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DISCOURSE

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"The science of endophysics claims that the world as it is given to us is only a cut, an interface, a difference inside what is real (the whole). This has some powerful implications, including the possibility to change the whole world (i.e. the interface world)."

Otto E. Rössler, "the world as an accident" in the art of the accident, NAI Publisher, page.172

According to Otto Rössler, the world "is not the world in which we live" but the interface through which we perceive and act, and the electronic realm induced by computation and communication technologies are not "the world of data and information" in which we are brought to live because the real world "doesn't function anymore", but the interface to a set of symbolic and expressive "processes". Consequently, O. Rössler describes a system depending on the observer's position for whom the projected universe is perceived through one among many possible cuts, an interface. This relationship between the observer and the external world through an interface is a determining factor, since a microscopic change inside the observer's world can drastically modify the interface and thus the perception and conception, the cognitive and mental set, whereas the universe as a whole remains unchanged by this fact. It is a transmitted reality; dependent on the interfaces, as a condition of "assignment" that determines the models and concepts of reality. In fact, the medium determines and controls the scale and the forms of human associations and actions as well as their forms of representation. The interface thus affects the relationship between man and the external world, thereafter extending the notion of interface to the very human senses and spirit, the brain, from senses (perception) to senses (cognitive and mental set of signification).

"Media, by altering the environment, evoke in us ratios of sense perceptions. The extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act - the way we perceive the world. When these ratios change men change."

Marshal McLuhan, playboy interview March 1969
<http://www.mcluhanmedia.com/mmclpb01.html>

Mc Luhan's quotation underlines the close relationship between our sensitive apparatus and technological extensions of our body, our functions, which directly conditions our perception and behaviour, the psychic and social effects. In this manner technology constitutes the interface to the external world. Otto Rössler, like Marshall McLuhan ("the medium is the message"), starts thus from the fact that the interfaces determine our perception, conception and practice of space. In this manner new technologies are the confrontation between what man regards as being possible and what the machines present as feasible. Technologies thus permanently shifts the relation between the possible (potential) and the feasible (functional) and where the construct of the real constitutes such a "negotiation" between the potential and the functional, being constantly reformulated according to technological progresses. The cut, (assignment condition) can thus be modified by technology, augmenting cognition and perception through multiple potentialities. These considerations lead us to conceive the conditions of assignment in a broader form, such as Marcos Novak describes them through the concept of the screen display - "screening":

"We learn through a logic of selective reductions: projections, screens, interfaces are at the same time reductions and clarifications of worlds in the broad sense, with which we never have direct contact. Any reality, including self-knowledge, is only available through the mediation of interfaces and screens: the projection of senses, sensorial and hermeneutic filtrations, personal and political veillings. The very question of conception and representation itself is an incommensurable question of interfaces."

Marcos Novak

Novak classifies interfaces, screens, as filters acting as follows: the sensitive screen constituted by our nervous system, synaptic networks, filters and membranes, perceiving a small section of a broader spectrum, or a congruous caption of the rough data constituting our environment; the cognitive screen of our interest compared to world, building our piece of knowledge constrained by the filter and the magnifying glass of our temporary attention; the faciality screen (representation and self-knowledge), our face being screens which veil and unveil identity, the character and the expression with the double purpose to mask and become, protection and vision.

They include our skin and its echoes as the ontological set of our self (clothing, architectures, avatars...)—the psychological screens of intersubjective and social reflections, identity constructs and political representation. This assignment of significance transforms all objects into subjects of our conscience.

In a significant manner, this transformation erases the distinctions between physical artefacts and symbolic ones, "expressions". For instance, the distinction between a brick and its image becomes a question of perception and cognition, semantic inscriptions, rather than a pre-determined polarity between reality and simulation, reality versus virtuality. Consequently, Novak's classification extends the concept of the "assignment condition" from sensual perception to the shared and mental conscience, the conceptual one.

"We tend to believe that something is assumed to be real if there is a consensus about it. Reality becomes a problem of inter-subjectivity. You know, in Antiquity, the Unicorn was real because there was a consensus about its existence. It is no longer real because there is no longer any consensus concerning the Unicorn."

Vilém Flusser, interviewed by Miklos Peternak <http://www.c3.hu/events/97/flusser/participantstext/miklos-interview.html>

The extension of the assignment condition between the perceptible and conceptual to the consensual enables us to tackle the question of interface as a construction between what Gibson calls the "consensual hallucination" and the "cyborg", between the technological extension of our self, mental space and interconnection of individuals and the set of reality (consensual hallucination). Consequently, technologies are not only direct extensions of the body; they also influence our mental processes by influencing the symbolic (representation), psychic and social constructs.

"To say that the images we now produce are simulations does not make much sense. Concretely they affect us just like objects do. This is my constant, let's say, dialogue with Baudrillard. Baudrillard believes that we are living in a world where the simulations hide reality. I think this is a nonsensical proposition. I believe that we are in the middle of a world which is either concrete or abstract. And those images are just as concrete as is the table on which your machine is standing now. We do not have any ontological tool any longer to distinguish between a simulation and a non-simulation."

Vilém Flusser, interviewed by Miklos Peternak, <http://www.c3.hu/events/97/flusser/participantstext/miklos-interview.html>

The introduction of the ontology description, set, of our self is directly related to the question of interface described by modern phenomenology, conceptualising the real as "transmission" of information, and particularly on stimulation of our sensitive apparatus. It is the computation of stimulations - inputs which determines our concept of the real, an ontology based on communication processes and the comprehension of their respective synthesis in images, feelings... This process is operated by our nervous system inside which the electromagnetic signals are interpreted by the brain into images, odours, feelings... what we call perception is determined by this process. We do not perceive the world instantaneously but transform "inputs" into perception. Reality thus is a parameter of transmission and computation. Consequently computation and communication technologies are extensions of our body anticipating mental and cognitive processes; they are the essential interface of world settings, instruments of the construct of an active space-time.

" Through the sensory experiences, stimulation became one of the main vectors of interaction and active space".

Marshal McLuhan, playboy interview march 1969

The stimulations caused by information technologies are described in McLuhan's "hot and cool media". Introducing the stimulation of our nervous system as a parameter of the qualification of a media / technology determines their participative potential. McLuhan characterizes the "cool media" by low definition and intense participation (e.g.: a comic strip) and the "hot media" by a high definition and a low participation (a photography). This distinction is characterized by the implication of the user in the process of inFORMation. In the case of a medium with weak definition, the user takes part in the formalization process of the contents; he/she is thus stimulated, mentally and emotionally active.

While in the case of a highly definite medium the user becomes a reactive witness. The main interest in McLuhan's definition of hot and cool media lies in the qualification of interactivity according to stimulation, including these mental and cognitive processes. Qualifying stimulation in the case of the real defines the active space as a "cold media", built by interactive and participative interfaces. Digital technologies develop relational systems, determined by a high degree of interactivity and immersion, thus gathering the parameters of an active space. Creating an interface is thus programming human characteristics and behaviours inside the electronic space. The interaction requires a stimulation of the sensitive system - a sensory and mental experience. The interface, related to the assignment condition sets up a relational system in which the cyberspace takes the form of an experimental space, as much through mental processes as through the direct and sensual interaction with information.

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Founded in 1995 LAB[au], laboratory for architecture and urbanism, examines through theoretic works, research/writings and production/conception possible textual, graphical, spatial, forms of transcription of inFORMation processes, transmission, computation and editing, and thus outlines the spatial and semantic mutation provoked by technologies on the perception and conception of space. It is thus about a definition of architecture like codes / language drawn from concepts of communication and information sciences with that of architecture. "Metadesign" thus can be understood as a technology determinism that constitutes the main vector/thought in the concerns of networked, information-based societies in order to build up connectivity and effectiveness.

Website: <http://www.lab-au.com>

Full biography: <http://www.lab-au.com/bio2.htm>

LAB_files: <http://www.lab-au.com/files>

Contact: lab-au@lab-au.com

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