

BLIND AND FAKE – EXPLORING THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE EXPANDED BOOK

MARIA HELLSTRÖM REIMER
MALMÖ UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF ARTS AND
COMMUNICATION, SWEDEN
MARIA.HELLSTROM.REIMER@MAH.SE

MILICA LAPČEVIĆ
BELGRADE, SERBIA
XTENDED.MIND@GMAIL.COM

LUCA SIMEONE
SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY, ROME, ITALY
ME@LUCA.SIMEONE.NAME

ABSTRACT

It seems like we are now rapidly leaving the galaxy of printed matter. As screen-based media is making its entry into our everyday lives, it is pushing aside an object – the book - that has structured our forms of being together for almost six hundred years. This shift is not absolute but successive, and it raises a lot of questions. What kind of mediating practices are developing beyond printed media? And how do these practices structure and organize common spaces and publicities? Even though today, we are far into the electronic age, in a way we are still suspended in between modern individualized life and new, more floating societal formations. Therefore, rather than presupposing the disappearance of the book, this paper approaches the idea of the book as an expanded and inter-medial “boundary object” (Star and Griesemer 1989). In this respect, the point of departure is the expanded book project *Roma Europa Fake Factory* (REFF) (Henderson *et. al.*

2010) – a platform for global discussion and exchange concerning the management and governance of new public spheres in the electronic age. Playing out the visual authority of the printed text against the flickering of the net through the use of inter-mediating QR codes (Quick Response Codes) and fiducial markers, the project constituted a critical and artefactual intervention, remixing and mashing up the forcible means of the printed word with the intermediary potentials of electronic circuits. In the paper, we discuss the project through one of the contributions – *Blind Points of Transition* – a combined text- and video-based dialogue; on the one hand an exploration of the book and the net as different locations, and on the other hand a tentative mapping of the intermediary territory between two geographically separate places. Focusing on the transition of text through different media, the paper critically examines the spatial expansion and modifications of the book as it enters electronic circuits, thus proposing a ‘blind and fake’, or in other words a questioning form of *boundary modification*;

dislocating the critical focus from visibility to agency and from permanent property to intermediary production.

INTRODUCTION

As Marshall McLuhan pointed out already fifty years ago in his reflections on what he described as the increasingly alienated *Gutenberg Galaxy* (McLuhan, 1964), any technology, any extension of the human senses tends to produce a specific human environment; a certain nebulous yet technologically articulated assemblage of values and meaning. Typography certainly did, generating among other things a clearly defined and localizable ‘public’ of liberally educated readers. Ubiquitous information technology is no exception, having so far resulted in an abundance of ‘new’ mediating forms – intermedia, multimedia, hypermedia – all of which self-evidently also have evoked the question of “what precisely accounts for the new” (Heinrich and Spielmann 2002:6). While the character of the ‘public’ created through the technologization of the word certainly presented a novelty, grounded as it was in the “intense and visually oriented self-consciousness” of the reading situation, constituting the subject through a visually grounded cognition (McLuhan 1962:prologue), electronic circuits do not in the same way privilege the visual or restrict the viewing subject to the role as passive receiver. It also results in new forms of mediating practices, inter-subjective exchange and social emergence. If the printed universe since Gutenberg unfolded according to a visual logic of continuity, uniformity and identity, its merger with the electronic sphere seems to allow for a wide variety spatio-aesthetic practices and movements, all with a shifting degree of ‘originality’ and visual coherence.

Today we might find ourselves much farther away from the Gutenberg Galaxy than McLuhan and his contemporaries. With high speed plunging forward through what is supposed to be the electronic age, we are still in a way hovering in between individualizing modernity and new, more reconfigurable societal formations. Printed matter is still around, and rather than presupposing the disappearance of the book as intermediary object, we should approach its ongoing transformations and trace its interference with emergent forms of spatial organization.

In the following, we will try to perform such rapprochement, taking as our point of departure the expanded book project *Roma Europa Fake Factory* (REFF) (Henderson *et.al.* 2010). The book was published in an Italian version in November 2010, and beside proposing a reading experience it provides a platform for transgressive exchange concerning issues of media transformation and intermediality. The book is of the hybrid kind, in one and the same project challenging both the visual authority of the printed text and the flickering presences afforded by the net. As

such, it also provides a critique of the attempts to manage and control the emergent public spheres of the electronic age.

The ‘expansion’ of the book is technologically staged through the use of inter-mediating Quick Response (QR) Codes and fiduciary markers, or markers offering instant yet trustworthy linking. Yet, besides reflecting on the “reinvention of reality through critical practices such as remix, mashup, recontextualization and reenactment” (Hendrickson *et al.* 2010), the book in itself functions as an artefactual intervention, remixing and mashing up the forcible means of the printed word with the intermediary potentials of electronic circuits – and vice versa. Rather than simply analyzing the project, the following investigation constitutes an attempt to approach the issues addressed in a similarly interventionist way. In the following, we discuss the REFF project through one of its interfering contributions – *Blind Points of Transition* – a combined text- and video-based work or an inter-locational dialogue developed through the expanded book. On the one hand, the piece investigated the book and the net as different locations, and on the other hand it cross-examined the expansion of the book as a text-based medium from the point of view of two geographically separate sites, one located in Malmö, Sweden, and the other in Belgrade, Serbia. A spatial or spatializing endeavor, it included several aspects of media transition, one of which concerned the interference between different media domains, and one of which concerned the differences unfolding in the process of localizing and materializing intermediation.



Figure. 1 Roma Europa Fake Factory, book cover. See also <http://www.romaeuropa.org/>.



Figure. 2. Blind Points of Transition. QR code from book interface which can be read using a smart phone or a webcam.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND – INTERMEDIALITY AND BOUNDARY OBJECTS

Before moving on to the actual account of the project and the spatial reconfigurations that it included, we would like to situate our discussion further, and this primarily in relation to two different discourses, firstly the discourse on intermediality and technological change and secondly the discourse on artistic and design-driven methods of investigation, more specifically the use of boundary practices and objects as material actualizations of social and political fields of forces.

Intermediality concerns acts of material translation as well as acts of spatial transition resulting from the use of different mediating technologies. In this sense, intermedial relationships imbue everyday life. From a semiotic perspective, we may say that intermediality actualizes the principle sustaining semiosis – the human ability to naturally translate sensuous experience from one mode to another; according to McLuhan something “we do every instance of our lives” (McLuhan 1962:5). The extension or technologization of this transitional ability therefore has significant consequences, not only in cognitive terms but also for our social existence. It involves a radical rummaging about and reconfiguring of the basic conditions for our being-together, for the better or the worse. Even the introduction of what from a contemporary perspective may seem like ‘simple’ technologies, such as that of pen and parchment, implies sweeping change, and Plato’s disbelief in this regard is well known. Writing, he meant, will only bring forgetfulness. People will neither need nor use their memories. “[T]hey will be hearers of many things but they will have heard nothing”. And socially, it will be as bad. The emergence of the written document will make people “tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality” (Plato 2008).

It may be easy to dismiss such remarks as mere techno-skepticism, but what it reveals is the refractory or wicked power of inter-medial transition and the human dependency on arte-factual or technological transitions. As animals of mythos and logos, we, the human beings, never understand directly, but always through modifying, transformative practice, through language, which constitutes a technological dimension.

This also means that we stay with our artifacts and mechanisms only insofar as they represent modifiable forms or reconfigurable patterns; only insofar as they, as Ernst Cassirer expressed it in his psycho-linguistics, present “a plastic medium” (Cassirer 1946:10), only insofar as they allow for fusion of one thing with another, and for the transition from one context to another.

When discussing the ‘evolution’ of mediating technologies, a common view is that the emergence of intermediate or mixed states in the development of a medium builds upon the pre-existing media (Heinrich and Spielmann 2002). Yet, rather than a sign of evolutionary differentiation, the appearance of intermediate forms of communication may be seen as an indicator of the importance of plasticity and reciprocal action. Similarly, intermediality is not to be understood as an intermittent stage in the passing from one defined medium to another, but as the resonance or tension necessary for dialogic activity. As Heinrich and Spielmann have pointed out, this dynamic understanding to a large extent emanates from artistic practice, from Russian Formalist experiments with text-image relationships, from Coleridge’s notion of ‘intermedium’ and later, from Fluxus ideas of intermedia as ‘conceptual fusion’ (Heinrich and Spielmann 2002:6; Higgins 1965/2001). In this respect, the emergence and continuous development of new intermedia art forms such as ‘happenings’, ‘performances’ and ‘land art’ since the 1950s suggests that intermediality concerns agitated encounters and situations rather than cumulative development.

With the emergence of electronic circuits, this paradoxical tendency of restless fusion has become increasingly present, changing not only the conditions for intermediality but also the general media sensitivity, resulting in new concepts such as *hypertext* and *hypermedia* (Nelson 1965/1980). Distinct from the change expressed by the prefix *multi-*, the *hyper-* does not necessarily refer to a multiplication of forms, but to an intensification of action. *Hyper-* has a clear agency connotation, actualizing not only the merging of different media but also the surplus energy or friction that is its result; the stimulation, excitation or even irritation. In this sense, the prefix *hyper-* may bring into play also the refractory aspect of translations and shifts in modality. Ordinary language is full of them; transitions that do not necessarily produce meaning but which unfold as different forms of excitations, or linguistic disorders (Jakobson 1956/1971).

The 'hyped' is thus not only a matter of intensification 'on the spot', but a spatially aberrant force with a disseminating potential, which in written language may be subjugated or controlled, but which in daily linguistic practice is highly present, as a leaking or drifting effect. In ordinary small talk, the synergy between different media – gestures, facial expressions etc. – is important, not only as a reinforcement of meaning, but furthermore, as a profuse play with modalities and a 'spacing-out' of a situation. In his spatial rhetoric, Michel de Certeau refers to this play as a divertive acting from within as *la perruque*; a popular, casual, or informal quasi-practice, disguised as meaningful work. The person engaged in *la perruque*, whether writing personal letters during work hours or using office material for own purposes, may be faking work, yet, at the same time actually generating spatio-temporal clearances within the system, sequences that are "free, creative, and precisely not directed towards profit" (Certeau 1984:25). Accordingly, intermediality actualizes tactical or maneuvering practices unfolding from within a ruling regime. In this sense they may be described as "arts-de-faire" (Certeau 1980b); a handling or doing taking into consideration also minor or weak aspects; the ways in which weak modalities may interfere with strong; the means with which marginal displacements may affect major movements and meanings.

The above understanding of intermediality as intensified situated agency brings us to the methodological question of how to conduct research on inter-medial and inter-modal transformation. This is where *RomaEuropaFakeFactory* enters the picture. Instead of initiating an empirical study of a 'real' encounter between two or more defined mediating technologies, the project provided an interrogative situation based upon the idea that the 'real', understood as different working principles and fields of forces, including their social 'effects', will reveal itself only when interfered with, reinvented, remixed or reenacted. As 'method', this approach alludes to that proposed by McLuhan, who in his intermedial studies relied on 'the experiment'. While empirical observation consists in noting phenomena without disturbing them, the experiment rests on the idea of introducing a variation of disturbances into a certain setting. McLuhan's example was experimental medicine, where disturbance through the suppressing of certain functions is thought to produce a disturbance in the entire system, allowing for a potential deduction of missing or malfunctioning processes.

With a focus on problem-solving, clinical experimentation makes use of controlled disturbance as a useful means to an end. From a more creative point of view, however, disturbance may unfold as an end in itself, or in other words, as productive of new ends. In this respect, 'disturbance' is understood as an interactive or even provocative procedure, what Certeau called a

"*polemological analysis of culture*" (Certeau 1984:xvii, italics in original). A culture is not a laboratory but an assemblage of practices, which "develops in an atmosphere of tensions, and often of violence, for which it provides symbolic balances, contracts of compatibility and compromises, all more or less temporary" (Certeau 1984:xvii). If clinical experimentation concerns disturbances directed or authorized from a neutral position, cultural experimentation concerns the disturbance also of authority as such. Thus understood, cultural experimentation is the development of a situation where the researcher, as participant in the play, puts herself at risk.

The material staging of such experimentation requires certain interfering props or tactical devices that can adapt to changing circumstances and that can mediate between disturbance and experience or between friction and expression from within a certain situation. Such devices have been called *boundary objects*. When first introduced by Star and Griesemer in 1989, the concept was meant to address "the problem of common representation in diverse intersecting social worlds" (Star and Griesemer 1989:388), or in other words, the problem of lack of consensus between different actors in heterogeneous exploratory processes. Boundary objects were thought of as "objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (Star and Griesemer 1989:393). Boundary objects would allow actors to negotiate topics, to reframe contexts and to 'travel' in between perspectives and approaches, affording intermediary mobility, much like a relational and interactive map, applicable for use in different discursive terrains (Star and Griesemer 1989, Linde 2007:96).

FAKE EXPANSIONS AND EXPANSIVE FAKES

From a design research point of view, it is not difficult to conceive of the *RomaEuropaFakeFactory* project in terms of cultural experimentation or polemological analysis, and the publication as such in terms of boundary object. Rather than a strict comparison of distinct systems – the printed book and the electronic publication – the entire REFF project is based on the idea of intermediality and interference, drawing attention to the mediascape as an intensified and sprawling *hyper-scape*. Yet, what is a boundary object in such an expanded situation? How is it materially instantiated and affected? And what kind of dislocations does it afford?

These were questions that came to our minds when confronted with the imperatives of the REFF project. On the one hand, the project addressed the confusing relationship between 'old' and new media. On the other hand it challenged the 'where and what' of intermediality, the questions related to the spatial instantiation and materialization of mediating practice.

Embracing thirty-three text-based reflections and twenty-eight artistic works, and supported by over 80 partners counting universities, associations, artists, hackers, researchers, designers, journalists, politicians, magazines, activist networks and media entrepreneurs, the REFF publication constituted a disturbing intersection of art, design and new technologies. As a ‘glocally’ situated ‘fake factory’ the publication was conceived of as a fictionalizing machinery challenging ideas of a stable, factual or unambiguous delivery of meaning. Massimo Canevacci, one of the REFF participants, refers in his contribution to Orson Well’s movie *F for Fake* (USA, 1975) arguing that this film “managed to anticipate a trend [...] related to a realistic critique”, a critique which, according to Canevacci, “instead of having an obsession with what is real, the death of what is real [...] introduced into the heart of the duality of that-which-is-fake/ that-which-is-real a hypothesis to go beyond, to surpass it” (Hendrickson et al. 2010:18). Canevacci sees the REFF project going in this direction, with ‘Fake’ as a distinctive trait through which to question the false / true dichotomy “now almost 19th century-style” (Hendrickson et al. 2010:18). The success criteria according to Canevacci, would not be the establishing of a new ‘order’; “a word that I dislike”; but the promoting of “an invasion of clusters of subjectivity which experience these mobile hybrids between digital technologies, mixed arts and new subjectivity” (Hendrickson et al. 2010:18).

Stephen Kovats, another contributor to the book, similarly the organizer of Berlin’s *transmediale*, reflects upon the subjunctive character of a project like REFF, comparing it to the designing of festivals as “a kind of incomplete projects”, or as “processes that you enact but that you can’t really control 100%” (Hendrickson et al. 2010:174). Festivals should not only be reactive, animated and vital landscapes, but fields for temporal chaotic displacements that act as “an open source construct” (Hendrickson et al. 2010:174). Along the same lines, in his preface to the book, Bruce Sterling situates the REFF challenge in the realm of *maybe*, *might be* as well as at the crossroads of a multiplicity of shared spaces and times. “The best way to ‘expose the dynamics of the contemporary world’”, Sterling writes, “is to live in a way that is not of the contemporary world – to personify the transformations that time has in store for society.” His vision of such a way of living and acting is one of “dislocated, time-warped, multi-perspective, pervasive and ubiquitous narratives’, [n]arratives that are not novels, or artworks, or political manifestos, but episodes from a daily life as it does not exist” (Hendrickson et al. 2010:6). A vision that comes close to the differentiating polemology proposed by Certeau, it would indeed mean “[l]ife, but not life as we know it [...] [n]ot ‘real life’, but virtual, neo-real life [...] [a] fake life that aspires to become more real than the life that surrounds us” (Hendrickson et al. 2010:6).

The REFF project also originated as a polemical response to the opening of the “RomaEuropa

WebFactory”, a digital art competition launched in 2008 by the RomaEuropa Foundation (Fondazione RomaEuropa) and Telecom Italia. Operating with oppressive copyright conditions, such as the unilateral transfer of the rights of the works submitted and a ban on the use of techniques like mashup, cutup, and remix, the Foundation paradoxically granted to itself and Telecom Italia the unlimited right to remix the submitted works. The competition therefore inspired the creation of a fake parallel, an alternative initiative allowing for multi-disciplinary analysis of the possibilities excluded from the competition but offered by freely available knowledge platforms, contents and resources. As such, it presented a tactical reversal of the logic of the competition, actualizing its authorial exercise of power through strategies of isolation and border control.

Furthermore, the grand motto of the REFF project – “Remix the world! Reinvent Reality!” – echoes the situationist ambition to contest official media policies through *détournement*; through different forms of tactical tricks and ruses; different acts of diversions or rearrangements, including acts of a more confrontational kind, such as squatting or hijacking (Jorn 1959, Martos 1989). An ironic recycling or misappropriation practice, the *détournement* represents “the last usage possible of a fossilized culture” (Martos 1989:115). In the same vein, the REFF project aims to embezzle the ‘fossilized’ phenomenon of printed media, thus confronting its petrifying management of intellectual property rights and its territorializing and authorizing of experiencing and knowing.

BLIND TRANSITIONS AS BOUNDARY MODIFICATION

As mentioned previously, the three co-authors of this article had different roles in the project. While one acted as initiator and coordinator of the overall scheme, the other two functioned as content providers. Yet, given the remixing ambition of the project, the relationships and responsibilities were not fixed. The contribution discussed in the following, *Blind Points of Transition*, was also a deliberate attempt not only to deliver content, but to reflect upon this constitutional unsettlement of the project as a whole.

From the very start, the contribution unfolded as a dialogue in between what in the ‘RomaEuropa’ perspective were two peripheral geographical locations. The idea was to actualize the ways in which ‘the margins’ were manifested within the project, ironically expressed in the very title. Yet, rather than simply transforming our intense e-mail conversations into a reflective article, we wanted to take advantage of the occasion to expand our intellectual exchange in order to practically explore the scope of the project. Hence, we decided to start out from our own geographical positions, and from there try to approach and

appropriate the public site of the expanded book.

The first step of our positioning endeavor consisted in describing our own contexts. We therefore pursued two simultaneous field observations on our respective locations. Far from Rome, the chosen sites were both peripheral public parks, the Swedish one situated in Malmö, Sweden, on the shores of the Öresund, the strait separating South Sweden and Denmark; and the Serbian one on the banks of the Danube and Sava rivers in Belgrade, Serbia. While the Swedish location formed part of a meticulously designed upmarket waterfront development called the Western Harbour, the Serbian location was of a more mundane character and embraced the northern, green and open “blocks” of the similarly planned but modernist Novi Beograd or New Belgrade; a post-World War II utopian development with large housing units and adjacent recreational spaces. Socially, the two edge areas were quite distinct. Despite its fancy situation and design, the posh Swedish waterfront counted relatively few visitors, at least this time of year, whereas the Serbian location, with its entirely disheveled atmosphere and to a certain extent neglected greenery constituted a more popular and populated space.



Fig. 3. Site I – The Scania Park, Malmö, Sweden, April 17, 2010.



Figure 4. Site II – Block 14, New Belgrade, Serbia, April 17, 2010.

The concurrent ‘inter-locational’ studies were conducted during one Saturday afternoon. For three hours, meticulous notes were taken on location about everything from temperature and architectural layout to temporary happenings and detailed findings. These observations were thereafter immediately copy-typed, exchanged, and organized into a combinatory time-line. When interlaced with each other, the detailed descriptions of the two sites resulted in a hybrid rather than comparative report; a reciprocal narrative, the transitions of which appeared as cross referential gaps or ‘blind points’.

Rather than ‘meaningful’, the gaps or blanks in between the two locations were experienced as unsettled spaces for potential movement. Having discussed back and forth what these breaches between locations and observational entries ‘meant’, we came to the conclusion that the best way to deal with them was in the form of questions. The questions that came to our mind in one or the other way concerned space – textual space, narrative space, urban space. “What are the circumstances?” “Who is this person coming towards me?” “What is there in the foreground?” Not only did the questions call into attention the two sites and their different urban and political contexts. They also agitated the text as site and the act of questioning. As the gaps were filled out with questions, the power of questioning was manifested, including its spatial significance as a directional and quite exigent form of address.

L'uomo con il cane nero più grande torna dal parcheggio. Si sta dirigendo verso di me, ma poi gira a destra e prosegue verso est.

QUAL E' LA CAUSA E QUAL E' L'EFFETTO?

12.40

Penso ai confini tra strade e sentieri a piedi e mi rendo conto che in questa zona non molto è stato fatto per rendere la vita facile ai pedoni. I percorsi stradali anche sono molto essenziali, senza soluzioni costruire appositamente. Ci sono solo i cartelli per il parcheggio, nessun altra informazione. La questione è quindi come orientarsi e decidere da che parte andare Io attraverso la piazza e raggiungo la parte del porto.

CONOSCI QUALCUNO CHE E' (MAI) STATO QUI?

12.42

Una donna con una giacca bianca e una coda di cavallo sta facendo jogging. Il vento continua ad aumentare e mi metto i guanti. Poi, le due ragazze con i pattini ritornano e proseguono verso sud.

DOVE E' L'INIZIO (DELLA STORIA)?

Figure 5. Text page with time codes and inserted questions. REFF, 2010.

Once inserted into the text, the questions also exposed the chain of iterative action and the intermedial movements between text and site, calling for further transitional agency. We therefore decided to use the questions as a concrete pretext for revisiting the sites, now physically depositing the queries at the (blind) points of their appearance. As direct gestures of textual

feed-back, we felt it should be simple and plain, and we decided to use cheap plastic letters, print outs or other global products that could be obtained in most geographical location. As such, the questions could easily be materially translated into situated spatial objects, again reframing their ‘original’ contexts. Deprived of their textual neutrality, the questions were transformed into spatio-temporal elements, concurrently ‘taking place’ at the actual sites, where they developed into situations. These situations included everything from curious or suspicious glances, dialogues with passers-by, disputes with park rangers and concrete discussions about artistic practice and about the future of the locals in question, all of which constituted an abundant extra material, opening for many possible itineraries. Of all the possibilities, we chose to video-document the textual interventions and present them as short parallel sequences on the web. On the one hand, this transition resulted in the emergence of yet a new hybrid site the locations involved were re-connected with one another. On the other hand, new gaps appeared, new blind points, preventing the manifestation of generalized explanations or definite justifications.

In a ‘final’ iteration, the video-documented spatial interrogations were linked to the textual dialogue through the use of Quick Response codes inserted in the actual text. Through the use of a smart phone as decoder, the act of reading could be complemented and spatially expanded to include also the video-documented interventions on location, thus making it possible to trace the different iterations and reflect upon the material and spatial consequences of the different transitions, technologically, geographically and linguistically. While the technological expansion proposed quick or almost instant geographical response, the linguistic dynamic of questions and answers – printed or otherwise materialized – actualized the fact that this relationship is not always as quick or as straightforward. Materialized and situated, the questions did not call for speedy answers, but for mobilization. As such, the performative nature of questioning was actualized, the fact that the question belongs to a fundamentally social sphere of divergent meanings and misunderstandings, of positioning and agitation, and that it, when acted out or articulated, actually has the potential of destabilizing dominant discourses.



Figure 6. From Blind Points of Transition: Internet interface – Belgrade-Malmö.



Figure 7. From Blind Points of Transition: Internet interface – Malmö – Belgrade.

DISCUSSION – BLIND AND FAKE DIGRESSIONS

Through their actualizing of ‘the knowledge object’, Star and Griesemer proposed an important epistemological shift. Dislocating the focus of knowing practice from the cognitive unveiling of inherent properties to the spatial and social “trading across unjoined world boundaries” (Star and Griesemer 1989:413), they also called into attention the importance of intermediality. Furthermore, the concept of ‘boundary object’ allowed them to do so without losing sight of the material instantiations of such trading. Later, Etienne Wenger has granted to the boundary object an even wider meaning as a materialization of abstract imaginaries and social relations. At the same time, it is important to point out that the object, besides potentiality, also executes a certain governing power, at times preventing a wider contextual understanding. Many critics have also expressed their concerns about what they have seen as the disarmament of the boundary object through the idealization of its situatedness and materiality (Björgvinsson 2007, Barrett and Oborn 2010). Boundary objects are not “magic bullets” delivering quick and smooth response. Instead, they provide discursive sites, “permeated with power” (Barrett and Oborn 2010:63). Non-finalized, questionable, engaging, ramified and potentially treacherous, they are objects calling for relational movement. In a recent reflection on the dissemination and use of the concept, Star also stresses this fundamental characteristic. Rather than developing guidelines as for what is and is not a boundary object, she develops further her original idea of boundary objects as arrangements that thanks to their material structure, scale and granularity allow different groups of actors to “work-play” together “without consensus” (Star 2010).

The intention throughout this article has been to explore the conditions for such intermediary and non-consensual “work-play” arrangements. In this respect, the *RomaEuropaFakeFactory* publication has constituted the contested boundary object through which this has been concretized and made possible. While sympathizing with an overall hybridizing intention, our aim has been to further trace the transitions fabricated,

and this at their extremities, at their outer limits, along the very fronts. By way of design intervention, we have tried to visit boundaries where total fusion never takes place, where meaning remains unsettled and where the knowable remains disclosed. This has entailed a spatial manifestation of transitional acts of dialogic, situated and iterative writing and re-writing, coding and recoding, contextualization and recontextualization. As such, our ambition has been to experimentally explore the idea of boundary object, with a special attention to its actualizing of ‘blind’ or questionable transitions and ‘fake’ or constructed unity.

Beside methodological and meta-critical aspects, our interventionist analysis of the expanded book also presents a critique of a similarly stretched public space. Through the establishing of a homology between the linguistic operations of the written text and the spatial modifications of urban publicity, the interrogative transitions and dislocations also provided a ‘content’ and produced possible arguments, first and foremost as concerns the intermediality between the book and the city as modern forms of spatial organization, both of which, within a digitized and globalized framework, are being fundamentally reconfigured. It is a reconfiguration that involves the distribution of power as well as the privilege of interpretation. Even though this urban aspect of the work to a certain extent falls outside the scope of this article, it constituted the framework, within which transitional intermediality would unfold as the dislocational dispositive, its gaps and blinds providing possibilities to social and spatial modification. In concrete terms, the iterations described above involved the questioning of ‘rights’ of access, the critique of authorship, the interrogating of intellectual and territorial property rights and the challenging of the privilege of interpretation.

Hence, intermediality should not simply be understood as “a formal category of change” (Heinrich and Spielmann 2002:6) or an intermittent stage in media evolution. Rather, intermediality is a trans- and performative quality inherent to mediation as such. A medium is not simply a carrier of messages, but a modal space, a space where conflicting modes of expression and exchange may be developed. Accordingly, we propose an understanding of the expanded book as an artifact affording modes rather than meanings, an intermedial but also spatially enabling object with divergent qualities. Similar to a map, it unfolds as a de- and re-territorializing ‘spread’, on the one hand ‘fake’ – contesting the idea of objective properties – and on the other hand ‘blind’ – breaking the visual authority of the printed text.

As an object questioning and materializing publicities, the expanded book does not necessarily provide new meaning. Instead, it has the potential to function as a ‘shifter’ or mobilizer, enabling transitions in between locations and scales. It actualizes the fact

that if and when a medium or a public space becomes ‘fossilized’ or only develops the functions of policing the “proper” use of its own terms, then playful questioning, metaphoric drift, and elliptical transitions – shortly, any form of boundary modification – is the only means to secure leeway. As much as the practice of asking, of traversing and introducing, requires a certain impulse or force, it can and will also lead astray, and for that reason, it may be seen as dangerous or objectionable. But, as Michel Serres and Bruno Latour have pointed out throughout their intermediary travelling – “we know of no other route to invention” (Serres and Latour 1995:66).



Figure 8. Still from Blind Points of Transition – Belgrade.



Figure 9. Still from Blind Points of Transition – Malmö.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Fake Press for the initiation of the REFF project and the support in the writing of this article. It has been a pleasure working with you and for us, it has been a great questioning experience.

REFERENCES

- Barrett, Michael and Oborn, Eivor .2010. Boundary object use in cross-cultural software development teams. *Human Relations*, August 2010; vol. 63, 8: pp. 1199-1221.
- Björgvinsson, Erling Bjarki. 2007. *Socio-Material Mediations - Learning, Knowing, and Self-produced Media within Healthcare*. Blekinge Institute of Technology and School of Arts and Communication, Malmö University.
- Certeau, Michel de .1980a. On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life. *Social Text*, No. 3 (Autumn, 1980), pp. 3-43
- Certeau, Michel de. 1980b. *L'invention du quotidien: 1. Arts de faire*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Certeau, Michel de. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Edwards, James C. 2004. The Thinging Of The Thing: The Ethic Of Conditionality In Heidegger's Later Work. Hubert L. Dreyfus And Mark A. Wrathall (eds.) *A Companion To Heidegger*. London: Blackwell.
- Heinrichs, Jürgen and Yvonne Spielmann. 2002. Editorial. In *Convergence* 2002 8:5 (special issue on intermediality).
- Higgins, Dick. 1965/2001. Intermedia. *Leonardo*, Volume 34, Number 1, February 2001, pp. 49-54.
- Jorn, Asger. 1959/1997 Le détournement comme négation et comme prélude. *Internationale Situationniste: éditions complète 1958-1969*. Paris: Librerie Arthème Fayard.
- Jakobson, Roman. 1956/1971. Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances. Roman Jakobson: *Fundamentals of Language*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Linde Per. 2007. *Metamorphing: The transformative power of digital media and tangible interaction*. Blekinge Institute of Technology and Malmö University, School of Arts and Communication, Doctoral Dissertation Series No. 2007:12.
- McLuhan, Marshall. 1964. *The Gutenberg Galaxy. The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Martos, Jean Francois. 1989. *Histoire de l'Internationale Situationniste*. Paris:Éditions Gérard Lebovici.
- Nelson, Ted. 1980. *Literary Machines*. Mindful Press, Sausalito, California.
- Plato. 2008. *Phaedrus*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Project Gutenberg Ebook. Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1636/1636-h/1636-h.htm>. Download date 2011-01-03.
- Serres, Michel and Bruno Latour. 1995. *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Star, Susanne Leigh & Griesemer, James R. 1989. Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39. *Social Studies of Science* 19 (3): 387-420.
- Star, Susan Leigh. 2010. This is Not a Boundary Object: Reflections on the Origin of a Concept. *Science Technology Human Values* 2010 35: 601
- Wenger, Etienne. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.