

Localities of Mediation

Deterritorialization and Embeddedness in the Mediated Experience of Place

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Image List

- a) Akitsugu Maebayashi – Sonic Interface <http://www2.gol.com/users/m8/>
- b) Esther Polak - NomadicMilk/MILK project <http://www.nomadicmilk.net/>
<http://www.milkproject.net/>
- c) Moblab <http://moblab.org/>
- d) Exonemo – Road Movie <http://www.exonemo.com/RM/indexJ.html>
- e) Proboscis – Urban Tapestries <http://proboscis.org.uk/> <http://urbantapestries.net/>
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To be located implies at once a violence and a juncture, to be tracked down, immobilized by an external force, countered by the confluence of dwelling, both of which suggest a physical rooting. However how may one be located in the proliferating digital, electronic mediascapes which surround us? The constituents of place, localized context, are increasingly deterritorialized, uprooted and distributed in mediated forms. But simultaneously the converse system is in operation where by the immaterial enters the material environment in an embedding which rearticulates place within a given site.

The discourse of the local, of the specificity of place is of course not limited to objective physical geographies, but includes the place of politics, economics, culture and the social, which have localized expressions and conditions. It is evident that a transformation occurs when these expressions and conditions are experienced in technologically mediated forms and as these forms are in turn experienced as a presence within the contexts of place.

And as we increasingly encounter place through its mediations the distinction between primary and secondary perception is placed in a state of confusion and we must question the necessity of evaluating these perceptions differently.

We must subject the Aura of the so-called 'original' to a renewed enquiry, as we are challenged to identify such a state when everything is replicated, represented and transformed through multiple mediations. These mediations induce a framing which restrict our reception of their content, enforcing standardization in order that the message may fit the medium. Yet at the same time these mediations allow for a renewed reception of the world and reveal to us new perspectives.

Systems of media technology formulated in network, mobility, ubiquity and immanence at once expand and contract space, which combined with (and contributing to) the process of globalization, form a dialectic of the local and the global.

The forces of globalization are frequently identified as portending fragmentation, homogenization, alienation etc., the local becoming endangered by the global but as we shall see in the constant process of deterritorializing and embedding the local and the global have a vital interplay which can not be so easily dualized.

In the mediated experience one is faced with simultaneous absence and presence, in which we are challenged to locate ourselves as well as the object of mediation. We are faced questions of how can mediated expressions and encounters assert our engagement with the constructions of place and embed us within a specific context? Does such embedding denote access and participation or restriction and control? Does deterritoriaization ensue the loss of place or new freedoms of interpretation?

In a constant oscillation between deterritorialization and reterritorialization, we can no longer map the mediated localities which we encounter, only the localities of mediation. We can not speak of a point of origin nor a replication, when all experience is based on the indirect, the represented, then this becomes the real and the authentic.

To begin this discussion we must first outline interpretations of the terms used in this investigation. Firstly the terms of deterritorialization and embeddedness. Deterritorialization stems from Deleuze and Guattari's term which is approached in a variety of methods, but designates a fundamental disintegrative force, a disengagement from land/territory, a dissociation from an imposed context of singular coded meanings and identities. The term has come to be used widely in cultural discourses, especially in relation to globalization, whereby the tie between culture and place is loosened, or unbound and dislocated. A state or process which Garcia Canclini has identified as a separation of the "natural" relations from social and geographical place (1995: 229) and which Giddens describes in the form of 'disembedding' which provokes the 'lifting out of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space' (1990: 21). Deterritorialization at once implies liberation but also loss and displacement.

Embeddedness is a term which has found a grounding in economics, psychology and socio-politics. In the realm of economics embeddedness has been used by Granovetter (1985) to describe 'socially orientated and socially situated' economic activity, which Zukin and DiMaggio (1990) have gone on to expand into four main fields of cognitive, cultural, structural and political embeddedness, and the importance of these in economic development. In terms of psychology the 'culture of embeddedness' is often applied to Freud's discourse of intersubjectivity (1913) and the construction of self through the limitation of relations to the family, which results in the unconscious projection of feelings onto them. Marx (1845) also makes reference to 'embeddedness in nature' 'Naturwuechsigkeit', concerning human's ingrained attachment to nature/the environment, which hinders the human in taking control of evolution. Embeddedness therefore may either strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of a given action, depending on its nature.

In this text embeddedness refers to the degree of engagement and participation in a particular context. It questions how media forms merge and embed themselves in other established structures and how this might afford a greater integration or connection with one's environment or that of another. It presents the possibility of embodying the mediated within a specific space, which draws upon a complex web of references to the external world but which enables the media and ourselves to become rooted in this specificity. A possible interpretation of this form of embeddedness is Heidegger's 'Being-in-the-world', the immersion, encapsulation of a presence in a reality, but also a positioning towards that space which enables our reception of it and interaction with it, going beyond passivity and non-reflection.

Both Deterritorialization and Embeddedness are highly imbued in the discourse of the phenomenological and metaphysical. Deterritorialization and Embeddedness do not form a mutually exclusive binary and we may see how one may lead to the other. To mediate may imply an instant deterritorialization but this is always reterritorialized at the point of reception. We encounter displacement only to form a new sense of place.

Finding One's place

Central to the discussion here is the very definition of place. In his introduction to 'The Production of Space' (1991) Lefebvre outlines the changing discourses of space issuing from that of the mathematical, to that of epistemological 'mental place', to the artistic space 'We are thus confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global. Not to mention nature's (physical) space, the space of (energy) flows, and so on.' (1991: 8)

The notion of place as a fixed phenomenon which is situated by a set of coordinates and delineated by physical territory and geographic/political borders is not our point of reference here. As Soja challenges, place is not 'fixed, dead, undialectical', notions which have been formed through an emphasis on the concrete, which is referred to as the illusion of opaqueness. Through this illusion is hidden 'the deeper social origins of spatiality, its problematic production and reproduction, its contextualization of politics, power and ideology' (1989: 124). Yet in the illusion of transparency 'spatiality is reduced to a mental construct alone...'. However, Michael Benedikt presents the case of place as a location of culture, which is realized in a state of imagination 'A mental geography of sorts has existed in the living mind of every culture, a collective memory or hallucination, an agreed-upon territory of mythical figures, symbols, rules and truths, owned and traversable for all who learned its ways, yet free of the bounds of physical space and time.' (1992: 30)

Place can be asserted as a human construction, as Lefebvre presents in the *Production of Space*. It can be argued that the concept of space is different from that of place, with a different set of connotations, but the discourses are highly intertwined. He states that 'every society and hence every mode of production – produces a space, a space of its own' (1991: 31) From every space a language ensues and 'Every discourse says something about a space (place or set of places)' (1991: 132), communication always carries marks from its place of issuance and the points which encounters in circulation. Space is created by society itself, through its actions, productions and articulations space comes into being.

To Lefebvre place is a matter of social production in which social relations 'project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there and in the process producing the space itself.' (1991: 131) Massey follows on from this as she states that space is 'constituted through social relations and material social practices' (1994: 254) she then goes on to make her own three propositions for the formulation of place as a 1) product of interrelations, sphere of possibility 2) of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality, a sphere of coexisting heterogeneity 3) always under construction, always in the process of being made (2007: 9). We see here place as presented as a rather nebulous entity, which is always in the state of emergence, not linked to the physical ground, but issuing from a set of shifting relations which are diverse and fragmented.

But for some, such as Lucy Lippard place is a form of anchor, as she suggests that the "pull of place" continues to operate in all of us as "the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to prevailing isolation" (1997: 7) She alludes to a loss of place through the constant shifting which Massey uses to actually define it, but identifies its influence whether in absence or in presence upon the 'way we live'. Place may be uprooted and deterritorialized yet it continues to assert itself through affecting our perceptions, behaviours and actions whether directly or indirectly.

However when considering place, it can not be thought of something outside of ourselves, it exists within us and through us, which again Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' (1978) finds affinity with. Malpas demonstrates how place reflects 'not only our practical and technological capacities, but also our culture and society- our very needs, our hopes, our preoccupations and dreams (1999: 1), our psychological constitution also in turn constitutes place and some may argue that this is the true location of place, within the mind. Notions of place are clearly diverse and subjective and these are undergoing even further transformation as we encounter and formulate place through technological means.

X Does Not Mark the Spot

The map can be seen as a basic mediation of place, in representing place it also delineates, delimits place and reflects a certain attitude or conception towards the definition of place and its structure. The map has functioned as a totalizing territorialization of place for centuries, a visual representation of geography, but this conception of place has also seen many transformations. This is highlighted well in the various developments in map-making as outlined by David Harvey (1991: 240-249). He indicates that in the time of European feudalism the meaning of place was imbued in the legal, political and social relationships which was reflected in spatial representations and understandings. The field outside of experience, that of external space 'was weakly grasped and generally conceptualized as a mysterious cosmology populated by some external authority, heavenly hosts, or more sinister figures of myth and imagination.'

However in Renaissance maps, 'new qualities of objectivity, practicality and functionality' came to the fore as a valued attribute, which has finally led to 'maps striped of all elements of fantasy and religious belief, as well as any sign of the experiences involved in their production, abstract and strictly functional systems for the factual ordering of phenomena in space.' This presents the map as forming an increasing system of negation, in which the act of documenting place in actual fact ensues its destruction.

Barthes has referred to this process of 'scientific geography and in particular modern cartography' as 'a kind of obliteration, of censorship that objectivity has imposed on signification', the inflexibility of the system, its misrepresentations and its clear assertion of power in delineating the land is to Barthes and de Certeau, appalling. de Certeau offers a critique of the map as a 'totalizing device' which 'collates on the same plane heterogeneous places', the map is in effect a homogenization and reification of the rich diversity of spatial itineraries and spatial stories (Harvey 1989: 253).

Borges story of the 'exactitude of science', which Baudrillard also quotes in *Simulation and Simulacra* highlights the absurdity of attempting to create a representation of such accuracy, that it in fact overlays the actual object of its representation. In this tale a map is made of such accuracy that it covers the very land that it wishes to describe and through so doing becomes meaningless.

'The College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same Scale as the Empire and that coincided with it point for point. Less attentive to the Study of Cartography, succeeding Generations came to judge a map of such Magnitude cumbersome, and, not without Irreverence, they abandoned it to the Rigours of sun and Rain. In the western Deserts, tattered Fragments of the Map are still to be found, Sheltering an occasional Beast or beggar, in the whole Nation, no other relic is left of the Discipline of Geography.' (Borges 1975)

Baudrillard takes this tale to present the saturation of representation which we have now constructed for our own reality, the primacy of the representation supersedes that of the original, and in fact leaves reality in tatters: 'Henceforth, it is the map, that precedes the territory. . . it is the map that engenders the territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map' (1983: 2). The map then is a representation of place which attempts to structure and order complexity into simplified legibility, applying a standard to all the kaleidoscopic myriad of diversity and in so doing changes our thinking towards the condition of place, pre-constructing encounter with it.

A Question of Technology

In our concern with mediation, we are primarily discussing that of media technology, but it is quite reasonable to question what media technology constitutes, and what is meant in fact by technology itself. There are many potential interpretations.

An initial position with concern technology may be to describe it as technique, a method, not only a physical tool or a machine, but a system of interpreting the world, harnessing and processing its forces, what may be described as a conversion for efficiency which Jacques Ellul describes as 'la technique' 'the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency (for a given stage of development) in every field of human activity' (1967: xxvi). Technology may be seen by some as a determining force, which can change the social and economic fabric of society, as is laid out by Marx whereby technology engenders a mode of production and any shifts which occur in this mode also impact upon wider relations in society 'The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist.' (Marx, 1976: 165)

Heidegger (1977) asserts that all technology is biased, it is a mode of positioning towards the world, a 'mode of revealing' which transforms but also limits our perspective. His student Herbert Marcuse warned even further of the totalitarian leaning of modern day technology 'Today, domination perpetuates and extends itself not only through technology that as technology, and the latter provides the great legitimation of expanding political power, which absorbs all spheres of culture' (1964: 158). However at the same time proponents such as McLuhan celebrate technology as a symbol of freedom and democracy 'Electronic media...abolish the spatial dimension... By electricity, we everywhere resume person-to-person relations as if on the smallest village scale. It is a relation in depth, and without delegation of functions or powers... Dialogue supersedes the lecture.' (1964: 255)

Throughout history there have been intense reactions in the face of technological development which have seen warnings, outcries, protests while at the same time being embraced and extolled. Technology can be seen as a system of interpretation which can change our perspective on the world bringing new possibilities but also new threats. But technology does not exist separate from the human, it is produced by the human, enacted by the human, as Latour bluntly expresses technology 'does not come from another planet; it is highly socialized and connected with a long history.' (Lovink 1997: 156)

With regard to 'media technology' 'new media' 'information technology' etc these are also highly debated and ambiguous terms and we shall struggle to find an appropriate expression for a form of communication or the conveyance of information which is largely based on image, sound and text, but can also be seen to engage the spectrum of the senses in other ways. Some physical technologies that might be included are: printing press, telegraph, telephone, radio, television, walkman, computer, mobile phone and internet. In this description it is important to note that all technology was innovative at some point in history and have continuously challenged societies' notions of the world, as Nigel Thrift (1997) has often commented the 19th Century saw huge changes through the railway and the telegraph which led to the maxim of the 'annihilation of space by time' which now finds revival again in the 21st Century.

Constituents of Experience: Perception and Cognition

In assessment of experience we must refer to the history of discussion upon perception (and in turn cognition) which has run throughout philosophical science. Beginning with the so-called dualism of Rationalism and Empiricism a clear distinction can be noted between the conceptual a priori of logic and reason which may be utilized to discover the truth of reality and the contrasting emphasis upon experience and the sense of perception as the basis of truth. In Rationalism the mind, the consciousness is critical as a separate subjective entity in revealing the objective world. However in terms of Empiricism, especially in relation to Locke, the human is a blank slate, with no prior knowledge or reason other than that formulated and imprinted upon him/her by experience through the senses. Kant attempts to bridge this divide through 'Transcendental Idealism' the construction of the world based upon our thought informed by perception, which is then in turn opposed by Realism claiming an objective world that lies beyond the senses and our conceptual reasoning. The purpose of this dialogue is to illustrate that the very basis of our human experience, the manner in which we perceive the world directly around us and how we formulate judgements upon these perceptions are themselves points of dispute and the truth of any experience direct or mediated must always be questioned.

It may be argued that our experience of the world is based upon perception and cognition, as a result of our senses and the processing of this information realizes our being in the world. Whether this experience brings knowledge of an objective world has been much debated in the history of philosophy, establishing doubt as to the accuracy and validity of our perception and reasoning. However through perception we make judgements and formulate notions of reality. It is through these notions that we enact our being-in-the-world and therefore even if we accepted the absence of a singular absolute reality, personal and collective notions of reality create their own validity. When considering the mediated experience of place these personal and collective notions of reality are important to take into account at the same time examining how these may be transformed through media technologies.

In the mediated experience we encounter the 'object' in the form of a representation, but how do we distinguish between what is representation and what is not? As Schopenhauer suggests, this may be an impossibility 'Still less can there enter into consciousness a distinction, which generally does not take place, between object and representation... what is immediate can only be the sensation; and this is confined to the sphere beneath our skin. This can be explained from the fact that outside us is exclusively a spatial determination, but space itself is... a function of our brain.' (1966: 22) Through our perception we create the structure and meaning of place, an internal realization of what is supposedly external, therefore we have only our internal processes to inform us of the world beyond.

This leads to ideas of phenomenology which are highly relevant in this questioning of experience. Husserl (1913) outlines three components in the experience of phenomenon: the authentic appearance, inauthentic appearance and signitive representation. In authentic appearance we receive the appearance of an object through direct observation, in which only certain perspectives of this object are revealed to us, the inauthentic appearance refers to that which does not appear to our direct senses, the plane which does not reveal itself upon observation but which we fulfil through imagination. Signitive representation manifests itself when appearance is evoked through a sign and not in its original. These elements come together to realize the act of full perception which is at once intuitive and signitive and fulfils a process 'similar to a continuous projection which takes on a new meaning with each phase of the perception process' (cited in Eco 1989). Perception is therefore not based upon a singular reception of the object but upon the multiple perspectives of seen and unseen, presence and signified.

Merleau-Ponty goes further in stressing the multiple ties between one object and another which also ties to the self, each object is a 'mirror to all others' (1958: 544) and we become part of the object when come to perceive it, as 'to look at an object is to plunge oneself into it' (1958: 78). And yet despite this seeming assimilation, we may never fully experience the object due to its myriad of reflections and so must question 'How can anything ever really and truly present itself to us, since its synthesis is never a completed process, since I can always expect to see it break down and fall to the status of a mere illusion? ...completion is made impossible by the very nature of perspectives...each one of them, by virtue of its horizons, refers to other perspectives and so on indefinitely' (1958: 385).

Our sense are open to endless interpretation in which we continuously build subjective realities, but our perception can also naturally be false, we can be tricked by them and can make deductions based upon complete misapprehension. Nietzsche uses this to argue the primacy of reason 'The senses deceive, reason corrects the errors; consequently, one concluded, reason is the road to the constant; the least sensual ideas must be closest to the 'true world' – It is from the senses that most misfortunes come – they are deceivers, deluders, destroyers" (1968: 317) Our senses are easily deceived leading us to make false judgement, yet it can be questioned whether despite false judgement, this experience remains reality or not. How do we deduce between authenticity and inauthenticity? To Merleau-Ponty if the stone is perceived, no matter if it does not exist, it becomes authentic in the very perception of it.

However to others the inconsistency of perception is a cause for alarm, as Cray comments upon the challenge to the basis of knowledge which realizations in the potential faultiness of sight brought. 'Functioning of vision became dependent on the complex and contingent physiological make up of the observer, rendering vision faulty, unreliable and it was sometimes argued, arbitrary' (2001: 409). Therefore 'Vision, or any of the senses, could no longer claim an essential objectivity or certainty.' This was a severe blow for the sciences of the 19th Century which had upon till then based fact upon rigorous observation, if the power of observation is fallible, then so too is the science that is built upon it. We must therefore realize that the construction of the world according to the senses, no matter how regulated, will always result in discrepancies. We find these discrepancies also present when the operation of the eye, or other senses, are supplemented by the apparatus of technology.

Adorno highlights the discrepancies of perception in any experience, which although may precede conceptually dualized accounts of subject and object, is robbed of immediacy, since experience always entails a primary mediation. 'There is no simple guarantee that my thoughts, words, or even sensual intuitions actually grasp the object as it is, independently of my perception of it and thought about it. The subject comprehends the object not as it is, but only insofar as it has been shaped by the subject's thought and perception. In Adorno's technical vocabulary, the subject mediates [*vermittelt*] the object' (Edgar 2006). Adorno outlines in *Negative Dialectics* (1966) the concept of mediation "Vermittlung" in which there is never a direct relationship between the knowing subject and the known object, the object is constituted by the subject through subjective perception and understanding which is a form of translation, a reception based upon mediation, therefore our even most essential experiences can be claimed to be mediated.

How we experience things and how we acknowledge these experiences will play a key role in this investigation into mediated place. As we have seen, various theories located experience and perception in a positioning of Subject and Object against each other, but Heidegger challenges this Cartesian dualism through 'being-in-the-world' by which the subject and object are intimately intertwined, disallowing any differentiation. For Heidegger perception does not involve a

separation and opposition to the world, it involves an unreflective embeddedness in the world. This is taken up by Merleau-Ponty who asserts that we must be integrated in the environment in order to perceive things, based upon a primordial involvement and understanding of the world. Perception is not a simple biological process but an openness to the world which allows a circulation to occur between all its components which simultaneously link to and reflect each other.

We have thus highlighted the differing opinion upon the objectivity of the world and our reception of it and positioning towards/within it. The idea of authenticity, reality and truth and how this can be reached is at the heart of these theoretical discussions. Empiricism maintains that such a path is offered through the senses, in particular that of observation, however as physiological research revealed the biological processes of vision and the fact that they can be faulty, undermines our ability to rely on the senses for an objective truth. Our senses always transform the object. The object is mediated by the subject as Adorno proposes, so even in our most basic perceptual functions we already experience mediation.

Extended Senses?

Therefore is it still possible to speak of the mediated and non-mediated? The original and the reproduction/representation? We can not claim authenticity belonging to a particular form, there is already a discrepancy between the object and the subject's reception of it. Therefore when the object is reproduced/represented it undergoes a similar process as in the transfer of our reception of knowledge based on basic perception. This questions our concern with the mediation of technology when our very biological perception and act of cognition already results in a mediation of sorts. We can not talk of an untouched, mediated experience here acts upon an even more primal mediation, apparatus place mediation upon mediation and therefore it can be claimed widen the degree of displacement and therefore allow for greater discrepancy. And yet at the same time such 'filters' and 'magnifiers' are claimed to enable an ever more accurate act of perception.

Does apparatus, technology counter this division, distance between subject and object or heighten it? And does this distance offer insight or imperception? From a simple lens, to a web camera broadcasting to the internet, what do we gain and what do we lose through technology?

The use of perceptual enhancing apparatus has been identified by many in triggering a disturbance of the realms of the inside and the outside, whereby the boundary between the two can no longer be identified. Crary's excellent studies document and analyse the development of visual apparatus and their impact upon our way of seeing. 'What begins in the 1820s and 1830s is a repositing of the observer, outside of the fixed relation of interior/exterior presupposed by the camera obscura and into an undermarked terrain on which the distinction between internal sensation and external signs is irrevocably blurred.' (1990: 24) The rise of film also led to further commentaries upon the human relationship to the machine, in which the human eye and the eye of the camera become merged, one seeing through the other, leading Miniam Hansen to claim 'boundaries of the human body have been burst' and we have 'the deliberate blurring of boundaries between human and nonhuman nature' (1993: 44/47) McLuhan exaggerates further, in his alignment of technology as 'extensions of man', in which we enter our nervous system into that of technology and technology also enters that of ourselves 'After three thousand years of explosion, by means of fragmentary and mechanical technologies, the western

world is imploding. During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today after more than a century of electronic technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned.(1964: 11) Extending our sensory capacity, Baudrillard comments that McLuhan 'saw in the era of the great electronic media an era of *tactile* communication' (1994).

But while McLuhan talks of an immersion of the senses, Cary talks of a 'pervasive separation of the senses', in which the dissociation of sight and touch occurs in a 'remapping of the body' 'The loss of touch as a conceptual component of vision meant the unloosening of the eye from the network of referentiality incarnated in tactility and its subjective relationship to perceived space.' (1990: 19) Here we have established a complex condition where upon the human body is at once extended and enhanced through media apparatus, while also becoming detached, alien to itself and its environment in the loss of the network of referentiality.

The Space Between Words

Language is the central position of this investigation, the key construct by which we attempt to describe and understand the world, but through the very act it alludes us. Language is representation. It employs signs, signifiers to represent phenomena, signified. As Saussure clearly lays out there is no relation between the signifier and the signified, this is arbitrary, "The conceptual side of value is made up solely of relations and differences with respect to the other terms of language, and the same can be said of its material side . . . in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it." (Saussure, 1959: 117-18) Language is made up of differences, it is only through these differences that we can identify a signified, as there is no positive correlation with its denominator.

This therefore promotes difference in which signs can not convey fully the signified, meaning is identified in the difference between signs, it is only in relation to others that meaning can be conveyed. Derrida, who promotes this term, identifies difference as emerging from the gaps and slippage between words and meaning, the continual flow of language. Difference is that by which 'the movement according to which language, or any code, any system of referral in general is constituted "historically" as a weave of differences.(1984: 12)' Derrida describes the 'movement of signification' which because of difference makes the present only possible if it is 'related to something other than itself in which absence becomes presence and therefore denies somehow the original presence to which it refers, drawing to the conclusion that 'there is nothing outside the text' (1976: 163) . Derrida identifies a unique point of instability which leads to the disintegration of everything which is not present, that is only the signifier exists for us, the signified is effectively lost.

Therefore there is no stability in the signified, a difference always remains between signifier and signified and results in multiple readings. This is of course taken up by Barthes in the Death of the Author "there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination"(1977: 148). A concrete signified never exists, it is at the destination, within the reader that meaning is inscribed, therefore undermining the historical authority of the author.

In language there is a given structure of communication in which, as Foucault comments, there is an 'interplay of signs' and these signs are arranged according to the 'nature of the signifier', not by the signified. This is a structure based on the difference between signs and does not have direct relation to the actual content of communication. The interplay of signs therefore becomes a game 'that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits.' In language a subject can not be pinned down, Foucault recognizing as Derrida does the constant movement and difference in language which is more 'a question of creating a space into which the writing[communicating] subject constantly disappears.' (1977: 102). The author here too then suffers another death along with the intended signified, we can only lose intention in language and submit to the play of signs.

Eco's 'Open Work' optimizes the openness in a system of differences, in which 'Meaning is an infinite regress within a closed sphere, a sort of parallel universe related in various ways to the 'real' world but not directly connected to it; there is no immediate contact between the world of signs and the world of the things they refer to' (1989: xxii). And through this separation of the world of signs and the world of 'things' openness arises, we ourselves make the connections between the two worlds. Eco applies this to the specific terms of the art work which he describes as 'a complete and closed form in its uniqueness as a balanced organic whole, while at the same time constituting an open product on account of its susceptibility to countless different interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterable specificity (1979: 49).' The work is simultaneously closed and open, it has been brought to some closure by the artist but the viewer then reopens this as: 'Every reception of art is both an interpretation and a performance of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself.' We therefore must create the work in our reception of it, we must enact it and draw out our own meanings, as the meaning itself is in a state of disturbance and beyond our reach. If there is no fixed meaning then does it matter the direction of our interpretations? Is every interpretation and misinterpretation equally valid? We can perhaps only say that each interpretation can not be taken as an absolute. But all we have are symbols, as Lacan observes "Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him..." (1956: 42) they create our very reality, even our destiny, they cannot be escaped and they cannot be gone beyond.

The mediated experience is based on a system of symbols which attempt to articulate a signified. They form their own language and therefore must be identified as a system of differences, they necessarily deterritorialize, that is remove from the referent through enacting communication. Jonathan Crary raises the separation entailed in this process through the example of the photograph which in the 19th Century 'becomes a central element not only in a new commodity economy but in the reshaping of an entire territory in which signs and images, each effectively severed from a referent, circulate and proliferate' (1990: 13). David Harvey proposes that 'Any system of representation, in fact, is a spatialization of sorts which automatically freezes the flow of experience and in so doing distorts what it strives to represent.' (1990: 206). Castells however warns against an interpretation that distortion and breakage somehow defines new media processes above other forms of interaction stating that all 'communication is based on the production and consumption of signs thus there is no separation between 'reality' and symbolic representation. In all societies humankind has existed in and acted through a symbolic environment. When critics of electronic media argue that the new symbolic environment does not represent 'reality' they implicitly refer to an absurdly primitive notion of 'uncoded' real experience that never existed.' (2000: 403-404) He challenges the concept of the 'untouched' 'uncoded', the code itself is part of reality.

Transaction and Capital

The system of capital and the transaction of currency is a concrete example of the dissociation of signifier and signified. The financial economy is based on a system of signifiers which have lost any connection with a signified, it is through imagination that it has become a reality in of itself. Is this the fate of technological mediations of place too?

James Cary highlights the supplanting of materiality with detached symbols as ‘part of a general process initiated by the use of money...the progressive divorce of the signifier from the signified, a process in which the world of signifiers progressively overwhelms and moves independently of real material objects’ (1989: 220).

Marx refers to money as the signifier of signifiers, the ultimate signifier, which is empty, which in fact is a complete abstraction which does not hold to a signified, but yet brings everything together in its overarching system. “If money is the bond binding me to human life, binding society to me, binding me and nature and man, is not money the bond of all bonds? Is it not, therefore, the universal *agent of separation*? It is the true *agent of separation* as well as the true *binding agent*, the *galvano-chemical* power of society” (1964: 167) The signifier as the “Agent of separation” but also “true binding agent” again establishes the dialectic of distance and immersion, the deterritorialized and the embedded, it is not one or the other but simultaneously both.

The discussion of the abstraction of space through capitalism is continued by Lefebvre: ‘It is now that artifice, which at first has the appearance of art, prevails over nature, and that form and the form separate from their content; abstraction and signs as such are elevated to the rank of basic and ultimate truths’ (1991: 218) Here we may accept the sign as an entity in itself, without consideration of its root, and therefore hold it as truth.

The correlation between financial economies and that of mediated images is explicitly demonstrated by Cary, in the form of photography, both money and photography enacting systems of power (particularly in the nineteenth century). ‘They are equally totalizing systems for binding and unifying all subjects within a single global network of valuation and desire. As Marx said of money, photography is also a great leveler, a democratizer, a ‘mere symbol’, a fiction “sanctioned by the so-called universal consent of mankind”. Both are magical forms that establish a new set of abstract relations between individuals and things and impose these relations as the real. It is through the distinct but interpenetrating economies of money and photography that a whole social world is represented and constituted exclusively as signs’ (1990: 13). Adorno also comments on the impact of living in a reality constituted by signs, which alters the very way individuals relate to each other, as they ‘economic subjects’ individuals ‘do not relate to one another at all immediately but act according to the dictates of exchange value’ (1967: 74) Our interaction with the world and those within it becomes in itself an economy of signs.

The Mass of Simulation

When a world of signs replaces that of reality, when reality is created in the image of reality, a simulacra is formed. As Sontag states simply the ‘Image world is replacing the real one’ (1977: 154), reality is ‘redefined’ and Debord continues ‘*Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation.*’ We are faced with the dilemma of not knowing what

reality is anymore when 'Fragmented views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a separate pseudoworld that can only be looked at. The specialization of images of the world evolves into a world of autonomized images where even the deceivers are deceived' (Debord 1995). We have succeeded in creating such an intense plethora of representation that we can no longer distinguish between 'original' and 'fake'. The world has created its mirror image according to Foucault creating a universe of emulation leading us to ask 'Which of these images coursing through space are the original images? Which is the reality and which is the projection?' (1966 18-19).

However in Baudrillard's hyperreality we need not be concerned with what is real and what is not 'Of the same order as the impossibility of rediscovering an absolute level of the real, is the impossibility of staging an illusion. Illusion is no longer possible, because the real is no longer possible.' Through over representation and duplication which forms the hyperreality, reality has already suffered a death, we can no longer distinguish between authentic and inauthentic, because original reality has been lost. The inauthentic becomes authentic in our reception of it and interaction with it: 'The spectacle that falsifies reality is nevertheless a real product of that reality. Conversely, real life is materially invaded by the contemplation of the spectacle, and ends up absorbing it and aligning itself with it' (Debord. 1995: 8). Reality begins to construct itself in the form of its represented image, the authentic attempting to fulfill the image of the inauthentic. Therefore we can but 'deny the primacy of an original over the copy, of a model over the image', and 'glorify the reign of simulacra and reflections' (Deleuze 2004: 80).

What is expressed here is the pinnacle of the merge of deterritorialization and embeddedness. Reality is displaced by the insubstantial, disconnected images of representation which reach such concentration that they come to constitute reality itself and attain full embeddedness, yet at the same time creating an alien world in which we ourselves are deterritorialized, without knowing it.

The Framed Landscape

Mediators 'transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry' (Latour, 2005: 39ff). There is no neutral form of mediation, no form of mediation which transfers in completion substance from one site to another. Heidegger's *Gestell*, the frame of technology is of great importance in the discussion of mediation. As Latour went on to comment the medium will always transform its content "Information as something that will be carried through space and time, without deformation, is a complete myth." (Lovink 2002: 155). Heidegger refers to technology as enframing the world, 'The rule of enframing threatens humanity with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth.' (1977: 309) Technology transforms our mode of being-in-the-world, and although we may question the existence of a primal truth, we may be sure that our experience is transformed through mediation. The technology, the form of mediation sets a frame around its content, it creates another context which is dissociated from the 'original'. David Harvey also raises concerns with regard to an experience based on representation as 'Any system of representation, in fact, is a spatialization of sorts which automatically freezes the flow of experience and in so doing distorts what it strives to represent' (1990: 206), mediation constructs another space and this is a highly different space to that of direct experience, therefore we can argue that when place is encountered through media technology it is inevitably deformed, there is always interference in the signal.

In the process of deterritorialization, the 'object' gains new meaning, but also loses meaning, the frame acts as if like a magnifying glass, enlarging and focusing its content, but prevents us from perceiving that which lies beyond the frame. Deleuze was also very aware of this frame, commenting that 'The frame ensures a deterritorialization of the image' 'it gives a common standard of measurement to things which have none' (1986: 14), this standardization is important to reflect upon, as objects are compressed, converted and rendered in order to fit the medium, they must comply with the standards of that medium and therefore losing a certain heterogeneity.

We are all familiar with McLuhan's commentary on the 'medium as message' and Norbert Boltz expands upon this to highlight how the medium impacts upon our behaviour, not only in our reception of the world but also in our construction of it: 'Every medium shapes human interaction in that, like the metaphor, it transforms experiences. Media work like metaphors insofar as they pre-construct the world we perceive' – (Bolz 1990: 111). We create an image of the world through various media before we have even perceived it first-hand.

This can lead to potentially threatening circumstances. When enthusiasts such as Alan Cohen, vice president of Airespace, (which sells wireless technology) readily proclaim that "If I can operate Google, I can find anything... Google is like God. God is wireless, God is everywhere, and God sees everything. Any questions in the world, you ask God" (Friedman 2005:159), then we have a great deal to be worried about. Google is just one example of how a singular frame has come to represent the whole. We can argue this as a form of censorship, which we ourselves perpetuate, as media platforms such as google only offer us a particular way of viewing information, and that information is also limited by the platform, the danger is for us to accept that such media portals are in fact God, that we can reach an all seeing, all knowing perspective through media technology. As mediations become all pervasive, it becomes easy to forget that the medium exists, as

Baudrillard points to the 'implosion' (1976) of the medium, which in fact results in the 'end of the message' (1978). The medium is everywhere and therefore nowhere, it has become invisible as all mediations are increasingly in one ubiquitous form of the digital and we no longer distinguish between mediated and direct experience. 'The medium itself is no longer identifiable as such, and the merging of the medium and the message (McLuhan) is the first great formula of this new age. There is no longer any medium in the literal sense: it is now intangible, diffuse and diffracted in the real, and it can no longer even be said that the latter is distorted by it' (1978: 54).

Media War

A key area of the study for the impact of media technology on people's perception has been the area of mass media and war, which provides a compelling example of the operation of enframing. When war is occurring in a distant place/country, a particular psychological distancing is already at play. War is an example of an extreme situation in which human tragedy is inevitable, and for those caught within it, war is an experience of horror. Yet as is often commented everyday through television such images of trauma are broadcast to people watching safely in their homes, possibly on the other side of the world, creating an ambivalent space in which one's relationship and response to extreme human situations undergoes a severance, as war journalism has "greatly increased the situation which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer know how to describe" (Deleuze 1989 103).

Many studies have been made into the psychological and social impact of 'normalizing' these intense images and

situations of reality. In the 70s various studies were made (Cline, Croft, Courrier 1973) (Drabman & Thomas 1974) as to the desensitizing impact of television, especially with regard exposure to violent imagery and behaviours, their studies suggest that the more we are exposed to such violence through the media, the weaker the impact it has upon the viewer, and instead of invoking strong emotions or even aggression, the result is in fact an indifference. This desensitization is a result of repetition and our inability to relate to the extremes that we witness, they become common place, as Cumings formulates 'By its incessant replication of images, television destroys individual identity: the return of sameness over and over again, in all its psychological desolation and tedium...it never meets anything but what it knows already' (Cumings 1994: 25).

War coverage we can argue presents one of the most intense forms of framing. It is of course a highly sensitive political issue and media attempt to persuade a certain positioning, if not through outright propaganda through subtle conditioning, particular perspectives are encouraged. War, media and propaganda 'The first casualty of war is the truth. There is of course no single truth. But the truths of the various contending parties are often turned into blatant propaganda.' The images and information which we receive through media construct our perception of the world 'impinge on interpretation' and 'critically affects the picture that people have of reality. These events often include human suffering, distress and death' (Damon & Lerner 2006: 844). Television in particular has been identified as a medium which demands a particular form for its content, it is a clear example of the standardization which Deleuze referred to. Abel identifies this standardization in the leaning of television to 'storytelling' 'TV is a storytelling medium. It abhors ambiguities, ragged edges, and unresolved issues... The effect all too frequently is to impose upon an event or situation a preconceived form that alters reality, heightening one aspect at the expense of another for the sake of a more compelling story, blocking out complications that get in the way of the narrative' (Abel 1984: 68).

"World war II had its newsreels, but with Vietnam, for the first time, film from the front could become a regular part of daily news coverage" (Hallin 1986: 129). The Vietnam war has been singled out as a highly extreme example of how the mediated image can impact upon political perceptions and change public opinion. The claim that 'The United States lost the Vietnam War because of the introduction of color television, which showed the American public in a luridly realistic manner what "our boys" were doing and experiencing over there' (Mulder 2004: 46) is often reiterated. The media have been identified as igniting public protest against the war, and yet as Chomsky has commented the media were very pro-war at the time, despite presenting images of hardship. In this case the power of the image could be sited as challenging its very operators.

We have seen a rising degree of media coverage of war since WWII, spanning mass media and more personal media, we may even say that media is used to wage war itself, a link which Virilio particularly expounds upon. We have now entered into what has been described as 'Information warfare', of course most information technology has emerged from designs for war and war can be waged through the flow of bits, rather than the march of soldiers. The machinery of war is not limited to fighting forces, but also includes the "perception management" of the population at home and indeed round the world' (Thussu & Freedman 2003: 64) leading us to the state where the full capacities of media are perfected for 'fighting, packaging, and selling warfare' (Cumings 1992: 1).

Media coverage of war is an extreme example of how we attempt to engage with a distant place and attempt to understand the situation, in the face of the absolute impossibility of achieving this. In this discussion we have used a strong

example to highlight how even in everyday matters media and media technology formulate our reception of the world on biased terms and impact upon our opinion and action.

Technological Transformation of Place

Let us now turn to the technological manifestation of the transformations of place. These are identified as Network, Mobility, Ubiquity and Immanence, all of which are greatly intertwined. These elements can not be simply divided into agents or qualities of either deterritorialization or embedding, but are key in the transformation of place through new technologies (which must also be recognized as a process which has been taking place over 100s of years).

Network

A network can be described as a system of nodes and connections. One can connect with anywhere in the network and there is a constant transfer throughout the system. There are various examples of network infrastructures which create a network of places, which can be found in telecommunications, transport and information networks. As places, nodes, become networked and enter a stream of communication/information, there can be said to be a merge of place.

Castells has mapped in incredible detail the 'Network Society' in which the infrastructure of the modern world is based upon that of a network space of flows. Castells describes that 'in concrete terms a network society is a society where the key social structures and activities are organized around electronically processed information networks,' in which the advance in technological infrastructure has provided the capacity for the system to work as a unit on a global scale. This generates a new relationship to place and between places, as sites are connected to many others in a form of immediacy which transforms geography: 'The topology defined by networks determines that the distance (or intensity and frequency of interaction) between two points (or social positions) is shorter (or more frequent, or more intense) if both points are nodes in a network than if they do not belong to the same network. On the other hand, within a given network, flows have no distance, or the same distance between nodes. Thus, distance (physical, social, economic, political, cultural) for a given point or position varies between zero (for any node in the same network) and infinite (for any point external to the network).' (2000: 501) Castells claims that the network defeats distance between all nodes in the network, but creates insurmountable distance between nodes in the network and those outside of it. Castells is highly aware of the exclusivity of the network, its ability to alienate as well as connect.

Latour 'Actor-Network Theory' explores how human and non-human actors are able to affect and influence each other in a network. 'Translation' is central to this process, it is not the case that influence is subsumed by every actor, the network consists of many points of heterogeneity necessitating re-interpretation, re-presentation or appropriation to bring the nodes into alignment. (Callon 1991) (Akrich 1992) (Latour 2005) A network consists of heterogeneous points assimilated into a greater structure, but ANT shows that entering a network is not enough to ensure effective communication between the nodes, it requires this translation. Therefore in terms of place, we can not directly transfer one place to another in an encounter of direct communication or direct influence, in the process of mediation transformation/distortion is necessary for effective reception.

Many have embraced the notion and infrastructure of the network with enthusiasm, lauding the integration that it brings. For instance in the Japanese government's charter on ubiquitous network society, the network is praised as 'it will be possible to exchange information freely going beyond the boundaries of time and distance, making a society in with smooth communication.' The strands of the network can enwrap us and embed us in instantaneous interaction of place.

However, counter to this Lash identifies 'forms of life in the network society' as 'somehow lifted, disembedded' (2002: 234), as in the network we have created a space of flows, a continuous stream which dwells in no place, existing in constant circulation, in which translation may be forced to take place through the lowest common denominator.

Mobility

Mobility is manifested in many forms from physical movement, including migration and tourism, transport technology to mobile technology and flows of information. Movement is not necessarily from one point to another, as is expressed in the urban derive, whereupon the flaneur is not concerned with how to get from A to B but traverses the city in a new form of subconscious awareness, by which the environment can be newly encountered. Debord describes the derive as 'A technique of transient passage through varied ambiances. The derive entails playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psycho-geographical effects which completely distinguish it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll. In the derive one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action...and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the attractions they find there.' (1981: 50) Mobility then can be a method of openness to the environment in which we can discover alternative narratives of place, through our movement through it. Certeau also alludes to this in the presentation of the walker as inscribing a poem upon the city (1984: 93). The derive allows for a political challenge to monopoly of urban space by the commercial, which attempts to govern movement in the city, directing it towards its own purpose, but the derive subverts the written rules of the city by writing its own text.

Here mobility can be interpreted as designating and expressing freedom, however this is only when we have the choice in mobility. But for many mobility is an enforced itinerant prison, for example in the case of refugees and victims of sex trafficking. Mobility is thus also associated displacement, powerlessness and exploitation. To some it may bring freedom but for others it brings incarceration.

The mobile phone has become the technological symbol of mobility and one which has stimulated much controversy over our notions of place. At the heart of this controversy is the delineation between public and private space, we can now carry out activities which we would have otherwise done in private in any public space. This has led to concerns of inappropriate behaviour, perhaps particularly well highlighted in an anecdote in Rheingold's *Smart Mobs* (2002) where a lady in the Philippines was amazed to see that as guests at a funeral held their hands together as if in prayer, they were actually texting on their mobiles.

Mobile technology creates a space which we can carry with us, which we can enter into, no matter where we are. For example each day on the commuter trains in Tokyo, we all escape the crowd and the intrusion in our personal space by creating our own space through the mobile phone, checking internet, sending emails, playing games, listening to music, even watching television, whole rows of people with their heads down, concentrating on the tiny screens in their hands.

Mobile technology allows us to enter other spaces, but does it facilitate an engagement with the environment at hand? Personal. Portable. Pedestrian (M. Ito, D.Okabe, and M. Matsuda 2005) identifies the use of mobile phones for

communication within a very short distance, generally within the same city or the same neighbourhood, even the same house. The authors propose that in many mobile interactions people are referring to their environment and this influences their behavior. It is not a tool to connect necessarily to a distant elsewhere, but also to connect within a given locality too. However it is highly questionable to claim that mobile interactions heighten our engagement with our surroundings, just because they can be utilized anywhere does not make them relevant to every place. It of course depends upon their application. Recent commercial applications have included car navigation and GPS locators for services in your situated area, which although detail information of the immediate location have little to do with engaging with locality. We shall see later some more effective creative approaches to this issue.

Mobility has made place mobile and has allowed us to move between places at greater speeds, whether at will or through coercion. This mobility brings place into a constant movement, which can never be fixed, and which it is doubtful if we can locate with GPS.

Ubiquity

Media technology is becoming ever more ubiquitous, becoming part of the structures of our lived environment. 'As video walls, LCD panels, video projections and large scale computer graphic displays become greater and greater parts of our lived environments, we enter a new era of architecture, one in which the design of our lived spaces reflects and incorporates the electronic information and imaging technologies which are ever more central to our lives.' (Lunenfeld 2000: 300) These technologies merge with the fabric of place, they themselves become embedded within it, however does this dictate that such integrated technology will also provide an embedded experience for us?

The pervasive computing of 'Everywhere' leads to a technological unconscious according to Thrift (2004). He outlines that computing is in a movement to greater context dependence, with location awareness which will allow it to adapt various relations between users and other devices, therefore becoming 'appropriate to the situation'. Such smooth operation creates an unconscious function in the environment but also makes us increasingly unconscious of the very presence and impact of such technology, which in turn begins to formulate our very unconscious.

Another side of ubiquitous technology demonstrates how embeddedness can become an incarceration, as particularly highlighted by surveillance and other systems of control, which increasingly monitor every aspect of a given space and people's movements and transactions within it, which effectively alienate us from the very environments which we inhabit. We may also challenge the embeddedness of ubiquitous technology through the fact that it can develop such embeddedness that it becomes disembedded, becomes invisible and thereby an ever more threatening absence/presence.

Immanence/Immediacy

Immanence is the any time/all the time component of media technology, the flood of information which occurs in simultaneity. A topic which Georg Simmel writes of in the 19th century with the 'Intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli' (1997: 175) and 'the rapid telescoping of changing images... onrushing impressions'. We encounter so many aspects of place, and so many different places all at the same time. Foucault comments upon this culture of 'all at once', 'We are in the age of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition,

the near and the far, the side by side and the scattered,' it is all there at once. There is no longer any absence, we have entered a state of 'pure presence' (Baudrillard 1988: 32) which although built on simulation is so immediate that it appears transparent to us.

Virillio stands at the fore of critique upon immanence, in which speed defeats distance, we reach our destination without even departing 'playing down the orient and, therefore, the departure, we can now, state that, having reached its destination, this same occident tend, with the industrialization of speed, to institutionalize urgency, that is, the pure destinations that annihilates finally the departure, all departures and all the orient in an instantaneous circumnavigation.' (1991: 122) It is this immanence this 'instantaneous autocommunication' which Virilio claims destroys geography, in which we need no longer be concerned with the spaces between things, the gaps and distinctions, they can all be encountered simultaneously in one point.

Global Flows and Local Currents

In the discussion surrounding the transformation of place, of perceptions of locality and the meaning of a specific place arguments inevitably become caught up in the politics of the local and the global, most strongly expressed by globalization.

The discourse of Globalization is a highly complex and problematic one. We have seen many conflicts over the term and over its impact. Many have argued that Globalization is the main source of loss of place identity and meaning, but this is an over-simplification. Arguments of pro and anti globalization local global glocal have become mis-represented. As Noam Chomsky states 'Globalization is international integration and everyone is in favour of it' (2002).

However, 'The term "globalization" has been appropriated by the powerful to refer to a specific form of international economic integration, one based on investor rights, with the interests of people incidental....Accordingly, advocates of other forms of globalization are described as "anti-globalization"; and some, unfortunately, even accept this term, though it is a term of propaganda that should be dismissed with ridicule.' (Chomsky 2002)

It is easy to lose sight of what globalization is in the midst of so much rhetoric. It has come to be interpreted as global economic integration which the world bank describes as 'being driven by international trade and aided by information technology', and its symbols are multinational corporations. But of course globalization is not just an economic phenomenon it is also a deeply political, cultural and social transformation too.

Globalization is not an invention of the last few decades, it can be claimed that it began in the late 16th/17th century. The Dutch East India company, established in 1632 is often heralded by historians as the first multinational cooperation and the first instigator of the shareholding system. Gunn in 'First Globalization – The Eurasian Exchange' makes a detailed analysis of the trade routes which were established between 1500-1800 between Europe and Asia. Then globalization was enabled by developments in shipbuilding and cartography, now globalization is enabled by new systems of organization and new communications technologies, most dominantly the internet.

Castells (1999) offers most insightful commentary upon the intrinsic relationship between globalization and technology, highlighting that the two processes of information revolution and globalization are firmly intertwined, and

accelerate each other. It is through technology that the huge increase in globalization has been able to occur. In 'The world is flat' Thomas L. Friedman (2005) identifies 10 key agents in the move towards 'global flattening', half of these are directly based on technology – Netscape, Work-flow software, informing (web search engines), open sourcing and wireless technology. They enable mobility, access to information, sharing and collaboration. However we must be careful to describe new technology as the cause of globalization, as clearly the actual technology is not such an instigating force, it is the thought around that technology and the uses that it is put to that cause transformation. As Castells comments 'Information technology is not the cause of the changes we are living through. But without new information and communication technologies none of what is changing our lives would be possible.' (Castells 1999).

The idea that globalization is opening new gateways, crossing borders, overcoming barriers (all much the same rhetoric which surrounds digital technology) is very much situated in the emergence from the cold war period in which the world was clearly divided by clear political lines and the Berlin wall became a key manifestation of this. Friedman speaks of this marked contrast 'So basically we've gone in the last 12 years from a world of division and walls to a world of integration and webs. We are all increasingly connected, but nobody's in charge' (2005). However a system of power always needs an enemy 'you're either with us or you are against us', the divisions of the cold war are now arguably replaced by the divisions of the 'war on terror'.

But let us continue with the mirage that globalization is global interactivity, with even Appadurai referring to the world as an 'interactive system'. It is associated with tearing down walls, dematerializing the nation, overcoming borders etc. This has brought strong advocates to globalization, who praise it for opening up opportunity, extending competition, universal participation, spread of wealth, education, creating new spaces, with hybrids and diversity. Friedman is aggressively optimistic about globalization, celebrating the new opportunities it is bringing "the global playing field is flattening," in which "individuals from every corner of the flat world are being empowered" (2005: 11). However others are highly critical of the current methodologies of globalization which result in exploitation, inequality, exclusion and homogenization. It is a process of 'Creative destruction', as Schumpeter (1942) would term it, but many would emphasize the destruction which such a system delivers, rather than its creative ability. There is a claim that globalization opens up spaces while others hold that it destroys place and imprisons.

Much of the global local debate centers upon the global as a standardization, a universal, a homogenization and the local is an expression of original world diversity which must maintain its original identity and not be corrupted by global forces. This is a debate of homogenization and heterogenization. The new movements of people, commodities, capital, information have resulted in new interactions and ties between disparate places. This brings new freedoms, choice and diversity. One is liberated to form their identity beyond the immediate locality and in so doing promotes new cultural awareness and understanding. However we have clearly seen the opposite side of this through racial tensions and perceived threats to culture, religion and way of life. Counter to the notion of places becoming more numerous and more diverse there are strong fears of a loss in diversity and a movement towards homogenization. If everyone is connected to everywhere, we can all access the same information, leading to a new diversity but in the same direction and a loss of separate identity.

However going even further than this are the warnings that globalization promotes only one culture, only one world view, that of America. It has been strongly argued that Globalization has led to Coca-colonization and McDonaldisation of

spaces throughout the world, a claim of homogenization and Americanization which replaces other cultural forms. These have become the greatest symbols of globalization, that every high street in every large city around the globe should proffer a McDonalds, a Starbucks, a Gap etc, western brands and corporations changing the visual and economic landscape of cities and also the cultural behaviours of its people, a situation which Naomi Klein has greatly detailed in 'No Logos'(2000). However it is noted that this is not just a one way system, the reception of outside influences can be culturally adapted, and although these influences certainly have an impact, they are not necessarily eradicating culture or place. Appadurai stresses that within globalization there is no simple equation of homogenization or heterogenization:

'The central feature of global culture today is politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thus to proclaim their successful hijacking of the twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular.'(1996) This is also a claim made by Homi Bhabha who asserts that homogenization and heterogenization are equally at force and should not be opposed between the local and the global, which similarly can not be described in terms of natural state and encroachment. 'The differences of locality are neither pre-existing nor natural but rather effects a regime of production. Globality similarly should not be understood in terms of cultural, political or economic homogenization. Globalization like localization, should instead be understood as a regime of the production of identity and difference, or really of homogenization and heterogenization' (1994:45). The global and the local are not binary opposites they are created and located within and through each other and this interplay creates spaces of equal cultural value. However there are very real cultural fears associated with globalization and its carriage of information technology.

But what is a global space? Saskia Sassen illuminates the difficulty of identifying the place of globalization.

She alludes to a strategic transnational space anchored in cities which simultaneously hybridizes and homogenizes. She challenges the overarching focus upon 'hypermobility of capital and the power of transnationals', an emphasis on the intangible and deterritorialized and aims in her analysis to 'recover place and production' in which she argues that globalization involves highly local processes which are embedded in place, forming a 'specific geography of globalization' and undefining 'the extent to which it is not a planetary event encompassing all of the world' (2001: 10).

To some a global space may be the equivalent of Augé's 'non-place', the ultimate space of deterritorialization, a place of anonymity which can be found everywhere but seems to exist no-where. A place that we are all familiar with, identified in 'motorways, service stations, big stores and hotel chains' (2006: 106). He defines non-place as follows: 'If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place' (2006: 77), he does not use the term homogenization but instead refers to 'factors of singularity' (2006: 40) which allow these spaces to be detached from any relationship to their surroundings and allow us to find them in nearly every place we travel to.

Appadurai outlines 5 different types of imagined 'world landscapes', which can also be used in the assessment of global space. These are: ethnoscapas, technoscapas, financescapas, mediascapas and ideoscapas. They are encapsulating landscapes which generate and transform spaces through the networks which they establish. But this does not mean that global space exists outside of local space as Giddens (1990) defines globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that the local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa"(1990:64). It is the link and affectivity between different localities which creates the space of

the global.

Divide and Conquer

But counter to the proclamations of mass global enfranchisement, globalization is shown to operate on the exclusion of others in order to include the privileged or those who can be useful to the system. Globalization, in its current form, necessitates inequality which we have seen through cheap labour, poor working conditions and the polarization of wealth and poverty.

With further developments in technology Castells (1999) warns that this becomes no longer a case of exploitation but a situation in which people and localities can be 'switched off', acknowledging the highly exclusionary processes involved in technological distribution, he remarks that an effective 'technological apartheid' is being formed but also the global economy is not designed to be all inclusive 'In fact, most people and most lands are excluded, switched off, either as producers, or consumers, or both. The flexibility of this global economy allows the overall system to link up everything that is valuable according to dominant values and interests, while disconnecting everything that is not valuable, or becomes devalued. It is this simultaneous capacity to include and exclude people, territories and activities that characterizes the new global economy as constituted in the information age' (1999). Those who are excluded, who have no value for informational capitalism are derogated to the space of exclusion the 'Fourth World'.

Tehrani offers an extreme metaphor for the divisions which economic and technological globalization fosters 'Marshall McLuhan's "global village" is divided between castles inhabited by the lords of the manors, protected by moats of electronic surveillance, and surrounded by teeming, restless peasants living in Panopticon societies controlled by the castles' watchmen stationed in the towering cameras of remote sensing satellites' (Tehrani 1997). And Massey highlights that the mobility and comfort which First world societies experience with 'time space compression' 'may entail environmental consequences, or hit constraints, which will limit the lives of others before their own. We need to ask, in other words, whether our relative mobility and power over mobility and communication entrenches the spatial imprisonment of other groups' (Massey 1994).

Some have gone further than to solely criticise the 'digital divide' and have claimed that the imposition of western technology upon the rest of the world as a form of cultural imperialism Massey sparks the doubt in our minds as she asks 'to what extent does the current popular characterization of time-space compression represent very much a western, colonizer's, view?' (Massey 1994).

In the European colonial campaigns which began in force in the sixteenth century technology played a key role not only in enabling the conquest of other lands, but also as a justification for such action. As Adas outlines in 'Machines as the Measure of Men', European science and technology was taken as a symbol of cultural sophistication and superiority, becoming a gauge by which to measure the level of development of non-western peoples. 'the spread of European science and technology has been central to the global transformations that Western expansion set in motion, the assumptions and policies that determined which and how many discoveries, machines and techniques would be shared with which non-western peoples have been critical determinants of the contemporary world order' (1990: 5). Technology and colonialism have historically gone hand-in-hand, which leads to deep suspicions when world dominating powers encourage

the rest of the world to adopt their technologies. Stuart Hall identifies this fear, as global mass culture 'remains centered in the West. That is to say, Western technology, the concentration of capital, the concentration of techniques, the concentration of advanced labour in the Western societies, and the stories and the imagery of Western societies – these remain the driving powerhouse of this global mass culture' (1997: 179).

Hall refers to strong characteristic of homogenization which media technologies appear to be inducing and the hegemony of which Virilio accuses that technology 'colonizes the world, through globalitarianism...but it also colonizes bodies, their attitudes and behaviours (Armitage 1999: 51). The argument appears that technologies based on Western thought, in particular American thought will lead to the promotion of this thought in those who engage with it, in a form of psychological, social conditioning. In particular the internet has been the recent target of these accusations. Hedley (1999) states clearly that the 'Internet opens the possibility of cultural imperialism on a massive scale.' In his study on the cultural impositions of the internet Seongcheol Kim further supports the notion that 'Information and technology are controlled by the core nations, and its flow is seen as uni-directional from the core to the periphery with little opportunity for peripheral nations to participate in the process' (1998). He outlines the unequal flow of media from Western dominated cultures to other territories through which Western cultural products heavily impact upon local and national cultures and their own perspective of themselves. The danger arises that culture becomes associated with commodity, with products which can be bought and sold in a marketing strategy, culture as an economic good, leading to 'massive cultural destruction, dilution and assimilation (The Futures of Culture, 1994: 10 UNESCO)

Rudi Volti refers to these issues as being ones of convergence theory. He states that, "Although the world's nations have different histories and cultural orientations, they are becoming more similar to each other [that is, converging] as they make use of the same technologies", and many see this convergence in the direction of American culture as 'increasingly exposed to global culture, which in most part are American messages' (Thussu, 2000: 167). However Appadurai challenges the still prominent notions that America is the source of cultural hegemony, it is 'no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes.' He counters the warnings of global homogenization by pointing out that 'What these arguments fail to consider is that at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or another way...' and suggests that the global cultural economy can no longer be 'understood in terms of existing center-periphery models' due to the complex interweave of physical and imagined places. But he does recognise that small polities will always feel a threat from larger polities in the region, fearing 'cultural absorption', and echoing Massey formulates that 'One man's imagined community is another man's political prison.' Hall is keenly aware of this political prison whereby 'Movements of the margins [are] so profoundly threatened by the global forces of postmodernity, [that] they can themselves retreat into their own exclusivist and defensive enclaves' potentially leading to fundamentalism, which is equally finding a footing through the use of the internet and other media technologies. But when a culture feels threatened by the influences unleashed through media technology is it an option to decline them? 'That is, can countries that have previously been isolated geographically, culturally, and / or economically continue to do so by "opting-out" of the very technologies that are pulling the world together now?' (Cesarini 2008).

Many nations (governments) and cultures have seen information technology as a threat to their power and autonomy. But this does not mean they are rejecting new technology, they are strongly advocating it, however transforming

or regulating its use to try and reflect 'cultural values'. In terms of governmental promotion of the internet for example this has largely become a form of censorship, controlling the content of the internet so as not to cause 'offence'. It can be argued that there is regulation in all states, although some are more intense than others. China is of course at the forefront of internet regulation, with its 'Great Firewall' blocking all provocative mention of Tibet, 1989, Falun Gong, democracy, human rights, to list but a few. Article 15 of the State Council Order No. 292 (2000) outlines what some have called an online dictatorship: "IIS providers shall not produce, reproduce, release, or disseminate information that: ...endangers national security, ...is detrimental to the honor of the state, ...undermines social stability, the state's policy towards religion, ...other information prohibited by the law or administrative regulations".

The Chinese have manipulated the internet well to create a new form of 'cyber-nationalism', taken to its extreme point in 2005 in violent anti-Japanese protests, (which were largely incited through internet chat rooms) in which the patriotism which the government has attempted to engender has gone beyond expectation and reached an extreme which actually works against the government's international relations. Cyber nationalism has become an alternative to state sponsored patriotism and reflects deep-seated feelings of Chinese educated youth who make up 70% of online users (Gries 2004). This gives a clear example of media technology being used to strengthen notions of Nation, to heighten an identity which is very much attached to the culture/political condition of a territory.

The case of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation is often referred to as an example of a minority culture taking on new media strategies in the expression of their cultural and political positions, in this case to gain recognition and political autonomy in an area where they are highly marginalized. They have utilized the internet, video streaming etc. to gain national and international support for their movement, raising awareness of the challenges facing indigenous peoples and rural workers in Mexico, who are severely affected by much of the Mexican government's foreign and domestic policy. There are many cases of political utilization of new media technologies such as mobile phone and the internet, the use for democratic causes is well documented. The fall of the Philippine Estrada government was contributed to through the use of SMS in 2001. In this case thousands of protestors dressed in black assembled at Manila street, through the distribution of the text message "Go 2 EDSA. Wear Black," (Rheingold 2002). There have also been studies recently on how new media technology is being used in Burma and Zimbabwe in a call for democracy. Studies and reports by Danitz and Strobel (1999), (Myint 2003) and more recently in response to the protests of 2007 (e.g. Yasumoto 2007) have highlighted in particular the use of the internet within Burma and outside of the country to mobilize support for political change and orchestrate demonstrations and actions towards this goal. Ndesanjo Macha (2008) has also recently documented how SMS, electronic postcards, google map, youtube flickr, social networking, mobile phones, blogging are all being used to highlight the corruption of ZANU PF. These are all examples of digital technologies being used to have a very real impact in a particular place, which included participation from the population themselves but also engaging many others beyond that population. Another example of locally engaged use of media technology can be found in the blogs of 'Salam Pax' (2003) Where is Raed? This blog was kept throughout the events of the 2003 Iraq war and the horrors and hardships which Salam Pax experienced here. He was able to inform people outside of Iraq the impact of the war on the civilian population, a subjective yet highly valid perspective on the events which caused chaos and destruction in the country. Salam Pax was able to counter the stories of the mass media, with his own personal truths which in turn gained international recognition.

These examples all state a heavily political purpose for the use of new media in response to national and local issues. But

how are such technologies being used for more general Cultural expression?

Mediations of Cultural Expression

To many cultural expression is also tied to language, it is difficult to find a space for cultural expression in the internet when the language which that expression is tied to is hardly represented in this electronic space, and for some languages there is currently not even the software to support their scripts or language. With 80% of all internet content in English (International Telecommunications Union 2002), it is a highly exclusionary space, presenting great difficulty to find representation for those outside of the majority languages.

There are now movements to encourage cultural expression through the internet in many local languages, officially endorsed by UNESCO in a 'recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace' (30C/Resolution 37). Two countries of particular concern are that of Tanzania and Indonesia, with highly diverse cultural/ethnic groups, a kaleidoscope of minority languages and limited internet access. Indonesia is an extreme case with 300 ethnicities, 740 languages spread over 13000 islands and limited infrastructure even for electricity let alone optic fibers. Tanzania, with over 126 different ethnic groups making up the population, with as many different languages has high ambitions for internet penetration, as Nagalimecha Ngahyoma, Director of the Institute of Arts and Media Communication, commented at ASEF New Media mini summit (July 2008) there has been a recent rise of media technology in Tanzania through a government initiative to increase ICT facilities. There has been a movement in the country of new internet activity, bloggers etc. people who want to use the internet to communicate about the things which are happening around them. Also young people have begun to use the technology creatively for example in the creation of music. The use of mobile phone is also becoming very popular. But there is still an economic divide which dictates access to technology and IT literacy. Those with internet facilities is still limited to less than 1% of the population. The majority have no chance to participate in the internet and the majority of languages in Tanzania 'have no representation on the Internet; Mafu's (2004) analysis suggests that this situation is not likely to change in the near future, since even Kiswahili is poorly represented, and basic problems of infrastructure persist'. However reporter and social activist Ndesanjo Macha, originally from Tanzania, has began a movement of 'decolonizing the internet' by encouraging people to write blogs in their own mother-language. In particular he is calling for Kiswahili speakers to bring more representation of this language to the internet. Kiswahili is widely used in East Africa and by increasingly the presence of currently under-represented languages, he hopes further minority languages will begin to find expression through the internet.

Media technologies are simultaneously identified as destroying space for expression, threatening minority of languages, through what has been described as "electronic media bombardment, especially television, an incalculably lethal new weapon (which I have called 'cultural nerve gas')" (Krauss, 1992: 6) but also has been noted as the potential saviour of these languages as "An endangered language will progress if its speakers can make use of electronic technology" (Crystal, 2000: 141) However if the speakers of those languages have no means to electronic technology, and even if they do can not find support for their communication, then it is likely that they will become even further marginalized, an example of how the implementation of information technology can contribute to a loss of culture, through lack of access and representation.

But some are finding access to these technologies and creating their own spaces of representation. Srinivasan (2006) has made a detailed study of indigenous cultures making use of new media technologies not just for political objectives but to continue cultural traditions. He makes reference to the studies made by Ginsburg (2002) in Canada, where the Inuit communities have been using video to continue oral traditions of storytelling. 'Rather than destroying Inuit cultures as some predicted would happen, these technologies of representation – beginning with the satellite television transmission to Inuit communities of their own small-scale video productions – have played a dynamic and even revitalizing role for Inuit and other First Nations people, as a self-conscious means of cultural preservation and production and a form of political mobilization. . . . [The benefit of new media] is apparent not only in the narrative constructions of Inuit history on their own terms, but in integrating it with Canadian modernity, embodied in the flow of television' (Ginsburg et al., 2002: 41–42). Other examples of minority ethnic groups utilizing digital video/photography and the internet for cultural expression include the Kayapo community in Brazil, the Uyghur population in China and Warlpiri Aborigines in Australia. These groups have often been regarded as isolated communities, with strong cultural traditions, with a separation from modern society, however they are employing new media technology, what has become the symbol of advanced society to communicate their cultural heritage and continue its evolution, finding in personal and shared technology an opportunity to create alternative narratives to main stream mass media and culture in their localities.

Condition of Community

It is well documented that many other minority cultures and marginalized groups are finding a space through new media, when in public society there is still little platform for them, for example the situation of LGBT communities has been commented upon widely. (Turkle 1995) But in general networked media is enabling individuals to come together through purpose, condition or interest and form "virtual communities". The formation of community which is not based upon face to face interaction, or physical location, has raised much debate as to the meaning of community and technology's impact upon this. Through globalization and the rise of information technology some have even been led to declare or predict the end of the nation (Sassen 1998) (Ohmae 1995) (Negroponte 1995: 238).

Anderson has of course highlighted clearly that all forms of community, especially the nation state, are imagined, an imagination which became particularly established through print capitalism which 'made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.' (Anderson 1983 p.36). This asserts the necessity of media forms to form ideas of community on a wide scale, to form a sense of connection between people, even though this can not be directly experienced. This therefore challenges our notion of community from the outset. Community has become a nostalgic notion for a state which in fact may never have existed, as Castells points out 'Too often critics refer implicitly to an idyllic notion of community, a tightly bounded, spatially defined, culture of support and belonging which probably did not exist in rural societies and which has certainly disappeared in advanced, industrialized countries.' (2000: 387). Jean-Luc Nancy warns against mistaken notions of community as a singular body, a singular mind (which he outlines has led to extremes of totalitarianism) put simply 'there is no communion, there is no common being, but there is being in common' (Nancy 1991: 28), we have a co-existence, there is something common in our being, but this is a plurality, based on difference.

Zygmunt Bauman criticizes the zealous assertions of new found community in the era of 'liquid modernity', as clamorous

acts to cover the truth of the matter, that community has long since suffered a death 'Once it starts to praise its unique valour, wax lyrical about its pristine beauty and stick on nearby fences wordy manifestos calling its members to appreciate its wonders and telling all the others to admire them or shut up – one can be sure that the community is no more... 'spoken of community (more exactly: a community speaking of itself) is a contradiction in terms' (Blackshaw 2005: 102)

Baudrillard's commentary upon the simulacrum are applied to the formation of community through the internet by Mark Nunes (1995) in which community exists precisely because it is a model, a simulacrum, "an imaginary effect concealing that reality no more exists outside than inside the bounds of the artificial perimeter" (1983: 26). Community is given the impression of existence, due to the lack of any other form of reality which has been lost in mediation. Baudrillard argues that "the compulsion of the virtual is the compulsion to exist *in potentia* on all screens," the existence of community and the self are increasingly found only in simulation, effectively leading to their demise. (1993: 57).

However despite this criticism of the very notion of community, and its apparent in-attainability in any form whether on-line or off-line, the idea still contains meaning, this idea may be a 'revolutionary, romantic, and immediate utopian dreams in collectives communicating in a reciprocal relationship' (Bolz 1990: 111), an illusion of community, yet many are still highly enthused by the personal feeling of community that they feel able to enter into through media technology. Ananda Mitra reflects 'It is precisely this question of commonality and fellowship that becomes the critical issue in the context of this analysis. Indeed, what produces community in the era of the internet are the shared systems of culture, language, and beliefs that are spread across large distances and consequently the opportunities for community formation vis-à-vis the internet have broadened in scope and possibilities.' (1996: 3) Community becomes deterritorialized in the sense that it can be formed beyond the bounds of any physical locality, but arguably physical locality has little to do with what community really is, which would appear to be more of a state of mind, a sharing and identification with others. This state, this positioning is rooted in something, it does not have to be rooted in the earth beneath our feet

As community and social/cultural interactions become further detached from the bounds of physical locality, so do the formulations of identity. The human and informational engagement brought by media technologies is instigating a 'vast process of redefinition of collective identities and the creation of new political frontiers' (Robertson et al 1994), but also individual identities are undergoing a dramatic change as Sherry Turkle has well documented, being in a network of millions of people and in reception of a stream of virtual objects, not only changes the way we see the world but also how we see ourselves (Turkle 1995). As Turkle outlines, media technologies enable a different form of communication and self representation, we are exposed to countless influences and also have the ability to express countless identities. It is an opportunity for self-exploration of interests, opinions, personality, sexuality, relationships etc., forming a highly fluid identity. Although 'there are no 'natural' and 'original' identities, since every identity is the result of a constituting process' and 'this process itself must be seen as one of permanent hybridization and nomadization' (Robertson et al 1994: 110), some may be concerned that in an identity built through the intangible flows of electronic space, we have nothing concrete left to hold onto. 'When names float around without precise, unambiguous attachment to unique things, referential complexities abound.' (Mitchell 2000: 11) As a counter to this Greenhill & Fletcher have highlighted that a strong relationship still persists between our surrounding social space, the meanings of material culture within this space and the expressions of electronic identity (Greenhill & Fletcher 1997). But we are increasingly being made to ask, as Turkle does

'Are we living on the screen or in it?', what is our distancing from the technology? Have we ourselves become so

embedded within it that we only have our virtual selves and virtual objects to identify with?

The Cultural Object

Culture is always in transition, it cannot be located in a particular place and is not found in a set of concrete forms but through the movement of interconnections and relations, as Suddhabrata Sengupta of Raqs Media Collective highlights 'Culture is something that never respects borders and territories. It is infectious, nomadic and volative. We see culture and cultural intervention, as an agile constellation of people, practices, connections and objects that come into being when different disciplines, histories and attitudes encounter each other in global space' (Kortun 2003).

So what of the cultural object, is this now to be a virtual object too? As media technologies dematerialize, deterritorialize and mobilize cultural referents we are led to question their authenticity and meaning. This was of a particular challenge to Benjamin who determined the technologies of mechanical reproduction as detaching objects from their embeddedness within 'the fabric of tradition' (Benjamin, 1969: 223). Benjamin concerns himself with the loss of the object's 'presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be' and therefore the 'quality of its presence is always depreciated'. The object loses its sanctity, it sheds its authority as it is 'turned into a 'commodity' available anywhere and for anyone' (Malpas 2008). The aura of the object 'withers' and is 'eliminated', in its reproduction the object to Benjamin loses something vital. We may apply this in the mediated experience of place. The authenticity of the original is lost in its reproduction, mediation, place finds an articulation in its cultural objects but through new media we see as Manovich notes the 'transformation of the object to a signal', and in this transformation 'cultural objects (words, texts, sounds and images) are progressively removed from territorial space into physical realms of electrons, sound waves and light pulses that are less palpable to the human senses.' (Poster 2006: 35)

Manovich maintains that the new media object is just as valid as any other cultural object, but due to the nature of any cultural representation it is 'inevitably biased. They represent/construct some features of physical reality at the expense of others, one worldview among many, one possible system of categories among numerous others.' While Benjamin warns against the deterritorialization of the object others interpret it as creating opportunity for new meanings and interpretations to arise, allowing for further cultural potentials. Miwon Kwon refers to such deterritorialization as 'liberating' 'displacing the strictures of place-bound identities with the fluidity of a migratory model, introducing possibilities for the production of multiple identities allegiances and meanings based not on normative conformities but on the nonrational convergences forged by chance encounters and circumstances' (2002: 165).

The idea of the original authentic object has undergone a severe erosion, so much so that it can be argued that such a form no longer exists and perhaps never did exist. The mediated object/experience can be said to be a fetishism, in which a symbol is grasped without its wider relations and problematics. Freud presents the fetish as a form of denial by which, 'the woman's (mother's) phallus which the little boy once believed in and does not forego' (1928) is substituted in some other form, to accept the absence foretells of the boy's own castration and therefore absence is denied in the fetish. Christian Metz (1982) has written much on the subject of photography and film as the fetish. He comments that in particular the photograph 'stands-in for and thereby comes to symbolise that to which it refers and it also, in psychoanalytic terms, displaces difficulties associated with the referent'.

The concept of commodity fetishism was promoted by Marx in which social relations become identified through exchange of commodities undergoing a process of reification in which the complexity of labour and social relations are reduced through the signification of the commodity. 'therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things' (1867: 165).

Both Debord and Baudrillard indicate how this fetishism has come to reign over society and reality reaching 'its absolute fulfilment in the spectacle, where the tangible world is replaced by a selection of images which exist above it, and which at the same time are recognized as the tangible par excellence.' (Debord 1995: 36) Reality is 'reinforced through its own destruction. It becomes *reality for its own sake*, the fetishism of the lost object: no longer the object of representation, but the ecstasy of denial and of its own ritual extermination: the hyperreal' (Baudrillard 1976). The fetish displaces reality and then reconstructs reality in its own image.

In the Mediated experience not only Cultural artefacts, but also our very selves are caught in processes which dematerialize, deterritorialize and mobilize. This is a process which Deleuze and Guattari have speculated much upon, in their form of rhizomatic nomadism. In their account of the nomad, relation and place are found in the very process of deterritorialization 'to such a degree that the nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself. It is the earth which deterritorializes itself, in a way that provides the nomad with a territory.' (1998: 381) They also relate this deterritorialization on an urban scale based on a 'function of circulation and of circuits' in which in order to enter a network material must be sufficiently deterritorialized 'to submit to the polarization, to follow the circuit of urban and road recoding' (1998: 313). This presents a strong correlation with media such as the internet, in which in order to enter circulation cultural objects must disconnect from their framework, allowing them to be accessed from any point.

The Voyeurism of the Tourist

But with ready access to 'anything' and 'anywhere', we ourselves become an all-seeing eye. We can peer into situations, without involvement, maintaining our safe distance, while exercising the power of a privileged position. We have become virtual tourists, a reference which Lisa Nakamura makes in conjunction with internet users, able to selectively 'visit' a location, pick and choose their sightseeing spots but having little insight into the deeper identity, community, culture, experience and context of that location. 'This dream or fantasy of ideal travel common to networking advertisements constructs a destination that can look like an African safari, a trip to the Amazonian rain forest, or a camel caravan in the Egyptian desert.' (2002: 89) We can holiday in the most exotic of places, without leaving our chair, but this power and privilege is based upon 'a vision of the other who isn't going anywhere' (2002: 89), again echoing Massey that our freedom of mobility is based on that of others' immobility, a fact which often choose to ignore.

The tourist is in a continuous state of reterritorialization, upon his/her own terms, whereby the new territory experienced must become assimilated into their own world view, their own comfort zone, they wish a foreign place to be as they imagine it to be, which is what Baudrillard alludes to when he speaks of "the perpetual tourism of people who no longer undertake voyages in the true sense, but simply go round and round in circles within their circumscribed territory" (Baudrillard 1983: 29), a tourism in which one stays within their delimited territory by reterritorializing that of others,

again reflecting a highly colonialist attitude. This is further supported in Dean MacCannell's commentary upon the tourist as a being who 'simply collects experiences of difference (different people, different places)' and "emerges as a miniature clone of the old western philosophical subject, thinking itself unified, in control, etc. mastering Otherness and profiting from it' (1989: xxi) And thus 'We arrive at a destination to find that the kinds of worlds that we had just left have followed us.' (Holmes 2001: 5). We can find ourselves pinned in immutable mobility, where it is no longer becomes necessary to travel as all vectors converge upon the screen of the computer and that of our imaginations.

Tourists are ultimate spectacle consumers and in our mediated experience of place we too must consider our own contribution to the commodification of that place, as media technologies offer a 'glass window from which users can consume the sights of travel' (Nakamura 2002: 90) , consuming their destination. This correlation is also asserted by Debord who equates the circulation of tourists, with the circulation of commodities which have already over taken any sense of place in the drive for its very promotion. Therefore tourism 'is the opportunity to go and see what has been banalized. The economic organization of travel to different places already guarantees their equivalence. The modernization that has eliminated the time involved in travel has simultaneously eliminated any real space from it. (Debord 1995) This mobility of people and commodities has in fact destroyed place, or made it all of one standard so that we may easily move from one place to another, without friction, thereby necessitating the smoothing of places.

In this position of the separated gaze, we also become the Voyeur, stimulated by visions through the keyhole of technology. Lacan refers to the dialectic of the eye and the gaze 'The eye and the gaze – this is for us the split in which the drive is manifested at the level of the scopical field' (1979: 102-103). As Lacan outlines scopical drive, desire, arises in this split between eye and the gaze, and our attempt to consume the vision is our attempt to make ourselves complete. Yet we have no means of touching what lies beyond the door, we are held in separation which at once excites and anguishes, but allows us to defer responsibility and exercise a certain power over the object of the gaze.

We can peer into a world without having to be part of it, as Metz reflects upon cinema, its 'voyeurism must (of necessity) do without any very clear mark of consent on the part of the object' (1982: 63). We can steal from image without it realizing and in so doing orchestrate a method of control, the voyeur exerts power over his/her subject, in a gaze which designates ownership. "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed, as the act of photographing is more than passive observing. Like sexual voyeurism, it is a way of... encouraging what is going on to keep on happening." (Sontag 1977)

We gain pleasure in this objectification for stimulation which also engenders 'narcissism and the construction of the ego,... from identification with the image seen' (Mulvey 1975: 10) The gaze does not only extend outward, in its operation it inflects back upon the subject, becoming internalized. We ourselves can never 'escape specularly' (Silverman 1995 150), as Foucault demonstrates we are both subject and object of the gaze, we are increasingly the object of the voyeurism of surveillance, as technological eyes proliferate, we are not only the watchers but the watched, we become the target of 'An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance, over and against himself' (1980 155) Power is exercised continuously by the reflection and refraction of the gaze, in which we eventually enact our own self-surveillance.

In the mediated experience of place we ourselves have become tourists and voyeurs, drawn to the spectacle but

keeping a safe distance through which we assert our power and privilege but are ultimately alienated from the object of desire.

The State of Alienation

In terms of the voyeur there is a clear separation from the object of the gaze. There is an alienation, which in this case may be chosen. There have been various debates upon the explicit alienating impact of media technology in particular in social terms, instigating not just a deterritorialization but a severance. Throughout the centuries, with each technological innovation voices have been raised against separation from God/Absolute, separation from nature and separation from each other. But we may argue that it is part of the human condition to be in alienation.

The first alienation is between humanity and God/the Absolute through original sin, a concept populated in both western and eastern philosophies. From the very beginning humanity is in a state of alienation and it may be argued that this is a stipulation of being human. To overcome alienation is to attain the ideal, the utopia. Furthermore in the operation of the subject and the object there necessitates division and alienation of one from the other and in the contemplation of the world one is necessarily removed from it.

In the psychology of Freud and Lacan the defining moment in the formulation of subjectivity is in the alienation of the child from the mother, alienation from world. Alienation is very much bound to the discourse of the Other, the subject can only come into being through the existence of the Other, as Lacan defines the Other as 'The Other as 'the locus in which is situated the signifying chain that governs which aspect(s) of the subject may become present' (1979: 203) – this states a form of continuous alienation by which the subject can only be known in the place or locus of the Other. We seek the self in the other, but are prevented from assimilation.

Both Hegel and Marx propose a constructed condition of alienation. For Hegel this alienation is also an expression of intersubjectivity, in *Phenomenology of Spirit* he outlines one can only formulate self-consciousness through that of another, 'A self-consciousness confronts another self-consciousness. Only through such confrontation with other is it self-consciousness in fact. Only through such confrontation is the unity of itself in its otherness (Anderssein) for it' (1998[1807]: 140) However, to construct a strict division between the self and other leads to alienation of man from the world and ultimately from oneself. Hegel outlines that the objectivism of the world and man's separation from it is a historical construct which must be overcome in order to achieve the Absolute 'Geist'. No such division truly exists, there is not an external reality, separate from the self. This is in contrast to the Cartesian form of Rationalism whereby it is necessary to make the division between oneself and the world in order to discover the rational truth within the human being.

Marx on the other hand talks of alienation as constructed by capitalist society, clearly postulating an intense study of alienation in terms of the capital economy by which labour is alienated from production. Alienation here arises as a result of capitalism, whereby workers lack autonomy and are estranged from the products of their labour and therefore from the labour itself. Thus human alienation is brought about as everything turns "into alienable, saleable objects in thrall to egoistic need and huckstering. Selling is the practice of alienation. Just as man, so long as he is engrossed in religion, can only objectify his essence by an alien and fantastic being; so under the sway of egoistic need, he can only affirm

himself and produce objects in practice by subordinating his products and *his own activity* to the domination of an alien entity, and by attributing to them the significance of an alien entity, namely *money*.” (Marx 1844) Here the one is alienated through the construction of self-worth and the worth of others in social relations upon the basis of commodity production and exchange in the imagined system of capital economy.

Debord takes this notion of alienation a step further to claim that human society has created a world so full of signs and commodities that it has become an alienated reality ‘the dominant alienation is undergone by the producer of an *alien present*. In this *spatial alienation*, the society that radically separates the subject from the activity it takes from him, separates him first of all from his own time. It is this surmountable social alienation that has prohibited and petrified the possibilities and risks of the *living* alienation of time.’ In terms of place and media, through media technology we produce representations of place, but in our reception of these products we become alienated and caught in a division, alienated from the products of place.

Alienation is central to our discussion of media technologies and experience of place. This involves the question of alienation from one’s environment but also a further fundamental estrangement which this may provoke. The argument of separation induced by technologies has been voiced throughout the centuries, including separation from god, separation from nature, separation from man. Sociologist Melvin Seeman has classified alienation based on the identification of 6 components: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, self-estrangement and social isolation, all of which can be assessed in relation to media technology and the mediated experience.

The element most frequently upheld in the debates of new media is that of social isolation. In these cases media technology is presented as an interface which engages, largely, the individual in a space of imagination and virtuality, a criticism which has proffered since the early technology of the novel. In the second half of the 20th Century, television was at the centre of this discussion, until the proliferation of computer games and the internet. Japan’s notorious phenomenon of ‘Hikikomori’, have come to represent the pinnacle of individuals who wish to escape society, characterized as refusing to leave their room, absorbed in surfing and gaming. Many have identified media technologies as a stimulus of such withdrawal from society, however such absorption is likely to only be a symptom, it does not concur that it is inherent within the medium to invoke such behaviour. Hikikomori may be an extreme, but each of us creates their own shields against a difficult world in some way. Castells notes that portable music devices are frequently used to create ‘walls of sound against the outside world’. If we wish to build a wall we will find the materials to do so, but the ability of new media to intensely engage the senses offers this aid very readily.

Lieven de Cauter in a study of capsular phenomenon of technology points out that it appears increasingly necessary to create protection against the ‘constant attack of an overload of stimuli (shocks)’, a phenomenon particularly highlighted by Simmel. As we meet greater physical and informational acceleration the greater the necessity of the capsule: ‘The more mobile we become the more capsular our behaviour, we are sedentary nomads. Most of recent technology can be described in terms of virtual capsules: the mobile phone, the walkman or the diskman, etc. And of course all screens (film screens, television screens, computer screens) are mental capsules. A world of screens is a capsular world.’ We construct capsules to keep the threatening forces of the outside world at bay, forces which media technologies themselves contribute to and then paradoxically attempt to suppress.

Media technology is promoted as a connecting force but as Daniel J. Bostin notes 'While technology seems to bring us together, it does so only by making new ways of separating us from one another.' (1977) We are offered the mirage of connectivity and interaction but the 'simulacrum of reaching the other', Gayatri Spivak notes, 'can become exclusive, an instrument of a certain narcissism... which is exactly a withdrawal of responsibility.' (Lovink 2002: 75) Replacing television as the threat to social integration the internet has been villainized in some quarters as promoting the 'dehumanization of social relationships' and offering an 'easy way to escape real life' (Slouka, 1996). Several scientific studies have been made as to the alienating effects of the internet including early studies made at Carnegie Mellon University in 1995/6. These studies suggested that 'greater use of the Internet was associated with a decline in participants' communication with family members in the household, a decline in the size of their social circle and an increase in their depression and loneliness' (Kraut 1998). This is in direct contrast to the promises of social networking and engagement offered by the ability to connect with anyone at anytime, leading Castells to pose the question 'Does the internet favour the development of new communities, virtual communities, or, instead, is it inducing personal isolation, severing people's ties with society, and ultimately, with their 'real' world?' (2000: 386). Is it part of the fundamental nature of technology that it embodies alienation? Or is it in the particular method of application, mode of thinking which stirs this separation?

In the discourse of alienation we may also consider it as an artistic device of defamiliarization, again whereby a distance is required in order to gain understanding and allow the flow of difference. Alienation can also be approached as a device of engagement. We must be defamiliarized in order to see beyond our habitual reception of the world and therefore lead to greater perception. Such a method of 'Ostranenie' was promoted by the Russian constructivist Viktor Shklovsky in 'Art as Technique': 'The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.' (1919: 16) Through the encounter of the unfamiliar we are led to reconsider our perspective and undergo a process of re-examination and extended observation. Brecht pursued a similar method in theatre with the 'Verfremdungseffekt', alienation effect, by which the audience are challenged in order to awake them from the slumber of familiarity and allow them to enter into the play upon a deeper level. Thus alienation is employed to in fact bring about engagement, an operation which Simmel fittingly summarises as 'the human being is the connecting creature who must always separate and cannot connect without separating' (1909: 69).

Absenting Presence

Deterritorialization and embeddedness are not necessary mutually exclusive states, but can be linked to the binary of absence and presence. To be deterritorialized is to lose presence in a particular realm or context, it indicates a certain absence, yet it still maintains presence. This discussion refers back to that of language and the sign, Derrida's *On Difference* being instructive here 'The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, "thing" here standing equally for meaning or referent. The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present' (1981: 9). Embeddedness aligns itself to a strength of presence, asserting a located contextualized existence, however it also implies an invisibility and therefore becoming absence. Here we must examine not only the presence and absence of the object but also that of the subject too.

Lacan comments that the human subject gives up its time to 'the unfurling of the structural alternation in which presence and absence each invoke the other', there is a constant oscillation between presence and absence which can not be clearly separated. In terms of the mediated object Lacan references Hegel in commenting that 'The symbol is the murder of the thing', in representation a death occurs, representation immediately denotes absence, in mediation reality is destroyed. Lacanian approaches to film are also relevant in the field of new media, where the image actually presents a continuous absence, a notion particularly explored by Christian Metz (1982). Metz concentrates upon the absence of the spectator, the viewer's separation from the content of the film: 'What makes possible the spectator's absence from the screen – or rather the intelligible unfolding of the film despite that absence – is the fact that the spectator has already known the experience of the mirror (of the true mirror), and is thus able to constitute a world of objects without having first to recognize himself within it' (1982: 46). It is common to associate the cinema screen with the mirror and hence Lacan's mirror-stage, described as the 'threshold of the visible world', where the child finally gains subjectivity in recognizing the image to be him/herself its reflection confirms presence, in a separation from the mother and the rest of the world. However the cinema screen does not reflect the image of the viewer it is a constant marker of the absence of self in which 'the reflection of the body has disappeared'. Yet the screen is still used as a mirror by which we confirm our own presence as 'The spectator's gaze is not returned and so returns only to itself' (1982: 48). This form of film theory then reflects the disturbance between absence and presence, in which we 'fasten on the image to deny the absence of reality' (Perez 2000: 17), as in all representation a presence is submitted as a substitute for that which is absent.

'There is no pure presence, for in whatever presents itself there is already in play the operation of signification. Presence is delimited – limited and yet rendered possible – by the operation of signification' (Sallis 1984). Heidegger and then in the deconstructivist theory of Derrida, challenges the notion of pure presence. Heidegger maintains there is no expression of complete presence, presence can not be expressed at a single moment, it is the result of 'thrownness' (construction through the past) and 'projection' (possibility of the future), which occur simultaneously, and therefore can never be pinpointed, it is constituted by the very things which are absent. Presence 'is in continuous movement, always supplementing itself in an onward movement of deferral and anticipation.' (Cooper 2006) Robert Cooper goes on to link the 'dynamic, never-ending interaction between presence and absence' with Heidegger's notion of 'a-partness', in which the completeness of a whole is undermined through the assertion that a whole is only a temporary arrangement of parts and it is these parts, these divisions which are 'the carriers of "being"'. Cooper explains that the notion of a-partness creates presence from absence, in which absence asserts itself as a haunting presence. Absence and presence are always co-present and mutually definitive. In every division and distinction which brings something into presence, there necessitates absence as 'every object or form is the product of a frame that *excludes* the surrounding context'. (2006) This is particularly applicable to the experience of 'presence' through media technologies which assimilate the near and far, present and absent and illustrate how presence is a formulation of 'distant, far-flung, multiple and varied happenings' which merge in a constructed space. It is this division, this difference which Derrida also utilizes in the challenge to the authority of presence 'What defers presence ... is the very basis on which presence is announced or desired in what represents it, its sign, its trace' (Derrida 2002: 7), in the mediated experience this is all we can grasp of presence as both Heidegger and Derrida present the impossibility of presence in any form of representation and thus question 'the accessibility, if not existence, of a primitive presence, origin, or meaning' (Borradori 2000).

In the mediated experience there is a strong interplay of presence and absence, can such an experience heighten our presence, or does our engagement with an absence, lead to our own absence? Heidegger may argue that both states affirm each other. Absolute presence is always made unobtainable by the very nature of 'being' which is fragmented and in constant movement, but we can still talk of a presence which substantiates itself within division, difference and flux, even though this simultaneously invokes absence. Absence suggests removal and loss, we enter into absence through the present signs of absence but what of the mediated experience when its object itself is ready at hand? Perhaps Heidegger's notion of technology as a mode of revealing can be applied in this context in which the technologically instigated processes of 'unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing' (Heidegger 1993: 322) the potentials of the materials before us. 'But this revealing never comes to an end'. We may use technology to reveal hidden aspects of things which are 'present' but as we reveal we also conceal in a never ending process.

We can conclude that absence and presence simultaneously constitute each other and mediation, of any form, only serves to heighten this complex relationship. We have seen in the discussion of alienation how we may absent ourselves from one place to find presence in another, how representation presents absence in the form of presence, but what of the possibility to assert our presence in the present? Can media technology offer us this embeddedness, this sense of being-in-the-world? Many would argue that such technologies promote passivity and subject us to a regime of control and surveillance, yet there are creative openings through which we can assert presence in real space by signaling in the virtual space that lies over/within it. This leads us to an examination of a number of creative projects which utilize media technology in order to appreciate the presence of our immediate surroundings and also provide opportunities for us to consider our own presence and engagement within them.

Creative Response to Mediated Place

The work of Maebayashi Akitsugu 'Sonic Interface' creates a disturbance between being at once located and displaced. The audience take a backpack filled with electronic hardware and a pair of headphones and walk around the surrounding area at ease. As they walk the sounds of the direct environment can be heard through the headphones which act as if like hearing aids, mediating what could be a direct experience. However, gradually these sounds are transformed as they become mixed with each other, the sounds of the past and present merging, running through cycles and rhythms which creates a new aural and spatial awareness. We experience absence in presence through the re-emergence of the past which we are able to hear simultaneously with the present. We are made to listen to the everyday sounds which surround us with a new intensity through an integration and augmentation which embeds us while deterritorializing.



b) Akitsugu Maebayashi – Sonic Interface

Artist led groups such as HONF, Yogyakarta, Indonesia and SARAI, New Delhi, India appropriate new media techniques to inform and engage the local community. Applications go beyond the abstractions of art, to deal with real-life everyday situations and issues which are affecting people in the local area. Their activities include the fields of education, health, employment and the environment in which media technology is introduced as a method of investigating and tackling these concerns. Centres such as these are long-established in their attempt to bring people together in the creative exploration of media technologies which can also provide a highly practical and informative experience and development of new skills which can find everyday applications. They use technologies and methods which are relevant to the context which they are working in, with a high level of sensitivity to the needs of local people and the local area. They can be taken as clear examples of the embedding of technology in a local situation which enables further engagement and participation in the surrounding context.

NomadicMilk/MILKproject is an ongoing project by Esther Polak which uses GPS technology to track the movement of foodstuffs (milk) from their point of original production to point of consumption. The project was first realized starting from a dairy farm in Latvia and traced to the consumer in the Netherlands. This is an example of translocal practice in which locative media is employed to visualize the set of relationships of production and transaction. Polak has also recently realized the project in a rural area of Nigeria tracking both nomadic cattle farmers who sell their produce directly to the local population and that of commercially produced powdered milk distributed nation-wide. The anonymity which divides the producer and the consumer reflects Marx's concern with the alienation of labour, which this work challenges in highlighting the link between individuals typically unknown to each other and how this link crosses the physical land.



c) Esther Polak – NomadicMilk/MILK project

Moblab is also a good example of the translocal. Utilizing the not so new media of a bus, this project brought together a group of Japanese and German artists on a journey throughout Japan, at each stop engaging with the local area and its residents in various participatory projects and events. The artists became nomads, but at each 'watering-hole' had to integrate and engage with the local set of practices. The bus itself became an exhibit and also a canvas, at each stage transformed through its dialogue with the specificities of place which literally left their mark upon the bus. The bus was held in a continuous process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, in a space of flows which entered different nodes and became for a short time embedded within them.



d) Moblab

Exonemo's response to their participation in the project was realized through the work 'The Road Movie'. This transformed the bus into the form of a modern day mobile phone with its multiple functions of GPS, internet access and photo/movie ability. To each surface of the bus was attached a web camera which constantly recorded the outside landscape for the whole duration of the three week journey. Every 5 minutes the image from the set of webcams along with the specific GPS coordinates was captured and fed into a specially designed software program, which recomposited these images in the form of an origami bus template which was then automatically uploaded to the internet in the form of a pdf document. Throughout the journey a database was formed which captured each moment, frozen freely downloaded so anyone can create an origami bus of any moment in the bus's travels. In fact some participants in the workshops and those who visited the bus during its stops recorded the time which they were in the vicinity of the bus then went online to download the image of themselves, as seen by the bus, a strong example of the process by which media technology can form a mirror for the subject. The artists also spoke of the project as a physical realization of film, each origami bus model represents one frame in the movie and by arranging these models in sequences, a film is produced. This sheds a new light on the 'freezing of experience' through representation but also allows that experience to be rearticulated through the combination of digital and more 'concrete' means. The bus came to exist more strongly in a virtual space rather than physical space, many commenting that they felt a stronger relationship to the bus while interacting with it online, rather than in the flesh.



e) Exonemo - Road Movie

The UK based artists Proboscis and Christian Nold have engaged in various projects which examine technology's relation to community and environment. Proboscis are well known for their series of projects under the title of Urban Tapestries which they describe as a new form of knowledge mapping and sharing, public authoring which relate to the 'Mass Observation' movement which began in the 1930's which aimed to record everyday life in Britain through the testimonies/diaries of hundreds of volunteers. Working with communities Proboscis introduce media technologies as tools

for investigating the conditions of place, but also being employed as tools of expression, communication and distribution. This has included the facilitation of 'Wiki-mapping' in which local participants are able to create collective maps of the area and add their personal annotations which become publicly accessible and reveal narratives which are deeply linked to the specifics of place.

The key objectives of this project were to promote open networks for mobile data, open geo data, the reinvigoration of the public domain, public services engaging with people, location sensing and positioning, and including everyone.

"We contrast the concept of a publicly authored knowledge and experience commons to the traditional way in which information is passed from a centre to the margins – the broadcast model of newspapers, television and radio. Public authoring offers an alternative to the passivity and narrow focus of consumerism. It presents a new opportunity for people to be agents, actors or authors in the world of communications and knowledge sharing. Public authoring proposes that everyday people become the authors of a complementary flow of knowledge that adds local specificity to the more generalized material that can be offered by media companies." (Lane et al. 1996) Proboscis present their projects as an opportunity for revitalized citizenship, engaging people in their communities and their localities and allowing them to place authorship in these places, asserting their presence in some form. An example of a concrete project in this series was 'Feral Robots' which involved using robots with environmental sensors to collate information upon carbon-dioxide levels, electro-magnetic radiation, noise pollution etc, technology used to directly assess the environment and prompt discussion and action plans amongst the community.



f) Proboscis – Urban Tapestries

Christian Nold's Biomapping maps in real time the biological/emotional responses of individuals as they move through a particular locality. These individual maps can then be brought together to form a collective mapping of the space. Using galvanic skin response monitors and heart rate monitors the individual's level of agitation/excitement can be recorded

This project has been realized in various different contexts which include urban planning and community development. This can be seen as a mobile project which examines the conditions within a specific place. Here technology is utilized to provide an objective document of people's subjective responses, the interplay of the internal environment and the external environment visualized through technology reveals our relationship to place, but also there is a lot it doesn't reveal due to the nature of transposing qualitative data through quantitative means. Therefore the project does not solely rely upon representation by technology but uses this as a basis for instigating discussion amongst the participants who are able to add their own narratives to the objectified mappings.



g) Christian Nold – Biomapping

Da Zha Lan project is a simple project in terms of its directness and its utilization of technology but one that offers a deep critique of the hierarchies of power and the use of new media strategies to combat this. Here again technology is used as an agent of documentation but in this process it also becomes an agent of protest and democracy. In the Dha Zhan district of Beijing, close to Tiananmen Square, residents are being forcibly deterritorialized, the area is marked by the city government for major redevelopment resulting in the eviction of hundreds of people from their homes and businesses.

The project initiated by Ou Ning, and his team of artists and urban theorists, aimed to empower the residents of this neighbourhood, allowing them to voice their opposition through media technology in simple forms such as video and digital cameras and sound recording devices in which families and individuals came together to document the destruction of the area, the physical force police were using to evict people and the anger and despair of those who are losing their homes and their livelihoods. Use of the internet, in particular in the form of blogging was also introduced as a method of making the situation more public and also creating a forum for the community to express their difficulties. This demonstrates the highly localized use of media technology which it can be claimed gains a high level of embeddedness in the local condition and also allows for its users to further engage in this.



h) Da Zha Lan Project

This project can also be related in some ways to the pioneering work of Kogawa Tetsuo in community radio. Challenging the hegemony of mass media and its one way channels of communication Kogawa initiated a movement in Japan from 1960's to encourage the use of shortwave radio broadcast as a social and political tool in the freedom of speech.

In contrast the project directed by Drew Hemment 'Loca' reflects upon the embedding of new media systems in the concrete environment which enable pervasive surveillance and systems of control. Wireless transmitting blue tooth devices are installed in the physical fabric of the urban environment and infiltrate the private space of individuals through their mobile phones. Here the embeddedness of technology asserts itself as an alienating force which is threatening and imprisoning, freedom of movement is countered by restrictions of constant monitoring.



Loca



i) Loca

The majority of the projects outlined above present the constructive role of the social in our interaction with media technology and place – this is perhaps where the sense of place most strongly lies, in the social. When we form a meaningful relationship with others, we also form a meaningful relationship to place. This points towards a method of asserting presence and also generating place. But also as some of the projects have demonstrated within the promise of social interaction may lurk a darker side of the relationships of power.

Participation vs Control

What does the mediated experience offer us? Does its positioning between deterritorialization and embeddedness realize new potentials for us? Does it allow us to become further embedded in our various places? Allow for new flows in deterritorialization? When technology becomes part of our environment, does this facilitate a new engagement with our surroundings?

As we have already seen the developments in new media technologies have been lauded as the agents of a heightened level of participation and democracy. Through this medium ‘you become an inhabitant, a participant, not merely a spectator’ (Mitchell 2000: 20) What are the forms of participation which are enabled through media technologies? Many have asserted that new media forms promote a character of democracy by allowing greater freedom of speech, social and political expression and the possibilities to create your own content and contribute to the circulation of perspectives. ‘With social and political movements, democratic forces have been emboldened by the proliferation of global communication channels through the internet, by direct satellite broadcasting, and by a global and diasporic media.’ (Tehranian in Kamalipour & Snow 2004: 240)

McLuhan even categorizes media forms by the level of participation that they offer from cold (high level participation) to hot media (low level participation). Howard Rheingold is also a strong proponent of social interaction political engagement which media technology can bring us highlighting a new sense of community and political empowerment which be instigated through this. We do not only consume the products of new media but also create our own – empowered to

photograph, video, edit, blog, upload, wiki we can choose our own territory, create our own territory and then deterritorialize it. Does this allow for a new found citizenship?

Let us reflect upon public space and participation. The public sphere as conceptualized by Habermas, outlined in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, presents a sphere which mediates between society and the state, it is "a discursive arena that is home to citizen debate, deliberation, agreement and action" (Villa 1992: 712). It is the 'realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest.' In this realm there is also a disregard of status, being the domain of common concern and therefore inclusiveness. He outlines clearly this principle of inclusiveness in Discourse Ethics:

1. Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.

2a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.

2b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse.

2c. Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs.

3. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (1) and (2)

(Discourse Ethics 86)

Habermas also points towards the previous role of press/newspaper as an institution of the public itself, effective in the manner of a mediator and intensifier of public discussion. However he highlights a great shift that has taken place through commercial mass media from a 'culture-debating public to a culture-consuming public' a 'public sphere in appearance only' (1989: 71). The public sphere has become commercialized and manipulated, leading to the subsuming of reality in favour of entertainment and indulgence which negates the possibility of critical public discourse. Mass media has greatly diversified but also greatly commoditized, we can not equate choice in consumption with participation. 'The celebration of new technologies like the internet as ideal for direct, plebiscitary democracy assumes that democracy is primarily about the expression and registering of personal preferences outside of any context of deliberative justification' (Sunstein 1993) Democracy is not the ability to follow your personal choice in isolation from a wider social and political condition, the ability to click on 'download', to click on 'buy now' does not make us citizens. The ease at which we can consume identity, play at community, yet still remain unknown is a point of critique which Seyla Benhabib also notes, indicating that social relations and communities constructed through the internet may also fail to realize their promise of 'mutual understanding and acceptance' due to the anonymity which can be maintained. 'While the space of communication and information is increasing, we also have fewer obligations to communicate in person, which is causing increased fragmentation. Arendt expects our interactions with the public sphere to be experiences where we learn from taking the perspectives of others and stepping outside of the personal' (Benhabib 2008).

The public sphere has always been invested with political and economic interest and hence can not be formulated in itself as a space of openness and democracy this is an idealization, as Andreas Broeckmann outlines in his essay 'Public Spheres and Network Interfaces' (Graham 2004: 379). Here he also challenges the unity and singularity of the public sphere as it is heterogeneous and fragmented, a 'dispersion of physical and virtual spaces populated by different types of

'publics'. It is precisely in this 'instability' that Broeckmann identifies the possibility of the democratic. He marks out the creative use of media technologies as holding the key to realizing these potentials by connecting and public spheres of both physical and electronic space. 'The public sphere will only come into being if there are complex forms of interaction, of participation and learning, that use the technical possibilities of the networks and that allow for new and creative forms of becoming visible, becoming present, becoming active, in short, of becoming public.'

Brecht realised the potential of participation in early radio and deeply regretted that 'radio has only one side where it should have two. It is an apparatus of distribution, it merely allocates.' He call for the transformation of radio from 'an apparatus of distribution into an apparatus of communication. The radio could inarguably be the best apparatus of communication in public life, an enormous system of channels – provided it saw itself not only as a sender but also a receiver. This means making the listener not only listen but also speak; not to isolate him but to place him in relation to others' (1932: 129) This perverse rendering of a technology, which could facilitate dynamic communication, into one of single direction transmission also greatly struck Benjamin, who in *Reflections on Radio* emphasised the potential of mass participation which this technology held. The 'crucial error of this institution is to perpetuate in its work the fundamental split between performers and audience, which is belied by its technical foundations. Any child could tell you that the aim and object of radio broadcasts is to put all kinds of people at any time in front of the microphone' (1932: 1506). We see here from early developments in media/communications technologies there has been the inspiration of new found democracy and participation, but at each stage in its development many have been disappointed by its limitations.

The opposing argument that technology is a medium of control finds even more prevalent citation amongst media critique. The promise of participation and immersion is in fact an entrapment, where we have no choice but to cooperate/be co-opted. To many technological society creates a relationship of dependency, the reliance upon technology for the running of our everyday lives, which therefore makes us deeply susceptible to technological 'malfunction and misuse' as Neil Postman observes.

Technology has a system, a way of functioning, which is different from other aspects of life's rhythms, the argument is that we are increasingly forced to change our way of thinking to conform to that promoted by technological systems and as the Unabomber warns us this is not only a psychological change but will also lead to a biological change through developments in biotechnology. 'Whereas formerly the limits of human endurance have imposed limits on the development of societies, industrial-technological society will be able to pass those limits by modifying human beings, whether by psychological methods or biological methods or both. In the future, social systems will not be adjusted to suit the needs of human beings. Instead, human beings will be adjusted to suit the needs of the system' (Kaczynski 1995). Such notions of the human that must be molded to fit the machine are prevalent in the work of Ellul: "Modern technology has become a total phenomenon for civilization, the defining force of a new social order in which efficiency is no longer an option but a necessity imposed on all human activity" (1964: 17), Langdon Winner, who expresses in no uncertain terms 'Technology is a source of domination that effectively rules all forms of modern thought and activity. Whether by an inherent property or by an incidental set of circumstances, technology looms as an oppressive force that poses a direct threat to human freedom' (1977) and Neil Postman 'Technopoly is a state of culture. It is also a state of mind. It consists in the deification of technology, finds its satisfactions in technology, and takes its orders from technology' (1993: 71), to name but a few.

In our encounter of an embedded, mobilized technology we can be increasingly manipulated by other bodies of

power, our movements tracked, our personal data collected, our habits of consumption, our medical history, our credit card rating, our choice of websites can all be monitored and can all be used in evidence against us. Deterritorialization and embeddedness can both be used as forms of control. As we have seen technology can uproot, lift people and objects from their context, from the relationships which give them identity and meaning, thus alienating them from themselves and others, alienated from their place of dwelling. This separation can weaken and isolate and place its object at risk. The individual is disempowered, no longer the individual, but a 'dividual', reduced to divisible units of 'masses, samples, data, markets, or "banks."' To Deleuze technological developments advance the grip of an exploitative, dehumanizing capitalism which forms the control society. And it is in this control society that technology may obtain such a level of embeddedness and lead us to such a point of immersion that the 'play of power becomes invisible to us 'propaganda [becomes] virtually unnoticed' (1964: 22).

The promises of freedom therefore hide the actual processes of manipulation, liberty is a mirage which Virilio in particular emphasises. 'The suppression of national boundaries and the hyper-communicability of the world do not enlarge the space of freedom. They are rather the sign of its disappearance, its collapse, before the expansion of an all-too-tangible totalitarian power, a technological control over civilized societies that is growing ever more rapid and refined' (1991: 11), noting that the very technologies which are used to guarantee freedom are also those used for incarceration. Foucault also describes the very structures and properties of power in terminology very familiar to that of media technology, as it 'circulates' 'never localized' 'exercised through networks' with multiple 'relays', in which individuals become conducting electrons 'Power passes through individuals. It is not applied to them.' Such a formulation provokes again the question if it is intrinsic within the nature of media technology to be a tool of power and control?

Open Structures

As a response to the problematics of control utilization of technology I would like to propose open source as possible counter to this. Open source as a navigation of both deterritorialization and embeddedness, by which information, content and structures can freely move between places, but can be adjusted to suit the specific context at each point. Open source is a term which has been associated with computer software, but its meaning and reach is far wider than this.

"The subject of open source can be approached on many different levels technically, politically, economically, culturally but the social appears to be pivotal to openness yet often overlooked. Open source is not just about software or the internet it is more of an attitude or culture of collaboration, sharing and promotion of access to tools and knowledge, here we must emphasise the role of people and the relations between them, not just the means of production. Open source is a question of empowerment, freedom of speech and enfranchisement, none of which can be taken for granted still in today's world." (Ota/ASEF 2008) Open source and open content allow for continuous transformation upon each reception and optimizes all we have discussed upon difference, framing, intersubjectivity, the perpetual state of becoming and the ideal of participation. Mark Poster suggests that as all cultural objects become digitized in a networked computing narrative, the consequences are 'devastating: culture becomes malleable, unfixable and fluid.' (Poster 2006: 138)

In order to understand open source in a wider context we must first examine its origins and specificities. Pioneer of Open Source Eric Raymond has compared the structures of closed commercial software with that of a Cathedral and the

methodology of Open Source with that of a bazaar. In the Cathedral there is a reverence to a particular authority (a limited group of developers) but in the bazaar there appears to be little formal structure, no central control yet people are able to come together as a whole and achieve problem-solving on a deeper level. In reference to the development of the open source operating system, Linux he comments 'Linux is subversive. Who would have thought (in the early 90s) that a world class operating system could coalesce as if by magic out of part-time hacking by several thousand developers scattered all over the planet, connected only by the tenuous strands of the Internet?' (2001: 21) This demonstrates well the power of collaboration which can be facilitated through the internet and presents an example of how multiple inputs do not necessarily lead to mass fragmentation but can in fact strengthen the shared 'whole'.

Richard Matthew Stallman, another leader in the open source movement and founder of the Free Software Foundation, vehemently attacks corporate control of software code, 'The idea that the proprietary software social system – the system that says you are not allowed to share or change software – is antisocial, that it is unethical, that it is simply wrong, may come as a surprise to some readers. But what else could we say about a system based on dividing the public and keeping users helpless?' (Dibona et al 1999: 54). He opposes the closed system, which is now not only limited to software but to all interactions with technology, whereby our interactions are limited and prescribed, falsifying a sense of power when we are in fact powerless, what Virilio may call the state of 'obligatory interactive confinement' (1991: 120).

Lawrence Lessig who conceived of Creative Commons, speaks nostalgically of the early days of the internet, which was 'a space built on a commons, where because most early code governing the Net was open code, and where because of the architectural principle of end-to-end, the network owner could not control how the Net would be used – the resource of the Net was left open for innovation; all could draw upon its riches; no one could close another out' (Feller et al. 2005: 359). But such an ideology has been resisted by those who want to close content.

If we see technology, as Latour criticizes, as a 'black box' we have no way in and no way out. If we wish to challenge systems of control and of closed content then the solution proposed by Jon Erickson is that of hacking 'The essence of hacking is finding unintended or overlooked uses for the laws and properties of a given situation and then applying them in new and inventive ways to solve a problem' (2003: 241) we must make our own points of entry and escape by proposing alternatives which create dysfunction in order to reveal other functions and interpretations.

We can perhaps equate this with De Certeau's discussion of 'tactics' in 'The Practice of Everyday Life', by which to consume is to engage in another form of production, this is not consumption as in the acquisition of an object, but consumption in its utilization which can be highly subjective and again allow for the rising of difference, 'although they remain within the framework of prescribed syntaxes these 'traverses' remain heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate and in which they sketch out the guileful ruses of different interests and desires' (1984: 229) He gives the example of a child who draws upon his school exercise book 'he has made a space for himself and signs his existence as an author on it', there is the possibility to be creative and add content or function to the products which we consume, the act of consumption becomes an act of creativity, as in 'between the person and these products there is a gap of varying proportions opened by the use that he makes of them'. (1984: 31) This gap is the space which hacking attempts to enlarge by subverting the rigorous closed systems of technology, which even Certeau identifies as un-signable.

Certeau references the approach of Bricolage, first applied to cultural studies by Levi-Strauss and further developed by Derrida. Bricolage may be termed as a do-it-yourself approach which makes do with a limited repertoire but brings about new possibilities. Levi-Strauss comments that 'it builds ideological castles out of the debris of

what was once a social discourse' (1966: 21) and describes the bricoleur as one who must make do with 'whatever is at hand' with finite tools and materials which are heterogeneous, not being designed for the task at hand but being 'the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions and deconstructions' (1966: 17). The resources are limited but in their circulation, in their processes of construction and deconstruction they may find new methods of employment, which the bricoleur may expand upon in each operation.

Another defining element of Open Source is the ethic of sharing and collaboration. We are all now familiar with the idea of reader as producer, but this is still very much based upon an individual's reception. In the approach towards open source the product of each consumer can then also be re-distributed, there is a constant process of production and interpretation which can then be rearticulated and made relevant at a different point of locality.

Open source/open content could be a highly relevant strategy with concern to the mediated experience and the formulation of our notions of place. In the process of consumption we can also join in the production of place, the very concept of which can be promoted as open source in the reception, transformation and redistribution of these products which can find new translations at every node. As we have seen even physical structures of locality are increasingly embedded with new technology but we can find methods (even if they are subversive) through which we can contribute to the content of a site, transforming us into practitioners of place, where mediation can heighten engagement. This open structure enables us to contribute to the character and content of a given landscape not only as individuals but also in collaboration, as Raymond has shown open source is very much about cooperation.

Technology is not deterministic, but nor is it neutral, a hammer can create or kill, depending upon the use that it is put to, but at the same time each technology is designed for a particular purpose and a particular pattern of use, it is a result of a pre-existing perspective and its very development reflects the presumptions and illusions of society. It is our responsibility to think beyond the prescribed function, to encourage a greater openness and collective collaboration which enables us to make our own spaces, but not just online, but in physical sites too.

Conclusion

Place is not an immobile truth, the danger is to accept it as such and to be satisfied that the mediated experience fully conveys this truth. Our ideas of place are always in flux and mediations generate even greater flux, we can not cling to an ideal of place, the sanctity of the local or the demon of the global (or vice versa). When place is networked and mobile, when distance is seemingly obliterated and we enter the immediate simultaneity of multiple places we must realize that place defies location, it can not be found on the map nor in physical topology. The mediated experience of place is one of continuous absence yet immanent presence, through the duality of which we may lose ourselves or affirm our own being, becoming lost or identified. We may be trapped by place, divided from place, defined by place, merged with place etc., conditions all of which media technology has the ability to heighten in some form.

In global flows of deterritorialized products of place we are increasingly encouraged to produce our own space, to build our own dwelling from the fragments of representation which bombard us. The spaces which we can create for ourselves are presented as a utopia of rich communication, engaged community, vital democracy and freedom, endowed to us by dislocating from our immediate context. However the methodologies for creating such spaces are still highly limited and

prescribed, as is our very reception of mediated place, when engaged with through a standard interface and protocol which immediately frames the content. But perhaps we can counter the control society and the standardization in representation through engagement in the spaces where the physical and virtual world overlap and using 'tactics' or methods of hacking which allow for a new creativity in these spaces whereby media technologies can be utilized according to ideas of open source and open content to participate in and add authorship to the very fabric of our surroundings and the mediascapes which run through it.

We must deterritorialize and embed simultaneously, as Siddhabrata Sengupta proposes our strategy should consist of 'being conscious of one's locatedness but not valorizing location', locatedness is not a singular fixed point, it is itself a fluid hybridity which is equally dependent upon dislocated forms and embedded experience in order to formulate its own condition, a dynamic which mediations of technology may also encourage. It is our decision what to make of our multiple dispersed points of reference, our manifold presence and absence and our ability to both read and write place.

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