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“We Are As We Move On”: Motoboys Economic Evolution in São Paulo

Gilson Schwartz



Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. Many a man believes himself to be the master of others who is, no less than they, a slave. How did this change take place? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? To this question I hope to be able to furnish an answer. – Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)¹

Glocal Emancipation: Beyond the Digital Frontiers

Country	Mobile Internet Penetration
US	15.6%
UK	12.9%
Italy	11.9%
Russia	11.2%
Spain	10.8%
France	9.6%

Germany	7.4%
China	6.8%
Brazil	2.6%
India	1.8%

Source: Nielsen, Mobile Media Marketplace report, Q1 2008

Only 2.6% of the Brazilian population has mobile Web browsing habits, compared with 15.6% of the U.S. population; Brazil shows about one-fourth of the intensity of the mobile Web phenomenon that exists in more developed societies. However, mobile phone penetration is quite high, with over 150 million cell phones in service all over the continental extensions of Brazil.

Even Internet access has been on the rise, with Brazilian users playing a substantial part in expressions of digital culture—as in the case of Orkut, which counts 70% of its audience in Brazil—and in a thriving “LAN house” industry. This latter phenomenon is especially prevalent in the peripheries of large Brazilian cities, as well as in every distant village with Internet connectivity—such as Campinópolis, Mato Grosso, which is little more than a former roadside construction barracks and an outpost for neighbouring Xavante Indian tribes.

The processes of digital convergence in a diverse and large country such as Brazil supports a thriving scene of innovations in the emerging field of technology appropriation models. A “tropicalist” approach tends to inform research agendas in Latin America;² tropicalism here is as central as “orientalism” has been for post-colonial scholarship and activism. In his controversial 1978 book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said uses the term to describe a tradition, both academic and artistic, of hostile and deprecatory views of the East by the West, as shaped by European imperialism in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Orient exists for the West, and is constructed by and in relation to the West. It is a mirror image of what is inferior and alien (“Other”) to the West. This issue has taken on new significance in the post-9/11 world in relation to numerous prejudices that circulate in a “clash of civilizations”. More generally, the post-colonial academic literature reflects awareness of the Other as an issue, especially in certain philosophical circles (such as Lévinas’s dialogical ontology) and media studies (Silverstone’s examination of media and morality, specifically in relation to renewed prejudice against the Other in the expanded “mediapolis”). From the perspective of economic development theory, there is a long tradition of structuralist analyses of Center-Periphery dynamics that, to a large extent, carry on the same essential debates about appropriation of space, time and knowledge within hypercompetitive global societies that are dependent on the virtuosity of the world economy.

Orientalism offers just one conceptual framework for understanding local reactions to Center-Periphery dynamics. In both the global-liberal and the local-activist

perspectives, fluctuating tensions within an internationally connected system come to the fore in advance of rules, best practices and civic intelligence.

Conceptually, the challenges of network design and implementation (“social weaving”, so to speak, as in assemblages and re-assemblages of actor-networks) are compounded by the simultaneous interaction of space, time and symbol—the playful evolution of this human e-infrastructure corresponds with values, projects and icons for the audiovisual e-superstructural grids.

“Iconomics”, from this very broad perspective, results from a critical review of the political economy and the macroeconomics of technology transfers and market design aligned with the Center-Periphery system. The evolving actor-network (Latour, 2005) develops and unfolds in the twenty-first century, generating new tools for the creation, management and critique of the information economy as a relatively open and simultaneously global and local network.

Core competencies in this network include multimedia creation, coding and exploitation of icons, on computer or mobile phone screens, in labour, education and health. This is the challenge to be faced by the periphery, which involves not only the usual scarcity of capital and infrastructure but a new challenge in terms of information asymmetries (Stiglitz, 2001).

Existing technological and economic gaps are compounded by social and cultural differences which are immaterial or intangible, and which are related more closely to the realm of icons than to the requirements of things (hardware, software) and beings (evolving social networks). The iconicity of this evolutionary development is also an index of new metrics for consumption and audiovisual knowledge creation chains. The intangible assets thus produced (real, digital or virtual) are differentially appropriated by individuals, groups and property rights owners (in all classes of assets). The recovery of the world economy depends on this new accountability as much as on the survival of this bank or that company.

The key strategic issue for economic development policies, as well as for research programs, is thus the design of an ethno-methodology which remains open to the phenomenology of these differences and asymmetries in icon creation skills as sources of value, accumulation and wealth, both locally and globally. Identifying local patterns of communication skills appropriation may also lead to the development of emancipatory roadmaps, which might prove useful for policymakers and civic activists looking for other possible glocal worlds.³

Economics as Physical, Symbolic and Social Appropriation of Real and Virtual Assets

The social and economic impact of the cell-phone is both conditioned and stimulated by all the simultaneous changes in other communication channels (radio, TV, press, cinema, Web N.O), in a market system that has been transforming rapidly from industrial to services and post-services economic structures. Technology and markets advance hand in hand as the service economy increasingly becomes an “iconomy” (requiring technological skills appropriation as a new competence for the marketing of labour).

If we are indeed to live well through the digital convergence of technologies and markets, the sometimes disturbing signal coming from social and environmental tensions is also a necessary foundation for policy; yet there is no established framework for the negotiation of positions and projects in this newly networked infrastructure. The collapse of the financial system is proof of the unstable nature of confidence-based networks, supposedly regulated by automated econometric algorithms.

The icon is the interface, the medium is the message. This metaphorically visual source of value is at the heart of a new theory of value as attention span, overcoming both classical and neoclassical economics into a Schumpeterian vision of the audiovisuality of value as an intensification of attention in time, which translates as icons.

Icons themselves may be stressed, distrusted or melt down—from the international standing of the dollar to the stability and conformity of married life, from having a job to being a democrat, from Lehman Brothers to “BRICs” as a supposedly decoupled

territory in a globally unstable economy. Every decision-making moment is laced with iconic references to confidence in technology, rationality and wellbeing.

As with agricultural or business cycles, markets for icons also fluctuate; the underlying convergence of valuation models into financially traded icons requires a high degree of coordination among those who would take advantage of this iconic managerial arrangement. Marketing agencies, the movie industry, fashion and massive consumption habits emerge as vested interests and stakeholders with vivid expression in the global media arena.⁴

There are iconoclasm in contemporary media-centric capitalism, crises which put a check on the media's capacity to channel attention so as to become a vital source of added value flows in the economy of fragmented attention spans, "long tails" and totalitarian pleasure promotion in contemporary audiovisual society. "Creative destruction" acquires a new meaning as urban megaclusters accumulate underlying and pressing energies of collective waste and unsustainable expenditure.

The challenge of living in the twenty-first century will be "to comprehend —without recourse to austerity and self-denial—the inevitable and necessary shift from a civilization founded on waste to one based on Bataillean expenditure".⁵ An energetic political economy is needed in order to grasp the iconic nature of digital capitalism.

Our main tenet is that digital infrastructures and social networks are valued as long as they become associated with existing or newly created icons, so that beings and things

become active as long as their movement is coded and signaled through audiovisual icons “on demand” and in real time.

The space-time of icons comprises an iconomy, rather than just another economic combination of resources in defiance of markets and hierarchies due to imperfect information on technological asymmetries. The accumulation of intangible assets by corporations, as well as new policy frameworks related to the fostering of knowledge and cultural assets, may eventually lead to Iconomics as a new research program and ideological framework for the design of human development projects.

The quintessential and visible emblems of this “iconic turn” in the social sciences are the groupware innovations that characterize the evolution of the Internet, generating both R&D prodigies (such as the genome project and grid computing) and branding blockbusters (such as MySpace, Orkut, Napster, BitTorrent, iTunes and similar networked branding strategies). Branding knowledge, rather than just ICT-based market expansion and wealth creation, becomes a key issue from an iconomic perspective.

The challenging hybridism of the global, local and individual (even intimate) dimension of life inspires new economic models, while creatively branded clusters lead to the emergence of new markets, hierarchies and needs. As the market for the masses is overcome by a mass of emerging, niche markets (as described by the concept of “the

long tail”), the tangible effects of the pervasive computing model, with which we are dressing and mapping our bodies, houses and streets, increasingly are intensively perceived as intangible, iconic strategies along with collaborative (groupware, grid and cloud computing, open source) technological effects.⁶

The *design of connections* as the combinatory art of symbol and code creation pushes research and development models beyond the efficacy of computing networks. A richer perception of value creation in the networked society requires due attention to the genius of icon design, especially as it evolves into new and more varied forms of identity and value creation—thus altering the profile and the effectiveness of production, distribution and finance systems.

Minorities and underserved communities will enhance or change their socio-economic and political stance as long as they appropriate not only technologies, but the iconic potential made more accessible by freely available networking infrastructures.

***Motoboy*s in São Paulo: Physical, Technical and Social Mobility as Icons**

In the specific case of the “motoboy” in São Paulo, icon development may pose a key survival challenge. Motoboy live in a state of flux, since on the one hand, they are deemed absolutely necessary by hundreds of businesses for performing a “sanguine”

circulation that supports daily urban life; on the other hand, they also became an object of derision insofar as their ubiquity and usually reckless driving habits (involving frequent accidents, with more than one casualty per day in the streets of São Paulo) have oftentimes been depicted as expressions of the bad, the ugly and the poor. Motoboys' mobility is mostly physical, marked by low levels of technical skill, and they carry a bad reputation, despite their function of supporting activity in the densest urban hub of Latin America.

Given the overcrowding of urban spaces, mobility in fact creates a competitive advantage in the platforms for numerous services. Transportation and communication technologies become mutually embedded, while the costs and externalities of developing ever more complex transportation matrices also come to the fore, as traffic jams turn out to be a major source of inefficiencies and low quality of life in big cities.

The Internet has typically been associated with the suppression of distance, and even with the avoidance of transportation and physical dislocations—from distance education to Second Life educational and business applications, much of the Web seems tailored to serve immobility, even to the point of provoking health concerns. (The Wii console, for instance, has been praised by many a commentator as a healthier digital device insofar as the players take advantage of the movement features in sports-like videogames.)

Motoboys are perceived ambiguously as a source of mobility and as a hindrance to civilized behavior in our over-clogged cities. An interesting description of the motoboy

phenomenon that pivots on its paradoxical relation to society has been offered by the New York Times' Larry Rohter under the headline, "Pedestrians and Drivers Beware! Motoboys Are in a Hurry":

In a city with nearly 11 million inhabitants and 4.5 million passenger cars, 32,000 taxis and 15,000 buses, traffic jams more than 100 miles long are not uncommon, and even on an ordinary day, getting from one side of town to the other can take two hours or more. Only one group here in South America's largest city seems immune to those frustrations and delays: the daring army of motorcycle messengers known as "motoboys".

This comparative advantage, however, comes at a cost, as these reckless drivers are always

[...] zigzagging among stopped cars, ignoring lane markers, red lights and stop signs, they regularly menace pedestrians and infuriate motorists as they zoom their way down gridlocked streets and highways, armed with the knowledge that without them business would grind to a halt. Though no one is sure of their exact numbers, estimates start at 120,000 and range as high as 200,000. Many work 12 hours a day or more to earn a salary of \$300 a month or less. According to official figures, São Paulo now has 332 motoboy agencies. Competition is strong, and they adopt names, often in English, stressing efficiency: Adrenaline Express, Moto Bullet, Fast Express, Agile Boys, Motojet, Fly Boy, Motoboy Speed, AeroBoy Express, Fast Boys.

Identity problems loom as these agents of flow are dehumanized:

“The truth is that we’re discardable,” said Edson Agripino, 38, a veteran of 15 years as a motoboy. ‘When a colleague gets hurt or killed, the first thing the dispatchers ask is, ‘Did he deliver the document?’”

Rohter further comments on this thorny identity issue:

[...] many motoboys, especially the younger ones, see themselves as free spirits or urban cowboys, defying the conventions of society and envied by stodgy wage-earners stuck in their cars and offices. [...] Everybody hates the motoboys except when they need one themselves, said Caíto Ortiz, the director of “Motoboys: Crazy Life,” a recent prize-winning documentary. “When he’s rushing some document of yours across town, then he becomes your savior, a hero, and you adore the guy.”

In short, mobility is an icon of modernity and a competitive advantage in jammed urban settings, where a living network of mobile agents is seen as necessary at the same time as it is despised. This particular iconography is tinted by a special form of “class struggle” between those who can move—the motoboys—and those who are stickier, slower and more regulated—the car drivers and pedestrians. The importance of mobility as an asset in networked societies has been thoroughly discussed, for instance, by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005):

In a reticular world, social life is composed of a proliferation of encounters and temporary, but reactivable connections with various groups, operated at potentially considerable social, professional, geographical and cultural distance. The project is the occasion and reason for the connection. [...] Projects make production and accumulation possible in a world which, were it to be purely connexionist, would simply contain flows, where nothing could be stabilized, accumulated or crystallized. (p. 104)

As a worker would contribute to the production process without access to the fruits of accumulation, the *motoboy* is an agent of flows and contributes to the transportation process but is always on the side of the “endless stream of ephemeral associations,” while customers and motofreight entrepreneurs mill their benefits and accumulate out of this flux. A research as well as a political issue, then, is to inquire into how *motoboys* might establish their own projects, aspire to their own forms of knowledge, and realize networking and identity formation potentials despite their disposable status in the game of iconic flows.

Where art thou?

The “Motoboy Channel” (“canal*MOTOBOY”) was launched in May 2007 as a public art project by Antoni Abad, a Spanish artist who uses digital technology in video and installation art. Abad works in several countries, primarily with marginalized groups, including migrants, the disabled, prostitutes and gypsies, as well as taxi drivers and motoboys.

According to Osava (2008), Abad initially persuaded 12 motoboys to record their daily lives using their cell-phone cameras. Accidents, crimes, water pollution, traffic jams, street protests, street art (like graffiti) and various other events made up a visual diary of the city, in photos, video or short texts that instantly Webcast through the Channel's Website. The group leader, Eliezer Muniz, a former motoboy who graduated in Philosophy at the University of São Paulo, also created a study group and has since made numerous efforts and promoted events favoring a remaking of motoboy identity and culture.⁷

Muniz imagines "10,000 motoboys" reporting by text, photos and videos from all over the country, in a new-style news agency that will offer a different, wider and more democratic view of urban life. "A revolução cultural dos motoboys" (The Motoboys' Cultural Revolution) was the headline under which the Brazilian edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique* reported a May 2008 cultural event promoted by the canal *MOTOBOY.

However, as inspiring as this cultural project may be, in some ways it remained as a record of the Spanish artist's project. From the motoboys' perspective, Abad could then be just another "customer" who has made use of motoboy experiences (in this case, for art production and reinforcement of certain icons), without those experiences having been directly appropriated by the motoboys themselves toward their own projects and accumulation needs. This case offers an ideal study of information asymmetries as a source of differential appropriation of iconic values—this is how I initially approached

the project, after participating in a roundtable during the canal*MOTOBOY exhibition at the São Paulo Cultural Center.

As a matter of fact, the canal*MOTOBOY was developed with a technology that the motoboys themselves do not fully understand, nor have they ever mastered. The group has not grown after two years of numerous events and efforts; part of the team has moved on to other endeavours, and the project's survival as supported by the motoboys is not guaranteed, despite all the media buzz generated by roundtables, civic calls and publications supported by Spanish government cultural agents. Abad, on the other hand, has extended his own experimental endeavours so as to “network” with canal*LLEIDA, canal*LEON, canal*INVISIBLE, canal*ACCESSIBLE (Golden Nica, Digital Communities Prix Ars Electronica 2006, Premi Nacional de Catalunya d'Arts Visuals 2006) and canal*CENTRAL.

Other liquid, post-modern artists validate the locative art embodied in this asymmetrical appropriation of artistic network externalities. Consider for example Lucas Bambozzi, who claims to be among those who problematize public space, trying to identify “what kind of tools could operate in order to promote an approximation to social reality,” thus “piercing into the bubbles which keep apart the subject and his experience of public life.”⁸ This brief statement alone poses some major challenges regarding asymmetrical appropriation, as it clearly focuses on the discovery of some gadget, some tool to “pierce the bubbles”—framing the artist as an activist-surgeon.

Abad deserves praise for his status as a “truly public artist,” who does not position himself in “the social” or in “public space” as a strategy to reap public grants, as Bambozzi has stressed, but as a means of creating activist public art. This distinction is particularly salient when public art involves the appropriation of technological tools produced for the mass communication market. From a techno-centric perspective, the artist threatens to become a magical or *ex-machina* “master of technological tools” ready to create a situation, locally, temporarily and without lasting relations between the social actors engaged in the artistic project in the course of “public” art performances.

Technological situationism may eventually lead artists to share the same fetishistic relation to the technologies used to recreate “public space” – or to audiovisually produce public space as yet another recreational space, as those promoted by corporate owners (and sponsors) of those same technological tools we are supposed to appropriate for our own good (not necessarily convergent with a corporate sponsor’s agenda).

From an iconomic perspective, creation (or recreation) does not result from the utilization of tools but rather from the *iconic* appropriation of these tools in contextualized *action*.

My interaction and later research projects with motoboys begin at the point where Abad “ends” his artistic project—yet there is a caveat here: Abad’s project has not actually ended, so long as at least some of the motoboys involved are still working on processing new information brought to them by the project and the Canal Motoboy thrives. A motoboy action-research-program came to life in the context of the “City of Knowledge”

research agenda as designed by the CMDAL project (“Comunicación Móvil y Desarrollo en America Latina”), a research project coordinated by Manuel Castells and sponsored by Fundacion Telefónica (2008-2009). In a way, the impact of Abad’s experiment has not diminished over time, although my own appropriation of the motoboys’ agenda implies a critical view with respect to the morality of the artwork itself.⁹

Sustainability issues, especially those related to appropriation patterns and artistic interventions, mainly have to do with time—the artwork is in itself eternal, while it may also have more or less lasting effects on the “public” that is exposed to the *deus ex-machina* of a new ICT tool or recreational *mis-en-scène*. Some of the sustainability issues clearly at risk in Abad’s intervention become central from the perspective of economic analysis; income as well as knowledge creation are as important as the symbolic act of creating an island of representation and identity in an ocean of daily anonymous massacres.¹⁰

To fully grasp the value of icon creation (clicking on cell phones, for instance) the motoboy would have to emancipate him or herself from the digital tool. This would necessitate the re-designing of a social, economic and political network that positions the motoboy as a subject of the appropriation process, enabling ideal representations to be constituted on-the-go, in light of survival and control issues. The symbol may not be a valuable icon in itself, unless it is associated with products, services, and real (as well

as virtual) mobile connections beyond this or that concrete use of a cell phone designed with some dated technology, interface or service tool.

An emancipatory motoboy project would have to be created by the motoboys themselves as protagonists, through a lengthier and hands-on action-research-program which could, among other results, reinforce the hypothesis of “motoboys making extra money by shooting pictures with their cell phones” (one possible lesson of Abad’s *direct action*).

The opportunity to engage in such post-artistic media (and culturally mediated) production activities in the motoboy community has been provided through the Telefónica Foundation project on mobile communications, which commissioned an econometric study of the demand for cell phones in this key urban actor-network (a group of research fellows worked under the coordination of Manuel Castells).

In the second semester of 2008, the “City of Knowledge” initiated a series of focus groups with various social movements in São Paulo, as part of the “Audiovisual Media Management Program” (GeMA), a social informatics project hub (known as “GeMA”), supported by the University’s “Learning with Culture and Extension” program. Among those participating in the process, some were former leaders of the Canal Motoboy project, such as Luiz Fernando Bicchioni, which had become a director of cultural affairs

at the São Paulo Motoboy Union (SINDIMOTO) and was intrigued by the potential return that Abad's project could actually bring to the motoboys themselves.

MotoAngels: a new icon is born

The social, cultural and political issues related to São Paulo's motoboys cannot be examined without an economic understanding of their organization, as well as a more detailed examination of their cell phone usage patterns.

Their actual appropriation of the cell phone is still poorly understood; the exhilarating images produced as part of an artistic performance do not pierce any imaginary bubble except for the passive enjoyment of a cultural performance that simulates, at most, the potential for a "reactivation" of connections, as noted by Boltanski and Chiapello.

The reengineering of flows requires a mastery of mobile technologies, which the motoboys (even those involved with the canal*MOTOBOY experiment) do not possess. The challenge at stake is one of effectively empowering motoboys, so as to create an authentic opportunity for them to design, develop and manage their own iconic assets. The role of cell phones in this potential bottom-up economic reengineering is yet to be determined.

The City of Knowledge, a research-action program at the University of São Paulo, Brazil, has pioneered local development projects since 2001, funded mostly by State agencies

(Federal as well as regional). These projects focus on experimenting with ICTs for socio-economic inclusion and, as we have come to define in 2005, “emancipation” both through and apart from the digital (thus our criticism of hardware-centered approaches such as the “One Laptop per Child” project or the canal*MOTOBOY).

What matters here is not the quality of the tool itself, be it open source, social networking, mobile or ICT4D related, but mainly the icon creation skills implicated in these different and ever-evolving technological platforms. In order to make sense out of gadgets, effective literacy teaching and capacity building become more critical than the supposedly libertarian open and free distribution of ready-made hardware and software. There is an underlying need for informational education, that is, education for the challenge of using and being information, an infoeducational as well as educommunicative perspective is needed.¹¹

Nonetheless, motoboys and cell phones offer an inspiring combination. The outcome of this combination might not be a frozen digital asset, but it is a truly community-based construction of collective organizations as varieties of knowledge-management challenges, which might be addressed on a socio-constructivist basis.

The main challenge in constructing knowledge-creating public spaces—that involve forms of “meaning creation” among different organizations, and thus different organizational cultures—is to adequately address *interaction* as a top priority. The changing potential of the underlying technological infrastructure must become

increasingly transparent in order to facilitate the movement of tacit knowledge as a permanent flow of intangible assets.

New modalities of knowledge production, wealth sharing and identity formation would then be supported by project-based connections among agents, mirroring the “city by projects” (*cit  par projets*) paradigm, as depicted by Boltanski and Chiapello. The idea of weaving a *knowware*—that is to say, a space-time of community-based icons designed through shared and diversified learning practices in hybrid (virtual and real) networking practices—embraces research on the anthropology of digital networks wherein work, learning and innovation co-exist in a state of play.

This situation could also be depicted as a special form of “class struggle” between those who are *nowhere*, as long as they can move—such the motoboy— and those who are *somewhere*, thus stickier, slower and more regulated— such as car drivers, pedestrians and clients who can “move” only insofar as they access mobile agents using mobile communication devices in a far from efficient telecomputing commercial grid.

The “MotoAngels” project aims at opening new job, identity and income generating opportunities so as to improve the conditions of life in this urban setting. It is an ongoing research project which aims at a contribution to the design of mobile digital interfaces for local entrepreneurship in the freight services sector of major urban hubs, such as the Greater S o Paulo area.

Based on both quantitative and qualitative experimental methods, this action-research-program initiative may lead to the formulation of sustainable strategies and innovative business models based on empirical analysis as well as on experimental and experiential proofs of concept. The associated metrics will bring more evidence into language patterns for civic intelligence such as ***digital emancipation*** (Schwartz, 2008) in mobile communication as well as in other open spaces for the social design of virtual interfaces.

Measures of efficacy and network externalities into the matrix of local activities intelligently connected to the research mobile will precisely indicate which types of local hubs thus generated by the designed networked interface are effectively acquiring skills, identity and value. Empowerment, income generation and innovation will be measured by a composite index based on time, space and communication variables measured in real time.

This experimental project in the management of mobile communities of practice with a focus on traffic and freight segments of the urban economy will critically reflect on the presence of mobile ICTs in urban spaces, focusing on issues such as mobility, ubiquity and pervasiveness of hardware, software and cultural infrastructures.

From theoretical and methodological perspectives, this project may contribute to empirical research geared towards development and innovation in web semantics, emphasizing digital empowerment tools (portals and blogs, complementary currencies and measures of intangible assets such as reputation, trust, emancipation) and performing on the ground as an incubator of innovative and sustainable enterprises and projects for human development and the attainment of the Millennium Goals.

Motoboys will be qualified so as to become “mobiquoteous” (mobile and ubiquitous) cultural facilitators for local artistic development in the Greater São Paulo Area. The main activity to be carried out will be peer to peer mobile production and distribution of local artistic activities developed by “motoboys” and “motogirls” educated as cultural facilitators (ringtones, wallpapers, social, environmental and technical communities of practice), under training and monitoring by the City of Knowledge, a research group at the Department of Film, Radio and TV of the School of Communication and Arts of the University of São Paulo.

A new source of identity for motofreight workers and their families will be experienced, as they become members of a cultural production and distribution network, thus creating a human development framework for a large contingent of young workers (there is an estimated number of 300,000 “motoboys” working daily in the Greater São Paulo area, most of them without stable contracts or working as autonomous and informal delivery people, with an average of one death every day as they criss-cross the heavy traffic of the megalopolis). A new source of income will be associated to

accumulation of intellectual and cultural capital by young cultural entrepreneurs among low-income families (royalties from the distribution of artistic content produced by the motoboys in their communities, knowledge and technical skills related to digital audiovisual production and m-commerce, potential fundraising tool for local development campaigns, sponsorships and partnerships).

Last, but not least, a new source of social and technical knowledge resulting from an engaged citizenship through civic campaigns associated to digital cultural production for the cellphone as part of a broader sensibilization and mobilization of the urban motofreight sector for issues and values such as security in traffic, adequate maintenance of urban areas and equipment, starting with sustainable use of oil, motor and other hardware, digital inclusion through mobile socio-cultural networks (thus combining cell phones with web 2.0 application and digital audiovisual streaming channels in real time).

This new open space for social networking is expected to become a ubiquitous artistic and cultural production may be associated to local development goals in different areas such as HIV and other public health issues, security, pollution, traffic and driving educational challenges.

New ubiquitous art forms resulting from the mobilization of a large community of young adults living in underserved communities will enable talented motoboy and motogirl, besides delivering their daily packets and routines, to become agents of digital inclusion and income generation, “delivering” local art production projects (music, images, video, poetry, storytelling, dance, technological performances and educational games) to a larger audience within local communities and beyond (mobile content markets).

At the end, Anton Abad’s situationist intervention will eventually take new forms of artistic and cultural expressions, as a seed well watered and illuminated by the interest, engagement and entrepreneurship of the motoboy themselves. The final result may not be a “canal motoboy”, but rather the opening of channels for motoboy to become angels of new professional, civic and artistic projects. Motoboy are as they move on, maybe they can make progress given a chance to move up as living angels.

Notes

1. Rousseau, J. J. (1960). Subject of the First Book. In E. Barker (Ed.), *The Social Contract [1762], (169)*. London: Oxford University Press.
2. See Bar, Pisani & Weber (2007).
3. For a basic view of digital emancipation as a language pattern for civic intelligence, see Schwartz (2008), in D. Schuler (Ed.), *Liberating Voices: A Pattern Language for Communication Revolution*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press. Retrieved from the Public Sphere Project.

4. Arsenault, A.H., & Castells, M. (2008). The Structure and Dynamics of Global Multi-Media Business Networks. *International Journal of Communication* 2, 707-748.

5. See Stoekl (2007).

6. See Anderson's (2004) The Long Tail. After the "Big Fail", long tail models are also a source of "change-for-your-life" survival techniques as capitalism fragments into non-capitalist trading territories. See also http://www.longtail.com/the_long_tail/2009/03/terrific-survey-of-free-business-models-online.html

7. I was invited to the discussion forum in May 2007, which took place at the São Paulo Cultural Center, with support from the São Paulo prefecture and Spanish cultural agencies. Since then, the City of Knowledge research group has been interacting with the Channel and other motoboys, especially with entities such as the SINDIMOTOSP (workers union), SETCESP and AEMFESP (motofreight business associations in the State of São Paulo). This experimental work in progress was at first integrated into the Fundación Telefónica research project on the impacts of mobile communications in Latin America under the coordination of Castells, but did not make it to the final report (to be published in 2009).

8. See Bambozzi (2008).

9. Adler, A.M. (2009). Against Moral Rights. NYU School of Law.

10. Sawchuk, K. (Interviewer), & Abad, A. (Interviewee). (2008). Registering Realities, Parasiting Networks: An Interview with Antoni Abad. *Wi: Journal of Mobile Media*.

11. These approaches have been the subject of research and teaching at the School of Communication and Arts of the University of São Paulo, where Edmir Perrotti promotes infoeducational projects and Ismar Soares develops educommunication as an alternative to functionalism and rationalism in education and communication practices.

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Biography

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