

## **Transindividual Urbanism**

### **Novel territories of digital participatory practice**

**Annarita Papeschi**

UCL, The Bartlett School of Architecture / Flow Architecture

E: [a.papeschi@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.papeschi@ucl.ac.uk)

Like an omen, the advent of ubiquitous technologies has carried the general expectation for the emergence of new forms of collective authorship. Drawing on cybernetic theory of communication and on the work of French philosopher Gilbert Simondon, the paper builds an ecological and materialist foundation to ideas of digital participation. It presents a discussion of Simondon's "L'individuation Psychique et Collective" (1958). Here, Simondon describes the individuation of the collective subject as an ontogenetic and metastatic process of psychological and affective events producing the Transindividual, thus offering a biological interpretation of the social process of becoming and a reconceptualization of ideas of knowledge and distribution of information.

By opening the digital participatory scholarship to ecological and post-humanist theory, the project intends to offer a better understanding of the complex nature of collective feedback, creating the potential for the affirmation of novel mediated urban narratives and aesthetics. These ideas are further explored through a design-research practice that uses participatory urban analysis and digital design speculations to explore the aesthetical, technological and cultural dimension of Transindividuality as a generative model for collective authorship.

The paper presents two projects - The HeartBit Walks and Affectual Infrastructures - designed as participatory events, respectively for the London Festival of Architecture 2018 and the E17 Art Trail 2019.

Developed as a psychogeographic mapping event in Hackney Wick (London), The HeartBit Walks builds on previous methods developed by artist Christian Nold, investigating the use of biometric sensing (Galvanic Skin Response) and live data-visualisations for urban analysis. GSR information was gathered during short group walks and visualised during in-situ group discussions as situated dynamic animations, exploring the modes of reconfiguration of group knowledge through the experiential act of walking. The results are collected in a rich visual index that by rendering the differently-able perspectives with granular definition offers a multi-scalar photography of the pedestrian mobility issues in the area.



*Photography: Matthew Booth*

For the Affectual Infrastructures project, six environmental activists were involved in an experiment of situated GSR data collection. Combined sound and GSR registrations took place at key locations scattered in East London. The resulting datasets inform a spatial installation that, working as an adaptive network, releases the sonic recordings and materialises for the public the layered experiences of the activists. Drawing on Rheingold's notion of virtual community, the installation attempts the detection of common sonic, spatial and emotional connections through the observation of data patterns at group level, exploring the metastatic formation of novel collective environmental awareness and the production of spatial configurations through multi-objective evaluation methods.

The production of urban space has for long time now looked at the sensing and measuring of environmental phenomena to create responsive developmental strategies. While fascinating for the depth of the knowledge created, this perspective tends to ascribe human subjectivity to an isolated and sanitised position. With an ecological angle that places humans and their living and non-living co-species as the network of actors that collaboratively addresses the production of space, Transindividual Urbanism proposes biometric sensing as a tool for the systematic deconstruction of the human agency and the reimagination of platforms for group knowledge creation with the potential of radically reshape the processes through which culture and places connect locally.

Keywords: Biometric Sensing, Citizen Science, Collective Authorship, Participatory Design, Simondon

### **Short bio**

Annarita Papeschi is a practising architect (ARB, RIBA) and educator, with a Laurea in Architettura from the Università degli Studi di Firenze and a MArch in Architecture and Urbanism from the Architectural Association School of Architecture. She was previously a Lead Architect at Zaha Hadid Architects and co-founded in 2013 FLOW Architecture. Currently, she is at Syracuse University London as Adjunct Professor and at The Bartlett School of Architecture as Urban Design MArch Theory Tutor.