

participation, criticism and awareness. Always remember. Observe your surroundings. Discover the control instruments that surround you and express your opinion about them, to demonstrate collectively that the real and daily problems of citizens contrast with this absurd trend, embraced by some leaders, to spread fictitious fears instead of working on the issues that really require their attention.

#### NOTES

- [1] STACHE, Inge, *Crítica de la mirada. Textos de Harun Farocki*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Altamira, 2003.
- [2] The term "hyperlink" was the first denomination given to what are better known as links or hypertext links.
- [3] The World's First Collaborative Sentence: <<http://ca80.lehman.cuny.edu/davis>> [Consulted on: 12/01/2008].
- [4] The File Room: <<http://www.thefileroom.org>> [Consulted on: 20/09/2007].
- [5] MACBA., *On Translation*, Barcelona, ACTAR-MACBA, 2002.
- The File Room was conceived after Muntadas' unfortunate experience with a video that was censored by Spanish State Television (TVE).
- [6] VIRILIO, P. "Velocidad e información. ¡Alarma en el ciberespacio!" (August 1995), *Aleph pensamiento*: <<http://www.aleph-arts.org/pens/speed.html>> [Consulted on: 11/02/2008].
- [7] BAUDRILLARD, Jean. *La guerra del golfo no ha tenido lugar*, Barcelona, Ed. Anagrama, 2001, p.66.
- [8] The artist appropriates and adapts the studio to an idea initiated just one year before by Jennifer Ringley. This student in Pennsylvania installed a series of webcams in her dorm at Dickinson College and connected them to a Web page, JenniCam.org. She broadcast her life 24-hours a day, for seven years, while performing all kinds of daily tasks and activities. Her experiment, transformed into a business

venture, was closed down for reasons that are yet unclear in 2005.

- [9] Little Sister: <<http://www.azapp.de/littlesister>> [Consulted on: 15/02/2008].
- [10] CASTELLS, Manuel. "Internet, libertad vigilada", *El Periódico*, 12 /02 /2006.
- [11] LOZANO-HEMMER, Rafael: <<http://www.lozano-hemmer.com>> [Consulted on: 10/12/2007].
- [12] This is an installation with various interactive modules. Originally designed for a technological play (in 1993), it is currently presented as a human eye in a plasma screen with a camera-tracking device that detects the presence and movements of the spectator in the room.
- [13] UNCOVERING CONTROL (Media art, surveillance and control): <http://uncovering-ctrl.blogspot.com>.
- [14] Proyecto Destapa el control: <http://destapaelcontrol.blogspot.com>.



## THE ARTIST AS A GENERATOR OF SWARMINGS: QUESTIONING THE NETWORK SOCIETY

[CARLOS SEDA]

### I. PROBLEMATISING WEB 2.0 WHY BARCELONA'S CIVIC ORDINANCE IS A POLITICAL CONSEQUENCE OF THE NETWORK SOCIETY?

Barcelona's civic ordinance branches out into two directions; on the one hand, it manages part of our lives, whereas on the other hand, it represses those practices that it has not foreseen. This is the basis of a war economy: the creation of new contents does not sustain new markets. Anything different to the established norm actually puts things into question, which is tantamount to a terrorist threat. In other terms, for the Barcelona City Council

the city's usage must constantly repeat the same thing every day, nothing new must appear on its streets, always the same skaters, always the same shows, always the same passers-by...

Consequently, how is it possible to generate new markets in a war economy if everyday has to be an exact repetition of the day before? New markets open up with increasingly sophisticated systems for the management of what is contained in the streets. Just as on the Internet... YouTube's success comes from managing videos; Flickr's success comes from managing photographs; Del.icio.us is successful because it manages links, etc. The aim is no longer to produce, but to locate contents as easily as possible, through labels and to capitalise on them. Hence, Barcelona City Council's interest in locating a series of events, theoretically banned by the civic ordinance, in specific areas: shows on the "ramblas", skaters around the MACBA, "musicians" on the underground... normalised spaces to ensure that the tourist and the "civic citizen" can enjoy the cosmopolitan and avant-garde Barcelona brand. Therefore, the Barcelona City Council is like a machine that tirelessly produces and manages spaces of normality. Any event that aims to politically question the civic ordinance making a different use of the street becomes the contents of a localised space, from that point onwards it will be "capitalised" if it is appropriate and repressed if it is not.

Considering that history collapsed in a moment (specifically since the fall of the Berlin Wall), if all possible times are occurring here and now, it is no longer possible to think of a tomorrow, or a great narrative that will "liberate" us, fleshing out a utopia. The world is as it is, and will never change again. In this case, there is no longer any point in placing our discourse in temporal terms, we must now think in cartographic terms, creating maps to observe what is happening to manage reality as best we can. Indeed, the World Wide Web embodies at that precise moment the first Internet revolution, allowing it to ex-

pand finally all around the globe. It is a network (a hypertext), which simultaneously allows us to capture time and multiply reality by representing it in a deferred manner. Every possible time is concentrated into one moment; all that is left is to manage them.

The second Internet revolution appears with the growing awareness of the need to manage the information produced and reproduced in it. That moment brought about the appearance of Flickr, YouTube, Del.icio.us, InnoCentive, Starlab, blogs in general... Content maps develop through folksonomy, rss and trackbacks, displacing, to some extent, Google's indexation by brute force. This cartography is only possible because of the "communities" that are behind these instruments, providing "labels" for this deferred reality. Terms such as crowdsourcing, long tail or the Cluetrain manifesto are those that, in the end, allow us to outline the operation of these communities.

Finally, the Internet's third revolution, which is now well on its way, is characterised by the ubiquity of access through mobile devices and wireless connections (WIFI, WIMAX, UMTS...) These advances together with RFID technology and new IP based video surveillance devices enable us to superimpose the atomic world with the Internet in one same dimension. It is at this point that Barcelona's civic ordinance takes on its fullest meaning; it is possible to manage citizens' lives because the necessary technology to construct a map of our lives already exists. This civic ordinance is the political consequence of a network society that has been forming for nearly fifteen years. The attempt to break the deferred reality established by the Civic Ordinance superimposes itself with an attempt to crush a form of the Internet conceived as a surveillance mechanism by certain corporations.

The logic of globalisation is a consequence of transmodernity. For many years the anti-globalisation discourse has told us that opening up global markets homogenises culture under the imperatives of "empire." This has turned out to be false. What is actually hap-

pening is that everyone maintains his or her difference, as each difference, regardless of how minoritarian it is, creates a market. This is the "long tail" theory. To be a communist, in this simple example, implies a market and its respective consumer goods, from the "merchandising" offered by the party to "fetish" countries in tourist terms (Cuba, Palestine, Chiapas...).

Therefore, markets are communities identified by a set of ideas to which they are faithful, and in the end, as is indicated in the "Cluetrain Manifesto," markets are conversations where each voice reproduces a community's discourse. Obviously, in order to create a community it is necessary to have an "inside" and an "outside", a friend and an enemy, identified by whether they belong, or not, with the ideas that the community is loyal to. Consequently, in order to belong to a community one must live with crossed surveillances within normalised space: surveillance of oneself by oneself in search for coherence with the defended ideas, as well as surveillance by oneself towards others, repressing all possible threats.

Finally, capitalism currently operates on the basis of opening of markets through the management of communities that because of their labels are located within a map that places them in relation with a series of consumer goods. The members of these communities are mobilised in all the aspects of their life around a series of ideas, producing and reproducing surveillance and establishing what we call Network Society. The voluntary mobilisation of individuals by ideas that are confused with life is known as, "crowdsourcing." The problem is that the reproduced differences are incapable of questioning this capitalist system because they do not generate crisis for the tool that enables us to manage and open up new markets: surveillance.

The requirement is to develop a project and execute it in Barcelona -to generate a voice and join the conversation. Barcelona is the great conversation that hosts thousands of smaller conversations within it. Barcelona is a

great conversation that shields and protects the thousands of conversations that it entraps by imposing the obvious. Barcelona is the Forum of Cultures. Nobody will question the need to seek peace, dialogue, a civic sense, in other words. A significant amount of citizens interiorise this brand staring at their neighbours searchingly to supervise that they too are a part of this concept of "what we all want", given that "we all move Barcelona". This is tantamount to saying you are either a friend of Barcelona or an enemy, either you join this great project or we will call the police.

This mobilisation of the citizenry around what is obvious, around life, which becomes confused with the idea of Barcelona, is the way of protecting the City Council's management of differences. The Council's goal is to "dynamise" the city, to sell it as a succulent product for tourism, as well as big events organisers, an avant-garde, social and civic product. To do so, every citizen, locked away in his or her normality, must reproduce the surveillance that helps to dynamise the management tools of the Barcelona brand. This process is not very different to that which certain corporations aim to carry out with the Internet.

## **II. SWARMING AS A PROCESS THAT QUESTIONS SURVEILLANCE AND FALSIFIES OUR VITAL MAP.**

How can we face our own normality, our own surveillance? How can we do so, without being set aside from the rest of the normal population?

Modernity is a debate regarding refining management styles for the contents, of the lives, of the few over the many. The step towards a management model based on the management of all by all, transmodernity, entails the sum of normalities. Although this seems to herald the triumph of differences, it does not question the root of modernity, the content management model, here and now, the surveillance of myself through my own normality, through my own vital map.

Our own vital map can be understood as being our "personality," but this concept is useless for us as it presupposes the acceptance of an inner being that has since been suppressed. We embody absolute exteriorisation. Therefore, our starting point is that our vital map is the one seen by "others," that is to say –action. All action requires limiting horizons in order to define it: inaction. Therefore, the character of a human being or a community will differ from others according to the limitations that prevent it from going "beyond" and enclose it in its normality: their manias/revulsion, fears/death and taboos/decencies.

9-11 is a model that apparently introduced crisis into all normalities, but almost immediately such crisis is politically normalised and thereby deactivated, this is the triumph of deferment, the swan song of distributed normality. Effective questioning can only happen from within, through falsifications, and swarming generating practices [1]. A swarming process represents the suspension of normality, like a Temporarily Autonomous Zone (TAZ) that enables the delocalisation of the subject, forcing this subject to obtain new coordinates on a false vital map that has simulated redefined simulation. We reach the crisis of transmodernity through the trafficking of falsified maps, only this process is capable of short-circuiting the management content model.

On the 13th of March 2004, swarming reached its peak, when masses of people gathered around the Partido Popular's headquarters suspecting that the normality that had represented to them was splitting at the seams. All swarming starts with a suspicion (that it had not been ETA, in this case) together with the simultaneous life experience of an alternative reality (that it had been Al Qaeda). The distributed networks that connect all individuals did the rest; the breach expands and grows deeper after each successive message. Information, as if it were a virus, infects every node until it overturns the event.

A swarming explodes the horizons of our vital map, displaces our manias/revulsion, fears/death, taboos/decencies and offers us, for an instant, a new set of boundaries, reinventing for those few moments the manner of relating them to the space, enabling the real existence of all that has been dreamt of. Coming back to the 13<sup>th</sup> of March, a budding civil society went out on to the streets to demand a chronology of events different to what the government of the time presented. Is a repetition of this same rebellious attitude possible right now? Of course not. Swarming requires some gestation.

Apparently, a swarming has no clear "origin" it operates in a similar fashion to rumours, a "snowball effect" that can be triggered by the smallest of tremors. Nevertheless, the tremor and the snowball have different characteristics and must not be confused. The tremor shakes, awakens suspicion; the snowball drags, generates and heightens parallel realities. They related, but not mixed up. If we had to seek an "origin" to a swarming we would have to track down who or what raised suspicion. The generation of a parallel reality has no ownership; it is the result of a shared imaginary between all the nodes, who define their nuances through constant communication.

We can find an example of the search for the "origin" of a swarming in the case of the video that showed how three hooded individuals robbed Spanish President Zapatero's seat in Parliament. As finally discovered, it was a programmed attempted swarming. What went wrong? Let us review the chain of events:

The video is uploaded on YouTube [2] on Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> of September and broadcast on Meneame on the Sunday[3], soon after it appears on the front-page and various blogs pick up on the news. By then, the collective intelligence of the so-called "social web" had already started to identify it as a fake, but the mass media outlets paid no heed to this, they omitted this detail in their struggle to capture the audience's warped attention and pre-

[INGLÉS]

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sented it as real. The first to do so was Telecinco in its "El buscador" programme; followed by La Sexta and Antena 3 in their news broadcasts. This news item reached the mass media's attention through a blog in Telecinco called "Al abordaje." [4] Finally, by Monday the news hit all the traditional media outlets, knowing that the video was a fake. Only then, did they start to ask the question, who did it? The cat is out of the bag, revealing that the authors are the same publicity agency responsible for the "Amo a Laura" spot. The author is tracked-down, labelled, the intention revealed, the swarming aborted. This attempted swarming fulfilled all the necessary prior conditions. On the one hand it broke the limits of the collective imaginary's perception of normality, enabling the possible taboo behind the fact that a group of people could enter Parliament and rob a seat undetected (the unbelievable becomes believable, the unthinkable is conceivable). On the other hand, it generated a simultaneous and alternative reality that called for taking action in the fight against poverty, demonstrating that "a handful" of anonymous individuals could baffle a government's security systems to call for "social justice." In fact, what failed was the frailty of truth, the frailty of anonymity that enables all persons to become a part of a message's action, simultaneously becoming a part of the message, given that the moment an emitter (the video's author) appears a receptor appears immediately. The hierarchical duality that establishes both extremes of the communication hinders the transformation of reality (and the subject within it) into the message, the mutation of reality into swarming. How many people would have tried to emulate the success of this chair heist if the video had not been identified as a mere stunt? This is what we are referring to when we say that in a swarming the subject becomes the message. The 13<sup>th</sup> of March offers another example, the notorious "Pásalo" text message; it was not people but a message that crossed all reality. Anonymity is an essential condition for the execution of

a process of this kind.

Moreover, although swarmings can help to break down normality they can also strengthen it. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2007, the following news item appeared in the media, picking-up on a news dispatch from the Spanish news agency EFE: "Two camp monitors arrested for committing sexual abuses, filming and distributing underage pornography".

What nobody picked-up on was the problem that could arise from the inclusion of one of the alleged paedophile's nicks ("Darzee") in the text. Soon after, the comments section of the free newspaper "20 minutos" [5] digital version, started to be flooded with entries calling for the publication of details of the alleged paedophiles, mostly by apparently irate mothers zealously protecting their offspring from vile perverts.

The story quickly made the front-page of "Meneame" [6] at which point one user decided to take justice in his own hands. A quick search for the term "Darzee" on Google produced a "boy scout" forum among the first results, where the administrator's nick coincided with that of the alleged paedophile. Without bothering to verify the sources, the aforementioned user started to propagate the story in the comments section of the "Meneame" and "20 minutos" Web page that the owner of this forum was the alleged paedophile. Furthermore, he included this person's email, in the hope that the Internet mob would lynch the perpetrator. Not content with this, the same user opened up a post on that forum accusing its administrator in front of the entire world, as well as opening up a debate enquiring whether to beat him up or not [7].

The forum administrator accused of being a paedophile by this user-vigilante soon finds himself in the following conundrum. He has nothing to do with the arrested and alleged paedophile, and yet is the target of innumerable insulting emails. Thus, he tries to clarify this confusion on his blog, announcing that he will take legal action against the user who

took justice into his own hands and tarnished his honour [8].

Obviously, he also sends the story to Meneame, who quickly reproduces it on its front-page, clarifying the unfortunate mistake and chastising the vigilante. [9] But sadly, it is already too late... the link between "Darzee" and the administrator has spread like wildfire and a photograph of him and his daughter starts to circulate, generating even greater anger in the comments page on "20 minutos" who turn him into a scapegoat. The repentant vigilante, aware of the mess he has created, and facing the threat of legal action from the accused's wife (a lawyer) [10], tries to amend the situation, begging for forgiveness in a blog specifically created for this purpose [11] which is sent to Meneame and published in its front-page a few hours later.[12] However, by then this was not enough, the moral damage done, an innocent bystander stigmatised by the mob (in a way that parallels the Dolores Vázquez case, except that in this latter case the lynch mob was formed by television and not by the Internet).

The blog posted by the lynched user clearly explain the conditions that brought about this situation:

"None of this mattered when an Internet user, who believed in his invisibility behind the screen, decided to publish my personal details on several Webs, bringing the lynching mob right to our doorstep."

"This person was merely trying to obtain some personal advantage by promoting this falsehood on a web in which your comments compete with others. In this context what better than a horrific story spiced up with an ounce of perverse imagination. We put the whole thing within the scouting world to gain that extra bit of deviousness, and the result is an unstoppable, and enormous, snowball of a lie."

These are the specific conditions for a successful swarming: anonymity, break in normality (for a boy scout to be a paedophile beggars belief) and the creation of a simultaneous and parallel reality with a message that can be manipulated at each node (the possibility of a public lynching by the angry mob, once the email address, photographs and forum are discovered in Google).

There is something horrific in this case. The surveillance of everyone by everyone, through the ubiquitous screens that we all possess, as extensions of our own bodies. What is "reality" becomes translucent, we can all, be seen by all, we are nothing more than a simulation, subjected to "political correctness" under the threat of a media lynching. We are what others can see... and if what they can see is what is on Google, then these are the dangers that are implicit in Internet's power.

### III. WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM ART NOWADAYS?

How can we tackle our own vital map from the perspective of art? How can we escape from the limits that trap us in our own normality, forcing us to be our own vigilantes? What if we consider the attempted swarming of the video of Zapatero's chair as art? What if artists had, at present, to suppress themselves once again, to give precedence to the message thus creating a constant ubiquitous performance wherein each of the Web's nodes could be a potential reproducer of itself?

In this sense, we must consider the interface beyond the screen's two dimensions. From this perspective, the artist becomes a generator of swarmings, distributed throughout the Web, which also affect the atomic world. In this world there would be no "I," no transcendental subjectivity, with decision-making capacities. There would only be a constant flow of masks, extravagant constructions, within a body serving as a temporarily autonomous zone, liable of being crossed by any message.

The field that we must explore lies in the combination of YouTube and Meneame, generating videos and messages that can fake the reality of the collective imaginary. More specifically, cell phone camera experiments are especially interesting given the capacity of using them at any moment to capture the apparent triviality of human life, that is to say, to displace any narrative whatsoever in favour of an image that has still not leaped into the imaginary. In other words, to question the imaginary through images, the crisis of surveillance generated by the community through images.

Therefore, movement is the language to explore in terms of cell phones with integrated cameras. Movement understood as the specific flow of temporarily autonomous zones, strategies that suspend the collective imaginary, and not in purely narrative terms. To occupy spaces where one does not expect to encounter cameras, to do away with what people expect to see.

It all ties in: the Pedro J. Ramírez video, the girl with the dog on "Sorpresa Sorpresa", the theft of Zapatero's seat in parliament, the kid in the Valencia underground, the girl with a smudge in her hair... all of these cases fulfil the essential condition, they are images that "did not have to be there". Furthermore, they brings to light the other side of the collective imaginary, the more horrible side of reality, the fears that we tuck under the blanket of normality and try not to confess our unhealthy attraction to (when we know nobody is looking). Internet has enabled all of this, viewing the dark side without being observed, freeing us from our own surveillance and knowing about the existence of other people that share our same interests. This is precisely the role of the artist in the Network Society, now known as "Web 2.0," to bring out the dark side to free it from itself.

#### NOTES

[1] As David de Ugarte explains on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2007: "we could define a cyberthrong (a civil swarming), as the culmination into street mobilisation of a significant number of people, following a process of social debate carried out by personal, electronic communication and publicity media, that break with the separation between cyberactivists and mobilised people."

[<http://www.deugarte.com/wiki/contextos/Ciberturba>]

[2]

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd1q\\_JR\\_B8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd1q_JR_B8)

[3] <http://meneame.net/story/le-roban-silla-zp-en-congreso>

[4] <http://www.blogs.telecinco.es/abor->

[daje/post/2006/10/01/el-robo-la-silla-zapatero](http://daje/post/2006/10/01/el-robo-la-silla-zapatero)

[5]

<http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/198160/0/pornografia/infantil/monitores/>

[6] <http://meneame.net/story/dos-detenidos-azotar-violar-ninos-distribuir-grabaciones-internet>

[7] <http://foro.larocadelconsejo.net/view-topic.php?t=591>

[8]

<http://blog.larocadelconsejo.net/2007/02/1a-falsa-imputacion-de-un-delito-si-es-un-delito/>

[9] <http://meneame.net/story/falsa-imputacion-delito-si-delito>

[10] <http://meneame.net/story/dos-detenidos-azotar-violar-ninos-distribuir-grabaciones-internet#comment-39>

[11]

<http://grancagada.blogspot.com/2007/02/una-gran-gran-liada.html>

[12] <http://meneame.net/story/explicacion-de-gran-gran-liada>



#### A FEW NOTES ON SOME OF THE FUNDACIÓN RODRÍGUEZ'S PROJECTS.

[FUNDACIÓN RODRÍGUEZ]  
WWW.FUNDACIONRDZ.COM

*Concepts such as "decentralisation" and "horizontality," pretend to unleash a critical analysis of our work environment, to explore new territories of social impact. We have always understood our projects as an extension of our creative work. Furthermore, they expand our intellectual capacities beyond the scope of our work as managers, coordinators, curators or however else, whatever they want to call it. It is far more interesting to learn and get to know people, than to continue exhibiting what everybody*