

CULTURE AND CREATIVITY: VISUAL CULTURE AND BEYOND

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INTRODUCTION

The present publication deals with issues of imagination and creativity as a notion, philosophy – and social and cultural form, with point of departure in current debates on visual culture. Whereas these debates cover a large ground, spanning from media studies over design to cultural studies, they seldom reflect on the basic fact that visual culture in its present form indicates a huge collective creativity in some capacity, implicating the entire postwar era. From early focuses on the possible social and cultural roles of the image in the 1950s and 60s - e.g. in work of Roland Barthes and Daniel Boorstin - to the present day, forms of visual culture have proliferated through a variety of collective dimensions, as reflected for instance in the curriculums of visual communication within design education and studies of image representation and pictorial cognition in art history and cognitive science.

Thus visual culture points to an interesting inroad to - and a possible novel focus on - the image - pictorial representation - as an issue of cultural creativity. For one thing the current interest in visual culture goes along with a surge in concrete interest in culture and creativity, e.g. related to debates on the cultural circularity of "the network society" (Manuel Castells), and the aesthetic modes of "economies of signs and spaces" (Scott Lash & John Urry) over analyses of the "experience society" (Gerhard Schulze), to the recent focus on a possible "experience economy" (B. Joseph Pine II & James H. Gilmore) and a "creative class" (Richard Florida). But in addition to that one may discern a larger social and cultural role for the image conjunct with a focus on creative image formation, as addressed traditionally by the notion of creative imagination in Western thought, in classic modernist thought, from Kant to the romantics, up to recent work of Paul Ricoeur, Richard Kearney, Johann P. Arnason and Charles Taylor, or in the interest in the image from an anthropological point of view in recent work of Arjun Appadurai.

The two texts presented here may be seen – by implication, as a proposition regarding culture and creativity, and response to this proposition.

The first text, "Cyberculture in Globalization," attempts to qualify the debate in the 1990es on "cyberspace," the "network society" etc. as a form of global culture, which situates in a novel relation between space and place, as a form of organization predicated on technology, but embedded in the space of the world and its myriad places. Whereas the idea of cyberspace only makes sense within a constrictive interpretation of the cybernetic tradition – the "computational heritage,"¹ the prospects and potential of new

¹ See Anders Michelsen, *Confronting the Imaginary of the Artificial. From cyberspace to the internet and from the internet to us*. PhD Thesis, Department of Art and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities. University of Copenhagen 2005.

media – and related technologies, present a need for a further understanding of place/space relations – and distinctions, in the text approached as a reflexive mode. With the mass-implementation of new media, a model of this reflexive mode – of what Bernward Joerges has called “prosopopoesis,” – of how technology may render itself present to place and space, is made necessary.² Such a model is suggested in “Cyberculture in Globalization.”

The second text, “Nothing has meaning outside discourse,” can be read as a response to the model proposed. Whereas the first text indicates a model, the second raises the question of what might be implied by such modeling in terms of creative – visual, culture. The focus is the debate on visual culture, which by itself is influenced by the mass implementation of new media, and computing, impossible without suggestive and imaginative visual interfaces. This points further to dense issues of how to make the complexity of computer based systems appear in their modeling “at large” – that is, making computerized form of ratio meaningful to the human. Since the first computer this has overwhelmingly been an issue of “visualization,” in multiple forms of visibility on websites, in browsers, in hand held devices, further in larger systems, in administration, economy, science etc. not least the systems that underpin globalization. The text develops an approach to visual culture in this regard based on the idea of a creative dimensioning of visual organizations. This idea is based on Cornelius Castoriadis’s notion of ontological “self-creation.”

Thus the agenda of visual culture studies is a pertinent response to a culture which is more predicated on images, not only by a broad and diverse forms of diffusion of imagery, but in substantial contexts such as new media, and further, in the imaginary forms such and contextualizing envelop within and rely on. Thus the texts indicate a revision of the current debates on visual culture in terms of creativity. Read in their disjunction and conjunction, the two texts presented here may open a possible framework for analyzing cultural creativity on par with globalization, and, as well, qualifying cultural studies beyond current restrictions and habits of thought.³

² Bernward Joerges, *Technik. Körper der Gesellschaft. Arbeiten zu Techniksoziologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1996, 265ff.

³ For a further perspective on the arguments in this publication, see “Autotranscendence and creative organization: on self-creation and self-organization,” in Peter Murphy & Anders Michelsen (eds), *Self-organization. Thesis Eleven: Critical Theory and Historical Sociology # 88*. London: Sage 2006. IP.

CYBERCULTURE IN GLOBALIZATION

**Globalization,
culture,
technology**

INTRODUCTION

The present paper juxtaposes globalization and culture related to computer-mediated communication, 'new media' - in the following, termed cyberculture. Globalization may be taken as an obvious frame for understanding cultural implications of the new media since this media is inherently telematic, multiplex, and dialogical, a "short circuit" of global geography as one writer (somewhat paradoxically) called the Internet in a Danish government report in 1994. Or as an Olivetti manager put it at the end of the 1980s: "Technology is destroying time and space, the last two barriers for the human race".

Along with telecommunication systems such as telephones and broadcast new media offers further prospects of decreasing importance of the geographical time and space-factors often discussed in relation to globalization, "the effective separation of communication from transportation" (James Carey). Nevertheless studies of cyberculture and new media often foreground a peer-based commonality which neglects broader issues of globalization, or see media as implicitly and unproblematically global.

The purpose of the present paper is to establish a framework for understanding: 1. How aspects of cyberculture may connect with globalization in broader terms of reflexivity. 2. How this connection may point to a global culture, related to but not predicated on technology. The paper is structured in three sections: I. globalization as complex connectivity: culture? An introduction of the theme globalization and cyberculture focusing on changes in the conception of the world system related to notions of reflexivity, culture, and complex connectivity. II. Cyberculture: the narratives of cyberspace. A critical sketch of cyberculture, exemplified by the 'narratives' of cyberspace in the 1990s, related to notions of reflexivity, culture, and complex connectivity. III. Cyberculture: localization and embeddedness. An evaluation of the localization and embeddedness of cyberculture and "virtual geography" in relation to restructurings of world cities and differences of "cyber-segmentation" in the new media.

I. GLOBALIZATION AS COMPLEX CONNECTIVITY: CULTURE?

1. Globalization and implosion

Globalization is often understood as the recent outcome⁴ of a historical process in which the *expansion* of an industrialized capitalist economy, from initial settings in Europe in the Sixteenth

⁴ Needless to say the term and concept of globalization is a contested one. One of the influential formulas of a global 'rationale' was put forward by the Annales-historian Fernand Braudel in his three volume world history *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th century*, Harper & Row 1981-84. Another important contribution to the idea of world relations is world system theory. The co-founder of the world system theory Immanuel Wallerstein wrote in 1974, "In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, there came into existence what we may call a European world-economy. It was not an empire yet but it was as spacious as an empire and shared some features with it. ... it is a 'world' system, not because it encompasses the whole world, but because it is larger than any juridically-defined political unit. And it is a 'world-economy' because the basic linkage between the parts of the system is economic, although this was reinforced to some extent by cultural links and eventually ... by political arrangements and even confederal structures," quoted from Malcolm Waters, *Globalization*, Routledge 1995, 23-24. See also Eric R Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, University of California Press 1982, Paul Knox & John Agnew, *The Geography of the World Economy*, Arnold 1998 (1989), Paul Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, Fontana Press 1994, Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Abacus 1994, and Robert Young, *White Mythologies. Writing History and the West*, Routledge 1990, and Waters, op.cit.

century, has created a systemic rationale covering or affecting the entire globe - "The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future" wrote Karl Marx. From a modernisation perspective this expansion has been one of economic and social transformation - a dual economic and political "revolution" - with factors such as science, technology, and culture reinforcing, or reacting to, the momentum of transformation. At the end of the 20th Century, after four decades of bipolar 'Pax Americana' (in the West) - the greatest economic expansion in history, in the words of historian Eric Hobsbawm - this ongoing economic expansion is thought to have reached the point at which the world is becoming totally immersed in: "...uncontrollable market forces" propelled by "...truly transnational corporations ... which owe allegiance to no nation state and locate wherever in the globe market advantage dictates", as Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson characterize the "strong" claims about globalization.⁵

However, the idea of globalization as systemic expansion does not cover the entire picture of present globalization, or, as we shall see, there is more, as well as less, to the global 'picture' than meets the eye. In a succinct analysis, *Globalisation and the Postcolonial World* from 1997,⁶ the sociologist Ankie Hoogvelt has questioned the assumption that globalization is equal to an expanding world system in the sense just described. On the contrary, the current dynamic of globalization may in fact break with the understanding of an expansive political economy transforming the world, world wide. According to Hoogvelt both liberals and neo-marxists assume that capitalism is driven by a need to incorporate ever-larger areas of the world in an "inexorable" expansion, a process whereby a: "...relentless search for raw materials, for cheap labour and for market outlets, time and again ...(drives A.M.) ...capitalism *either* into fresh geographic regions, *or* when these ... (are A.M.) ... no longer available, into upgrading existing ones."⁷ However, the world system has since the end of the 1970s experienced a change which breaks with the dogma of economic expansion, and the structure of the system has been transformed from a "classic" expansionist mode to what Hoogvelt claims is a state of implosion with a new deepening internal logic, thus reframing the relation between what world system theory called core and periphery. Hoogvelt traces this reframing in three significant changes: (a) Change in world trade and world economic exchange, (b) Change in investment flows and the emergence of a "global

⁵ Paul Hirst & Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question?*, Polity Press, p.195. Hirst and Thompson are critical of the claims about globalisation from an economic point of view and see the claims of globalization as a "distinctly 'global' economic structure" (ibid) as partly ungrounded, although they acknowledge that the economy "has changed radically in structure and forms of governance" (op.cit.,196), since the long boom from the 1950s to the 1970s.

⁶ Ankie Hoogvelt, *Globalisation and the Postcolonial World*, Macmillan Press Ltd. 1997.

⁷ Ibid, 65, 65ff.

financial deepening” , and (c) A new technico-economic paradigm linked to a changed phenomenology of the world:⁸

(a) Current world trade is showing a redistribution in the respective shares of the world trade between the world system core and periphery reflected in a significant shift from *inter*-group to *intra*-group trade. Whereas the immediate postwar years experienced a surge in the mutual involvement of core and regions in trade, the prevailing trend since the 1960s shows a disinvolvement from 44% in 1961-63 to 26.6% in 1990 which must be compared with a raise in intra-group trade in the industrialized world from 48% in 1961-63 to 55.4% in 1990.⁹ One interesting consequence of this, is a fall in the proportion of the world population involved in world trade, from a historical high of 18.7% by 1900 to a “combined population of the ‘core participants’” reaching 17.1% of the world population in 1990, even if one include in the core Japan and the four Asian Tigers.¹⁰ Hoogvelt argues that this stands as evidence of a ...modestly thickening network of economic exchanges within the core, a significant redistribution of trade participation within the core, the graduation of a small number of peripheral nations with a comparatively small population base to ‘core’ status, but above all to a declining economic interaction between core and periphery, both relative to aggregate world trade and relative to total populations participating in the thickening network.”¹¹

(b) This is complemented by a substantial redirectment of investment flows away from the periphery into the core. In 1960 the Third World received one half of the total global direct investment which in 1988-89 had dropped to 16.9%, and over half of this remaining “trickle went to the regions of the east, south and south-east Asia.”¹² This geographical redirection must be compared to what Hoogvelt calls a “global financial deepening” where the pace of growth of international, financial transactions is very much more rapid than any of the underlying economic fundamentals like trade, investment, and output. Not least because of a variety of novel, financial instruments which instantly convert any expected future cash flow into instant spending power, creating a peculiar profit-pattern based on fictitious capital formation, “....debt and exponential debt creation.”¹³ Hoogvelt quotes John Reed, a chairman of the bank Citicorp for noting the emergence of a new “bankable” world: “ (a) ...global economy which is very much a phenomenon of the northern hemisphere - Europe, North America, Japan - with some small additions.”¹⁴ In short, the periphery of world

⁸ Ibid, 69ff, 80ff.

⁹ Ibid, 74, table 4.3.

¹⁰ Ibid, 74-75, table 4.4 .

¹¹ Ibid., 75.

¹² Ibid., 77.

¹³ Ibid, 80ff, 81

¹⁴ Ibid, 83.

system theory is going from being submitted to capitalist exploitation (or underdevelopment) to “*structural irrelevance*” says Hoogvelt, creating a relative, selective, withdrawal of linkages between core and periphery.¹⁵ While large or perhaps even increasing parts of the world may still be, or become, irrelevant to the world system, the remaining (core) parts are exposed to a quantitative as well as a qualitative deepening of relations. Despite globalization and gigantic increases in economic activity, the global economy does not necessarily become more global, “*not any more!*.”¹⁶

(c) On this controversial background Hoogvelt continues to analyse a new “technico-economic paradigm.”¹⁷ The structural changes of globalization is related to a historical contingent “regulation” (The Regulation School) of the capitalist economy connected with the network- and flexibility-instruments of postfordism; “volume through variety”, JIT, lean production, customizing of products, and simultaneity principles integrating design, manufacture and component supply etc..¹⁸ This induces a need for a new global market discipline, related to the productive, organisational, and commercial strategies of postindustrialism. An important feature of this is apparent on a phenomenological level, where the instruments of postindustrialism make possible, and reversely necessitate, an altered ‘approach’ to the world. In time-space terms globalization combines postindustrial strategies and new technological infrastructures with an increased instrumentalization of time; i.e. a time-space compression in the sense of David Harvey, which renders spatial differences subject to an accelerated account of time in the postindustrial economy. This process “amounts to a virtual *annihilation of space through time*”¹⁹ a time-space distancing in the words of Anthony Giddens which means that events and actions developing in time may have an impact on large segments of space.

Hoogvelt quotes Giddens: “Globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of world wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.”²⁰ Globalization is creating “a new social architecture of cross-border human interactions” which is closely related to the need for a new global market discipline, writes Hoogvelt.²¹ While we still live in local places as individuals and bodies, globalization engenders experiences of an ever more comprehensive phenomenal world within disciplinary demands of new productive systems, as well as in new social relations. Globalization thus entails new options to act on the world with less attention to parameters of time and space, as

¹⁵ Ibid., 84.

¹⁶ Ibid., 76.

¹⁷ Ibid, 90ff, 94.

¹⁸ Ibid., 93ff, 95-101.

¹⁹ Ibid, 118f, 120.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 67, 123ff.

well as a changed perception of this enacted world. Globalization is producing a “stretched” mode of social forms, agencies, and events “across the earths surface as a whole”²² in the words of Giddens, which must be understood as part of a continuing “disembedding” of modern institutions.

One important aspect of this is the implication of a new *reflexivity* vis-a-vis the “consequences of modernity;”²³ i.e. responses which not only mirror globalization in the sense of an “ideological battleground” (Wallerstein)²⁴ of the world system, but carry their own momentum. The establishment of a “phenomenology of globalization” in the words of Malcolm Waters, in which “the inhabitants of the planet self-consciously orient themselves towards the world as a whole...”²⁵ is from a cultural studies point of view perhaps one of the most important parts of this process, albeit not necessarily reflected in the development of the world economy. Thus globalization, in many senses unquestionably global, or more geographically global than previous eras of ‘internationalism’, may hide important new differences, which become apparent in so different phenomena as the crisis of the welfare model, the demise of third worldism, the rise of religious fundamentalism in many parts of the world, and the claim of a “new economy” of faith in technological development in the US. This points not only to a qualification of the notion of reflexivity found in Giddens (predicated on the modern universality of stretching and disembedding), but to an indication of new types of reflexivity, which I will relate to cyberculture in the following. The prime importance of Hoogvelt’s analysis is to point to this ‘uneven’ and composite trajectory. Hoogvelt’s analysis of the implosion of the world system indicates interesting qualifications in the reading of globalization which may be sketched on a systemic, experiential, and cultural level:

(1) *SYSTEM -COMPLEXIFICATION*: It indicates a break with the bias of universality and uniformity in the relation between geographical expanse and systemic expansion. Instead a more *complex* relationship ensues, partly as something which follows upon the expansion of world systemic relationships, as consequences of Western modernity, partly as a novelty expressed in how various modes of the systemic relate to various modes of for example geography, as in the issues of structural irrelevance.

(2) *EXPERIENCE - AGENCIES*: Globalization is experienced and intended by means of new time-space agencies, for

²² Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge, Polity Press 1990, 64.

²³ *Ibid.*, 21ff, 55ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 36ff, 55ff. Immanuel Wallerstein, “Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World System”, in, Mike Featherstone (ed), *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, SAGE Publications 1990, 31ff.

²⁵ Waters, op.cit.,63.

example *new media*. The world is becoming smaller in several ways, thanks to new (and old) media, but this foregrounds not only the consciousness of a “single place,”²⁶ but also, various specific frames for action, identity, and understanding (for example various media) which again are partly related to social architectures and new disciplinary prescriptions of the changing world system.

(3) *CULTURE - REPERCUSSIONS*: Other parameters than functional and economic aspects may indicate important repercussions of globalization, for example cultural issues related to new time-space agencies. The implosion of the world system may indicate more profound changes in the world, i.e. in the notion of system, and the *social-historical eo ipso*. The discussion of culture in globalization is an indication of the composite and changing nature of globalization.

2. Globalization and culture

The idea that culture may have an increasingly independent importance in globalization is reflected, discussed, and developed in several ways in contemporary cultural and anthropological studies of globalization, which question the assumption that culture is immobile, bounded, and coherent, “occupying a physical territory mapped as political territory (predominantly the nation-state) and binding individual meaning constructions into this circumscribed social, political space.”²⁷ James Clifford discusses “travelling cultures” where practices of cultural “crossing and interaction” are seen as troubling to the “localism in many common assumptions on culture.”²⁸ Ulf Hannerz writes: “There is now a world culture, but we had better make sure we understand what this means. It is marked by an organization of diversity rather than by a replication of uniformity ... No total homogenization of systems of meaning and expression has occurred, nor does it appear likely that there will be one any time soon. But the world has become one network of social relationships, and between its different regions there is a flow of meanings as well as of people and goods.”²⁹

This interchange and flow is also an important aspect of postcolonial theory and cultural studies, for example in recent

²⁶ John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, Polity Press 1999, 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ulf Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture”, in, Featherstone (ed): *Op.cit.*, 237ff, 237,. See also Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*, Columbia University Press 1992.

writings of Robert Young and Paul Gilroy.³⁰ Although the impetus of postcolonial research is the critical analysis of Western 'construction' of cultural identity from ethnocentric and cultural matrices of sameness and otherness,³¹ it also implies a global agenda. Homi Bhabha's theory implies a global dynamic which emphasizes contestations and negotiations in the "location of culture" both in the West and in the colonies, based on cultural displacement caused by migratory diasporas and displacement of values in the reception of Western culture in the Third World.³² In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said, one of the the mentors of the postcolonial field relates his critical exposure of Western constructions of 'the Orient' to issues of a global ecumene: "We live in one global environment with a huge number of ecological, economic, social, and political pressures tearing at its only dimly perceived, basically uninterpreted and uncomprehended fabric. Anyone with even a vague consciousness of this whole is alarmed at how such remorselessly selfish and narrow interests - patriotism, chauvinism, ethnic, religious, and racial hatreds - can in fact lead to mass destructiveness. The world simply cannot afford this many more times."³³

However, the idea of 'culturalization' is inherently alien to world system theory. In a discussion with Roy Boyne, Immanuel Wallerstein, one of the principal proponents of world system theory rejects the idea of culture's independent importance as a residue from notions of freedom and will in nineteenth-century social science,³⁴ which together with economics and politics is "... a non-subject, invented for us by nineteenth-century social science. The sooner we unthink this unholy trinity, the sooner we shall begin to construct a new historical social science that gets us out of the many cul-de-sacs in which we find ourselves. Emphasizing 'culture' in order to counterbalance the emphases others have put on the 'economy' or the 'polity' does not at all solve the problem; it in fact just makes it worse."³⁵ Although Wallerstein indicates that the systemic may not necessarily be predicated on economy, he maintains that an analysis of globalization must be forthcoming within a concept of systemic rationality as adequate epistemology; i.e the study of systemic and functional pertinences, accumulative and innovative impulses, and polarizations and inherent prospects

³⁰ Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Routledge 1995; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Verso 1993.

³¹ Robert Young, *White Mythologies. Writing History and the West*, Routledge 1990.

³² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge 1994.

³³ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage 1993, 21.

³⁴ Immanuel Wallerstein, "Culture is the World System: A Reply to Boyne", in, Mike Featherstone (ed): *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, SAGE Publications, 63ff, 64-65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

of demise of the world system.³⁶ Wallerstein considers the idea of 'culturalization' as a product of the cultural "anti-systemic movements" of the late 1960s which repeats earlier trends in Western history. Culture is derivative and the *chasse gardée* of culture in recent years cannot help a regress to a pre-systemic point of view, so to speak.

Nevertheless, what appears as highly compromising to world system theory is described as a new "social functionality of culture"³⁷ by Fredric Jameson in his defining essay on globalization and the postmodern, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." The structural importance of culture in globalization is seen as a specific historical mode related to what Ernest Mandel termed the third stage of capital. Jameson describes this as: "the purest form of capital yet to have emerged, a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas,"³⁸ leading "... to the point at which everything in our social life - from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself - can be said to have become "cultural" in some original and yet untheorized sense."³⁹ However, globalization is not only bringing 'culturalization' into focus, it is also linked with a vaning critical potential in the dialectic between high modernism and mass culture. But to argue that culture is no longer endowed with the relative autonomy it once enjoyed is not to signal it's disappearance, Jameson writes, on the contrary, it may open up a new mode of cultural politics, a new aesthetic of cognitive mapping, grasping the new global mode of power, control, and economy: "a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole."⁴⁰

As Kwame Anthony Appiah points out in *In My Fathers House*⁴¹ postmodernism can be seen as an assertive stance vis-a-vis a change in a the world system making way for culture, which is *neither* a negation of the systemic (modern) *nor* an affirmation of postmodern arrhythmia, but is, as he puts it, simply a forthright way of "... understanding the multiplication of distinctions"⁴² which follows in the wake of a new complexity: "... Modernism saw the economization of the world as the triumph of reason; postmodernism rejects that claim, allowing in the realm of theory the same multiplication of distinctions we see in the cultures it seeks to

³⁶ Wallerstein, "Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World System", in, Featherstone (ed), Op.cit., 35-38.

³⁷ Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986*, Vol. II, here quoted from Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Fathers House. Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, Methuen 1993, 228-229, 228.

³⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism. Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press 1991, p.35-36.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 48, 51, 54, 37f. Se also 55ff.

⁴¹ Appiah, Op.cit.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 235.

understand.”⁴³ In “coming to terms with what it means to be modern” African and Western intellectuals have interests they should share, Appiah adds (41). Whether postmodern or not, the idea of culture in globalization indicates an epistemological shift in the conception of world relations. Beyond their dichotomous differences, Jameson's postmodern idea of a cultural 'overdetermination' of postmodern third-stage capitalism and Wallerstein's (modern) rejection of culture as relevant to an understanding of the systemic, pose a question of how new qualities emerge. Culturalization may thus be understood as a certain inroad to the present of the world system, or better, to what meanings the notion of system may have presently, thus pointing to alterations of the systemic *eo ipso*. Or to put it differently, we may reinterpret, or restate, the role of culture, without reproducing the holy trinity of nineteenth century social science; or reversely, the culturalization in question, may be said to question the functionality of world system theory on this theory's own epistemological, i.e. systemic, accord.

3. Globalization - a field of complex connectivity

Insofar globalization unquestionably implies systemic relations, in economic terms “global assembly lines”, postfordist “flexible production complexes” etc., these systemic relations may be conceived as “complexified” along the lines of the “complexification” which John Casti registers in various areas of science and scientific explanation.⁴⁴ It may be an epistemological confusion to compare the Wallersteinian world system theory with the conservative dynamics of ‘Newtonian physics’ put to a critical test by complexity-theories.

However, world system theory may be placed within the rationale of what N. Katherine Hayles has called the second phase of system theory, which implies an emphasis on autopoietic and Umwelt-distancing qualities.⁴⁵ In contrast to this, Hayles identifies a third phase of system theory and cybernetics which puts the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ John L. Casti, *Complexification*, HarperPerennial 1994. One may argue, *first* that issues of self-organization has from the beginning been optional vis-à-vis social and cultural issues, *second* that formalizations (computational or otherwise) have tended to predicate on physical, biological and mathematical issues, which have nevertheless been directed towards social and cultural issues, *third*, that an increased pertinence of self-organization for social and cultural phenomena has been opening further prospects of theory. See also Anders Michelsen, “Autotranscendence and creative organization, on self-creation and self-organization,” in Murphy & Michelsen (eds), *Op.cit.*

⁴⁵ N. Katherine Hayles, “Boundary Disputes: Homeostasis, Reflexivity, and the Foundations of Cybernetics”, in, Robert Markley (ed), *Virtual Realities and Their Discontents*, The John Hopkins University Press 1996.

emphasis on open, adaptive aspects of systems, not least an emphasis on how systems may adapt, relate, and change vis-a-vis embodied human phenomenology (in the case of postfordism for example displayed the ability of a system to adapt to 'human' factors in the market). With reference to G.J. Dalenoort's overview of self-organizing systems, globalization may in systemic terms be conceived as a self-organizing system, albeit in a human mode, which entails what one may term a certain ontological intransparency, since the human system (Dalenoort is discussing the human brain) is not goal-directed and related to survival values in the sense applying to other parts of organic life: "The human brain has become so complex in biological evolution, that behaviours have emerged of which the goal-directedness is difficult to detect, and of which survival value is outright questionable."⁴⁶ What I want to argue here is that a focus on current globalization cannot and need not count cultural aspects out or reduce them to something non-systemic. They may point to a different conception of the social-historical, and this calls for closer inspection.

One way of approaching this is to define globalization as "complex connectivity" as John Tomlinson attempts in *Globalization and Culture*: "... globalization refers to the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependencies that characterize modern social life."⁴⁷ The multiplicity of linkages exist

"...in a number of *modalities*, varying from social-institutional relationships that are proliferating between individuals and collectivities world wide, to the idea of the increasing 'flow' of goods, information, people, and practices across national borders, to the more 'concrete' modalities of connection provided by technological developments such as the international system of rapid air transport and the more literal 'wiredness' of electronic communication systems."⁴⁸

Culturalization can thus be theorized as modalities of complex connectivity, and we may conceive of the issues of "implosion" (Hoogvelt), "hybridity" (Bhabha), "travelling" (Clifford), and "flows" (Hannerz) as expressions of such modalities of culturalization emerging in a changing world.

The "dialectic" of opposed principles and tendencies behind many schemes of economic expansion is not necessarily wrong but one-dimensional, argues Tomlinson,⁴⁹ in a discussion of Hirst and Thompson's critique of globalization. When Hirst and Thompson state that "without a notion of a truly globalized economy many of

⁴⁶ G. J. Dalenoort, "The Paradigm of Self-organization: Studies of Autonomous Systems", in, G.J.Dalenoort, (ed), *The Paradigm of Self-Organization. Current trends in Self Organization*, Studies in Cybernetics, 19, Gordon and Breach Science Publishers 1989, p.1ff, p.18.

⁴⁷ Tomlinson, Op.cit., 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 16-17.

the other consequences adduced in the domains of culture and politics would either cease to be sustainable or become less threatening”⁵⁰ they maintain the universalist bias of economic modernisation. I.e. they remain within the perimeter of a one-dimensionality which cannot grasp globalization “... understood in terms of simultaneous, complexly related processes in the realms of economy, politics, culture, technology and so forth, it involves all sorts of contradictions, resistances and countervailing forces ...”⁵¹ The idea of complex connectivity entails sets of diverse modalities in a middlefield of “complexly intertwined practices of the cultural, the economic, and the political, a sense of the purpose of the cultural - that of making life meaningful.”⁵²

According to Tomlinson the cultural may be functional and instrumental, as it, in a certain sense, is in world system theory, an “ideological battleground” but it is also an end in itself, or an end to other things, distributed in different modal configurations related to general and specific purposes. It is simply present in “...the trip around the local supermarket aisles, or to the restaurant, the sports hall, the dance club, or the garden centre, the conversation in the bar or in the corner”;⁵³ mundane practices that contribute to lives and peoples ongoing “life-narratives.”⁵⁴ Culture is “the order of life,” “...people’s sense of identity, the experience of place and of the self in relation to place, shared understandings, values, desires, myths, hopes and fears,”⁵⁵ where human beings construct meaning through “practices of symbolic representation.”⁵⁶

If we return to the qualifications indicated by Hoogvelt's argument on a systemic, experiential, and cultural level, we may add to the previous summary:

(1) *SYSTEM - CONNECTIVITY*: The determinations of the world system theory, modernisation theory, and global development theories may be revised by applying Tomlinson’s idea of *complex connectivity*. The world system may thus be seen as plurality of modes which may intertwine, and thus restate the relative importance of, for example the cultural, economic, and political, and other instances that make “life meaningful” (in terms of economics this may also accommodate Hoogvelt’s analysis of implosion)

(2) *EXPERIENCE - MODALITIES*: The idea of the stretching of social forms and disembedding of institutions may be developed in relation to different modalities of reflexivity. If globalization is experienced and intended by means of new time-space agencies related to for example *new media*, we

⁵⁰ Hirst and Thompson, Op.cit., 3; Tomlinson, Op.cit.,16.

⁵¹ Tomlinson, Op.cit., 16.

⁵² Ibid., 18.

⁵³ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 18.

need to examine how various modalities of reflexivity build up in relation to them.

(3) *CULTURE - PRACTICES*: If plural modalities of 'whole ways of life' are foregrounded by means of culture it becomes important to look into how these cultures invent symbolic practices of "... shared understandings, values, desires, myths, hopes and fears,"⁵⁷ and how these furthermore are related to other modalities of globalization.

Globalization and culture can thus be seen as mutually dependent, not as an overriding rationality *tout cour*, but as a complexification in the understanding of what was the object of world system theory. In this sense it has to do with the impact of the stretching and disembedding of institutions, social relations, and symbolic practices throughout the world, from the American culture-industries over UNESCO programs to international sports and *cyberculture*. But it also has to do with migratory movements, new reflections, contestations, and negotiations of the impulses deriving from, or felt to derive from globalization; from the rise of racialist and racist sentiments in Europe to the Latin American subcultural pastiches of US popculture.⁵⁸ - An expression of a complex and conflictual construction of cultural fields, where a dynamic shifting relational interplay "constitutes the dynamic transmutational structure of a complex phenomenon", in the words of Richard J. Bernstein.⁵⁹

In the following I will discuss this in relation to *cyberculture*, which I, in reverse, will consider as a window to the issue of culture's role in globalization. As we shall see this does neither neglect the issue of economy nor the issue of culture in globalization but it reinterprets these issues. Since I am going to deal with quite different issues due to my interdisciplinary approach I will use the qualifications indicated by Hoogvelt's argument as a 'discursive map' for my argument. I will continue through the following themes:

II. Cyberculture: the narratives of cyberspace. A critical sketch of *cyberculture*, exemplified by the 'narratives' of cyberspace in the 1990s, related to notions of reflexivity, culture, and complex connectivity.

III. Cyberculture: localization and embeddedness. An evaluation of the localization and embeddedness of *cyberculture* and "virtual geography" in relation to restructurings of world cities and differences of "cyber-segmentation" in the new media.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁸ Celeste Olalquiaga, *Megalopolis. Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities*, University of Minnesota Press 1992, 75ff.

⁵⁹ Richard J. Bernstein, *The New Constellation*, The MIT Press 1992, 9.

II. CYBERCULTURE: THE NARRATIVES OF CYBERSPACE

1. The new media and culture

Cyberculture is one of several prominent buzzwords for culture related to or dependent on computer technology and computer-mediated communication, for example in 'dialogic' versions (collectively interactive in a 'many-to-many'-form, e.g. the Internet and WWW) or 'monologic' versions (individually interactive in a 'one to many' - (or one-to-one) form, e.g. computer games on cd-rom or stand alone virtual reality) of the new media. One outspoken protagonist of a cybercultural perspective, the American philosopher Michael Heim,⁶⁰ understands cyberculture as a new space, a *cyberspace*, constructing a new nature in a "New World of Machines", which filters memories, communication, organization and planning. He writes with the characteristic tone of the debate: "... We are finding in cyberspace a second nature, a new home"⁶¹ which according to him has "theological properties" on par with nature: "infinity, inaccessibility, overwhelming power, fearsomeness, wildness, and primordially."⁶² While the various aspects of communication in the new media, i.e. communication, sharing

⁶⁰ Michael Heim: "Nature and Cyberspace", Man and Nature, Working Paper 28, Odense University 1993.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 16.

information, keeping contact, exchanging points of view etc. by means of computer technology is as old as computerized networking itself, the idea of a vastly more comprehensive 'cybernetically generated' space (i.e. a space generated by or at least predicated on cybernetic technology, e.g. computer technology), a *cyberspace*, is related to ideas of far ranging options and prospects (in the following I will primarily, but not entirely, be concerned with dialogic new media).

Although the first computerized network-schemes such as the Arpanet, the predecessor to the current Internet, was designed for scientific time-sharing of computers and military purposes in a nuclear war, they quickly became the instruments of personal mail-functions, e-mail, and filetransfer between parts of the scientific community.⁶³ From the beginning of the 1980s this prospect of computerized communication developed into a range of more or less public communication systems such as the university-based Usenet or the private Fidonet. These early nets were peer-based communication systems within rather narrowly defined social bases - e.g. computer scientists, student groups, academic affiliations, nerds and hackers, NGOs etc. - and only with the broader implementation of the World Wide Web-scheme based on hypertext and browser technology over the mid-1990s, the Internet became the broad social and global media we know today. In 1998 the Internet boasted more than 140 million users (in Autumn 2003 it is assessed that 665 million people have access to the internet),⁶⁴ and a comprehensive communicative and interactive typology⁶⁵ ranging from casual browsing through homebased personal computers over internet relay chats, corporate intranets, and e-commerce to interactive multimedial 3D-space in "virtual universes". Although this system puts an overwhelming priority on the core in the Wallersteinean world system (USA, Europe, Japan) - less than 5 % of registered hosts in 1998 were placed outside the core, and 70,9 % of the registered hosts were US-American⁶⁶ - it is clear that the Internet has a potential for global "complex connectivity" which may be reinforced by the development of new technology, for example 'post-pc'-platforms such as cell phones with Internet-access.

While the developments of postwar computers and information and networking technology in the 1940s, -50s, and -60s were closely related to such technoscientific disciplines as

⁶³ Janet Abbate: *Inventing the Internet*, The MIT Press 1999; Paul E Ceruzzi: *A History of Computing*, The MIT Press 1998.

⁶⁴ UNDP: *Human Development Report 1999*, Oxford University Press 1999, 5. For a netversion, see <http://www.undp.org/hdro/>. Se "Beyond the bubble. A Survey of Telecoms. October 11th 2003," 4, in *The Economist October 11th 2003*.

⁶⁵ Jens F. Jensen: "Roadmap til Informations- Motorvejen. Medietypologier for informationstrafikmønstre på Internet", in Jens F. Jensen (red): *Internet, World Wide Web, Netværkskommunikation. Om netmedier, netkulturer, beboede 3D virtuelle verdener og meget mere ...*, FISK-serien 4, Ålborg Universitetsforlag 1999, 25ff.

⁶⁶ Tim Jordan: *Cyberpower*, Routledge 1999, 51.

cybernetics, information theory, and artificial intelligence projects, it became a “social infostructure”⁶⁷ from the 1970s onwards, which in part was reflected in famous evaluations such as Daniel Bell’s *The Coming of Postindustrial Society* from 1973, Jean Francois Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* from 1979, and Alvin Toffler’s *The Third Wave* from 1980.⁶⁸ With this, the early frameworks for understanding culture in relation to computers, for example Norbert Wiener’s cybernetics,⁶⁹ change considerably, implying a “jump” from “automata into architectures” in the words of Susan Leigh Star writing in 1995:⁷⁰ “... With the widespread adoption of increasingly powerful computers and Internet usage, a shift ... occurred in the focus ... Human actions and interactions are increasingly centered and mechanized imitation of humans increasingly less central. Metaphors of ‘space’ and discussions of affordance and tools are replacing discussion of automata and Turing tests.”⁷¹

This implies also a more comprehensive cultural agenda, establishing computer-mediated communication as (a) a “medium for building communities and networks”, (b) a way of representing, stretching and redefining cultural practices, and (c) a manifestation of cultural problems, conflicts, and powerrelations.⁷² Here, bits and pieces from postwar computer science, media studies, and cultural studies are mixed in what is still an only loosely understood cultural discourse related to the many practices within the new media - cyberculture - which may in part be summarized as follows to demonstrate the mixed and complex nature of the discourse:

(a) A break with a good part of the ideas of cultural impacts of technology put forward by in the first phase of cybernetics, information and systems theory, and in part with the second phase’s ideas of for example autopoiesis and Umwelt-problematics.⁷³

(b) A revised continuation of the heritage of cybernetics, information and systems theory departing from what N.Katherine Hayles terms a third phase of cybernetics and system theory (and other parts of early computer science e.g.

⁶⁷ Shumpei Kuman and Izumi Aizu: “Co-Emulation: The Case for a Global Hypernetwork”, in Linda M. Harasim (ed): *Global Networks. Computers and International Communication*, The MIT Press 1993, 312ff.

⁶⁸ Daniel Bell: *The Coming of Postindustrial Society*, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. 1974 (1973); Jean Francois Lyotard: *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press 1984 (1979); Alvin Toffler: *The Third Wave*, Bantam Books 1981 (1980).

⁶⁹ Hayles: Op.cit.; N. Katherine Hayles: *How We became Posthuman. Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, The University of Chicago Press 1999.

⁷⁰ Susan Leigh Star (ed): *The Cultures of Computing*, Blackwell Publishers/The Sociological Review 1995, 8.

⁷¹ Ibid., 9-10.

⁷² Ibid., 8.

⁷³ Hayles: *How We became Posthuman*, 1999.

the early hypertext and multimedia schemes of Vannevar Bush and Ted Nelson).⁷⁴

(c) Development and application of various ideas from media theories such as the Canadian Medium Theory (Innis, McLuhan, Meyrowitz) and its emphasis on prosthetic incorporation of media technologies and social implications of media technology and media history.⁷⁵

(d) Mergers with the new epistemological agendas unfolding with the proliferation of poststructuralism and new “critical” theories (themselves not uninfluenced by the heritage of cybernetics, system theory, and medium theories of the 60s), in part appearing within discourses of cultural studies of technology, and science and technology studies, in part operating directly in relation to the new media.⁷⁶

(e) Mixtures with new social and cultural trends, practices, and identity politics for example in feminism, communitarianism and neo-liberalism.⁷⁷

The appearance of cyberculture (probably best known to a wider public through magazines such as *Wired*) is thus predicated on a complex cultural development. One may briefly systematize it as in part pertaining to various practices, as in part emerging from new issues of science and technology, including new technological constructions such as networked computing and graphic user interface. Nevertheless the borders are often blurred, due to the discourse and the ‘practicians’ contemporaneous affiliation with scientific, commercial, and social aspects (in itself a highly interesting subject, which is beyond the scope of the present paper).

However, one very important aspect of cyberculture concerns a peculiar reflexivity in the sense of Giddens’ and Water’s discussed above, although in many cases not explicitly or only vaguely related to cultural aspects of globalization, but taking shape for example within the various issues just outlined in (a) - (e). One gets a sense of being ‘beyond’ the questions of globalization in a new sister/brotherhood of inherently global cybernauts and cybernetic organisms, as expressed vehemently in executive editor of *Wired*

⁷⁴ Paul A. Mayer (ed): *Computer Media and Communication. A Reader*, Oxford University Press 1999.

⁷⁵ See for example Norbert Bolz: *Am Ende der Gutenberg Galaxis. Die Neuen Kommunikationsverhältnisse*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1993.

⁷⁶ See for example Douglas Tallack (ed): *Critical Theory. A Reader*, Harvester Wheatsheaf 1995.

⁷⁷ Richard Barbrook und Andy Cameron: “Die Kalifornische Ideologie”, in, Nettime (hg.): *Netzkritik. Materialien zur Internet-debatte*, Edition ID-Archive 1997; Hayles: *How We became Posthuman*, 1999.

Kevin Kelly's synthesis of complexity theories, neoliberalism, biology, and poststructuralism in *Out of Control*.⁷⁸

Despite the widespread assumption that the new media is not predicated on restraints such as geographical time and space-factors, the analysis of cyberculture is often quite paradoxically 'parochial', foregrounding communication-inherent, or system-related qualities related to issues of community, gender, fiction, identity politics, ethnicity etc. Thus the Niklas Luhmann-inspired Norbert Bolz rejects the perspective of agency in the systemic omnipotence of the new media and their autopoietic construction of the mediatic agents, and consequently reduces the issue of cyberculture in globalization to an almost destined expression of "Westernization", i.e. the Western technological principles, Western posthistory and its "American way of life". It is the only form under which we can imagine globalization."⁷⁹ Even in cases of explicit global treatment of the new media, a certain regionalism prevails.⁸⁰

Thus cyberculture may be said to be based on the assumption of a media-immanent practice in wholesale incorporations which for example comes forward in passionate debates (within and without the new media) on "gender swapping", "cyberrape", "flame wars" etc. related to 'virtual' activities in the media. In *Cyberpower* Tim Jordan presents a symptomatic, although highly ambitious, attempt of such a cybercultural immanence in the outline of a Michel Foucault-inspired virtual cyberpower-structure, based on individuals, social relations, and imaginaries in an almost wholly independent immanence of mediation.⁸¹ The new media is seen as a singular 'plane' of immanence, to paraphrase Gilles Deleuze, related to virtual organisations, electronic groups, networked cooperations, and communities etc. distanced from the world 'outside' or not in need of paying real attention to the problem of 'world-reference', one way or the other.

2. The culture of real virtuality – reflexivity

⁷⁸ Kevin Kelly: *Out of Control. The New Biology of Machines*, Fourth Estate Limited 1994; Anders Michelsen: "Life on the Screen? Computers, Culture, Technology", in, *Arte Electrónico/Electronic Art*, *Atlantica Internacional Revista de las Artes*, Número 23 1999.

⁷⁹ Anders Michelsen: "The perfect black box and its global paths. From cyberspace to hyperspace (interview with Norbert Bolz), in, *Atlantica Internacional Revista de las Artes*, Número 8 1994, 138.

⁸⁰ Brian D. Loader (ed): *Cyberspace Divide. Equality, agency and policy in the information society*, Routledge 1998.

⁸¹ Tim Jordan: Op.cit.

In *The Rise of the Network Society* by Manuel Castells⁸² a much broader reflexive position of cyberculture is put forward in a comprehensive treatment which attempts to establish a framework related to paradigms of globalization. The central notion in Castells analysis is “*the space of flows*” which he has developed in a number of analyses,⁸³ culminating in the *The Rise of the Network Society*. The space of flows is defined as the “dominant spatial manifestation of power and functions in our societies”, and as such it is critical to the distribution of wealth and power⁸⁴ in globalization. The space of flows is thus differing from the traditional space of places related to the historical organisations of space which are common to our experience; it is “organized around command and control centers able to coordinate, innovate, and manage the intertwined activities of network of firms.”⁸⁵ What matters from the perspective of the space of flows, “is the versatility of its networks”:

“... a process ... by which centers of production and consumption of advanced services, and their ancillary local societies, are connected in global networks, while simultaneously downplaying the linkages with their hinterlands, on the basis of information flows.”⁸⁶

The dispersion and concentration of production is the manifestation of “... a multiplicity of global industrial networks whose intersections and exclusions transform the very notion of industrial location from factory sites to manufacturing flows.”

A radical implication of the space of flows is to be found in culture. The space of flows is related to new options of communication and saturation of informational systems, wherein culture is mediated and enacted as a *culture of real virtuality*, expressed through new orders of knowledge generation and new cognitive patterns.⁸⁷ “Our historically produced systems of beliefs and codes” are reenacted by the new media, which - in a broad sense - can be considered as material-cultural support of “dominant processes and functions” in the network society, specified in the circuits of: (a) electronic impulses in the technology, (b) the actual nodes and hubs which link the space of flows to well-defined social, cultural, physical, and functional places, thus forming, (c) the settings for a spatial organization of the dominant, managerial elites, cosmopolitan yet “personal micro networks,”⁸⁸ bound together by a

⁸² Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I: The rise of the Network Society*, Blackwell Publishers 1996.

⁸³ Manuel Castells, *The Informational City. Information Technology, Economic Restructuring and the Urban-Regional Process*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1989.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 378.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.386.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 327ff.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 411ff, 416,.

“unifying symbolic environment”, termed the culture of real virtuality.⁸⁹

According to Castells the network society is exerting a capacity for interactions with a whole encultured denaturalized environment:⁹⁰

“We are just entering a new stage in which culture refers to culture having superseded nature to the point that Nature is artificially revived (“preserved”) as a cultural form: ...our species have reached the level of knowledge and social organization that will allow us to live in a predominant social world.”⁹¹

The ‘telos’ of this encultured sphere of real virtuality is a new momentum, what he calls a frozen “glacial time”, a “timeless time” breaking down the rhythmicities attached to Fordism, replacing the life cycles of premodern and modern times with a culture:

“ (...) at the same time of the eternal and of the ephemeral. It is eternal because it reaches back and forth to the whole sequence of cultural expressions. It is ephemeral because each arrangement, each specific sequencing, depends on the context and purpose under which any given cultural construct is solicited. We are not in a culture of circularity, but in a universe of undifferentiated temporality of cultural expressions.”⁹²

If we return to qualifications indicated by Hoogvelt’s argument on a systemic, experiential, and cultural level, we may make further additions to the previous summaries in order to emphasize issues of *reflexivity* related to *the new media*:

(1) *SYSTEM -ENCULTURALIZATION; THE NEW MEDIA*:

The plurality of modes which intertwine and restate the relative importance of the cultural, economic, and political in globalization are to a certain degree related to complex *mediatic* capacities for interactions with a whole encultured environment. In terms of media the reflexivity of cyberculture is thus predicated on specific technologies and these technologies relation to other modalities of complex connectivity.

(2) *EXPERIENCE - REFLEXIVITY; THE NEW MEDIA*: If it is correct that in cyberculture “culture refers to culture” we may see that phenomenologies related to new time-space agencies in the new media are pointing to a reflexivity of a predominantly *encultured* sphere inherent to a network

⁸⁹ Ibid., 417.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 467.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 477.

society; the technological reflexivity in cyberculture may thus be seen as self-referential.

(3) *CULTURE - IMMANENCE; THE NEW MEDIA*: This foregrounds aspects of virtuality and ephemerality seeing culture as depending on specific purposes enclosed within the *immanence* of the new media. The questioning of the world is not predicated on a phenomenology of the world, but on a phenomenology arising through practices wholly incorporated in the new media.

3. Narratives of cyberspace – reflexivity

In what is often seen as the historical inauguration of the idea of cyberspace, the novel *Neuromancer* from 1984 by the writer William Gibson, the new media is described in the famous metaphor of cyberspace, an abstract non-space of the mind, disembedded and stretching over a sublime field of a new immanence:

“Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts. ... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding... ”⁹³

The advent of the new media and the discourse of cyberculture in the 1980s is characterized by a peculiar relation between fact and fiction which is nowhere more predominant than in the narrative construction of cyberspace. In Gibson's fiction illusion is thus seen as the tacit anticipation of a reality 'out there' behind the screen, which Gibson testifies to have experienced in talking to computer workers. David Tomas describes the narrative construction of cyberspace as a highly reflexive relation between *narrative* and technology:

“Science fiction ... is a spatial operator ... connecting pasts and futures by way of the present. ... it allows us to make sense of an advanced information technology that has the potential to not only change the economic structures of human societies but also to overthrow the sensorial and organic structure of the human body, this by disembodiment and reformatting its sensorium in powerful, computer-generated, digitalized spaces.”⁹⁴

⁹³ William Gibson: *Neuromancer*, HarperCollinsPublisher 1984, 67.

⁹⁴

This narrative procedure in the formation of cyberculture has been identified by N.Katherine Hayles in other aspects of the development of new technology. In an analysis of the phenomenon Artificial Life she wonders at the practice of describing configurations of computer code in computer simulations of evolutionary biology inscribed in silicon as "life" by computer scientists and biologists. She concludes that this procedure indicates a continuous shuttling of metaphors and material fact: "a multilayered system of metaphorical and material relays through which "life", "nature", and the "human are being redefined"."⁹⁵ Hayles characterization of this narrative aspect of technological development may be adapted to the narratives of cyberspace in order to understand the peculiar reflexivity engendered in cyberculture. For heuristic reasons leading to the next part of my argument, I will highlight two forms of reflexivity:

- (1) Narratives of cognitive construction, i.e. an immanent cultural sphere reflecting new experiential modalities
- (2) Narratives of architectures of information, closer to the historic cybernetics and informational science, giving the ideas of a universal information science a sense of encultured immanence:

1. **Cognitive construction:** The experiential nature of cyberspace is extremely important for the narrative of cyberspace. In a popular introduction from 1996, *Cyberspace. The Human Dimension*, David Whittle writes that cyberspace is a virtual space which is defined as a "a state of mind", a place simultaneously real and artificial. Although cyberspace can only be entered by means of a physical access device joined with other access devices on a network of physical connections forming a physical network, the *conditio sine qua non* for cyberspace, according to Whittle, is the creation of a virtual sphere of an experiential nature; a cognitive structure enabling a specific interactive communication.⁹⁶ Cyberspace is a cognitive space based on an expanded phenomenological and symbolic handling of technological resources, where it may be difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction, as Tomas suggests.

2. **Architectures of information:** In the anthology *Cyberspace. First Steps* from 1991 Michael Benedikt describes cyberspace as a special architecture made possible by and structured in domains with myriads of places and regions based on a globally-networked, computer-sustained, computer-accessed, computer-generated, multidimensional artificial reality; a window to a reality whose

⁹⁵ N. Katherine Hayles, "Fortællinger om kunstigt liv/Narratives of Artificial Life", in, Anders Michelsen & Frederik Stjernfelt (eds.), *Billeder fra det fjerne. Videnskabelig visualisering - en antologi/Images from Afar. Scientific Visualization - an anthology*, Akademisk Forlag, Copenhagen, 1996, p. 50/180.

⁹⁶ David Whittle: *Cyberspace. The Human Dimension*, W.H.Freeman and Company 1997, p.3ff, p.5, p.7.

objective character is made up of information deriving in part from the operations of the real, physical world, but primarily from a traffic of information in “science, art, business, and culture.”⁹⁷

“The dimensions, axes, and coordinates of cyberspace are thus not necessarily the familiar ones of our natural, gravitational environment: through mirroring our expectations of natural spaces and places, they have dimensions impressed with information value appropriate for optimal orientation and navigation in the data accessed.”⁹⁸

The last quote is a symptomatic example of how the idea of a cyberspace builds up to a narrative of a new world operating coextensively as technology and metaphor. On a closer look we can see how the description of a ‘transformation’ that juxtaposes, compares, exchanges, and finally divorces the immanence of cyberspace from worldly space is building up; the creation of preconditions for radical change in cognitive states on a singular plane reversely affirms the architecture of such a plane as an immanent encultured object.

In a short text circulated in several versions on the Internet, Roy Ascott unites the idea of cognitive construction and informational architecture in the idea of an “Architecture of Cyberception”⁹⁹ based on the fact, according to Ascott, that “Post-biological technologies enable us to become directly involved in our transformation, and are bringing about a qualitative change in our being.”¹⁰⁰ The “emergent faculty” of cyberception is creating a post-biological faculty based on the enhanced perceptual and cognitive interactions in the global networks of cybermedia thus making it possible to conceive of an architecture of “new worlds:” “Cyberception not only implies a new body and a new consciousness, but a redefinition of how we might live together in the interspace between the virtual and the real.”¹⁰¹ The result, according to Ascott, is an “Inter Reality”, a, “fuzzy state between the virtual and the real in which our everyday social, cultural and educational interactions takes place;”¹⁰² a “culture of apparition;” narrated as a complex, cognitively mediated construction of contexts.

Here, cyberspace is conceived as a plane of complex connectivity, which is “stretched” and “disembedded” - appearing in apparition as a new emerging immanence in a radical sense of this term; an ‘always already’ existing world in its own sense. A world which not only reflects the world outside in model-form, but instigates a world which reflexively is conceptualized as a peculiar

⁹⁷ Michael Benedikt: “Cyberspace: Some Proposals”, in, Michael Benedikt (ed) *Cyberspace. First Steps*, The MIT Press 1991, p.123.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Roy Ascott: *The Architecture of Cyberception*, (unpubl.) 1994. Text kindly relayed by the author.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰² Ibid.

encultured world. In the terms of Paul Virilio, an “endo-world,”¹⁰³ consisting of symbolic forms practiced purely by technological mediation. In a text from 1996 Michael Benedikt¹⁰⁴ criticizes Castells’ notion of a space of flows for being too geographical and sociological and not grasping the radical nature of cyberspace as a novel concept of space *eo ipso*. We are witnessing, argues Benedikt, not just the connecting of real places in physical terms but a new medium, “where real geographic place is irrelevant.”¹⁰⁵ Coming ultra-fast networks such as the so-called tera-bit network being developed in the US with Federal Government support, will make possible: “the creation of fictional, consistent, wholly electrical “third” spaces, places that exist nowhere and everywhere, whose light shines only in eyes and not on trees and streets.”¹⁰⁶ According to Benedikt, this is not a “space of the flows” as Castells argues, but a

“ (...) space in flows sensorially reconstituted as space: as urban space, as architectural space, as urban and architectural space all together reconstituted, namely as cyberspace.”¹⁰⁷

These spaces are or will be accessed by means of the 3D-paraphernalia of virtual reality, of sensors, artificial accommodations etc, mediating and cyber-spatialising the totality of what is given:

“ (...) power, money, symbols, news, the presence of other people, decisions, proposals, reports, linkages, references, affirmations, laws, entertainments, conferences, classes, stories, real and imaginary images ...”¹⁰⁸

Benedikt’s critique of Castells is useful for understanding in more precise terms how the discourse of cyberculture is *related to* globalization on the one hand, and *distanced from* globalization on the other. Benedikt’s argument demonstrates a slide *from* a notion of a “space of flows” related to the technico-economic paradigm of postfordism and the culture of real virtuality *to* “a space in the flows” practiced within a new immanent expanse of a technology-constituted, technology-driven and technology-maintained encultured world. This world is predicated on what Harald Wolf calls the “modelplatonism” in social conceptions of networking¹⁰⁹ that

¹⁰³ Paul Virilio: *L’ inertie polaire*, Galilée 1990; Anders Michelsen: “Den artificielle økologi - transformationer i Paul Virilios tænkning”, in, Niels Brügger & Henrik Nørgaard Petersen (red): *Paul Virilio. Krigen, byen og det politiske*, Rævens Sorte Bibliotek 1994.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Benedikt: “Information in space is space in information”, in, Anders Michelsen & Frederik Stjernfelt (eds.), *Billeder fra det fjerne. Videnskabelig visualisering - en antologi/Images from Afar. Scientific Visualization - an anthology*, Akademisk Forlag, Copenhagen, 1996.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Harald Wolf: “Das Netzwerk als Signatur der Epoche? (Unpubl), 9. Text kindly relayed by the author.

neglect any anchoring or relation to a real social 'lifeworld'. While Castells maintains a worldly reference in the concept of the culture of real virtuality, although one that is related to an almost all-encompassing interaction with material issues, Benedikt simply leaves this behind. One may say that such a cyberspace viewed *in vivo* and *in situ* may be a 'matrix' not only for future communication in networked systems, but a prime example of an emerging 'horizon' of the world - of everything that can be 'given' in the Husserlian sense.¹¹⁰ Or to put it differently; when 'enlightened' by a light that shines from and on "third spaces" the resulting phenomenology may not at all be able to 'intend' - to 'see' or 'symbolically reflect on' - the world still enlightened by the light shining on the trees and streets (and people), for example in the structural irrelevant parts of the world.

The narratives of cyberspace are predicated on a critical independence which takes the notion of a new technico-economic paradigm into a paradigm of a singular plane, an immanent culture *in extenso* mitigating or neglecting differences (e.g. of scale, composition, and 'content') between the cyberworld, and the geographical, human, and phenomenological world. This points to radical paradoxes in the notions of encultured culture; one the one hand, according to Castells, the cyberworld is a human construction, on the other hand, according to Benedikt and others, this human construction is leaving the actual human collective of globalization out. Or to put it in bolder terms; never in the known history has the 'worldly' planet of the Earth seen so many humans, so much activity, so much enculturalization, and never (at least not in modernity) has the idea of posthumanity experienced such an exposure.

Cyberculture, however, is not only a world-neglecting "modelplatonism" or an ideological response to "third-stage technology" in the world system, an extreme affirmation of postindustrial capitalism that 'wants to be free' of the world in pure cyberplatonism (also reflected for example in the working of the informationalized finance markets). If we accept Hayles' argument, that is, if we accept that the narratives discussed above are pointing to reflexive processes implied by, as well as preconditioning, the proliferation of the new media, the narratives of cyberspace cannot escape the shuttling of metaphor and material fact as "a multilayered system of metaphorical and material relays through which "life", "nature", and the "human are being redefined"."¹¹¹ Cyberculture in the sense just described may refer to new transversal world-circumscribing systems of an, if one like, 'abstract nature', architectures of a circular 'encultured culture'. But it refers, as well, to the materiality of its relays; cyberculture is not free of materiality, that is, it is not free of shuttling, it is not really free of dichotomies, i.e. it is not a third space of apparition. It cannot help raising a question of how it is at home in the human and

¹¹⁰ Edmund Husserl: *Cartesianische Meditationen*, Felix Meiner Verlag 1987;

Klaus Wieglerling: *Husserls Begriff der Potentialität*, 1984.

¹¹¹ Hayles: Op.cit, in, Michelsen & Stjernfelt (eds.): Op.cit.

phenomenological world, exactly because it hypostasizes the virtual potential of *material* technology.

4. Technology, culture, and globalization - in the middle

In the anthology "Technoscience and Cyberculture"¹¹² Michael Menser and Stanley Aronowitz write in a manifesto on cultural studies, science, and technology, that cultural studies always arrive in the middle, in a milieu; i.e. they are always situated in a complex contextualization,¹¹³ which makes necessary what they term *phenomenological*, *pragmatic*, and *ontological* distinctions. Because technology is increasingly adapted to and applied in the most varied of settings, we need to leave behind any notion of a restricted functional and efficiency based rationalism.

Consequently they plea for what we could call a distributed and contextualized causality when explaining and understanding technology, which avoids causal determinism. In a critical discussion of social constructivism as well as what they call cultural technophilia, they reject the notion that an abstract understanding of a process can be a sufficient paradigm for studies of technology and science. On the contrary, it reduces the actual complexity in favour of abstract complexity. With departure in philosopher John Dewey's criticism of the behaviourist response to the phenomenon of a child burning its fingers on a candlelight, they comment on the Human Genom Project:

"Just as the genom project cannot be fully grasped without taking its functional teleology into account nor (can) the biological and physiological activity of eating as a mediation between humans and "nature" (be) understood without grasping that the meat and tomatoes, the nature stand-ins, are already permeated with humans aims, so the natural event of the interaction of the child with a natural event, fire, is not without presuppositions."¹¹⁴

The cultural implications of current technological advances, i.e. an increasingly technified artificial context for life on global levels, is creating a still closer interaction between technology and non-technology. But we need to ask whether this is pertinent to an extrapolation of phenomena observed in the new media and visions of technology into to far ranging ontological consequences. To paraphrase Menser and Aronowitz; we may say that the notion of

¹¹² Michael Menser and Stanley Aronowitz', "On Cultural Studies, Science, and Technology", in, Stanley Aronowitz, Barbara Martinsons and Michael Menser (ed): *Technoscience and Cyberculture*, Routledge 1996, 7ff.

¹¹³ Ibid., 17.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 23

encultured immanence in a world of the new media cannot be understood as a reflexive mediation between humans and technology without grasping that the encultured, the reflexive, and the immanent, the world stand-ins, are already permeated with worldly aims; the aims of cybernetics, poststructuralism, and cultural politics etc., in short the aims of cyberculture.

Instead of what is at best an unfinished interdisciplinary collation of material, bodily, psychological, and social incorporations of technology, we need to investigate relations between technology and contextualizations of a diverse kind. The slide from the notion of a space of flows to the notion of a space in the flows extrapolates phenomenological, pragmatic, and ontological aspects of new technology into a deterministic narrative of cyberculture. In this sense it may be described simply as ideology, a strike on the 'ideological battleground' of the world system, a hyperbolic case in point of what Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron have called the "Californian ideology,"¹¹⁵ reflecting, in the most simple form, 'core-interests' of the world system.

However we may also return to John Tomlinson's sketch of complex connectivity and interpret the discourse of cyberspace as a cybercultural mode of culture within globalization; as a certain reflexive stance vis-a-vis technology and globalization. In order to do that we may use the methodological distinctions of Menser and Aronowitz and develop the previous qualifications indicated by Hoogvelt into three questions concerning *cyberculture in globalization*:

1. *ENCULTURALIZATION - PHENOMENOLOGY*: How can cyberculture be related to phenomena of complex connectivity in globalization?
2. *REFLEXIVITY - PRAGMATICS*: How can the cybercultural discourse be related to the practical global construction of technology?
3. *IMMANENCE - ONTOLOGY*: How can cyberculture tell us something about the complexified (and contested) world of globalization?

¹¹⁵ Richard Barbrook und Andy Cameron: "Die Kalifornische Ideologie", in, Nettime (hg.): *Netzkritik. Materialien zur Internet-debatte*, Edition ID-Archive 1997.

III. CYBERCULTURE: LOCALIZATION AND EMBEDDEDNESS

1. The global city

In recent texts Saskia Sassen¹¹⁶ has outlined a theory of a new type of composite world center in globalization, what she terms the global city : "...a strategic site not only for global capital, but also for the transnationalization of labour and the formation of transnational identities."¹¹⁷ As cities that may aspire to this status Sassen mentions New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Sydney, Hong Kong but also cities such as Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Bangkok, Taipei and Mexico City.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Cf. Saskia Sassen (1997a), "Whose City is It? Globalisation and The Formation of New Claims", in, 2nd Johannesburg Biennale's catalogue, 56ff; Saskia Sassen (1997b), "Immigration. Eine internationale perspektive", in, Peter Weibel (hg.), *Inklusion : Exklusion. Versuch eine neuen Kartografie der Kunst im Zeitalter von Postkolonialismus und globaler Migration*, DuMont Buchverlag, Köln 1997, 61ff; Saskia Sassen (1997c), "Die Immigration überdenken: Eine internationale Perspektive", in, Peter Weibel, Slavoj Zizek (hg.), *Inklusion : Exklusion. Problem der postkolonialismus und der globalen Migration*, Passagen Verlag, Wien 1997, 107ff. Anders Michelsen, "Byen og Magten i Cyberspace" (English translation of Danish title "The City and Power in Cyberspace"), interview with Saskia Sassen, in, *Weekendavisen* ("The Weekend Post"), Copenhagen 22/12-28/12 1995.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Sassen 1997a, 60,

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 58

However, the concept of the global city is not identical with this configuration of big cities throughout the world, it is linked with new processes related to globalization. What she terms the global city is a configuration which may be placed on the sites of big cities but it is not restrained to the urban form, placements, and dynamics hitherto associated with the geography of these places, i.e. the urban structures that have played an important part in the era of the modern nation state and industrialization.

The notion of the global city reconceptualizes the modern (and premodern) political geography of centered metropolitan urbanism as a new topography related to new global configurations where places that are not geographically approximate can form a coherent expanse generated by various systems, agencies, and flows of money, work, commodities, people, information, culture, entertainment, tourism etc. The global city may be described as a networked 'node-system' configuration that transforms the political geography of industrial capitalism to "the space of flows" in "the network society". However, in contrast to Castells, Sassen foregrounds the aspect of geographical *localization* and *embeddedness*; the flows of globalization, whether information or people, run through points of concentration, nodes or hubs in concrete as well as metaphorical senses, and therefore the flows cannot be seen as distanced from issues of embeddedness.

The changed phenomenology of time and space, the stretching and disembedding of social relations and institutions related to for example new media still has a *locus situs*, "a new geography of centrality and marginality" cutting across national boundaries as well as the divide between North and South.¹¹⁹ Thus globalization and the formation of transnational entities in Sassen's sense may grant pregnancy to *how* the stretched and disembedded domain is 'grounded'. The notion of the global city is inscribed in what David Harvey calls a paradox of postindustrialism: "the collapse of spatial barriers does not mean that the significance of space is decreasing."¹²⁰ While global corporations pay less attention to space in general they pay much more attention to localization in particular:

" ... precisely because diminishing barriers give capitalists the power to exploit minute spatial differentiations to good effect. ... We thus approach the central paradox: the less important the spatial barriers, the greater the sensitivity of capital to the variations of place within space, and the greater the incentive for places to be differentiated in ways attractive to capital."¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Kevin Robins and Andrew Gillespie: "Communication. Organisation and territory", in, Kevin Robins (ed): *Understanding Information*, Belhaven Press, 160.

¹²¹ Ibid.

This may apply to money, work, commodities, people, information, culture, entertainment, tourism etc.. Some examples; money locates where the financial systems 'place' it. Work may try to be located where the businesses 'place' jobs. People may try (or be forced) to be located where social relations 'place' people. Information may be located where the servers and the user, respectively, are 'placed'. Culture is located where symbolic environments are concentrated into 'places'. Entertainment is located where producers or presenters are 'placed'. Tourism locates where the tourist resorts are 'placed'. If this, in fact, is close to being a tautology, it is because the importance of place has never ceased or decreased. The relation between system and node is diversified in "complexly intertwined practices of the cultural, the economic, and the political,"¹²² and, we may add, other instances. What Harvey calls a paradox is in fact part of a new 'system of the world' which may build on world system theory, but with a different complexity.

However, the most important point Sassen wants to make is that the global city is a contestatory constellation where "corporate cultures" may exist in contestation with "transnational cultures" of migration¹²³ as different forces "making claims on the city."¹²⁴ "Whose city is it?" Sassen asks and answers that the global city can be seen as a central precondition for the "formation of a postcolonial discourse."¹²⁵ Perhaps her argument cannot avoid the impression of wanting to bridge the gap between new theories of globalization (for example postcolonial cultural studies) and a more 'classical' sociological approach to urban studies, thus in a sense invoking the spectacle of a 'fin-de-siecle' struggle reminiscent of the famous class conflicts in big industrial metropolises in Europe (and elsewhere) in the first half of the 20th century. In this respect one may relate her argument to phenomena such as the burning of Los Angeles in 1992, or the turmoil in Asian cities during the Asian crisis of the late 1990s.

However, the primary importance of Sassen's argument may be discerned at a more principal level of analysis; we might conceive of the global city-concept as pointing to globalization as a "concentrate of diversity" apparent in a range of new phenomena which are constituted in the interplay between strategic systems and concrete nodes pertaining to money, work, commodities, people, information, culture, entertainment, tourism etc..¹²⁶ I.e. transversal structures consisting of many modal configurations of globally situated systems linked to other modalities by way of nodes. One, or several, of these configurations are closely related to computer and communication technologies, among other things the new media. The material relays of cyberspace are localized in a variety of specific places distributed as a "concentrate of diversity". - Let us for

¹²² Tomlinson: Op.cit., 18.

¹²³ Sassen 1997c, 114..

¹²⁴ Sassen 1997a, 61.

¹²⁵ Sassen 1997c, 113.

¹²⁶ Ibid.,114.

a moment 'follow' the concentrate of diversity in the construction of material relays in networks and interfaces, from requests for information made by clicking on computer-screens transmitted through coaxial cable in intranets over modems, or bridges, and gateways etc through WANs, or MANs, and further on by means of other technical nodes, hubs, sonets etc. and perhaps other WANs, MANs or LANs and so on, finally addressing sites with the requested information, all of it comprising the Net, or nets, albeit in a concrete technological complexity only hinted to by this description.

One example: When the backbone communication-structure of the Internet was privatized in the mid-1990s it was based on the creation of central network access points, NAPS. When the NSF decommissioned the NSFNET (the public ran backbone of the Internet from 1990-1994) from 1994 onwards, four NAPs were already functional and operated by private Internet service providers.¹²⁷ In 1999 one was operated by Ameritech in Chicago, one by Pacific Bell in San Francisco, one by Sprint in New York, and one by Metropolitan Fiber Systems in Washington DC. These four network access points are: " ... Much like major airport hubs that serve several airlines. And, like an airport, service providers can come to the facility knowing other major carriers will be there, and passengers, or in this case IP packets - can be exchanged."¹²⁸ These NAPs are only one, but highly important, part of the US backbone structure and this structure is mirrored in similar structures in many parts of the world.

This is not the 'place' to go further into the highly complex technical structures, distributions, and topologies of communication networks and their architectures. The point is to demonstrate that the idea of a certain location and embeddedness of computer-mediated communication is highly relevant to an understanding of cyberculture in globalization. Cyberspace in the sense of "... fictional, consistent, wholly electrical "third" spaces, places that exist nowhere and everywhere,"¹²⁹ nevertheless also exist embedded in material communication systems which are located in space and place, for example the backbone-structures running through the US-NAPs as well as large parts of the remaining world. Cyberspace is located and embedded, and in Sassen's theory of the global city this is central to globalization; cyberculture thus becomes located and embedded in a new topos related to new global configurations generated and interrelated by means of various systems, agencies, and flows of money, work, commodities, people, information, culture, entertainment, tourism etc. - One recalls the strange configurations of embeddedness in the (in)famous scene from the movie *Brazil*; where the two central figures are driving towards freedom (they think) in a landscape of preindustrial pastoral beauty, until, suddenly, a hole in the panoramic fense along the highway

¹²⁷ Daniel Minoli and Andrew Schmidt: *Internet Architectures*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 27.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Benedikt: Op.cit., Michelsen & Stjernfelt (eds.): Op.cit.

reveals that all of it is fake, a screen behind which the devastated ruins of industrial landscapes stretch out, mirroring in perfect parallel the nightmare that the male protagonist experiences when waking up from this dream 'embedded' in torture.

2. Urban restructuring and virtual geography

Before I continue I would like to present a brief reference to an analysis of “postmodern urbanization” in Los Angeles by Edward Soja, which may expand the understanding of the global city. Soja points to six concrete geographical “restructurings” of Los Angeles which “... must be considered together as an intertwined set of processes and relationships producing a postmodern composite geography.”¹³⁰

The *first geography* arises from a restructuring of the economic base of the city in a combined process of fordist deindustrialization and postindustrial reindustrialization based on the networked, globalized schemes of “flexibility”, which in Los Angeles for example becomes apparent in the city’s “technopoles” of “...high technology aerospace and electronics firms, office buildings and industrial parks of Orange County.”¹³¹

The *second geography* intertwines this “local” structure with a system of world cities which increasingly integrates Los Angeles within global networks resulting in an aggregation of finance and production in the city with “...what today may be the most culturally heterogenous population ever agglomerated in any city,”¹³² a “minority majority city”. Soja claims that Los Angeles displays the structures of a “growing global bourgeoisie and global proletariat”¹³³ making up a dual city structure (ibid) of the kind Sassen writes about.

This leads to the *third geography* of restructuring of “urban form” and “the conventional language we have been using to describe cities,”¹³⁴ reflected in neologisms such as megacities, outer cities, edge cities, metroplex, technoburbs, postsuburbia, technopolis, heteropolis, exopolis (ibid). Related to this are new job creation dynamics, settlement patterns, transport systems related to income, racial and ethnic differences; a “combination of decentralization and recentralization, the peripheralization of the

¹³⁰ Edward W. Soja: “Postmodern Urbanization: The Six Restructurings of Los Angeles,” in, Sophie Watsonb and Katherine Gibson (eds): *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, Blackwell 1995, 129.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 130.

¹³³ Ibid., 131.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

center and the centralization of the periphery, the city simultaneously being turned inside out and outside in.”¹³⁵

The *fourth geography* continues these trends into a “... changing social structure of urbanism”¹³⁶ with new patterns of social fragmentation, segregation and polarization, related to new social groupings such as new managerial technocracies, “dinks” (double income no kids), entertainment superstars, electronic wizards, junk bond dealers, ethnic entrepreneurs etc.

The *fifth geography* arises from the increasing “un-governable” character of the previous restructurings resulting in a range of new urban forms and phenomena such as carceral cities, stealth architectures, urban surveillance in panopticon-like shopping centers etc., a: “... new topography of race, class, gender, age, income, and ethnicity ... a landscape filled with violent edges, colliding turfs, unstable boundaries, peculiarly juxtaposed lifespaces, and enclaves of outrageous wealth and despair.”¹³⁷

The *sixth geography* is both a summary and a new dimension, writes Soja¹³⁸ which pertains to “... a deeper behavioral, cultural, and ideological restructuring” (ibid) in the “urban imaginary”. Soja only discusses one important aspect of this problematic which he conceives as a restructuring in the fundamental meanings and pragmatics of settlement and urbanity, what he terms the “intrusion and growing power of an urban hyperreality, of simulations and simulacra (defined as exact copies of originals that do not exist), into the material reality an ideological imaginary of urban life ... that confounds and reorders the traditional ways we have been able to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined... the diffusion of hyperreality from its specialized factories into everyday life in households, neighborhoods, workplaces, shopping malls, voting booths, virtually everywhere in the city. Today, you do not choose to visit the hyperreal; it visits you where ever you choose to be.”¹³⁹

In Soja’s sketch the idea of a global city may be expanded to circumscribe a composite restructuring of localities and embeddedness which, although taken from the development of Los Angeles, may be found in many parts of the world. Paul Knox underlines that new divisions of labor, new financial structures, new corporate networks, facilitated by new modes of regulation and by “revolutionary process and circulation technologies”¹⁴⁰ which has several “functional components”¹⁴¹ are an integral part of the restructuring of modern metropolises in globalization. The stretching and disembedding of social space and social time in the city have a

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 133.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 134.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 135.

¹⁴⁰ Paul Knox, “World cities and the Organization of Global Space”, in R.J. Johnston, Peter J. Taylor and Michael J. Watts (eds): *Geographies of Global Change*, Blackwell 1995, 232.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 236.

variety of meanings¹⁴² they are not merely “containers”, of human activities¹⁴³ but predicated on structurings and restructurings of various kinds. If we once again return to John Tomlinson’s sketch of complex connectivity we may interpret this in the light of urban restructuring in globalization. We may take any of Soja’s six restructurings and ‘run’ them (I hope the reader will forgive the technophilic metaphor) through the idea of complex connectivity; the result will in all six restructurings be increased complexity and a plethora of modalities, that is, a plethora of phenomenologies and symbolic practices related to each restructuring.

In fact by this procedure it becomes clear that Soja’s six restructurings are only a heuristic sketch, there may be many other restructurings, not least if we expand the scope to other parts of the world (for example third-world megacities). The restructurings of Copenhagen may in some case be similar to Soja’s analysis of Los Angeles, and in some cases dissimilar, or they may be a different modal version of what is going on in Los Angeles (the recent establishment of a film-town in Copenhagen by the filmmakers Zentropa may thus be named Collywood just as the filmtown of Bombay is named Bollywood) The central point is that the restructuring of urban locality may be predicated on embeddedness of incorporating media such as the new media; and it is in this sense we may understand how cyberculture ‘anchors’ in globalization. And this is furthermore predicated on other modalities of complex connectivity and, as well, their mutual contestation (which may run along many ‘frontlines’, not only of labour/capital ‘class struggle’, but, for example, also along the fronts of migrants/ethnic Danes in Denmark).

On this background we may give an preliminary answer to the questions concerning *cyberculture in globalization* implied by the methodological distinctions of Menser and Aronowitz:

1. *ENCULTURALIZATION - PHENOMENOLOGY*: How can cyberculture be related to phenomena of complex connectivity in globalization?

Answer: Cyberculture is related to modalities of complex connectivity specified as one form (or several forms) by the new media as specific parts of the restructurings of globalization. It transverses the world but only in these specific configurations.

2. *REFLEXIVITY - PRAGMATICS*: How can the cybercultural discourse be related to the practical global construction of technology?

Answer: Cyberculture is a reflexive deliberation of the apparent transversality of configurations in the restructurings of globalization. In this role it acts upon the further

¹⁴² R.J. Johnston, Peter J. Taylor and Michael J. Watts : “Global Change at the End of the Twentieth Century”, in, Johnston, Taylor and Watts (eds):

Op.cit., 8.
¹⁴³ Ibid., 7.

proliferation of the new media for example by creating sentiments, horizons, and arguments in relation to and in favour of the new media.

3. *IMMANENCE - ONTOLOGY*: How can cyberculture tell us something about the complexified (and contested) world of globalization?

Answer: It may be seen as a strong outline of new cultural perspectives related to the restructurings of globalization, although it does not reflect the universal processes and values implied by world system theory or postwar modernisations theories but only a modality of complex connectivity, which may be understood on par with other modalities, for example religious fundamentalism.

In the article "Virtual Geography" Michael Batty attempts an outline of what he calls a geographical discipline "changing in subtle and dramatic ways" because of the impact of computer-mediated communication:

"Virtual geography is not merely cyberspace *per se* for it comprises many types of place and space in which the digital world finds expression. We define cspace - the space within computers, cyberspace - the use of computers to communicate, and cyberplace - the infrastructure of the digital world, as key components of what Castells refers to as 'real virtuality'. Virtual geography is all this, all well as the study of these worlds from traditional geographic perspectives."¹⁴⁴

The impact of computation and computer-mediated communication on the study of geography calls for a new discipline which transforms the discipline of geography. Not only because virtual geography outlines a new territory, but because this territory includes a new "geography of the screen"¹⁴⁵ linked to a "geography of the real world."¹⁴⁶ Computer applications often attempt to simulate or lean to geographies of the real world which are displaced into the computer, in order to "analyze, model and predict."¹⁴⁷ These attempts at reconciling the real and the digital extend in the application of real geography as metaphors in computer applications, for example computer games, as metaphors of place and space connotating aspects of the real world. "Putting real geography and inventing fictional geography inside the computer is thus our first benchmark for a virtual geography,"¹⁴⁸ Batty writes.

¹⁴⁴ Michael Batty: "Virtual Geography", in, *Futures*, Vol. 29, No. 4/5 1997, 337.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 338.

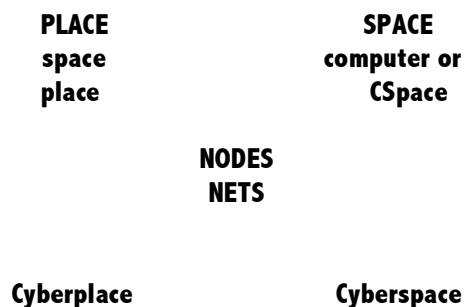
¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

This must be placed beside a second benchmark which is establishing a comprehensive and expanding convergence between different aspects of digital technology : “Eventually computers will be everywhere - in paper, in clothes, in highways, in the very fabric of material society itself as entire cities become computable.”¹⁴⁹ This new dimension of geography calls for a classifying of virtual geography into a typology consisting of: (a) a *macrolevel*¹⁵⁰ which Batty calls the level of geography itself, “perhaps reflecting the material world,”¹⁵¹ based on the distinction between space and place, (b) A *micro or ethereal level* where “... We can define how real and imagined place/space is influencing individual and collective behaviour,”¹⁵² (c) A “*meta level*” “... where a geography of computers and communications attempts to explain the macro and the micro.”¹⁵³

This leads furthermore to what Batty terms “four foci” involving place and space (numbered by A.M.): “(1) *place/space*: the original domain of geography abstracting place into space using traditional methods; (2) *cspace*: abstractions of space into c(omputer)space, inside computers and their networks; (3) *cyberspace*: new spaces that emerge from cspace through using computers to communicate; and (4) *cyberplace*: the impact of the infrastructure of cyberspace on the infrastructure of traditional place.”¹⁵⁴ Batty establishes schematical relations between the various foci of the virtual geography as a circular diagram:



By means of a circular process of abstraction going clockwise from place/space over computer or cspace to cyberspace, then to cyberplace and finally again to place/space, Batty tries to establish how the historical and structural evolvment of computer technology and applications has created a virtual geography, superimposing

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 339.
¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 340.
¹⁵¹ Ibid.
¹⁵² Ibid.
¹⁵³ Ibid.
¹⁵⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 341.

and imposing virtual geography on real geography. *Place* is a physical node for a proliferating network which proceeds by abstracting *space* into a *cspace* of networked nodes in systems of computer-mediated communication, which amounts to a *cyberspace* in networks where different *cyberplaces* in the net are possible, which then again impose themselves on real *places*. Three issues are important in this scheme:

(1) Here the immanence of the narratives of cyberspace discussed in the previous section is related to placement in localizations and embeddedness of real geography. Batty departs from the notion of a cyberspace as an emerging space of apparition. However, he conceives of *cspace* as something which is coherent, and an end in itself, which leans on to the many different incorporations of computer technology, "in paper, in clothes, in highways, in the very fabric of material society."¹⁵⁶

(2) Batty nevertheless maintains the idea of a distinct cyberspace; "the order of which space and place has been influenced by the gathering momentum of the digital world,"¹⁵⁷ and he consequently sees the boundaries between the different classes as the most interesting question, i.e. how place/space evolves into a singular *cspace*, how *cspace* evolves into a singular cyberspace, and how this returns to the world as cyberplaces in the net. We may thus characterize Batty's virtual geography as consisting of *plural* singulars. This becomes apparent in the last distinction of cyberplace, which may be considered as the critical moment in the scheme, where the virtual geography has to anchor in the world.

Although Batty sees the proliferations of computer devices in paper, in clothes, in highways, in the very fabric of material society, as the 'connecting points' of cyberplace to cyberspace, he cannot help reproducing the ambiguity of Castells' culture of real virtuality (which was his points of departure); i.e. a question of whether the many new forms of computerized applications, devices and gadgets - from wired highways to wireless "non-physical infrastructures" - ¹⁵⁸ can in fact be distanced from embeddedness and localization, in highways, paper etc.. In short, it appears to me that Batty - although establishing an interesting overview of the complexity of applied computer and communication technology, not least new media - *confuses* geography with technology, and thus overlooks the need to understand *how* complex technologies in an increasingly technified artificial context for life might contribute to complex connectivity in an

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 339.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 341.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 347.

already existing geography, or to put it differently, how cyberculture is 'in' the world of globalization.

(3) This gains importance if we remember Batty's division between macrolevel, micro or ethereal level, and metalevel. In fact he seems to concentrate on macro and metalevels, i.e. on establishing an epistemology of cyberspace by way of his scheme of foci. The so-called microlevel of virtual geography which has to do with impact on behaviour, or with the importance of the imagined¹⁵⁹ (for example in relation to simulations and virtual geographies on the screen), looks as a dark horse intersected in between real geography of place/space *and* virtual geography of place/space. But the imaginary may not at all be a dark horse; it may play a wholly different role, which I will discuss in the next section.

If we for a moment compare Soja's restructurings with Batty's virtual geography it becomes clear that the confusion of cyberspace and realspace may be reinterpreted as restructuring: (a) Virtual geography is not an independent or a wholly self-inclusive factor, it is not a singular plane, neither in 'mono' nor 'plural' versions. (b) Virtual geography must be read alongside a number of other restructurings, as part of a composite geography. - People do not drive in a cyberplace when driving on the intelligent highway, or grasping in cyberspace when taking out a piece of intelligent paper in order to be told what route to take; they drive on an intelligent highway grasping an intelligent object, while being an integral part of a highly composite geography, perhaps passing through big factories of hyperreality or segments of inhabitation for illegally migrating global labour, or affluent homes for good American dinkys - or so and so many other restructured elements of the global city.

3. Cyber-segmentation

In the article "Electronic space and power" from 1997 Saskia Sassen continues the analysis of globalization and contestation entailed by the idea of the global city. Electronic space is shaped by powers and conflicting interests. She argues that: "Whether in the geography of its infrastructure or in the structure of cyberspace itself, electronic space is inscribed, and to some extent shaped by power, concentration, and contestation, as well as by openness and decentralization."¹⁶⁰ The Net is empowering to specific interests such as commerce and finance, in part because these actively apply the Net in their strategies, in part because the repercussions of

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 343

¹⁶⁰ Saskia Sassen: *Globalization and its Discontents. Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*, The New Press 1998, p.177.

powerful users of the net are felt outside. Thus, the net can be read in terms of a political practice which in Sassen's opinion points to the "embeddedness" of electronic space: (1) There are no fully virtualized enterprise or industries. Even multimedia industries require other infrastructures, labour resources, and buildings. (2) This is emphasized by what she calls the "inequalities in the distribution of the infrastructure for electronic space"¹⁶¹ by increasing demands of access in high-powered segments and features, an "unequal geography of access."¹⁶² (3) Commercialization of public networks and hierarchical concentration of power in private networks are producing what she terms "cyber-segmentation."¹⁶³

She argues that, "The vast new economic topography that is being implemented through electronic space is one moment, one fragment, of an even vaster economic chain that is in good part embedded in nonelectronic spaces."¹⁶⁴ Thus telematics and globalization are seen to be "fundamental forces reshaping the organization of economic space"¹⁶⁵ because telematics maximizes the potential for geographical dispersal¹⁶⁶ which must be seen as a precondition for the "strategic role for major cities in the current phase of the world economy,"¹⁶⁷ i.e. as command points, key locations and marketplaces for leading industries and sites for innovative activity.¹⁶⁸ The idea of a 'seamless' global cyberspace is far removed from these realities because the relations between telematics, cities, and new service-intensive postindustrial activities point to "a continuation of old patterns of agglomeration but a new logic for agglomeration."¹⁶⁹ The important issue according to Sassen is how centrality remains a "key property"¹⁷⁰ while the "spatial correlates of centrality has been profoundly altered by new technologies and by globalization."¹⁷¹ In other words, the globalization processes operating through and by means of a world structure of global cities, frame global telecommunication to its own advantage. Therefore there is no such thing as a seamless global network, and the net may not become more global in geographical terms. On the contrary, corporate powerhouses are using their power to shape the development of the Net according to their own interests because they are increasingly the most active users of networking.

In Sassen's opinion this interrelation of different aspects of global economy points not to how a cyberspace may exist but on

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 178.

¹⁶² Ibid., 185.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 179.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 180.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 181.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

the contrary to how a “transterritorial center”¹⁷² is forming from the viewpoint of the “materiality” of place/infrastructure intersections “with technologies and organizational forms that neutralize place and materiality”. On this background she examines “emerging forms of segmentation” in three areas: (1) The commercialising of access. (2) The “emergence of intermediaries to sort, choose, and evaluate information for paying customers.”¹⁷³ (3) The formation of privatized “firewalled” corporate networks on the Web.¹⁷⁴ She concludes that although the Internet may also be a place for “distributed power that limits the possibilities of authoritarian and monopoly control,”¹⁷⁵ it has also, and increasingly, become a space for contestation and segmentation, transforming the idea of a coherent and immanent cyberspace to an issue of “multiple electronic spaces”¹⁷⁶ related to power implications of globalization. She sums these up in three major conditions: (a) Digitalization and globalization of leading economic sectors contribute to “hyper-concentration of resources, infrastructure, and central functions”¹⁷⁷ with global cities playing one important role. (b) The impact of electronic space on global alliance-making and concentration of capital and economic power. (c) The contributions of this to new forms of segmentation in public and private electronic space.¹⁷⁸

This analysis is interesting because it takes Batty’s virtual geography ‘back’ into the real world, removing it from the idea of a seamless, coherent cyberspace of a singular, or plural, planar nature. Cyberspace is deeply related to contexts of diverse kinds, and Sassen’s critical evaluation is only one possible contextualisation of virtual geography. One may say that Sassen ‘reverses’ Batty’s techno-geographic concern for cyberplaces with a critical geographical concern for material intersections between power, technology, and economy. These intersections may extend through the entire expanse of cyberspace, right ‘into’ the most remote and assumedly irrelevant technicalities of telecommunication and computer architectures, and right ‘out’ into the most trivial daily experience of weblog and exclusion from segments of the Internet. The idea of cyber-segmentation is not only pertaining to aspects of computer-mediated communication, but runs through the whole idiom of new media and cyberculture, or to put it differently, it intertwines cyberculture with the world.

Thus we, so far, end up in an analysis of the localization and embeddedness of cyberculture, which enable us to put a more precise focus on the ideas of commonality in cyberculture. If we recall Susan Leigh Star’s account of the cultural implications of computer-mediated communication as (a) a “medium for building

¹⁷² Ibid., 182.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 191.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 191.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

communities and networks”, (b) a way of representing, stretching, and redefining cultural practices, and (c) a manifestation of cultural problems, conflicts, and powerrelations,¹⁷⁹ we seem to have moved from (a) to (c). Sassen’s theories foreground the conflicts, not only internally in cyberculture, but *tout cour* of postindustrial globalization as a whole. What Hoogvelt describes as an increasing potential for structural difference in the global economy in certain senses also applies to cyber-segmentation. The localization and embeddedness of cyberculture is also a social and conflictual practice of cyberculture in globalization.

In the *Human Development Report 1999* from UNDP this picture is sustained in an analysis based on a range of empirical data. Although the report does not count out the options for global development related to new media, it emphasizes that differences of geography, education, income, gender, and language as something which “poses severe problems of access and exclusion”¹⁸⁰ in the new media:

“This exclusivity is creating parallel worlds. Those with income, education and - literally - connections have cheap and instantaneous access to information. The rest is left with uncertain, slow and costly access. When people in these two worlds live and compete side by side, the advantage of being connected will overpower the marginal and impoverished cutting off their voices and concerns from the global conversation.”¹⁸¹

In broad terms the report confirms the analysis of Sassen, juxtaposing the position of empowered and powerless in a new “landscape”¹⁸² consisting of (1) shrinking space, (2) shrinking time, and (3) disappearing borders for many, but not for the majority; i.e. highly different modes of complex connectivity in relation to finance and business, tourism, NGOs, and high-skilled labour, and unskilled labour. This also applies for communication:

“Geographic barriers may have fallen for communications, but a new barrier has emerged, an invisible barrier that true to its name, is like a world wide web, embracing the connected and silently - almost imperceptibly - excluding the rest. The typical Internet user is male, under 35 years old, with a college education and high income, urban-based and English-speaking - a member of a very elite minority worldwide. The consequence? The network society is creating parallel communications systems: one for those with income, education and - literally - connections, giving plentiful information at low cost and high speed; the other for those

¹⁷⁹ Star: Op.cit., p.8.

¹⁸⁰ UNDP, Op.cit, 6. Net-version, see <http://www.undp.org/hdro/>

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 29.

without connections, blocked by high barriers of time, cost and uncertainty and dependent on outdated information.”¹⁸³

The Mexican artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña writes in 1996:

” (...) When we began to dialogue with artists working with the new technologies, we were perplexed by the fact that when referring to cyberspace or the Net, they spoke of a politically neutral/raceless/genderless/classless “territory” which provided us all with “equal access” and unlimited possibilities of participation, interaction, and belonging - especially belonging. ... many things have changed ... We are no longer trying to persuade anyone that we are worthy of inclusion. What we want is to “politicize” the debate, to “brownify” virtual space; to “spanglishize” the Net ...”¹⁸⁴

To sum up:

1. *PHENOMENOLOGY*: How can cyberculture be related to phenomena of complex connectivity in globalization?

Answer: The phenomena of cyberculture - whether as manifest in activities on the Net or as discourse of the Net - may on a principal level point to complex connectivity in globalization. However, the phenomenology of increasing virtual geographies are not one of expansion in the sense of world system theory. Nothing today points to the evolvement of the Internet into a global communication system. On the contrary the internet-intranet technology which is gaining ground as a prime corporate tool may deepen cyber-segmentation.

The ideas of cyberspace may in a sense be ‘true’, since it is correct that the new media may transform phenomena previously associated with the phenomenologically real world to virtual ground. However, this pertains not to a secluded immanent commonalty but to contexts of powerimplications and issues of new media (and other issues) in globalization. The phenomena of cyberculture may produce their own cultural phenomenologies in the sense of Star quoted above, but they must also be understood in their relations to other modalities.

2. *PRAGMATICS*: How can the cybercultural discourse be related to the practical global construction of technology?

Answer: The implementation of new media and cyberculture may thus be seen as a ‘perfect’ reflexive fit with the implosive structures of globalization. However, this is not the entire picture of global complex connectivity, in the sense of

¹⁸³ Ibid., 63.

¹⁸⁴ Guillermo Gómez-Peña: “The Virtual Barrio @ the Other Frontier (or The Chicano Internet)”, in, Lynn Hershman Leeson: *Clicking In. Hot Links to a Digital Culture*, Bay Press 1996, 178-179.

Tomlinson. The complex technological options and cultural prospects of the new media may be seen as a range of modalities, primarily related to issues of the former core of the world system, but as such they may also intertwine with other modalities. Nothing I have said or quoted so far, really contradicts that. New wireless information and communication technologies - although still somewhat 'immersed' in the same technophilia as the pc and the WWW in the beginning of the 1990s - may prove a much more adaptable technology for carrying the new media into the peripheral parts of the world. But they will not do so by hypostasizing technological immanence.

3. *ONTOLOGY*: How can cyberculture tell us something about the complexified (and contested) world of globalization?

Answer: The symbolic practices of cyberculture related to the new media may point to a different understanding of technology and culture, and, furthermore, to the import of new ideas of the social and the historical. Cyberculture may in some senses be, for example, community, predicated on for instance time-space agencies of the new media. In this respect it may lead us to a different notion of what community is altogether, since it is not the social and territorial commonality we have come to naturalize in modernity. Thus the stretching of social relations and disembedding of institutions via globalization lead us to the point where the social bond, and the knots tying it to the ground of the planet, are in a process of metamorphosis. In this sense cyberculture may display an interest which can be shared outside the core of the world system, a wonder of what it means to come to terms with modernity, to paraphrase Kwame Anthony Appiah in the first section of the paper.

NOTHING HAS MEANING OUTSIDE OF DISCOURSE?

On the creative dimension of visuality

"The subjects of interest to visual studies seems, at first sight, to be scattered over the whole range of image production and reception (...) photographs, advertisements, animation, computer graphics, Disneyland, crafts, eco-design, fashions, graffiti, garden design, theme parks, rock/pop performances, subcultural styles, tattoos, films, televisions and virtual reality" – to which I would add sex and sexuality, Las Vegas, Hollywood and Bollywood, depictions of death and violence, international airports, corporate headquarters, shopping malls, Balinese tourist art, Bakelite, Barbie, Burning Man (...) Astroturf, ivory *mah-jongg* sets, underwater Monopoly (...) Ghanaian coffins in the shape of chickens and outboard motors (...) tourist attraction ashtrays (...) Sally Mann and Catherine Opie. The list seems hopelessly miscellaneous or happily inclusive depending on your point of view."¹⁸⁵
James Elkins

"We would miss, on the one hand and above all, the fundamental fact that there is nothing visible that is fully given and completely made in which the seer could insert herself, any more, indeed, that there is a "representational picture," but rather emergence, continued creation, incompleteness (...) that is never filled out but rather transforms itself into another incompleteness."¹⁸⁶
Cornelius Castoriadis

¹⁸⁵ James Elkins, *Visual Studies. A Skeptical Introduction*. New York: Routledge 2003, 34-37.

¹⁸⁶ Cornelius Castoriadis, "Merleau-Ponty and the Ontological Tradition" in *World in Fragments. Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination* (ed. David Ames Curtis). Stanford, California: Stanford University Press 1997, 284.

1. The predicament of the image world: tripartition

The debate on visual culture over the past two decades has largely been predicated on the assumption of novelty. Thus Nicholas Mirzoeff tells us that "human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever before from the satellite picture to medical images of the interior of the human body."¹⁸⁷ Sturken & Cartwright contend similarly that "the world we inhabit is filled with visual images. They are central to how we represent, make meaning, and communicate in the world around us. In many ways, our culture is increasingly a visual one. Over the course of the last two centuries, Western culture has come to be dominated by visual rather than oral or textual media."¹⁸⁸ Gillian Rose ponders in yet another introduction that " (...) recently many writers (...) have argued that the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies. It is often suggested that much meaning is conveyed by visual images."¹⁸⁹

It would probably raise indefinitely many and complex questions to find out whether present visual culture really transcends previous forms. Would for instance murals of The Last Judgment have less impact on a Danish peasant in the Middle Ages than let's say fifty images of Pamela Anderson on the average high school student of today? It is safe, however, to claim that to critics of latter day visual culture, the novelty of this cultural form looms large. So much more peculiar that the dynamics of this articulate novelty, assumed to expand by the hour, is often stifled as determinate. *First*, the articulation of visual culture is subsumed under a structuralist or poststructuralist notion of representation originating in terms of linguistics, semiotics, and communication. *Second* the dynamics of visual articulation is conceived by a prefiguring system of relations and differences – relationality, e.g. by negotiating and negotiated positions of encoding and decoding, establishing systems of visual meaning. *Third*, a practice of visual culture – of "looking" is understood by discursive action upon such systems in some capacity of imagery, visual mediation, and technique. Visual culture is thus a structuring/structured relation, manifest in a range of visual forms, which is determinable e.g. by the notion of discourse. While this notion today resounds in many versions and definitions it is fair to say that the debate on visual culture approaches discourse in the basic Foucauldian sense of a complex strategic situation. Visual culture understood thus makes no sense outside discourse, it must be understood as clusters of meaning

¹⁸⁷ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London & New York: Routledge 1999, 1.

¹⁸⁸ Marita Sturken & Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking. An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001, 1.

¹⁸⁹ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies. An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London: Sage Publications 2001, 6.

predicated on discursive formation, as Stuart Hall argues in the popular textbook *Representation* (1997).¹⁹⁰

Put differently: criticism of visual culture follows largely the postwar attempt at turning structuralism and poststructuralism into cultural theory, from Levy-Strauss and Lacan, over Barthes and Eco, to Foucault and Deleuze & Guattari. Following the general antihumanism of this attempt it focuses on the visual as an ocular-centric visuality (Martin Jay) invested in a showdown with the seeing subject and its ocularcentrism. Thus in Hal Foster's inaugural manifesto of visual culture criticism presented by the DIA Art Foundation in 1988, the notion of difference between the seeing subject, "the datum of vision," and forms of *visuality* is developed into a transversally structuring system of differences *generating* "how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein."¹⁹¹ Visuality is ultimately a "disc(o)ursive determination" as Foster terms it, an immanent conjecture of social and cultural determination conceived by e.g. interpellative¹⁹² changes of relational states, as further conjectured in the famous power/knowledge relation.

¹⁹⁰ Stuart Hall (ed), *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publications 1997. Hall summarizes his concerns, "Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society." (6) This 'classic' definition of discourse may be adjusted vis-à-vis novelty and creativity by emphasizing the dynamics of power, e.g. in terms of hegemony/resistance in the definitions on discourse. Hall himself adjust it by attaching a notion of constructionism to the notion of discourse. C.f. Hall, *Op.cit.*, 5ff, 24ff. However I would like to emphasize that what is at stake here is also a different ontological approach. To focus on visual culture in terms of "emergence, continued creation, incompleteness" (Castoriadis, *Op.cit*) is to change the ontological framework from issues of structure/structuring to issues of becoming, to become, see below. See Peter Murphy, "The Pattern of Creation," in *Budhi: A Journal of Culture and Ideas* (Manila: Ateneo University Office of Research) (forthcoming); Anders Michelsen, "Autotranscendence and creative organization: on creation and self-organization," in Anders Michelsen & Peter Murphy (eds), "Self-organization." *Thesis Eleven: Critical Theory and Historical Sociology* 85. London: Sage 2006 (forthcoming);

¹⁹¹ "Why vision and visuality, why these terms? Although vision suggests sight as a physical operation, and visuality sight as a social fact, the two are not opposed as nature to culture: vision is social and historical too, and visuality involves the body and the psyche. Yet neither are they identical: here, the difference between the terms signals a difference within the visual - between the mechanism of sight and its historical techniques, between the datum of vision and its discursive determinations - a difference, many differences, among how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein." Hal Foster, Preface," in Hal Foster (ed) *Vision and Visuality. Discussions in Contemporary Culture Number 2*. Seattle: Bay Press 1988, ix.

¹⁹² Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation), in Douglas Tallack (ed), *Critical Theory. A Reader*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1995. The framework of Althusser is of course the classical settings of a Western Marxism within a structuralist

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to follow the ways that structuralism and poststructuralism make their points from the 1940s to the 1990s including the many crossovers and linkages in a further contextual landscape, from linguistics and cybernetics over speech act theory to ethnology, cultural studies, and discourse analysis – to mention some of the influences, offsprings and implications,¹⁹³ it remains however fair to argue that the cultural criticism of visual culture studies grasps its object as determinate by diverging paradoxically from the dynamics of visuality per se, that is: the novel impetus of imagery, visual mediation, and technique.

One interesting approach to this paradox is found in the relation between visual culture and current visual art. Most often visual culture criticism takes the predicament of visual art vis-a-vis visual culture for granted. Visual culture has "surpassed art's power to communicate" as Lisa Phillips writes in the catalogue to a major statement of appropriation art, the exhibition "Image World" in 1989.¹⁹⁴ While post-Duchampian art – from the revolutionary

interpretation. However, the wider cultural and social implications are quite clear, e.g. in relation to what makes up a social and cultural identity, with some of the concerns following upon the 'cultural turn' of the 1980s. For a specific use in relation to the current debate on visual culture, see W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory. Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press 1994.

¹⁹³In terms of image theory etc. a wide variety of notions are active, e.g. convention, mythology, text, code, communication, abstract machine, scopic regime, screen of signs, etc.. All this is of course much beyond the scope of this paper, as mentioned, but one should, however, not overlook the continuity and the commonality of themes, from the 40s to the 90s. See Thomas G. Pavel, *The Feud of Language. A History of Structuralist Thought*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell 1989; Klaus Bartels, "Kybernetik als Metapher. Der Beitrag des französischen Strukturalismus zu einer Philosophie der Information und der Massemedien", in Helmut Brackert und Fritz Wefelmayer, *Kultur Bestimmungen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag 1990; Vincent Descombes, *The Barometer of Modern Reason. On the Philosophies of Current Events*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993. See also, Anders Michelsen, "Faces, tears and ascii-codes. On the paradox of the human in visual culture– why there can no visual culture without humans." Forthcoming in in Mikkel Bogh, Hans Dam Christensen & Anne Ring Petersen (eds), *Anthro/Socio: Towards an Anthropological Turn in Practices, Theories and Histories of Art*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum 2006

¹⁹⁴ Lisa Phillips. "Art and Media Culture," in Marvin Heiferman & Lisa Phillips with John G. Hanhardt, *Image World. Art and Media Culture*. New York: Whitney Museum of Modern Art 1989, 57. An important aspect of the paradox debated here lies in the almost hegemonic conceptualization of post-Duchampian art as representation in some capacity of semiotics, linguistics and discourse theory in debates throughout the past three decades. Along with this has gone a continuous depreciation of art vis-a-vis other forms of visuality assumed to be more probable social and cultural, e.g. mass media. It goes without saying that however important this conceptualization has been for rendering a new contextual and institutional view of art possible, including interesting new artistic strategies, from Barbara Krüger to Superflex, it has, however, also had a price, e.g. in the outright contrafactual assumption of a demise of art (in an era of unprecedented boom) as well as an unqualified embrace of mass medial forms. C.f. Brian Wallis (ed), *Art After Modernism. Rethinking Representation*. New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art 1984 It goes also without saying that part of the intricacy of the debate

Agitprop trains of the Russian Revolution to Fluxus and appropriation, has been following – with a hopeless reduction, an agenda with deep similarities to concerns such as Foster's above, it is also true that this art, the major art form of the 20th century has been expanding radically on the visual, that is, in a basic sense, on what one may well 'see' as art, thus establish as visuality in some capacity. Post-Duchampian art has explored the options of the visual in such breath, scope and scale that it is still not really understood. Momentous constellations such as the postwar formation of Broodthaers-Lewitt-Warhol-Kosuth-Beyus-Koons (to mention just one probable entry out of an indefinite number) are not only focused on critique and assessment of inherited ocularcentrism and related preferences for style, oeuvre and biography. Equally important they are focused on disclosing new issues of imagery, visual mediation, and technique. From Beyus's 'eurasiatic' explorations to Warhol's parody, novel forms of the visual are a major way of exposing artistic concepts. The shock of the new inherent in modern art is thus also an impetus of "emergence, continued creation, incompleteness"¹⁹⁵ (Castoriadis). From Duchamp's pissor over the predicaments of the 1950s formalism – an overexposed issue in the larger picture (to the advantage of Clement Greenberg as well as his critics), to current relational aesthetics, one may review modern art history as a continued articulation by creative addition to the world *by* visuality.

In a debate on culture and creativity Johann P. Arnason suggests that creativity can be conceived by a theme of tripartite culturalization, raising the fundamental problem of how a world is created for humans under a novel perspective shifting *from* the *essence* of reason/imagination *to* the *dimensions* of "rationalization"/"imaginary:" not the given ability of reason vis-a-vis imagination, but the "cultural articulation of the world" as new forms of creative rationalization is the mainstay of this turn.¹⁹⁶ According to Arnason the contemporary landscape of thinking pursues a tripartite problematic¹⁹⁷ to this end: (a) "radicalization;" developing inherited notions of reason to forms of rationalization; (b) "fragmentation;" leading to "the abandonment of the search for a common denominator"¹⁹⁸ and (c) "relativization;" focusing not on the

relates to the stance of critical theory, contributing to the debate by a problematic reiteration of a negationist and reflexive critique. C.f. Hal Foster, *The return of the real : the avant-garde at the end of the century*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996. Today it appears apparent that new positions beyond the differences, schismas, and agenda established over the past three decades – and earlier, are necessary, not least because of the increased unfolding of the very dynamics the debates rely on.

¹⁹⁵ Castoriadis, Op.cit.

¹⁹⁶ Johann P. Arnason, "Reason, imagination, interpretation" in Gillian Robinson and John Rundell (eds), *Rethinking Imagination. Culture and Creativity*. London and New York: Routledge 1994, 155, 156.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 164.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

universal, but on on "the explication – and explicability – of cultural patterns."¹⁹⁹

This seems relevant to the current debate on visuality: insofar visual culture articulates new fields of imagery, visual mediation, and techniques, it may be theorized by Arnason's tripartition. It articulates, (a) *radicalization* by developing inherited forms of reasoned imagery to new forms of visual rationality, e.g. as clusters of meaning - visuality, predicated on discourse; (b) *fragmentation* by relaying inherited ocularcentric canons, e.g. in art to a pervasive yet disparate visual culture of mass mediated visuality; (c) *relativization* e.g. by developing art publics into a performative and dynamic visual audiencing of visualities. Thus a cultural articulation of "rationalization"/"imaginary" in realms of visual culture points to a transversal yet highly diverse propensity of visualities.

If we take a brief look at two of the major 'manifestoes' of art in the 90s, Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (2002/1998) and Peter Weibel's *Kontext Kunst* (1993),²⁰⁰ we may indicate a number of aspects of such a tripartite articulation. Weibel argues emphatically for a discursive notion of contextualized art because "artistic discourse must be relativized by reintegration in social, philosophical, political, economic, ecological, natural scientific discourses."²⁰¹ Thus art may be seen as specific forms of *rationalization*, establishing comprehensive yet specific *fragments* of a new public, *relative* to other articulations of the rational. In Weibel's view this is underlined by a critical review of the paradigm of social self-organization in Niklas Luhmann's theory of autopoietic social construction.²⁰² In Bourriaud's account tripartition is further developed to an engagement with direct creative articulation. A work of art is a creative performativity of culture co-extensive with visual audiencing. What is established is a dimension of concrete rationalities adding directly to the cultural world of forms. Fragmented and relational statements in artist performances becomes a direct "social interstice"²⁰³ Bourriaud argues, allowing for networks of meanings (form) to emerge as a "rich loam for social experiments."²⁰⁴ The micro-utopias of Bourriaud's manifesto may thus be read as a further conjecture on Weibel's idea of a principal contextual art.²⁰⁵ However, Bourriaud's art is able to overstep the lurking predicament of Weibel's discourse because he sidelines the notion of discourse – representation, to the advantage of direct

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 165.

²⁰⁰ Peter Weibel (Hrsg.), *Kontext Kunst. The Art of the 90s*. Köln. DuMont Buchverlag 1994.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 19.

²⁰² Ibid., 19ff.

²⁰³ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. Les presses du réel, 16.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁰⁵ One should not overlook Weibel's comprehensive intervention into issues of complexity and culture, see e.g. Peter Weibel: "Virtuelle Realität: Der Endo-Zugang zur Elektronik" in, Florian Rötzer und Peter Weibel (hrsg): *Cyberspace. Zum medialen Gesamtkunstwerk*, Klaus Boer Verlag 1993; Otto Rössler, *Endophysik* (hg. Peter Weibel). Berlin: Merve Verlag 1992.

addition to the world. Context is “connotated” as a cultural articulation which is not based on aligned representational form, but on a direct dimensioning of the social, a direct addition – art as a tripartite modeling of the world, emphasized by Bourriaud when he argues for a new connectionist form²⁰⁶ by “elements forming (...) joined together in a form (...): “a setting of elements on one another (...)”.”²⁰⁷ This marks a break as well as a continuity in the notion of visibility. Visibility may well be generative by immanent systems of e.g. discursive determination, but it transcends the ocularcentric mainly because of addition. It is creative and forwards new unseen, thus incomprehensible, forms, not of, *but to* the world.

2. Representation and presentation: meta-instability

The process developing from Weibel’s discursive art definition of context to Bourriaud’s relational art conception is more than an issue of differing intellectual positions. The often lamented eclecticism of Bourriaud matters also less, as do the radical chic of so-called micropolitical art.²⁰⁸ What appears to be in question in

²⁰⁶ In fact one should not overlook either the influence on Bourriaud’s manifesto from issues of complexity. Read him e.g. with Daniel Parrochia, *Philosophie des réseaux*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1993.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁰⁸ The intense predicaments of a critical project today, vis-a-vis e.g. globalization, fundamentalism, and new forms of identity, mirrored in the ridicule/compartementalization of critical reflection in elitist and expert forms of culture in contemporary art, may serve to indicate some of the forces at play. Thus in the director’s text of *Documenta XI*, Okwui Enwezor’s radical chic leads him almost to an embrace of Islamic fundamentalism as a form of resistance against ‘empire’. He writes, “The main political rupture of today is properly caught in the resistance struggles being initiated by a host of forces (whether Islamic or secular) in order to prevent their societies from total integration in these two phases of the Western system [the world system of capitalism and democracy A.M.]” The relation between current Islamic forces and what they allegedly resist against is, to say the least, somewhat less clear than Enwezor indicates. One may think e.g. of the relations between Wahabism, the Saudi Arabian state, The West, and al Qaeda, which might indicate that Islamic religious struggle may be complicit somehow with Western agendas in an as yet unclear manner, and can not merely be counted on as a struggle ‘against’. Culture is no guarantee in these matters, on the contrary. C.f. Okwui Enwezor, “The Black Box,” in *Documenta11_Platform 5:Exhibition. Catalogue*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers 2002, 46. See also, Anders Michelsen & Khaled Ramadan (eds), *Dossier Terror-ISM in Atlantica Revista de Arte y Pensamiento Número 35 Verano 2003*, Las Palmas (Gran Canaria): Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno – CAAM 2003. For different perspectives, also relevant to visual culture see the debates on global civil society, c.f. Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier & Marlies Glasius (eds), *Global Civil Society 2003*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003; Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*. London: Verso 2002; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

relational aesthetics is rather the acknowledgement of a formation of creativity which has been lurking within modernity: a further acknowledgement of the moderns that we construct the world on constraints which are somehow residing with a human issue of a meta-instable yet manifest “autotranscendence”²⁰⁹ and “self-creation.”²¹⁰ We may, in different words, model the world under a number of complex constraints of form, or systems of form, i.e. morphology, let’s say, from the Green House Effect to On Kawara’s mail art. In terms of the visual this acknowledgement can be discerned in a major change *from* the dichotomy of representation/presentation *in terms of* exterior and interior, that is, (realist), or better essentialist, depiction of the world, e.g. by the inherited canon of ocularcentrism, aesthetics, *sensus communis* etc., *to a tripartite term of* dimensioning by implicit and explicit meaning, that is, *by the addition of visual organizations* to the world, in all sorts of manifestation of new imagery, visual mediation, and technique.

It is possible to discern an implicit creativity of the visual rendered explicit in systems of form, whether enframed in terms of immediate modeling of visual form (in the sense of appariential entity constructed by someone), e.g. in the gestalt of an installation by Jeff Koons, or in the programmings of mass media organizations, e.g. reality-tv such as Extreme Makeover or the SPIN of embedded journalism in the recent American campaign in Iraq.²¹¹ To make visible, to visualize – to see, may be conjectured beyond ocularcentrism as a generative creativity, that is, as the articulation of organizations to the world by additive novelty, dimensioning and appearing to a visual field (but of course not only to this field). Thus, one may argue, it is possible to rephrase the relation between what an image may depict by a reference in some capacity, and what an image may picture in larger sense including as well e.g. phantasy, phantasms etc.. In other words one may undertake a principal

Cultural Dimensions of Globalization. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1997.

²⁰⁹ Paul Dumouchel & Jean-Pierre Dupuy (dir.) *Colloque de Cerisy: L'auto-organisation. De la physique au politique*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1983. Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Introduction aux Sciences Sociales. Logique des phénomènes collectives*. Paris: Ellipses 1992.

²¹⁰ Cornelius Castoriadis, *Domaines de l'homme. Les carrefours du labyrinthe II*. Éditions de Seuil 1986; Castoriadis: *World in Fragments. Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination* (D. Curtis (ed)). Stanford: Stanford University Press 1997 (1997b). See also Anders Michelsen, “Autotranscendence and creative organization: on creation and self-organization,” *Op.cit.*

²¹¹ The phenomenon of SPIN, surfaced in its contemporary form in connection with American debates on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in the 1980s, where it designated “Significant Progress In the News.” In the words of an encyclopaedia article, “spin” often, though not always, implies disingenuous, deceptive and/or highly manipulative tactics.” Not least the visual aspects of spin has had importance as the recent American president elections has proven, whether the focus is Michael Moores *Fahrenheit 9/11* or the streamlined Republican campaign. C.f. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spin_%28public_relations%29 (04/11/05 12:14).

revision of the relations between representation and presentation which constitute – one way or the other, the Western ontology of the image, from Plato to discourse theory. In particular one may argue that the issue of current visuality points to a change in an ongoing Western scepticism with regard to the image, from Plato to Jean Baudrillard, by a different rehearsal of possible relations between representation and presentation, residing with the dimensioning of visual organizations.

Let us take a closer look at some of the options for such a rehearsal. According to Jean-Jacques Wunenburger the "ontology of the image"²¹² in the West depreciates the image by a range of deeply paradoxical arguments which develops from the Middle Ages towards postmodern conceptions of the simulacrum.

In its basic mode Western scepticism reviews the "comprehension of the image" as meta-instable because of the unclear relation between representation of something external in the sense of depiction, and something internal in the sense of an interiority of a mental presentation. Wunenburger argues for a *longue durée* circumscribing two exigencies in this respect:

(a) The appearance of the image as a mode of presentable sensation [*présentation sensible*] cannot be confined [*confond*] to an immediate experience of the real: "A painting, a dream, a metaphor, a symbol, is accompanied by a mode of particular presence, proper to a mental interiority, but localized in an exteriority (...) the image is (...) endowed [*dotée*] by the pretention to expose something essential which can not be delimited [*rabattre*] by a contingent empirical particularity."²¹³ To Wunenburger it is not at all clear how the image is actually taking up a place in the world, or in the "mental [*psychique*] flux."²¹⁴ This may however, point to a deepened understanding of the issue of paradox, with a number of consequences. We cannot establish a determinate relation between exteriority and interiority and this remains a feature of Western scepticism, whether the solutions tend toward idealistic or naturalizing attempts of definition.²¹⁵ The image is clearly established by acts of seeing but such acts are not really to be relied upon, it appears.

(b) One important consequence of the paradox of exterior and interior is clearly at display if we regard the historical unfolding of the troubled bereasoning [*arraisonnement*] of the image in terms of representation and presentation. Since these terms cannot be

²¹² Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, *Philosophie des images*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1997, 147ff.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 190.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ For a recent raise of stakes in this classic schisma, see Jean Petitot, Francisco J. Varela, Bernard Pachoud & Jean-Michel Roy, *Naturalizing Phenomenology. Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press 1999.

cleared by determination, so to speak, they raise emphatically the issue a principal meta-instability. It is not possible to dedicate any direct relation between image in the sense of representation and presentation. Representation is "impure" as Ernesto Laclau has argued,²¹⁶ because it adds something which from within of representation transcends the system. The image, Wunenburger argues comes to exist as an indefinite rotation which does not coincide with a 'last' manifestation, "an ultimate Revelation which can be said to mount the one or the many [qui dirait ou monterait l'Un ou le Tout]."²¹⁷ The process of imaging is highly dynamic and not determinate, whether in terms of idealism or naturalism, or in later attempts, by code etc..

Whereas the Western ontology, at least according to the criticism of visual culture, approaches the paradox mainly by an ocularcentric relation between exterior and interior, in the criticist stance to be solved by a discursive determination, Wunenburger points to important further prospects of creativity. The paradox of exterior and interior may develop into a tripartite version of explicit and implicit pertaining to the issue of a modeling ocular-eccentricity. In the discourse taken for granted in visual culture criticism, explicit and implicit coexist on meta-unstable – impure, terms: that is, between a moment of explicit organization in systems of morphology, that is, manifest organizations of visibility, and a different moment of implicit creativity, an inherent mode of additive conception dimensioning the organizations in question, throughout a human world.

To Wunenburger, Western ontology may well circumscribe a meta-instability as "a properly unedited discourse" which has to do with the paradox of exteriority and interiority. But meta-instability

²¹⁶ " (...) it is of the essence of the process of representation that the representative has to contribute to the identity of what is represented (...)." Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*. London: Verso 1996, 87. Based on Derrida's notion of supplement, Laclau develops his notion of impurity in a critical exchange with what he terms the phenomenological idea of conflation of meaning and intuition. Since meaning is not 'reducible' to appearance, but in itself contributing by an apparitional hegemony of power, a fuller horizon must be installed: what Laclau terms "the general form of fullness" which is "independent of any particular content" (*Ibid.*, p.93). On this background it becomes possible to conceive of power as a lack to be filled by floating signifiers contesting and 'negotiating' hegemony, including the stance of hegemony *per se*. That is, the notion of discourse may be de facto creative in some capacity. However, what I am arguing here relates further to a qualification of discourse by emphasizing the creative disclosedness of structure in a human predication; what Castoriadis terms the "magma" of social imaginary significations structuring the social as an ongoing relation between what in Laclau's argument is termed the contingent and the connective. In the final sense, what is at stake is a principal difference between a notion of discourse predicated on language and what Castoriadis terms the magma, see below. Laclau's versatile version of discourse theory remains within the immanence of discursive determination, residing in the final sense with an ambiguous notion of "the general form of fullness."

²¹⁷ Wunenburger, *Op.cit.*

also defines a wholly different realm of creative articulation which has to do with a grounded definition of Being for humans. As he puts it, the "massive and irrevocable devaluation of the image"²¹⁸ in the Platonean and Christian heritage is also a performative moment of creativity, of what he terms an "ontophany" [ontophanie] of Being.²¹⁹ That is, an appearance of reasons for the world in a wider sense. Meta-instability is autotranscendent in "the manifestation of the suprasensible, traversed [travers] by the spatio-temporal incarnation of the divinely absolute."²²⁰ Image-scepticism is on the one hand the reading of a "reductionist lecture" yet it becomes paradoxically impregnated with a status of affirmation, an apotheosis –reflecting a divine reason for the world. In other words, the image is depreciated, untrusted – specular, mirror, surface, simulacrum, and so forth, yet it is also the opening of a dimension which we may well designate as creative.

Most important in the present context, within modernity this issue takes on increasingly charged and radicalized character, pointing from the exteriority/interiority of essence to the explicit/implicit of dimension, in the sense of Arnason. The initial paradox of depreciation/ontophany is rephrased as a tentative (and secular) "nihilism" of unrepresentable presentability thematized as an incessant movement of "presence to absence."²²¹ The modern aesthetic renounces the Christian reference to divine revelation, but furnishes a continuing, yet differently motivated distrust by the theme of the sublime, charged with exposing a world much vaster than the sensible.²²² Whereas the beautiful contemplates harmonious, finite forms, bound to the appreciation – to the commonality of a 'sensus', that is, an experiential beauty (attempting to solve meta-instability by measures of commonality), the sublime circumscribes a problem of the properly invisible in the visible, a comprehension which goes beyond mere representation of a suprasensible intuition, and becomes a " (...) presentation in the sensible of what may exceed, by way of its incommensurability, by its disproportion, our faculties [pouvoir] of representation."²²³

"Consequently, the sublime relates to an image in which the imagination produces a maximum representation of that which is appearing as directly unrepresentable to the human. As I. Kant underlines, the sublime "oblige us to think subjectively the nature in itself of the totality as presentation (*Darstellung*) of something suprasensible, without being able to realize this presentation objectively" (...) It is because the image is not so much [n'est plus] an imitation of an ideal and perfect reality [d'une réalité idéale et idéale] but a simple appearance created by the human in order to make an

²¹⁸ Ibid., 148.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 148ff.

²²⁰ Ibid., 149.

²²¹ Ibid., 181ff, 182ff.

²²² Ibid., 183.

²²³ Ibid., 184.

indirect, symbolic presentation of what proves the presence around [autour] it, and beyond [au-dessus] it, but of which it cannot assure [assurer] a direct presentification²²⁴

This "new way of thinking,"²²⁵ related to Kant's Enlightenment but radicalised by the romantics, poses the problem of an "asymptotic representation of a dazzling point [d'un point aveugle] (...) (the focus imaginarius in Kant's terms)"²²⁶ which in its postmodern versions is summoned by an appraisal, *on the one hand*, of the simulacrum, interiorizing the original and the copy – the model and the reproduction, as "pure phenomenality,"²²⁷ in the words of Deleuze, "The simulation is the phantasm itself, that is, the effects of the functioning of the simulacrum as a sort of [en tant que] machinery, a Dionysiac machine ..."²²⁸ *On the other hand*, the image may thus capture nothing, it is perpetually vacillating, flowing, in a "continual flux."²²⁹

"The image is repetition without end in itself [d'elle-même] because in itself it lacks substance, consistence. Deprived of Being it appears as incessant movement, a tropism, a tendency towards; the image thus loses all ontophanic value, it elides [s'évide], it deposes by form-inform, always disappearing [disparaissant], nourishing in the final sense a new iconoclasm. In this sense [dès lors] the creation is itself the movement by which one erases [s'arrache] the image completely in order to install a vacuum [vide], an abyss [abîme], the origin of all expression, writing or representation."²³⁰

This pure phenomenality is on the one hand a possible culmination of the inherent image depreciation in the West leading to a non-depreciative appraisal of form, from Clement Greenberg's modernism to the alleged "mechanism" of mind e.g. in the symbolic approach to Artificial Intelligence (and further in the various complex attempts at a naturalized phenomenology, from algorithms of vision to pattern recognition). In this sense pure phenomenality empties form in order to open a different agenda. However, and even more important, on the other hand the issue of pure phenomenality is opening an ultimate form of depreciation/creation underlined by an appreciation of a Dionysiac flux of simulacra, and the instantiation of vacuum, abyss, as "origin of all expression, writing or representation."²³¹ That is, a different appreciation of visuality proceeding from a new lurking issue of creativity in the

²²⁴ Ibid., 185

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid. 185-186.

²²⁸ Ibid., 186

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

collective mode of e.g. Deleuze & Guattari's "abstract machine," that "does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality."²³²

One should thus not overlook the problem of creativity lurking in the continual flux underwriting current conceptions of the image, from the Deleuzean simulacrum over Baudrillardian simulation to Foucauldian power/knowledge. The fact that the being of the image is meta-unstable, is withdrawing in primordial abyss, opens in fact a quite different and paradoxical acknowledgement of creativity. What vacillates in this meta-instability is a transformation from essential relations between exterior and interior to dimensions of explicit and implicit. Put differently: the articulation of creativity as *conveyer of images by images*: that is, the problem of the image being not the effect of the world somehow, in some capacity, but the emergence of effect upon the world, as addendum. The explicit organization of the visual, in post-Duchampian art or postwar broadcast media, is rendered on intrinsic dimensions residing within, or perhaps, from within of autotranscendence. This is why the discursive notion of visibility is forced to define the visual as a system of differences from within discourse in some capacity, but it is also why this notion cannot stand alone if it is to be articulated.

One may thus debate the role of "nihilism" in modern conceptions of the image, not only as an ontology of a system upon simulacrum/abyss, but as an ontology of creation upon simulacrum/abyss. Insofar the image in the Western tradition proceeds towards a 'point zero' of no qualities it is because the creative is increasingly apparent as a pressing predicament of presentation: a form of heteronomy, which cannot be conjectured from the standpoint of representation. What is lurking in the abyss of the modern image may be a peculiar nihilism, but it is also a rite de passage to creativity. The propensity of for instance the modern Bild Verbot, the 'shock of the new' – the avantgarde's ongoing struggles with visual form and material, also in the debates on visibility, can be apprehended not only as a tropism of de-depiction, but as a will to creativity, surrounding and surmounting the image from many points of entry.

Image in the sense of depiction becomes thus less a casualty, and more a lever of creativity, what Wunenburger terms the "in between" of the "imaginal" [imaginal] – an imago-formation beyond aisthesis; a creativity which has to be defined not by the inherited realism of intuition-imagination-conceptualization, that is ocularcentrism in some capacity, but by the inverse relation of creation- imaginary-valorization, forwarding ocular-eccentricity by a

²³² Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: The University of Minneapolis Press 1987, 142. See also, Anders Michelsen, "The imaginary of the artificial: automata, models, machinics. Remarks on promiscuous modeling as precondition for poststructuralist ontology," in Thomas W Keenan & Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (eds), *New Media, Ole Media. Interrogating the Digital Revolution*. New York: Routledge 2006 (IP).

dimensioning implicit to certain explicit organizations of the visual (residing with an implicit dimensioning), which attempt to account for something creative "beyond" them, in Wunenburger's phrasing" (...) make an indirect, symbolic presentation of what proves the presence around [autour] it, and beyond [au-dessus] it, but of which it cannot assure [assurer] a direct presentification."²³³

3. Ontological modeling: visuality and creativity

Wunenburger's 'genealogy of the problem of presentation in Western image-scepticism may be summoned by at least four stages of meta-instability of representation and presentation (1) apotheosis allowing for ontophany, that is, Being as divine becoming for humans, (2) sublimation in the modern era opening a vaster realm of secular appraisal of creativity as incomprehensible, (3) transformations of sublime presentation in issues of abstraction in the 20th century, e.g. by post-Duchampian art and conceptual approaches from the 1950s onwards, (4) a further disclosure of the contours of a new dimension of the creative by the appearance of a tripartitional modeling of explicit organization and implicit dimension.

As Martin Jay argues, the emergence of modeling in the postwar period is closely related to the change from an essentialist conception of reason/imagination to a dimensioning of organizations predicated diversely on relations of rationalization/imaginary. The import of ocular-eccentricity is not blindness or 'un-seeing' but rather seeing by way of a creativity of modeling in a new sense: "models of visuality." As post-Duchampian art shows, visuality does not abolish seeing as such, but inserts systems of intermediation in the visual, e.g. by notions such as discursive determination. Modeling is thus anything but a simple term. As Jay writes:

"Indeed, it is precisely the proliferation of models of visuality that the antiocularcentric discourse, for all its fury against the ones it distrusts, tacitly encourages. Ocular-eccentricity rather than blindness, it might be argued, is the antidote to privileging any one visual order or scopic regime (...) Michel Serres claims that contemporary modes of communication, based on codes and computers, have put an end to the reign of "panoptic theory." "The informational world takes the place of the observed world," he writes, "things known because they are seen cede their place to an exchange of codes. Everything changes, everything flows from harmony's victory over surveillance."²³⁴

²³³ Ibid., 185.

²³⁴ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes. The denigration of vision in twentieth century French thought*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1993, 591, 593.

The notion of modeling is in Jay's usage primarily to be understood in terms of a history of ideas. However I think, it also relates crucially to a question of model in the sense of a creative dimensioning in Arnason's terms. Jay's use of the notion model is clearly playing on the computational heritage where a model is first of all signifying how things may organize themselves in a human dimension, that is, as complexity in a form discernible to humans (e.g. by images). The term model is endowed with an emergent dimension which can be grasped by humans, but only within the given order of the model, e.g. as a diagram of traffic flows or a weather system relating to number of algorithmic and mechanical functions of computation made accessible to humans through the model (including visual aspects such as imagery), in this mode further to issues of complexity in various other strata of the real (e.g. 'real' weather) accessible – by this or in other ways, to humans.²³⁵

However, the idea of model may be expanded if viewed as a question of creative appearance. Put differently, the visuality of the postwar era may be reviewed as emergence, incompleteness and continued creation of visuality, first by the appearance in immediate terms of new explicit organizations, from art to broadcast, second, by an implicit dimension. Explicit organization is referring to a broad field of concrete organizations of the visual reflecting effects of the "models of visuality" Jay debates, importantly not only in the exotic issues of scientific visualization and the like, but as a range of circumscriptive and massified social and cultural issues, such as reality-tv or embedded journalism. Implicit dimension – or better, dimensioning implicit to organization, refers to what may be termed effectuation, to the creativity residing with what Arnason terms dimension. This makes it possible to replace the inherited ocularcentric predicament of exterior/interior (that is, the conception of creativity by the dichotomy of essentialism and skepticism), with a conception based on relations between explicit organization and a dimensioning implicit to the organization, without arguing for discursive determination, e.g. in Foster's sense.

Arnason situates the most farranging version of tripartition in Cornelius Castoriadis philosophy of the "imaginary institution of society." Here tripartition is mirrored in a concern for how the imaginary pertains to (a) a "defunctionalization" going beyond organic needs and drives in a further sense of a creative – dimensioning of rationality,²³⁶ (b) a "deconditioning" loosening its bond to "external referents" fragmenting essentialist and ocularcentric form in created organizations and (c) most importantly, a "destructuring"²³⁷ of explicit – existing, organizations by an inherent issue of an implicit and dimensioning creativity, to Castoriadis the issue of the "magma:"

²³⁵ See Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The Mechanization of the Mind. On the Origins of Cognitive Science*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2000, 27ff.

²³⁶ Arnason, Op.cit., 166

²³⁷ Ibid., 166-167

” (...) it concerns its internal determinations, and it is perhaps here that the shift from the imagination to the imaginary is most important. Neither the representative affective/intentional flux of the psyche nor the open-ended and self-altering network of linguistic and cultural significations in society can be reduced to determinate structures; more precisely, we have to do here with a mode of being which resists description in the terms of traditional ontology, and for which Castoriadis suggests the concept of magma (...) The destructuring and destructured aspect of the imaginary is what ultimately undermines closure and makes total identity impossible, makes a culture capable of questioning itself, of confronting other cultures as well as the world in its capacity of – to quote Castoriadis – an interminable enigma and an inexhaustible source of otherness.”²³⁸

Now, how can this notion of implicit dimension, that is, of something antepredicate to explicit organization in fact be grasped beyond speculative claims? That is, how can creativity per se be addressed? Castoriadis suggests a number of procedures having to do with the understanding of social and historical organizations – what he terms “institutions” or the “social-historical,” the issue of sublimation, and not least, as indicated, the problem of constraint as inherent part of human – instituted, autotranscendence. However, closer to the protolinguistics of discursive determination he presents the idea of a polysemy of language by a “bundle of referrals.”²³⁹ The issue of “significations in language,” he argues, is also “the co-belonging of a term and of that to which it *refers*, by degrees, whether directly or indirectly”²⁴⁰ that is, to a system or a further dimension of the co-signification present in language as well as by other possible imports of signification in a human realm. Signification in language gains form by an open “bundle of referrals starting from and surrounding a term.”²⁴¹ This inherent polysemy is of course relying on the magma, or, conversely, pointing to multifarious issues of structured meaning cum sign. A living language, Castoriadis argues is characterized by the dedication of an indeterminate option or a “continuous possibility”²⁴² – a constitutive option, of the emergence of significations, of “signifieds

²³⁸ Ibid., 167. For Castoriadis’s own definitions and debates on the notion of magma (beyond the scope of this paper), see Cornelius Castoriadis: *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Polity Press 1987, Cornelius Castoriadis: *World in Fragments. Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination* (D. Curtis (ed)). Stanford: Stanford University Press 1997. See also Michelsen, “Autotranscendence and creative organization: on creation and self-organization,” Op.cit.

²³⁹ Cornelius Castoriadis: *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Polity Press 1987, 345ff

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

other than those already recorded for a given 'synchronic' state."²⁴³
The "bundling" of referrals are always emphatically open because the attachment of concrete signification, of meaning, is predicated on the magma:

"A signification is indefinitely determinable (and the 'indefinitely' is obviously essential) without thereby being determined. It can always be marked out, provisionally assigned as an identity element to an identity relation with another identity element (...) and as such be 'a something' as the starting point for an open series of successive determinations. These determinations, however, in principle never exhaust it."²⁴⁴

The "being of signification," Castoriadis goes on, has been inadequately described by "the distinctions between proper and figurative meaning, central signification and semantic aura, denotation and connotation."²⁴⁵ In fact there is no denotation opposed to connotations, there are only connotations – addendum – or as Castoriadis argues, "*every expression is essentially tropic*."²⁴⁶ All language is essentially the "abuse of language"²⁴⁷ meaning that any formal rule of language, any structural setting of language, is only applicable insofar as it allows for creation of significations in the sense of letting the creative dimensioning of the magma prevail. Being in language means to accept that there is no final and in this sense determinate response to the issue of identity, that is, to "accepting to be in signification"²⁴⁸ – in our context to accept certain organizations as options of dimensioning: "A language is such only inasmuch as it offers speakers the possibility of *taking their bearings* in and through what they say *in order to move within it* (...) to use the code of designations in order to make other significations appear (...):"²⁴⁹

"There is thus a logical and real inseparability of these two aspects of signification, *peras* and *apeiron*, definiteness-determinacy-distinctness-limitation and indefiniteness-indeterminacy-indistinctness-unlimitedness. It is essential that language always provide the possibility of treating the meanings it conveys as an ensemble formed by terms which are determined, rigorously circumscribable, each identical to itself and distinct from all the others, separable and separate. And it is equally essential that it always provide the possibility of new terms emerging, that the relations between existing terms be redefined, and so that the existing terms, inseparable from their relations, also be redefined (...)

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 346.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 347

²⁴⁶ Ibid.,348

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 350.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 353.

Beyond any set which could be extracted from it or constructed out of it, significations are not a set; their mode of being is other, it is that of a magma.²⁵⁰

It is important to understand that the Castoriadean polysemy – his definition of signification, is pertaining to issues of language, in that sense, to the ways structuralism and poststructuralism make their points over six decades. Nevertheless, his idea of a principal connotation – in the terminology of structuralism and poststructuralism, is not only transversal in the sense of discursive determination, but pervasive in the sense of human meaning. What is in question is a principal porosity and mutual supplement of organization and dimension (e.g. within language) – a co-extension of relations between, as Castoriadis terms it elsewhere, the functional, the symbolic and the imaginary.²⁵¹ Thus he opens a different, or essentially supplementary issue – an “essential supplement”²⁵² within the visual, as well as within other possible modes of human meaning. It is, in other words, possible to conceive of various tripartitions of various dimensions, e.g. the visual, the oral, the aural, the tactile, even the olfactoral etc. even if it must be emphasized that these dimensions are still a crude approximation residing with a delimited, yet relevant, issue of human psyche-soma – the sense-making body. Thus in a collective – to Castoriadis social-historical mode, it should be envisaged to see these approximations as merely heuristic.

4. Revision of visibility - Merleau-Ponty and the ontological tradition

This may developed by a quite radical revision of the notion of visibility, if one reads Castoriadis with the posthumous Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the latter's elaborations of the reversibility thesis and the “chiasm” by the conjecture of the new element of the “flesh”

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ “Beyond the conscious activity of institutionalization, institutions have drawn their source from the *social imaginary*. This imaginary must be interwoven with the symbolic, otherwise society could not have ‘come together’; and have linked up with the economic-functional component, otherwise it could not have survived. It can be placed, and it must be placed, in their service as well: there is, of course, a *function* of the institutional imaginary, although here, too, we observe that the effect of the imaginary *outstrips* its function; it is not the ‘ultimate factor’ (we are not looking for one anyway) - but without it any determination of both the symbolic and the functional, the specificity and the unity of the former, the orientation and the finality of the latter, remain incomplete and finally incomprehensible.” Ibid., p.131.

²⁵² Ibid., p.127

of the visible and the invisible.²⁵³ Proceeding from the psyche-soma of the perceptual faith of a human body invested in the world – the formula of his early work stipulating that “our own body is in the world as the heart in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system”²⁵⁴ – Merleau-Ponty takes radical steps in the second posthumous phase of his thought, into a terrain which becomes equally co-formative of such different approaches as poststructuralism and cognitive science.²⁵⁵ While this may create problems with regard to reception, it also opens, more importantly, crucial alternatives to the import of visibility. In fact one may see the later Merleau-Ponty’s thought as a blueprint for a conception of visibility which not only allows for an expansion of the notion of discursive determination into a proper visual field, but also to discern what possible specificities might pertain to such a field. Most important the idea of a chiasmic relationality between the visible and the invisible may open for a different understanding of how dimensioning of Being as signification²⁵⁶ is rendered possible in specific organizations of the visible.

With a further importance, the mutual ‘projections’ – what Renaud Barbaras terms “the conjunctive tissue,”²⁵⁷ of the visible and the invisible are not recursive but rather explicit/implicit in the sense I try to indicate here: that is, they are the dimensioning – the “dimensionality,”²⁵⁸ of organizations relying on an intrinsic relation between explicit systems of form, i.e. morphologies and implicit issues of dimension: the opening of an explicit “visible” relative to what Merleau-Ponty himself describes as a conjunctive “dimension that can never again be closed” – the “idea” – i.e. the meaning of the world (for humans, or, a human world) eo ipso – the “invisible of this world.”

“With the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, that is, not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated. The idea is this level, this dimension. It is therefore not a *de facto* invisible, like an object hidden behind another, and not an absolute invisible, which would have nothing to do with the visible. Rather it is

²⁵³ See also Arnason, *Op.cit.*; Murphy, *Op.cit.* Fabio Ciaramelli, “The Self-presupposition of the Origin: Homage to Cornelius Castoriadis” in *Thesis Eleven: Critical Theory and Historical Sociology* 49. London: Sage 1997

²⁵⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1986 (1962), p.203.

²⁵⁵ For the former see e.g. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1988, for the latter see Alva Noë & Evan Thompson (eds), *Vision and mind: selected readings in the philosophy of perception*. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press 2002.

²⁵⁶ Renaud Barbaras, “Phénoménalité et signification dans le visible et l’invisible”, i, *Les Cahiers de Philosophie* nr.7, 1989, 40ff., 42.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

the invisible of this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility, the Being of this being.²⁵⁹

Thus, in different words, there is no visible without an invisible, there is no morphology of organization – the explicit of the external, without in inwardly sustained dimensioning of the “invisible of this world” in some capacity. And moreover, this must apply to any mode of explicit, that is any manifest morphology of the world, which consequently – in general terms, and in each and every specific case, has a recourse to the invisible of dimensioning. That is (and far beyond the inherited phenomenology of the constrained psyche-soma of the perceptive, or intentional, egological) there is no visibility without the meaning of the implicit invisibility of given collectivities, e.g. in a cultural realm of visual culture.

Nevertheless, with all said, Merleau-Ponty does not treat the issue – beyond vague indication, of what leads to the peculiar state of the visible and the invisible he probes. Along the lines of the phenomenological heritage he ultimately refers to something given, in the extreme a wild form of being, but a being still given, still appearing somehow, in the posthumous Merleau-Ponty to be sure beyond the egology of phenomenology, and thus vision in the ocularcentric form, but still, given.

Castoriadis focuses on this deficit in different parts of his thought. While acknowledging the possible creative dimension of the notion of the chiasm, arising from the moment of mutuality between the visible and the invisible – the chiasm, he also criticizes the latter's moderation with regard to the imaginary.²⁶⁰ Thus in the text “Merleau-Ponty and the Ontological Tradition”²⁶¹ he argues that a notion of perception remains problematically present in Merleau-Ponty to the extent where it forecloses the issue of the imaginary. Thus the possible imports of creative constitution related to a notion of chiasm de facto recedes. The imaginary is not thought in the capacity of creative constitution, and consequently, Castoriadis argues, “the difference between real and imaginary becomes again as absolute as it could be, their qualities opposed, the consubstantiality of the first with the true and of the second with illusion massively affirmed.”²⁶²

Thus Merleau-Ponty's posthumous thought come to affirm the phenomenological notion of the given in the sense of an unmitigated real, as Castoriadis argues, thus affirming the traditional division between real and imaginary to the effect that “the real is coherent and probable because it is real, and not real because it is coherent;

²⁵⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1968, 151.

²⁶⁰ See Ciaramelli, *Op.cit.*

²⁶¹ Cornelius Castoriadis, *World in Fragments. Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination* (ed. D. Curtis). Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 273ff.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 279.

the imaginary is incoherent or improbable because it is imaginary, and not imaginary because it is incoherent.²⁶³

Nevertheless, even in terms of the mind, Castoriadis goes on – i.e. the traditional focus of phenomenology (although with important qualifications in Merleau-Ponty), it is inconceivable that the imaginary should not have real implications. It is not only inconceivable that the mind should be unable to be captured by its representations, it is conceivable, in much more radical terms that representation is the produce somehow of a creative dimensioning. It is thus possible to conceive of a notion of mind – meaning, wherein the issue of representation becomes co-extensive, or even derived in a sense, from a creative flux emerging in the mind:

”The mind does not ”have” representations. The mind [*esprit*], if one wants to use this term, *is* this: representational flux (and something else as well, of course). The ”mind” is, first and foremost, this perpetual ”presentation” of ”something” that is not there *for* something else (re-presentation, *Vertretung*) or *for* ”someone.” Perception, dreams, reverie, memory, phantasm, reading, hearing music with eyes closed, thought are first and foremost that, and they rigorously enter under the same heading. Whether I open or I close my eyes, whether I listen or I stop up my ears, always , except in dreamless sleep, *there is* that itself – and, to begin with, nothing but that – which is in and through this presentation; there is (since the metaphor of vision, and not by chance, dominates) absolute ”*spectacle*,” which is not spectacle of another trans-spectacle, nor is it spectacle for a spectator, the spectator herself being, in as much as she is at all, on stage.”²⁶⁴

The net result is thus that the conjecture of the invisible and the invisible remains within the perimeter of a much expanded perception – e.g. in relation to the ocularcentric subject, however expanded. It cannot overcome a question of derivation from the real somehow, which stands in contrast to the fact that forms of the given must recur to imaginary articulations in some capacity, to reflections instantiating – positing, the perception and its juxtaposition to something real. The issues of perception, and thus of the real, are of a secondary nature, an invention, in simple terms,

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 281-282. I would like to emphasize that what Castoriadis argues is, I think, neither incompatible with current cognitive science, e.g. of the connectionist type, or with aspects of neurobiology, or with the idea of discursive construction. In fact what Castoriadis argues is philosophical complement to a number of pressing issues in contemporary debates on mind, cognition, neurobiology, and culture. For a historical perspective, see Olaf Breidbach, *Die Materialisierung des Ichs. Zur Geschichte der Hirnforschung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: 1997. See also Klaus Peter Dencker (hrsg), *Labile Ordnungen. Netze Denken, Kunst Verkehren, Verbindlichkeiten. Interface 3*. Hamburg: Verlag Hans-Bredow-Institut für Rundfunk und Fernsehen 1997.

which refers to a much more complicated issue of emergent flux, Castoriadis argues:

" (...) the "something" (as ob-ject, *Gegen-stand*, whatever its particular tenor incidentally might be, but as holding itself [see *tenant*] apart from the representational flux) and the "someone" (as subject, whatever the "interpretation" thereof: man, soul, consciousness, "mind," or *Dasein*) are separations resulting from reflections. They are inevitable and legitimate – but of a second order. They are "real" and "logical," even "solid" so far as they can be – but of a second order. That in the *there is* of the representational flux the (allegedly full-bloomed) perceptual thing rapidly (though not inevitably) blossoms forth is of importance and even decisive – but of a second order."²⁶⁵

To base a "cosmology" – the term of Merleau-Ponty,²⁶⁶ on the visible and the invisible is thus also to open a debate on a creative – dimensioning, magma of the imaginary, that is, of a 'primary' order. There is no real discrepancy, Castoriadis maintains, between reality and fiction, rather there is something "before the distinction between 'real' and 'fictitious'" namely the imaginary of the magma, mirroring a radical imagination of the psyche-soma: "(...) it is because radical imagination exists that 'reality' exist *for us* – exists *tout court* – and exists as it exists."²⁶⁷

There is, however, also an ambiguous side to Merleau-Ponty's argument. In fact Merleau-Ponty circles around the issue of creative dimensioning in ways which at points come close to acknowledge the need for a query of how the chiasm comes into being. This is quite clear when he asks for example by what instance the natural world attains the status of a chiasm to be reflected upon, and more importantly, by what instance – he uses the term "miracle," – the issue becomes reflectable at all, in the first place:

" (...) by what miracle a created generality, a culture, a knowledge come to add to and recapture and rectify the natural generality of my body and of the world."²⁶⁸

This question may be answered in a further sense – not only in the absolute terms of Castoriadis's conjecture of a strong ontological imagination, but in the subtle terms of how it is possible to align the two's work. It is thus possible to displace the ontological agenda of the visible and the invisible – Merleau-Ponty's strategy of approaching Being by the visible, into a realm of tripartition in the sense of what Castoriadis terms a cultural history of creation of perception. One should understand the notion of culture correctly

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 282-283

²⁶⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et L'Invisible*, Éditions Gallimard 1964 (1986), 318.

²⁶⁷ Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Castoriadis Reader* (David Ames Curtis (ed)). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1997, 319ff, 321.

²⁶⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 152.

here, in fact Castoriadis is talking about collective, historical emergence²⁶⁹ of the entire implication of the chiasm as a new creatively constituted visuality, which may simultaneously retain and qualify the inherited idea of perception:

"If our perception is cultural-historical, as it incontestably is, not only could it not be a question of maintaining for it any ontological privilege whatsoever or the status of "archetype" relative to other forms of access to what is, of "giving itself" something or making it be, what you will; it becomes important and urgent to explore the consequences of this fact, to ask oneself what "components" of perception are social-historical in origin and in what manner they are so, whether one can thus distinguish any "components" therein and impute them in a distinct way to this or that origin, and, finally, whether one can even preserve the traditional sense of "perception."²⁷⁰

Of course then, the visible and the invisible – loosened, or better, qualified from a perceptual issue to an imaginary state circumscribing the perception as it were – thus conjectured without any real neglect of the independent aspects of perception, cognition and culture etc. – must reside with magma. However, and we should not proceed too hastily here, the visible and the invisible is still a qualified instituted field of 'referrals' of visuality, organizing a dimension of the real whose ultimate 'reason' lies in the magma but whose intricate complexity may well be accounted for by the notion of chiasm. Put differently: we may have gotten closer to the implicity of explicit morphology in the visual terrain, and we may have seen an inaugurative dimensioning, but we still need to retain Merleau-Ponty's comprehensive idea of specific visuality. Put differently: In the synergy between Castoriadis and Merleau-Ponty one may discern a framework for understanding visuality as a creative dimensioning of the world, explicit in specific organizations, from art to reality-tv.

5. In closing

I have been trying to argue above that the debate on visual culture is in deficit with regard to discerning the creative dimension of its own appearance. This has not only obvious analytical implications, but also further implications for understanding why our age ultimately may be rendered more visual. On the other hand I have been trying to indicate that a closer look at the notion of visuality

²⁶⁹ The issue of definitions of history and culture looms large in Castoriadis work and is beyond the scope of this article, see for instance, Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 165ff.

²⁷⁰ Castoriadis: *World in Fragments*, 293.

may not only clarify why the novel creativity pass by unacknowledged but also shed light on a further cultural dynamic, relating to the creativity of visual organizations making up concrete visual culture. Finally I have attempted to describe a synergetic framework for a notion of creative visual culture beyond discursive determination, which should ad to the understanding of why and how visibility is appearing to the world. With regard to the possible predicament of art in the age of visibility, this should finally be a reassurance as to the further prospects of artistic endeavor even if art may change even more in possible modes of tripartition.