

Cyber emotional realities behind capitalism

Emotions are built on the basis of personal experiences and cultural associations. These are activated by receiving external stimuli that relate to past experiences. Therefore, the set of emotions that individuals receive and return to the city is itself the result of cultural diversity. Our purpose was to capture this emotional diversity in cities with the mere purpose of exploring and observing the layer of vital experiences that cannot be captured in an urban context that only gives permission and space to produce resources. During the course of the project, we wanted to make accessible to the inhabitants of Basel a virtual extension that would make it possible to create an emotional archive in which to listen and feel heard, focusing on emotions in order to give emotional well-being a relevant role in the development of cities.

For the purpose of mapping the unseen, we drew from Christian Nold's investigations on emotion maps. Nold assumes the premise that visualizing collective emotions results in a graph of cultural diversity and that alternative visual media are needed for these to be visualized and shared.¹ According to Nold, the sensation of objectivity that conventional maps provide is actually a distortion in itself, since it artificially excludes the observer from the scene, creating the false illusion that a place can be the same regardless of the individual that inhabits it.² Likewise, Massey Rose argues that this distanced look “*reinforces the dominant Western masculine subjectivity in all its fear of embodied attachment and in all its universal pretensions*”.³

Therefore, taking into account that urban environments cannot be reduced to a simple act of interpretation, but rather reflect our feelings and experiences, the visualization of urban environments cannot be reduced to passive listening either. Taking into account that the need to share emotions requires subjects with specific needs, it is necessary to have the interactivity component in the representation of emotional cartographies that reliably show urban environments. In this direction, Nold argues that interactivity is the only way that a map can be configured around particular interests, and that this dynamic constitutes the implementation of temporal subjectivities to the resulting visualization.⁴ Therefore, the appearance of interactivity and subjectivity as physical and theoretical starting points for the narration of spaces, allows diluting the power-knowledge relationships between user and creator, promoting the emergence of the product as a catalyst for exchange and conversation.

However, to understand the need to extol the presence of emotions in the city, we delve into the social structures that have nullified them in the first place. In this sense, we must analyze both capitalist and patriarchal dynamics. First of all, we can connect the concealment of feelings in our social system based on Tsing's revised concept of precarity. Tsing argues that we see precariousness in our society as an exception to what happens in a general way, and argues that

¹ Christian Nold, *Emotional Cartography: Technologies of the Self* (Creative Commons, 2009), 39.

² *Ibid*, 40.

³ Jon Bird, *Mapping the Futures* (Psychology Press, 1993), 74.

⁴ Nold, *Emotional Cartography*, 42.

precariousness, instead of being what "drops out" from the system, is the established condition of our time. Tsing defines precariousness as a consequence of vulnerability, which is caused by not having control of our environment or solid social connections that support us. Therefore, for Tsing, living in precariousness means not feeling safe in the world we inhabit, which is enhanced by the feeling of indetermination.⁵ Therefore, precariousness is a vital state to which we lead ourselves, driven by a capitalist ideology that places the center on the acquisition of achievements instead of bonding. In this way, attending to one's own emotions and those of others is an impediment to continuing in the production cycle and, due to the informative and chaotic nature of emotions, it is not presented as a reliable solution to escape uncertainty or provide a sense of control. Additionally, by nullifying the need for attachment in favor of the need to obtain achievements, there is no demand for alternative realities that constitute collective emotional networks.

On the other hand, since emotions are deeply gendered in society, and therefore stigmatized from a patriarchal perspective for being associated with feelings of vulnerability and care work, it is imperative to analyze the cancellation of emotions in cities from a feminist perspective. In this sense, the imaginary construction and development of cities is subject to the masculine vision as an extension of hyper masculinization in the urban and architectural sector. Hence, the values that precede the design of cities are more linked to demonstrations of power, monumentality, and prestige than with care, security and comfort.

Therefore, through feminist theory, Haraway argues that, just as salamanders regenerate their structure by losing members of their body, we must regenerate the social structure to recover the mutilated values of society,⁶ in this case emotions in cities. This new regenerated alternative reality is represented by a cyborg world,⁷ by a social conception that requires virtual prostheses that can reconstruct what was artificially mutilated from human behavior. According to Haraway, patriarchal structures will break down when we can create multiple, charged and complex networks of connections between individuals.⁸ Hence, we must reject the natural matrix of unity and totality generated by framing a construction as absolute.⁹ Consequently, virtual spaces operate as safe spaces for alternative communication and as enhancers of an emasculated emotional reality. An application that functions as a human extension for recording and emotional connection with other beings constitutes a regeneration of the member of femininity that has been excluded from the productized urban life.

Furthermore, this perspective bears similarities to Rossi Braidotti's posthumanist theory, which argues that in order to become posthuman we must combine social justice and community-based experiments involving bottom-up approaches. For these projects to emerge, they need to involve

⁵ Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 3-4.

⁶ Donna Jeanne Haraway and Donna Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto* (Victoria, British Columbia: Camas Books, 2018), 64.

⁷ *Ibid*, 20.

⁸ *Ibid*, 29.

⁹ *Ibid*, 25.

dense networks of interaction that contemplate the new technological paradigm.¹⁰ Consequently, a feminist posthuman perspective must question the modes of knowledge production, the basic reference units that define the human being and the development of new forms of ethical commitment.¹¹ On the other hand, the project is intrinsically related to transhumanism, which advocates the fusion of virtual networks with human consciousness to achieve the improvement of the unification between mind and computer.¹² This shift in the way of denaturing the human body to re-naturalize it, despite starting from a technological point of view, aims to counteract the techno-capitalist system.¹³

On the other hand, in order to materialize the virtual extension of emotions, it is necessary to generate a new visual language code that recodes the words that describe emotions. In this way, the image associated with the registered emotion aims to return to the user the same emotions that he or she delivers. Therefore, starting from a post-structuralist point of view, we assume that the language that describes emotions, being inscribed in a system that degrades them, restricts their meaning and significance. Thus, it must be recoded to occupy a new symbolic place in the collective consciousness. This recoding process translates emotions from words into multidimensional objects that change in time and space and are endowed with subjectivity both in their conformation and in their interpretation.

Therefore, we drew from the explorations of the psychologists, Glerean et al. that carried a study called “*Bodily Maps of Emotions*” where they visualized how the most common emotions are felt in the body, their intensity, their spreading capability, and whether the feelings they contain are expansive or retractive. Consequently, we transferred these parameters to every emotion that we registered so we could translate them into four-dimension orbs. Therefore, in order to keep the different sensitive criteria of emotions dependent on measurable variables, we divided the orbits into nucleus, emission and perimeter. Referring to the dimensions of intensity, expansion and felt duration of emotions. This dimensional differentiation allows us to broaden emotional analysis and consider issues such as the ratio between intensity and expansion, which corresponds to the nucleus and emission, or the speed of the particles that make up the expansion of emotions. In this way, emotions reflect physical behaviors of the human body that react to specific stimuli. Therefore, emotions such as calm or anxiety represent radically opposed flows of movement due to the variations in heart rate that are experienced with each of them.

In conclusion, the project intends to create subaltern realities to the established social systems, escaping the urban surveillance systems and creating safe spaces for the recovery of our emotional human needs in the spaces we inhabit daily.

¹⁰ Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Feminism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), 7.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 42.

¹² *Ibid*, 61.

¹³ *Ibid*, 150.

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