



Sensing anthropology: A critical review of the sensorial turn in anthropology

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to present the existing epistemological ties between the *sensorial turn* in anthropology and collaborative forms of production of knowledge in the framework of shared anthropology. From this perspective, the major debates in anthropology regarding the senses and emotions and their epistemological implications will be critically analyzed. The focus firstly lies on questioning those approaches that approach the senses and the body as another traditional subject for anthropological studies. Secondly, on exploring the existing misconceptions in the sensory approach. Thirdly, on claiming that the most valid form of exploring and presenting the state of experience is through integrating collaborative engagement of the subject, optimally through the framework of shared anthropology. Lastly, the potentials and advantages of audio-visual media and art in general as the medium of (re)presentation will be explored.

Keywords: shared anthropology, sensorial turn, emotions, senses

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INTRODUCTION

12 years ago, I visited an ethnology department presenting my PhD proposal to a potential supervisor. During the presentation, I explained the relation between my work and the ‘crisis of representation’ in anthropology. The first reaction I received was:

“Crisis of representation?’ ... It was 20 years ago! I thought we were over it!!”

Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography (1986), edited by James Clifford and George Marcus, has been one of the most influential texts in anthropology. The book highlights several problematic aspects within the discipline: It raises questions regarding the colonialist character of ethnography and anthropology, unequal power relationships in fieldwork, self-reflexivity of the research process and its reflection in representation. It also criticizes the positivistic gaze on ‘others’ in search of objective reality. Hence, *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* chronicles the critical elements that have highlighted the so-called “crisis of representation” in anthropology ever since its release. Advocates have called for a major shift in the discipline’s methods of knowledge creation and mediation. Applying the theoretical tools derived from post-structuralism and literary criticism, the authors in the volume most prominently problematized the methods of text-production. The volume has highlighted, as Pink (2009) articulates,

“[t]he constructedness of ethnographic texts, the importance of attending to the process by which ethnographic knowledge is produced and the need to bring the local voices into academic representations” (p. 14).

Despite all the new inspirations that these critics injected into the discipline, they did not find themselves immune to criticisms imposed by other scholars who expressed their dissatisfaction with its ‘logocentric’ character, giving privilege to language and leaving out the body, its senses, emotional or affective states, and the role they play in processes of experience and perception. Some of these aspects have for a long time been ignored in most anthropological bodies of works and theories, as Crawford (2010) puts it:

“The significance of the ‘body’ has, alongside questions of aesthetics, throughout most of the history of anthropology in its modern sense, been neglected or, rather, regarded as subject matters belonging to other academic disciplines, such as psychology, or to the domains of art” (p. 23).

In contrast, in the last two decades of the previous century several anthropologists have published numerous publications emphasizing the importance of an increased attention to sensory experiences, which has resulted in a growing body of work on the anthropology of the senses (Howes, 1991; Ingold, 2000; Pink, 2009). However, Schneider and Wright (2010) problematize that these works,

“with few exceptions, have remained studies of the role of senses in various cultural settings and have sadly not been read for their implications for anthropological methodologies and strategies of representation and exhibition” (p. 6).

Scholars such as Paul Stoller, David Howes, Steven Feld, Keith Basso, and Nadia Seremetakis were

“involved [in] the exploration of both the sensory experiences and classification systems of ‘others’ and of the ethnographer” (Pink, 2009, p. 11).

ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE SENSES: A KEY DEBATE

Howes (1991), alongside Classen (1993), has developed a project of cross-cultural comparison investigating the diversity of the patterns of sense experience in different cultures based on the attribution of meaning to the modalities of perception. Howes (1991) and Classen (1993) tend to identify

“the influence such variations have on forms of social organization, conceptions of self and cosmos, the regulation of the emotions, and other domains of cultural expression” (p. 3).

Howes (2010) criticizes the phenomenological approaches to the study of the senses, as he believes it has a tendency towards

“universalizing the subjective sensations of individuals [therefore] it ignores the extent to which perception is a ‘cultural construct’ and therefore has little to offer concerning the politics of perception” (p. 335).

Hence, Howes (2011b) calls for moving beyond the phenomenology of perception, which simplistically considers the

“existential grounding in one world”

as a basis for claiming that we share the same experience, which enables us to

“an understanding of perception, which allows for the cultivation of ‘ways of sensing the world’” (p. 320).

By stating that one of the principles of the cultural study of the senses is to

“attend and to respect indigenous experiences and understandings of perceptions” (ibid),

he demonstrates his reluctance to the claim that anthropologists should consider neurology as the essential understanding of sensory perception and experience. As this approach disregards or downgrades indigenous beliefs about perception, he admits that:

“... dialogue between anthropologists and neurologists can be informative for both sides (indeed, anthropologists might be able to tell neurologists something about how culture tunes the neurons), it is important to keep in mind that neuroscience is itself a product of culture in its particular research aims, methods and interpretations, and therefore cannot provide an

a-cultural, a-historical paradigm of understanding cultural phenomena” (Howes, 2010, p. 335).

In the process of his cross-cultural projects, Howes (2011a) refers to a cultural psychiatrist, Laurence Kirmayer, who states that mind and experience in recent cognitive neuroscience are considered, as phenomena,

“not confined to the brain but also through body and the environment, most crucially, through a social world that is culturally constructed” (p. 166).

Subsequently, and in his effort to build a “cross-cultural handbook of multisensory process”, a culturally patterned investigation of the sensory processes is required to draw

“... an inventory of the range of cultural practices and technologies that generate different sensory combinations across different cultures and historical periods” (ibid).

Therefore, to depict the different synesthetic combinations across different cultures, Howes (2010) uses as evidence the metaphors and symbolic terms different people use in their language. As one speaks of ‘hearing smell’ in many Melanesian languages, Howes (2010) states, that is the sign of auditory-olfactory synesthesia

“since most communication occurs ... face-to-face ... and odoriferous substances ... are used to augment the power of a person’s presence and words” (ibid).

In his book *The perception of the environment* (2000), Tim Ingold—based on Merleau-Ponty’s (1964) philosophy of perception and the ecological psychology developed by Gibson—has a critical view of Howes’ program of comparison of the varying hierarchies or sensory orders in different cultures. Ingold (2000) believes this approach situates the sensory modalities in ‘disembodied culture’ and it is at odds with the anthropology that conceives its knowledge as an embodied practice. In the same way, Ingold (2000) also rejects the work of Classen (1993), who, in her book *Worlds of senses*, insists that ‘sensory models’ are ‘culturally models’ and ‘sensory values’ are ‘culturally values’, which are shaped up by the expressive ways the sensory experiences have been selected metaphorically to stand for those values and models. These are what she considers as the cultural ‘shaping’ or ‘conditioning’ of perception. Denouncing Classen (1993) and Howes’ (2010) objectification of the bodily experiences and their conversion into metaphorical resources for the expression of extra-somatic, cultural values, Ingold (2000) states that singling out the sensory modalities as vehicles for symbolic elaboration, this does not mean that people will see, hear or touch any differently in consequence (p. 283). He therefore concludes that these approach

“reduces the body to a locus of objectified and enumerable sense, whose one and only role is to carry the semantic load projected onto them by a collective, supersensory subject—namely society—and whose balance or ratio may be calculated according to the load borne by each” (ibid, p. 283-284).

Ingold (2000) furthermore stresses that he finds that the representational theory of knowledge is at the heart of this approach and adds:

"The theory rests on a fundamental distinction between physical and cultural dimensions of perception, the former having to do with the registration of sensations by the body and the brain, the latter with the construction of representations in the mind" (ibid, p. 282-283).

He believes accordingly that project of cross-cultural comparisons of Classen (1993) and Howes (2010), and similar anthropologists, are rather committed to the Cartesian dualism. They are more concerned with the way sensory experiences are ordered and how

"meanings and understandings of the world gained through perceptual activity are 'expressed symbolically' by way of metaphors drawn from one or another domain of sensory experience" (ibid, p. 283).

As a result, the diversity and varieties of these experiences and bodily engagement with their life world have been left behind. This is how he proposes an anthropology of the senses should primarily be concerned with, how these diverse lived experiences of individuals affect and influence their metaphysics and the way they shape our perception of the world around us. Ingold (2000) believes that Howes' (2010) criticism of phenomenology is based on the premise that it prevents the possibility of converting indigenous knowledge and understandings into comparative analysis. By refuting Howes' (2010) comments in accusing phenomenology for universalizing the subjective sensations of individuals, Ingold (2000) states that all human beings, as living organisms, perceive the world by way of sensory engagement in one way or another, and this is what he calls the "universality of human corporeal experience". But this does not imply that these experiences are the same everywhere, because (Ingold, 2000):

"... thinking, perceiving, remembering, and learning have to be studied within the ecological contexts of people's interrelations with their environments ... [the] mind and its properties are not given in advance of the individual's entry into the social world, but rather fashioned through a lifelong history of involvement in relationship with others, ... and it is through the activities of the embodied mind-or enminded body-that social relationships are formed and reformed" (p. 171).

To enrich the perspective on this critical review on the anthropology of the senses, we can refer to the works of Jackson (2013), who has developed his anthropological body of work as 'existential anthropology', based on a phenomenological approach to 'body praxis', which tends to

"avoid naïve subjectivism by showing how human experience is grounded in bodily movement within a social and material environment" (p. 56-57).

He states that

"... our humanity is at once shared and singular. This paradox of plurality means that we both identify with others and differentiate ourselves from them ... the particular person cannot be 'disappeared' into a discursive category without violence ... Accordingly, human beings seek individuation and autonomy as much as they seek union and connection with others" (ibid).

In what he calls

"the subjugation of the bodily to the semantic",

Jackson (2013) criticizes the

'intellectualist tendency' in asserting that "the physical channel supports and agrees with spoken one" (ibid, p. 55).

Thereby, he asserts the body's pre-lingual process of perception and mediation that, consequently, does not necessarily need to be 'intentional' in the linguistic sense and therefore

"an understanding of a body movement does not invariably depend on an elucidation of what movement stands for" (ibid).

The second problem, Jackson (2013) argues, is reducing body to the

"status of a sign as a 'medium of expression or communication' an object of purely mental operations, a 'thing' onto which social patterns are projected" (ibid, p. 55-56).

As a result, and in the same way that Ingold (2000) proposes, this leads us to the Cartesian dualism. Also,

"through a reification of the unknown subject, which is made synonymous with 'society' or 'the social body' society is made to assume the active role of governing, utilizing, and charging with the significance the physical bodies of individuals" (ibid).

Furthermore, Jackson (2013) refers to Starobinsky (1982) who stated that

"[i]t was thus not the body that imposed its law on the mind. It was society that, through the intermediary of language, took the commands of the mind and imposed its law on the body" (Starobinsky, 1982 in Jackson, 2013, p. 291).

These views, Jackson (2013) states, finally lead us to the third problem, which leaves the body as a

"neutral and ideographic means of embodying ideas or it is dismembered so that the symbolic value of its various parts in indigenous discourse can be enumerated" (p. 56).

According to Jackson (2013), this is the consequence of treating the body in various anthropological studies as

"passive and static", derived from "mechanical rules or innate programming" (ibid).

He rather calls for further attention to the domain of 'bodily existence' within which the studies can focus on the dynamics of lively bodily interaction and exchanges.

SENSORY ANTHROPOLOGY: A CRITICAL REVIEW

As a point of departure from an anthropology of the senses, Pink (2010) introduced the term *sensory anthropology*, supporting the critical perspectives towards

“traditional forms of cross-cultural comparison” and explaining that sensory anthropology “implies a re-thought anthropology, informed by theories of sensory perception, rather than a sub-discipline exclusively or empirically about the senses” (p. 331).

The advocates of sensory anthropology argue about the interconnectedness of the senses that are originated in one

“organism, as the process of embodiment is one and the same as the development of that organism in its environment” (Ingold, 2000, p. 170).

To strengthen this argument, Pink (2009) draws on two reports from neurobiologists Shimojo and Shams (2001), who state that the

“cross-modal interactions are the rule and not the exception in perceptions” (in Pink, 2009, p. 28).

To expand this argument Pink (2009) refers to another study by Newell and Shams (2007), which indicates that

“[o]ur phenomenological experience is not of disjointed sensory sensations but is instead of a coherent multisensory world, where sounds, smells, tastes, lights and touches amalgamate. What we perceive or where we perceive it to be located in space is a product of inputs from different sensory modalities that combine, substitute, or integrate. ... [furthermore] these inputs are further modulated by learning and by more cognitive or top-down effects including previous knowledge, attention, and the task at hand” (qtd in Pink, 2009, p. 28).

Although this argument seems to be not so far away from Laurence Kirmayer’s statements mentioned earlier and referred to by Howes above, Pink (2009) concludes that the interconnectedness of the senses offers us the capability of sense making, and how similar meanings may be expressed in different contexts. Furthermore, she underscores the appreciation that the sensory ethnographer should have towards the

“... cultural and–biographical–pecificity of the sensory meanings and modalities people call on and sets of discourse through which they mobilize embodied ways of knowing in social contexts. ... But at the same time she stresses that culture itself is not fixed. Rather human beings are continuously and actively involved in the processes through which not only culture, but also the total environments in which they live are constituted, experienced, and changed continually over time” (Newell & Shams 2007, in Pink, 2009, p. 28).

Based on a discussion of the work of different anthropologists, Pink (2009) diverges to some extent from the conventional classic methods of ethnography, grounded in data collection methods, participant observation and other related technical strategies. Proposing the term sensory ethnography, she refers to the tendency to engage with the field through the interactively embodied and sensory experience but also to be reflexive

“to conceptualize their meanings theoretically and to seek ways to communicate the relatedness of experiential and intellectual meanings to others” (Pink, 2009, p. 26).

Therefore, one can say that the necessity of thinking *about*, and *through* the body in anthropology, which leads us to reconceptualize the relationship between human individual and sociocultural structure/convention, is at stake. In this sense, the body plays a central role in the process of perception and is considered the site of knowledge and meaning making. This time it is not only the body of the subject under study, but also the anthropologist’s body that is acknowledged as the medium and means to experience making sense and meaning of other peoples’ life experiences.

I support the major debates of embodiment that reject the mind-body dualism and emphasize the importance of the body as an intelligent organism that is conscious and creative. It carries and communicates meanings through its own grammar and organic systems. Nonetheless, despite the innovative methods proposed and implemented in sensory ethnography, there are still some unresolved questions left to these approaches, which may sound similar to the criticisms that were expressed on the heyday of the crisis of representation. If the questions of anthropology about senses and emotions stay limited to what Howes called ‘the politics of perception’ or the collective representation in different cultures, discussed earlier, then it would lead us to narrow down the research domain into the definitions that different people use as an interpretation of sensory and emotional experiences, as cultural categories, and keep it in the realm of discourse. This seems indeed like how Howes himself criticized the *Writing culture* debates because of their verbo-centric character. Jackson (2013) critically describes this condition in an eloquent and comprehensive manner:

“Anthropology also sought definition in delimitation. In the same way that societies protect their identities and territories by excluding persons and proclivities that are perceived as threats, so discursive regimes seek definition by discounting experiences that allegedly lie outside their purview. In the establishment of anthropology as a science of the social or the cultural, entire domains of human experience were occluded or assigned to other disciplines, most notably the lived body, the life of the senses, ethics and the imagination, the emotions, materiality and technology. Subjectivity was conflated with roles, rules, routines, and rituals. Individual variations were seen as deviations from the norm. Contingency was played down. Collective representations determined the real. Experience was deduced from creeds, charters, and cosmologies” (p. 3-4).

But if we want to get an insight into the more diverse layers of experience, how can we move beyond these limitations as well as the problematic and critical aspects of the process of knowledge making: interpretation and/or representation? How and to what extent (if possible at all) could anthropologists gain access to the embodied knowledge and make sense of the experience of the others, in the context of their lifeworld and subsequently turn this (yet to be discovered) knowledge into a form of representation?

What is certainly true is that acknowledging the theory of embodiment does not give us easier access and methods to understanding others. In contrast, it stresses how complicated and hard to accomplish this mission (if ever possible) is. The fact that we as researchers tend to experience the daily practice of others’ lives while negotiating it with them to make the subsequent interpretation and

conceptualization in the process of meaning making, is helpful. It can be considered as a step forward compared to what has been traditionally practiced in fieldwork (such as the classical methods of ethnography). Nevertheless, because of the varieties of horizons and contexts of lives, what is experienced by the researcher in the field and in the framework of 'sensory ethnography,' still is definitely a different experience. Therefore, the meanings that it produces and tries to convey to other people do not necessarily reflect what the subject experiences and means, as Merleau-Ponty (1964) states,

"[h]ow can we understand someone else without sacrificing him to our logic or it to him" (p. 115).

Indeed, through long-term involvement and experiencing other people's life practices in the context of their intersubjective lifeworld, one may reach some extent and level of understanding of his or her life's conditions. However, this after all shows a significant difference with conditions and qualities of engagement with the life that another person lives in, or in Ingold's (2000) term, with their "dwelling perspective," (p. 154), which is an inescapable condition of existence that one "organism-person" immerses in and inhabits. This is the characteristic, which makes the difference; the 'inescapability', which forms and gives direction to the process of experiencing life with its own particular - sensorial, emotional, and rational-quality. Thus, I argue that a researcher-anthropologist, artist, educator-who tends to experience people's lives with embodied engagement-has fewer or no similar circumstances of life condition. This prevents them from experiencing the condition of inescapability as a fundamental characteristic of this dwelling perspective and imposes major constraints in the process of sense and meaning making from the experience.

One may argue that the experiential part of the research is supposed to be supported and complemented by communication and negotiation with the subjects who are participating in research, and through this, there are better chances of grasping the meaning. However, the dilemma remains in how these processes of negotiation occur, by whom and under which formats. How would the outcome be induced, interpreted, and mediated or represented to the people who are about to consume this knowledge? Several anthropologists have implemented experimental methods and strategies, such as collaboration with other scholars from other related disciplines and or with artists (more information in Schneider & Wright, 2010). Much research is also being done on participation or collaboration with the subjects themselves (Ginsburg, 1995; Rouch, 2003). These methods, considered as 'traditional', especially in field of visual anthropology. But it is striking that with very few exceptions, it is researcher with his/her colleagues-e.g., another 'professional' collaborator from other disciplines-who eventually becomes the author of 'created knowledge' on the identified 'truth' and 'reality', justifying them into theories and subsequently turning them into any form of discourse and representation.

SHARED ANTHROPOLOGY: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Here, with a critical view on these methods, I would like to present the experimental approach I have been developing in recent years inspired by the notion of 'shared anthropology', introduced by Rouch (2003), to find my point of departure from these predicaments and their political and ethical consequences. The late filmmaker and

anthropologist Rouch (2003) developed the concept of shared anthropology in the 1950s, to give voice to the people who were the voiceless subjects of study. Rouch (2003) made several films in collaboration with his subjects, mainly about the stories they wanted to be made. To respect their authorship, he received their feedback on the edited version of the films and applied the changes accordingly. Rouch (2003) chose film as his medium, as it was the only way, he believed, that he could show his subjects the way he saw them - since obviously they were not able to read and use the 'scientific' written texts, which were being produced almost solely for academic consumption. Through this, they were also able to reflect and play a role in the process of creation and production and furthermore, it provided work in hand that could be useful for them and other non-academics as well. His wish was to see the people who were always the Westerner's subjects of study, through the advent of new technology-namely video cameras-being capable of representing themselves in way they saw it themselves.

In 2011, I initiated a project exploring what 'home' might mean to us in the transcultural life condition based on my personal dilemma about this concept and the role it plays in human life, at both personal and emotional, as well as social and political levels. The project has been inspired by Rouch's (2003) method of collaboration and authorship, with the problematic issues mentioned earlier in the debates related to the theories of embodiment and centrality of the body in perceiving life. Yet the aim was to develop a newer approach to the concept of shared anthropology. I therefore argue, that to make sense of experiences people make in their lives, each individual has the best access to those experiences. Hence, they are the most eligible person to interpret and express those states of being. I also argue that in any form of knowledge production, after all, what a researcher as well as the consumer of the product (audience, reader, viewer, etc.) does is to interpret the lives of the people who have been the subject of the study. Therefore, it is politically and ethically more relevant to attempt to project or manifest the interpretation of the collaborators themselves rather than use the information and 'data' gathered from them as the raw material for the interpretation by the researcher. Furthermore, to establish a research project and following the idea of shared anthropology, I question whether anthropological research is thought of as a conscious and intentional process of investigation in the quest for understanding aspects of life, or as I argue, why the subjects of study should not be conscious and aware of this process and be able to reflect on it accordingly. Therefore, in building up a long-term communication on various occasions, locations and conditions, each participant was exercising auto-ethnography that is "both process and product" (Rutten, 2016, p. 300). I find the concept and the idea behind this approach to ethnography very well-articulated by Jackson (2013), who argues:

"Ethnographic understanding simply means that one may glimpse oneself as one might be or might have been under other circumstances and come to the realization the knowledge and identity are emergent properties of the unstable relationship between self and other, here and there, now and then and not fixed and final truths that one has been privileged to possess by virtue of living in one particular society at one particular moment in history" (p. 10).

To proceed with this process, which can be considered as an intersubjective simulation of the lifeworld, each collaborator as well as myself at some point, reached a level in which to express ourselves in

different ways. Subsequently, each of us managed to realize these experiences in an audio-visual form—through a mutual interactive process. I intended to create room for each collaborator to be the authors of their own part. Each person created the idea of how to express him/herself as far as they were able to, but nevertheless, each was present and had the final word on the process of realization and editing his or her own ideas. The intention was to have them, rather than me myself, express and interpret their own experience of ‘Home’ and subsequently what it meant to each of them - and myself. Eventually these works altogether became one film called ‘Parallax’ (Omrani, 2011). A collage of diverse self-reflections and interpretations about ‘home’; a ‘collective auto-ethnography’.

Taking part in the process of investigation as a collaborator and expressing the personal experience of the subject of study by the anthropologist—here I mean, rather than studying other people, I see the urge in studying *with* them—plays a vital role in preserving a more integral reflection on the inter-subjectivity, diversity and variety of extrapolations from the created and experienced situation. Also, self-reflexivity, which is considered one of the essential elements of modern anthropology, appears not only to reveal the intention and political aspects of the work more transparently to the audience, but also in being reflexive towards the participants, it modifies and regulates the hierarchical positions among those involved in the project and leads us to a more democratic relationship and knowledge production.

Due to the nature of the subject of our investigation, several sensorial and emotional connotations had been evoked for each collaborator at various moments and levels. Thus, the affective circumstances of these experiences were clearly active and effective in the process of sense-making and conceptualization that each of us could experience. Those which occurred either during moments of sharing and communicating their feelings and thoughts, or when tracing them back inside the body and most notably, in memories. One could also consider it as the imagination of memories, as they indeed do not appear only as images and visual patterns, but rather as multi-sensorial re-emergence of recalled experiences. Moments of nostalgia, insecurity, hope and desire ... Most remarkably the time that some of us, in the middle of the process, noticed that what was discovered was a different feeling and perception of ‘home’ than what had been pre-supposed. This eventually led to a completely different direction in conceptualization and interpretation expressed on the subject by that person.

It is worth mentioning that what I consider affect in this process is the intensity, as something that occurs in, and is experienced by the body, because of a somatic interpretation of circumstances. This is unlike the ideas that separate affects and emotions—considering the latter as the secondary, conscious, and a mental reduction and interpretation of the former that is an intensity, which is preconscious and pre-individual. Thus, what I mean by affective circumstances here is, the process of “embodied meaning-making” (Wetherell, 2012). This process of embodied perception functions arbitrarily, that is not necessarily always an act with self-aware intentionality during the moments of occurrence involving unconscious or conscious cognition—namely memory—because of seamless and intertwined characteristics of the brain/body activity as one organism. Thus, our experience and perceptions contain biological and natural elements as well as social impacts. But it is certainly not yet possible to divide or measure the role that visceral experiences play versus cognitive parts, as well as personal versus socio/cultural impacts as Reddy’s (2001) states that

“it has become difficult to sustain the distinction between thought and affect ... [as] no-one has yet found a way to probe or measure an emotion directly” (p. 31).

Langer (1954) metaphorically states in her book ‘*Philosophy in a new key*’ diverging from the logicians and linguists who refuse to go beyond the limits of discursive language that human thoughts at best are:

“... a tiny, grammar-bound island, in the midst of a sea of feeling ... The island has a periphery, perhaps, of mud-factual and hypothetical concepts broken down by emotional tides into the ‘material mode,’ a mixture of meaning and nonsense. Most of us live the better part of our lives on this mudflat” (p. 70-71).

Here the question will be then, how to deal with this embodied sensorial, and at the same time, cognitive and semantic amalgam of knowledge. Is it possible to transmit the experience sensorially through abstract scientific text? Which is the most dominant method of representation in human studies. Can we disregard other mediums because of their lack of potentiality to convey arguments and theories, in search of the facts and truths? Is the crisis of representation really over?

In his *Truth and method*, Gadamer (1975) argues that there are truths, which essentially go beyond the knowledge claimed to be grasped by the methodology of human science, which has a tendency towards

“establishing similarities, regularities, and conformities to law, which would make it possible to predict individual phenomena and processes” (p. 3).

“The fact that through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way constitutes the philosophic importance of art, which asserts itself against all attempts to rationalize it away. Hence, together with the experience of philosophy, the experience of art is the most insistent admonition to scientific consciousness to acknowledge its own limits” (ibid, xxii).

CONCLUSIONS

I have adopted the same line as the ones who believe that we should consider and apply the potentiality that audio-visual mediums and in general works of art offer. Despite the strong reluctance of many academics in disregarding the attempts to apply different experimental approaches to create, collect, and present truths and knowledge in its contingent, hybrid and temporary quality. Through this, there will be attempts to communicate bodily and to leave room for audiences to experience, by means of their own body with its own unique characteristics, limits, and capabilities to make sense and meaning - not universal but transcultural - of what has been shared with them. Rather than solely hypothesizing, theorizing, and generalizing peoples’ lives, which leads to a disregard for individuality, hybridity, and the dynamic aspect of the lives they experience. The kind of works of art that are my concern here, are the ones that privilege the aesthetics, primarily as the “perfection of sensation” (Howes, 2011a, p. 167), and only secondarily and consequently, consider their facets of beauty. In other words, by mastering the creation of beauty, the latter complementary assists the evocation of the former.

The mediums applied in art, especially films or in general multimedia, contain great potential. Inviting and enabling the audience not simply to 'translate' what has been watched and heard, but rather, through moving images and sounds - with their particular conceptions of time and space (Deleuze, 1986), and with the 'haptic' (Marks, 2000) and sensorial quality that can be evoked—experience corporeal knowledge and meaning that MacDougall (2005) states, are:

“concerned with the moment at which these meanings emerge from experience before they become separate from physical encounter. At that point thought is still undifferentiated and bound up with matter and feeling in a complex relation that is often lost in abstraction ... [but at the same time] meaning when we force it on things, can also blind us, causing us to see only what we expect to see or distancing us from seeing very much at all” (p. 1).

It is important though to be cautious and critical of what MacDougall (2005) warns about as well, in that

“... the way we use words all too often becomes a mistake recipe for how to make, use, and understand [visual image one could say in communication in general] by treating images—in painting, photographs, and films—as a product of language, or even a language in themselves, we ally them to a concept of thought that neglects many of the ways in which they create our knowledge” (p. 1).

The shared anthropology I propose, rather than being a methodology, is more an attitude: to experiment and experience life with other people with the hope for a democratization of knowledge that is shared and experienced by the public rather than 'homing' in the bookshelves of libraries.

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