ABSTRACT

This paper shows how different technologies can mediate different perceptions in lifeworlds, such as (Ihde's example of) the South Pacific navigational techniques[1]. Similarly, the use of image technologies and software research and development in spatial analyses and geographic information have proliferated since the development of VR, 'Second Life' and 'Half-Life' virtual worlds. Current spatial research in imaging technologies applies 'scale-free' methods varying from statistics (based on geographic information) to neural-network analyses, to geographic information systems. These interdisciplinary methods are applied to networks ranging from brains to cities, models that range from air-traffic control systems to pre-manufactured systems of ecology.[2] Fractal geometry is applied to project future urban growth patterns and human behaviour, as well as open systems analyses[3]. The virtual 'disappearance' of size — and hence, referential scale and distance (the underscoring of lived spatial experience) — produces a gap between real life and virtual experience, which automatically alters our perception of the world, as well as our conception of lived space. Time and distance seem to be erased so that experience seems instantaneous and immediate.[4] Merleau-Ponty's words 'My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven' remains central to all human-technology relationships.

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[1] Lévy-Bruhl distinguishes between 'primitive thought' and 'rational thought', claiming that 'primitive' thought has a logical system that differs from that of formal logic. The 'laws of thought' in formal logic are non-contradiction (A cannot both be A and non-A), the excluded middle (something is either A or non-A) and identity (A = A) (Dusek, 2006:165). 'Primitive thought' identifies opposites and identifies the part with the whole and identifies a person with a totem or an object. Lévy-Bruhl suggests that primitive space is not organised like the space of geometry (Dusek, 2006:165), which Ihde explicates in the Western and non-Western techniques of navigation that were informed by and in turn informed different technologies.

[2] Cf. CASA (Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis) current research. http://www.casa.ucl.ac.uk/projects/projectDetail.asp?ID=63.

[3] The notion of applying the second law of thermodynamics to the social sciences, as explicated by Illya Prigogine and others, in order to determine internal and external factors that influence social behaviour and the possibilities of manipulating these factors to such an extent that 'bifurcation' occurs from which new orders emerge, was explicated in my architectural studies (Viljoen, 1990).

[4] Ihde alludes to this in (*TP*:90;) describing 'objective' distance that becomes relative in the 'quasi-immediacy of the television'.