

PSYCHOLOGY OF EMOTIONS, MOTIVATIONS AND ACTIONS

GLOBAL EMOTION COMMUNICATIONS

NARRATIVES, TECHNOLOGY, AND POWER

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NOVA

Psychology of Emotions, Motivations and Actions



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Maximiliano E. Korstanje
and Antonio Rafele**
Editors

Global Emotion Communications

Narratives, Technology, and Power



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52305/RLBB3285>

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Additional color graphics may be available in the e-book version of this book.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

ISBN: 979-8-88697-397-6 (ebook)

Published by Nova Science Publishers, Inc. † New York

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Chapter 6

Covid Archipelago 19. A Visual Atlas as a Narrative

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“You can only go beyond the surface by working on the surface itself.”

Richard Avedon

Abstract

In spring 2020 we experienced an extraordinary virtual and relational proximity in the environments of our digital homes. The image, the one that narrated and lived, experienced the pandemic epidermally, completely broke discontinuity between virtual and physical spaces, resolving itself into a space of tactile continuity, even before audio and visual. The title of this article, Covid Archipelago 19, directly recalls one of the digital visual storytelling experiences born in March 2020, in full pandemic explosion, from the need to tell live, choral and plural, our country in an extraordinary historical moment. Conceived by a group of Italian photographers, the project focuses on the visual story and involved a hundred gazes scattered throughout the territory, converging in the social life spaces of digital platforms and witnessing a much wider phenomenon during the pandemic. The intense months of lockdown in Italy can be explored and told through a complex visual mosaic that is no longer and is not just a mainstream media perspective, with a controlled and univocal imaginary perception, but recalling an inhomogeneous, polyphonic atlas, relocated into a new media experience, elaborating an

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In: Global Emotion Communications

Editors: Adrian Scribano, Maximiliano E. Korstanje and Antonio Rafele

ISBN: 979-8-88697-269-6

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incomplete and partial gaze, multi-perspective, with digital and open optics, montage of an immense archive, difficult to control. This essay chooses an approach that mainly uses media studies and visual studies, taking media history and archeology as a reference point, exploring and experiencing a new perceptual regime, in digital flaneuristic immersion.

Keywords: image, screen, frame, photography, pandemia, Covid-19

1. Introduction

With spring 2020 we experienced in the environments of our digital homes an extraordinary virtual and relational proximity, connatural and interstitial to the unseen incumbency of Covid-19. The image, the one that narrated and experienced, epidermally experienced the pandemic, became a complete breakthrough of the discontinuity between virtual and physical spaces, resolving itself into a space of continuity (Baudrillard, 1981; Boccia Artieri & Farci, 2021; Castells, 1998; Keidl et al., 2020; Levy, 1998): a tactile flow, even before audio and visual, has intermittently permeated us, resolving itself into a single but complex landscape--of mediascapes Appadurai (1996) wrote, which we pass through and by which we are passed through--connecting bodies, eyes, and digital screens, in a dual environmental and multisensory drive, indulging and expanding a timely historical-archaeological, nineteenth-twentieth-century legacy delivered to our present, which has celebrated as much the drive for *spectare* as for *exponere* (Abruzzese, 1995; Brunetta, 1997; Fiorentino, 2007), as much the production of a mass of images, as much as consumption through the gaze.

The title of this chapter, Archipelago Covid-19, directly recalls one among the digital visual storytelling experiences born in March 2020, during the Italian lockdown and pandemic explosion, out of the need and urgency to tell a live, choral, and plural account of our country in a momentous historical moment (Archipelago19, 2022). The archipelago metaphor evokes a grouping of islands that are close and yet separate, close and multiple, similar but dissimilar. Conceived by a group of Italian photographers, the project, multilateral, scalar, and dynamic, centres on visual storytelling and involved in spring just under a hundred gazes scattered across the entire Italian territory converging in the social life spaces of digital platforms - mainly Instagram and Facebook - and witnessing a much broader phenomenon, proliferated in the months of the pandemic, of which I will try to give an account, representing

however one of the photographic responses - relational, informative, expressive - matured, over the last ten years, by social environments and networked information contexts. The narrative of the present and a digital present made image multiplies, letting emerge informational projects and networked gazes that relate the subjective experience, social-historical situation, territorial, and local contingencies, public and private space, digital context and global and medial destiny. The intense months of lockdown in Italy, especially March, April, and June, can be first explored, then told visually, through a complex mosaic that is no longer and is not only mainstream media perspective, from controlled and unambiguous imaginary perception, but recalls an inhomogeneous, polyphonic atlas, relocated in a new media experience, elaborating an incomplete and partial, multi-perspective, digital and open-minded gaze, editing an already endless archive that is difficult to control. This essay makes use of an approach that primarily employs media studies and visual studies, taking media genealogy and archaeology as its reference point, exploring and experiencing, in digital *flaneuristic* immersion, the new perceptual regime. The chapter moves from the need to take stock of visual experience in the context of lockdown, starting precisely from a montage and narrative that draws on the Instagram platform. In the first part of the text, we address the experience of Covid-19, which is also disconcerting to everyone's media and visual experience. Images, still and in motion, passed through us in stream form (Bolter, 2019). At the centre are the devices of the screen, the environmental medium hybridized into bodies, and a visual flow that has become a means of relating inside and outside, between the experience of home and the experience of the world, redefining the relationship to space and time. The attempt is at least to summarily describe such experience redefined at the time of Covid.

In the second, in an essential and exploratory manner, we initiate reasoning about the pandemic collective imaginary (Pintor Iranzo, 2020), recording a kind of *datified* and controlled iconography, empathetic and redundant. In synthetically and photographically collecting some strong imaginary emergencies of the lockdown, the excess of images produced by each of us coexisted with the digital reproducibility of a few mainstream images, exponentially amplified by the algorithmic management of networked social spaces. While in this sense the paradigm of "control" can be updated and extended to the digital context, on the other hand, one has to take into account an endless self-production of images, sometimes with a geolocalized and territorial connection, with *places* that return to be points of reference also for performative and media animation in a networked context and connection

opportunities that, are offered by social platforms (Van Dijck, Poell & De Waal, 2018). Beyond any binary simplification, in the third and final part of the essay, immersion in the context of a social network such as Instagram returns, as a participant-observer, an intentional multiplicity of gazes expression and testimony, horizontal relation and design and visual interaction, where the eye relaunches boundaries and stories of the Italian pandemic, and not only, in a dimension of multiplicity and counter-narrative. Here the assigned digital boundaries are constantly crossed by the researcher's gaze, offering not exclusively familiar narratives or prevailing icons, but tactics for re-inhabiting the extraordinary everyday (De Certeau, 1980), images that witness and virally infect the perception and imagination of the present, restoring possibilities to the plural narratives of an articulated visual archipelago.

2. Space and Time

Space. Images have besieged and chased us around the house, and have become the main means of relating inside and outside, greatly dilating our spatial experience. We have undergone them and produced them, a viral and avant-garde flux has inhabited us, subject and object, interior and exterior at once, reckoning, among other things, with a few visual fragments-true cuts-that have settled in the passage of time and memory, constructing the image of the future and, in part, reworking the narrative imaginary prefigured, or at least dreamed, in the more recent media past. In the interaction between the different senses, between the eyes and the visual frames, whether small or large, the *screen* device has definitely and socially hybridized to the body, capillary already under the skin, in the form of the medial extension, smartphone, tablet, computer. Covid-19 emphasized and amplified this: the *multi-screen was environment within* an environment, an image within an image, home within a home, evidently environmental media (Buckley, Campe & Casetti, 2019; Keidl et al., 2020; Montani, Cecchi & Feyles, 2018; Tirino, 2020), point of deferral and grafting into the environment of the home – an extension of the body (McLuhan, 1962) - connection of the cerebral eye, multiple grafting into our private dwelling, into this exclusive life or, in other ways, into a reclusive space - about three months old, in all likelihood destined to replicate itself, until it becomes daily life. The medial experience was embodied again and differently in the users' bodies, but it was also relocated

in an environment “shaped, precisely in the dialectic between environmental media and medial environments” (Tirino, 2020, p. 183).

The new social prisoners confronted, begrudgingly, the old prisoners, no longer and not only marginal segments of contemporary society, primarily sick and elderly, in a paradoxical phase that saw them differently on the margins, flesh sensors, facing – and not only in front of but also to the side – to the widespread electronic frames: with the digital TV picture, which stood out and still stands out on the living room wall, functioning as a visual *node of reference*, a hub that opens to the journey and multiplicity of spaces in the home context. Definitively, far beyond the sense of televisual place, but duly, and actively, *video connected* (Boccia Artieri, 2012).

Time. Three intense months: March, April, May 2020, a black hole, time itself dilated by screens, which could disturbingly, or cyclically, restart, reworking our present and becoming. The time, circular and unfinished, of Covid-19 was also the vital time of the eyelid that raises and lowers, to react connectively, that helps to live and liberates in its movement, immobility with extraordinary mobility (Bonadei, 2020; Yan Dou, 2021), between *spectare* and *exponere*, scopic tension and drive in staging, the conscious and the unconscious, looking and building, experiencing and relating, in image interacting and living. Digitization proceeds, natural and accelerated, in the gaze: the artificial landscape integrates with the natural landscape, the window, the doors, the visual frame, frame and glass, continuous cross-reference between different contexts and frames, limit but also possible dynamic opening that reopens the enclosed destiny of the home, pandering to social contexts, very different generational sensibilities and multiple intelligences projected into the new millennium (Gardner, 1999). In the case of my subjective experience, a visual sensibility, essentially rooted in analogical culture (Abruzzese, 1995; Romano, 2020), has dilated-in this entirely new time-hybridized into the digital context, seamlessly, in the invigorating interaction with my students and participant self-observation, for a kind of embryonic ethnographic self-analysis that relates intensely to the world it represents and experiences through the image (Mitchell, 2015).

3. The Eye at the Time of Covid-19

Eyelids rise and fall, orienting the smartphone in the hands: relationship image, interaction image, and connection image (Fontcuberta, 2017; Gunthert, 2015). The quantity of public images is uncontrollable and overflowing,

governed by the orientation of the extraordinary flow of data. On the other hand, along with the redundancy of images, viral extensions, and vital fusions of the most cherished affections and social relations spread under the skin and in the web's reticular matrix, difficult to govern, however recognizable, controlled, and fuelled by algorithms (Eugeni, 2021; Pireddu, 2017) and brand governance. In the mediological analyses daughters of Covid-19, perhaps it might suffice to ask simply, and regardless, how we would have lived without the connections of the digital image. How would our students, adolescents, children, school, and university, first of all, have lived without the flexible and modular relationship built through digital screens (Denson, 2020; Hagener, 2020).

This sort of sensory apnea multiplied the intensity and empathy of the eye (Di Marino, 2021; Montani, 2020). Habitually chilled by distance, stressed from the immersive experience of time, the eye warms up (McLuhan, 1962), in a sensory synergy that calls out to the different parts of the body, empathically engaged by individualized ambient soundtracks. The sound of voices, possible and subjective musical sound settings, multiplicity, and self-expression, interact with the buzz and noise (Krukowski, 2019) of audio-video information. The mobile gaze, altered and, at the same time, sequestered-released (Yan Dou, 2021), has lived an extra-ordinary experience yesterday, ordinary today, in which the perennially connected digital camera is a decisive part: for daily lessons, for professional and emotional relationships, for formal and informal encounters of the daily vital flow, seven days by seven, twenty-four hours a day. Social platforms of videoconferencing show and share, activate a "screen-camera, which produces and shows at the same time" (Arcagni, 2018, p. 158). If the world in modernity has become a skin image, now the cerebral cortex is a visual and virtual extension. Cross-media information feeds the anaesthesia of the gaze, the social panopticon, and the paradigm of "control" extended to the digital context can, and must, reckon with home balconies, building terraces, the window on the edge of the courtyard, the peepholes of smartphones, and the assigned and violated digital boundaries that are not exclusively "familiar narratives" (Pedroni, 2020), but possibilities of the everyday, images that feed and infect perception, that write and feed the imagination, and might contaminate and rewrite narratives. Beyond binary simplifications, immersion returns me as a participant-observer to a multiplicity of possibilities, a possible polyphony where the haptic and active eye must and can re-mark and construct boundaries and stories.

4. Devices. *Con-Optic* Frame

Let us try to reason about the devices that inhabit the home, about screens of the most diverse formats (Casetti, 2015), about the technologies that frame, photograph, and film the lived environment and relaunch it in digital territory, in a circularity between capillary environmental media and environments innervated with media technologies. The excess of dematerialized vision on screens is *resemantized* in the contemporary home, in a continuous signifying shift (Fiorentino, 2019), integrating itself with the place we inhabit: the device of the wearable screen frame is grafted into the house, in the garden, at the window or on the balcony - again a *window on the courtyard* - framing, in turn, the streets, the gardens, the natural, artificial, anthropized landscape, close to the house (Borrelli, 1995). Place again becomes central in its performative and medial animation. The house, in its multiplicity, returns to have space and visual identity in a circular relationship between inside and outside, public and private, in the province as in the city, even on the scene of the Roman metropolis. Even our social face becomes image, pellicular essence: beyond masks physically brought into public spaces reworking a semi-public self between frames and panes, through video sharing platforms - between Zoom, Meet, Teams, Instagram, and Facebook.

The frame suspends and extends space and time, dissolving linearity and hierarchies, and bringing space back into time. How can I dilate this space? How can I augment this time? The home subsumes screens, projecting images of the expanded self into the connected world of the network. One must come to terms with the epidemic of screens and the Covid-19 pandemic, with the control of the digital media ecosystem, with few narratives and a few viral images. With redundant images, with the highest transmedia circulation that feed the dominant storytelling and iconography of the pandemic. With the ability to preserve and stop very little memory at the digital time: to reject a lot and reject a lot.

Ruggero Eugeni has shifted the classical paradigm of panoptic control - the supervising eye device from above and from a single point of view, embodied by the great media empires of Google, Facebook, Netflix, Amazon, and YouTube - to the “plenoptic,” which, in a “dissemination of gazes” takes the multiple forms of a diffuse, participatory, integrated eye, which is in turn employed by different wills, according to different programming based on data processing (Eugeni, 2016, 2021). In the case of the “plenoptic,” “the heart of the visual flow is regulated and administered by the algorithm, its food is

data, and its prostheses are the varied eyes that produce, replicate, or distribute digital images” (Arcagni, 2018, pp. 164-5).

As a researcher and teacher, I have tried to ferment antivirus for conscious research that opens to the gaze and the image according to a different perspective; for the interaction between gazes, for the recognition of the other and the learning relationship that, passing also through the image, opens and uncovers the possible, welcoming the spaces of digital vision as a possible meta-medial awareness, in a horizontal, anti-hierarchical dimension, in a necessarily intergenerational practice. Compared to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century panoptic and the digital *plenoptic*, learning that opens the *gaze-with optics* (representing a clear and deliberate gendered choice), camera, and screen, through the use and production of images-triggers new possibilities of the device, accrued in the learning relationship, to discover, produce, replicate, modify, hybridize, and distribute digital photographs. The imaging of my students, over the course of 2020, is reflected in teaching and learning practice *with* the students themselves, first and foremost, in shared, conscious, and evolving discovery.

5. What the Images Want

I have been moving immovably over the past few months with the need to get my eyes dirty again and again, to give back a voice to images as subjects, not considering them exclusively as expressions of the information machine, of a globalized cultural industry with *plenoptic* meshes, and of a scopic-expositional regime that still dominates today, in the new millennium. Of image as a subject endowed with desires, writes William J. T. Mitchell. One might choose, Mitchell explains, as is sometimes deliberately done in the literary sphere for masks and mirrors, magical portraits and living statues, to recover and celebrate without qualms the “uncanny vitality of images” even those that inhabit screens and homes (Mitchell, 2015, p. 102). With Mitchell, beyond the critique of “a society of spectacle, surveillance, and simulacra...,” there is a dialogue with Walter Benjamin, Aby Warburg, Marshall McLuhan, and Jacques Rancière, with the plurality of images, in a *con-optic* perspective. “No method is offered here... The aim is to challenge ready-made dominant patterns of interpretation...” (pp. 120-121).

Living a hypertrophic reality, I decided to totally collapse the digital eye in deliberate and strenuous immersion, three months on social networks to listen to images, to identify possible narratives capable of opening windows

that return to the complexity and multiple symptoms of the real. After an initial wandering among institutional information, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, I chose Instagram as my elective visual environment, in a constant bounce between fragments that refer back to other visual fragments, between the square images, the serial and ordered screen, the sequences of three images that follow one another and refer back from one account to another, starting with institutional sites of national and international information. Photography remains at the centre: *re-mediated*, but central, a return fragment, already a meme, an interruption, and restart of the video stream, a video game, a dialectical image, but one to which one returns in a context of reappropriation, sharing, and relation. The visual instant, mobile, metamorphic, reproducible, the pieces in the assemblage of the mosaic, compose a puzzle in the making, a pandemic archipelago, globalized and historicizable. Meanwhile, of digital photography, contaminated and disseminated, a few images remain that cross the panoptic and refract themselves plenoptically, scanning the globalized March of an Italy at the centre of the world. These are images - *images*, absolutely distant from the material physicality of the *picture*, Mitchell again - that survive and transcend media, icons that can be transferred from one medium to another, that slip from one screen to another and end up thickening in the collective imagination, in the unconscious, in the removed and recognizable (Mitchell, pp. 27-28). Images with very high circulation, grafted by public life and in the private lives of consumers and producers of images, controlled by digital algorithms that produce, replicate, distribute, manipulate, and reuse digital images by virally transiting them from one social network to another, in a complex path, from Facebook to Twitter, between WhatsApp and Instagram, relaunching them up to news outlets, to the institutional spaces of globalized information, in a deflagrating media short-circuit (Colombo, 2018). In a context of visual production that short-circuits local and global, and in the spring months have seen, among other things, the emergence of Italian photojournalism with a proflux of individual, authorial, journalistic projects, often published by the internationally recognized news, suffice it to bring the very different examples of the *New York Times* with Andrea Frazzetta (April 15, 2020), or *Vanity Fair*, with Alex Majoli (March 26, 2020).

6. Three Images for Social Imagery

Regardless, three *image* photographs (Mitchell, 2015) have definitely prevailed over the others in spreading and consolidating in the 'social

imaginary at least Italian (Smargiassi, 2020), emerging from the flow of images, infographics, and screen visual narratives in which the world of everyday life, consumption and information con-fuse. These are the same images stopped recurrently, among others of extraordinary circulation in the media ecosystem, in the imaginary of a sample of eighty students of the University of Tuscia.

March 8. Cremona. A ‘nurse falls asleep, her head still wrapped in a protective cap and mask, on her work papers, between the keyboard and the PC screen. The nurse, who collapsed from exhaustion at the end of her shift in the emergency room of Cremona’s Maggiore Hospital, is photographed with a smartphone by Dr. Francesca Mangiatordi, in black and white. The doctor takes the photograph as the cover image of her Facebook profile; the photograph is shared 677 times. From the personal social space starts the spark of a viral journey that lands in local, national, and international news outlets and spreads everywhere.

March 19. Bergamo. On Borgo Palazzo street, a procession of ten military vehicles carries 65 coffins to the crematorium. Emanuele di Terlizzi, 28, from Naples, a Ryanair flight attendant, photographs the funeral procession from his window with his smartphone, and shares the image via WhatsApp. Friends spread it via Telegram, then di Terlizzi himself turns the image into a story on his Instagram profile. The photograph circulates virally, again saturating any digital information environment and literally making its way around the world.

March 27. Rome. The pope’s solitary prayer in St. Peter’s Square is a Vatican communication project of incredible visual power. Intrusive image and silence, a circularity of audio-visual and freeze-frame. To which will correspond, among other things, a month later, the walk on the Altar of the Fatherland in the deserted Piazza Venezia of the head of state on April 25. In the desultory void of the media institutional scene, Pope Francis, who is not a character in Paolo Sorrentino’s visionary and serial universe, interprets and occupies the visual centrality of the cross-media space as an icon of religious faith, transferring a dramatically silent hope, in the deserted and artificially lit square. Only this third image is the result and elaboration of the institutional information system, designed by the papal entourage and materially realized by Ansa and Vatican Media for circulation in the media ecosystem. Two out of every three images, as Smargiassi (2020) notes, are symptoms captured in the live feed by image producers who are not information professionals. These images live and re-emerge from an intense, in some ways dramatic, redundant, visual climate and environment. They stand out in the space-time of the

pandemic, synthesizing it with visual energy peculiar to *image* photography that lingers in memory and crystallizes, or at least catalyses, imagery.

7. Beyond the Frame. Covid Archipelago

The boundary is made to be crossed, the gaze to go beyond the edges of frames and pre-constituted and algorithmically reproduced framings, predisposing the mediated gaze of time Covid-19 - *with optics* - in listening. Without any systematic or exhaustive pretension, in a digital environment and time of constant transformation, I register some visual symptoms and some illustrative experiences, essentially related to the Italian experience and centred on the photographic medium, a starting point for mapping a scattered and much wider archipelago. From the visual immersion confined to social contexts, I find projects and gazes with a shared and collective orientation, according to orientations brought forward as a response to the complexity of the present by the multiplicity of interconnected, inhomogeneous, and relocated, evidently polyphonic digital eyes. The catalogue overflows, as it should. The *augmented* experience I represent is that of an eye that connects, assembles, and reworks (Benjamin, 1982; Warburg & Warnke, 2000) a list of fluid experiences that are constantly evolving and in a process of continuous reproducibility, as, moreover, or for example, that of the Covid-19 Visual Project's dynamic and scalar archive-in-progress, triggered by the *Cortona On The Move* festival (The Covid-19 Visual Project, 2022). The space of the network and the shared project is immediately narrative counter virality, complementary point of view, sociological symptom, and clue, complex and diffuse, nourishment and substance of heterogeneous narratives, also analysis of the new media context in direct, experience of inhabiting the present of the world with digital eyes and prostheses, a testimony of the time we live. Of course, in this time the mass practice of photographic production interprets needs for expression as well as information, for widespread relationship and interaction, for social vitality, and the necessity of the present. It would suffice to refer to the REFOCUS open call for photography, dedicated to lockdown and the Italian territory, promoted by the General Directorate for Contemporary Creativity of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Cinisello Balsamo, which collected more than 180 visual projects by the end of spring 2020 (Direzione Generale Creatività Contemporanea, 2022). REFOCUS shifted the focus precisely to a possible *refocusing* of reality through the anthropologically different gaze of young

photographers, following the effects that confinement has had on the spatial-temporal coordinates of everyday living and how this has indirectly transformed the perception of reality itself, aiming at the narrative of a forced condition, of the modification of urban spaces, of the relationship between public and private space, of lifestyles and rhythms of life, of people's emotional and existential condition, testing languages and practices of the image, in the face of fundamental issues - technological, political, psychological, social-economic - that prefigure the becoming.

Even at the edges of the globally established system of visual information-for example, the large international photojournalistic agencies-alternative experiences could be rhapsodically pointed out, such as that of the Noor agency, which was formed in 2007 by the collaboration of 13 photographers from different countries and has seen, for example, Francesco Zizola visually elaborate the life of our country's capital, on the emptiness, on the subtraction of light, on the lack of a man in the context of metropolitan spaces, or again the proposal of Cesura, an Italian laboratory project that has been developing in editorial and collective production terms since 2008, which has produced, in the case of Marco Zanella, the recording of a visual diary of quarantine: like an inner seismograph, the photographic image has shown and elaborated the life in and through the smartphone screen that interacts and palpates in the threshold space between home and the world. More broadly, heterogeneous and glocalized, but in some ways dispersed, one could trace the collective gazes of Instagram accounts such as Thephotosociety or Everyday Africa. Different, however, is the visual experiences born on our territory and conducted intentionally, in this phase of social acceleration. The vocation to complementary information of "Internazionale" for example, in the print issue *24 hours in Italy* (No. 1358 of May 15), corresponded by a network space, has produced an intermedial connection between material and immaterial, print magazine and website flow (Internazionale, 2020), bringing together forty journalists, photographers and writers who recounted, in a collective montage, 24 hours of Italy crossed from Palermo to Cremona, from the provinces of San Fedele Intelvi to Crevalcore, through a cross-media stream that unrolls like a digital parchment of photographs, texts, soundtracks, videos, environmental recordings, colour and black and white, stillness and movement, rhythm, different formats and sizes, horizontal or vertical juxtapositions, videos that exploit the vertical dimension of the smartphone, evoking the free and hypertextual editing, of comic book pages. And again *Internazionale* offered an extraordinary, photographic issue in print format in the spring, intelligently and customarily challenging the digital context precisely during the pandemic

spring. In *Foto Diario per immagini della pandemia*, an extraordinary issue of *Internazionale* (extra no. 11), the search engine selects and chooses, veering the visual montage between the centrality of the local Italian experience and the complexity of a global situation. Fabio Bucciarelli's *photography* of private, almost *staged* drama in the homes of the sick in Bergamo was contrasted with Clement Bernard's deserted, black-and-white Madrid streets, "The Quarantine Diaries," flanked visions of ten places and gazes around the world, proposing a visual journey into the world fluidized by smartphone displays in Pianello Val Tidone for Marco Zanella, in Ashley Gilbertson's segregated New York, in the portraits of the medical staff of San Salvatore Hospital in Pesaro photographed by Alberto Giuliani for the U.S. monthly *The Atlantic*. Valerio Bispuri questioned in pictures what meaning the #iorestoacasa decree could have for the Roma population, traversing the Castel Romano camp with his photographic lens; Matteo de Mayda explored the experience of the colourful and washable "Mascherine solidali" designed and made in the Treviso design workshop "Talking hands," Graziano Panfili recorded and showed in mosaic the proliferation of webcams turned on for the world, while Gabriele Galimberti figuratively staged the world of Milanese families framed behind windows warmed by the lights of a movie set.

In spring 2020, the international visual storytelling festival *Cortona on the Move* opened a multimedia platform (The Covid-19 Visual Project, 2022) with the aim of establishing a permanent photographic archive on the pandemic. The Covid-19 virus, in disrupting the time and space of millions of people with its historical scope, has offered margins for narratives that multiply points of view and can suggest and nurture the reworking of memory for decades to come. *The Covid-19 Visual Project. A Time of Distance* stands out for constituting a digital hub in the making, fuelled by international commissions, an open call, and the narrative flow intercepted from the centrality of Instagram (Instagram, 2022a), collecting and exhibiting transmedia narratives where photography represents the pivot of storytelling, placed between the local dimension and a global pandemic context. The project starts on May 11, photographic stories are launched through Instagram snippets and then develop widely on the site, investigating the shifts that have occurred in the private and urban fabric, in social relations or choosing to tell, in specific focuses, for example, the transformations of the many different Italian companies that have decided to help healthcare facilities, repurposing traditional productions to meet the needs of the moment and self-promote differently. The work of photographers, video makers, and visual artists has gradually flowed into the digital hub being updated, articulating around seven

key themes: “the challenge of healthcare,” “the urban void,” “the lockdown,” “the economic consequences,” “a wounded society,” “the revenge of nature,” and finally the new possible, or presumed, “normality.” The Festival’s international projects and commissions were overlaid with selections of visual content from social media and an international open call, which opened May 18 and closed on January 31, 2021, made in collaboration with Lens Culture, a global community of photographers and industry professionals that is home to 3 million people in 145 countries around the world, to collect photo essays - *photo series* of 12-20 images - and mini visual stories - up to 5 photographs - originals that continued to feed the Instagram profile and website. The visual storytelling by places, themes, and modes of expression, between social reportage and autobiographical diaries, citizen journalism and vernacular photography, in a global mosaic articulated between posts, stories, and a newsletter of direct interaction with festival subscribers, already in the summer of 2020 translated materially into a series of exhibitions scattered around Cortona combining the screen environment with the multiplicity of architectural and exhibition spaces, conceived as photographically re-inhabitable, of the medieval city. *A Time of Distance* in aggregating and assembling visual histories is predisposed to offer the context for reworking collective memory and articulating a metariflexive gaze without a centre, in constant motion, where we can return shortly, as is proposed in the introduction to the site: “to create a stable space in which to let all this settle, a place to which we can collect meaningful material and to which we can return to try to understand what happened, how and why.”

Arcipelago-19 debuted online on March 17, “from the impulse to collectively narrate this unique and extraordinary historical moment,” an idea developed by photographers Max Cavallari, Michele Lapini, Valerio Muscella, Francesco Pistilli, and Giulia Ticozzi (Archipelago19, 2022; Instagram, 2022b; Facebook, 2022). The Archipelago-19 window, on Instagram, on Facebook, on the Internet immediately became a response to “an urgency” to be short-circuited and nurtured in digital spaces until it landed circularly in the pages of newspapers and in urban settings-with #Anticorps 2021-a poster campaign carried out between March 16 and 17, 2021 on the streets of 14 Italian cities across the entire peninsula. The key sharing words on Instagram along with the most generally circulated pandemic narrative hashtags #coronavirus, #covid19, #covid19italia, #virus, #pandemic, #storytelling, are represented by the specific narrative perspective intended by the curators, in the terms #photojournalism, #reportage, #photographersocial - translated into English and French - and by the collective and connective

visual perspective highlighted by the tagging #arcipelago19, #atlas, #atlasvisual. The list of authors is in constant becoming, freelance photographers and photographers aggregated as they went along according to heterogeneous and localized perspectives and gazes, “multi-voice testimony” gathered in real time to establish connections between public spaces and spaces of private experience transformed by the pandemic: merely by way of example, moving in a veritable archipelago of photographic histories, on the one hand, the metamorphosis of Bologna’s municipal theatre and the daily lives of entertainment workers in Michele Lapini’s photographs and on the other the transfiguration into a dark fairy tale of an average family’s quarantine in Elisabetta Zavoli’s lens. Together, in a visually inseparable connection between information and imagination, between the ordinary and the utterly extraordinary. The home page of the Arcipelago-19 website is presented as a kind of visual constellation with the photographic fragment functioning as a node that, in a dynamic and scalar form, constitutes the starting point for an interactive journey through the Italy of 2020, with the possibility of choosing which stories to explore, according to tags and keywords or by intercepting places, themes, communities, authors. Beyond the daily numbers of the pandemic, beyond the redundant news and photographs of the familiar narrative or frames that renew and feed the social imaginary, here an atlas of images and subjectivities becomes an active and alternative testimony to the dominant narrative. The photographic document propagates in the network through constant linkages, reminders of fragments connected to other fragments. “We would like Archipelago to be a window from which anyone can look out and see what we see.” The photography presents spaces and times of a social experience, and assembles a mosaic made up of houses, towns, cities, “small and large islands not divided by the sea but by quarantine,” a landscape accessible from any mobile device and at any time on the state of the country that also represents a relational and transformative scenario in constant motion.

In March, around the city of Bologna, photographers Francesca De Dominicis, Cecilia Guerra Brugnoli, Jana Liskova, Francesco Rucci, Anita Scianò, and Erika Volpe launched the project @covisioni (Instagram, 2022c). Again, the proposal is choral and multifaceted, according to an avowedly “anthropological and social” perspective involving forty photographers in twenty Italian regions to explore Italian society in the slippages of border zones, through the transformations of human relations in a year of life with the ambition to return visual symptoms in the shared space of Instagram. Here, the network of contemporary photographers, supported by the LUZ agency

(@luzaboutstories), uses the extension of the digital eye as a tool for investigation, exploration, and invention, distant from the health emergency in its photojournalistic immediacy. Reclusive spaces become greenhouses, the diurnal slips into the nocturnal, and nature open to differently possible conjunctions and encounters. “Glades,” “silences,” “collisions,” “nebulae,” and “greenhouses,” are words that leave the gaze open to the subjective and emotional transformations of the human landscape. The experience again will land on a return physical visibility after incubation on the web: Co-visioni will be exported in September 2021 to the exhibition spaces of Sifest Off in Savignano sul Rubicone and has launched a crowdfunding campaign for the creation of books and traveling group exhibitions. The project, starting from the editing articulated according to the format of Instagram, intends to function as “a technical device capable of reworking the incident by translating it into a research, which will take strength through everyone’s gaze,” opening the viewer’s subjective gaze and interaction as it slips (Barthes, 1980) on the sliding block of photo-notes, dilation and temporal occasion situated in the contrapuntal and geographical scanning of the twenty reference regions.

An idea of Giulia Haraidon takes its start @creativiiinquarantena (Quarantine diary and archive) that, founded on the hashtags #creativiiinquarantena #1shotchallenge, is developed on Instagram (Instagram, 2022d) starting from the need to promote the visual expression that reworks, between eye and extension of the digital prosthesis, in the form of a personal archive, but intended for the community, the experience of the pandemic. The call for participation was welcomed first in individual bulletin boards, then in the space of the shared account, the travelogue of inner space, a visual chamber with many eyes, projected to observe, between inside and outside, the relationship between senses and inhabiting, bodies and environments, moods and actions manifested through the essential basic elements of the photographic image, form, light, and colour. In this case, the inner seismograph applied to digital extension provides almost a reaction to the pandemic and lockdown, expressing a kind of visual therapy that passes through contemporary photography by providing a map of the psyche and relationships externalized in the public space of Instagram.

With Terraprojectnet Photographers, we return to a collective formed in 2006 by photojournalists Michele Borzoni, Pietro Paolini, Rocco Rorandelli, and Rocco Donati: starting April 2, the group’s Instagram account brings to life the specific project *Homemade.AvisualarchiveofSocial.Distanceing* (Instagram, 2022e). The navigation bar here is offered by some keywords in English that recall serial moments of daily life: #pray; #play; #exercise;

#work; #deliver; #study. *Pray* is the weekday gaze, complementary and opposite to the spectularity of Pope Francis extraordinarily immersed in the solitude of St. Peter's Square. Compared to the silence of the Pope at the centre of the world, here are the priests of the Italian province, gathered in the solitude of their churches, in front of the altar and the webcam, actors and mediums, sacred vestments mediated by the frames of screens and smartphones, a tactile gaze spread throughout the entire peninsular territory, the ultimate witnesses of the need for proximity, of the suffering of absence, of a desolating emptiness that yearns for ordinary and extraordinary contact.

In a context of permanent evolution, where localized initiatives multiply by interweaving distant fields of interest, I still intercept two experiences that are complementary to each other, both in their production model and in their multiple-look visual interpretation, but linked by the thread of major European cities. *Paris Covid2020_project* aims its eyes on daily life in the 20th arrondissement. The Instagram profile reads, "Un virus/ Un quartier/ Un collectif de photographes." A Paris neighbourhood - Le 20eme arrondissement de Paris - is staged in the context of Instagram by photographers living in the area on the city's eastern border during the Covid-19 crisis. The project is launched on March 31 (Instagram, 2022f) and in syncopated storytelling, recounts interior and exterior, public and private, all of Belleville, the streets and squares in the deprivation of sociality, the details of private life, the eyes and portraits in masquerade. The tone is that of weekday cartography, with ordinary details and nuances, each reflection of the folds of everyday life is expressed and translated into a subjective vision of the virus and the boundaries crossed and violated by it, as well as by the camera. Multiplicity exposes the offstage, the everyday edge in the extraordinariness of the moment. Neapolitan photographer Eduardo Castaldo's project *Intervallo, Naples 2020: diary of a suspended city*, produced in collaboration with the *Fondazione Donnaregina per le arti contemporanee* museum Madre (Instagram, 2022g) also collects a collective, anonymous production, woven with the surreal counterpoint of the historical television format chosen by its curator. Picking up on Rai's historical "Interval," Castaldo "recounts the abrupt interruption of our daily life caused by the sudden and global diffusion of Covid-19, in a logbook composed of photographs and unpublished clips," punctuating it cyclically with the notes of the Toccata from Pietro Domenico Paradisi's Sonata No. 6 in A Major. The repetitive scanning of the harp notes, proposes the frame of an extraordinarily long interval from ordinary time, in a still and circular singularity in serial repetition (day 1; day 2; day 3;... day 22) and from the spaces, and the scenes, landscape, architectural and

theatrical, always different from each other, an expression of great mobility of the collective digital eye, multiplicity of travel and reflection of a metropolis boundless, but at the bottom all too similar in the extraordinariness of lockdown and emptying of lived life (Sant'Eframo Vecchio; Via Mergellina; Via Diocleziano; ... San Vincenzo alla Sanità controra, day 18). Where the paradoxes inscribed in the nature of digital images, reckon with the paradoxes of a kind of suspension of historical and social time.

The last collective experience I survey, with a format in the making, was conceived by photographer Giorgio Barrera, *with an* explicitly and projectually relational *optic*, with a luminous openness that is destined to remain open. The hashtag #Inthelightofyou (Instagram, 2022h) is launched on Instagram much later, as if preluding a context of permanent social emergency and an inescapable and irrepressible expectation to be enlivened in every environment and context, of course from my specific perspective specifically the environment of learning and education. The first sequence of two photographs is published on September 7, 2020 - in this case, the scene is the city of Florence-which repeats, in any setting and any Italian or world city, two shots: one presents a long field that enlarges the scene, the second slides gently into a medium field that brings out the bodies of the image's protagonists. Barrera, a photographer with a broad sociological sensibility and great attention to the rituals of everyday life, speaks of "a visual study that starts from the observation of the phenomenology of the virus." The personal idea quickly became a collective project, initially shared by 150 photographers from Italy and abroad, but then spread to the network by opening up to the Instagram community, inviting people to construct photography that finds ways to visualize the urgency and necessity of relationship in the distressed context. Each photograph-the call was spread as open and globalized by collecting sequences experienced in photographic performances held anywhere in the world-puts two people, in profile, wearing protective masks, facing each other in an urban or rural context, in a kind of essential, delicate, fragile performative flash mob. Covid's social and human condition is an evocative starting point that expresses the whole need of the person to meet, a celebratory and cathartic form and photographic translation of a state of necessity and practice of survival written in human history, where the media, in the last stretch of history, have played a relevant part in opening up spaces of intense, but distant, conjunction.

Conclusion

The narrative of the present and a digital present made image multiplies, letting emerge informational projects and networked gazes that relate the subjective experience, social-historical situation, territorial, and local contingencies, public and private space, digital context, and global and medial destiny. The months of lockdown in Italy can be first explored, then told visually, through a complex mosaic that is no longer and is not only mainstream media perspective, from controlled and unambiguous imaginary perception, but recalls an inhomogeneous, polyphonic atlas, relocated in a new media experience, elaborating an incomplete and partial, multi-perspective, digital, and open-minded gaze, editing an already endless archive that is difficult to control.

Beyond any binary simplification, in this chapter, immersion in the context of a social network such as Instagram returns, as a participant-observer, an intentional multiplicity of gaze's expression and testimony, horizontal relation, and design and visual interaction, where the eye relaunches boundaries and stories of the Italian pandemic, and not only, in a dimension of multiplicity and counter-narrative. Here the assigned digital boundaries are constantly crossed by the researcher's gaze, offering not exclusively familiar narratives or prevailing icons, but tactics for re-inhabiting the extraordinary everyday, images that witness and virally infect the perception and imagination of the present, restoring possibilities to the plural narratives of an articulated visual archipelago.

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Publications from the Last 3 Years:**2019**

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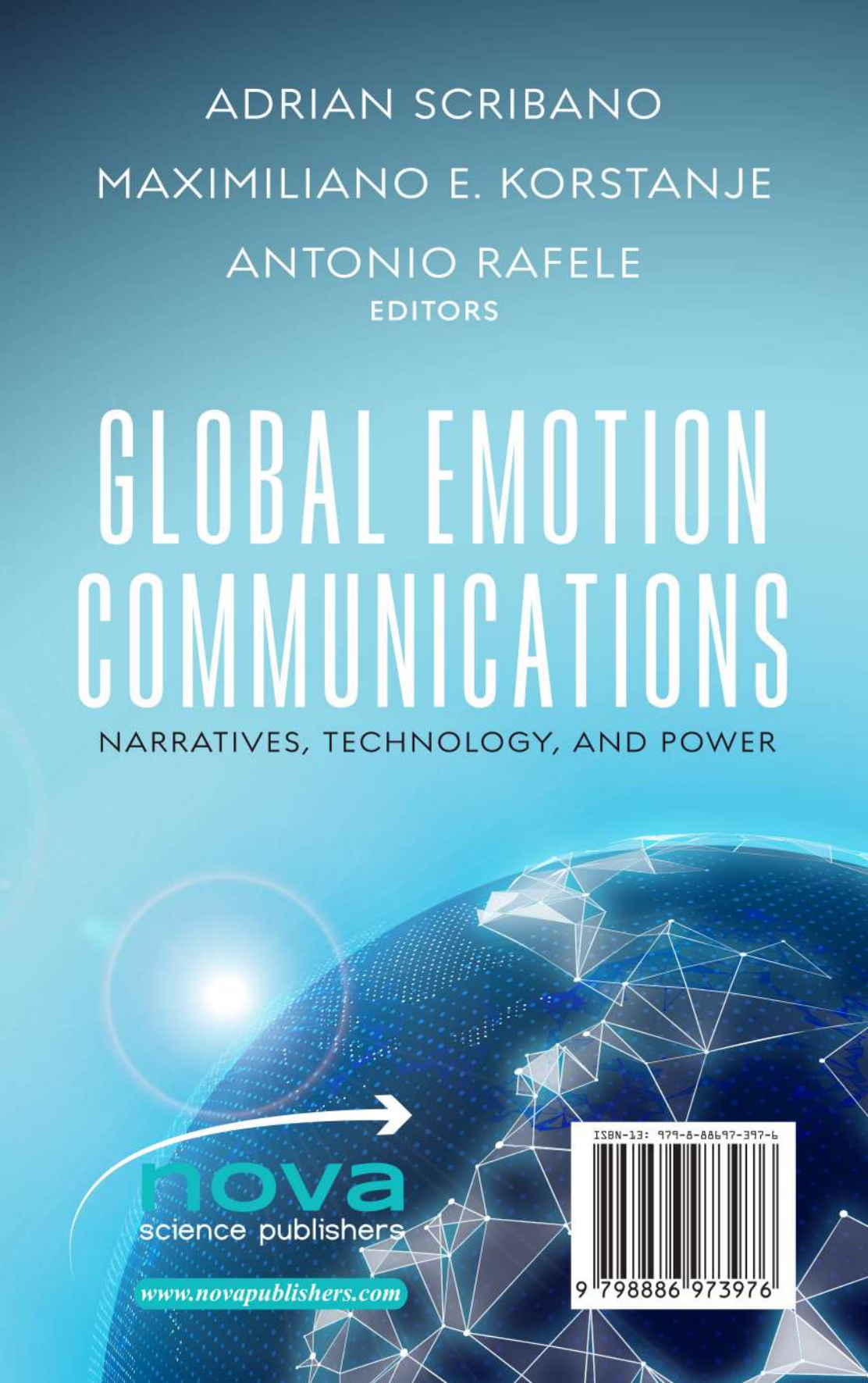
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MAXIMILIANO E. KORSTANJE
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