

Brazil's Cultural Hybridity and the Latest Stage of Globalisation: Reassessing Anthropophagy

Kalinca Costa

University of Essex

One of the consequences of the latest stage of globalisation is that Brazil's current economic panorama witnesses the inversion on the trajectory of modernity, characterised by the declining hegemony of the West¹. This inversion - and the fact that the radicalising of modernity would result in 'the evaporating of the privileged position of the West'² - was a theme of British sociologist Anthony Giddens *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990). Moreover, today, social theory accounts, either centred on the axial principle of modernity (such Giddens' one) or on that of post-modernity (such as Featherstone's principle) attribute the following characteristics to globalisation: the collapse of economic and cultural hierarchies; and the emergence of competing centres. These analyses point to the fact that - as Dutch Professor of global sociology Jan Nederveen Pieterse has formulated in his essay *Globalization as Hybridisation* (1995) - globalising processes are not one-directional and homogenising. They instead result in globalisation as a form of pluralistic hybridity; that is, a phenomenon where all the dimensions involved, such as the structural and the cultural, are hybrid due to the 'interdependency and open-endedness' they imply³.

In this light, the following article proposes a reassessment of Brazil's Anthropophagic hybridity. The Anthropophagic movement of the 20/30s,

¹ In this article, the term "West" is associated with 1) the re-mapping of hegemony since the entry of the USA 'in the concert of imperial nations in 1898', and 2) with the economic and cultural leadership of the USA and Europe within the context of a world split into centre, semi-periphery and periphery according to the modern world system model.

² Giddens A. - THE CONSEQUENCES OF MODERNITY, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990, p. 64

³ Nederveen Pieterse, J. - *Globalization as Hybridization* - in: Featherstone M., Lash S., Robertson R. (eds.) GLOBAL MODERNITIES – London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 1995 p. 46

launched by Oswald de Andrade and adopted by Brazilian *modernistas* such as Tarsila de Amaral, was indeed an expression of cultural hybridity that neither merely replicated aesthetic-literary trends coming from the West, nor accepted unquestionably the authority of European modernism. Hence, hybridity, at the beginning of last century was a weapon with which to undo the ties of cultural dependency. It was a reaction against hegemony; a project that tackled inequality and questioned the existing hierarchies between Brazil and the centre. Andrade's hybridity was aggressive, as it proclaimed the devouring of European trends. It was subversive, as it wanted to de-authorise cultural imports, and was concerned with the colonial trauma that still pervaded Brazilian identity. This article, on the other hand, wishes to give an account of the character of hybridity today, in Pieterse's fashion, preoccupied with 'the ways in which localised cultural forms become separated from existing practices and recombine somewhere else with new forms and practices'⁴. Therefore the article will not deal with the infiltration of culture in Brazil as the authoritative presence of hegemonic culture, but will instead depict cultural transplants as generators of immediate relations and facilitated interaction between cultures no longer subjected to power asymmetries.

This reassessment explores two broadly adopted categorisations created to discuss the 'transformations in the place-culture relationship in the context of global modernity'⁵. Several cultural and social theorists have used the terms "dis-placement" (or "deterritorialisation"; or "delocalisation") and "increased complex connectivity" in order to describe the lift of cultural practices and behaviours from their geographical locations either physically or virtually. These concepts are vital if the intention is to detach Brazilian Anthropophagy from its established role of resistance and rebellion to the Western cultural canon, and render it instead as a sort of metaphorical and immaterial place of encounter of equally important, yet physically distantiated cultures.

⁴ Ibid, p. 49

⁵ Tomlinson J. – GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE – Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999, pp.106-107

Accordingly, the article will render Anthropophagic hybridity as a pluri-fertilised field in which distant cultures representationally meet and deal with issues of cultural complexity. The chapter will engage with the way in which Brazilians, within their domestic and urban locales, react to the blurring of the distinction of local and global culture - private and global identity.

For Anthony Giddens, today's globalisation is 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'⁶. Using Giddens' definition of globalisation as a basis, Jan Nederveen Pieterse notes that the phenomenon, in terms of structural forms of social organisation, 'increases the range of organisational options, all of which are in operation simultaneously'⁷. Nation-state and local economy, for instance, were the main organisational options of the phase of globalisation that precedes the current one; that is, the 'era from 1840s to the 1960s'⁸. Nowadays, Pieterse (1995) recognises that organisational options have become a ladder of administrative levels expressed from the national, to the international and transnational, crisscrossed by functional networks of corporations, governmental and non-governmental organisations, computer users and so on. Concomitantly or separately, this range of options shapes the global scenario under its 'social, institutional, legal, political, economic or cultural spheres'⁹. In the words of Pieterse:

'The overall tendency towards increasing global density and interdependence, or globalization, translates, then, into the pluralisation of the organisational forms. Structural hybridisation and the melange of diverse modes of organisation give rise to pluralisation of forms of co-operation and competition as well as novel mixed forms of co-operation. This is the corollary to flexible

⁶ Giddens A. - THE CONSEQUENCES OF MODERNITY, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990, p. 64

⁷ Nederveen Pieterse, J. - *Globalization as Hybridization* - in: Featherstone M., Lash S., Robertson R. (eds.) GLOBAL MODERNITIES – London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 1995 p. 51

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ *ibid*

specification and just-in-time capitalism and, on the other hand, to cultural hybridisation and multiple identities. [...] Also in political economy we can identify a range of hybrid formations. [...] counterposed to the idea of dual economy split in traditional/modern. [...] The notion of articulation of modes of production...holds that what has been taking place is the interpenetration of modes of production...[and] the rise [of] melange effects. [...] Hybrid formations constituted by the interpenetration of diverse logics manifest themselves in hybrid sites and spaces. [...] Border zones are meeting places of different organisational modes – such as offshore banking facilities (hybrid meeting places of state sovereignty and transnational enterprise). The use of information technology in supranational financial transactions has given rise to a hyperspace of capital¹⁰.

The modernisation of the underdeveloped world that characterised the 20th century's globalising phase up to the 1960s, assumed that such modernisation would occur by exporting the whole package of western organisational options, institutions and values. However, by considering Pieterse's views on the consequences of the globalising processes destined to erase traditional societies across the world, Westernisation as structural homogenisation of the "rest" to the standards of the West has given way to a plural, multidimensional hybridising phenomenon. Denying that modernising processes synchronised the realities of semi-peripheries and peripheries, such as Brazil, to the ones of the centre, would cast a shadow on the beneficial aspects of the westernising processes which took place from Modernisation theory onwards; but to state that globalisation processes are, under any of globalisation's dimensions, homogenising is made difficult by reflections such as Pieterse's. After decades of globalising processes designed on the model of one-way imperialism, globalisation has finally become fluid and multidirectional. Nowadays, the hybridisation of every single Western key modern institution (capitalism, industrialism, urbanism, a developed nation-state system, mass communications and so on) has two major implications. 1) The last phase of globalisation has marked a profound

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 50-51

alteration on the coordinates of the trajectory of modernity - weakening the centre and empowering the periphery. 2) If the West's key modern institutions are, in fact, highly hybridised as result of their global expansion, Western cultural transplants must behave accordingly. Consequently, within fully fledged globalisation, Pieterse's version of cultural hybridisation seems to be the only possible strategy with which Brazilian culture brings its own peculiarities to bear upon cultural infiltration. In the specificity of culture, his hybridity assumes that the territorial, or in his own words, 'the introverted concept of culture which underlies romantic nationalism, racism, ethnicism, [and]...civilisational chauvinism' is outdated; hence it ushers in a transcultural cutting and mixing between equally meaningful, interdependent cultures¹¹. If cultures across the world intermingle regardless of hegemony or territory-related hierarchies, neither the local reception of Western culture nor the impact that each culture has upon others can be downplayed.

After about a half century mainly devoted to expanding the developmental path pioneered by Western Europe and the United States, globalisation is now characterised by what Pieterse (1995) recognises as an ambivalent momentum. Uniformity and standardisation have given way to counter-current behaviours on behalf of non-Western or Westernised areas. Counter-current behaviours, in economic terms, have particularly come to the fore since the emergence of the BRICs and the latest financial collapse. In the early 2000s, Goldman Sachs Economy guru, Jim O'Neil, stated that 'by 2041 the BRICs (of which Brazil is part) would overtake the six largest Western economies in terms of economic might. The four...[countries]...would come to represent the pillars of the 21st century economy'¹². Through this statement O'Neil coined the theory of Decoupling, which 'holds that emerging economies [that is, the BRICs] have broadened and deepened to the point that they no longer depend on the United States for growth, leaving them insulated from severe

¹¹ Ibid, p. 64

¹² Tett G. – *The Man that Named the Future* – in: FINANCIAL TIMES Week End Magazine, January 2010, pp. 32-36

slowdown there, even from a fully fledged recession¹³. Particularly since the 2008 credit crunch, the BRICs have shown resilience to the global crisis by rebounding even if recovery was not taking place in the developed world as a whole.

According to *The Economist*, in the same period the BRICs accounted for no less than half the world's increase in wireless-technology subscriptions. Brazil not only was the last country to enter the worst global recession since the 1930s, it was also the first one out of it. In a fifteen-page review *The Economist*, in 2009, lists how Brazil has finally become a country able 'to cut interest rates and inject money into the economy as the world economy faltered'¹⁴. The review also points out that 'even as foreigners have been piling into Brazil, a number of Brazilian firms have been entering markets overseas...[and]...can be described as multinationals'¹⁵. It further notes that one of them is Vale, one of the largest world's mining companies, present in five continents; and that another good example of Brazil's multinational boom is Embraer, which is not only the third largest producer of aircraft with a branch in China, but also a popular supplier of jets to North-America. In addition to this, *The Economist* (23rd edition of 2010) has stated as recently as 17th July 2010, that Brazil is the world's most efficient ethanol producer and aims to create a global market in the green fuel.

Brazil is also changing its political position in relation to global affairs. After decades of enslavement to the IMF, a centralising institution that ensured the economic dependency of the country to the West, the Brazilian government announced that it will lend money to the institution. In the above mentioned 2010s issue, *The Economist* has stated that Brazil is seeking power and

¹³ De Aenlle C. - DECOUPLING: Theory vs. reality – THE NEW YORK TIMES online, 8th February, 2008. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/business/worldbusiness/27iht-26delink.9520541.html>

¹⁴ Getting it Together at Last: A Special Report on Business and Finance in Brazil – in: THE ECONOMIST, Volume 393, N. 8657, November 14th 2009, p.

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¹⁵ Ibid, p. 9

influence in the developing world - its contribution to the UNDP¹⁶ being as generous as those of donors such as Canada and Sweden. This effort matters to poor countries because it offsets the slowdown in aid from the West, and because Brazil does not impose Western-style conditions.

In Brazil, the importation of the Western canon began when Portuguese sailors landed on its shores in 1500; by 2010 the country seems to have wisely hybridised any of the “colonisers” imposed set of rules and values. After receiving the “full set of Western modern institutions”, it has first mimicked hegemony by adopting them, then metabolised and interpreted these institutions – endangering the very countries that intended the imposition of “their” rules and values to be a form of domination. Within 21st century Brazil, Anthropophagy as hybridisation is a theoretical construct that has permeated realms other than culture – such as the economic one.

Economic phenomena such as Decoupling and the emergence of the BRICs, prove that the later stage of globalisation is inverting the trajectory of globalising modernity and contradicting the Western hegemonic project. Nowadays globalisation is, as from Pieterse’s conceptualisation, hybridity in the plural. The global imposition of the Western canon has been subverted on a multidimensional level, and the latest stage of Brazil’s development, as described above, witnesses the alteration of power relations between the centre and the periphery on political and economic fronts. Brazil’s current expression of globalisation has blurred the canon, reversed the current, and subverted the centre. Brazil, through economic hybridity has shifted power whilst questioning and endangering the authority of the West. Its oppositional reactions to deep rooted dependence have gone beyond the cultural field, and considering that all fields of social life are interconnected, it is unavoidable that the chase for identity, the need of cannibalising the enemy could not manifest itself only in the cultural sphere. The influences coming from the West have been de-authorised and re-configured to such an extent that, paradoxically, it is difficult to continue giving to Anthropophagic hybridity

¹⁶ United Nation Development Program

culturally subversive qualities. Given the scenario of 21st century Brazil, cultural Anthropophagy as an insurrection destined to overcome hegemonic dominance has become an obsolete concept. Power asymmetries are progressively diminishing, politico-economic hierarchies between Brazil and the West have been questioned, and inverse hypotheses have been formulated. Therefore it becomes vital to reassess cultural hybridity according to the reality of Brazil's contemporaneity.

Since the 1960s, communication technologies and the mass-media have been the main generators of Brazilian Anthropophagic hybridity. The *Tropicalia* movement, which can be considered as the Anthropophagic rebirth of the 60 and 70s, showed how their hegemonic message was subverted, and their centralising function denied within an era characterised by westernising forces at their height. Tropicalism was pointing its finger at the paternalistic stance with which the West was interpreting global expansion as monocultural imposition. Oiticica, for instance, was questioning Western influence and repeatedly cited Oswald de Andrade in one of his most programmatic texts: "cannibalism would be the defence that we have against foreign domination and the principal creative weapon, this constructivist will, which did not totally prevent a kind of cultural colonialism that today we want objectively abolish, definitively absorbing it in a super-cannibalism"¹⁷. During that period there was a generalised climate of imperialistic revival: theories of development such as those of Frank and Wallerstein, critical and cultural theories' debates on cultural imperialism, the "Coca-Colonization" of the world and so forth. Those times were marked by a strong programme of westernising emancipation of the world coming from the centre, equalled only by the vehemence with which Brazilian art would resist homogenising threats. The oppositional hegemonic/subaltern relationship was unconcealed, antagonisms were open - the Cold War may be taken as the alter-ego of the bipolar trait of that phase of globalising history.

¹⁷ Basualdo C. – essay: Sobre Tropicalia: Avant-garde, Popular Culture, and The Culture Industry in Brazil (1967-1972), p. 11 – in: ATLANTICA: Magazine of Art and Thought N. 45, Spring 2008. Cabildo de Gran Canaria: CAAM, Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderna

Contemporary Brazil's situation is different. On the one hand, politico-economic subalternity is fading away, hence politico-economic issues of dependence no longer foment social disturbance as they used to: accordingly, as the criticality of this type of praxis has been tamed, art may take less subversive stances. Starting from these premises, can Anthropophagic art still mirror the cultural strata of Brazil if it continues to rely on destabilising hybridity? Is there still any need for art to subvert the canon; to invert power relations; to assert Brazilianess in order to oppose resistance to hegemony? In politico-economic terms, Western authority has been syncretised with and intimidated by Brazil, whose relation with the centre is no longer a "subject-object" one. Now we can conceive this relation to be occurring between two equally authoritative and interrelated subjects.

On the other hand, the current relationship between Brazil and the West has far less contrasting traits, with communication technologies having dramatically improved when compared to what they used to be during the *Tropicalia* movement. We now live in the era of the internet, the mobile phone, I-Pad, online-banking and youtube. Complex connectivity has been exacerbated by 'the sheer ubiquity of media', globalising communication technologies have become common within Brazilian households, and although physical distance between other areas of cultural practices have remained the same, these far-originated practices can reach intimate spaces with the click of the mouse or the touch of the key-board¹⁸. The time-space equation has been reduced as never before, generating immediate relations, therefore facilitating interaction, between other cultural behaviours and practices and Brazilian ones.

Transnational corporations, international chains and products pervasively inhabit Brazilian homes and local streets. Even the urban plan of the country's small cities has lost the comforting character of familiar cultural setting to host distant social forces and processes. Here, I am referring to the way in which the current stage of globalisation has fundamentally reconfigured the

¹⁸ Tomlinson J. – GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE – Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999, p.115

relationship between inhabited spaces and cultural practice, experiences and identities (Tomlinson,1999). More specifically, I am addressing the phenomenon identified by several theorists and named “dis-placement” (Giddens, 1990); or “delocalization’ (Thompson, 1995); or “deterritorialization” (Appadurai, 1990; Canclini, 1995; Featherstone, 1995; Latouche, 1996). Although there are ‘differences of emphasis between these usages, it is possible to identify a general sense of the concept’ which, Tomlinson advocates, is the breakage of the link between culture and domestic and/or public social territories¹⁹. Further, we can conceive of dis-placement as the reassessment of the traditional equation of anthropological place: land=society=nation=culture (Tomlinson, 1999). Or, by judging Featherstone’s words, it is the phenomenon through which:

‘the boundaries of local cultures are seen to have become more permeable and difficult to maintain, to the extent that some proclaim that everywhere is the same as everywhere else [;and through which] we live in localities where the flow of information and images have obliterated the sense of collective memory and tradition of the locality to the extent that there is no sense of place.’²⁰

In Brazil, even areas that were characterised by unprivileged economic means and rudimentary yet extremely local culture, have been caught in the process of transformation of dis-placement. The daily life of a vast majority of Brazilians is now interwoven with and penetrated by objects and images originating “somewhere else”, both within the private and public realms. Certainly, the decrease of poverty resulting from the recent progressions of globalisation has played a fundamental role on this. In the words *The Economist* :

‘On a Saturday night in Canudos, a town of 15,000 people in the interior of Bahia...there is a lot of consumption going on. Everyone has a mobile phone, a few people have new cars, and early-evening courting is fuelled by branded

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 107

²⁰ Featherstone M. – UNDOING CULTURE – London: Sage, 1995, p. 93

beers and hot dogs. This place was one byword for poverty, sitting as it does in the middle of Brazil's drylands. [...] Carlinhos Silveira has returned to Canudos after some time spent working in São Paulo and now runs a small hotel. For decades internal migration in Brazil worked in the opposite direction, as people escaped the hardscrabble north-east for menial jobs in the more prosperous south-east. Now it is possible to find members of Brazil's burgeoning middle class even here.²¹

These words not only describe the improvement of Brazilian's quality of life, they also denote the sense of dis-placement of the most popular areas of the North-East of Brazil. Dis-placement is also depicted in the photographic work of young artist, Marcio Lima. His series, *Estetica de um Povo* (Aesthetic of a Population) (**Fig. 1, 2**) describes how far-away social forces proliferate within improving social settings.

Through these photographs, it is possible to think of urban place as "locale" a term coined by Giddens to describe geographically the 'physical settings of social activity'²², which in the latest stage of globalisation have become 'increasingly phantasmagoric' as local contexts are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them²³. Lima's "locales" are Brazilian settings of phantasmagoria because they convey how the trivial presence of symbols of North-American or European culture - such as Las Vegas style street gambling, a game of pocket billiards or adverts for American fizzy beverages – underlines the absence yet penetrating spectral presence of the distant practices linked to these very symbols. In his work, Lima overlaps the ghostly presence of these far originated and enacted social practices to the practices and symbols of every-day Brazilianness. The *Fusca* (a still post Second World War model of the utilitarian German Volkswagen, which has been produced in Brazil since the development of an early

²¹ Getting it Together at Last: A Special Report on Business and Finance in Brazil – in: THE ECONOMIST, Volume 393, N. 8657, November 14th, 2009, p. 16

²² Giddens A. - THE CONSEQUENCES OF MODERNITY, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990, p. 18

²³ Ibid, p. 19

manufacturing industry, and which has been for many decades the iconic car of “the people”); the gatherings after work outside *Botecos* (Brazilian convivial places of entertainment where alcoholic drinks and typical snacks are served) over a *Geladinha* (the traditional almost-frozen beer drunk daily by the vast majority of the population); black or *mestizo* youth in the streets with no shirts as a testimony of the constant heat - and of the not completely extirpated lack of means. Lima’s photographic compositions depict these Brazilian urban areas as imbued ‘not simply [with] that which is present on the scene; the “visible form” of the locale[s] conceal the distanced relations which determine...[their] nature’²⁴.

Lima’s visible forms are somehow ordinary, the pictures disguise their conceptual reach by assuming the shape of banal holiday-maker’s shots – he behaves like a 21st Century *flaneur* accessorised with image-making technology. If further analysed, the simple rendering of basic cultural practices - drinking; cooking; playing; chatting; discloses these very practices as hybrid, that is, similar to those of peoples who inhabit far-away geographical locations, yet to a certain degree peculiar to the local. Hybridity is therefore immortalised somewhere in between long geographical distance – the latter has been transformed to “virtual proximity” as locally separated practices meet. These photographs prove how today’s globalisation, according to Giddens, dramatically ‘tears space away from place’ fostering the intermingling of existentially meaningful symbolisation and experience (that is, of culture) between people who are not joined in face-to-face experiences²⁵.

Imported objects and images of today’s Brazil are depicted with a certain sense of complacency; cultural imports have fertilising rather than polluting features. They are pacifically associated to the complexity of cultural appropriation, and the circulation of what previously could be labelled as hegemonic symbols is approached from a non-controversial position. Lima belongs to a generation of artists that no longer interprets these symbolic forms as belonging to a civilising mission which suggests Brazil’s positioning

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ *ibid*

within the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder. Consequently, his work takes for granted that foreign objects and images of any provenience, when crossing the Brazilian frontier, are unquestionably attributed with meanings and uses that differ from those given to them in their place of origin.

In *Estetica de um Povo*, objects (or the mediatic image linked to them) become totems of convergence of foreign and Brazilian cultural practices. Given that all objects are linked to their utility and meaning within the behavioural patterns and values of a certain culture, whilst using the object conceived of abroad, the local consumer is acquiring the behavioural patterns and values of the distant culture that the object crystallises. Values and behaviours, when acquired through the object are spontaneously “unwrapped” within the culture of the local consumer, who decodes these foreign influences using his/her local cultural resources. This generates new, localised behaviours and practices, which are hybrid, a mix, a melange – which, in turn, are re-embodied in objects and images. In other words, multiple inflexions of culture and different existentially meaningful cultural behaviours irradiate from objects or mediatic images – manifesting themselves in distant localities, such as the Brazil of Lima’s snapshots. Objects and images are material and visual substances that through their use both generate and carry hybridity. They are simultaneously the major agents and bearers of what today’s social sciences define as cultural complexity, that is, of ‘the greater production, mixing and syncretism of cultures which were formerly held separate and firmly attached to social relationships’ within specific geographical areas²⁶.

The latest repositioning of Brazil within the global economic scene has had repercussions within its population other than the ones discussed earlier. In recent years, ‘the share of people in social class C...[that is]...the middle class...increased from 42% of the population to 52% in 2008. [...] Brazil’s score on the Gini coefficient, a measure of social inequality, is falling, getting

²⁶ Featherstone M. – UNDOING CULTURE – London: Sage, 1995, p.11

closer to that of the United States'²⁷. The increasing wealth of Brazilian society implies that through the expanded access to information technologies, such as the internet, cultural complexity irradiates from the computer screens of many Brazilians. According to Rogerio Santanna²⁸, Secretary of Logistics and Technology at the Brazilian Ministry of Planning, research made in 2006 across the whole national territory proved that 'although it is still necessary to develop public policies in order to favour the use of internet within the D and E classes', within B and C, there has been an increase of the possession of computers, an improvement of domestic internet access and of the use of internet cafes²⁹. Regarding the use of these technologies, 45.6% of those interviewed had used a computer; 33% had accessed the internet at least once. Almost 30% of those interviewed had constantly used internet in the three months previous to the research, the majority at home (40%) or at internet cafes (30%). Moreover, 48,08% of classes D and E accessed the internet from public spaces.

According to Tomlinson, communication technologies have 'a broad significance...in the process of deterritorialisation'³⁰. He further explains that the penetration of domestic or familiar locales by globalising technologies has implications not only for the privacy of family life, but also for 'the "boundary" which constitutes 'the self'³¹. The boundary of the "private self" may be threatened due to its constant and conspicuous interaction with the 'wider horizon of human belonging' made possible by the use of information technologies³². Although complex connectivity - that is, living plugged into the

²⁷ Getting it Together at Last: A Special Report on Business and Finance in Brazil – in: THE ECONOMIST, Volume 393, N. 8657, November 14th 2009, p. 16

²⁸ All translations of Rogerio Santanna's text by the author unless otherwise specified

²⁹ Santanna R. in: PESQUISA MOSTRA O USO DA INTERNET NO BRASIL, Inclusao Digital: Governo do Brasil (4/12/2006). From: <http://www.inclusaodigital.gov.br/noticia/pesquisa-mostra-resultados-da-pesquisa-sobre-o-uso-da-internet-no-brasil>.

³⁰ Tomlinson J. – GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE – Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999, p.115

³¹ Ibid, p. 118

³² ibid

global network may be interpreted as a dangerous blurring of the distinction between public and private, local and global self; it may more positively be taken as a process of fertilisation of the self that hybridises it.

In Brazil, particularly in large cities, the intrusion of the “outer world” into the domestic and urban sphere is rescaling the relationship between local and imported culture to the smaller element of social life, namely the individual. Dis-placement has detached the experience of culture from physical territory and through the internet this relationship is now occurring within virtual spaces. A conspicuous amount of the metabolisation of foreign cultural practices happens whilst Brazilians face computer screens. Monitors and eight hundred computer “mice” are the material used by artist Eide Feldon in her work *Fertilidade Urbana* (Urban Fertility) (**Fig. 3, 4**). This video-installation, presented in 2001 at *Paço das Artes*, in São Paulo, comprises an enormous pile of computer “mice” that climbs one of the columns of the exhibition space, threatening to invade the whole room. As Brazilian art critic Laymert Garcia dos Santos³³ points out, they are ‘metaphors of fertility and spontaneous reproduction...,[and] of the symbioses of the digital and the biological’³⁴. The installation is also composed by two video works in which the “mice” resemble spermatozoids in the process of fertilising an egg, while also recalling the vision of the Earth from intergalactic distance. The pile of “mice” is wrapped in a disparate range of images, all easily gathered by the artist or by anyone with the touch of a key-board button; through the videos it is also possible to access the internet and navigate sites that generate in the viewer/browser free associations between telecommunications, visual and data information, and fertility.

The installation also triggers a wide range of other associations; the imposing agglomerate of imagery generated ubiquitously in terms of time/space (which may come from both material and virtual reality) conveys today’s globalisation

³³ All translations of Laymert Garcia dos Santos’ text by the author unless otherwise specified

³⁴ Garcia L. dos Santos – REDE DE TENSAO – Sao Paulo: Co-edicao Paco das Artes e Imprensa Oficial do Estado, 2001

as a dramatic process of instant mediation and interchange, and as the immediate proximity of each individual to the immense set of behavioural and cultural patterns manifested across the planet. The monumental intricacy of the sculptural part of the installation, where “mice”, images and wires are chaotically entwined, denotes global culture as a manifold space, a clustered form, a pluri-fertilised field; it suggests the relativisation of culture through increased juxtaposition. It points out how the cult of the image, although conceived to perpetuate long-established discourses of dependency, is instead fostering a shift in both the global balance of power and in the image of culture. The sense of disorder and confusion felt by looking at this monolithic chaos points to the current re-evaluation of the sociological image of global culture. The latter, was long-conceived as ‘something integrated, unified, settled and static; something relatively well-behaved which performed the task of oiling the wheels of social life in an ordered society’ where the periphery would gradually and methodically be educated to climb up to follow the centre³⁵. Feldon’s enormous pile of image-saturated “mice” is anarchic and lacks direction, bringing to mind the chaotic cultural interdependence of today’s global integration. The latter, as much as *Fertilidade Urbana*, gains much of its impetus from the collapse of symbolic hierarchies.

The interaction of the biological/human with the digital/virtual, conveys the way in which the “private self” finds in computer screens an open window to the multi-faceted self of the world. Through the work’s relation to the biological glossary it then becomes unavoidable to think of the global process of appropriation of the digital by the human as a stage of metabolisation of virtual information. Hence the “private self” becomes anthropophagous through the instantaneous digestion of endless information coming from the self of distant others. However, the work suggests, this interaction is fertile, the process of global metabolisation that follows is productive – metabolisation releases positive and constructive energies. The scenes on the “mice” mountain as much as the information delivered to the beholder while he/she looks at the visual and data information are, in fact, concerned

³⁵ Featherstone M. – UNDOING CULTURE – London: Sage, 1995, p.13

with the general state of cultural metabolisation that is taking place, at an individual level, globally. Brazilians are complying with this generalised state, which in turn is linked to the current shift of the symbolic power of the West that followed the emergence of competing centres. Hence, it can be said that Brazil's Anthropophagic metabolisation has lost its aggressive and confrontational stance. The entire world is participating in a process of relativisation of the West that whilst equalling its cultural capital to that of other areas is attributing to all cultural capitals the same fertilising qualities. Feldon's work conveys how Brazilians are now allowed to positively metabolise foreign influence without engaging in issues of power relations. Brazilians have their share in a process of Anthropophagic hybridity of the self that is encompassing the whole world, triggering within each person a sense of belonging to 'the global village'³⁶

Dis-placement and increased complex connectivity have generated two substantial changes in the lives of the Brazilians. They now experience a declining relationship between their local culture and their material spaces, and a sense of proximity and intimacy in relation to omnipresent foreign cultural practices. Lima's and Feldon's works witness what Anthropophagic hybridity has become in their current reality. If the relation of culture to geographical and social territory has been compromised, cultural Anthropophagy no longer can 'demarcate a difference, a border' to be asserted both physically and ideologically³⁷. If the current stage of globalisation is providing an unlimited interaction within cultures and cultural integration has lost its direction, Anthropophagic activity can continue to generate hybridity only through pacific metabolisation of foreign cultures and through the convenient coexistence of the national and the imported. Furthermore, displacement and increased complex connectivity are phenomena common to people around the globe, hence this compromising

³⁶ Tomlinson J. – GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE – Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999, p. 3

³⁷ Sandfuhr T. – *So' a Antropofagia nos Une: Assimilation and Difference in the Character of the Anthropophag-* in: Aus Dem Moor E., Ronna G., (eds) - NEW PINDORAMA – Nuremberg, 2005: Verlag, Fur Moderne Kunst Nuremberg, 2005, p. 42.

form of Anthropophagic activity is occurring everywhere. Anthropophagic hybridity is a Brazilian cultural construct that has been changed by these phenomena, and that through these phenomena, it has been “exported” – being as it is now practiced in the globalised world.

Hybridity has lost its aggressive stance, as there is no longer the need to tame or marginalise imperialistic undertakings. In his analysis of globalising cultural complexity, Mike Featherstone remarks that nowadays it is problematic to assume that there is a ‘centre from which everything flows out towards the periphery’, and in politico-economic terms, Pieterse’s words referred to earlier have been proved right: that the global exportation of Western institutions resulted in their hybridisation and in counter-current behaviours that weakened the position of Western economies in relation to emerging ones³⁸. Featherstone also states that globalisation is marked by ‘a growing sense of multipolarity and the emergence of competing centres’ – a statement that destabilises the traditional formula “hegemonic/subaltern”³⁹. In Brazil’s case, its relation to the West has become a relation between centres; between equals – both characterised by hybridised structural forms. By analogy, the relationship between their cultures, freed from conflict of interest, has become far less engaged with issues such as subordination or derivation.

³⁸ Featherstone M. – UNDOING CULTURE – London: Sage, 1995, p.9

³⁹ *ibid*

Fig. 1,2: Marcio Lima, *Estetica de um Povo*. Media: Photography. Exhibition: Rede de Tensao at Paco das Artes. Sao Paulo, 2001

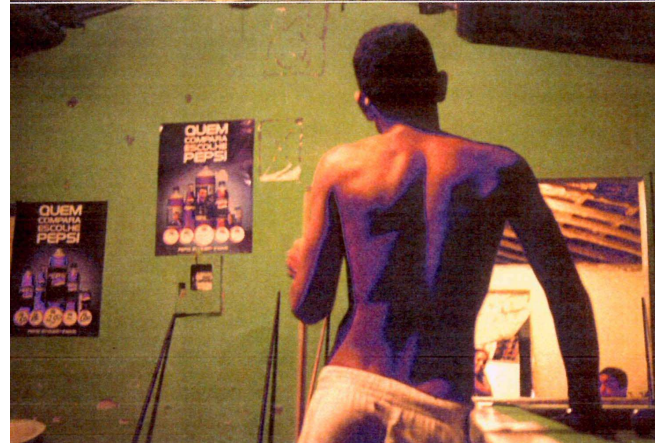




Fig. 3- Eide Feldon,
Fertilidade Urbana
Mixed-media installation
Exhibition: Rede de Tensao at
Paco das Artes.
Sao Paulo, 2001

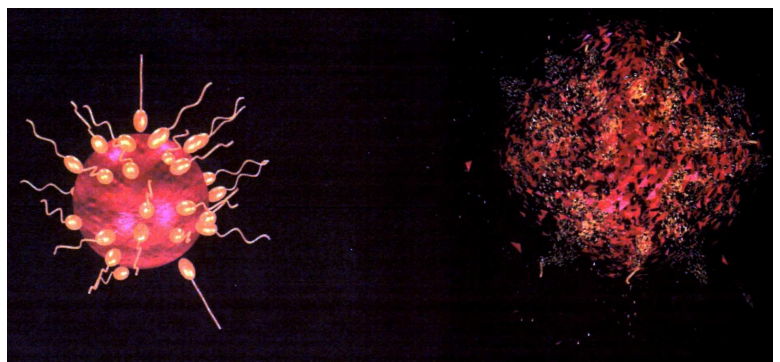


Fig. 4: Video work detail of *Fertilidade Urbana*