

Sensus communis: understanding the acoustic space in its resonant and sensory environment

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Abstract

How, and what for, the concept of acoustic space came up in Marshall McLuhan's thinking? When we try to find the answer to this question, we face not a straight explanation but a speculative method of thinking named explorations. The aim of this paper is to achieve the methodological and epistemological connections of McLuhan's understanding. Based on this understanding we hope to comprehend the states of culture developed as the *sensus communis* of the electric age.

Palavra-Chave

Acoustic space; resonance; environment; sensorium, exploration.

1 On a possible human understanding of the media

Space is the key category of the propositions made by Herbert Marshall McLuhan from which he built his understanding of culture from the point of view of the production of world views, perceptual and cognitive systems. In his studies on space, McLuhan develops his most challenging concerns, as examined in detail by theoretician Richard Cavell in his work on the cultural geography of space where he revisited the key elements of McLuhan's thinking (CAVELL, 2002).

As a category, space translates cultural coordinates derived from perceptual and cognitive models generating a common sense of guidance in culture, as is the case with the oral-aural perception responsible for the model of the multisensory perception of space. By retrieving the historical-cultural configurations from the

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theoretical point of view, McLuhan understands that every perceptual model constructs a state of culture and, as a consequence, of understanding of space. All his work was developed in an attempt to apprehend, observe and summarize the main aspects, elements and behaviors of these spaces. With that, he took the task of developing a cultural understanding of space following the sensory shifts that motivate states of culture which, in turn, reshape the common sense (*sensus communis*) of understanding itself. The link between the understanding of space and the sensorium developed as a world view accounted for one of his boldest concepts: the conception of the resonant acoustic space as a form of integrated, multisensory and simultaneous perception of interactions. He used this conception in different sensory and cognitive fields, considering the media as key agents of change of the states of culture.

One of the most widely disseminated works by McLuhan was devoted, above all, to understanding the media. *Understanding Media* (1964) proposes the understanding of the media from the point of view of the space, but does so by first making an analysis of the sensory model introduced by electricity which, thus, was responsible for the stimulus to the integration of the *sensus communis* or states of culture from different sensorialities. Far from being a mere intellectual provocation, *Understanding Media* revisits well established epistemological paths in major philosophical works such as the architectures of the essays by John

Locke compiled in the volumes of *Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). Although Locke postulates human understanding as sensory, Locke's perception of space is configured, roughly speaking, by visuality, by invariance, by continence. In this sense, *Understanding Media* reveals another possibility of human understanding based on the perceptual and cognitive model projected by the acoustic space of the media.

We will not propose a comparison between Locke and McLuhan, a task that Erik McLuhan took for himself in the edition of the posthumous book by his father, the one dedicated to the presentation of the understanding of the media which in the 1980's would conclude the studies started in the 1950's. *Laws of Media: The New Science* (McLUHAN; McLUHAN, 1988) organizes the whole theoretical investments that did not hesitate to project the different perceptions of space in models of understanding. Knowing where different propositions of understanding of the media converged makes the task of redoing the path of understanding the acoustic-environmental space more precise. Far from being the prophecy of a guru of the electronic age, we are facing a possibility concerning the human understanding of the media, i.e., of the forms of perception and cognition which have historically been outlined by the Western society. The memory of the empiricism regarding human understanding, based on perception, is evidence of a speculative tradition to which McLuhan's ideas relate. Our purpose now is solely to

understand McLuhan's legacy as a speculative work that deeply touches the model of perceiving the world and, as a consequence, of constructing the understanding of the surroundings constructed as the environment, i.e., we are talking about human understanding and not about provocations or prophecies.

When McLuhan asks the following question: to what extent can we associate the shifts in the media to the change in the way of perceiving and knowing the world?, he connected understanding to a process of investigation which, far from the innatist and a prioristic thinking, dives into the analysis of the experiences introduced by the work of the cultural dynamics. For this reason, the question asked does not lead to an answer, but rather to the understanding of the variations in the continuous flow in the processes of communication and cultural interaction. Experience alone reveals itself as the source and the limit of human understanding, because nothing is established or finished in it once and for all. Quite the contrary, from experience come the challenges posed to understanding.

McLuhan's interrogative method invites us to exercise discovery based on observation, description and analysis of experiments and experiences. For this reason, his speculative method was called «exploration», allowing him to fully exercise inductive and abductive thinking in order to reach a possible understanding of the media. McLuhan's human understanding of the

media follows some assumptions expressed in notions such as perception training, learning for the formulation of ideas, speculative exercise, modes of thinking, inventory and analysis of the effects in order to reach the bases of the cognitive experience that the human sensorium is able to build.

The conceptual syntheses presented in many of his works make up the speculative exercise of the understanding, sometimes even being part of the titles of his books and texts. *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), *Explorations in Communications* (1960), *The Gutenberg Galaxy: the Making of typographic Man* (1962), *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964), *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (1967), *Counterblast* (1969), *Through the Vanishing Point* (1968), are true maxims of thought uttered as a synthesis of the understanding of the complex phenomena of the historical-cultural experience. An understanding that was the result of explorations and partnerships with anthropologists Edmond Carpenter and Edward T. Hall, designer Quentin Fiore, plastic artist Harley Parker, and professor Bruce Powers, not to mention the fundamental dialogue with his masters, sociologist Harold Adam Innis and literature theoretician I.A. Richards. Here careful reflection should be made before reducing the dialogical pragmatism to the exercise of a mere game of quotations.

Conceptual syntheses and maxims of thought show understanding as a possibility. With that,

it is natural that we can deal with McLuhan's ideas considering his structural hypotheses. One of them is the possibility of understanding the media as a sensory space of communion and, thus, as an environment of interaction. Considering the transformations introduced by electricity into culture, McLuhan conceives the media in the context of the pervasive electric environment. He glimpses in it the rise of sensorialities that stimulate an intersubjective space and a sense of communion that he recovers as the *sensus communis*.

Advancing in his observations on the behavior of human perceptions in spaces of electronic communication, McLuhan sees the interaction forming the *sensus communis* that his understanding elaborates as a resonant acoustic space. He retrieves and translates into electric terms the sense of communion and interaction of a cultural state of orality and auditory-intuitive perception.

The proposition in this essay could not be other than an understanding of the esthetic-philosophical exploration of the media as environments of simultaneous perception of the resonant acoustic space – a dear conception of the media as manifestation of culture. In order to do that, an attempt is made to understand his formulations on the perception of space as an intersubjective esthetic experience, particularly those explored in diagrammatic constructs, the result of his understanding of the dialogical practice of life with

art and the technological sectors of culture. This is only one possibility of manifestation of the *sensus communis* in the human understanding embedded in cultural media.

2 Algorithms of understanding the space as environment

Opposing the disseminated notion of space as a continent of things and the delimitation of places, McLuhan's understanding is driven by the conditions of possibilities (in the Kantian sense) of the intuitive space. In this regard, if the acoustic space is proposed as an environment of communion and interaction of sensorialities (*sensus communis*), we will start from an empirical experiment developed through McLuhan's partnership with plastic artist Harley Parker (1915-1922). In the discussion with Parker (McLUHAN; PARKER, 1975), the concept of space as an environment of involvement is observed and analyzed based on the watercolor *Flying Children* by Harley Parker himself.

Trying to understand the acoustic space and its environment from visual production might seem strange, but is not a contradiction. It should be stated right away that the notion of acoustic space is not an opposition to any mode of perception, quite the contrary, acoustic space is primarily integrating, *sensus communis*. Parker's painting only served as an experiment for the speculation on the acoustic space in its environmental make-up because it works with

Figure 1 *Flying Children*, Harley Parker



Source: McLuhan; PARKER, 1975, p. 218.

the limits and does not fear to explore sensory frontiers. What we can glance are composition lines that project figures in varying proportions, reproducing misaligned flight movements of floating bodies. In contrasts of light, with bands geometrically outlined by light and dark, the lines underscore the conflict of directions. Added to that is the dilated proportion of the flying arms, stressing the speed of the movements. Contrasts of light, direction, proportion ultimately project the dimension of space that McLuhan understands as being environmental, i.e., stimulated by different simultaneous perceptions of space. This environmental make-up was the understanding that led to the observation of the acoustic space.

We should notice the fact that the starting point is a perceptual experience taken as a speculative premise for the understanding of what essayists understand as sensory environment.

If by environment one understands pervasive involvement, it should not be difficult to reach its fundamental property: invisibility. In this case, the painting or the pictorial space becomes a challenging experiment because visibility is part of its nature. How could invisibility be configured in a watercolor? McLuhan and Parker invite us to turn our attention away from the pictorial matter and direct our look to the intuitive sphere of the perception of the portrayed movements. From

the experience movement arise involvement, inclusiveness, integration and simultaneity that emerges on the painting as an environmental trait. We obviously do not see the environment, however, there is nothing that prevents it from being actualized in perceptual terms as a dialogical practice of the senses. The space is environmental, but the environment itself is invisible. This is a maxim that becomes recurrent in McLuhan's thinking. In a work with designer Quentin Fiore, the environment was projected onto two blank pages on the center of a book, only with the following words: "Environments are invisible. The groundrules, pervasive structure and overall patterns elude easy perception" (McLUHAN; FIORE, 1967, p. 84-85). The blank page stimulates the simultaneity of perceptions; and this is what it is all about.

The notion of environment based on the involvement of a pervasive space defines the condition of art proper, this is why the esthetic experience is a starting point that founded the conceptual speculation. In Parker's painting emerges an environmental space that is not limited to visuality; in the middle there is an invisible environmental dimension that is revealing of another way of understanding space. Instead of being a container for things, the space of Parker's painting shows us beings whose bodies seem to be devoid of weight floating and flowing in space. The involvement between space-and-body revisits the theme of body extensions from another point of view: the reverberation that shows the

mutuality of relationships where space is only the space of interaction of senses. The space of sensory reverberation leads to a form of comprehending space that is much closer to acoustic sensoriality than to the visual. Thus we come to a conceptual key of acoustic space: reverberation.

What was observed on the painting became a hypothesis for understanding the media as environments, particularly considering the premise of situated sensory extensions, which is the key in understanding the media (McLUHAN, 1964). On this subject, McLuhan and Parker (1975) said the following: "Since technologies are extensions of our own physiology, they result in new programs of an environmental kind.

Even if the idea of extension is observed in the term-to-term correlation between sensory organ and the environment – eye / painting, hand / writing, wheel / foot - the notion of environment implies a sensory exchange, mediations. Going back to Parker's painting, the sensory representation of the environment does not take place outside the sign exchange reached in graphic semiotics when measuring cognitive elements of a different nature. This means that if the algorithms that are fundamental for the understanding of the space as an environment bring together involvement, inclusion, simultaneity, integration, the extension cannot be considered as being outside the environmental context.

We are far from the notion of space as something given a priori. If we agree that involvement, integration, simultaneity imply interrelated varieties, there is no way to see in the environment the isolation of one single meaning. For the sensory reverberation in space to be applicable, even on a pictorial painting, one must count on the perceptual actualization. McLuhan and Parker (1975) go further: the environment observed in the space of the painting *Flying Children* evokes touch itself by intervening in proportions: the tactility as a matrix, a kind of “original sense from which all the others gradually differentiated”. Thanks to the actualization of senses, the environmental space translates the esthetically configured sensorium.

Invisibility, involvement, simultaneity and interaction. These are some of the fundamental algorithms of the environmental conception of the space, found in the esthetic experience and also in sensory representations of the media. Undoubtedly, the electric age was able to bring together such algorithms in audiovisual and kinetic environments reproduced on media on screen, or better said, on screens: pictorial, cinematographic, videographic, digital. The radiophonic process, which is not graphic, nevertheless has a screen: the radio display and even the microphone are designed with materials in the form of a screen for the sound to travel. A screen implies sensory models that are very close to what McLuhan and his partners conceptualized as an environmental acoustic

space, a state. When the sensory model of culture projects environmental spaces, human history can be understood from an equally environmental perspective, i.e., instead of progressive and causal stages, we are faced with organizing states that are not necessarily diachronic.

3 Sensory models of states of culture

If space constitutes an environment that can be designed with fundamental algorithms, the concept of space is therefore not limited to one single sensory coordinate like, for example, visuality. How can the notion of acoustic space be understood as a category of perceptual and cognitive understanding of the *sensus communis* itself? Would it not be another form of restriction? McLuhan’s explorations seem to choose it is not. However, his reflections should be closely followed.

The notion of space did not become established in Western culture as environment. The invention of the alphabet – the formation matrix of the typographic man – favored the conception of space mainly as a delimited visual field where field restriction seems to refract the algorithms that would be the environment constituents. In the work he developed with designer Quentin Fiore, the exploration of different conceptions gains an iconic translation in the form of diagrams, which allows us to follow the fundamental aspects of the speculative method of reasoning. The diagram that iconizes assumptions

of geometry shows how the way we see the world as a visual space is delimitating and fragmentary. (McLUHAN; FIORE, 1967, 1969)

If we consider the iconic thinking as shown in the diagram, we can read two different possibilities: (1) the fragmentation of visual fields from the geometric linear perspective; (2) the concomitance of represented points of view. Even if the definition of the visual space results from the projection of dots, the perception of concomitance calls for an environmental perception of a space that welcomes differences. It is a perceptual model of cultures that are not directly centered on the alphabet, historically situated before or after its invention and written fixation. Thus the need to expand the possibilities of observation, as stated in the text that antecedes the diagram: "The method of our time is not to use one single model of investigation, but many" (McLUHAN; FIORE 1969, p. 97). According to McLuhan, the media created from the invention of the alphabet really established a visual space delimited in specific fields and, consequently, specialized the senses. When the ears are replaced by the eyes, the space becomes clear-cut, specific. Thus emerged and developed a visual culture that turned people and space into projections of visibility. However, this same culture moves in other directions, opening space for the emergence of what had been neglected and disregarded, for example, the acoustic space. If, on the one hand, the alphabetic culture enhanced visibility, disregarding the state of

auditory alertness, on the other hand the reversal proposed in terms of audiovisuality developed by the electric media cannot be ignored. It is in the dialectic alignment of contrasts and conflicts that emerges the notion of acoustic space. Two key elements of the law of media have already been mentioned: intensification and reversal as environmental conditions in conflict, but not mutually exclusive.

Even if the term acoustic space, at first, may reverberate sound elements, this is not the understanding that supports McLuhan's proposition when he examines the environmental character of the acoustic space. If there is an opposition, it refers to the notion of the restricted, fragmented visual field, but not to visibility as perception. If the acoustic condition is interactive par excellence, particularly due to the actualization movement inherent in it, there is no reason to think of limits.

That being said, we can follow the development of the thinking process that understands electricity as the event that expanded the perception and comprehension of the environment in its invisibility, involvement, simultaneity and integration, being responsible for the creation of the space-environment that is representative of the *sensus communis* of the culture of media. For McLuhan, electricity is not just the great event of Western civilization that repositioned the perception of space as a pervasive environment. In his view, electric circuits establish a sensory

condition radically opposed to fragmentation. There is nothing more involving and pervasive than electricity, thus raised to the condition of pure information. Thanks to electricity, culture retrieves the state of involvement common to oral cultures that are driven by hearing and intuition, marking the conception of a sensory experience of integrated *sensus communis*, as seen in the photograph of an African community around a story-teller, all of them taken by the trance of the narration (MCLUHAN; FIORE, 1967, 1969).

Since the foundations of the constitution of the model are sensory perceptions, McLuhan is taken to understand that such model actually makes a state of culture emerge. Thus, it goes against the diachronic constitution of stages of civilization. The great enterprise > of this statement is the possibility of permanence of models in the process of differentiation and cultural shift.

By understanding that different states of culture are driven by sensory models, McLuhan can investigate relationships of proximity and detachment. If, at first, he perceived the distinction between oral-auditory condition and the graphic-visual condition of the alphabet, he soon also realized the extent to which one distinct condition is not immune to articulation.

McLuhan's understanding shows that the algorithm found in both sensory environments is the oral-auditory condition. However, the mediation is completely different: one takes

place through direct contact and the other through electric mediation. The importance of the medium becomes fundamental for the understanding of the cultural space in its sensory ambiance. This is why the *sensus communis* is radically linked to the medium and its space-environment mediations.

The space of interaction with the oral narrator at the center creates a centralizing intuitive environment of a cultural imaginary. The same is not the case with the orality mediated by the radio: there is no sensory centrality or elements that distinguish perceptions and the decentrality of the look, each goes on one direction, like in the household scene around the radio in *The Mechanical Bride* (MCLUHAN, 2002). However, there is nothing that precludes the systematicity of the model from the point of view of the sensory dynamism involved.

4 The environmental plasticity of the acoustic space

When summarizing the fundamental characteristics of the acoustic space in a few elements – invisibility, simultaneity, involvement, inclusion, integration – in order to constitute the space as a pervasive environment, McLuhan voices his concern with reaching a more encompassing understanding of a cultural environment organized by technological media. Technology itself is no longer the object of his speculation, but rather the movements translated

into behaviors observed as constant mechanisms that could define the laws of media.

The laws of media are propositions formulated based on

observations on the operations and effects of human artifacts on man and society, considering that human artifacts are not merely an implement for working, but an extension of our body, effected by the artificial addition of organs (McLUHAN; McLUHAN, 1988, p. 96).

The fundamental theoretical framework of the law of media results from the transforming effect of our artificial organs which, in turn, become matrices that generate new environmental conditions for life in society (McLUHAN; McLUHAN, 1988). The media come to be seen as major environmental configurations of effects, such as those observed regarding the acoustic space. It is not the medium itself, but rather the effects in terms of perception, its resonances and reverberations that develop new environmental configurations. Resonance in the meaning that Werner K. Heisenberg attributed to the connection of the particles in the universe (McLUHAN; WATSON, 1973).

In fact, resonance and reverberation are sensory forms of behavior and perception that emerge from the very plasticity of the acoustic environment. Although it was present since the first explorations by McLuhan in the 1950's, it was the space event in the 1960's that provided the empirical conditions of the

thinking on the plasticity of the acoustic space and its environmental determinations. This event was the television broadcast of man landing on the moon. For McLuhan, this was a unique movement of environmental interaction between Earth-Moon promoted by the lenses of a television camera. He noted that, when it was fixed to the moon ground, the television camera transmitted a paradoxical image of us on Earth. The resonant environment is projected, as can be read on the statement excerpt that tries to describe the plasticity of this space that had never before being configured.

After the Apollo astronauts had revolved around the moon's surface in December 1968, they assembled a television camera and focused it on the earth. All of us who were watching had an enormous reflexive response. We "outered" and "innered" at the same time. We were on earth and the moon simultaneously. And it was our individual recognition of that event which gave it meaning.

A resonant interval had been established: the true action in the event was not on the earth or the moon, but rather in the airless void between, in the play of the axle and wheel as it were. We had become newly aware of the separate physical foundations of these two different worlds and were willing, after some initial shock, to accept both as an environment for man (McLUHAN; POWERS, 1996, p. 21-2).

After assembling a television camera on the moon surface to shoot images of the earth, the Apollo 8 mission brings together at the same time the moon and the earth space. It is this radically unusual image that completely changed his

conception of space, leading him to conceive the concept of one “resonant interval”.

The resonant space emerges here more vigorously to designate the conjunction of a figure and its background, considering that the Moon (the figure) became a privileged place to turn the Earth into a take (background), one involved with the other and both simultaneous. Even though the take was made by the camera, the fundamental effect of the photographic gesture is not the visual image, but rather this unusual space of duplication and self-reflectiveness that McLuhan understands as a resonant interval – a plastic version par excellence of the *sensus communis* of the electronic age.

But the speculations McLuhan makes from this episode were decisive for the coming of age not only of the notion of acoustic space, but also for the perception of large scale sensory environments, such as the global village and the extensions of the central nervous system. The global village becomes a plastic construction of this resonant space whose fundamental characteristic is the fact that it operates similarly to a brain, with its hemispheres projected in such a way as to produce environmental effects and configurations of the electronic sensorium, which will just be mentioned here, since the complexity of this approach led us to a more detailed study in a book devoted to Marshall McLuhan thinking on the media.

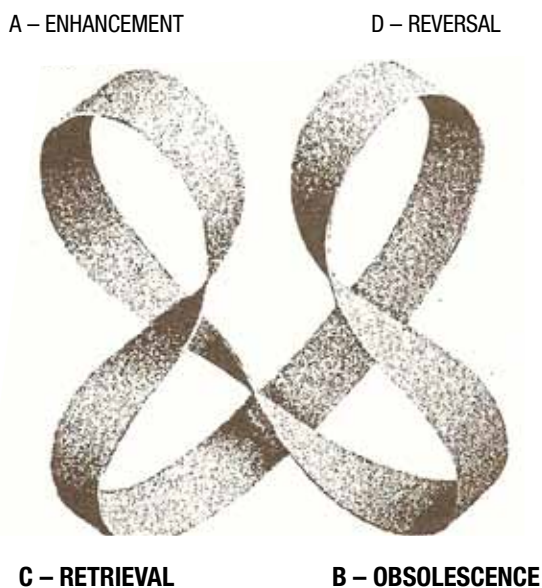
Based on this large scale environmental configuration, projected from the resonant space, the event of the space conquest becomes an environment to further improve the laws of media which McLuhan elaborates by observing behaviors resulting from four fundamental questions:

- (1) What does it amplify or intensify?
- (2) What expresses the obsolete or displaced?
- (3) What does it recover which was previously obsolete?
- (4) What does it do or what can it become when pushed to its limit?

According to the notion of the media as extensions, a new configuration emerges in the intensification of a sensory environment. However, the new medium emerges as its complementary opposition counterpart: since the confrontation is not exclusive, but rather corresponds to a movement of dialectic opposition that moves towards obsolescence when facing the emergence of a new shift. The laws of media were summarized in four movements: enhancement, reversal, retrieval and obsolescence.

Although it has been formulated in four points, operationally we are facing injunctions, of opposing pairs that seek to apprehend the transforming movement of one dimension in another one. At the same time it projects the relationship figure / background, the continuous movement synthesized in four

Figure 2 Tetrad structure



Source: McLuhan; POWERS, 1996, p. 27.

points equates a conceptual metaphor that McLuhan refers to as the tetrad:

The norm of the four parts clearly shows that the true tetrad has two backgrounds and two figures in balanced proportion, which tends to highlight the nature of the reversal step (McLUHAN; POWERS, 1996, p. 54).

The tetrad helps us to see the figure and the background, brings the later to a visible plan. In this case, the tetrad is the revealer, or better, “an instrument to reveal and predict the dynamics of innovations and new situations” (McLUHAN; POWERS, 1996, p. 34). In the specific case of technologies, we should examine how the electronic displaces the visual space to retrieve the acoustic space in an innovative way under the background of the alphabet culture, which was made

obsolete, which does not prevent it, however, from being an integral part of the tetrad structure. This is the case because it is not about eliminating confrontation, but rather promoting balance, like Harold Innis advocated at his time. Electronic technology repositions the sensorium, valuing what at Cicero’s time was *sensus communis*, i.e.,

(...) all senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch were all translated the same way among themselves. It was the Latin definition of man in a natural and healthy state, when the physical and psychological energies are constant and distributed in a balanced way in all sensory areas. Under such conditions, it is difficult to delude oneself. In any cultural medium, problems emerge when only one sense is subjected to one energy band and gets more stimuli than the others. For the modern Western man, this would be the visual area (McLUHAN; POWERS, 1996, p. 51).

Extensions make a dynamic movement resulting from the interplay between their essential qualities: enhancement, reversal, retrieval and obsolescence. When projecting as general operation of the interaction between closed and open systems, qualities become general properties of the media as environment-forming extensions that are self-regulated so as to guarantee the vital functioning of the ecosystems. The tetrad will thus be extended as a pattern of functioning of the system as it evolves.

With the tetrad, McLuhan brought the space metaphor in its functional orientation in order to support the dialectic relationship between acoustic and visual space and also to suggest that the latter could be understood as a function of its adherence to the former. The acoustic space is thus developed into an ontological metaphor and becomes the core of what McLuhan understands as the mode of communication developed by electricity. Therefore, when in contact with the screen media (pictographic, videographic, radiophonic and digital), the translation movement from one perceptual field to the other can be followed. This means that the ears take the place of the eyes, just like movements occupy pages and sounds make landscapes. This is not about a mere transposition of media, but rather the exploration of the resonant capacities of enhancement, reversal, retrieval, obsolescence: tetrads that equate the laws of media.

In other words, having established the internal equivalence and coherence between visual and acoustic space, McLuhan sets to show that the metaphysics of the media is a fact of acoustic nature. Based on this assumption, he argues that a perspicacious model of the study of any technology should operate based on metaphysical principles (GOW, 2001). Like the extension, the tetrad corresponds to this principle.

5 Conclusion

Since the 1950's, McLuhan questioned whether visual principles were proper analytical tools to describe the comprehensiveness of the acoustic space in its pervasive movement outside any hierarchy. Already around that time, he glimpsed the distinction between acoustic and visual space, not from the point of view of opposition, but rather from the dialectic-temporal conjunction and the figure / ground interaction represented by the electric-electronic media.

The notion of media as sensory extension was the great hypothesis that guided his exploration and the understanding of his fundamental question: shift in perception as a unique possibility presented by culture to change its cognitive processes. Roughly speaking, one might say that all his theoretical investments and intellectual partnerships sought strategies to investigate this shift. McLuhan not only proposed a challenging hypothesis, but also invested in observations so as to construct possible understandings.

From the interaction between observations and understanding an intellectual tool was generated proposing a cognitive model based no longer on the visual space founded by the alphabetic visuality, but rather by the perception of the environmental acoustic space. He called this cognitive model generated by the acoustic space tetrad. Thus, his questions from the 1950's enter into another speculative context in the late 1970's, shortly before his death.

The media projected by the electronic audiovisuality constituted the empirical field of conceptual speculations. From the metaphor of the Narcissus that McLuhan attributed to the videographic screen of the television, an observation is made of what is processed in the figure/ground interplay where the visual image (figure) is guided by the acoustic environment (ground). The videographic screens do what McLuhan and Fiore drew in a photomontage where the ear replaces the eye, restituting the sensory environment of the resonant acoustic space.

The resonant space thus conceived reaffirms not only the perspective of the noosphere, but also its importance for the understanding of the global village if, on the one hand, it favors the ecological environmental perception, on the other it situates the development of the nervous system designed by the media as a manifestation of the *sensus communis* that is able to promote consciousness or the planetary mind. The model of consciousness that is part

of this thinking process is based on human interactions, but focuses on processes and modes of interaction in and through the media which, during its evolution, reproduce a consciousness. In this regard, consciousness or the mind is a cognitive entity that gets energy from languages and images from the media, but which turns this information into consciousness and identity. Human consciousness would be nothing but the product of the media.

McLuhan's hypothesis continued to be challenging and dialogues actively with recent speculative experiences, like the one developed by Portuguese neuroscientist Antonio Damásio in his latest book *Self comes to Mind: Constructing Conscious Brain* whose title in Portuguese *E o cérebro criou o homem* (And the brain created man) evokes an evolutionary experience of consciousness guided by environmental interactions: only an indelible trace of Herbert Marshall McLuhan's thinking which has been resounding in the space of culture for one century. (LEITE, 2011)

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***Sensus communis:*
para entender o espaço
acústico em seu ambiente
sensorial ressonante**

Resumo

Como, e com que propósitos, o conceito de espaço acústico emergiu no pensamento de Marshall McLuhan? Quando tentamos encontrar resposta a esta questão, nos deparamos, não com uma exposição direta, mas com um método especulativo de investigação, denominado de explorações. O objetivo deste ensaio é alcançar as articulações metodológicas e epistemológicas do entendimento construído por McLuhan. Com elas espera-se compreender os estados de cultura desenvolvidos como *sensus communis* da era eletrônica.

Palavras-chave

Espaço acústico; ressonância; ambiente; sensorio; exploração.

***Sensus communis:*
Comprendendo lo espacio
acústico en su ambiente
sensorial y resonante**

Resumen

Cómo y con qué fines, ele concepto de espacio acústico se ha planteado en el pensamiento de Marshall Mcluhan? Cuando tratamos de encontrar la respuesta a esta cuestión, nos planteamos a una exposición directa, pero con un método especulativo de la investigación que quedo reconocida como exploraciones. El objetivo principal de este ensayo es alcanzar las articulaciones metodologicas y epistemologicas de entendimiento costruido por McLuha. Con elles se espera comprender os estados de cultura arrolados como *sensus communis* en la era electrónica.

Palabras clave

Espacio acústico; resonante; ambiente; sensorio; exploración.

Expediente

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