

Atacd Residency

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The project:

My residency at Goldsmiths college started on October 5th and finished on 19th, 2009. Framed within the Atacd Project on Topology and Cultural Dynamics, my project on border art from India and Pakistan intended to argue that a reflection on the topological space might provide some useful tools to analyze artistic works centred on border-spaces. The research questioned the notion of identity focusing on the continuous dynamic process of re-localization enacted by art. It then proposed to consider the experience of living on the border in post-phenomenological terms, as visual art can use affective devices to challenge the very notion of geographic rootedness that characterizes the rhetoric of nation-states. The key issue of my theoretical analysis might be summarized as follows:

The border and the nation-state:

Within the political discourse of nation-states, a border-line is a geometrical line in a Cartesian space-time supporting the state’s sovereignty. This geometrical border-line aims at establishing a neat division between interiority/exteriority and sustains the idea of a homogeneous time and a sense of origin (purity of belonging).

The theoretical turn:

A “topological space – writes Deleuze (*Foucault*, p.110) – establishes a contact between the Outside and the Inside, the most distant and the most deep”. Like Deleuze underlines in *Logic of Sense*, there is no distance in topology: all the matter of the inner world is actively present to the outer world on the limit of the living body. Considering the inside as being constituted by the folding of the outside, borders appear as unstable conjunctive webs (Serres). They are multidimensional mobile surfaces, rather than merely physical lines. In topological terms then, extensive borders (DeLanda) can be reconsidered as zones of intensity populated by *virtual* forces of deformation: they are always “in becoming, absorbed in occupying a field of potential” (Massumi *Concrete*, p.7).

The artistic frontiers I analyze are installations, video-installations and other works visually presenting new configurations of border-spaces. These works, which modify concrete forms like walls or natural landscapes, also enhance practices of subjectivation and highlight the involvement of the audience in a topological transformative movement. Art catalyzes the non-phenomenological experience of living on the membrane; moreover, the affective process of subjectivation, triggered by border art, questions the crystallization of identity. It dismembers the Cartesian Subject's completeness casting it into a trajectory of variation. This affective artistic contagion disrupts the sense of geographical belonging and reveals the political aim implied by the same works: the space seems to grow through the contacts taking place on the networked membrane, while it shrinks in the strict configuration of the state.

In conclusion, the project tried to consider the frontiers as thresholds giving way to new understanding; irreducible to the monodimensional mark of a line or to the tridimensional structure of a wall, borders are multidimensional poly-surfaces where every point can be a place for re-articulating an old knowledge (See Chambers, *The edge of the world*).

The residency:

The residency at the Sociology Department of Goldsmiths' College gave me the chance to participate to a series of meetings with Prof. Celia Lury and researchers from both Goldsmiths College and Basil University. Both the seminar held on October 9th and the following informal meetings with PhD students were a platform for exchanging ideas on the topological approach and the methodologies used for different researches. During my stay in London, I also contributed to the organization of the Atacd Student Day that will take place on December 9th in Barcelona. But the residency was mainly a chance to access the material available at Goldsmiths' College Library and other libraries in London, where I focused my research on books and articles on Indian Visual arts, on topology and space. The aim was to write a paper for the final conference to be held in Barcelona combining theories of the border, and their reconfiguration within a global context, with a topological approach.

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