the status of relic, like abandoned monuments of a previous age that need to be exposed in new conceptual galleries created on the ruins of this model. Transforming the old into aesthetised urban scapes, the contemporary Western metropolis aims to attract the *elsewhere* into its symbolic zone. That is exactly the opposite of what was the structure in the industrial shape of the city. The peripheries, the suburbs, the countrysides, are becoming the points of intersection of this global mind and this thanks to the connections established by the branching of all the mass media. Connections made with telephones, televisions, videos and computer terminals are creating the joints of an extended metropolitan network, in which the economical and cultural rhythms of the elastic centre are

not necessarily coming from the European and North American countries.⁵⁹ The habitat of the metropolis, which is so real as imaginary, became the myth of our times, the references that once were clearly dividing and separating the city from the countryside, the artificial from the natural, are now *reproduced indiscriminately as potential signs and horizons inside a common topography*.⁶⁰ The allegoric extension of this habitat doesn't allow us anymore the possibility to trace a precise map of the modern metropolis, because we can't capture its borders and boundaries and frontiers, as they change quickly in an unpredictable manner. The début of the visual-scapes, of the images inside our real has educated us to act in completely different structured environments and the metropolis now rules the time instead of the space. The physical space of the city is trespassed and crossed by the multividual energies of human communicative actions and interactions mediated by technologies, our bodies complete the circuits. Hence the sense becomes movement, as

“In this apparently rootless and boundless landscape, where the signifier refuses to slow down and be classified, we experience the semiotic blur and limitless cross-referencing of the ever-present and ever-ambiguous sign. The semiotic vista furnishes a language that, through clothes, styles, fashion, magazine, advertising, music, film, video, television and telecommunications, provides much of the architecture of our daily lives but nevertheless it is without an apparent purpose; it is a language that exists beyond the obvious common sense or

⁵⁹I. Chambers, *Border Dialogues: Journey in Postmodernity*, Routledge, 1990 transl. Iain Chambers, *Dialoghi di Frontiera: Viaggi nella Postmodernità*, Liguori Editore, 1995 pp.81-2

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.83

*the isolated “reading” of the individual sign, with a syntax that wrap in itself its own referents”.*⁶¹

Sound of Noise is a movie directed by Ola Simonsson in 2010 that tells about the story of a group of urban guerilla musicians, who decide to realize a four-act urban symphony, in which every act takes place in a specific site of the everyday city. The first act “happens” in a bank, the anarchist musicians follow their precise plan and irrupt inside the bank offices and start to play using instead of the instruments, the objects (including money and photocopier) and the surfaces of that particular place, and then they leave before the police comes and catches them. Another act happens on the highway and another even at the power station, where their protesting musical act of reclaiming the city arrives to use the huge electric cables as guitar strings, literally they jump one for each cable and they start to play like little harping fingers. The result is hilarious, of course, but the power of this story is its proper metaphor of the complete embodiment of the human body with the city.

Consider the metropolis as the spacial metaphor of modernity is just the first step to open to a reading of the possible interactions among urban social and cultural processes and specific shapes of symbolic mediation like the music is. At a deeper level, the specific articulations of music forms can affect aesthetic reflections or cultural praxes oriented by the interaction non-linear and non-convergent of dynamics in homological configurations that structure and are structured by the metropolis.⁶² In any case, the constant trait of the metropolis evolution is the disaggregation, differentiation and reconstitution of links and new social identities, in this point of view music becomes a cultural and communicative resource that is endlessly recreated to act and interact with the social and symbolic structure that shapes the

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.84

⁶² F. D'Amato, *Suoni*, 2002 in V.Giordano, *Linguaggi della Metropoli*, Liguori Editore, 2002, p.130

membership context in transformation. This dissociative behaviour is in Lévi-Strauss opinion, the same that stands behind the cities that are also intended to produce proportionally more inertia than the number of organizations implicated in them. The resulting disorder is what the physicians call entropy, therefore Lévi-Strauss suggests to call *entropology* the discipline that studies this process of disintegration in its manifestation.⁶³ Urban entropology.

Nevertheless, it is pointless besides impossible to research defined and taxonomic paradigms to encapsulate the metropolitan typologies, because they have to be seen inwards, the plural and mobile inward has to be treated like singular individualities with a decentralised and polyphonic methodology that is able to subtract the strength of the visual fetishisms. *Everything is exaggeratedly local and global inside-out and outside-in the metropolis. The metropolis is communicative and is everywhere, and because of this everywhere pervasivity the top exasperations of micrological differences multiply, and we have both to understand and construct them.*⁶⁴

⁶³ M.Canevacci, *La Città Polifonica*, SEAM, 1997, p.97

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.99

Chapter II

*Not yet a science but a proposition:
That certain problems in linguistics might be
solved by viewing language as a complex
dynamical system or "Chaos field."
Hakim Bey, *The Temporary Autonomous Zone**

2.0 *It's all about relationships*

The core of the metropolitan experience in Simmel is the interaction. According to him the metropolis is the modernity essence as it represents the emblem of instability and the subjects who face a plurality of stimulating inputs develop an organ that is able to contrast the intensification of the nervous life, that is the intellect and which peculiarity is to be less sensitive and farer from the deepest layers of personality, it owns the logical combining faculty that makes it able to calculate and assimilate its role. In his essay *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903), Georg Simmel analyses the deepest problems of the modern life, that also concern the individual pretension to preserve the independence and the particularity of being determined in the face of the unbeatable powers of the society, of the historical heritage, of the exterior culture and of the technique.⁶⁵ In the modernity the subject resistance is levelled and dissolved inside a technosocial mechanism.

⁶⁵G.Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, 1903 trans. G.Simmel, *La Metropoli e La Vita dello Spirito*, Armando Editore, 2004 p.35

To understand the metropolis and the modernity we need to question about the products of the modern life in their inwardness and about cultural body. We have to look for the movements with which personality adapts to the powers that exist out of itself. The intensification of the nervous life is the psychological base that characterises the metropolitan individualities, it is produced by “the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli”.⁶⁶ The human consciousness is stimulated by the difference among the impression of the moment and that one that precedes the impressions that last, not much differenced or alternated by habitual regularity. The main result is the comparison / contrast among the psychic metropolitan life and the countryside, based on sentimentality and emotional relationships, set in the less conscious levels of the psyche and which are developed by the repetition of uninterrupted habits.⁶⁷ Even if Simmel's essay is dated 1903 and clearly refers to modernity, which is a little bit an over era, assuming that we disputably live in the post-modern age, better classified at this point of the human development as the *Information Society*, it is still appropriate to consider the words of a – in my opinion – genius, who was able to paint with extremely wisdom a perfect portraits of the feelings and emotions that float around the life in the city. The visual experience that takes places everyday through our eyes and gazes has a deep influence in the creation of the identity. To avoid that everything in the metropolis collapses into chaos, it is necessary a transformation of the time because with the work division, the urbanization process, the development of the media, the time becomes a resource to exploit, organize and keep under control. Moreover, according to Simmel, time becomes a cultural object, loosing its nature in the moment it becomes the ruler of society, and from this spreads the *blasé*⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p.36

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p.38

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p.42

personality, which absence is the indifference to the things.

According to the bible narration of the Genesis, the city has its origin in the disorder, the human beings challenged the divinity constructing the Babel Tower to show their technical skills, but god punish them condemning them to chaos confusing their language. The point at issue is that is necessary to regain common meanings to guarantee the exchange, the communication and the recognition of the subject identity.

*“Relations of meaning and communication drive the process of interaction in image-worlds. The relationships between subjects and objects cannot be predicted by their individual characteristics. There is always a process of hybridization at work that frames how meaning circulates through the use and abuse of subject/object relations. But to varying degrees hybridization produces a result that is greater than the parts. Intelligence moves around and enhances the thinking process beyond the boundaries of either image or subject”.*⁶⁹

The contemporary subjectivity is constituted in its imagination by the combined effect of migrations and mass communications. These lasts are transformed by the current media as they furnish new resources to construct imagined subjects and worlds. In the everyday narration they offer the means to experiment different constructions of the self in every kind of society. Moreover, through the complex shapes they appear, their images-in-movement

⁶⁹ R. Burnett, *How Images Think*, MIT Press, 2004, p.55

cross deterritorialized spectators, creating diasporic public spheres. The media circulation means the circulation of people. Migrations, that have always existed, organize a new unstable order in the production of modern subjectivities in the moment they approach to the mass media images. The diasporic public spheres that emerge from this crossing of processes put in a state of crisis the “national” factor. Spectators and images circulate contemporary and sign the present world as they are the powers that push the imagination work, therefore we can underline a mobile relationship among globalization and the modern, constituted by the relations between mass media events and migrant audiences.⁷⁰ The diaspora subject, unlike the nomad one, is syncretic and crosses hybrid spaces. These spaces mostly identify themselves in the metropolis and borders space, inexhaustible containers of crossed multiplicities, and it is not a case if exactly these areas are characterised by diasporic migrations. The diasporic subject dislocates itself in a disordered manner becoming the subject of more stories in a multiplied richness. The term *diaspora* points to migrations that are often, but not always, forced and the subjects that are part of it dislocate themselves in many different contexts, the ethnic matrix is lost and the subject is disconnected. Syncretism and diaspora, as liquid concepts, skilfully slide against every authority without trying to conquer it. The flows created through these processes always converge to the new metropolitan scenario and they are decisive for its production.⁷¹

The national States acquire their sense just in case they are grafted as parts of a system, which however is not well organized to manage the double diaspora of people and images that characterises the *here&now*. It is not very probable that they could work as long term rulers in the relationship between globality and modernity, this last is therefore fragmented but can be

⁷⁰A. Appadurai, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*, Minnesota University Press, 1996
transl. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernità in polvere*, Meltemi, 2003 pp.16-17

⁷¹M. Canevacci, *Sincretismi*, Costa & Nolan, 2004 pp.68,72,75

ready to be rebuilt under techniques that are similar to the *bricolage*.⁷²

On earth signs and names define our identities, from a terrestrial point of view our relationships can be inscribed in the archaic entity of the cosmos. „*The being is constituted by a network of cosmic relationships that define and settle the place to occupy*“, says Pierre Lévy in *The Collective Intelligence* (1994) and continues, the human being is a microcosm himself, like an echo or a reflection of the everything, every part of his body and every movement of his soul refers to certain events or places of the world.⁷³

*To every place corresponds a type of identity,
a kind of desire, a psychic structure.*

Pierre Lévy, *The Collective Intelligence*

2.1 *Non-places*

Marc Augé defines as *non-places* all those structures that are necessary to the accelerated circulation of people and goods (highways, motorways, airports), means of transport, big shopping malls, refugee camps, all the places where millions of individualities cross without getting into a relationship, pushed by the hectic wish to consume and accelerate the everyday

⁷² A.Appadurai, 2003 p. 36

⁷³ P. Lévy, *L' Intelligence Collective. Pour une anthropologie du cyberspace.*, Éditions La Découverte, 1994
transl. P. Lévy, *L'Intelligenza Collettiva. Per un' antropologia del cyberspazio.*, InterZone Feltrinelli, 1999,
pp. 155-6

transactions or considered as access points for a change that can be real or symbolic.⁷⁴ As already mentioned, the non-places are the product of a supermodern society characterised by the excess of time, space and ego. Non-places are centred just on the present and they are representative of our epoch, which is characterised by precariousness, temporarity, transit and the passage and solitary individualism. People transit through the non-places where anybody lives. Places and non-places are strictly interrelated and often difficult to distinguish. Rarely they exist in a pure form, generally are the places of the standard in which everything is precisely calculated (i.e. the decibels, longness of paths, frequency of stops, type and quantity of information). Non-places have assumed a positive and reassurance valence, users don't take care that the commercial halls are all made from the same mould, instead they are delighted by the sense of security give the fact that they can in every corner of the world the things they need. This circumstance descends from one of the paradoxes of the non-place, the passing traveller, lost in an unknown place, find himself in the anonymity of the highways and of the gas stations, other non-places. The relationship between non-places and their users usually happens through symbols, an explicit example is the sign “no smoking” that we can find in every public non-place of the world. The individual in the non-place loses all his characteristics and personal roles, and exists just like a client or user, a role defined by a more or less tacit agreement that we sign as we enter the non-place.⁷⁵ The use of the non-places is designed for the average user, the generic man without distinctions, not persons but anonymous entities. The client buys his anonymity just after have proven his identity, just after signing the agreement. There is no individual knowledge, spontaneous and human, there is no recognition of the social group, as we used to have in the anthropological place.

⁷⁴M. Augé, *Non-lieux*, Seuil, 1992 transl. M. Augé, *Non Luoghi*, Eleuthera, 1993 p.36

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Socialization, identification and localization occur just at entrance and exit, for the rest of the time we stay lonely and similar to all the other users, clients, passengers. Society would not put limits of entrance on condition that a series of rules is respected: being identified as a solvent client hence acceptable, wait for your turn, follow the instructions, fruit the product and pay. *We are born in a clinic and we die in a hospital.*⁷⁶

If we identify as non-places the hypermarkets, the motorway restaurants, the hotel chains and so on, we cannot help but affirm that are all fragments of a rhythmic universe which is oriented from the culture of consume that crystallizes the human action in a finished, catalogued and controlled series of social relationships. If there is a breaking of the languages and of innovative reading skills, as for example the hypertextual communication in the shopping malls, they find a place at a very low deconstructive level which is functional to the profit game. The freedom of being and enjoying goes in my opinion, beyond the consume faculties, on the contrary it acts in an omnicomprehensive dynamic regarding themselves. The joyful enjoying, free of charge and shared of the non-places like the temporary autonomous zones⁷⁷, that are utopian places free from the commodification happily against the vision of absolutely cynic, selfish and anxious solitude, as the main characteristic of the supermodern individual, who structures his life just in relation to the relationship profit / loss set by the most of these places.

Globalization brings us in a context that Ulrich Beck calls *polygamy of places*, and with this he means a transnational polygamy that marries the subject with more places that belong to different worlds leading to a biographic globalization. Beck proposes an ideal of life that is no

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p.73

⁷⁷ For more informations about the TAZ cf H. Bey, *T.A.Z.: THE TEMPORARY AUTONOMOUS ZONE, ONTOLOGICAL ANARCHY*, Autonomedia, 2004

more linked to a specific place, not fixed nor stable, but a life on the road. Thanks to the approach of the distances and to the creation of distances in a same place, to live in a place doesn't mean anymore live together and live together doesn't mean anymore live in the same place.⁷⁸

With the new social behaviours and the perceptive modifications connected to the development of the territorial mobility, the places in which gather significant flows of individuals get more and more energy. The non-places transform themselves in stages for entertainment events, non stop shows that liven up our cities and lives, like Chinese boxes they become containers of other containers, one place can contain another. The logic is explicitly contaminative where prevails the disjunctive conjunction and every consume tool can be seen as an island that is part of an archipelago where the “consumer” can jump from an island to another, therefore the scenario of our consumer praxis is extraordinarily changed in the last few years. The real breaking between modern and post-modern has to be found in the fuzzing of the real with the imaginary and the non-differentiation is becoming the main trait of our new society, while flexibility shatters the old schemes. Alike, the different moments of our day have been shattered and every second of every day is good to consume. Social relationships have been deeply changed by the new consumer tools and so did the mental habits, which extended to places that before weren't destined to the consume, on the whole we think more and more environments in terms of consume cathedrals, in fact the proliferation of channels translates for the consumer into a multiplication of chances to buy.

⁷⁸ U. Beck, *Was ist Globalisierung?*, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1997 transl. U.Beck, *Che cos'è la globalizzazione*, Carocci, 2001 p.97

„Do you see the eye?” she asked me,
“Well?”
“It’s an egg.” she concluded in all simplicity.
“All right,” I urged her, extremely disturbed, “what are you getting at?”
“I want to play with this eye.”
G. Bataille, *Story of the Eye*

2.2 The visual communication as a driving force

The pervading penetration of visual technologies in the human everyday life is one of the main characteristics of the current cultural global space and the modality of representation or self-representation in the construction of meaning is directly configured by the addiction to the technological progress. I have already mentioned the rising of new panoramas, the visual-scapes, and their intersection with the daily flow of our lives in the city context. These transformations, which are complex, reclaim new way of thinking and the new anthropological boundaries are inside the postindustrial transformation and the production of immaterial goods inside the new technologies and ecologies. Canevacci suggests an *anthropology of the dissolution*⁷⁹, passing through and against the borders. Because in the next future it will be always more difficult to understandably analyse every culture or its section, without the growing connection to the visual culture. This cross is precisely the place of intersection where the fading, the dissolution happens and can be compared to the Turner's

⁷⁹M.Canevacci, *Antropologia della Comunicazione Visuale*, Meltemi, 2001 p.267

conception of *liminoid*⁸⁰ zone, a transition from a past positive condition to a future unknown one, connected to the mutation of our times. The visual body of these scapes should be fragmented and recollected creating the connective pattern of all our explorations, alterations of bodies, mutations of visual-scapes in a visual phantasmagoria that can be set free just in the risk of *getting seen*. The problem of *being seen* is well explained by Bhabha with the surveillance of the colonial power in which he identifies the impulse orientated to the unleash of the pleasure that we get from seeing. The gaze, which can be compared to the object of desire, moves its own existence from the myth of the origins and from the fetishism. Hence the surveillance (as also stated by Foucault in his panopticon studies) is the active ambivalent agreement of the watcher and the monitored. It is ambivalent as it is for the stereotype.⁸¹

This happens when the differences are clearly visible, in the even more ambivalent case of the camouflage, the mimicry means *getting streaked on a streaked background*. The mimesis process is a hidden secret that invisibly circulates like the gaze of the evil eye, the secret circulates and it is not seen. The invisibility hence erases the selfpresence of the I and this antidialectic movement pushes away the object from the gaze, it's the access to death. The evil eye releases its payback in the circulation, but without being seen and the secret of invisibility manifests itself in the person representation crisis.⁸²

In his effort to expand the cultural view of picture and photographs with the roles of the viewers, Ron Burnett analyses the shift from images to imagescapes (conceptually close to the visual-scapes). The latter are not just related to the spatial metaphor, but they embrace the

⁸⁰ The term *liminoid* refers to experiences that have characteristics of liminal experiences but are optional and don't involve a resolution of a personal crisis cf. Turner, Victor. 'Liminal to liminoid in play, flow, and ritual: An essay in comparative symbology'. *Rice University Studies* 1974

⁸¹ H.K.Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, 1994 trans. H.K.Bhabha, *I luoghi della cultura*, 2001 p.111

⁸² *Ibid.* pp.81-82

mechanism of mapping all the relationships that spread from a range of several processes located in a multiple time which includes the viewing, the experience but also the creation and interaction. The point at issue is that when there is interaction, there is also creativity, creating a connection with the spectators.⁸³ All the viewers need to understand and experience the imagescapes they encounter on daily basis, it is important that they are able to trigger this special relationship as it is part of our life. Viewers are no more just spectators because they evolved beyond their parameters of viewing in relationship to distance and separation as images now intersect the real.⁸⁴ According to Burnett, the experience of viewing is a creative act, in fact everybody have a different perceptive experience in the act of viewing, and all the levels that interact in this process, like daydreams, thoughts, *reveries*, don't have a specific hierarchy and *the continuity of experiences here means that imagescapes are just one element in continuous flow of exchanges*.⁸⁵ Reverie means to surrender to the viewing experience, it is something like daydreams and memories and thoughts that occur from the things to the process of viewing, it is the emotional connection, the inner relation between viewer and image. Images loose their original meaning of representation or interpretation of human actions and expand their role becoming central in every action that establishes a mutual relationship among human beings. Because it is a visual expression of human creativity they become the benchmark in the transmission of informations and knowledge.

It is through the visual communication of the contemporary culture that is possible to feel and discover and create the many changes that happen in different societies. If communication is a multichannel system where every single one participates every moment, the same participation get richer and nimbler in untangling the channels exactly through the different

⁸³ R. Burnett, *How Images Think*, MIT Press, 2004 p.40

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p.42

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.48

languages that visual offers us i.e. advertisement, cinema, TV, briefly the various technological means involve all human cultures and the diffusion of visual communication has brought the achievement of a global culture characterised by fragmented and juxtaposed flows that create syncretisms leaving the national as obsolete.⁸⁶

The verisimilitude of the images is the attempt to produce created images that are very similar to the corresponding non created ones, the latter has to be intended as the image that is not a product of the artifice and was not calculated by the sender or the receiver. Dropping the subject over the instrumental images, which in all our civilization have been the operation in relation to verbal and conceptual communication to fix in time, the verisimilar images become fundamentals and universals with the triumph of the white civilization producing a context of politic and military hegemony of the whites. And to understand the reason of this success we must disassemble and analyse the object, because if nobody takes care about the material that constitutes an instrumental sign, we surely linger on a photography.⁸⁷

The emergence of new considerations of the signification on the analysis of the language and the mind, has clashed against the deconstructive effect that has disorganised the axiomatics of the philosophic, scientific and epistemological discourse, becoming an element of the deconstruction series but ceasing to be part of it, introducing the perturbation, the disorder and agitation which are not reducible, that is the principle of dislocation.⁸⁸ The ubiquity of the visual goods has panoramized into its contrary and the *videoscope* indicates exactly this extension of the visual communication. *The videoscope is a panoramized projection of media*

⁸⁶ M. Canevacci, *Antropologia della Comunicazione Visuale*, Meltemi, 2001 p.51-53

⁸⁷ U. Dante, *L'Utopia del Vero nelle arti visive*, Meltemi, 2002, p.7-8

⁸⁸ J. Derrida, *Some statements and truism about neologisms, newisms, postisisms, an other small seismisms* in *The States of Theory*, Columbia University Press, 1990, pp. 63-94 transl. J. Derrida, *Come non essere postmoderni*, Medusa, 2002, p.44

codes inside an artificial nature. That is possible through the electronic inner editing which produces an offer of images or signs per sequence, these videospace expands and reproduces itself in metropolitan scapes of visual culture. The importance of the panoramatic body seen as a puzzle is in its being the sight of the expansive signs that we expose to the others and that deciphers in the others. Everything turns around the body, the cultural messages are the obsession of Western consume culture that educates the individuals to read the differences of the signs.⁸⁹

*At every corner the shop-window thus forms
wishful dreams, to make the rich people who have
no money draw it out of their pockets.
And no one knows better when it comes
to this sort of dream than the dresser who arranges
its displays. He does not only set out commodities,
but also the enticing image which arises
between men and commodities;
he builds with happiness and glass.*

Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*

2.2.1 *The perturbing fetishism of visual goods*

In its high degree of visual entropy, the *torment* and the *uncanny* of visual communication are its disorder, which pushes every given code to a mutation as addiction and the recognition must surrender to the stupor, to fluidify a structure of the attention that is always culturally dissipative. The visual communication has its metasymbolic valence of ventriloquial sort, that

⁸⁹M.Canevacci, *Antropologia della Comunicazione Visuale*, Meltemi, 2001 p.252-3

substitutes the functions of the past ideologies and spontaneously spreads from the visual goods, both from the explicit contents and the “pure” objects, things as such. In the reproducible visual communication the ideology speaks on its own accord in compliance with a meta-communicative level, through clutter of messages that are indifferent or even conflicting each other, that indirectly and silently exalts the triumph of the West. In this new model, the visual goods emanate ideologies from their entrails, the ideology-goods become ventriloquists. Every polysemic image becomes a concentrate of music, fashion, body techniques and daily technologies, urban scapes and perceptive skills, and the visual image gets the world vision.⁹⁰ The culture of consumptions is the culture of visual communication, the exchange of goods involves the trade of images and cultural experiences, but the excess of signs represents an intrusion into the traditional order of symbols and upsets it carrying out a process of desymbolization and transforming what was considered as symbols into clean signs, without a symbolic mediation everything is exactly what it seems, directly.⁹¹ The visual goods have a social life and from objects they become subjects with their own individuality, that is because in their production they develop a cognitive process, therefore the methodological fetishism is the suitable approach to the communicative forms of the animated-things that dissolve their commodified character through the semiotic shifting of the codes that are embodied in it. Interpretation is in the same breath destruction and it is the primal feature of decoding method. The aim of this methodology is to favour the dissolution of the visual fetish-goods exasperating their seduction, their *sex appeal of the inorganic* in a metaobservation that is the suitable approach to decode the visual communication of seeing, seeing the self, getting seen, placing in the point of view that is both completely out and

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p.271

⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp.245-7

inside.⁹²

Fashion: Mr Death! Mr Death!
*Leopardi: Dialogue between Fashion and Death*⁹³

The origin of the word fetish comes from the Portuguese term *fetisso* coined during their colonization in South America and it tries to translate the sacred praxis which are diffused in many African populations, defined by them as pagan, idolatrous and magical. This definition produces and invent the fetishism as a taxonomy connect to the obscure and the arcane. The etymology of this word comes at the same time from the Latin *facticius*, that means something manufactured but that refers to the things that are animated, the hybrid of organic and inorganic where the sacred is.

On the other side, Marx has also an ideal of fetish and that is its character obscure that transmutes the goods in supersensitive thing and the power of the immaterial communication inner to the material production of the goods. The contemporary visual goods, too are supersensitive or materially immaterial, and the visual fetishism connects to the pervasive diffusion of the immaterial communication, therefore the material animated in this case are the codes and the signs and the qualitative goods, they are sacred but semiotic and bound with a double-bind the observer to the observed. In a powerful game of attraction these visual fetishes are presenting themselves as new subjectivities.

⁹² *Ibid.* p.19-20

⁹³ Quoted in W. Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, hrsg. von Rolf Tiedemann, 2 Bände, Suhrkamp Frankfurt am Main 1983 transl. W. Benjamin, Parigi, capitale del 19. secolo : i "Passages" di Parigi , Einaudi, 1986, p.82

*It is our task not to complain or to condone
but only to understand.*

Georg Simmel, *The Metropolis and Mental Life*

2.3 Prague, capital of the 21st Century

Focusing on what happens on a train type of Prague Underground, I'm presenting here a report of my observations made in 2009 of the Prague underground line B, also called the *Yellow* for its colour. The aim is to show how the train of the metro, as crossroad of solitudes made by the singular paths of the individuals where each of them in his flow of actions leaves an imperceptible trace of his passage, is to all intents and purposes a microcosm where we can see and discuss the tendencies that mostly characterise the forms of interaction of a daily city place. Behaviours respond to specific social models imposed by the urban spaces and their characteristics, the human action is basically a rational response to the social situation and representation that the "actor", and our behaviour on the underground journey is generally cynic, strategic and indifferent both as a response to an extraordinary context (as from one side, in the rush hours the trains impose a situation that breaks the rituals and the conventional rules of daily interaction and put in motion strategic mechanisms of "civil disregard", while the underground is border and passage place from a form of sociality to another⁹⁴ in which are defined own rules on different contexts), and as ideal-type of the ordinary relationships. The action that takes place on the underground becomes a moment of observation of how we relate to the other and the sequences of gestures admitted and not that regulate our daily

⁹⁴ M. Augé, *Un Ethnologue dans le métro*, Hachette Litterature, 1986 transl. M. Augé, *Un Etnologo nel metro*, Eleuthera, 1992 p.42

relationships. The underground train can be identified in the concept of solitude, as it underlines the paradox inner the modern relationships and the underground, as moment of the daily interaction, is its exasperated representation, the more contacts we have, the more they become elusive and make stronger the sense of loneliness and silence every time we are wrapped by strangers. In this perspective I'm going to analyse the rituals and rules that structure the behaviours of the underground users, the eventual mechanisms used by the individuals to avoid the contact with the other travellers and the management of our own image, the way we line up inside the train that follows precise strategies.

During my observations held on different trains of the B metro line of Prague, result recurring outlines of this urban transport mean. First of all, transience, mutability and uniformity (reiteration) are the characteristics that most structure this context. Apparently contradictories, these terms if applied to the underground, clearly define from one side the continual coming and going that makes the whole shape of the passengers of the mean, while on the other side the similar composition that seems to characterise the whole itself, even if it changes at every stop. These two processes can be assimilated through a stylistic game, to the two hypothetical physiologic dynamics of the mean. In this way, we see the constant mutation and transit of passengers that allow the underground to have sense as transport citizen line, and at the same time every modification is just the result of a continuous reiteration, in fact people change but at a general level the composition of passengers seems to change at all. These group of processes can be seen trough the recycle concept, like the ecological dynamic that gives life and meaning to what we commonly call underground. Nevertheless, if this has a meaning on a general level, when we get to the individual layer, the meaning of the two processes that form the group of passengers and the group itself, assume a different connotation. As a matter of fact, the underground train is crossed by a multiplicity of solitudes, a constant flow of

individual paths that interweave and juxtapose each other, while they rarely coincide. For all of us the train is just a transit space, a context of fleeting and anonymous contacts, a place of stay in movement that brings us from to an arrival point, a border through which we pass from one role to another (i.e. from home to work, etc.) and in which are in force unwritten rigid norms and rules that are not clearly defined. The uncertainty that typifies the interiors of the train is then even more exasperated by the fickleness of the passengers. At every stop those present have to recover the social interaction balance that the stop has broken and compromised (since some people got off and on) through the adaptation of the newcomers to those norms and rules above-mentioned. A balance that in default of a external control, seems to be imposed by the presence of the other and by his mechanisms of moral blame.

Hence on an individual level, the “human traffic” of the metropolis creates a constant tension on the single person and models of interaction behaviours that are recognized by all, and which are fitted to define and maintain this dynamic balance. Another characteristic of the underground experience is the anonymous condition that people share inside the train, a condition that has a certain influence on the strategic management of the social image in single individuals. The train can be in fact the peculiar limelight which situation context impose certain rules and in which the elapsing anonymity among actors, makes possible the absence of particular interests in giving a certain image of the self that is not the one conformed to the prevalent rules. At this purpose are illustrative the complicity and confidence gazes that occur among the presents when a subject who doesn't respect this norms get on the train. These quick glances often intend to confirm what we share. Beyond the anonymity, another consideration that favours the lacking attention to a particular management of the social image is that the underground is a fleeting place of roles exchange. In this sense the underground train can be defined as a non-place because we don't play a

specific role and from this perspective the underground, despite of the affinities, strongly differentiates itself from another mean of transportation like the railway train is. In the latter the contacts among people, which are transitory anyway, are extended in time and can often turn to permanent relationships that go beyond the travel circumstance. In conclusion, it is necessary to add the the anonymity empowers that sense of uncertainty that is generated among passengers, because who gets on is for just a stranger and we can decipher what kind of person he is just through rapid heuristics of judgement. It is also necessary to precise that this tension to the balance is much more felt in the moments of more inflow of people in train, hence close to the transport interchanges underground stops, when the situation goes totally out of any kind of individual control because of the presence of many users. This doesn't mean that the permanence on the underground during the travel on peripheral stops is not signed by behavioural and interactional norms, they just become less harsh.

Having said that, the rules that constitute our behaviours inside the underground train recall also to what have been defined as *territorial instincts*⁹⁵ to indicate the relation among spatial context and the behaviours acted by the subjects in order to feel safe and emotionally stable. In the occupation and placing on a public space, the individuals act in a strategic and rational manner under action models that are largely shared and implied. This means that they are valid for all, both for the usual users and for those who get on for the first time, because they are part of the fundamental knowledge that we learn through the different phases of socialization.

In an effort to narrate these behaviours, their placement and rules I won't insist much on them as the aim is not to standardize the passengers conduct, but I will try to show some variations that occur in the different populations that compose the passengers whole. As said before,

⁹⁵ A. Augustoni, *Comunita, ambiente e identita locali*, Franco Angeli, 2005 p.30

these are the two main characters of the underground journey, the uniformity and multiplicity. It is possible to begin this report of such behavioural and relational models following the different phases in which the passing through the train is articulated. The entrance phase suppose the people who have to get on to let the others get off, this commonly happens in Prague as there is in my opinion an innate strong feeling of respect of the other among Czech people, often this rule is broken by tourists and foreigners, who are probably accustomed to act in a different manner in their respective cities. Therefore this happens mostly in stations like Muzeum or Můstek, which are the closest stations to city centre. When somebody doesn't let get off usually the underground population complain about that, showing it with facial expressions but rarely somebody says something. Once we get on, we can finally take a proper look at the strategic action of the social actor, who has to choose where to place himself valuing a group of factors that start from the research of a free seat, to the consideration about what kind of people are placed around. It is not rare that many people decide to stand on their feet and not to seat at all. Regarding the spatial placement inside the train I've found different tendencies during my observation. The interior of the train car, which has a rectangular shape, is composed by an alternated series of three interposed seats next to the doors and two ranks of single seats in the middle. In the first and last car of the train there is respectively at the top and the bottom some free space, with no seats, to let the cyclists park their bikes as it is free of charge to take the bicycle on the underground. The train usually opens the doors on the same side and this regularity, apparently non influential, tends to characterise the Yellow line for a more intimacy and a less need of concentration and tension because it automatically sets which place has to be let free for the entrance and exit. At a general level, people prefer to take the seat on the spots that are at the extremities of the car, this regularity is strongly recognizable when the train starts from the end of the line, but usually a person of average age

won't take a seat if he doesn't really need it, if he doesn't feel i.e. tired or sick. By the way, the preferred spot is the lateral one, as there are some metal bars that help the body to hold and delimit the territory, therefore the bar becomes a defence that allow the individuals to assure the protection of a side of their body. Close to this dynamic, that we should call centrifuge, there is the other that occurs when all the seats are busy, people tend to place themselves along the doors, sometimes leaning on them despite of the stickers that warn about a possible opening of the doors, or near the lateral spaces in front of the doors. When the car is not full and the space problem is not so urgent, people usually avoid to stay in the middle where the seat rack is. In case these preferred areas are occupied, there two more territorial instincts that regulate the displacement inside the car, passengers tend to occupy the central zones that are between the two opposed doors, subsequently, when even these areas are busy, they infringe the space contained between the couples of the three interposed seats. These areas can be seen as off limits sectors as they are occupied just when there is no other space. The reason for that must be probably researched in the fact that this collocation entails the being in the middle of more intersected gazes and the lack of control of the zone behind. In the previous situation the individual, thanks to his collocation next to the lateral walls, maintains a total control of the context, as the only space to monitor overlaps the visual space they embrace, while the off limits zone there is a part that is excluded by that control.

A further consideration, inferable by the observation and referable to the need of control that often structures our action on the underground and recalls the need of balance that I previously said, is the trend of the passengers who stand on their feet to place themselves with the glance oriented to the doors, to monitor the entrance flow that at every stop composes the group of individuals that are on the car. Ascribable to the more general question of the behaviour on the underground depending on the need of stability, is the persistence of that

spheres that are around the individuals which Edward Hall named *space body bubbles*,⁹⁶ which define the social distances and the proximities with the others in our daily life. However these spheres are subjected to a reorganization, if compared to other public spaces, that is proportionally to the filling of the car till the extreme case in which the space is congested and the last form of preservation of our own space reduces itself to the backs set against or to the divergence of the gazes between people that are forcedly face to face. Regarding that what concerns the exit phase, people usually don't go to the doors till the train arrives to the station, that happens because everybody are sure that in the exit moment, the people who don't need to get off will quickly make the space for those who need to do it. Sometimes it looks like a sort of ritual. After the exit, people swiftly reach the escalators, like at a running challenge, and disappear leaving the platform completely empty. The dynamic of these last actions are systematically clean like everybody knows how and where to move.

It is now possible to touch on the most common norms that define the interactions and behaviours during the underground journey. As I've already mentioned, the anonymity and the fleeting contribute to favour the absence of detailed relationships. Observing the prevalent interactions I find three main characteristics to define them: accidentality, indifference and participation. The relationships among passengers have often as object ephemeral circumstances that rarely give the chance to a profound interaction. While accidentality expresses the randomness of the social relation, indifference and participation are the principle from which are inspired interactions and behaviours, in the first case it is enough to think about all that transitory and flighty relationships that take place when we try to fix eventual infractions of the conduct or when appears in train that kind of actor, who explicitly doesn't have a suitable behaviour, recalling the moral reprobation of the others who silently

⁹⁶ E. T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, Anchor Books, 1966, p.14

and through knowing gazes reinforce the normality. The indifference for example takes place when a drunk or an homeless get on a train and it is not because of their social position, but simply people complain about their smelling. I rarely saw people get close to somebody in need, unless he is invalid, in that case people help a lot. I remember one episode that I've seen not so many time ago, a blind girl holding her little newborn in her arms, was able to quickly get on the train because all the people around, *without saying a word*, were helping her to do it. It is like when you have to leave the seat for somebody in need, here in Prague almost everybody do it and probably this is one of the reason why most of the people don't even sit down and prefer to stand on feet.

In any case, the forced proximity that occurs on a train full of people triggers the use of different distraction devices of the passengers, in the attempt to avoid the contact with the others. The most evident is reading any kind of book, newspaper or magazine, an habit that especially have those who usually use this mean, who are most of the times very organized. Another device is the mp3 player or just the decision to take a little nap. In opposition to these devices, that in different manners suppose a certain degree of isolation with the external reality, there that distraction mechanisms that consist in wandering with the gaze looking for something to which give the attention, just till we arrive to our stop. This behaviour never anchors too long the gaze on somebody, otherwise the embarrassment and the discomfort become so evident in the other, that he could try to change place in order to go out from this nagging visual space. In this wandering like a flaneur of our times, are particularly important the advertises placed inside the car on the panels-separators near the doors. These posters have a strategic collocation as they allow the people to lighten the gaze without crossing others eyes and without giving the impression of watching somebody else. From this necessity to distract, advertisement on the underground acquires a powerful *attraction* factor,

accentuated by the fact that on the underground it is established among the ad and the viewer an individual relation that is not possible with other sources, that explains the presence of advertises that are particularly detailed and that address specifically to the consumer almost establishing a confidential relationship. Last but not least, there is the “meditation”, that is a sum of these last typologies. The gaze is orientated to the ground and the mind is thinking to some daily question or pleasant thought and brings the individual to isolate from the rest.

An interesting consideration concerns the success of the free newspaper Metro, which is distributed every morning at the underground entrance. I can suppose that this success comes from the need of the passenger to be distracted, who can read the news in a concise and quick manner both because he has to read before the stop comes, and because it works as a tool of inattention and distraction.

From what was said earlier about the spatial displacement characterised by isolating and no contacting dynamics, we may conclude that this urban interactions and behaviours are lived as exasperations of more general tendencies that are part of our daily behaviour in the city. This whole of dynamics contributes to build that sense of solitude that the individual experiments when he is inside the underground, a feeling that get stronger as the people around us tend to avoid us, as happens on the underground. However underground is not just uniformity and standardization, but it also composes a multiplicity of solitudes, that have been just described in the lines above.

The whole of the individual paths that start from a stop to arrive to another designs an unpredictable picture made of these paths. Imagine the paths like coloured lines and you will see the great hank we get.

PART TWO

Chapter III

3.0 Presentation of chosen methodology

*Je veux, pour composer chastement mes églogues,
Coucher auprès du ciel, comme les astrologues,
Et, voisin des clochers, écouter en rêvant
Leurs hymnes solennels emportés par le vent.
Les deux mains au menton, du haut de ma mansarde,
Je verrai l'atelier qui chante et qui bavarde;
Les tuyaux, les clochers, ces mâts de la cité,
Et les grands ciels qui font rêver d'éternité.* ⁹⁷

⁹⁷ „In order to chastely compose my eclogues, I wish To sleep near the sky, like the astrologers, And, neighbor of the belfries, to listen as I dream To their solemn hymns carried away by the wind. My chin resting on my two hands, from the heights of my garret window I will watch the workshops, singing and gossiping; Chimneys, steeples, those masts of the city, And the wide-open skies that make you dream of eternity.” 86. Paysage/Landscape C. Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1857

In an anthropological research it is first of all necessary question about what kind of approach we should use to come near the other. According to Malinowski, the ideal way to know the other is to experiment it in person going on site and absorbing his mores, the people he lives with, the habits and his language to come then back and witness. His project was revolutionary compared to the previous ethnography of colonial type, it reveals the troubles that every culture have in understanding others. In fact, even if living in a different cultural place, it is possible to get a totally distorted conception in understanding a particular culture. The method introduced by Malinowski was to pitch a tent in the middle of the village he was studying and to concentrate the latter on a culture of the exchange, contacts and rituals of the inhabitants of the Trobiand islands. The thesis that he proposed, reflected the need to to the place and see before emitting a judgement. Nowadays, even if this approach had a fundamental importance in cultural anthropology, the Malinowski method couldn't be practicable as the nowadays culture is more and more hybrid.

For centuries earth was populated by a small group of free people who subjected the rest of the world, on the contrary today, the number of societies convinced of the value of their independence, which give rise to the sense of their identity and related pride, are always more.⁹⁸ Another approach was the one from Gregory Bateson who, despite of the fact that his work didn't reflect a fragmented aesthetic, finds himself inside a contemporary reflexive orientation because he considers all the living systems he studies from the twofold point of view of the self-referenciality and interaction with the environment. The systems imagined by Bateson are able to elaborate informations through reflexive processes, characterised by circular interdependent dynamics, that have the power to alter in every sequence the

⁹⁸R. Kapuscinski, *Wykłady Wiedenskie* [I, II, III], 2004 in R. Kapuscinski, *L' Altro*, Feltrinelli, 2007p.74-5

interactive elements (the connective pattern in an ecology of mind).

Moreover, he continuously and systemically his conceptual tools and place them among quotation marks to maintain in a state of constant crisis his deduction method. Questioning himself about the limits of consciousness and knowledge, he considers the researcher more internal to the context of study. Bateson aims for the increase in value of the intersubjective competence. At the same time he considers the language as problematic and not neutral, his writing is experimental as it is conscious of forcing the boundaries of conventions. He probably tried to make visible what cannot be seen.⁹⁹ In the present-day cosmopolitan reality, the strategy that should be used must first of all refer to a precise historical moment and have to be an ethnography that takes in consideration the new global ethnorama¹⁰⁰ as essential parts of a new narration.

The reflection of Clifford Geertz about what the ethnographer does and inscribes, make him think that there is a lack of self-awareness regarding the representation modalities. The issue of auto-representation becomes hence the symptom of a radical turning point in the anthropological interpretation that goes beyond the interpretation of the interpretation. In order to make the text a work field, so that its subjectivities acquire a polyphonic character it is not enough to suppose a dialogue from the presence of two subjects that talk as, despite of the good intuition, proposes Geertz. The dialogic methodology is supported by the relationship among writing and interpretation and makes possible the multiplication of subjectivities in the text.¹⁰¹

The problem of the epistemological approach is that it tries to describe the cultural elements aiming to a totality. On the contrary, the enunciation method is an operative sequence more

⁹⁹ V. Padiglione (by) A. Cotugno, G. Di Cesare, *Territorio Bateson*, Meltemi, 2001, p.90-91

¹⁰⁰ cf. Appadurai

¹⁰¹ M. Canevacci, *Sincretismi*, Costa & Nolan, 2004, p.213-15

dialogic that, recombining the places of cultural negotiation, tries to follow the mobile imprints and the reorganizations, the effects of the cultural developments and antagonisms. At the time that the borders touch each other, Bhabha calls it *contingency*, happens the repetition of eventuality and circumstance in an overlapping that is extremely deep of the difference of the one in the other and that reoccurs again and again. Thinking outside the sentence in a cultural and savage manner, takes place the sense of contingent in the shape of double and disjunctive phenomenon. It is in the genres of the discourse that Bakhtin recognizes the enunciation dialogic subject, through its metaphorical reading of the dialogic novel understands the chain of linguistic communication, detecting the retarded effect of the intersubjective in the social action. "If the object (...) is already discussed in various manners"¹⁰² removing the subject that originates the social discourse and proceeding in the continuous casualty of the discourse itself, he identifies the transformation logic of the social discourse. In the metaphor of the communicative chain, the contingency becomes contiguity and the author is removed from its role of agent. The act of addressing to somebody changes into dialogic echoes and the problem of performance is removed by reducing time and space from the sphere of the activity and daily of an enunciation. When the others hide some words, arise some dialogic nuances that are degrees of extraneousness, the intersubjective temporality of the action is the metaphor realized outside the author. The enunciation is structured on more layers hence it is difficult to analyse it and in the ambivalence of those echoes and boundaries the agent embodies the temporary delay that manifests itself in the social area of the discourse.¹⁰³

In dialogic and polyphony the author style fights the monologism that sees the only legitimated voice in him, and to do so it is necessary to adopt a decentralized for every single

¹⁰² Bakhtin in Bhabha (2001) p.261

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p.91-92

character (as Dostoevsky did as first) in which the projection of the auto-hero in the discursive order is fought, placing him inside every character. Therefore the dialogic, through the act of speaking, multiplies the subjectivities in the construction of sense and the dialogic text must pay attention to the translation betrayal, trying to transcript as much as possible the logic and phonetic sense of the other. It is the subject that lives inside its environment to be the first interpreter of a specific cultural trait, hence through the negotiation between this subject and the researcher it can be possible just the moving of the meaning of the observing writing. This all is about finding a constructive transaction that discovers in the auto-representation the manifestation of the indomitable tension among the different points of view.¹⁰⁴

To the ethnographer is assigned a specific position in the texture of the intersubjective relationships that are part of the interlocutive event. Disassembling the textualised body of the other and of the interpretant I the text lacerates itself, but is also true that if the ethnographic authority would be just dialogic, the textual fact would be bridled. To resist against the authoritarian representation of the other is typical of dialogic, this happens protecting the fiction of originality in other's voice, considering the particular circumstances in which the exchange occurs. It is a dialogic research even in absence of the literary dialogue form, the important is that there is the presence of a third participant who mediates between the two individuals, it doesn't matter if real or imaginary. The entire negotiation is what needs to transpire through the whole research. *Every culture is unpredictable negotiation between who is outside and who is inside, and every language is the contingency place among its own contingencies.*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ M. Canevacci (2004) p. 215-2200

¹⁰⁵ J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, 1988, transl. J. Clifford, *I frutti puri impazziscono*, Bollati Boringhieri, 1993 p.64

*The whole life, in all its complexity and beauty,
is to eternity impressed in the gold of the words.
Our poets don't wander anymore with imagination
in the empyrean; they descended on earth and with us
in step advance to the sound of the severe mechanical march
of the Musical Workshop; their lyre is the morning
rustle of the electric toothed brushes;
it is the threatening crackle of the sparks in the Machine
of the Benefactor; it is the high echoe of the hymn
to the Unique State, it is the intimate sound
of the chamber pot of shiny crystal; it is the stirring
noise of the curtains that drop; it is the cheerful
voice of the most recent cooks manual; it is the just
perceptible murmuring of the membranes of the streets.*

E. Zamjatin, *We*

3.1 Drawing flows with our bodies, defining the continuous changing shape of the city

Here follow three fragments of the interviews I made in 2009 to some persons who in that moment were living in Prague. I had to ask some questions not to force, but just to broach the discourse about this city. In fact, the following are three selected narrations to all intents and purposes of these people, chosen among who was available to release their story about how they see Prague. The result is a small collection of autobiographic fragments about how do these people lived, felt and drew with their movement the city of Prague in 2009. Unfortunately the transcription from the audio recordings will suffer the filter of my presence as it is impossible for me to put on paper what will be presented as an audiovisual collection

fruit of my experiment, an experiment that doesn't want to set categories, but simply present with the narrative flow of these metropolitan beings, a sort of photography of the precise moment for that specific persons. Prague tales.

Fabiana Manis (IT)

I prefer to move by foot if the weather is nice, or by tram but not by underground, I don't like it so much...There are too many gloomy people on the underground, and anyway I prefer the tram because so I have the possibility to see the city, it's more relaxing. Even the people on the tram are more relaxed. Not on the underground because, leaving aside the fact that I trip too much with the mind, because people are too gloomy. I noticed that I absorb all the others pains, if I meet happy people it's OK, but if I meet people who are too gloomy, they make me so sad..especially in winter time...my relationship with the city is by foot. The first time I've seen Prague underground I was surprised, I had a moment of craziness, it's beautiful! I liked it...well, it's not all like that but for example there are some places like Flora or maybe also *Náměstí Míru* ..I remember those circles on the wall, all these colours...very nice. The trams also are nice, but they are very old school ah-ah, Prague is beautiful to visit as a city, the architecture that there is in the city...that's why I go by tram, because anyway I have the possibility to watch well what's around, for me the ideal is to sit on a tram and make a trip from one point to another of the city just to see some other stuff. I clearly would like to see the future of the moving in the city by foot or by bike, also because it's ecological. And even because sometimes when I take the underground I feel suffocate, I don't see ways out, when there are too many people I say myself "can you imagine if something happens now..", in fact

I'm a little bit paranoid about the underground, even because sometimes it's too fast, it makes me see the city in a more frenetic manner, hence I would like the future of the city transportation on surface, I'd prefer the trains, yes, outdoors because anyway it is too fast, the tunnels...you don't have the possibility, I mean you move but you don't see anything, it's ugly, especially when you go to work, I mean, when you move by tram you see people walking, you see other people, you see different situations, on the contrary on the underground I feel like in a factory, yeah a factory of people, everybody seem lobotomised ah-ah...you arrive there, you arrive to the underground and you take a seat, everybody are by their own, there is an absurd silence, if I compare it to the Italian means of transport where anyway you hear people talking, here I see it more stressful, I'd like interact more.

The smiles...

For example when I sit next to somebody I smile, because generally there is a smile exchange...

I was thinking about that the other day, I went down to the underground and at one point I sat near this man and I was seeing the other people walk away, and at one point the smell, but it wasn't a smell of dirty, poor, then somebody told me that probably he had diabetes, but because he was an old man I didn't want to marginalise him, so I stayed next to him for the whole journey. At one point he told me that he was sick, you know it's because I'm sick. By the way it was really an awful smell, strong, maybe it's impressed in my mind exactly because of the smell. And all the other people as they were entering the car were walking away playing the indifferent..and me with the scarf on the mouth breathing through it. Once I was in Bologna where there are more Arabs compared to here and they move a lot with the means of transport, it happened to me...I saw this person talking alone and I said myself "what about him?" and then I heard the echoes of these two who were making their traffics in the

distance on the bus and I said myself "what the.." and it was in that period of terrorist attacks, that they were threatening Italy, too, that now I know it was all a mise-en-scene, but it was enough to make me panic. Hence when they got on the bus, with their typical Arab clothes, I had a moment of panic and I saw them talking in this way and I was asking myself "do I get off or not?" then I realized that they were just making their business, so...

Anyway, all these images around the city after a while, make you a little bit passive, you don't feel anymore, you become a little superficial... I tell you, I come from a village of five thousands inhabitants, by the sea hence nature and everything else... and I have always seen those coming from the city a little more superficial, I mean they don't have tight bonds as we have in a small village, aside from the friendships, but even with the relatives you are in a tighter contact when you live in a village, while when you are in the city I think you learn to let the things slide on you...maybe now I'm starting to be more passive, even if I've never lived in a really big city, because Prague is not considered as a big city, but to me is big, it's enough, it's people-friendly, considering also that here people are much "colder" therefore I'm starting to be more distant, too, detached from the people, I see this detach, it's something that I hadn't before..before I was launching into more situations to meet people, while now I'm more by my own..then when you go..this thing is true in my opinion, the fact that all this fast movement..it is what I was telling you before, to go and take the underground to me is..I imagine like the little men from Lego, you know like cartoons? You see the escalators and the people mm mm, they don't speak, the train arrives, the doors open, close then passes another train, loads some other people, I see them as masses of people loaded on this car, they are brought away, then arrives another..understood? A little bit like this...personally this makes me really...when I go to take the underground, also I don't like to make always the same route, but with the underground I'm forced to do it! Sometimes I'm lazy and I don't feel like to take

the tram, and I should walk just more 100 meters, I would say...well, I mean, it's also my fault. From the fact that I consider Prague a city, and I've never lived in a metropolis, hence I cannot say what is it and what is not...I've been to London, Milan, but I've never been to Rome, never, ah-ah oh yes, I will go the next time, anyway I consider this as a city because I see her enough people-friendly, unless you have to go somewhere in the periphery, almost all areas are accessible by foot, I walked a lot in Prague, and there is also somebody who gave me wrong directions, anyway I wandered a lot by foot and I was never tired, and I would say that there aren't many giant buildings, it doesn't make you feel suffocated, it's not a noisy city therefore I consider Prague as a city. In my opinion the metropolis should be bigger, more frenetic, after all here there are just three underground lines and they are not even so long, in half an hour you can reach the other top of the city...I can't say you the difference among a city and a metropolis as I've never lived in the latter, I lived in a small village in Ireland and once I've been to London where are too many lines, I even don't know how many, too much. I tried to took the underground but I didn't know where to get off, I couldn't get out of the Tube, I was too lost, so....

Talking about Prague, knowing that here are all punctual, they are...I mean the time compared to space that we have to pass is too long sometimes, understood? It looks endless to me. Even today for example I knew I had to come here and I couldn't find it, I thought it was there and instead it was here, I walked almost an hour, I didn't realize it at the moment, but I did it, but because I'm not from here I usually watch the map and I don't know why everytime I get lost, I find the the street, but I get lost very easily. I'm sorry to say that but sometimes I blame the Czechs for that, because I always ask for informations around, I'm not ashamed, quite the opposite. I tell you, my first guide are the citizens, because they should know it...so I watch firstly the map and then I start to ask, but I don't know why, regularly they give me wrong

directions, they are not sure, they say me mm look, maybe it's there...hence it happened to me a lot of times that I turn turn turn, as it happened once in Stromovka, I stayed blocked for one hour and half in the park and there was anybody who told look, try to go out from there, no one who wanted to give me the informations, what the...I think I wasted my shoes that time!

Marek Eisler (CZ/USA)

I usually go by foot but sometimes it is hard because if somebody comes from the opposite side, everytime I feel that it should be a contact, that never happens. Generally people gazes at somewhere else and when I look into their eyes it is strange and that contact...meeting thousands of people without knowing anybody, it's strange...

When I'm in the metro I often think about the design and I look at the station and I ask my self when it was created this? As I've grown up in New York I don't even know it, I wasn't here and I have the feeling that it comes from communism and I think it is interesting: all these signs of functionalism and minimalism and I often think about that it is still there, nobody pulled it down and rebuilt it in a modern style or whatever...and in the meanwhile many people criticise that historical period, while we use it every day. Sometimes I think that we should be grateful but for example that long escalators, are a little psycho style..the long tunnels...I would say that it influences our thinking in a linear manner in these restricted spaces, where to go, arrows here, arrows there...when you see it everyday you can start to think as a robot, a machine, the detail of the doors closing on the tram is terribly dissolving, attention! The individual must turn off the feelings so he doesn't get hurt by that, drrrrriiin! this is one thing, and people voluntary...we know we don't have to stay there, and you have to hear it everytime, and in general the norms and the rules for who are they set? I don't need

somebody to take care of me, I'm responsible for myself, there is a minority of the people who make stupid things and then they set a norm for the rest of the people, and then we are not free anymore..

I think a lot about the future of the movement in the city...I see that the contemporary culture, the postindustrial internet culture, is very young, 200 years the industrial ...and it still develops and develops, they make a lot of studies, psychological ones about what is making the life style being robotic . I would like to ask if is it possible to go on in this way and in my opinion, people are not satisfied and they are not enough unsatisfied that they could solve this. Maybe here this still comes from the communism, this mood, like the whole world...I'd like to make changes but just on what I can do, just by myself, as one individual, and then I will tolerate this. I think we are on a dangerous way, that time will show us that the symptom...and we'll see it when it will be too late, I'm for the electric cars, all the resources of electricity and energy we have to solve it all, or maybe it shouldn't be a city at all, it would be better, we won't use the streets full of people anymore, I have a lot of question, why are we all so jammed in the city?and I'm not referring to now, I'm interested about the history, how it happened, I was just born and grown up in it, because it was like this and it has to stay like this. So I have a lot of questions about that....

I have controversial opinions, and I always watch the ticket inspectors, I always have with me the season ticket, I see them some meters before me, I see them how they're coming to me, and then they show me their badge, and I immediately take out the ticket to show them that they didn't surprise me, I'm always prepared because I don't want to make problems, but because I'm quiet, I have the possibility to observe how they act with the others, and I realized that they act a little bit like foreigner hunters, a lot of people take profit from the fact that when the inspectors catch many people without ticket, they have more possibilities and space

to escape. The inspectors don't ask to everybody, they don't want to know how many people don't have the ticket, they look for people with larger languages, foreigners and tourists that probably don't know that they have to punch the tickets, and once I was just watching this situation and one inspector who was really just looking for foreigners, and he wasn't even speaking in English, so he stopped one woman and two girls and said please, show me your ticket, and they had the ticket but they weren't punched, and it was a terrible example of communication, they couldn't understand each other, he was saying it's not punched and they said we have the tickets, and he was saying no, no, it's not punched, and I was there and because I speak English I came to them and I was their interpreter, and the girls were really smart people, they were on the way to give a lecture, and this man was bothering them for a ticket that they had, because I got that she didn't want to travel illegally, so I translated for them and I said him that I didn't like the way he was making his job, and I would like your id number, I want to complain eh-eh and he said me what?? and we had a discussion fight but he didn't give me the number and run away.

We have so much inputs in this life that we had to learn how to turn ourselves off, and this is dangerous, maybe...like the screen down on the underground, you hear a news and that's just another sentence in the information network or the free newspaper, it is something new, every given morning you take the metro and you get newspapers, when people get things for free, without paying, when on this newspaper are written important news that regard the world, the governments meeting and so on...this is interesting, somebody reads Blesk!, somebody else Metro, why people don't read classical novels? Poems by William Blake or Shelley, people answer you that they don't have time, the library is empty, if I have to travel back-and-forth for one hour, it is the best moment to read that literature that could awake some feelings, I think that when somebody is sick has the time to think about what he is doing wrong, wrong

diet, no gym, physical problem? but maybe he could also think that hey, its my fault..

I hope someday it will be better, maybe it is the infrastructure that has an influence on that...

I am influenced, and it makes me sad, when I see the psychological status of my fellow citizens...somebody play with the mobile...they voluntary enter in Bohnice(psychiatric clinic), and this makes me sad. And I mentally escape 'cause I don't want to see this around me, and I hide myself in these books, I read terrific stories and this is positive, but if I hadn't anything to read, well, I think I would suffer, I cannot live that situation with those people. A hundred people in the underground car and I can't talk to anybody! I f I start to speak, or I start to sing, because I'm in the mood, everybody would look at me as a fool, and that I disturb on a public space, so I start to think and I think about the future, I look for a solution, like an engineer I watch how it was built and it has a positive effect on me. A problem that inspires me. And besides I meditate, I work on the harmonisation of the physical and mental state. People wake up in the morning, take a coffee, watch the news, office, underground , TV, sleep...they can be dangerous.

I see Prague as a border between a city and a village, I'm not an expert...I would say that it is a group of people, without any kind of personal relationship, it's like there is a social aim, like in an anthill, but its not yet expressed, there is no agreement on the common goal, and I ask myself, why is it like this? Why are we here together? Everyone would explain it with his own way but there is no known consent, where are we going? Why is it like this? Why are we working here, why do we live? I really don't know, and the characteristics of the city are to me a lot of people, and not cooperation, voluntary, but instead it is like a challenge, this is another thing...this is why I can't watch them in the eyes, because my fellow citizen still looks for the cheapest food, the faster transport, and when the food is cheap it means that I pay less while somebody gains less, I have the chance and he has no chance, it's a challenge, to

survive....it looks to me very fake the contemporary society, I would like also to ask to the spectators like what is the impulse, why think? Really, let me know....I want to know, I think that instead...I don't mean to cancel it, but really we should think about that, why and how it is built....Praha..Praha...it's an interesting question, Prague is to me a mystical place, my mummy always told me that Prague is the heart of Europe, I wasn't understanding it before, but now that I'm here for quite a while and I see how much it is on the borders among west and east and moreover between north and south, here happened a lot of history, scientists and philosophers and writers, everybody were like pulled to Prague, and I met an American during a stage here, and she told me: you should rather make compliments to Prague- I appreciated a lot, when I wonder through the city, the architecture, an interesting layout.. again she told me she was in Berlin, Paris, everywhere in Europe because she studies journalism, and she told that Prague is unique, she was in Venice, Vienna, but she told me that Praha is *unica*, and in fact, a person stands in front of the national theatre looks at the castle...it's a magic! It's magical, because in this way you can believe in creation, that perfect river and all is really caught, and you can see in it how old it is, that it was developed..

Recently I've often heard that time accelerates, and they tried to explain it to me in a scientific manner, really it accelerates, I didn't even understand the scientific explanation for this acceleration, now I'm 29 and I don't have so many experiences on my back, but I remember that when I was 10 or 20 and yes I felt it...the question is why don't we stop it? And the transportation, as I've already said, we look for the fastest connection, and the thinking, our thoughts are off, we have been bombarded...time is amazing!how do an ant feel the time, or an elephant, it is surely a subjective thing, the feeling of the 24 hours, but the psychological stuff can influence our perception of the time, so often, and I tried it when I was a boy, people where saying that for example ten years passed like it run...! And I'm sad when older people

say that life is so short...We don't use every moment of our life in a complete consciousness, maybe it's because of that, we have mobiles... I think it is possible to change it, people have a quick time or a slow time...it depends on the person, how we mentally use it, an interesting detail about the public transportation and time, I confess that I'm one of those who likes to know when the bus is going to arrive when I don't have much time, a busy day, when every hour I have something scheduled, and it is true that Prague public transportation is terribly precise, in New York for example it isn't absolutely like this, there you wait for and you hope, eh-eh but Prague is always in hurry, and when you go to the stop you know that in some minutes it will arrive, and if not it means that something happened, it is comfortable, it is good, but....you are late?damn! Or I will read Shakespeare and I'll be completely happy eh-eh...

Martin Volejnik (CZ)

I obviously use trams to move in the city, in Prague as everybody knows they work beautifully, unfortunately I live in Motol that is a little bit far, hence...I would like to move by bike but it's impossible, because there are no roads for the bicycles, the street is dangerous, it is dangerous to drive with the moped, because the people here...the drivers are not absolutely accustomed to watch the driving mirrors, they don't give way, to drive around Prague is difficult even by car, bike, moped and...let's say that since I live on a hill for me to city centre is perfect, but then when I come back from work... to go up with the bike along the Plzeňská ...and nothing... I move with the public transportation, I don't pay the ticket, because here in Prague the season ticket, that for the students costs like 10 Euro and now I'm more than 26 so

I should pay 500 or 600 crowns, now I don't know but...I don't make the season ticket, sometimes I make the journey ticket which is good, you can make it also through the SMS service, I usually do it in the morning when there are more possibilities to catch the inspector, and I make this ticket and I arrive to the centre..then when I come back in the night I don't do it, on the night trams there are no inspectors and if I catch one...here..they are quiet, I mean, I talk to them, it is difficult that they make you pay the fine... and so I move with the means that work also in the night, even because I don't have the driving licence at the moment they took it to me, or by foot or by the means..and anyway Prague is small so you can move very easily...

Here is a little sad when you travel, you are not in tune with the others, it's not beautiful, there is no communication, everybody travels all by themselves, people move from one point to another without coming in contact with anybody, in Rome for example is beautiful that you go out and people talk to you, in the shop people talk to you, on the bus you ask for informations exception for the old ladies of Rome that don't have anything to do and want to speak with you, but it is beautiful that people look for communication, on transports too, here in Prague this doesn't exist , it's a sadness...you cannot even talk with the driver because he is driving, and anyway they are all upset, because they have to work...it often happens that you go, you try to catch the tram and the driver sees you and don't wait for you, he cannot wait a second to open you the door, it doesn't exist...I was now three months in Rome so I just came back and coming back at the airport I already knew it, the first to treat me bad will be the Czech driver of the Czech bus that I need to take to come back home...and it happened, I was with all these luggages and nothing, the door next to the driver was open for a second, me I was with the luggages, I needed to do the ticket because I hadn't yet the time to buy it, so I had to forcedly get on from the first door and the driver closed it, and hence I moved with all

my luggages to the back door so I knocked gently on the door to ask him if he could please open the door, and he made the classic face of a Czech driver...what the...and hence in general here the communication with the others is really sad, in Italy you are charged by the people on the street, you can ask, talk, the day starts in a good mood while you go to work or to school, here unfortunately this doesn't exist...not even among the young people...it's a little bit like that...

I really like the design on the underground, the communist one that is a Design, a very simple thing that if you see it now the result is very nice, and the trams also, it's beautiful, it's a pleasure, you see...I like to have many beautiful things around myself, it makes me happy...now they are also putting these stickers on the trams, they are nice, with this comics that suggest for example to give the seat to the eldest, they're very funny, and now also there are these stickers with all the informations about the travel, the design is very nice, I don't even know who makes it, but it's beautiful, the terminus stations also..some of them are really cool, like for example here in Letná the terminus Špejchar or that one in Vypich...they are nice, they just lack of vitality, there should more people, a pub...anyway here in Prague, the means and especially the trams...there is a particular atmosphere, it's a poetry of travelling.... instead of a real travel, because these kind of trains..people don't use them, because they are slow, here the means are nice not just to travel but also to move, like when you go up to the castle in the middle of the park there are the tram rails on the grass, it is nice...the design is really well made, especially the old trams, they are also maintaining the same design on the newest trams, I like them. For example now there is this new tram, I mean the last new tram, that has the design made by Porsche, why not?

Recently I started to finally see more people travelling with the moped and I hope that a little bit of this culture, this anarchic moving with the moped...maybe in this way there will be a

little less traffic, the cars, here it is difficult...the last news was that they wanted to demolish the railway station Masarykovo nádraží, that is a non sense I don't get why they are doing it, the future should be that people move outside Prague in the suburbs...they are extending the underground lines, so you can leave the car, the motorbike by the end of the line and because Prague is small from periphery it will take you about 15, 20 minutes to get to city centre...the same is for the trains, Czech trains České dráhy...are working on putting more extra-urban lines and the frequency has been more and more increased. It's a little bit counterproductive because they are working on that, this Karlin group...wants to make a shopping mall of this station and I don't know...I'm afraid about Masarykovo nádraží, there is already a shopping mall nearby, it's a non sense, in Czech republic..we are now in this pseudo economic boom of the shopping malls, they are building them everywhere....people go there so it is convenient for them...and they are putting all these malls in the city centre, it's a rubbish, because I don't think that in Europe are building all these malls inside the city centres, can you imagine a Tesco in Piazza Navona??? They are making this here everywhere....and this is obviously wrong...the problem is that even the municipality doesn't have a project, a development, there are no projects, exception for this tunnel that are digging in Letná to lighten the traffic jam...is good...the previous governments didn't do good stuff, for example in 1989 when they built the motorway in the middle of the city up on Wenceslav square, the magistrála....there was the railway station there before, now it's all blocked by traffic 24 hours a day, and anyway a lot of people are moving outside Prague but all this is missing a solid infrastructure...the developers should think that if they want to extend Prague they should think about the infrastructure...make liveable these new neighbourhoods...

Prague is not yet like for example Berlin, which is far bigger and therefore there is more art, and designed walls...but here we are starting to have a lot of nice bars, with art also...this is

nice...here life happens in the bars, on the streets there is no much social life, I saw a documentary about North Korea and there also, there is no communication among people on the streets, you see the cars driving but you don't see the street life, and this is the reality of our communism that was here, it's this...anyway here when you enter a bar, you already know what kind of bar it is, what kind of people you're going to meet, obviously some places have always been dangerous, but life as in the past, is still happening in the bars, hence now you have a lot of clubs, the teenagers are making their own culture, obviously everyone looks for his own places, and Prague is also tourism, the tourists bring here a lot of money, they make Prague prosper...it doesn't bother me, on the contrary Prague compared to other cities in Czech republic, it's a city where come millions of tourists, it's a nice aspect, you can speak English, Italian, any kind of language, that is normal for a metropolis, in Prague I work for the foreigners, I go out with foreigners...you speak in three languages everyday...so I like it. The advertises around the city are maybe too much, if the ad is a little bit more artistic it doesn't bother me otherwise yes...the old Prague of decades ago, when there wasn't so much ads, looked more relaxed it was nicer...but anyway I think that it is normal and that we can't stop it, for us is the "bringing democracy" idea...for example when you take the highway every spot is completely covered by ads, awful ads! While if you travel on the highway in Germany, where the ads are forbidden you can travel more relaxed...it changes the journey... it's always nicer to live in a calmer city, with less traffic and less noise...it's nicer, but I think we can't help about this...

In my opinion a metropolis is a bigger city with much more inhabitants, metropolis is a word that sounds really good, to me it's a city that works well, you have a lot of infrastructures, roads, you move, you change..there is a life that never stops, never...you have many different things to do...an intersection of cultures...where life is very fast, on the other hand

Prague...Prague is a rarity, it's undefinable, the definition of Prague is Prague. Prague's got its rhythms, I don't think it's much a metropolis, even if it's growing very fast, it's extending...also how it was built up, Prague was projected by architects, the most famous in Europe... once upon a time there were projects and now there aren't anymore...now they build randomly...Prague maintain this small town philosophy even if many aspects make of her a metropolis...I would say a quiet metropolis..it's still small, it's easy to move around...you cannot get lost..it's provincial and economically it's a city that is really growing..

Here people seem to be always in a hurry..but it's not true, people are accustomed to move very quickly from home to work and back, from home to the pub and back...here the transfers are fast, because at the end she is small.. even by foot...its easy.

Conclusions

*Life and death of hypotheses.
From the equation I part of the Cosmo
to the axiom Cosmo part of the I.
Subsistence. Knowledge. Antropophagy.*

Oswald de Andrade, *Manifesto Antropofago*

The term *Aporia* is used by Derrida to indicate a problem that doesn't have a solution, and can't be recalled to a synthesis, hence the *aporia* is not conquerable but become an endless experience inside which it is necessary to stay if we want to produce thinking.¹⁰⁶

Editing as sculpting, the thought in the cut.

The application of the polyphonic methodology makes visible the dialogic, it selects the decentralization of subjectivity, the coherence with the paradigms internal to each determined subjectivity and not just that one of the researcher. The polyphony coordinates not only different harmonies but, above all it approaches the conflicts and intersects the rifts. Observing a city it is necessary to learn to interpret ethnographically what is hidden under a mask, to give meaning to what have no sense, flipping its application and taking it to the alienation with the familiar and to present its many-sided aspects. The main characteristic of polyphony is the editing, a method which is stable and unquiet at the same time “that adapts to the scape of the urban communication, which in turn favours the production of abstract

¹⁰⁶ J. Derrida, *Apories*, Ed. Galilée 1996 transl. J. Derrida, Aporie, Bompiani, 2004 p.14

thoughts modelled on the shape-city”¹⁰⁷ The firsts who have theorised and applied the polyphony to the urban context were the futurists, they conceived culture not as an unitary whole, and they found it instead in the editing of fragments of their works. The futuristic poetic is dominated by the destruction of the syntax, words set free, simultaneity and absolutely freedom of images and analogies, expressed with unlinked words, without a leitmotiv or punctuation. The futuristic program indicates the anthropological method of the editing because it makes possible the bind among distant things, apparently different and hostile in tones of analogies more and more vast, through the juxtaposition of the isolated visual fragments. This methodology applied to the city metropolis is also suitable for other contexts, like the visual communication, because a fragment is an evidence of post-modernity. Like a sculptor that models his work, the editor gives an extra shape to the flows of narrations. The third space.

The theoretical structure of the anthropological journey is essentially about discovering, a no confirmation of the own interpretative schemes but an endless shock. The real paradox is that in the recent history of anthropology, it has been progressively reduced its ability to travel. With the structuralism this refuse reach its highest point and it is not much about a dislike of the journey, as the disregard for the theoretical challenge that this brings with it. The anthropologists have discovered again the journey as a structural and precise marker of their way of knowing. The urban anthropology has stimulated all that. Our home otherness is not very visible, sometimes is perceived as annoying. As the destination of our journey is physically closer to the point of departure, as the otherness is sharp and raw.

The little fragments of movements I collected and put together from Prague , reveal not only the characteristics of the behaviours in this city, as they are unpredictable they are already

¹⁰⁷M.Canevacci, *La Città Polifonica*, SEAM, 1997 p.38

changed, but especially the ambiguity and the strong contradiction among all the forms of this city that make the urban movement of the people the peculiarity of Prague.

In conclusion I can hence say that the movement drawn by our bodies moving through the city is strictly bound to the fact that in our microcosm we are part of that great connective pattern described by Bateson in his ecology of the mind. Prague is a mind multifaceted and rich of external inseminations, Prague speaks a foreign language.

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