

Experiencing the Everyday

Edited by Carsten Friberg and Raine Vasquez



NSU Press

Copyright © Carsten Friberg and Raine Vasquez (eds.), the authors and NSU Press
2017

NSU Press & Nordiskt Sommaruniversitet
Föreningarna Nordens Förbund
Malmøgade 3
2100 København Ø
Danmark

Produced by Förlaget (M)
Nylandsgatan 17 B
FI-00120 Helsingfors, FINLAND
<http://www.forlaget.com>

Printed by Nord Print Ab
Helsingfors, 2017

Distributed by Aarhus University Press
Langelandsgade 177
8200 Aarhus N DENMARK
<http://www.unipress.dk>
ISBN: 978-87-87564-93-9

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
<i>Epp Annus</i>	
Chapter 1	22
Everyday Aesthetic Experience: Explorations by a Practical Aesthetics	
<i>Dan Eugen Ratiu</i>	
Chapter 2	53
The Poetics of Workplaces	
<i>Anna-Lena Carlsson and Jennie Schaeffer</i>	
Chapter 3	69
The Landscape as Image	
<i>Eva la Cour</i>	
Chapter 4	89
Entering Spaces, Creating Places: A Human Geographical Approach to the Production of the Every- day	
<i>Evi Riikonen</i>	
Chapter 5	110
Ecological Significance in Nature Appreciation	
<i>Corinna Casi</i>	

Chapter 6	133
Between places: Everyday Experience and Everyday Places in Leslie Kaplan and François Bon <i>Tue Løkkegaard</i>	
Chapter 7	145
A Phenomenology of Interaction: Space and the Body of Progress in Angola <i>João Afonso Baptista</i>	
Chapter 8	166
Creating and Experiencing the Everyday through Daily-life <i>Ossi Naukkarinen and Raine Vasquez</i>	
Chapter 9	190
Chopin's Heart: The Somatic Stimulation of Our Experience of Thingness in Every- day Popular Culture <i>Max Ryyönen</i>	
Chapter 10	207
Education through Everyday Things <i>Carsten Friberg</i>	
About the Authors	225

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Phenomenology of Interaction: Space and the Body of Progress in Angola

João Afonso Baptista

Introduction

Progress is a pervasive idea. Whether taken as personal, social, ethical, material, spiritual, or otherwise, the idea of progress plays an important role in the way we strategize and organize our everyday lives. In this essay, I explore the idea of individual progress through a phenomenology of interaction.

Within the social sciences, most of the contemporary theories of both progress and the individual explain the confluence of the two in terms of deterritorialization. For example, this is what Zygmunt Bauman tell us: the progress of the individual involves “the revenge of nomadism over the principle of territoriality” (2000, 13). For Bauman, as for many other renowned theorists, the modern pursuit of matters that are desirable to the individual requires her/him to embrace a constant state of deterritorialized fluidity;^[1] it demands that the individual dissociate herself/himself, specifically in terms of her/his aspirations, ideals, sense of possibility, and sense of self-fulfillment, from

the actual conditions of territorial space – the particularities of space are trivial. My goal, by contrast, is to show that individual progress in today's world may be related to the basic spatialization of oneself; that is, it may signify the radical synchronization between a territorial space, the things inscribed in that space, and the individual's self.

Before proceeding with my explanation, let me introduce two essential premises on which I build my arguments: first, I adopt Michel de Certeau's notion of space as "practiced place" (1984, 117), which means space is a product of *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984); second, I understand this practice, the everyday experience of space, as something that makes beingness – it affects humans' ways of being. It is this latter approach that a phenomenology of interaction would promote in its treatment of space.

In the wake of Alfred Whitehead's process philosophy, various scholars have claimed that "beings do not preexist their relatings" (Haraway 2003, 6). In harmony with this reasoning, I maintain that human beings are a result of interactions with space. Humans always think *with* and are *with* the things that they live with in space. For example, psychologists have claimed that newborn infants start developing emotions, ideas, and their notion of themselves and others through their grounding, or embeddedness, in the concreteness of space, not through acts of disembedding from it (e.g. Reddy 2008). This grounding or embeddedness leads to both initiation into and rootedness in the world. "Space is existential", de Certeau says, "and existence is spatial" (1984, 117). Accordingly, in this essay, I sustain the view of the lived space as constitutive of existence, and demonstrate the following: the ways individuals conceptualize what to pursue for the accomplishment of an improved self-condition – individual progress – are affected by their interactions with and within the worlds that they inhabit in space.

Besides the question of spatiality, crucial in my commitment to the notion of individual progress are the body and material culture.

Here, I build my arguments from the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as from “new materialists” and “vitalists”, like Jane Bennett and Donna Haraway. The latter current of thought promotes the idea that human beings are not the sole holders of agency and vitality. What is needed, says Bennett, of “the task” of understanding the world and the constitution of our ideas in it, “is a cultivated, patient, sensory attentiveness to nonhuman forces” (2010, xiv). By emphasizing, even overemphasizing, theories of embodied being that cross the human-nonhuman divide, these scholars ask questions such as: “Why should our bodies end at the skin?” (Haraway 1991, 178).

Yet, my awakening to the relation between progress and both “the body” and materiality did not originate from my readings in phenomenology and “new materialisms”. Rather, it originated from my ethnographic fieldwork in Southeast Angola, which I started in 2011. It was the local context that I encountered, and in which I lived, that prompted me to think of such a relation and, furthermore, led me to research material culture and what de Certeau (1984, 118) called “a ‘phenomenology’ of existing in the world” more seriously. There and then, I realized how the corporeally lived interactions of humans with and within the spaces where they find themselves can have a profound effect on the production of subjectivities commonly considered to be fully under the control of humans, such as the idea of progress (e.g. Nisbet 2009).

To introduce what I discuss more thoroughly below: in Southeast Angola, local residents conceptualize their “practiced place” in terms of a body that they, in turn, sense as being constitutive of them. The development of oneself is fundamentally constituted through becoming and being such a body. This body symbolizes a monism relative to the union between people and the world with which they interact. Put differently, this body is locally understood as a sort of metaphysical container of the everyday interactions with an everyday space.

As such, it encompasses the immediate sensorial engagements that one has with the objects, people, institutions, and any other sort of elements inscribed in the space of one's ordinary life. This space may be limited to the area of a small village, or may instead incorporate various villages, towns, and cities. This space, this united, assembled, and interdependent body I call the *body-whole*.

In contrast to the science of anatomy, which defines the body as a definite entity, the body-whole to which I refer exceeds the individual's skin. It includes and is open to those elements external to the human anatomy that come to count for the composition of a meaningful existential whole for its bearer. Haraway says: “[t]he corpse is not the body. Rather, the body is always in-the-making; it is always a vital entanglement of heterogeneous scales, times, and kinds of beings webbed into fleshly presence, always a becoming, always constituted in relating” (2008, 163). Basically, for Haraway, bodies are instances of interactions in the making. In the same tone, Elizabeth Behnke argues that “my body is something I *do* [and] I do not do it alone” (1997, 198). I build my arguments on this ground. The body-whole is something that the individual does *with* the properties of the space that she/he interacts with. It expands, maintains, or shrinks as a consequence of interactions with and in space. In Southeast Angola, there is a term for the doings-through-interaction that expand the individual's body-whole: *progresso individual*.^[2]

Specifically, I explore the relation between body-whole and individual progress in Southeast Angola by analyzing local residents' interactions with an asphalt road. As various anthropologists have highlighted (e.g. Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012; Larkin 2013), infrastructure provides a fruitful site to investigate the ways in which people produce meaning and make things relatable. In this sense, infrastructure, such as roads, not only involves the circulation of material goods and people, but can also stimulate the production of meanings, aspirations, and the definitions related to one's own progress.

My theoretical contribution deviates both from phenomenological approaches that do not consider the materials in space as an essential component of the body, and from material culture's approaches that do not consider the body as central to the materiality of space. I ultimately contend that, in order to better understand the production of ideas of individual progress and the impacts of such ideas on everyday life, we should move our focus away from human and nonhuman "actants", to use Bruno Latour's (2004) famous term, or "the body" alone (e.g. Csordas 1994), and to concentrate more deliberately on the *interactions* between them. Indeed, we and our ideas are always, and primarily, constituted through phenomena of interaction.

Interaction

Etymologically, the verb *to interact* is derived from the Latin words *inter* (meaning among, between, or in the midst of) and *actus* (a doing). To interact means to act on one another. Correspondingly, the noun *interaction* indicates an event that happens through two or more elements that have effects on each other. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED Online, 2015), the lexical history of the concept derives from the word *interdeal*, first used in 1591, which signified mutual dealing or intercourse. The tree of related terms grew from *interdealing* to "reciprocation" to "intercommunion", until the word *interaction* flourished. The word itself came into print for the first time in the Romantic age, with Romantic philosophical and metaphysical investments (Wolfson 2010, 2). It first appeared in the novel *Saturday Evening*, by Isaac Taylor, in 1833. Taylor proposed that there are "influences or principles of interaction, which... *bind together* all the solid masses of the universe, and impart to each sphere an agency that extends itself to all others" (2013 [1833], 125; emphasis added). In 1875, Ralph Emerson gives a poetic spin to the notion of interaction, and refers to it as, "the large effect of laws which correspond to the inward laws which he [the poet] knows, and so are but a kind of *extension of*

himself" (1909 [1875], 41; emphasis added). The principle of interaction came to be registered as an individual process of knowing, affecting, and attuning that could foster the extension of the self in connection to the world. Later, Thomas Hardy relates the word *interaction* to the pursuit of culmination and triumph – the pursuit of progress: “the acme and summit of the *human progress*... will become corrected by... a closer *interaction* of the social machinery than now jolts us round and along” (2013 [1906], 5; emphasis added).

I find these writings illuminating. They support what I want to demonstrate in this essay: the extension of one’s everyday interactions in space can have a unifying effect, namely between the individual and the elements she/he interacts with. Moreover, the degree of this territorial extension can be translated as an indication of individual progress.

In its prevailing meaning, interaction refers to reciprocal action or influence, and therefore implies effects that do not emerge from an independent factor but always in intermediacy. Interaction is a field of betweenness, and is the primary source of agency. An absolutely independent element cannot make things happen, generate events, or promote effects: it cannot produce agency. Agency can only emerge through interaction and never through an element alone (Baptista 2016). Putting interaction at the core of the production of agency and meaning-making means, therefore, recognizing the crucial importance of the ways of interacting in that process of production. In other words, it is not only the physical properties of an asphalted road (i.e. its colors, textures, temperature, shape, uniformity, etc.) that may help to constitute and shape meanings, but also the ways in which one interacts with it (i.e. by driving, walking, running, seating on or looking at it).

At the core of my arguments rests a fundamental idea: our interactions produce, enable, and constrain our perceptions of ourselves and the world. People do not make themselves primarily through (their)

objects, as Daniel Miller suggests (2005, 44), or through their bodies, as a legion of phenomenological anthropologists advocate,^[3] but first and foremost through the interactions they have with and through these objects and bodies. People are basically interacting beings.

Everyday Interaction in Cusseque

In November 2014, 17 months after my last visit, I returned to the village of Cusseque in Southeast Angola. As usual, my first encounter was with the *soba* – the headman. We greeted one another with a prolonged handshake accompanied by smiles before he left to get two chairs for us. We then sat under the shade in front of his mud house. I opened the conversation with a circumstantial question: “How are you doing?” He turned his eyes towards the new asphalt road which had been built less than fifty meters across from us. Gazing fixedly at the roadway and without blinking, he answered thoughtfully: “Still”. A passenger van, carrying goods in a trailer, drove through and honked to scare the pigs and dogs wandering on the road. Since the completion of the road, which became an important infrastructure of flux and connectivity between the southeast and the rest of Angola, residents in Cusseque became, in a way, front-row spectators of a spectacle of mobility of, for, and by others. “Abandoned and still, that’s how I’m doing”, the *soba* said.

In 2007, the Angolan government hired a myriad of national and international companies to overhaul the old colonial dirt road that crossed through Cusseque. In 2010, what had been an unpleasant sandy path gave away to the acclaimed EN140 (National Road 140) – a new asphalted road that extends for approximately 415 km. This masterwork was nationally celebrated as a manifestation of modern progress and a general value in itself; as it is commonly mentioned in the national media, “[i]t is with these projects [referring to EN140 and other new roads] that the region embraces the path of progress” (Tumba and Chisselele 2015).

Nonetheless, in our conversation in Cusseque, the road, as the ultimate symbol of progress in the region, seemed to be a critical factor in the *soba*'s sense of abandonment and inactivity. What became clear during the conversation, and obvious to me during the following months of my fieldwork in the village, was that the road in itself was not what had motivated his complaint. Rather, what was at stake was the particular ways in which the *soba* interacted with the road. "The road is here but I don't have the means to use it properly. Nobody here has a car, tractor, or even a motorcycle. For me and the rest of us here, the road is just to be looked at, nothing else", he said.

Cusseque is a place of contrasts. The new paved road, with fiber optic internet and telephone cables buried along it, embodies the tangible efforts of modern progress. Yet, such an expression of progress drills through a society where the majority of the population hunt and fish using tools made with what the surrounding forests provide them; a population that lives with no electricity, tap water, or health clinic; a population of over five hundred people that sleep at night in dwellings made of mud and that share two public latrines. These people settled in what is currently acknowledged as the village of Cusseque during the Angolan Civil War (1975–2002), when no one was living in the vicinity. They colonized the empty area to defend and protect the existing colonial path and bridge over the river Cusseque. During the civil war, the area remained isolated from other people, except for the purpose of combat (i.e. when settlers were visited by representatives of MPLA^[4] and received military hardware, or when they encountered military of opposition). "We had to rely on what we had here to survive", an elder said, "from food to medicine, this place was our world".

Owing to their dependence and reliance on their knowledge of the locale to remain alive, the material and immaterial substances inscribed in the place became conceptually integrated into local residents' own vitality; their bodily "lived world" (Merleau-Ponty 2012

[1945], 61) became integral to their notion of themselves: a field of oneness. Somo Chitongo, born in 1951, told me in a gathering: “During the war, you needed to know very well the holes where the bees put honey, the location of the fruit trees, the roots that you could eat, the habits of the animals that you hunted; you needed to know these things by yourself here. You were those things. They gave you life”. Spontaneously, a middle-aged man added, “But today is the same. The road doesn’t give us anything from the outside”. “Yes, that’s right”, my 53-year-old *xará*,^[5] João Baptista, said, “we eat and are what we get with our hands here: the things that we access ‘with the body’ [*com o corpo*, in the Portuguese original]”. A collective mumble by way of agreement with what was said emerged after his comment. Merleau-Ponty would have agreed too. As he said, “it is through my body that I go toward the world” (2012 [1945], 330). Finally, a woman affirmed thoughtfully, “We are what we can live with, and our bodies live in Cusseque only”. Basically, people’s bodies, their everyday world, and their sense of themselves were declared to be undivided, which implies the fusion between “practiced place” and the embodied self. This has one major implication: being “someone” means being (not just occupying) a space.

In Cusseque, residents rely greatly on their unmediated bodily interactions with things in order to *apprehend* them (see Baptista 2013, for ethnographic support). I use the word *apprehend* here in two related ways: in the sense of understanding, and of accommodating something into one’s domain of being – “We are what we can live with”. Indeed, local residents orient themselves in a kinesthetic and sensorial way in space, and in so doing, they integrate the things and their sensing bodies into a wholeness of life; a wholeness that is a kind of synthesis made of residents’ own physical organisms, their sense of being, and the material and immaterial substances that they interact with – a body-whole.

Arguably, the political and historiographical circumstances of war,

social isolation, and limited access to delocalized technology may have compelled these people to embrace an everyday living highly determined by (and understood through) their bodily engagements with the immediate world. However, the village of Cusseque is not the only place where the understanding of individual and social life is charged with bodily significance. In fact, throughout post-war Angola, the identification of people and society with space is commonly promoted in both political and popular spheres in terms of corporeality. This is particularly manifested through the promotion of the fusion between the human body and built infrastructure. For example, in a widespread newspaper in the country, an Angolan journalist celebrated the government's investment in roads in this way: "Analogically compared to the arteries of the human body that bring life to the most distant parts of the human organism, roads, when obstructed, gangrene, at the stage that impedes economic and social progress" (Semanário Angolense 2012, 2). This is part of a growing national discourse that builds on the concept of a metaphysical body "vivified by circulation" (Weston 2013, 31) and by the interactions between its constituents to define not only cohesive social life, but also progress. Hence, in Cusseque as elsewhere in contemporary Angola, the built, the unbuilt, and "the body" can attain what the psychoanalytical tradition calls "symbolization" – following the term's etymological meaning (in ancient Greek, *sun* and *bôlon*), to "put together" (Warnier 2013, 193).

"I'm a citizen, so I deserve to be in a place with coverage", a young man born in 1988 told me while we were sitting on the side of EN140 in Cusseque. By "coverage", he meant the possibility of moving freely – "To expand myself", as he later explained to me. The new asphalt road facilitates this. However, the problem is how people such as João, who spoke of "coverage", with no job and with irregular and scant income, can manage to accomplish that? "It is difficult, you know, I'm not really able to use the road. The wish I have in my heart

is to expand [through it]. But what I feel is that my body is closed in one place, and thus I don't progress", he complained. Crucially, the importance of following through the possibilities that the road enables with the body is decisive to Cusseque residents. Hence, the state of disenchantment with the ways Josão and most of his neighbors interact with the EN140 has grown in the village as they realize their inability to bodily "expand" through it.

In theory, since its construction, the EN140 road has become a field of possibilities for Cusseque inhabitants. Its physical properties allow these people the opportunity for certain interactions, such as interactions with places, things, and people that are kilometers away. It also brings them the possibility of acquiring delocalized commodities, which now circulate close to them daily. Ultimately, as a platform of and for mobility, the road offers local residents the possibility to increase their field of perception and, moreover, to accommodate the mobility, interconnection, and progress that the road represents into their sense of themselves. Yet these are just that, possibilities, which to be satisfied require the residents to be able to afford other means, such as transport vehicles or money to buy the new commodities that cross the village. By not having these, the road became a distressing agent, influencing local residents' sense of themselves in terms of "stagnation", of "non-progress". In other words, their interaction with the road is limited and limits them to the locale. Hence, the road became *incorporated* as a *member* in their lives – it exerted a "certain hold" on their bodies, to put it in Merleau-Ponty's (2012 [1945], 261) terms – that reinforces their sense of deprivation. At the heart of this lies a fundamental principle: individual progress is primarily realized through the territorial range within which body and world interact with each other.

Progress and the Body-Whole

In Southeast Angola, there are, of course, different stories to tell. Three years after the EN140 was constructed, Mr. Pena, born in the town of Chitembo, 47 kilometers north of Cusseque along the new road, and working for the municipal administration, decided to take a university degree in the city of Kuito. “It’s exhausting, but gratifying”, he told me in October 2014. During the week, he drives the 150 kilometers road that connects Chitembo to Kuito in his Toyota Hilux 4x4, returning on the same evening or, depending on his “spirit and strength”, as he told me, the following day. Mr. Pena described to me with particular precision his ordinary activities in Kuito, such as the paths he walks, the roads he drives, the house where he lives, the restaurants and cafés he frequents, the cash machines where he withdraws money, the stationery shop run by Vietnamese where he buys his study material, and the colleagues that he interacts with at the university. With the same precision, he detailed textures, smells, and sounds in Kuito. The materials that he described and the sensations activated by his interactions with those materials were important to his “sensori-affective-motor conducts” (Warnier 2013 [2006]) in Kuito as elsewhere.

“In Kuito”, Mr. Pena said after he had demonstrated excessive caution in crossing a sand road in Chitembo, “there are stop lights powered by solar panels. Their lights are very bright, very effective. Because of them, I’m now careful when crossing roads, there, here, everywhere”. The lights of Kuito’s traffic signals have a powerful mode of appearance that produces effects in Mr. Pena’s conduct. I experienced many other situations that attest to the effects of habituation that the city’s rhythms, acoustics, and smells have on Mr. Pena’s behavior. However, at this stage in the essay, let me present the fundamental conclusion that those examples would lead to: Mr. Pena’s regular interactions in Kuito serve as a process of containment within Mr. Pena himself, bringing the outside world in; they have shaped his “body schema”.

Merleau-Ponty (2012 [1945]) developed the notion of body schema (*schéma corporel*) in terms of Heidegger's existential philosophy of "Dasein" – the being as an existent in the/a world (1996 [1927]). Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty refers to body schema as "an experience of my body in the world" (2012 [1945], 142). For him, it means the bodily awareness, attainment, or earnings that are felt through an ongoing sensing task – by "sensing task" I imply the event of both making sense and being affected by what can be sensed. "Learning to see colors", Merleau-Ponty exemplifies, "is the acquisition of a certain style of vision, a new use of one's own body: it is to enrich and to reorganize the body schema" (155). As such, the objects that one interacts with in an everyday space become incorporated into the body schema as the body adjusts to them. As Merleau-Ponty says, "I engage myself with my body among things, they coexist with me" (191). Yet, let me underline, this coexistence and potential sense of synchrony between the individual and her/his immediate things are always and primarily the result of interaction. We coexist with things in the particular sense that we interact with them. Interaction is what intertwines us with the world and with the things inscribed in it.

Returning to Mr. Pena: he uses the accumulation of his habitual interactions in Kuito to "enrich" his body schema, to justify new bodily habits, and, ultimately, to build and expand his self. The spatial extent of his *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984) generates and determines his body-whole. Indeed, his familiarity with more-than-Chitembo works as a quality, a new attribute that he utilizes in the constitution and spatialization of himself and his everyday world. "I live here and there", he said, "both places are my home. I've grown with the road". Explicitly, Mr. Pena related the extension of his everyday interactions in space with a process of personal growth. This is interesting because he foregrounds how individuality and relationality are not contradictory but complementary. His individual progress comes precisely from the growth of his interactions with the world: it is rooted in his bodily

relatedness to something beyond his skin. “Now, I feel that I’m here and there all the time”, he said with a smile. In other words, he feels that he *is* Kuito and Chitembo even when he is anatomically (with his own physique) absent from these spaces. Ulrich Beck called this living “a kind of *place-polygamy*”, in which the person seems to be “married to many places” (2002, 24). Nevertheless, in this polygamous union with space, his occupancy of a “there” with his “actual body” (Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945], 261) is relativized. Clearly, with the road, his sense of spatial and conceptual being extended. The road allowed him to expand his presence even in his actual absence. It increased his body-whole – “I’ve grown with the road”.

Mr. Pena represents the value that the road can have for individuals in Southeast Angola. By bodily and regularly practicing the movement that the road “affords” (Gibson 1986 [1979]), Mr. Pena incorporates the modern progress that the road personifies in political and popular discourses. More to the point, he apprehends the affordances of the road and, because of this, he extends his self-perceived sense of himself as a conscious subject of interaction through space. The notion of affordance, as introduced by James Gibson, refers to what the environment offers to the creatures living in it. Affordances are what allow possible actions. However, as Gibson notes, every affordance has to be considered relative to the individual. They are unique for that person, for the posture and conditions of the individual in question (Gibson 1986 [1979], 127).

Accordingly, the road affords some individuals (i.e. those with means of transportation) with opportunities to increase their body-wholes, while it does not afford other individuals (i.e. *soba* José and João, who do not have access to transportation) in the same way. Therefore, it distributes inequalities. This supports a broader claim that “new materialists” and “vitalists” commonly highlight, namely concerning “the agentic contributions of nonhuman forces” (Bennett, xvi): the physical infrastructure and other materialities that we expe-

rience in our everyday life should not be seen as mere “background” or inconsequential structurings that underpin mundane life. They are not passive, but rather determinately crucial for the ways we are organized and organize ourselves.

Continuing on this ground, our everyday interactions with the materiality of space (not just the materials-in-themselves) are the primary source of the constitution of our self-awareness of being part of, or, on the contrary, detached from the meanings (such as “progress”) that such materiality can exemplify. Hence, when we interact with those things with which it is possible for us to act, such as roads, we do not perceive only the possibilities for action, but also impossibilities. Here, the very things that afford us the experience of possibilities, or instead reveal to us the impossibility of experiencing those possibilities, lose their status as mere background materials and become powerful entities affecting our sense of self. The things, possibilities, and impossibilities that we live with live in us. Ultimately, as our bodies interact with the materiality of space, so a constituting interplay emerges in which our selves and our subjectivities become entwined with the texture of the space.

We can observe the relationship between the body and spatiality, which I have been analyzing through the concept of the body-whole, in the works of various scholars on different epochs, different geographies, and different “collectives” (Latour 2004). Bell (2016), for example, says the Mayan drama *Rab’inal Achi*, performed since the sixteenth century reveals the centrality of the human body in defining space in the Mayan culture. Bell notes that the individuals in the *Rab’inal Achi* make reference to their occupation of space through their bodies: they conceptually embody a geographic mapping. Likewise, in Southeast Angola the human body symbolically holds spatial territories. There is, however, an important difference from Bell’s study: in Southeast Angola, the elements and contingencies of space (i.e. the EN140) also decentralize the human body. It is not only the individual’s body that

represents and constitutes space, but space, too, represents and constitutes the body of the individual: I use *body-whole* to refer to the result of this co-constitution.

Final Considerations

In Southeast Angola, individual progress cultivates corporeal extension. This extension is not limited to the actual physical body of the individual. It also relates to the spatial familiar world in which one interacts: the body-whole. People, as subjects of progress, are considered as holders and carriers of the spaces that they commonly and immediately interact with. The more delocalized the individual's space of interaction, the more progress the individual personifies.

Throughout Southeast Angola, the reason for the conspicuous relation between individual progress, bodily interactions, and the immediate world can be related to its past. Historically, owing to its degree of social isolation from the rest of the country, Southeast Angola was popularly known as “the lands at the end of the world” (*terras do fim do mundo*, in Portuguese). This expression originated among early Portuguese explorers, who found there a vast territory of dense vegetation with less than one person per square kilometer. Compared to the rest of Angola, the region was largely neglected by the Portuguese, who therefore did not invest substantively in the construction of new infrastructure in the region. The lack of infrastructure in Southeast Angola contributed to its maintaining a lack of connectivity with other regions, a disconnection that remained after Angolan independence, and continued at least until the end of the civil war in 2002. Hence, in theory, local residents' impatient eagerness to expand their interactions beyond the localities where they develop their lives as manifestations of individual progress can be related to a generalized desire to break with the regional past of confinement.

In contemporary Southeast Angola, the space that the individual makes and senses as her/his terrain of everyday life is necessarily

constituted through bodily incursions within it; that is, formed and perceived in virtue of regular sensorial interactions with and in it. This space – the intercorporeal body-whole – is made up of the intertwining between the sensing body, the fabric of space, and the self. It is a field of coexistence which involves the entanglement of matter, meaning, and being. Finally, the radius of this coexistence, the radius of one's spatial presence in the world – that is to say, the dimension of one's body-whole – serves to signify and evaluate individual progress. Therefore, in contrast to postmodern visions that see progress as a process of deterritorialization and spatial rootlessness, the body-whole's progress derives from the potency of territorializing interactions within and with space. It revives the importance of considering the unmediated interacted space – the experienced, lived, practiced space – as a central component of modern progress. Furthermore, it shows that, in addition to the production of territory by political institutions, territories gain significance, become meaningful and embodied, fundamentally through everyday interaction.

The formation and relevance of the body-whole in Southeast Angola supports and derives from a universal rule: no ideas of progress and practices of everyday life and the self can develop without basing themselves on phenomena of interaction. Hence, to conclude in a suggestive way, a phenomenology of everyday interaction based on ethnographic work can help to clarify much of the unexamined assumptions of the actual world-life in which our aspirations and ideas are formed.

Notes

- [1] This perspective is shared and explained by a myriad of contemporary influential thinkers, such as Anthony Giddens, Manuel Castells, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and Ulrich Beck.
- [2] Original Portuguese (individual progress, in English).
- [3] See Desjarlais and Throop 2011, 89 and 90.
- [4] The political party *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA).
- [5] In Angola, as in most of the Lusophone world, the term *xará* is used to refer to people who have the same name.

References

- Baptista, João. 2016. "The Road of Progress: Individualization and Interaction Agency in Southeast Angola". *Ethnos – Journal of Anthropology*, DOI: 10.1080/00141844.2016.1150312.
- Baptista, João. 2013. "'Everything': Towards an Ecology of Land Utilization". *Biodiversity & Ecology* Vol. 5, 393–405.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, Ulrich. 2002. "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies". *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol. 19, No. 1–2, 17–44.
- Behnke, Elizabeth. 1997. "Ghost Gestures: Phenomenological Investigations of Bodily Micromovements and Their Intercorporeal Implications". *Human Studies* Vol. 20, No. 2, 181–201.
- Bell, Elizabeth. 2016. "Geographic Mapping, Social Mapping: The Human Body in the Rab'in al Achi". *Ethnohistory* Vol. 63, No. 1, 29–46.
- Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke UP.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Csordas, Thomas, ed. 1994. *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dalakoglou, Dimitris and Penny Harvey. 2012. "Roads and Anthropology: Ethnographic Perspectives on Space, Time and (Im)Mobility". *Mobilities* Vol. 7, No. 4, 459–465.
- de Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley. University of California Press.
- Emerson, Ralph. 1909 [1875]. *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Boston and New York: Fireside Edition.
- Desjarlais, Robert and Jason Throop. 2011. "Phenomenological Approaches in Anthropology". *Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol. 40, 87–102.
- Gibson, James. 1979. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Haraway, Donna. 1991. "A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century". In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, edited by Donna Haraway, 149–81. New York: Routledge.
- Haraway, Donna. 2003. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hardy, Thomas. 2013 [1906]. *The Pocket Thomas Hardy: Being Selections from the Wessex Novels and Poems of Thomas Hardy*. London: Forgotten Books.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1996 [1927]. *Being and time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Larkin, Brian. 2013. "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure". *Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol. 42, 327–43.
- Latour, Bruno. 2004. *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2012 [1945]. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald Landes. London and New York: Routledge.
- Miller, Daniel. 2005. "Materiality: An Introduction". In *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, 1–50. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Nisbet, Robert. 2009 [1980]. *History of the idea of progress*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- OED Online. "Interaction". Last modified December 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.oxfordenglishdictionary.emedien3.sub.uni-hamburg.de/view/Entry/97519?redirectedFrom=interaction>
- Reddy, Vasudevi. 2008. *How infants know minds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Semanário Angolense. 2012. "Projectos mal concebidos" [Poorly designed projects]. *Semanário Angolense*.
- Taylor, Isaac. 2013 [1833]. *Saturday Evening*. London: Forgotten Books.
- Tumba, Elias and Adriano Chisselele. 2015. "Bié: Novas vias encurtam distâncias" [Bié: new roads shorten distances]. *ANGOP news*, July 21. Accessed 9 September 2015. http://www.portalangop.co.ao/angola/pt_pt/noticias/reconstrucao-nacional/2015/6/30/Bie-Novas-vias-

encurtam-distancias,41be9a93-0932-44c2-96c8-f4d22481fca3.html.

- Warnier, Jean-Pierre. 2013 [2006]. "Inside and Outside: Surfaces and Containers". In *Handbook of Material Culture*, edited by Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer, 186–95. London: Sage.
- Weston, Kath. 2013. "Lifeblood, liquidity, and cash transfusions: beyond metaphor in the cultural study of finance". *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Vol. 19, No. 1, 24–41.
- Wolfson, Susan. 2010. *Romantic Interactions: Social Being and the Turns of Literary Action*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.