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# Re-Sensitizing as New Sensitizations Process

## Experiences on/of the Street

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*Abstract. Ambiances affect us in several ways. Our everyday lifestyle has guided us to a lack of time to feel, raising questions about our sensitiveness. Questioning if re-sensitizing activities would create new ways of sensitivity, we decided to explore the points of view of passersby from the streets of downtown Rio de Janeiro. Experiences on/of the streets have derived from the look of the flâneur. Each passerby was invited to analyze the street in sensible ways such as sounds, smells, and with the help of a frame - as in when one is about to photograph something - an angle of the street. The experience has shown that the sensitive is in everyday life and is apprehended when we let ourselves be carried away by the affections, the feeling stripped of the analytical eye.*

**Keywords.** *Re-Sensitizing, Flâneur, Street, Photograph*

### Understanding a Sensible Approach

The power of impregnation of ambiances concerns not only the environment, but also ourselves, as we are conditioned to detect subtle differences. Sensitivity expands our field of perception, letting us more susceptible to the force of ambiances.

Sensitivity becomes a faculty to capture these forces. It can also be understood as receptivity to external stimuli. In other words, sensitivity allows its bearer to recognize quite different environmental stimuli or to ignore them (Schmitz, 1995). Thus, to speak of the powers of impregnation is, in a way, to speak of sensitivity (Thibaud, 2019).

Although sensitivity is inherent to every human being, some studies (Haroche, 2013; Baumann, Dokins, 2014) have reported people's loss of sensitivity. Our lifestyle is increasingly guided by our lack of time to feel (Haroche, 2013) lead us to a consumerist and individual view of current resources and to a weak and fragmented social bonds.

If it is through sensitivity that we are taken by the force of ambiances, the detection of loss of sensitivity leads us to explore new sensitizations. "How to open our emotions to secondary qualities, open our senses to secondary qualities: the timbre of a voice, the brightness of light, the momentum behind a gesture." (Thibaud, 2019, 179).

Like ambiances, sensitivity is clear in a real situation and cannot be learned theoretically.

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It occurs only through the experience of the psychological process in which the individual is not only present passively, but also participates emotionally and actively in a specific situation or event. It is in the search for an emotional and active engagement, that the person understands and explores not only new sensitizations, but those that were also dormant within us, forcing us to re-sensitize.

The use of the prefix 're' brings a notion of repetition or reinforcement; it is a new interpretation of a state or process. Re-signifying or re-sensitizing is being focused on making a new analysis, creating new meanings, and deepening thoughts and sensations.

If it is only by experience that we can understand sensorially, then experimenting places not only send us to a sensitive dimension, but also to sensible places (Thibaud, 2018). And even if some places carry some preconception within themselves, a sensible experience is personal and unique.

To raise awareness is to make the pedestrian pause and explore, consciously, the sensible possibilities of a place and create new meanings. In this perspective, affection appears combined with perception. Being in an active process during the walk is a fundamental and essential mean to make the body connect with places, emerging a sensitive and participatory approach.

Considering the process of walking aimlessly through the streets, just like a *flâneur*, this research brings the experiences on/of the streets. With the point of view of a careless walker, we aimed to use photographs, not only to capture what beholds the sight, but also the feeling present when the picture is being taken.

This experience showed us that, in addition to being able to collect data of sensible events that occur in urban spaces, as we seek to bring new sensitizations alive to another person, we also are in fact a part of the process itself.

### **Dynamics on/of the Streets**

Thinking about ambiances leads us to find what emphasizes our ability to be affected by our surroundings, as well as allowing them to be affected by us. In this context, the street is much more than just its constructed materiality: it is created physically and sensorially. The role of the body at the street becomes essential as a vehicle for experiencing environments and the appropriation of places, since the exchange of movements and actions makes the space diverse and significant.

Thibaud (2019) states that it can be difficult to approach a feeling in its essence empirically; when working on perceptual axes, and borderline situations, there is a great chance that it will reveal itself. As a means to establish a mutual resonance, borderline situations usually require ourselves to be carried away by the perception of the other's point of view (Breviglieri, 2013). In this case we understand that it would not be just to trigger new sensitizations, but to allow the sensitive to emerge.

When dealing with the other's point of view, we would be required to leave ourselves, recognizing ourselves from otherness, which is when we are aware of the Other (Eisenberg, 1986). Being in the public space, experiencing it leads us to the possibility of recognizing otherness, enabling the expression of individuality within a necessarily plural universe. In the plurality of the street we are brought to the encounter of affections, materialized in urban scenes.

The *flâneur*, a figure of the modern city, has been transforming itself throughout the times. Before, only an observer of the daily life of the cities but, now photography has also been added as a method of tracing down the walk.

Each photograph taken is a direct action of the person taking it. When taking a photo, the person chooses “the permanence of a certain moment.” At that gaze, the specific angle chosen creates identification with the scene.

Using photography as a means of recording experiences that take place on the street, it helps us to become intimate with the urban scene and its actors. For Kossoy (2003), every author of a photograph begins with a purpose, because at that moment, the chosen framework shows the photographer’s vision, imagination, and the form of personal expression.

In view of a better understanding of how pedestrians relate to the street, we found it pertinent that we would bring up an exercise about the perception of urban sensitivity with random passersby on the street.

### **Planning the Unplanned: the Experience on/of the Streets**

Considering the street as the main environment to study processes of urban re-sensitization, our group of researchers identified that walking would be the most suitable way to gather different perspectives on the experiences on/of the street. During the idealization of the experiment, the intent was to go out to the streets and re-sensitize pedestrians.

As previously discussed, to be engaged in a sensitive experience we need to sharpen our senses. So, the aim was that those who researchers approached on the streets could first pause and focus on that moment, and then be a part of the re-sensitization experiment. The idea was to encourage the invited ones to have a practical and viable way of expressing themselves, in a sensible bias. As a means of expression, photography becomes a possible and interesting method to grasp the actions on the streets. It is also a way to promote an exchange between pedestrians with their surroundings.

During the experiment the passersby, who previously walked the streets just experiencing flanerie, become actors of their own experiences. Turning passersby into photographers, we could begin to sensitize people to their surroundings, which often go unnoticed in daily life. Therefore, we developed the first form of interaction between researchers and the pedestrians asking them to take a photograph of something on the street that grabs their attention, something that would captivate their senses. They could choose anything that had a positive or negative aspect. The goal was to make the pedestrians stop walking and focus on the action. To give the pedestrians full authorship of their framings, we created giant and festive frames to make the whole experience more palpable.

The walk-through experiment started downtown of Rio de Janeiro, a place with a lot of movement and a wide variety of pedestrians, such as: traders, businessmen, shopkeepers, and tourists. We decided to split the researchers into three groups to prevent a feeling of discomfort for those we approached. The starting point was at Tiradentes Square, a historical and central portrait of the city’s urban landscape. From that point on, we instinctively went in different directions to approach the first passerby.

A small questionnaire was developed to be completed as we talked to the pedestrians. First, we asked the participant to frame something in their surroundings that seemed interesting. Then we asked them to describe the scene in the frame with one word and asked if the person visited that place frequently. In order to reach more sensitive levels. We also decided to explore other senses beyond sight and asked what smells and sounds were the most represented at that very moment.

Just like the flaneur who walks around without a planned direction, the researchers decided that it would be the participants of the experience that would dictate our course. Thus, when framing a view of the street, without knowing it, the participant was guiding us to our next direction. We were putting ourselves, literally, in the other's point-of-view and generating walks guided by the passersby. As much as the purpose of the drifting is to walk being led aimlessly, we wanted to be able to document the experience and our path. Therefore, we photograph the frames being used and recorded the route of each group using a GPS application.

Our aim, as researchers as the experiment proceeded was to raise the awareness of inattentive pedestrians “entering” the frames. The research was so captivating that it was not noticed that the groups physically encountered each other multiple times (according to GPS). We were all so focused on looking at the city with new eyes, listening to the brakes of the cars, the music coming out of stores, smelling food and the old beer washed of the sidewalks of a previous party, that all the sensitive elements that had been shown to us, had reached us.



Figure 1. Framing option of a participant, Juliana Queiroz, 2019



Figure 2. Framing option of a participant, Marília Cavalcanti, 2019

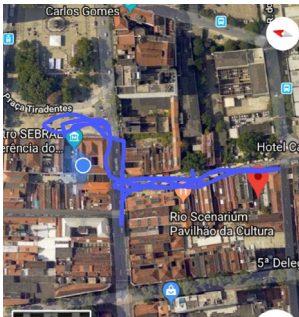


Figure 3. Map of group 1's path, Juliana Queiroz, 2019

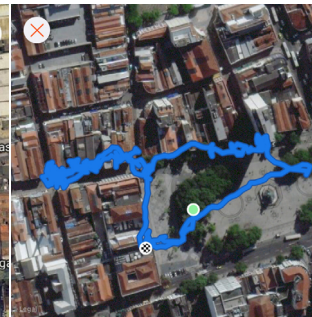


Figure 4. Map of group 2's path, Eliene Tozetto, 2019



Figure 5. Map of group 3's path, Matheus Mota, 2019

### Framing the Action: Outcome of the Experience

To explore the sensitization of the process, the experiment was designed to invoke sensitive experiences on/of the street from the pedestrians' points of view. Each frame invited the participant to stop and look at the street in a more sensitive way. However, although the experience started with the aim of awakening the passersby's senses, it ended up taking another direction: affecting the researchers.

The perception that *I* only exist from the *Other* means that otherness is what allows

me, also, to understand the world from a different perspective. This demonstrates how much we could be sensitized by the experience. In experiences that focus on understanding the sensitive space and how people perceive an emotional and active participation of the involved ones is required, including researchers. The analytical eye of the researchers is usually turned to the space and its actors, forgetting that they are also part of the scene.

Exploring a sensitivity sight within the framework went beyond those who were passing by, leading the researchers to a new interpretation of their own state and process and re-sensitize them. The researchers reported that being part of the experiment made them transpose their own world views. It was an experience that seemed to bring borderline situations, since those involved were urged to disassociate themselves, triggering new sensitizations in a re-sensitizing process.

Thus, although the exploration was turned to study the street through the sensitive point of view of the passerby, it was the researchers who reported the nuances detected in each route. It was the body of the *flâneur* who, even sensitized by their own affections, demanded to expand their perception in relation to their surroundings.

Finally, perhaps one of the most unexpected results of the experiment was the different ways in which new sensitizations were instigated. From the use of the digital camera to the flanerrie taken from a photo shared by the other, it was possible to explore the experiences on/of the street under a sensitivity bias. As much as the researchers and passersby were related to the same source - both were submerged in the same ambiance - the experience prompted the researchers to revisit and reconsider the sensitive aspects pointed out by the pedestrians. As the researches were trying to explore a new sensation process through pedestrians, they were, additionally, led to re-sensitize themselves.

## Conclusion

When people are exposed to a certain situation here and now, they are not only confronted by measurable factors, but also by the sensitive ones. In the same way that subjectivity is produced in the relationship of forces that pass through the subject, it is considered that the sensitivity that emerges from an ambiance impregnation, also (re) sensitizes us. To think about the street ambiances and the way that it spreads and takes hold, the experiment shows that we must allow the sensible to emerge.

The street for some has a spatial poetics, for others it is a transition. Some have it as a home while for others it is just a place of passage. How we see the street, how we frame it in our perspective and how we allow ourselves (or not) to experience it, based on how we framed it was the guide of our practical experience. Experiencing it involved not only being in your physical space but also letting yourself be carried away by its affective tones (of affection and its effects). The smells and the sounds that are part of their narratives, our relationship with each other and with ourselves: we are in a certain way at some point flâneurs, part of the same experience. In this process, what we had was the confirmation that when re-sensitizing cities, we are not only talking about the other, but also, and above all, about ourselves.

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