Thinking Aloud
János Sugár

Rivers and Bridges

Even as a ready made image, the bridge is quite a broad metaphor, easily interpreted in a metaphor-hungry world. New phenomenon's emerge, absorbing metaphors, traceless, reminding the work of understanding to the hopeless task of erecting a dam. We are living in a notional-vacuum — searching for synonyms to put an old content before the background of a new context, with a grand gesture rendering them visible. The tools of our analogical way of thinking are the word-images, rendering the representation of the past to the notions of the present. We try to discover new words, finding references to reveal the mechanisms of the medialized world — the global feedback, where past-less, reference-less yet very efficient media surround us. In our multilevel networked age the world is full of potential metaphors, we need to attempt to let the mythical experience interweave the products of our technological boom.

For me moreover, the bridge was a returning dream, I dreamt about a bridge standing alone and lonely in the sea, not connecting — nothing to nothing[1]. We are constantly participants in situations to which the metaphor of Bridges and Rivers refers to — two different dimensions crossing each other: a natural border and an artificial construction. The overcoming of natural obstacles is reached through the help of a civilisatoric technique, an artificial construction, an engineering masterpiece making possible the "get across" of a dynamic, unstoppable entity. The bridges have their own names, yet it sounds like the naming of a scapegoat, breaking the biblical prohibition of loosen and binding. From an engineering point of view, the memorial to breaking the prohibition is the temptation of possibilities. One may not underestimate the strategic significance of bridges.

They mark important places, exceptional points border crossings, checkpoints where we can cross the contradictions keeping our feet dry. The blowing up of dams, the burning of bridges has always had symbolic significance — the Pope as Pontifex Maximus meant the biggest bridge builder. During WW2 all the eight bridges of Budapest crossing the Danube were blown up and the rebuilding of these bridges signaled, like a gigantic concept art piece, the speed of moving away from the past. Bridges fulfill the need of limitless access to the "everywhere" — two separate entities connect, a matrix of bridges creating a new dimension[2] based on connections. The bridges are corridors for the Memes[3], isolation disappears and infections [multiculture] begin to penetrate — the bridge as serious source of danger.

Today the bridge is a link, one single association, the memorial to an accidental running thought, connecting two isolated data-particles in the information universe. The quantity of links meaning popularity thereby a tool of selection. Links creating the hypermedia, where anything can occur except metacommunication.

Revolution of Hearing

Multiculturalism is a common place, it is a daily routine, a continous experience. In a situation where I can not be sure to whom I am addressing, the overcultural, superlanguagual communication plays an important role. To find our way around in the daily practice of the age of transit passengers, we need obvious, understandable signs. This is a democratic language understood by everyone — the language of symbiotic cooperation. Visual

communication is the most simple — we orientate primarily through our eyes, images are widely understandable. Seeing is more and more a merely cognitive process, the understanding is consciously controlled. Visuality becomes a unilateral communication tool, in accordance with this our environment is visually overloaded — our social, visual and acoustic spaces are filled by the multicultural horror vacui. Everyone wanting to communicate with images against the spoken word. If we want to build a bridge between ourselves and the "other" — signs, symbols, logo's, pictograms crowd our visual space.

The spoken word remains the global English: love, stop, go, feeling, new, etc. — the 500 most important words of the inhabitants of the planet. Deriving from its efficiency the image is no longer a mere spectacle, but a surface, an interface, we need to get into an interactive relationship if we would like to conquer the domain of the unknown. That's why it had a revolutionary significance when Ivan Sutherland presented the Sketchpad software in 1962, the sensation of direct freehand drawn lines on the computer display — a gesture-input, associative of the visual communication. The relationship with the machine has become anthropomorphised, on the basis of physical experiences all the operations are easily executable.

It seems that with our other hi-tech perception device, just the opposite occurs, there is no communication business of that scale built on hearing. Only speaking takes our ear seriously advantage of — hearing is linear, bound to the course of time, like we are bound to the irreversible direction of time. Medial design sees in listening the quickest way to the subconscious, its like a direct channel to the subliminal manipulation. Because of this our auditive space is continuously filled by prescribed sound — consciously joined to our actual mental state, spatial noise information and an incredible amount of engineered music/signals. Thanks to the improving recording techniques the music has a background function, we do not pay special attention [conscious listening], because everything is concealed, [canned, conserved]. Since the appearance of sound in motion picture films we are living in a continous musical background — we have learned how to regulate our musical taste and perception to our fate [live-recorded ratio]. The case of concentrated listening is rather rare, listening requires real-personal time in a society always on the move — the spectacle is lost when the music is already recorded. When we are really [consciously] using this high level perception device it is exceptional, solemn, quasi ceremonial [live concerts, rave parties, etc.] otherwise the sound is only background, muzak making the work easier on the assembly line.

The radio is one of the eldest "new mediums", it remains on a large and clumsy infrastructure, having been relegated to a secondary role after the advent of newer "new mediums"[sound plus visual, like TV]. Maximum as supporting phenomenon of multimedia, in which sound acts as illustration material, disburdening the eye. The centers of power realized its significance rather early and are interested to keep it a unilateral, one way form of communication, creating a precedence for later developments in technology. Radio is the only medium where our fantasy is inspired through our ears, with a gesture-input twisting of the knob we can navigate the cyber-ocean of various audio broadcasts. So we can hear the invisible.

Goals

Multi minus one medium. Using the ear, vacation of eye.

* to enhance the activity of listening, to have the same consciousness toward the audio - acoustic environment, as to the visual; to activate the passive perception of hearing, a postgraduate education of the ear, revival of darkness, thinking aloud, with closed eyes.

* building up dialog — bridge — between the institutional, traditional suppliers and the non institutional, non conventional users of the radio medium, pirate stations, web radio, helping the transition toward the new technological versions of the radio medium.

* focus on acoustic activity in the practice, [let artists onto the air, acoustic performances] and in the realm of media theory have the spoken language as the most basic territory.

Ideas

* collecting visual elements, [real bridges, rivers, architecture, drawings, photos etc.] and textual references, sound documents in order to create database published on the net.

* constructing a small wooden bridge, where in every hour one could hear the 12 o clock news broadcast, always from a different time zone.

* publish information how to be an independent audio provider, technical infos, [how to build a pirate stations], examples, transcriptions.

Form

I imagine a radio play, one homogeneous 24 hour live radio program one complete day of live broadcast, with one central station, center, mixing office. Speakers, hosts changing throughout the day.The radio program should be directed [organized] by a story, a drama, a narrative tale — a global narrative which can be a very simple [mythical] story. The allotment of time to the broadcasters would be in relation to content, not on an equal, egalitarian distribution. It should be a one day continous global radio play for a global public, put together of local public events, by local suppliers: live voice, acoustic or theater performances, etc. — ideally this should span to outside of the actual world broadcast.The public could follow it either by listening to the radio — it should have as many as possible broadcasting stations as it can [it should be accessible everywhere] — or attending the local events. It should be a multi-tongue [not multilingual] situation among native and not native speakers, bad and less bad translators. Since Rilke and Heisenberg its obvious that even the observer is observed, in other words there is no original, or everyone belongs to a minority.

The theme is rivers and bridges and the idea of translation could be represented by various local moderators, particular professionals and non professionals, who are commenting, translating the events, chatting with each other, and participating in this global live program.

Call

* for images, texts, documents concerning rivers and bridges,
* for proposals for the narrative structure global radio play,
* for proposals for local live acoustic events, for bridges and rivers related acoustic materials.

[1] Jonah-Modell, 1987, video installation

[2] Balint Bori, a Hungarian Artist, in 1982 had an idea of creating a computer model which would consist of many small islands standing in a pool of water in a room, and ants would traffic like the moving bits of information, the connections would be stripes of honey.

[3] Glenn Grant, *Memetic Lexicon* 3.2

[4] Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Against Multiculture*, Automedia, NYC