

**WEAVING RHIZOMES: AN ONTOEPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH
IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH CREATION**

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**FACULTY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES
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DOCTOR OF COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

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Acceptance Page

This dissertation titled “WEAVING RHIZOMES: AN ONTOEPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH CREATION” is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Communication (DComm).

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DEDICATED

to

DR. JEAN A. SALUDADEZ

for being the backbone of this thought

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lorena Bañares currently resides and teaches in Cambodia where she served as the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Communications and Media Arts at Paññāsāstra University.

She has over 16 years of experience in both academia and in the media industry. This has led her to develop and adopt new methodologies in teaching professional communication subjects anchored on current industry demands---a hands-on interactive approach applicable for students in the Southeast Asia region.

She also served as communication specialist for government organizations and a visual design consultant for marketing agencies.

Born and raised in Albay, Philippines, she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Advertising Design from University of Sto. Thomas-Legazpi, Albay (formerly Aquinas University). She later earned her Master in Development Communication at University of the Philippines, Open University.

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Actualizing this dissertation would not be possible without the assemblage of humans and non-humans who have intra-acted in putting these pieces together. Doing this inquiry is indeed a liberating journey. I am gratefully indebted to the affective materiality of our cameras, workstation, surface laptops, Angkor temples, my Internet connection, and mobile phones. The sensation brought by these non-human forces makes possible a space where the following humans intra-acted to make this project a reality.

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ABSTRACT

BAÑARES, LORENA R, University of the Philippines Open University, July, 2021, **Weaving Rhizomes: An Ontoepistemological Approach in Communication Research Creation.**

Adviser: **Dr. SERLIE BARROGA-JAMIAS**

Anchored on Deleuze's Ontology of Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism, this postqualitative inquiry puts philosophical concepts to work in the doing of inquiry to produce knowledge differently. It adheres to ontoepistemology where the act of knowing is through performativity. Guided by Deleuze and Guattari's Rhizome concept, the dissertation is a living Rhizome: a thought in motion.

Letting thought guide the work, I experimented with how materialities in photography are constituted in photographing Cambodia's Angkor temples. Together with my co-photographers, I attuned to the molecular *becomings* of visuals while being entangled in the knowledge-creation process: its deterritorializations/reterritorializations from virtual to actual.

The inquiry was able to surface Photography as a surface event of *becomings* where subjectivity only emerges from the intra-action of humans and non-humans. Such surface event is a communication phenomenon when virtual meets the actual, a rhizomatic *becoming*. Responding to the Ontological turn, the inquiry generated a possible discourse on the Posthuman concept of communication as a force of relation that recognizes the dynamics of humans and matters that are always imbricated in a genesis of infinite *becomings*.

The experimental inquiry yielded an ontoepistemological research-creation approach in studying communication phenomena as *becomings*. Called Weaving Rhizomes, this research-creation approach disrupts the colonial and stabilizing methods in research, by acknowledging the dynamic relations of humans and non-humans as always imbricated in the doing-making of research. As an approach to speculative inquiry, Weaving Rhizomes does not prescribe any method rather, allows experimentation.

This dissertation contributed widely to debates on photography and communication as *becomings* in the Ontological turn. It also added to the growing field of visual research methods foregrounding visuals as active agencies in research-creation, an entangled performativity. The inquiry experimented with mobile camera as prosthetics of the body and was able to develop Luminous entanglement, a way of sensing visual data as rhizome that disrupts anthropocentric gaze in analyzing data. Remaining consistent with the Ontology of Immanence, this dissertation was written as a rhizome, data are woven as rhizomes and maps a probable future approach in research-creation.

Preface

ENTANGLED BEGINNINGS

. . . and perhaps one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian.
– Michel Foucault, *Theatrum Philosophicum*

... and Foucault was right.

As I began my doctoral study at UP Open University, I made up my mind to do qualitative research even though I lean heavily on new materialism. When I encountered subjects like COMM 310, I realized how we cling too much to conventional methods trying hard to explain current phenomena that are so fluid. Arresting them in a category would be unthinkable. While our required readings and course structure are focused on traditions of communications, this started to sound archaic to me. On one hand I started reading Thomas Kuhn's stunning book, *Structure of Scientific Revolution* and began questioning the scientific paradigms we have gotten used to since time immemorial. Questioning the existing "truths" propagated by conventional thinkers is indeed a thorny yet liberating ride.

It was in COMM 390 that fueled my interest in postmodernism. Though interested, I was hesitant and still thought I would be safe with conventional humanist methodology. I sought solace in the Interpretive paradigm, but it didn't work. It was Dr. Jean Saludadez who pushed me to my limits to take the path less trodden, to see the potentialities of what the discourse of vulnerability has to offer. In her most subtle gestures, she steered me towards this path, but it was too soon for me to realize we were heading towards the Posts. This dissertation is a living footprint of her work. Without her, I would still be rooted in conventional research. *She is the backbone of this thought.* This is where the rupture happens. Rhizomatic

lines deterritorializing from the black hole to find a territory for the “new.” To transcend the conventional ways is difficult, but the lure of the new is too hard to ignore.

The more I got curious, I started navigating the path of vulnerability. I found Dr. Elizabeth St. Pierre’s postqualitative talk that eventually changed my track. I met Dr. St. Pierre online who has been incredibly supportive in guiding and giving me readings regarding this new empiricism. Postqualitative is not easy. Many times, I still fall prey to the distraction of methods-driven research. Guides are available elsewhere so why would I purge myself to the new? But I knew the enchantment offered by the new is something that is urgent, timely and at least for me, the right thing to do since the conventional humanist methodology cannot accommodate the posts. It is simply unintelligible for me to think that humans are separate from the world, that reality is purely constructed by interacting humans.

While Dr. Jean supervised me on my first attempt to do a postqual paper, I joined reading groups to sharpen my understanding on post-philosophies and studied post structuralism and new materialism at my own pace. I remember I spent, burned sleepless nights reading the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, which were too hard for me then as they threw strange concepts after concepts. Not giving up, I managed to reread their authored books along with other contemporary philosophers in posthumanism, poststructural, and new materialism. When I got the hang of it, it was a feast in my soul.

Courses in DCOMM became a creative space exploring innovative ideas,

entangled words, photographs, readings, conversations, and hyperlinks that all constituted becoming naive, becoming radical. These entangled relations brought me to abandon the conventional humanist methodology and explore post ontology to arrive at the new. As an artist, it was so easy to fall in love with the concepts. I am living this Philosophy.

Chapter 1

PLATEAU: THE DISSERTATION AS RHIZOME

There are many of us writing this piece. This is authored by many voices, empty bodies, matters, and incorporeal forces hovering around, infolding and unfolding, communicating in every surface, intra-acting to create new phenomena.

Rhizomes as Thoughts in Motion

This dissertation is a Rhizome. Unlike the arborescent tree that is vertically structured, rhizomes crawl across without the hierarchy of structure. It consists of matters and bodies that exist in relations of movement and rest. These are unformed substances where subjectivity only emerges from its relational movement. A rhizome can be detached and plugged in anywhere. You can read this paper from anywhere, detach its parts, find new connections, a new assemblage will emerge. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) remarks, “a book is not an image of the world but rather forms a rhizome with the world” (p. 11). This troubles the Cartesian binaries that has been the hallmark of most social science researches. Rhizome is a thought in motion.

A thought without image (Jackson, 2017) is the creation of the new. For Deleuze and Guattari, the new is not negation of something already known but an encounter with the unthought (Zagala, 2005, p. 22). To create the path of the new is to disrupt binary logic allowing roots to produce multiplicities, a line of flight, a rhizomatic experimentation. Infused with difference, the subject is decentered, imbricated within the assemblages of humans and non-humans in constant motion. It is an act of creation, not one of recognition. Thinking happens by force, by chance, and through an encounter. This force—this violence—is an intrusion: the claws of

both “necessity” and “enmity” inflict themselves and “awaken thought from its natural stupor” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 139). There is no method to “thought”. Jackson (2017) states:

“We don’t invite or expect this force, and when it happens, conditions of thought emerge; thus, the violence is both a destruction and a creation. That is, to create something new, the dogmatic image of thought must be disrupted and destroyed. We don’t try to understand, recognize, or resolve this force. Instead, we create” (p. 669).

Rhizome is a mapping of thoughts. Mapping of thoughts means living with concepts as I experiment with my photographic encounters in the Northwestern plains of Cambodia. It is through these encounters that made me as I am, a researcher. Following Deleuze’s Ontology of Immanence, this speculative inquiry is a story of *becomings* in movements of thought. It rethinks thought as motions of intensities that make us act. It blurs the distinction between binaries: subject/object, nature/culture, form/content, and man/woman. As O’Sullivan (2006) concedes, “The ‘mind’ is no longer the origin of thought as such, but operates as a kind of threshold, or temporary turbulence, within a thought cloud-field” (p. 30).

Thought travels as it creates new terrains while attending to the lines of flight, transformations behind the creation of a photograph. Weaving data as rhizomes foregrounds thought in motion. Motion constitutes the intensities, *haecceities* (events) of matter and humans that create communication phenomena. Phenomena that foreground ecologies of matters creating new ways of seeing data as *becomings*. We are held in constant communication with matters and bodies within the plane of immanence, encountering new forces, and thus, we transcend. This is an experiment of staying in between. We met in between, in the doing, in the

process of worlding. Staying in between requires attending to the modulations taking place which events come to expression in this sense, of photography. These events are forces created by vital ecology exploring new potentials and bringing forth new concepts and things---an actualization of the world.

While postqualitative inquiry is now a growing field, its influence gave rise to speculative approaches that share the ontology of post inquiries. The traditional notion of research that is structured, limited and rigid having step-by-step methods are refused in this form of inquiry. Instead, it encourages experimentation to let the methods emerge. Subjects meld and melt within the stream of these fibers. Allowing thoughts to take over, I am constantly reconstituted becoming a photographer-researcher.

Remaining consistent with the Post's ontology, this study contributes to ongoing debates on the ontological turn that disrupts representational notion of Photography instead; it opens to discourses on photography as a surface event. It investigates how materialities in photography are constituted, the photographer's entanglement with the ecology rather than focusing on the product of actualization that is detached: mediated, represented, and already formed. The experimental inquiry created an ontological understanding of photography as a movement of events, a rhizomatic communication phenomena. The experiment yielded visual braiding techniques as it accounted for the in-between, allowing textures of vitalities among humans and non-humans to rise leading towards an event to come. Establishing communication as rhizomatic *becomings*, the inquiry opens possibilities towards developing a new research-creation approach that acknowledges the

dynamic relations of forces and intensities, both human and non-human within the plane of immanence. Called ***Weaving Rhizome***, this approach contributes to the growing field of speculative methodologies in social research recognizing humans and more than humans as co-constitutive. ***Weaving Rhizomes*** emerged from my experimental inquiry on what would work and how would it work, when one lets thought take over during our photography encounters with Cambodia's Angkor temples.

I join conversation with these proponents of post inquiry approaches: Donna Haraway's (2018) *String figures* (Environmental and Feminism), Liza Mazzei and Alecia Jackson's (2012) *Plugging in* (Feminism and Education), Sarah Truman and Stephanie Sringgay's (2017) *Walking methodologies* (Education and Arts-Based), Karen Barad's (2007) *Diffraction* (Environmental, Feminism), and Erin Manning's *Inflexions* (Arts-based) to name a few. ***Weaving Rhizome*** is my contribution from communication studies using the communication lens.

Rhizomatic Plateaus

Rhizomes are made of Plateaus. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) used this concept Plateaus in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* that allows readers to navigate the chapters of the book as "a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities" (p. 9). Each signifies a level of intensity much like how one mass of landform is created from coupling of energies. In his introduction, he describes it as "multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome" (p. 22).

A cursory look at how geologists describe Plateaus shows that a "plateau is a flat, elevated landform that rises sharply above the surrounding area on at least one side." Landforms take shape from the earth's crust upward movement caused by slow collision of tectonic plates due in part to volcanic eruptions. Shapes of the plateaus can change over time partly due to erosion and rivers cutting through the plateaus (National Geographic, n.d.). These changes in landforms are testimony to the intensity of the earth's crust; an eventful charge of energies that are caused by converging singular forces. The landform of Cambodia is shaped like a saucer or bowl where waters from rivers of Tonle Sap, Mekong and Bassac feed 75 percent of its plains. Its low mountain ranges that serve as the wall have recently undergone so much changes due in part to the infrastructural development and economic exploitation - in remote areas - formidably forested (Wikramanayake et al., 2002).

Consider this inquiry as fields of plateaus in different forms. Each field is an effect of movements created from rhizomatic formations on its surface. Movements are enacted from collision or convergence of heterogeneous matters and bodies. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call these assemblages within the smooth space. A smooth space is the plane of consistency. Activities within smooth space creates variations of textures as it forms new landmass over time.

As you navigate this dissertation, each chapter functions like plateaus. Some are grassland, meadows, an open desert field, or rocky terrain. Each field has its own depth. Each is never the same in its structure; a result of the heterogeneous intra-action of rhizomes. The Plateau is a plane of consistency where most photographers assemble, pick up objects, intra-act with to give rise to images. Each

plateau offers a particular way of thinking Photography and Communication as rhizomes. In this inquiry, photography as a practice is understood as an art, a form of thought, and as a technology of subjectivity (O'Sullivan, 2006).

This dissertation is an experiment that departs from conventional humanist social science research. Instead, this is a research-creation, NOT of production. You will not find research questions and objectives that normally treat phenomena as *a priori*. To move with the unthought is to let the phenomena emerge, which cannot be arrested *a priori* because the world never sits still (Barad, 2003). The institutional chapters we have gotten used to remain but are now reconfigured in this experimental inquiry. As this paper moves as a rhizome, it remains consistent with the Ontology of Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism. As readers, what could you expect?

What you will encounter are stories of entanglement, mesh, movements, stories of *becoming*. Traversing this dissertation offers a foray of matters like cameras and temples and sand and computers and technology prosthetics and coffee *and and and...* plateaus brewing with intensities. Marvel through its places, run your fingers across edges, go with the flow of thought. You will stumble upon repetitions in circular motions, sometimes you will go to the inner depths. In many instances, it will take you to the folds, yet, you will still come alive in a world full of textures.

For novice readers, you might come across strange, ambiguous words that you will not normally find in empirical researches but are common in the language of

post philosophies. To help you navigate the site, embedded in this section are the concepts used that will help you understand its most basic term. As you go along the pages of this dissertation, such concepts are discussed in detail, where they are borrowed and how it applies to phenomena.

Plateau: Introduction invites you to the textures of this inquiry. It introduces the thought in motion within the plane of immanence. This plane is where the whole inquiry is anchored. The Immanent Plane – a plane consisting of unsigned matters. Also known as the virtual.

Plateau: Molar Rhizome is a walk through the striated fields of visual communication. Normalized and institutionalized. This is where we pick up energies to disrupt the symmetrical weave. We will look for ruptures and let it transcend, widen the alley, dig holes, let the textures open up, bring out the muted beauty one never encountered before.

Trusting the thought in motion led me to *Plateau: Rhizomatic Rupture*. This plateau is where I bolster speed, load more energies to develop the new. This gives an overview of the ontologies and concepts used in this inquiry. This is a vibrant plateau where I found allies to build the machinic assemblage against the state apparatuses of representation. This sneaks through the emergent approach used in the inquiry. Once you get lost in the wild, this Plateau will be a good companion. This section should be re-read diffractively while navigating Angkor. Central to this plateau are the concepts of:

Posthuman: Conceptualizes humans as entangled with living matters.

Rhizomes: Stems running underground horizontally. It strikes new roots. As applied in this inquiry, it is an assemblage of matters and humans that intra-acts infinitely creating new concepts or things, always becoming.

Ontology of Immanence: a virtual ground of unsignified objects and substances. It is where we pick up elements to create the new. But what happens within this plane?

The following terms are used:

Diffraction - a process taken from quantum physics that explains how waves combine when they encounter an obstacle. Applied in social sciences, humans and matters are always entangled in creating an event or phenomenon.

Interaction – assumes that there are entities independently existing that preexist interaction.

Intra-action – the collision and movement of matters and bodies “within” to create phenomena. Humans and objects only emerge from intra-action.

Entanglement – a result of intra-action: when matters, substances, bodies, and other entities intra-act that (re)creates assemblages.

Assemblages are the dynamic organization of content and expression.
Assemblages are organized within the strata.

Strata – composed of layers or belts where assemblages are organized or actualized. It produces the actual from the virtual plane.

Actual – signified object; established meaning

Virtual – unsignified matters

Becomings – transformations. The transition/formation from virtual to actual is always becoming.

Ontoepistemology – the process of knowing is in doing-making of research.

Plateau: Stitching Angkor takes you to the wonders, enchantment, serendipity in photographing Angkor. Letting serendipity take over, the choice of temples to navigate came out of wonder, of where our feet would take us, of making sensation work to guide us. New insights and new concepts were created along the way. *Plateau Banteay Kdei* is the fibrous rhizomes, a molecular *becomings* on how photographs emerge from movements of sensation to the figural. *Banteay Kdei* allows us to weave the tiniest fibers of rhizomes, its molecular *becomings*. It gets into the details how sensation works in photographing matters, how matters came to matter. Being in-between, matters and humans co-constitute these *becomings*, which often lead to unexpected paths, that is, rupturing the tiny fibers already woven or held captive by existing ideologies and power. *Plateau Preah Khan* demonstrates how such power can be debilitating, yet rhizomes exploded out of control taking charge of its own path, once again deterritorializing its tiny fibers like claws of nerves

creeping in different directions creating new *becomings*. Power and hierarchy are destabilized. *Plateau Ta Prohm* sustains the deterritorialization by developing multiplicitous diffraction patterns where humans become fully entangled with the ecologies of nature. These plateaus explain Photography and Communication as:

Molars - the signified objects, organized, represented, and expressed. Molars are rhizomatic fibers that are captured by signs. It becomes hard knots.

Molecular- the 'unsignified matters' movement that exists in the virtual plane. Once captured, it becomes molar.

Deterritorialization – when one leaves the territory. A line of flight. A deviation from normal structure.

Reterritorialization – a probable effect of deterritorialization. A new territory is established. In context, a new meaning.

Sensation – what the body felt upon encounter with an object that determines instinct at a particular moment.

Figural – a movement away from image of representation that is, when the image (re)creates a new meaning.

Infold – captured by regimes of signs.

Unfold – line of flight, opens up to something new. An escape.

Gleaning from insights within the battles in *Plateau: Stitching Angkor*, a new plateau emerges where the concepts of communication as rhizomatic *becomings* is discussed. An absolute deterritorialization that has created full new assemblage on communication in the posthuman, new materialist lens. An unfolding of communication from the dogmatic image of thought towards a more dynamic understanding of communication in a flattened ontology, a transcendental empiricism. This unfolding of communication is triggered by:

Rupture – the breaking of or opening up to something else

Abstract machines – the cutting edge of decoding making the assemblage open into something else

Machinic assemblages – consists of unformed matters and substances that form an assemblage

Sustaining this, the final Plateau proposes the **Weaving Rhizomes** as an approach to communication inquiry that is attendant to full *becomings* since communication is a rhizomatic *becomings*. It invites us to extend the lines of flight, create new ones, revv up intensities setting the thought free. Trust, the new will always kick in as phenomena never sleep.

Chapter 2

PLATEAU: THE MOLAR RHIZOMES

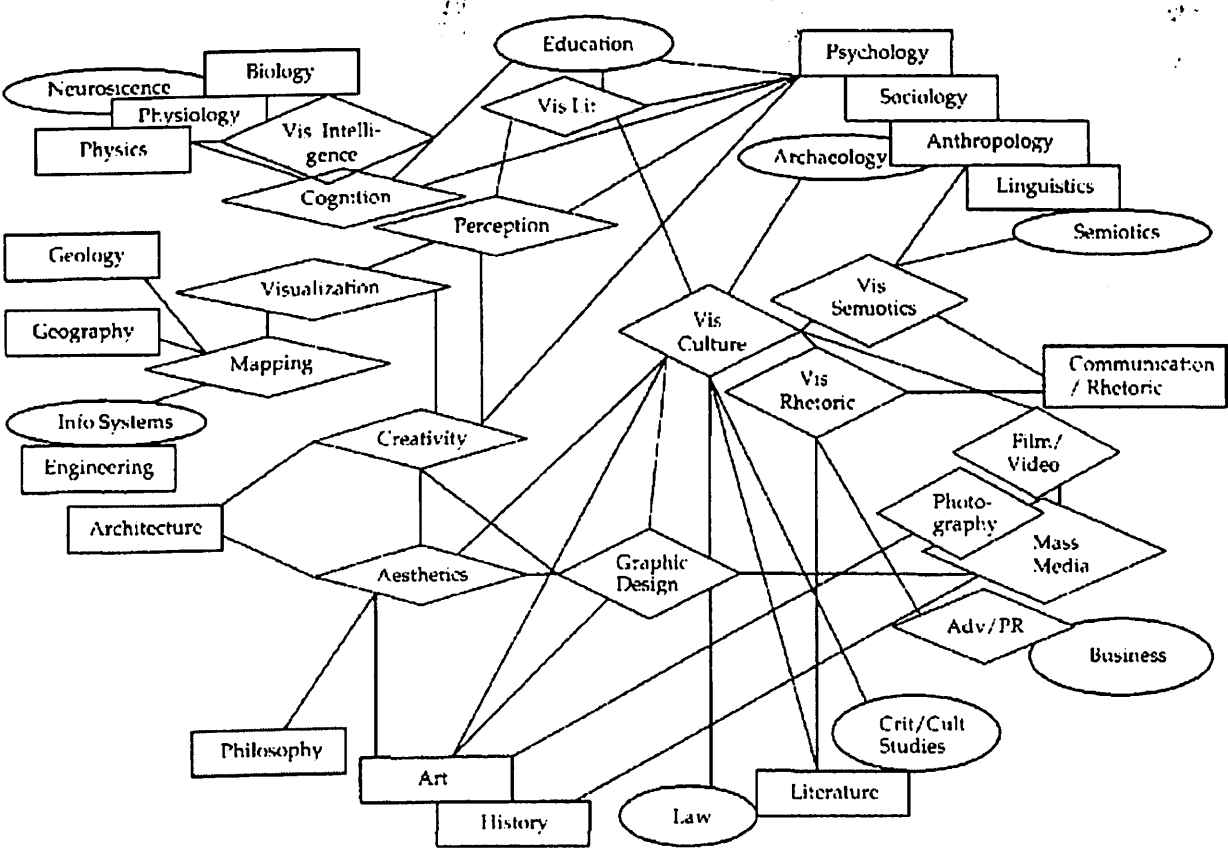
Navigating this field of inquiry takes me to a different plateau, plains that are striated, occupied by political regimes of sign. This is the Molar rhizomes--- the dogmatic image of thought-existing paradigms-normalized and institutionalized.

This literature review will map out the discourses in visual communication studies culled from the mapping of Moriarty and Barbatsis (2005) and Barnhurst et al. (2004). This overview provides a snapshot of the track of visual communication. I will attempt to locate photography currents, its statements and visibilities, folds, and potentialities. The sheer sample of studies cited here are testimonies that each discourse or regimes of signs are still actively breathing yet its saturation opens to full potential rupturing to an emerging new field of discourses in photography.

Mapping the Visual Communication Field

Sixteen years past, Sandra Moriarty and Gretchen Barbatsis (2005) developed a rhizomatic map of the visual communication field identifying the molar disciplines (major contributor to the field), molecular(studies/theorizing), and the intersectional(emerging) (*Fig. 1*). Their mapping shows the “flows of theoretical activity and research associated with visual sense-making” (pp. xv) as regulated and random fragments. The field does not operate in “linear or language centered reality” (pp. xxi) but collapses and merges with other disciplines.

The authors identified the molar disciplines as the “center of power”. They coined this as the traditional academic centers of power that influence theory building in visual communication. The molar taxonomy includes social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. The molecular field, on one hand, are offshoots of the traditional and professional disciplines, while the intersection is where visual communication theory and research emerges. These nodes act as starting points to grow the lines of flight for further deterritorialization of the field. Professional practice became the locus point that drove the field's development of thought.



A Rhizomatic Map of Visual Communication. (□, Molar; ○, Molecular; ◇, Intersections)

Figure 2.1. Rhizomatic Map of Visual Communication. From Moriarty, S. and Barbatsis, G. (2005). *Handbook of Visual Communication. Theory, Methods, and Media.* LEA.

In recent years, the rise of imagery pushed publishers, institutions, and

researchers to grow. Visual scholars leaned on new media technology “shifting towards visual over verbal, production over critique, form over ideology and practice over theory” (Barnhurst et al., 2004, p. 637) deterritorializing visual studies from rhetorical approach reterritorializing to new semantics and the rise of interdisciplinary arts-based researches. The recently published book on Visual Communication coined the 21st century as dominated by visual communication (Kelly et al., 2020).

While photography has been located at the intersectionality of the map, an emerging field in visual communication theory, it enlivens other disciplines. As my communicative practice, navigating its scholarly field is imperative looking for points of rupture for further deterritorialization. Multiple black holes are scattered around plains that breed with discourses on photography that are still on the debate of dualisms: nature/ culture, formalism/ postmodernism, and visibilities(content)/ expression (statements) (Emerling, 2012).

Currents in Photography Studies

Photography Realism

The biggest striated field is the regime of realism. Since photography’s inception, it follows the classical art and epistemic truth that foregrounds the relationship of the photograph and its putative referent. This follows the Renaissance’s notion that photography is an imprint of nature “motivated by a desire to capture the image in camera obscura” (Emerling, 2012, p. 25) and thus becomes the fulfillment of the enlightenment project. Images produced are therefore

representations of reality. For Walter Benjamin, the invention of the camera is the epochal event of modernity (Taylor and Harris, 2008).

Photographs were used according to certain rules, an index of the past rather than a sign that stands on its own (Freeland, 2008). Such rules developed constrained visual thinking and experimentation (Gomez Cruz and Meyer, 2012). Fox Talbot considered photography as “the pencil of nature,” further claiming that photographs are impressed by nature with only the agency of light and contrasts it with a work of art confined in the subjective imagination of an artist. Talbot’s representational notion of photography remains the stronghold of photography discourse since its invention as a mimetic representation of nature (Emerling, 2012). Studies in photography as a representational truth gained strong ground in academia establishing rules and procedures in taking photographs. This formalism stage treats photographs as a representation of the real, therefore, its mechanical techniques are developed in ways to capture the likelihood of an object.

To further strengthen photography realism, Beaumont Newhall’s (2006) *The History of Photography* identifies the “Basic Laws” of photography that establishes the visual criterion and the mass ushering in the formalist history on the “cultural need for representational verisimilitude”. In practice, Alfred Stieglitz and Ansel Adams are known for this formalist style. These criteria raised by Newhall became the golden rule in modernist formalism photography, which became influential even in empirical research in visual studies.

Empirical studies test and measure the validity of images consonant with the

representational view that photography reflects reality discounting the processes but privileging human's objective judgment. Images become static variables whose effect can be measured by logical empiricism. Evidence to this is the study of Newhouse (2013) that assesses the digital representation of artworks to the object represented. The project involves researchers creating digital representations of artworks and was judged comparing the markings of physical forms against the digital forms. The closer it is to representation, the highly effective is the digital artwork. This demonstrates how visuals are given a *a priori* condition that there is a singular reality. Meanings therefore, are fixed, established. Any mediations to this fixed reality are measured and manipulated to remain consistent with the discourse of representation, to advance its claim within the politics of positivism. In further testing the truthfulness of the image, Bufquin et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative study on the effects of website photographs and the length of descriptions on hotel customers' emotions (enjoyment and stress). Their study found that concise description pictures increase enjoyment, while pictures with long textual information cause stress. This highlights the importance of photographs and their descriptions on the information processing styles of hotel customers.

The studies mentioned expand the representational notion that a photograph, an image, or a visual are representations of reality, an index to reality. This scientific view has dominated the craft for decades, treating photography as a communicative conduit of information, information that for logical empiricists is the real. Thus, the camera as a communication tool is simply a conduit to convey reality.

Photography as Phenomenological Interaction

Critics, however, rose to contest the claim. The interpretive advocates pushed for a constructivist view. The encounter between the photograph and the viewer becomes the common subject of discourse in most interpretive studies. A new form of striation in the field emerges, a deterritorialization from the dominant positivist paradigm. A new territory was born developing its own architecture of the field. For the interpretivist, meanings arise from the interaction. Such interaction forms the structure of the social sphere. Studies under this paradigm delve into what meanings are created by photographs upon an encounter, while some attempts to critically analyze the image. Roland Barthes' (1981) posthumous account of the photograph's affect opens the discourse of the power of the "punctum" ---a point that connects the viewer to the object, a stimulus that jolts the viewer leading to interpretation and meaning-making.

Putting emphasis on the meaning generated by the visual image, Oliviera and de Oliviera (2015) analyze how Man Ray's photograph dubbed "Violin" engages a poetry of silence as a poetic communication technology to reveal the absence from the present. Anchored on rhetoric tradition, communication is theorized as the practical art of discourse. To uncover the meanings of the metaphor used in the photograph, authors employed visual analysis. The rhetoric analysis reveals that poetry can be beyond the written text and merge the conjunction of images that references a multiple of present and absent images. The use of symbols in Man Ray's photograph is viewed as metaphoric language to communicate its meaning to the viewer. Such studies became widely popular during the interpretivist era given that the meaning behind such action (photographing the subject) was a primordial interest of this school of thought. Visual analysis became the linchpin in visual

studies. In Roland Barthes' influential essay "The Photographic Image", he contends that "photography is never an art but always meaning". His semiotic approach to reading photographs demonstrates an analysis of the cultural codes inscribed within production and reception of a photograph.

While studies like Man Ray's photograph surfaces the meaning created by the image, numerous scholars have become intrigued at the phenomenological interaction within image creation and its wider implication towards constructing a social reality. Interestingly, literature started looking at how images are created by photographers. In further refuting the formalist and representational function of photography, John Szarkowski (2007) delves into the aesthetics of photography and contends that photographs are not conceived but selected refuting the claim that a photograph is a double of given reality. For him, the act of photography is an act of choosing and eliminating, a phenomenological sense-making. Hence, the trend of studying photographic practices also began to emerge.

Demonstrating this phenomenological interaction, Sijoholm (2013) explores how the modern visual art studio becomes a place for creative innovation and knowledge production. Drawing from London-based artists' narratives, the study elicits the material traces of their work and how material things constitute their work of art. Through serial visits, interviews and observations, the author found that a studio is an interactive space of discovery from controlled chaos, where artifacts intermingled to create the artwork.

To provide a closer look at what happens inside a studio, Mondada and Tekin

(2020) conducted an ethnomethodological study using conversational analysis on how touch is enacted and accomplished in a professional setting like the photo studio where photographers take photos of their models that involves arranging bodies and orchestrating poses. Touch is a communicative phenomenon enacted through a "touch-cum-vision," combining professional vision and professional touch that include: gently and delicately pushing, moving, smoothing, manipulating details of their models' bodies to arrange poses. Here, photography is purely a phenomenological interaction.

Delving into photographer's practices, Forrest (2012) studied the everyday practices "and the places that photographers visit and inhabit online". It pays particular attention to movement in taking photographs, their routines, and habits to gain an in-depth understanding of what 'doing' photography entails. Her ethnographic accounts show that habitually carrying a camera allows photographers to notice details that most would ignore. Publishing photos online expands this interaction. The author found that online and offline movements often become entangled, and when photographers explore Flickr, there is a clear synergy with the way in which they explore their local city space.

Expanding photography's social connectedness triggered by the ubiquity of social media. Avni (2015) attempted to (re)define how people use visuals in social media. It identified the user's communicative intent of posting photos in social media to develop a framework that will be useful in explaining social media photography.

Gleaning from Carey's Ritual of Communication (1985), ritual of frequency

created sharing, participation, and fellowship in their online community. Participants are in a dialogic position having the viewer in mind when posting photos. At a deeper level, communication is also viewed socioculturally--- as a ritual (posting photo) to maintain social order, structure, and identity.

Hjorth and Pink (2014) examine how the new digital cartographies, photographic practice, copresence, and the emerging stories of place are taking on novel dynamic dimensions. They explored the daily routines of Australia's urban users on how camera phone and Location Based Services (LBS) practices become part of everyday routines. Using Tim Ingold's (2011) "wayfarer" concept, the authors expanded the concept to digital wayfarer as they moved through taking and sharing pictures and their tagged geographic and temporal contexts as part of broader emplaced and interwoven visualities and socialities.

Geismar (2015) showed how the social "composition of digital images is an affective sense of connecting to reality engendered by photographic technologies" (p. 306). Using Maori Cloak as an object of the empirical study, Geismar reveals that the image and viewer are socially interacting where subject and viewer both engage in meaning making.

Following Eelco Runia's Presence Theory (2006): Presence means being in touch with reality, as basic as meaning, digital 3D images surrogate of Maori cloak was created to connect with the communities. The *wairuna* (spiritual energies) contained in Maori channeled through cultural treasures constitute profound co-presence in which objects are understood to be experiential links to the past,

present, and future. This simply shows how digital visuals possess the ability to project moments through time and space. Participants are in a dialogic position with the digital Maori Cloak as a means of connecting with the past. At a deeper level, communication is also viewed socioculturally--- to maintain culture, structure and identity that is, reanimating/reconnecting the cloak to Maori community. Geismar's study was able to justify the connective capability of images thereby establishing a co-presence, meaning, images can make a particular ritual, act and memory, which become alive through sensory apparatuses.

Critical and Political Photography

Not contented with the interpretive stance of surfacing meaning behind the action, critical theorists advocate for a more detailed analysis of these meanings to emancipate the voices of the subaltern. Horkheimer and Adorno's (2007) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* of the Frankfurt School seeks human emancipation to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them; thus, research in this era attempts to look at the role of photographs for social change. This opens the crack in ruptures revealing those voices that are often unheard of and promises emancipation. Recently, tourism photography is becoming a fertile ground for researchers.

Scarles (2012) explored the visual in the tourists' experience where social relationships are produced through photography. They found out that agency emerges as "locals being photographed negotiate the complexities of performing amongst larger, third-party forces that exist within the wider global political economies and western tourist mythologies" (p. 3). Thus, locals become submissive

to these margins where they become inflected to the spectacle of tourists' consumption. Confined within restrictions and regulations in the tourist space, "locals perform through obligation, resignation and despondency." However, a closer look at its agency reveals the locals as living and active agents who see the phenomenon as an opportunity for alternative means of income and employment, thus locals become directors turning back the gaze for their own benefit.

Kelly's (2020) visual ethnographic study on Broome, Australia's small urban town investigates the practices beyond the photographic frame against the representational colonial gaze. While tourism depiction studies tend to focus on within the frame representations, Kelly challenges this orthodox ontology by getting into the practices less observed. Employing the felt critique practice by building on local bodily feeling, the paper is able to surface the rich indigenous voices and actions that are not normally within the frame. Participant photographs are able to "articulate possibilities that extend beyond the immediate context, to challenge imperial forces at work in the authority of the settler colonial sovereignty" (Kelly, 2020, p. 9).

Critical photography emerged as a critique of the formalist style of photography by forwarding anti-aesthetic forms to advance socio-political agenda. This involves critique of the dominant institutions of art that formalizes art forms and the constitution of subjects (Emerling, 2012).

Critical Postmodernism

The mid-20th century gave rise to postmodernism that destabilizes the long

tradition of modernist formalist photography. Walter Benjamin's works "A Little History of Photography (1931)", "The Works of Art in its Mechanical Reproducibility (1936)," and the "Author as Producer (1934)" ushered in the postmodern critique in visual arts. Benjamin's works on material culture resonates with post structuralist thinkers Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Giorgio Agamben. Benjamin indicates that all "photography is a dissimulation and beautification of the modern capitalist world" (Emerling, 2012, p. 32) transforming poverty into an object of enjoyment.

In practice, Maholy-Nagy's (1995) experimentation took up unusual viewpoints in photography, a subject intended to disrupt a plane of viewing inherited from Renaissance that dominates the modernist tradition. Maholy-Nagy's photographs succeeded in dismantling the rules of photography by experimenting with the camera's "creative possibilities" rather than photographs being reflections of nature. His photographs serve as inspirations to produce instead of reproducing that later ushered in the conceptual form of photography.

Consequently, John Tagg's *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Image* (2009) played an essential role in photographic discourse. His arguments are heavily influenced by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Tagg stressed how the history of discourses immobilizes the field of the creative forces that it is capable of generating. Foucault's genealogical methodology responds to reassessment of aesthetics as a multiplicity of local, irruptive effects generated by imagery and think of the production of an image as an event that would allow one to dwell in the in-between space. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), an image is a

disjunction, an "and" that is "neither a union or a juxtaposition, but... an active and creative line of flight". Images, therefore, are assemblages that map territories and create new ones in endless transformations.

Anchored in the post's paradigm, several studies have explored photography as an event. Ainsworth (2014) takes a critical review of the anthropocentric representational views of photography and child-centered practice against a materialist perspective. It proposes a shift from child-centered to a relational materialist paradigm that might impact relations in an Australian classroom setting through autoethnography. Her diaries reveal that photography is an event that opens possibilities as a form of Early Childhood Education (ECE) inquiry. Defying anthropocentric view, humans and nonhumans are agential and co-participants in the becoming of an event.

Kind (2013) engages with the troubled materiality of photography's voyeurism. Through mutual experimentation between an entangled researcher and children as participants through photography, the author attempts to look for the possibilities of subversive ruptures within the photographic process without erasing the voyeuristic gaze while representing a child's vision and interests, making their inner worlds visible in an entangled inquiry. Subject is decentered. The camera's presence can produce reactions and particular effects, interrupting and resisting processes of colonization of representations. It opens space to what is happening through being entangled, decentering human agency.

Monea (2012) challenges the age-old debate on photography vs. art by

experimenting with Lomography to develop the link between art and photography demonstrating the photographer as becoming-artist through Lomography. The author argues that photography reveals *Haecceities* like Deleuze's treatment of Francis Bacon's works of art. Using *Haecceities*, Deleuze and Guattari describe *haecceities* as consisting "entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected. The becoming-painter of the photographer and the becoming-photographer of the painter in Lomography, was achieved through the attendant-figures that oscillate, highlighting the motion, deterritorializing and destratifying perception just like what an artist does. Non-Representational. Fluid. Political. Elements are in relation with forces— "sometimes an inner force that arouses them, sometimes with external forces that traverse them, sometimes with the eternal force of an unchanging time, sometimes with the variable forces of a flowing time" (Monea 2012).

Ulmer (2016) inquires into the possibilities of what happens when assemblages of images, texts, and music are co-constructed; where unfolding and refolding of layers modulate within Deleuzian thought. Through hypermodality, text and visuals become flattened hypermodal assemblages of graffiti, music, and digital photography.

Postmodern photography promises a path full of potentialities awaiting to be discovered. This is an immanentist plane where matters and humans appear in its pure form not yet signified. It encourages every nomad to experiment, to create the new from the multiplicities of matters, humans, species, and environment where vitality is always present.

Such discourses are in continual reworking positions. The recent turn to post philosophical inquiry destabilizes the representational and linguistic era and calls forth studies that explain the current turn that is, when material-discursive practices co-constitute each other.

The Ontological Turn

The Dogmatic Image of Thought

From the above currents, visual studies have been anchored on humanist paradigms where humans are separated from the visual. The former is privileged in the meaning-making processes, missing the tensed micro-processes that intra-act, which gives rise to meaning. This dominance of humanist thoughts was noted by Linda Tuhiwahi (1999) as cited in Taylor (2020) who argues that “research through “imperial eyes” assumes that Western rationality is the only legitimate way of making sense of the world” (p. 66). As Cole (2020) rightly puts it, “overriding scientific research practices and processes of universities and colleges around the world are usually based on Western, positivist and analytic philosophies” (p.111). This is because since the time of Descartes, empiricism has become the cornerstone of social science research. Conventional rationalism holds that consciousness as the source of knowledge can only be derived *a priori* from rational thought independent of sense experience. Descartes privileges the cogito “I” doubting knowledge obtained by our senses because it is temporal and uncertain (Dosse, 1997; Rouse, 2002).

In contrast, empiricism assumes that senses are faithful recording devices without cultural or linguistic mediation (St. Pierre, 2018). Empiricists favor experience as the source of knowledge while rationalists cling to reason. Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz (rationalists) doubted the empiricist's claim and continuously pushed for rational objectivity to be maintained for science to function. Dualisms like mind/body, subject/object, nature/culture became the linchpin of this thought that later became the dogma of Western scientific research. Preserving this order requires separation of ontology and epistemology for fear of being unacceptable to scientific research enterprise.

While Husserl refuses the Cartesian dualist assumption, he pushed for the human consciousness that helps form experience. Called a science of essences, self-evidence for Husserl is what validates knowledge, that phenomena exist in the world as pure essences which can be perceived and expressed through language (Sokolowski, 2000). Applying this in social science research, subject and object are integrated, but the object is bracketed as they make meaning and describe their lived experience. Such is the case of phenomenology where descriptions of primary experiences still maintain a representational logic (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013). Poststructuralists critiqued phenomenology as substituting the originary meaning of the act of knowledge by lived experience (Foucault, 1998), primordial or what is already given (Derrida, 1982; Sellars, 1997; as cited in St. Pierre, 2016; Bryant, 2008). Experience is that which must be explained. The interest is on the generation and conditions of genuine experience not of possible experience (Scott, 1999 as cited in St. Pierre, 2016).

In later years, the Vienna Circle advocated for universal methods of scientific investigation (St. Pierre, 2019). Called logical empiricism, for inquiry to be scientific, it must adhere to the methodological maxim of rational procedure of inquiry. Social science, therefore, is made to submit to logical and rigorous analysis much like in natural sciences. It harks the dogma that anything that cannot be seen and measured is mere speculation, hence, the context of discovery, which is descriptive and qualitative, becomes pre-scientific (St. Pierre, 2018). Its aim is to expand its following through incrementalism, its enterprise for it to thrive as the dominant form of inquiry (Kuhn, 2012). It privileges the human as the all-knowing subject, to support the advancement of modernism, thereby, putting humans and the other than humans to be manipulated and controlled (Tessar, 2018). Consequently, life becomes governed by metrics that “construes the human itself as homo oeconomicus” (Brown, 2015, p. 176).

The dominance of humanist philosophies heavily influenced social sciences. Positivist soon influenced the Interpretive to qualify as scientific. This rapidly creeps through portals of universities and colleges as the dominant “knowledge-production machines” (St. Pierre, 2014, p. 7). Patti Lather (2013) developed a schema that captures such movement in qualitative research into several layers:

Qual 1.0 is focused on a “humanist subject who has an authentic voice, transparent descriptions of lived experiences” (Lather, 2013, p. 635). These rich descriptions of their beliefs can get closer to the truth. Qual 2.0 begins to acknowledge multiple voices, but it is still grounded in humanist concepts of

language. This is a point when qualitative becomes institutionalized, disciplined, and regulated. Qual 3.0 postmodern theories are integrated to postqualitative work carrying with it epistemologies on feminism, race, class, and postmodern theories. However, the field continues to be structured as “interpretive mixed methods” (p. 635). In Qual 4.0, researchers got weary of the conventional methods and started craving for “inquiry that might produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (p. 635). Postqualitative inquiry begins to make sense (St. Pierre, 2011 as cited in Lather, 2013).

Gleaning back on the rhizomatic map of visual studies, the knowledge production machines are the molar aggregates, the centers of power. As the main influence on molecular units, visual studies therefore are not spared. As a result, visual studies concentrated on the humans as the all-knowing creator and interpreter of the masterpiece discounting the tensed activities that happen in-between encounters of matters and humans during visual production and interpretation (Schuppli, 2013). Such contradicted the very aim it seeks to accomplish: to surface the natural phenomena. It is not a surprise that fields are captured by the “ontological grids of intelligibility that structure humanist methodologies” (St. Pierre, 2015, p. 78).

Descartes’s humanist assumption is refused under the posts’ ontology; instead, Barad (2007) proposes for an ethico-ontoepistemology (St. Pierre, 2016) where knower is not separated from the known. This resonates well with Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism. What is needed is an approach to engage in “a world that doesn’t sit still. A world that is always on the move” (Murris, 2020, p. 2).

This dissertation contributes to an emerging field of speculative inquiries by putting ontological concepts to work on photography practices. This is not to totally dismantle the subject; instead, he/she is imbricated within the system of knowing co-constitutive of the phenomena. My quest is to uncover the intra-action that happens in-between matters, breath, voices, bodies, planes, light, etc. that give rise to communication phenomena during visual production. Unlike phenomenology that puts humans at the center of experiences, this study looks at the purity of experience on how it came to be an “experience,” acknowledging not just human matters in motion but an entangled relation of human and non-humans. This work attempts to theorize the materiality of the approach of knowing. Its resultant data and the mode of analysis help to produce communication research practice that disrupts the binary thought. It hopes to contribute to recognizing art and philosophy as co-existing in doing communication research.

Chapter 3

PLATEAU: RHIZOMATIC RUPTURE

Navigating the striated field teeming with arborescent trees leads to the discovery of points of rupture where new roots can deterritorialize to the plane of consistency. Supple lines are emerging and once these roots are freed, they can outgrow the arborescent trees. New plateau emerges. Rhizomes climb along a massive trunk of tree creeping on edges, extending their roots like tiny fibers encircling, colluding, thickening in layers. Such intensity gives rise to the ontological turn.

Rhizomes as Ontoepistemology

Locating the “Human” in Posthuman Communication

The inquiry is anchored under the Vulnerability Paradigm (Mumby, 1997) where reality and subjectivity are questioned. This dissertation adopts the Posthuman thought that criticizes assumptions of human subject upheld by the humanist image of Man and “works instead towards elaborating alternative ways of conceptualizing the human subject” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 37), that is, humans are entangled with forces of living matters. Human subjectivity is continuously transformed by reterritorialization and deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) in continuous flux of *becomings*.

“The posthuman subject is not postmodern, because it does not rely on any anti-foundationalist premises. Nor is it post-structuralist, because it does not

function within the linguistic turn or other forms of deconstruction. Not being framed by the ineluctable powers of signification, it is consequently not condemned to seek adequate representation of its existence within a system that is constitutionally incapable of granting due recognition.(...)The posthuman nomadic subject is materialist and vitalist, embodied and embedded — it is firmly located somewhere, according to the radical immanence of the 'politics of location'(...) It is a multifaceted and relational subject, conceptualized within a monistic ontology, through the lenses of Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari, plus feminist and post-colonial theories. It is a subject actualized by the relational vitality and elemental complexity that mark posthuman thought itself" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 188).

Consistent with the discourse of vulnerability, it conceives communication as (im)possible (unstable, creating shared, fixed, discourses, continually articulating the possibilities for its own transformation; meaning disseminates endlessly, rendering impossible any sense of closure), political and subject-less (Mumby, 1997). In sum, the nomadic posthuman subject will never be; it is in a continuous process of *becoming* (Boreback and Schwieler, 2018; Braidotti, 2013). To arrive at a Posthuman concept of communication where the human is imbricated, the inquiry relies on Deleuze's Ontology of Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism.

Ontology of Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism

The plane of immanence is the absolute ground where concepts are created. The plane consists of an unlimited field of abstract machines, bodies without organs that are formless. The plane "is a flat surface of virtual or potentials, forces or singularities moving at different speeds that produce but do not condition the actual" (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 5). Deleuze's Ontology of Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism is the creation of the new from the virtual plane. The transversality from the virtual, which means unsignified objects, once captured, lead towards the

actual(signified). The capture is organized within the strata or layers of belts. The strata is composed of assemblages where organization and actualization take place. These assemblages of heterogeneous matters and bodies are always differentiating and *becoming* (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008), an inexhaustible creation of difference (Deleuze, 1995). Therefore, signified things including the “I” only emerges from the phenomena. While not all virtual objects are captured, the excess carries new potentialities.

In Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism, “things come into existence in external relations under different genetic conditions” (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 119) where the unthought arises. The unthought is an “existing force entering into new relations through chance encounters” (Baugh, 1992, p. 139). Humans are of the world (Barad, 2007), entangled, connected into different assemblages where all multiplicities are flat. To know or inquire is to perform the act of knowing. Here, the knower is constitutive of the intra-action that generates phenomena, an intra-play between the virtual and the actual. It is only through performativity and entanglement (Barad, 2007) that phenomena are created. Ontology and epistemology are therefore, not separated.

Having been trained in humanist methodologies, it is not easy to disperse what I have been taught and grown up with. Many times, while weaving the rhizome, I still fall prey to the detriment of humanist methodologies. Resisting this is freeing thoughts from stabilizing machinic powers of academia and letting thought take over. Risky, and unpredictable, but it is worth the ride.

To rethink this and arrive at the new, “we must disperse that central figure, human being” (Barad, 2007, p. 45). This inquiry troubles the Cartesian bifurcation and thus decenters the human. What you will find instead are the assemblages of humans and non-humans weaving rhizomes, creating the new. There is no doer before the deed. As an artist-researcher I am always configured and reconfigured in the intensities, movements, and *haecceities* (events) as I weave the rhizome. Guiding this inquiry, I relied on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of Rhizome. In what follows, I will sketch how this concept informs and guides this postqualitative inquiry.

Rhizome

Beaulieu (2019) who is experienced in landscaping wrote: “Rhizomes are modified stems running underground horizontally. They strike new roots out of their nodes, down into the soil. They also shoot new stems up to the surface out of their nodes. This rhizome activity represents a form of plant reproduction.” Deleuze and Guattari (1987) used this to describe how matters emerge.

A Rhizome is an assemblage of lines of articulation, segmentarity, strata, territories, lines of flight, movements, deterritorialization, and destratification. These lines are what produce phenomena of acceleration and rupture. The nodal points are connected to one another non-hierarchically. Connections that communicate. At the micro-level, the rhizome is constantly moving carrying intensities, heterogeneous matters self-organizing and reterritorializing within a plane of pure immanence. Rhizomes are always and will always be in its constant BECOMINGS. Hence, it is consistent with the Ontology of Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism, that is,

research creation as constitutive of *becomings* relies on the immanent field of forces to create the new.

The emergence of phenomena can be mapped in a rhizome whose elements form an assemblage organized within the strata. "To stratify is to organize or create the world from chaos, from the plane of immanence. Assemblages are produced in the strata. It is territorial" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 503). An object emerges out of this intra-action. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) outline its characteristics: *Rhizome is connected and heterogeneous*, which means it can be connected to anything in contrast to an arborescent tree which fixes an order. *Rhizome is non-hierarchical*. All things are interconnected, some visible, some sublime transcending destinations and unexpected possibilities. *It is also characterized by multiplicity*. It possesses neither a subject nor an object but only, "magnitude or dimension that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature" (p. 8), like nerve fibers which form a weave increasing its dimension and expanding its connections. No structure, points or positions, only lines. Multiplicities are flat within the plane of consistency. The latter is the outside that is being filled by lines of multiplicities. The plane of consistency is where the deterritorialization and lines of flight spread out. Rhizome can rupture. "It may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again in one of its old lines, or new lines" (p.9). Its stem ruptures against the signified, cutting across single structure deterritorializing, creating new territories as lines of flight continue to expand touching other matters and bodies in an assemblage.

"Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays

in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying" (p. 10).

Rhizome is a cartography and decalcomania. Rhizome is not amenable to a structured, generative model. It is a map. Not a tracing. It is "oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real" (p. 12).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) contrast this to the arborescent thinking. A tree is always hierarchical and hierarchical thinking has always been the dominant mode of thought since the time of Plato and Hegel. Concepts of development and capitalism have always been hierarchical where man is the center of the universe. This creates the nature/culture subject/object divide, linear, one-way communication. To break from these dualistic concepts, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest thinking like a rhizome. This has become my philosophy since then.

"A Rhizome has no beginning and no end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. Make rhizomes not roots, never plant! Don't sow, grow offshoots! Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run lines, never plot a point! Speed turns the point into a line!" (p.24).

How can Rhizome inform this inquiry and generate the map? What "new" can we create from experimenting?

As a postqualitative inquiry, I consider the journey as a rhizomatic phenomenon. Weaving the phenomenon means constantly being entangled in the assemblages, following routes of thought, and letting these forces and energies drive the new. It means staying in the middle. To stay at the middle means being attuned

to *becomings* from the immanent plane where virtual meets the actual. It entails following the lines of flight, a thought in motion in a flattened ontology. Rhizome is a movement of matters and humans where ontology and epistemology are not separated but imbricated. Rhizomes therefore is an ontoepistemology.

Postqualitative Inquiry

Consistent with the ontological assumption of the Posts that there is no fixed reality, the study is a Postqualitative Inquiry. Introduced by Dr. Elizabeth St. Pierre in 2011, postqualitative inquiry destabilizes conventional humanist qualitative inquiry (Murriss, 2020); a fitting approach in doing a postmodern, poststructural, posthuman research. This new empiricism is heavily influenced by Deleuze's *Ontology of Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism*, posing a challenge: "We lack creation. We lack resistance to the present" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 108).

Postqualitative inquiry adheres to the ontoepistemological framework, which means that the process of knowing is through performativity (performing or action). Epistemology, ontology, and methodology are woven together in the act of research-creation. "It works not with uncertainty but with indeterminacy and disrupts everything we (think we) know about agency, freewill, causality and so forth" (Murriss, 2020, p.4). Postqualitative does not adhere to the rigors of qualitative research, therefore, it is methodology-free (St. Pierre, 2018). This is because such forces of thought that jolts the mind during an encounter is not an *a priori* nor exist in the essence of experience. It arrives during performativity in an unorganized stream of energy, which "cannot be written into a research proposal and included as a step in the research process" (St. Pierre, 2019, p.8). Therefore, there is no research

problem, no methodology to follow, no theory to test at the beginning of inquiry.

Postqualitative is not “is” but the *not been* or *forthcoming*. It encourages experimentation as we immerse ourselves in the mundane activities of everyday life. “Thought does not need method” (Deleuze, 1983, p. 110). “A method is the striated space of the *cogito universalis* and draws a path that must be followed from one point to another” (p. 377). This means, methods prescribe order that prohibits experimentation and creativity. Reconfiguring the human, matters, and apparatus relation means breaking down traditional binaries dominant in the knowledge making practices in social sciences.

“To repeat, post qualitative inquiry begins, not with a social science research methodology, but with a philosophy of immanence” (St. Pierre, 2020, p. 2).

The study is experimental rather than a replication of conventional humanist methodologies. Neither quantitative nor qualitative methods can accommodate the posthuman, poststructuralist, and new materialist ontoepistemological philosophy in a flattened ontology. St Pierre (2015) reminds: “Again, there is no model (no method, no research design, nor an “I” that exists in experimental work that pushes toward the new and different” (p. 84). Concepts and practices are invented in encounters “in the context of the problem whose conditions they determine” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 54) and so cannot be determined in advance (St. Pierre, 2016).

Proponents of Postqualitative recently dropped the hyphen post- since it is not anti or after or going beyond the human (Murriss, 2020). Sinclair and Hayes (2019) concede dropping such hyphen can have a normalising effect and can “accelerate

the future" (p. 121). Postqualitative then demonstrates the entanglement between posthumanism and qualitative humanist research. Thus, "*postqualitative*"(without the hyphen) will be used in the entire inquiry.

PLATEAU: Weaving the Rhizomes, Diffractively

Coming from the striated fields, I am now poised to weave the rhizomes. This is a vibrant plateau where I found allies to build the machinic assemblage against the state apparatuses of representation. This explains the emergent approach used in the inquiry. To understand performativity and entanglement in the doing-making of research in the Ontological turn, I will sketch below Barad's (2007) concept of diffraction that will be your companion species in navigating Chapter 4. This section should also be read diffractively with Chapter 5.

Diffraction Concept

Originally conceptualized by Donna Haraway (1992) and later expanded by Karen Barad's (2007) concept of agential realism, diffraction is a process taken from quantum physics that explains how waves combine when they encounter an obstacle. Diffraction happens when an apparatus obstructs the passage of the wave. Barad (2007) explicates this: when one throws a stone in a pond, waves overlap and its amplitude forms a composite. Two overlapping waves result in smaller or larger waves. Resultant wave is the sum of effects of each individual component wave, a combination of disturbances created by each wave individually. Diffractions, therefore, are the result of intra-actions of matters that create phenomena.

“Phenomena are differential patterns of mattering produced through complex agential intra-actions of multiple material-discursive practices or apparatuses of bodily production” (p. 140).

Because of the presence of obstruction created by a diffraction apparatus, the entangled structure of the changing ontology of the world is highlighted. It brings to light the notion that the apparatus of knowing and the knower is not separate from what is to be known: rather, part of the phenomenon in its constant *becomings*. This brings to the fore the knower's entanglement with matters and environment, of apparatuses and bodies such that we are part of nature that we are trying to investigate. For Barad (2007), diffractions are attuned to differences that knowledge-making practices make and the effects they have on the world, that is, it's the patterns of difference that makes a difference.

“Diffraction does not produce ‘the same’ displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of difference appear” (Haraway, 1992, p. 300).

This is consistent with the ontoepistemology of the posts, that interaction and communication are subjectless, and there is no privileged position: rather, heterogeneous matters and bodies are entangled within the plane of immanence. This performative entanglement in knowledge creation will illustrate how diffractive patterns are created when forces within the plane constantly move and change creating lines of rupture, breaking against the walls of the dominant black hole looking for further possibilities.

The Weave

I am always fascinated by textures of fabric whether it is silk, cotton, or felt. Its tactile nature creates a different sensation constantly reworked over time. It's a space where one can recreate so many things: from prints, crochet, patchwork, quilts. Like many of us, I grew up in this tradition. Back home, when cross-stitching became a fad, my mom's hobby suddenly changed from computer games to cross-stitching. Until today, many of her finished pieces still hang in her room.

To map is to weave. Weaving is a production of fabric by interlacing two sets of yarns so that they cross each other, normally at right angles, usually accomplished with a hand or power-operated loom. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) devoted an entire chapter on the relations of smooth and striated space. The latter is attributed to a fabric. The striated space is "constituted by two special kinds of parallel elements, and the two intertwined, intersect perpendicularly" (p. 475). While they attributed the striated space as Plato's paradigm for royal sciences or the art of governing people or operating State apparatuses, its opposite, the Felt, is "a supple solid product that proceeds altogether differently, as an anti-fabric. It implies no separation of threads, no intertwining, only entanglement of fibers obtained by fulling (for example by rolling the block of fibers back and forth) (...) it has neither top nor center; it does not assign fixed and mobile elements but rather distributes a constant variation" (p. 475).

Weaving the Rhizome

Pondering on this, smoothing and striation can be combined. This interlacing

is what attracts me. Disrupting the symmetrical balance in weaving loom, weaving rhizomes allows for any directions (re)creating new designs. This is because the rhizome loosely grows in any direction. Combining these paradoxical binaries, consider the rhizome as multiple heterogeneous fibers each with various levels of intensities woven together. Fibers are what constitutes in between. I am in between together with my apparatus of weaving.

Olkowski (2016) describes rhizome as applied to inquiry as the rhizome is an image of thought for assemblages that organize themselves in non-hierarchical lateral networks that experiment with new and heterogeneous connections that may mix "words, things, power, and geography" (p. 25). As such, it is the very image of multiplicity that is never a "one" because each connection leads to other connections creating a multi-dimensional assemblage. The "mapping" of such rhizomatic connections is an immanent and continuous process that reveals the creation of new connections and dimensions with no interference or commands from outside. In context, we are already situated in striated space governed by state apparatuses. Deterritorializing towards new smooth spaces is our task. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) validate this concern:

"What interests us in operations of striation and smoothing are precisely the passages or combinations: how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces" (p. 500).

In between these transitions, these fibers are what Charles Sanders Pierce called "bundle of habits" (Pierce, 2009, p. 279, as cited in Manning et al., 2019). For Manning et al. (2019), "We live amongst bundles, endlessly inventing techniques for

reshaping these bundles, and sometimes, rarely, encountering what hasn't yet been bundled" (p. 10). Sometimes, the fibers create knots, knots that are captured by intervening intercessors. When another intercessor performs cuts, a new phenomenon might arise, this time rupturing the fibers into an unknown, breaking its hard knots pushing it towards multiplicitous fibers that creates the new, a deterritorializing act of thought.

To weave is to stay in between. Staying in between means attending to the qualitative differences of an encounter between forces and thought and how such *becoming* carries new concepts that are unpredictable. It is not the finished work that matters, but the transformations and *becomings* brought about by these forces. It's looking forward to every moment. All matters and humans in Deleuze's (1995) words are "Intercessors are essential. Creation is all about intercessors. Without them, there is no work" (p 125).

Manning (2017) wrote: "Intercession occurs at all levels: the artist is intercessor, the writer is intercessor, the ecologies that orient their coming together are intercessing. It is wildly layered" (p. 11). This means, I am part of every phenomenon, entangled in between vitalities of matters as we weave one plateau to the other. Unspoken voices, histories, and characters emerging from nowhere---all in constant communication within this relational creation of phenomenon. It's what keeps the rhizome weaving towards the unpredictable next.

The Apparatus of Weaving: Camera Prosthetics

Inspired by Donna Haraway's (1991) Cyborg Theory, the method used in this inquiry emerges from the mundane objects we normally peruse in everyday lives.

"A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction (...) creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted" (p. 150).

Modern day mobile phones are equipped with high resolution cameras, portable, lightweight and durable. We recreated its function as body cameras using an improvised strap, attaching it to our chest (*Fig 3.1*). Living in this era of post-technologies, the five of us are not new to mobile cameras. The use of mobile phones emerges from our collective brainstorming whether to use action cameras or mobile phones. We decided on the mobile phone because of its high megapixel and flexible battery capacities aside from the fact that all of us are using it as a camera whenever we go. Consent forms were executed after explaining what the research was all about. Since I have worked with them on several projects, this time, they loved the concept of what they termed "freedom photography" as no art director would be dictating to them what to shoot.

Massumi (2002) writes that bodies and objects are mutually implicated. "The object can be considered prostheses of the body, provided it is remembered that the body is equally a prosthesis of the thing" (p. 95). Such intra-action produces an entangled relation between the flesh, our cloths, and a host of other material fabrics. The mobile camera as a prosthetic device allows me to see the sublime:

embodiment, performativity, materialities, and organisms in action that are most often ignored in conventional humanist research. While the use of such technology is not new in research processes, it is often reduced only as an apparatus of capturing the truth rather than an active participant in the process. This inquiry, however, looks at apparatuses of knowing as entangled with what is being researched and the bodies. Donna Haraway (1991 as cited in Barad, 2007) beautifully summarizes its entangled nature:

“The “eyes” made available in modern technological sciences shatter any idea of passive vision; these prosthetic devices show us that all eyes, including our own organic ones, are active perceptual systems, building in translation and specific ways of seeing, that is, ways of life. There is no unmediated photograph or passive camera obscura in scientific accounts of bodies and machines; there are only highly specific visual possibilities, each with a wonderfully detailed, active, partial way of organizing worlds” (p. 369).



Figure 3.1. Mobile camera as body prosthetics

The inclusion of these non-humans opens the door to new characters as part of the research data (Menning et al., 2020). The camera becomes a companion species of our journey. It breathes, siphons the surrounding matters, and becomes part of the ecology of knowing. I was fully entangled in the filming process along with some field notes that are still necessary from time to time to record nuances. One advantage of using body camera is it reduces the human's sense of mastery in filming the phenomena as we shoot photos instead, surrendering it to the body camera's capacity to record the event (Caton, 2017). This entanglement creates a sonorous relationship with the ecology when light passes through its built-in aperture to encast the image as bits of data processed and stored in its internal memory. Challenging the Cartesian way of using visual technologies in research, Barad (2017) contends:

"Knowledge making is *not* (emphasis added) a mediated activity, despite the common refrain to the contrary. Knowing is a direct material engagement, a practice of intra-acting with the world as part of the world in its dynamic material configuring, its ongoing articulation. (...) Knowing is a distributed practice that includes the larger material engagement" (p. 379).

As Don Ihde (as quoted by Haraway, 2016) puts it: "Insofar as I use or employ a technology, I am used by and employed by that technology as well... We are bodies in technologies". They are in Haraway's (2008) sense, companion species in the body's unfolding with the world.

To reiterate, this inquiry treats digital technologies as productive agencies in knowledge creation. While humanist methodologies treat photography and video as separate visual apparatuses that are objective and separated from the object and

subject (de Freitas, 2016), they become passive instruments in research---static and immobile. Qualitative researchers, however, admit that the researcher is not invisible in the interpretation of the data (Menning et al., 2020; Onses and Hernandez-Hernandez, 2017). Therefore, the researcher should not be divorced from the knowledge creation practices. Coding and stratifying what the apparatuses capture have left minute details of difference discarded. Such mundane differences in between matter most to postqualitative as differences are what constitute the actual, the thing, or the signified image.

Haraway (2016) elucidates that the technology adapts to humans and vice-versa. Human bodies and technologies cohabit each other in relation to projects or lifeworlds. They touch; therefore, they are. It is about the action in contact zones. Like an octopus, its tentacular vision captures the mundane. "It makes attachments and detachments, cuts and knots, weaves paths and makes a difference" (p. 31). As it weaves trails, the body camera, like other organisms, are wayfarers.

Weaving Data: Luminous Entanglements

In analyzing data, I started to question the relational assemblages between sense, data, and the researcher. Conventional qualitative research codes, categorizes, and extracts themes from what has been gathered in the field. de Freitas (2016) noticed that video data treatment in qualitative research is assumed as mere representation of empirical phenomena. Doing conventional research objectifies this data where in fact, the researcher is entangled in creating such

knowledge as the segregator and interpreter to fit the findings to the industry of positivism or interpretivism. Bracketing the researcher is simply unthinkable for the posts.

Interested in how this will work for my inquiry, I turned to Maggie MacLure's (2013) concept of "wonder". "Wonder resides and radiates in the entangled relation of data and researcher in qualitative research" (pp. 228). This intensity that emanates from data is what she calls the "glow". She was interested what data do to us rather than insist on "typological thinking" (De Landa, 2002) that is fixed, representational, and hierarchical putting data as "dumb matter" manipulated by human interpretation (Massumi, 2002). Turning data as active agencies is what interests me in this inquiry. Following MacLure, "what data do, how they interact or interfere with thought" (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2018, p. 462) or simply put, how these fragments of video footage create sensation as flows of assemblages rather than a representation. MacLure (2013) explains this intra-action:

"When I feel wonder, I have chosen something that has chosen me, and it is that mutual "affection" that constitutes "us" as, respectively, data and researcher" (p. 229).

This is consistent with Karen Barad's intra-action and Deleuze's assemblages that both elucidates on the movement and intensities that reside in between connecting bodies and matters.

Working with Deleuzian ontology does not privilege any entity in accounting for its pure *becoming*. This means resisting the privileged role of humans in the knowledge-creation process; instead it acknowledges how humans are imbricated in

postqualitative inquiry resides in the critique of conventional humanist methodologies. She proposes instead concept as a method to make this new empiricism possible. She elaborates:

“Each researcher who puts the ‘posts’ to work will create different articulations, remix, mash-ups, assemblage, a becoming of inquiry that is not priori, inevitable, necessary, stable or repeatable but is rather created spontaneously in the middle of the task at hand” (p. 620).

Presenting the footage as is, may prompt researchers to identify hierarchical entities, awaiting to be categorized and extracted into themes. St. Pierre (2013) calls this treatment as brute, widely popular during the positivist era in its quest for objectivity. Since the five of us are spread out on a site, I weave the footage from the five participants. The footages are from different points of views at a single area/time. Using video editing software, I placed the footages on a timeline overlaying each other. Here, the unit of analysis is phenomena. The software allows for easy switching of one footage to another (*Fig. 3.2*). Reading between data, my subjectivity is continuously molded and shaped by the ongoing interaction and experimentation with the footages as I weave rhizomatic images not of recognition but of participation when sections of footages start to “glow” and activate my sensation. What came out is an imbricated assemblage of footage data. Weaving footage through overlays from the multiple videos of participants shows the cameras, stones, sculptures, humans, trees, ambient sounds of unusual species - in other words, *assemblages*. Overlaying scenes flattens the humans and non-humans in an assemblage, therefore, not privileging any entity. This challenges and disrupts the notion of time as unilinear compared to cutting video in sequences as slices of reality and incidents. Postqualitative inquiry is interested in “how the video is implicated in

the production of new knowledge” (Menning et al., 2020, p. 155). It disrupts the habitual gaze through distortion of image and changes in speed.

Engaging with this data is what I call **Luminous Entanglements** as I blend and meld on its *becomings* in reading, and analyzing its assemblages, paying particular attention to the movements between bodies, materials, and discourses. This is what MacLure (2013) termed as “experiments with order and disorder” (p. 229) - an ongoing metamorphosis of data that never closes but instead opens up to new possibilities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Luminous Entanglements is a diffractive technique that emerges from this inquiry by overlaying footages or data, producing an imbricated assemblage of matters and humans in a scene (*Fig. 3.3*), an intra-acting phenomenon in analyzing data as it unfolds. Holt-Daniels (2017) describes diffractive research thus: “Diffractive methodology is the performance of movement in research; in other words, research is the mapping of the ripples on the water, how those ripples intra-act with each other, how far they reach, how they change, and the materials they lap up against” (p. 113). I, the researcher therefore, am part of the phenomena of research creation because I enact agential cuts, I intra-act, a performativity. Barad (2014) explains that being entangled is:

“Intra-actions enact agential cuts, which do not produce absolute separations, but rather cut together-apart (one move). Diffraction is not a set pattern, but rather an iterative (re)configuring of patterns of Differentiating-entangling (...) Matter itself is diffracted, dispersed, threaded through with materializing and sedimented effects of iterative reconfigurings of spacetime-mattering, traces of what might yet (have) happen(ed)” (p. 168).



Figure 3.3. *Diffraction footage.*

The data captured by body cameras were explored as “a mind/body/machine meld, as experience, as sensation, as a perception±consciousness formation” (Kennedy, 2002, p. 5). Film is explored as processual, not purely representational: a material capture, part of the assemblage in knowledge creation. What results is a difference in repetition in images understood as an assemblage where there are no subjects/objects. This passage from the body camera, to computer software and to me as the researcher recreates or deterritorialized the representational notion in analyzing data in most conventional humanist methodologies. The images operate as movement-images, an *affect*, a sensation on a plane of immanence. The body camera and the footage are instrumental in creating rhizomatic lines of flight capturing the fleeting moments of deterritorialization. Weaving data is a performative phenomenon. This means that I am produced as a researcher by my ongoing participation and engagement with data. Everything is an immanent process of weaving, or in a basic sense, communication (Murphie, 2019).

The writing that accompanies this blends descriptions, field notes, images, videos, and my own narrative woven as analysis that coalesce to trouble conventional forms. It grows and glows. It inhabits different spaces at the same time/area. The result is a transparent loom blended by movements deterritorializing its branches to an open-ended potential. It looks at data as active agencies rather than mute, brute, passive, simple, and concrete (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2018, p. 463). The visuals that accompany the analysis should not always be viewed as illustrations of the narrative, but rather, a segment of the story. This indicates the imbricated materialities of texts and visuals. Working with an inclusive flattened ontology allowed me to reconceptualize the mutual role of humans and non-humans as imbricated in the on-going process of knowledge creation. The in-between could not be ignored. While you will find interpretations of video footage, I diffracted it with my involvement as a researcher. I attended to the transformation in between, as I overlaid the tracks that incited “wonder,” flattening the usual hierarchical objects in the frame.

While you might find the visual uneasy on the eye, that is because it disrupts the conventional gaze we have gotten used to in judging images. The overlaid footage speaks of the chaos, the out of frame, the differences before a photo is actualized. The reality is in the difference, the *becomings* or the in-between.

Chapter 4

PLATEAU: STITCHING ANGKOR

This will take you to the wonders, enchantment, serendipity in photographing Angkor. Letting serendipity take over, the choice of temples to navigate came out of wonder, of where our feet would take us, of making sensation work to guide us. New insights and new concepts are created along the way.

Carrying along the concept of Rhizome and Diffraction, I began exploring the site of Angkor. The temple was completely deserted since it was closed to tourists when the global pandemic struck, so I took this opportunity. Four of my messmates-photographers who I have worked with in visual production projects tagged along. As a nomad, letting those thoughts percolate in me, there was



Figure 4.1. The South Gate of Angkor Thom.

something enchanting in this archaeological site that gave me excitement when I walked through its monumental carved stones, giant figs, moats, and greens covering the temples and the pristine aura liberated me from the chaos of the city.

Revered around the world, Cambodia's Angkor complex is a living trace of earlier human civilization that thrived in Southeast Asia. Located northwest of Cambodia, it was hailed as the world's largest empire, a city that boasts a population of one million when London was at 50,000 during that time (Ray and Robinson, 2008). Its most important cultural symbol is the ancient Angkor Wat and its monumental antiquities. Temple structures were built from timber, brick, stucco, sandstone, laterite, metals, and fired clay tiles (Rooney, 2011). Detailed bas-relief carvings of its Hindu Gods, Goddesses and *apsaras* (celestial dancing girls) were built entirely from stone without any sophisticated tools.

An early morning travel through the Angkor road is walking through rich canopies, leaves stretching across the sky cloaked in the misty fog that engulfs the whole complex. Inside Angkor's complex is a home to magnificent structures built during the Khmer Empire (*Fig.4.1*), a sophisticated marvel of architecture: towers flanked by elaborate courtyards, richly decorated walls, and intricate carvings of Khmer's daily life. These remain astounding features of these masterpieces. The archeological park is an open-air botanical garden surrounded by some of the oldest flora and fauna in the country, a rich patchwork of tropical dense forest, wetlands, rice fields, ponds, water channels and a sanctuary for thousands of species of plants and animals (apsara.com).

Surrounded by dense jungle, Khmer's life is entangled within this ecosystem whose dependence on its natural environment is depicted in elegant carvings of bas reliefs in the monumental edifices of Angkor temples. Humans, nature, and animals are shown in motifs of these carvings, a mute testimony to the co-constitutive existence of nature and humans. The Kings who ruled Angkor exhibited a kind of ingenuity in using these natural resources to their advantage. Its water system called *barays* (water reservoir) became the foundation of their lifestyle and as a major support to erect the buildings. This also became one of the contributing factors in the demise of Angkor. Droughts have impacted the sprawling city's water supply and agricultural productivity, while high-magnitude monsoon years damaged its water control infrastructure (Buckley et al., 2010).

Today, remains of these temples that survived have become a major tourist destination in Cambodia. Photography has become its ally.

Photography

I fell in love with photography when I was 20. I found this small machine too useful to capture the elusive elements in movement. Such desire has never escaped me until today. Ours is a creative space where visuals come to life when a team of visual artists work in synergy to deliver the best image.

My apparatus has walked me through various projects back home and here in Cambodia, treating a photograph not as a representation but as a work of art. Years of handling visual production projects oftentimes left these processes mundane. While thinking along Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *Rhizome*, a shock of thought

struck me to look on the minutest details of the process. Recalling the latest commercial project we had right before the pandemic, I was mesmerized by the movement, the feet careening from one place to another, bodies entangled with machines, words declaring commands slipping and slurring as subjects of photography became hollow bodies manipulated for aesthetic appeal. In between chaos, the sound of shutter freezes everything. Despite the realists' claim of its representational nature, what is behind the creation of image before hitting the shutter is a multiplicity of chaotic movements when nature and culture are one, when matters and bodies are rhizomatically imbricated to create the visual. Here, communication is always foregrounded in the organization of the visual.

I witnessed the transition of film cameras to digital DSLR, compact cameras and the growing development of camera phones and nail-sized portable cameras available in the market. Until today I still have my first DSLR camera, the Canon EOS, carrying film negatives. As a fine arts student, my training has been realist, structured renaissance-inspired techniques. Ansel Adams was emulated during our time. I was too young then when digital cameras and Adobe were launched. My experimentation went from realist to surrealism processing my photos conveniently in computer-aided software applications.

These creative possibilities came with the advent of recent camera models that offer a host of added techniques and filters aside from the conventional manual operation functions. When smartphones came in, they took the world of photography by storm. Huge DSLR cameras simply became an option. Built-in cameras for hi-end phones surprisingly carry higher megapixels, offer on-the-spot app for photo editing,

enable instant uploads to Instagram and offer portability and mobility. The only disadvantage perhaps is the lens. Recently, I opted for Fujifilm's x-series, a mirrorless camera loaded with built-in color enhancing features and is now automatically connected to the Internet. These technologies became my constant companion each time I visited the site.

Visiting the site, a favorite haven among artists and photographers, we never had an idle moment. Getting lost inside is communion with nature. Exploring hidden forests and temples, and tracking the less beaten path offer so many things to discover. In what follows, I experimented how matters came to matter in photography production while remaining entangled within.

The choice of temples was unplanned. We met at Bayon Temple, the center of the Angkor Thom City. The whole city is enclosed by five gates located at each cardinal points with roads that lead directly to the Bayon temple. From these gates, we followed where our thoughts would take us. Heading to the southeast, we were intrigued by this small temple less frequented by tourists, the Banteay Kdei.

Plateau Banteay Kdei

FIBROUS RHIZOMES, MOLECULAR BECOMINGS

Coming from the gates of Angkor Thom led us to this small monastery less frequented by tourists. Located southeast of Ta Prohm and east of Angkor Thom, Banteay Kdei is a monastery built under King Jayavarman VII's reign. Its architecture is consistent with the architectural style of most Angkor temples. It consists of multiple chambers in three enclosures lined with galleries. The inner enclosure galleries run along the axis and lead to the main temple. The second enclosure is the hall of dancers with pillars decorated with *apsaras* or the celestial dancing nymphs. Banteay Kdei is a host of still well-preserved historic and interesting *devatas* carved in bas reliefs.

Without any preconceived notions in mind on what to shoot, we followed what sensation would dictate to us. In what follows, the scenes captured by the tentacular rhizomatic visions of the body camera show the imbricated assemblages of photograph's *becoming*--a communication phenomenon from molecular to molar. Molars are the signified objects, organized, represented, and expressed, while molecular is the movement of the unsignified matters that exist in the virtual plane.

This molar and molecular is central to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of Rhizome. Merriman (2018) describes the molecular as "operating below the threshold of perception and associated with *becomings* of innumerable kinds" (p. 66). Molecular are always in its constant *becomings*-traversing, performing cuts, undermining, or even overthrowing molar's stabilizations. In photography, the visual

is the molar aggregate, while the process is the molecular. Drawing from our encounters in photographing Angkor, I examined these molecular *becomings*, the movements from virtual towards the actual signification. Navigating the site with our body camera as extensions of our nerves, it mapped out our subjective understandings of place that were constantly modified during the relational encounter with the object.

In what follows, each phenomenon is segregated into rhizomatic moments to show the imbricated process of the molecular *becomings* in photographing Banteay Kdei.

Moment 1: Encounters. Entering the east gate, the path towards the east *gopura* is covered with fine cream sand strewn with dried leaves creating a crisp rhythm of sound when it touches the feet. The causeway is shaded by canopies and huge trees as cicadas and other species sing in unison, rhythmically hailing bodies.

Walking along the pathway, the body cameras attached to the harness mount move along as we walk, partially recording our breathing. We were greeted by the sight of children swinging on the twigs of a tree.
(Field Notes)

Upon encounter, cameras were adjusted, zooming-in the lens to capture the moment when leaves falling like pellets of snow added texture to the mood. Poised to capture the event (*Fig. 4.2*), I abruptly asked my messmates to wait for a few minutes to ask permission from the mother sitting nearby; she agreed. Hoisting back the camera, multiple reframing and refocusing ensued before magnetically capturing

their moments in bracketed shots, a union of different bodies in one image. While Nan was photographing the twigs of trees, I noticed the gigantic roots creeping along the causeway. Following its path, it extends to a hollow moat, but my attention switched back to roots sprawling across as I positioned my camera at a low angle. Noticing the register of texture on the screen panel, I browsed through color enhancing filters and reshot the object.

Here, the plane of immanence consisted of matters and objects not yet signified as form in the photograph. This plane was coined as the virtual and the signification was the actual. The transition of virtual to actual was molecular *becomings*.

“The actual object and the virtual image, the object become virtual, the image actual, are all figures dealt with in elementary optics. This distinction between the virtual and the actual corresponds to the most fundamental split in time, that is to say, the differentiation of its passage into two great jets: the passing of the present, and the preservation of the past” (Deleuze, 2006, p.151).



Figure 4.2. Assemblage of lens, twigs, children, dried leaves, photographer

My interest was in unpacking the transition between the virtual to actual, which Deleuze refers to as molecular *becomings*. In between encounters lies a sensation that makes our bodies act. Sensation as what Deleuze hypothesized as "sensation is what passes from one "order" to another, from one "level" to another, from one "area" to another. Therefore, sensation is the master of deformations, the agent of bodily deformations" (Deleuze, 2003, p. 36). Sensation as an abstract machine drives communication in its full *becomings*. In this assemblage, Deleuze (2003) notes: "it is not movement that explains the levels of sensation, it is the levels of sensation that explain what remains of movement" (p. 41). In rendering this sensation in visual photography, sensation insists from the moment we encounter the object and subsist within the interstices of the photographic process.

The body camera attached absorbs these forces during our body encounters: rhythm of our feet, the sound of cicadas, equipment, and even the humidity of the air caressing our skin. It testifies to the encounters and adjustments our bodies make to compose the image. As prosthetics of our body, the body camera shows the multiplicity of vital matters that competes with the body's sensation to become the figure or object of photography. (Field Notes)

From the virtual plane, the figure has been identified: children swinging in the twigs of trees, roots of trees, and dried leaves. The choice of such objects belonging to the virtual is a subtraction process towards actualization. Other vital matters outside the frame that serve to further enhance the figure are incorporated: the body, camera, lenses, even the wind. The formation of the figure then is not divorced from the sensation as it acts as an agential force in forming the figure. The object

becomes a sign once it is identified. This intensive register of the sign for Lyotard (1989) is the tensor when the object becomes the trigger point for movement. "Tensor can be understood as precisely the affective side of the sign" (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 20). This can be seen in the footage captured by the body camera as it records instances of movement, what hails our bodies, and how modulation in sensation can easily change from one movement to the next.

The first moment, therefore, was an encounter with matters operating within a virtual surface not yet signified. Its singular formation, existence, composition and play of light once combined communicates with other bodies. A discrete communication happens in between these assemblages: upon encounter with objects and matters. While perception has been a popular jargon in communication processes, sensation is different. The latter precedes the former. Perception involves the selection and organization. It belongs to the actual.

Sensation activates within bodies that drives this communication. It works to connect these intensities creating an assemblage. Sensation interacts "immediately upon the nervous system, which is of the flesh whereas the abstract form is addressed to the head" (Deleuze, 2003, p. 35), the passage from the virtual to the actual. Creating resonances between the object and human's proprioception, is giving form to figure. Since the virtual that constitutes the formation of the figure is an act of sensation, to render the sensation is for Deleuze "to record the fact" (p. 35). Fact here is an assemblage that helps form the "form", that is to render visible forces that are not themselves visible.

The “fact” is sensation being rendered in a photograph. Elements therefore in a photograph are assemblages of sensation. The movement of the twigs, the roots creeping, the pellets of dried leaves, the children, choice of lens, and the photographer are all imbricated before the emergence of a figure. The collusion of these vital matters (Benett, 2010) is a communication phenomenon.

Approaching the front enclosure of the temple, multiple figures of *Garudas* stand on the causeway: lions sculpted from pure sandstone. *Garudas* are symbolic of Khmer architecture and are commonly found in causeways of temples. Figure was identified. Noticing the two huge trees behind him, Cha stepped back further, halted for a while gazing at the scene and decided to frame the temple’s facade by the giant



Figure 4.3. Causeway Assemblage.

trees (Fig. 4.3). The 72-200mm lens mounted on the camera was changed to a wider

angle lens to suit his intention. Positioning the camera in low angle, he slides his nails through the edge of the liquid crystal display (LCD), flips it open, and shoots the temple's causeway framed by the trees. Other figures came into play like the sunlight casting strong rays on *Gopura's* structure, a moment when bodies wait for perfect timing to get a shot. Such assemblages are heterogeneous. They are never the same yet can be connected to other assemblages. The molecular becoming of a photograph is constituted by an interplay of a host of various objects colluding, communicating, entangling, and creating tensions in forming figures.

Moment 2: Figuration. The second enclosure of the monastery is a hall of dancers: a sandstone paved hall supported by massive rectangular pillars, each decorated by carvings of dancing nymphs locally known as *apsaras*. It is believed that dancing halls are where ceremonies and offerings to the Kings were held before entering the main sanctuary. Encountering the *apsara* figures, sensation was modulated. What caught our attention was not the beauty of the perfectly sculpted lines in figures but the broken faces and contours forming a new figure, a becoming from ideal figure to abstract forms.

I repeatedly disrupt my messmates to ask about these figures. Unlike the other temples that feature dainty, young divinities, Banteay Kdei hosts a full gallery of divinities of different ages. One of the photographers suspects they are the goddesses of the empire. Our bodies disperse within the inner shrine capturing these figures of apsaras. (Field Notes)

<https://youtu.be/WDmRGZleikQ>

Notice the few second halts upon encounter with the object: this is where sensation starts to modulate, increase in intensity. There are constant adjustments of positions, lens, and recreating the figures. Figuration is when form or figure is transformed or manipulated re-creating anew. This happens when sensation insists and subsists:

“Sensation is what determines instinct at a particular moment, just as instinct is the passage from one sensation to another, the search for the "best" sensation (not the most agreeable sensation, but the one that fills the flesh at a particular moment of its descent, contraction, or dilation) (...) The levels of sensation would be like arrests or snapshots of motion, which would recompose the movement synthetically in all its continuity, speed, and violence” (Deleuze, 2003, p. 39-40).



Figure 4.4. The out of frame(right). Pictorial composition(left)

Before a shot is executed, a framing and reframing ensues. There is always an out of field that has a negative role in determining the frame (*Fig. 4.4*). Moving from figure to figuration is defined by the tendency to constitute a closed system, but such a system is never closed as there is always a thread that connects it to the outside, the spectator, to the larger whole (Deleuze, 1986). It is never closed because it communicates.

Dom and Hak's techniques are evident of this: they shoot figures juxtaposing the intricately carved figure of the deity with a figure of mutilated, broken *apsaras*. The broken figure of *apsara* constitutes the pictorial frame, but the massive walls and pillars where it is carved, the out of frame still offers figurative potential such as when shooting two contrasting figures by playing with the angle to overlap its host pillars. In addition, the wide variety of creative controls and lenses allows for re-creation of the figure based on what the body senses. This is where the figure becomes figurative, a *becoming*.

Sensation belonging to an abstract machine is what drives communication in its multiplicitous *becomings*. It makes us move. The positioning and depiction of objects are experimented in multiple viewpoints, the choice of apparatus, timing, and body movements all constitute the content of the figuration. Figuration celebrates creative composition when the figure coupled with other elements that hailed our attention are brought together in one frame, figure is given character through different compositional enhancements. Here figuration is (re)creation, a difference in repetition, a deterritorialization.

The molecular becoming of figure to figuration happens when "synthetic sensation" entails the decomposition of the various sensational forces felt when first encountering the object, followed by a reconstruction of these forces placed upon the subject. Thus, the sensation, a "movement in-place," is felt by the bodies and is transformed by the bodies and camera apparatuses to another visual. This can be seen when shooting the artifacts; first sensation moves the bodies to point the camera towards that object. Since sensation is always at work, most often the first

attempt leads to shifts of attention to recompose or change the composition. Such decomposition brings a moment when all of us break the molar forms into tiny fibers, a reconstruction of the figure to figuration.

Reconfiguring the colonial gaze, figures of distorted and broken faces of divinities, and mutilated bodies dominated our screens. We constantly adjusted our bodies by crouching on pillars and broken pediments, manipulated our cameras, and executed multiple shots to portray a different image of the figure. Image manipulated, the figure becomes figurative.

Scribbling my notes, I was thinking along Bennet's (2010) vital matters, the matter's agency in the transformation of the figure while on the other side, the ruins brought by human's irresponsible treatment of matters. (Field Notes)

While having our coffee in between I meandered and tinkered through our photographs joining the different faces of divinities (Fig. 4.5). What came out are photos that elude the common depiction of women in the past centuries as goddesses of beauty (the Molar). (Field Notes)

The act of photography has deterritorialized by exposing another side that would not be representational of ideal deities and devatas. A morphology of objects in the plane of immanence towards a different actual, an act of deterritorialization. Deleuze (2003) remarks that artists must use this process to overcome the cliché, "the facile and the ready-made" (Deleuze, p. 32). The rupture begins where the figurative becomes figural.



Figure 4.5. Apsara Weave.

Moment 3. The Figural. The figural is constitutive of chaotic fibers rupturing into full deterritorialization. The shift of attention means the shift of sensation, a sense that jolts us to wonder, a force that makes the body move and interpret things. Such rupture can open new beginnings.

We went further to the left side of the inner sanctuary's enclosure where a giant tree's roots have crept towards the covered gallery and pillars. The trees' massive roots have forced major blocks of the temple's hall to collapse, rendering it in poor condition. Despite the temptation of capturing the intricately carved divinities, the way the tree interacts with other matters creates a solid sensation as Deleuze (2003) mentions, "away from the cliché" (p.34).

Lines of roots creeping on the side of the causeway led us to the west *Gopura*. The narrow paths were covered with dried leaves, while cicadas swarmed in creating the atmospheric mood of the forest. Roots grew in between pediments of stones overthrowing the structure of the causeway, extending its reach several meters to the northwest. We traced to what extent can such roots of trees dismantle the structure.

We took photos of fragile walls and pillars only supported by thin metal beams, sandstone blocks blocking the whole doorway, rows of pillars in wavelike form on the verge of collapsing. Here, forces of nature started to reveal the current state of this centuries-old sanctuary. The conditions of the structure communicated a strange scenario. Anticipating the possibility of an accident, I asked my messmates not to penetrate some areas since the structure was already in poor condition: one false move could render some stones to fall. Crouching our arms on the *naga* balustrade, climbing on top of the sandstone piles while clutching both the body camera and the main camera brought us to an entryway with detailed *apsara* carvings foregrounded by trees.

Strange synchronous sounds of unusual species can be heard. The messaging alert from body cameras blends in a sonorous rhythm with the sound of ecology. We put down the camera on the sandstone block, changed lenses, and took notes of the strange phenomena.
(Field Notes)

The bare textures of sandstones where divinities were sculpted were transfigured as properties of nature, of the ecology that now owns Banteay Kdei. Lines of flight started to reveal the might of ecology dominating back the citadel of

worship and power.

<https://youtu.be/y3CEZiDWboA>

Interestingly, the ecology colluded with the bodies and technology to divert the colonial notion of gaze depicting power and stature in photographing religious monuments. Rhizomatic fibers reveal the molecular composition of the molar breaking it in tiniest fibers redirecting its flight to the plane of consistency towards the virtual giving voice to the muted non-humans that constitute the temple. Quite different from the frontal enclosures encountered on the facade of the monastery, the outer enclosure of the inner sanctuary leading to the west *Gopura* testify to how ecology is conquering back what they have lost before during the Khmer empire.

(In)Conclusion

Thinking along these, the material assemblages of how the object was made, sensation, camera, and bodies all constitute the photograph. Sensation operates within matters and bodies, making us act, colliding, converging (re)creating phenomena. Different points of view are manifested from subjectivity that emerges from embodied interaction with matters and objects. Points of view are a single portion of an object; thus, a photo cannot be said to be an actual representation of reality but a surface event of the virtual and actual---in assemblages that are always pure *becoming*.

Sensation is what makes our body move, therefore it triggers communication. Within communication, the transversality of figure, figurative, and figural are always

in its infinite *becoming*. Therefore, there is no bifurcation between figure, figuration, and figural or form, content, and expression—these are always imbricated within layers of the process. Such movement from molecular to molar is what constitutes assemblages. It is *aliquid*. Because sensations determine the movement of bodies and matters, sensation is part of the communicative process. Such assemblages are always in communication, a surface event.

Communication is a vital force that makes assemblages intra-act. Intra-acting matters within an assemblage create phenomena--the actualization of virtual (molecular) from the plane of immanence. Once it is actualized, this is where the tiny fibers of the rhizome are captured by the signifying regime. It becomes the molar or hard knots (signification), stabilized, territorialized meanings. Through intervention, these hard rhizomes can rupture, deterritorialize or diffract, forming new assemblages. Communication drives these new *becomings*.

Navigating through this temple demonstrates the tiniest fibers of rhizomes as constitutive of the molecular *becomings* of a photograph. Such molecular shifts account for the matters that become matters of concern. *Becoming* is always molecular for Deleuze. The molar designates identifiable forms, the signified, while the molecular are those that escape structures of normative power. Molecular can rupture, opens up the identity of the molar and frees it towards the new.

The notion of the molar and molecular provides another way to understand how identifiable forms are constituted through the more fundamental processes of *becoming*; how identity is constituted in and through difference.

Premise 1: Photography as assemblages of molecular *becomings*

In between lunch, I lost no time drafting pieces of this writing while the sojourn in Banteay Kdei still percolated in my head. In a few moments, we drove towards the northeast side of Angkor drifting through huge canopies of trees while cicadas hailed us. We passed along small temples and when we got weary near the end, we stopped at Preah Khan. A narrow rough road connects the temple from the main road. While walking past a wide expanse of grass covered walkway, small yellow and tangerine butterflies follow us until we reach the main causeway. Since Preah Khan is the seat of power during the Khmer empire, I started to brace myself on what would unfold or infold.

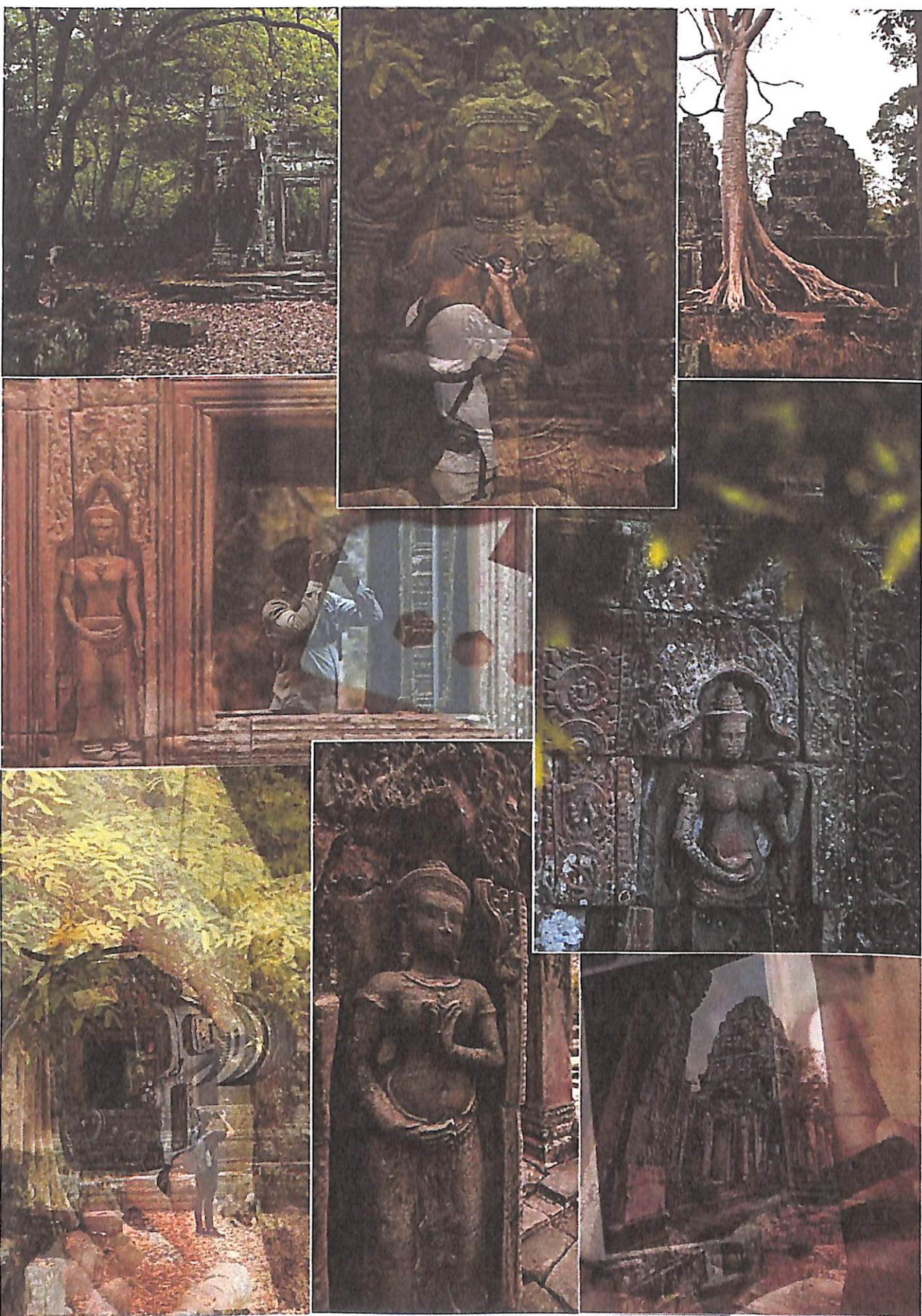


Figure 4.6. GALLERY: Banteay Kdei.

Plateau Preah Khan

RHIZOME-DETERRITORIALIZING TERRITORIES

Located northeast of Angkor Thom, we headed towards the seat of power, Preah Khan. This temple was built during King Jayavarman VII's reign in honor of his father. Once a home of power and learning, the temple is slowly being conquered back by nature. To protect the structure, authorities are cutting down the age-old trees growing along the walls of the shrine and covered galleries in *Gopuras*.

Being the epitome of power, Preah Khan's massive structures speak of hierarchy and Kingly stature. Three small temples surround the central shrine; the North is dedicated to Shiva, the South to the deceased Kings and Queens, and the West to Vishnu. The temple has multiple chambers and doorways from all points of

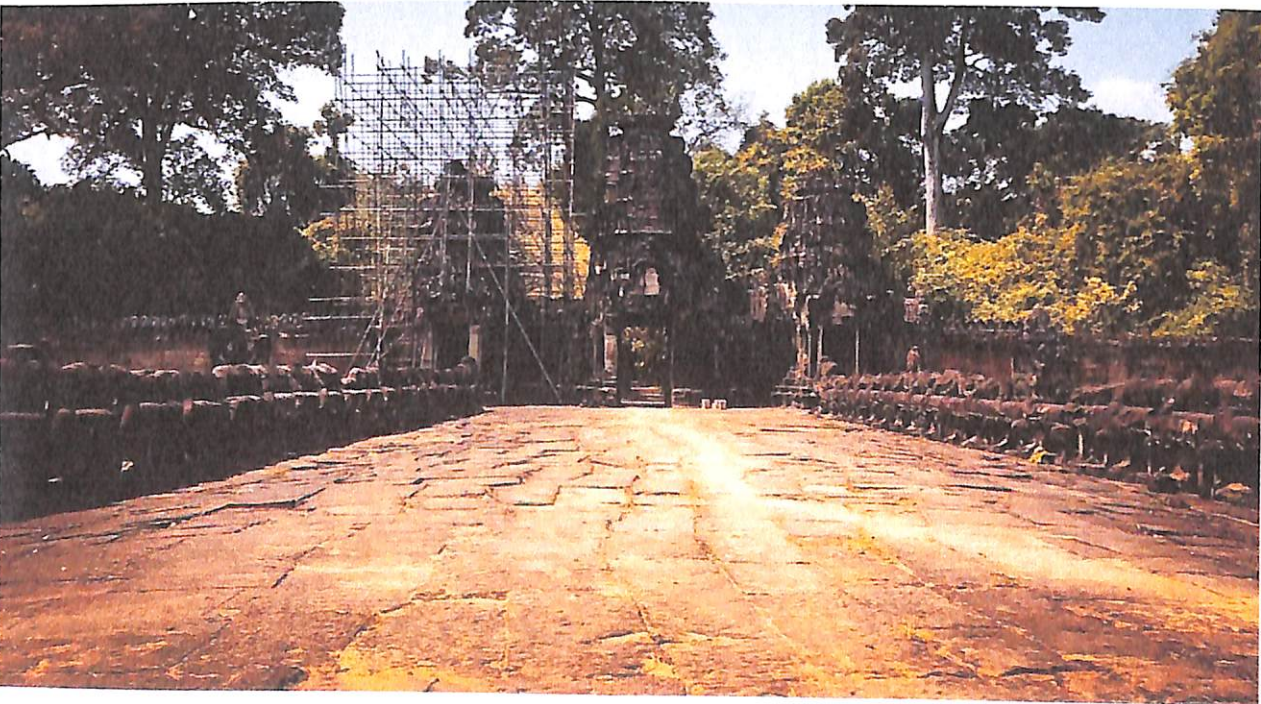


Figure 4.7. Causeway: Preah Khan

entry receding towards the inner sanctuary. History tells us that doors are designed in receding perspective to allow the people to bow their heads and respect the King as one gets closer to the main sanctuary.

Entering the east side, Pheah Khan spans a wide stone causeway (*Fig. 4.7*) that crosses the temple's moat. The causeway is framed by the gods and demons carrying the giant *naga* on both sides or symbolically known as *the Churning of the Ocean Milk* popularly visible in architecture of Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom. This causeway leads to the temple's outer *Gopura* or gateway where *Garuda* images are sculpted on each side.

The body camera throttles as we walk, gliding its vision as we move our bodies from left to right. Powerful sites like the Garudas - the symbolic protector of the air and water, the villa, and the receding doorways become the common subjects. Though Garudas are symbols of surveillance and discipline, one can glean the morphing of man and nature in one being as guardians of the temple. There is a sheer respect and delicate haptic motion I noticed with my co-photographers in photographing the Garudas. Being the seat of power, I ponder on as the other photographers pay respect by kneeling and bowing three times before entering the complex. (Field notes)

Taking photographs of receding doorways, we exchanged ideas how to best shoot with low light given the different types of cameras we were using, moving bodies back and forth, deploying multiple shots to depict the rhythm of the doorways. These doorways lead toward the inner sanctuary where the sacred stupa is located, the epitome of Preah Khan. The stupa is erected at the center of the sanctuary.

Looking upwards the corbelled ceilings, light passes through a small hole shaped like the light of a candle. Reclining the camera at low angle results in an image of the tip of the stupa touching the hole making it appear like a burning candle. Facing west, the inner left side of the sanctuary hosts the sculpted image of Queen *Indradevi*.

Hak directed us to follow him to pay respect to the shrine (Fig. 4.8). They took off their shoes, set aside the cameras and lit the incense sticks. The body cameras along with our bodies obediently bowed with us. I followed what they were doing, took off my shoes and knelt, but I was continuously distracted with the smoke of incense sticks hovering above our heads while a small glimmer of sunlight illuminated it. (Field Notes)

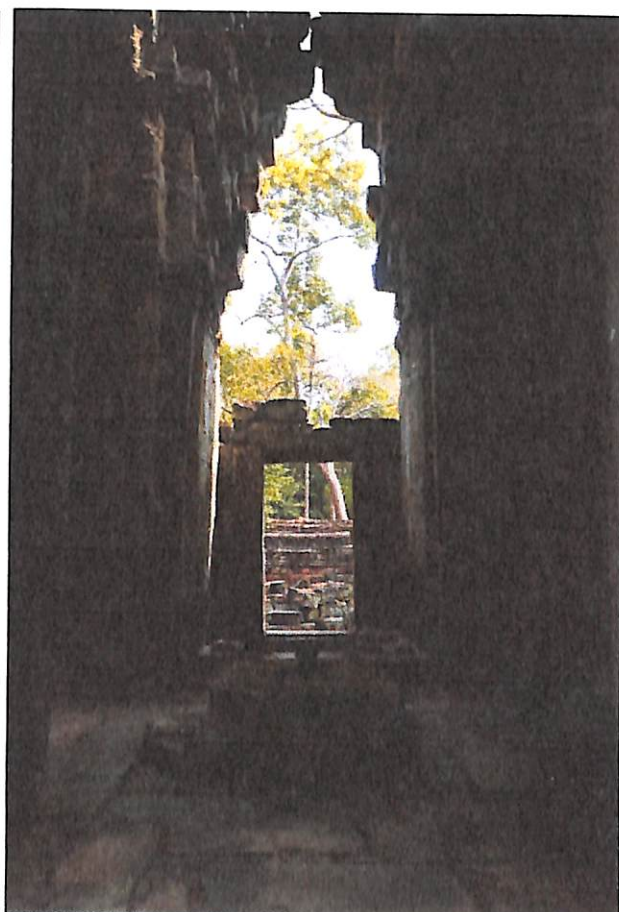
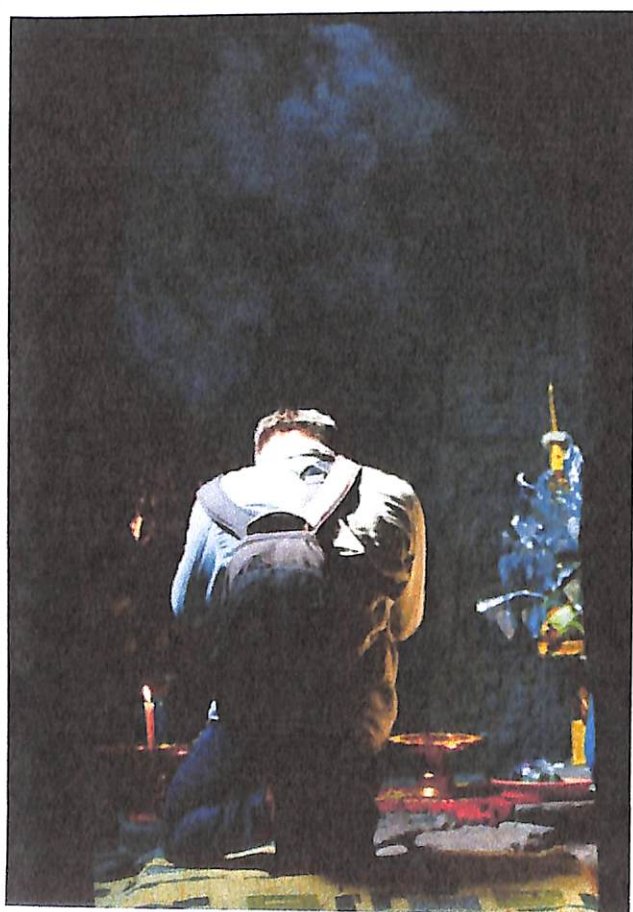


Figure 4.8. Indradevi Shrine(left); The Villa entryway(right)

Turning back, instead of taking a photo of the Goddess Queen *Indradevi*, Nan was already taking a photo of the smoke hovering like soft clouds against the dark corners of the shrine-- a deterritorialization. Deleuze (1987) states: "Deterritorialization is the movement by which "one" leaves the territory. It is the operation of the line of flight" (p. 508).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987), however, clarifies that deterritorializations can be negative and positive. The former is a reconstruction of the old, while positive reterritorializes into new assemblages. To create a transcendent line of flight from the plane of immanence, there must be absolute deterritorialization that can evade capture. The doorways, stupa, incense sticks, and the sculpted image of Queen *Indradevi*, however, are deterritorializations overlaid by reterritorialization as assemblages of signified symbols of power that "stand for" (p. 508) the lost territory, a signifying regime, and is therefore, still a negative deterritorialization. The smoke is considered an index of the incense sticks; incense sticks are used to pray for the Gods and Goddesses. Therefore, it is a deterritorialization of the image of God and a reterritorialization of the same power represented by symbols: stupa, incense sticks, Queen *Indradevi*.

The temple itself is a place for worship, power, and learning where rituals are held. Hierarchy and colonial gaze following the standards of aesthetics imposed during the modernist era are practiced. Photos are too conservative as most of them are symmetrical (*Fig. 4.9*). Such is the case when photography exercises a deterritorializing agency that modulates more of its power as portrayed in the photograph. Formal photography. Symmetrical balance. Symbols of power as

subjects. Low angle shots. The photograph becomes a modulated symbol of power.

This subtle effect of power dispersed in society and in bodies has been emphasized in Foucault's (1988) writings. Biopower as a set of relations is dispersed throughout society: "In fact, there are power relations. They are multiple; they have different forms, they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration" (pp. 38). In the deterritorialization in photography, power becomes a relation, moving and circulating, affecting, infiltrating, colluding with other bodies even at local responses, simple gestures, articulated in the practices and the photographs. Power "produces things, induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (Foucault, 1980, p. 199).



Figure 4.9. The Villa

Such power image has remained a hallmark for most Angkor temples and has

infiltrated the nerve fibers of rhizomes developing hard, sturdy knots establishing their own territory, captured by neoliberal powers---*becoming* the molar rhizomes. The enlightenment's project has established a tree-like structure that captures deterritorializing roots of rhizomes, cutting it down to prevent it from further growing but, like a couchgrass, rhizomes can grow everywhere.

Photography is part of this constitution of power long apprehended before as an instrument of capitalism (Igoe, 2010, Edwards and Ramamurthy, 2017, Emelheinz, 2015, Heikkila and Peycam, 2010). Imposing photos of structure is a by-product of ideology humanity has long been made to believe. This is because such aesthetic criteria have set the standards of photography during the modernist era.

Running through the hours-long footage, I got glued to how these microfibers rupture to deterritorialize. In several instances, I noticed how it manifested while shooting the Villa, known as the hallmark of power. The villa is a two-storey pavilion enclosed with small patios. To any photographer, its design stood out because of the drum columns that are believed to be where the King used to house the Sacred Sword.
(Field Notes)

After taking multiple shots of the villa, Nan walked a few meters away when he encountered the moat protecting the sanctuary. A shift of sensation happened, and he decided to shoot the villa reflecting on the moat. The villa is nestled in front of a terrace, an elevated platform made of laterite stones where inscriptions say it is where the King used to rest while the sacred sword is housed in the villa.

Nan climbs up the terrace to get a 360-degree shot of the villa but turns his back instead and shoots a panoramic vista of the temples with trees perching atop its towers. In a few moments, he is standing in the open causeway of the villa, his attention directed to the left moat where a group of people are fishing. He loses no time capturing the event as a pastoral depiction of human's dependence on natural resources (*Fig. 4.10*). The assemblage of shooting the villa, the moat, and the pastoral scene is a recasting or a positive deterritorialization recreating the old.

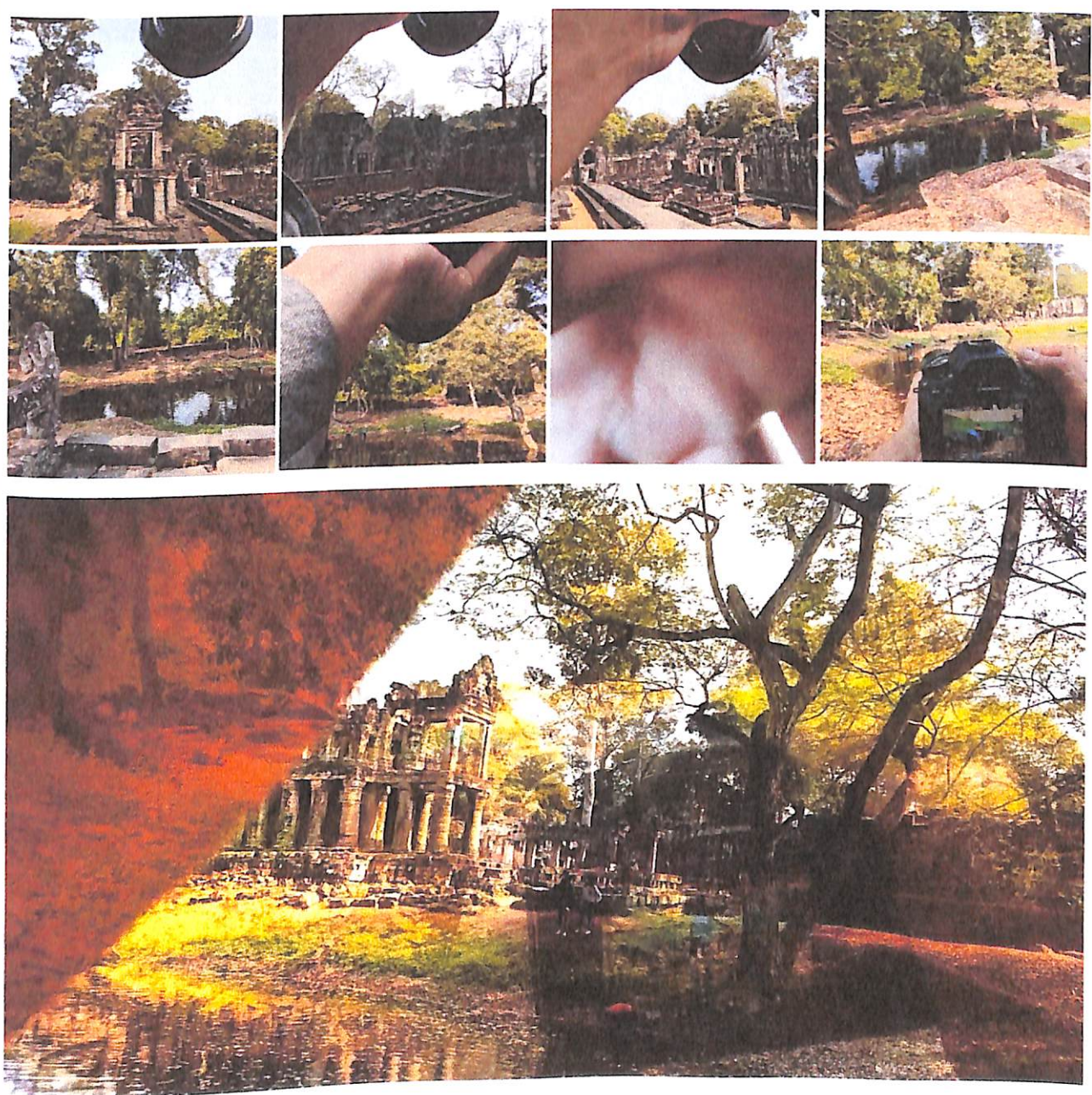


Figure 4.10. Deterritorializing the Villa.

This rupturing is characterized by the blending of heterogeneous matters constantly moving and communicating that sneak out from the captured zone releasing its fibers onwards, a line of flight. That said, established meaning can still rupture creating new *becomings*, its transversality is preceded by the force of communication. Such change from photographing the symbols of power towards inclusion of muted non-human matters is what Deleuze (1987) calls relative deterritorialization (D).

“D becomes positive--in other words when it prevails over reterritorialization (...) the lines of flight it draws is segmented, is divided into successive proceedings sinks into black holes (...) this is the case of regime of subjective signs, (...) positive but only relative” (p. 508)

Deleuze further explains that positive D is “when an organism that is deterritorialized in relation to the exterior necessarily reterritorialize on its interior. A given presumed fragment of embryo is deterritorialized when it changes thresholds or gradients, but it is assigned a new role by the new surroundings” (p. 54). Positive D can be equated to migration, the infolding and unfolding of matters or bodies to create new assemblages. When photographs are re-fashioned, recreated using computer software, giving it a new meaning, a new assemblage is created, a positive deterritorialization.

The affect inducing this deterritorialization is pushing the rhizome towards a different direction encountering new objects and putting old objects at the background. We followed roots, climbed sandstone blocks, eased through narrow

pathways, until we reached the far left of the east of *Gopura*'s entrance. Canopies, strangler figs, and the broken tree clinging on the covered gallery attracted attention. Thin roots remained visible on the ground hiding on the crevices of sandstone blocks. Following these roots half buried on the ground led to the inner left side *Gopura* with a huge sculpture of lion *Garuda* sitting on the balustrade shaded by trees. Our movement went faster, running to the side to capture that moment when the temple appeared to be in a haze of fog framed by leaves---depicting the temple as situated in the middle of the forest. We managed to take different angles, constantly adjusting our bodies, while relying on the sandstone ruins for support.

Previewing the footage, the clicks on the shutter, changing lens, tightening the harness, cleaning lenses, prefocusing constitute the assemblages while experimenting the best angle to shoot the teeming lush greeneries partially hidden against the temple's robust structures. (Field Notes)

<https://youtu.be/KzsRQZT6qW8>

One of us uttered words in awe, when a team member successfully stole a shot of the *Garuda*, the tree, and thin rays of sunlight colluding with each other while foregrounding the leaves crawling in the trunk of the tree creating a shallow depth of field. I noticed that one of us was stuck in the covered gallery in the *Gopura*'s entrance. A twin giant tree known as *fromager* (Rooney, 2011) (*Fig. 4.11*) with roots that have crept into the crevices of the covered gallery was recently cut down since according to authorities it is ruining the structure. This was a moment when nature was supposed to conquer the temple. but man took control to protect the structure as

the site is preserved for tourist consumption.

Curious of what lies behind, *apsaras* hidden behind the roots remain entirely naked from the tourist's gaze. Few meters behind it are granules of wood chopped from the tree that were left strewn on the ground. Hak tried to get closer inching himself to the narrow passages in between the roots. Taking the photo was difficult as the roots obstruct many of the passageways. Nevertheless, he was able to manage to take close-up shots.

A shot has always two aspects: "it presents modifications of relative position in a set or some sets. It expresses absolute changes in a whole" (Deleuze, 1986, p. 19).



Figure 4.11. Layered footage of Fromager.

Here, shifts in sense happen in-between when the body encounters another matter or object. It ruptures from the normalized zone towards new potentialities. It diverges from the normal anticipated photographs expected of Preah Khan emphasizing its grandeur and power. A portrayal in photographic practices of the severance to the old context of power expected of a religious site is deterritorialized to new assemblages. Escaping from the dominant gaze, I stitched these deterritorialized movements into assemblages. This disjunction can be considered as a breakdown of institutional practice in mimicking power in photography; instead, it exposes human's intervention to the ecology of Preah Khan. This interference, for Deleuze and Guattari (1987), involves the scrambling of existing codes. Photography therefore can act as blockage to globalized coding machines.

(In)Conclusion

The rhizome is within the root, just as the root is within the rhizome. As seen in this inquiry, rhizomes deterritorializing can grow from the edges of stabilized hierarchical roots, which I call the hard knots or the molar rhizomes. These sprouting rhizomes rupturing against the molar are the lines of flight, a creative practice, a new assemblage freeing the fibers from the hard knots.

Developing new assemblages is recombining the absolute and relative deterritorialized elements to reach the summit of lines of flight. It is a creative use of assemblages within the virtual and actual planes to reconfigure new assemblages. To deterritorialize is an act of communication involving matters and bodies, the infoldings and unfolding towards the new. These configurations that is

communication, connects and reconnects matters, form, content, and expression. It is along this line that the subject undergoes "molecular changes, redistributions of desire such that when something occurs, the self that awaited it is already dead, or the one that would await it has not yet arrived" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 199).

Deterritorialization is important, as such could be our only hope. "It allows us to imagine our world differently, and as such it offers escape routes, Deleuze and Guattari might call these lines of flight, from our representational and often over stratified sense of self" (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 28).

Premise 2: Photography as re-deterritorialization of open-ended potentialities.

Fascinated as well as intrigued by how nature conquers the once powerful temples, we headed towards Ta Prohm. The winding road provides a smooth drive, and the absence of tourists makes the complex a sole territory of cicadas, lush vegetation, and green manicured lawns as we passed by other temples.

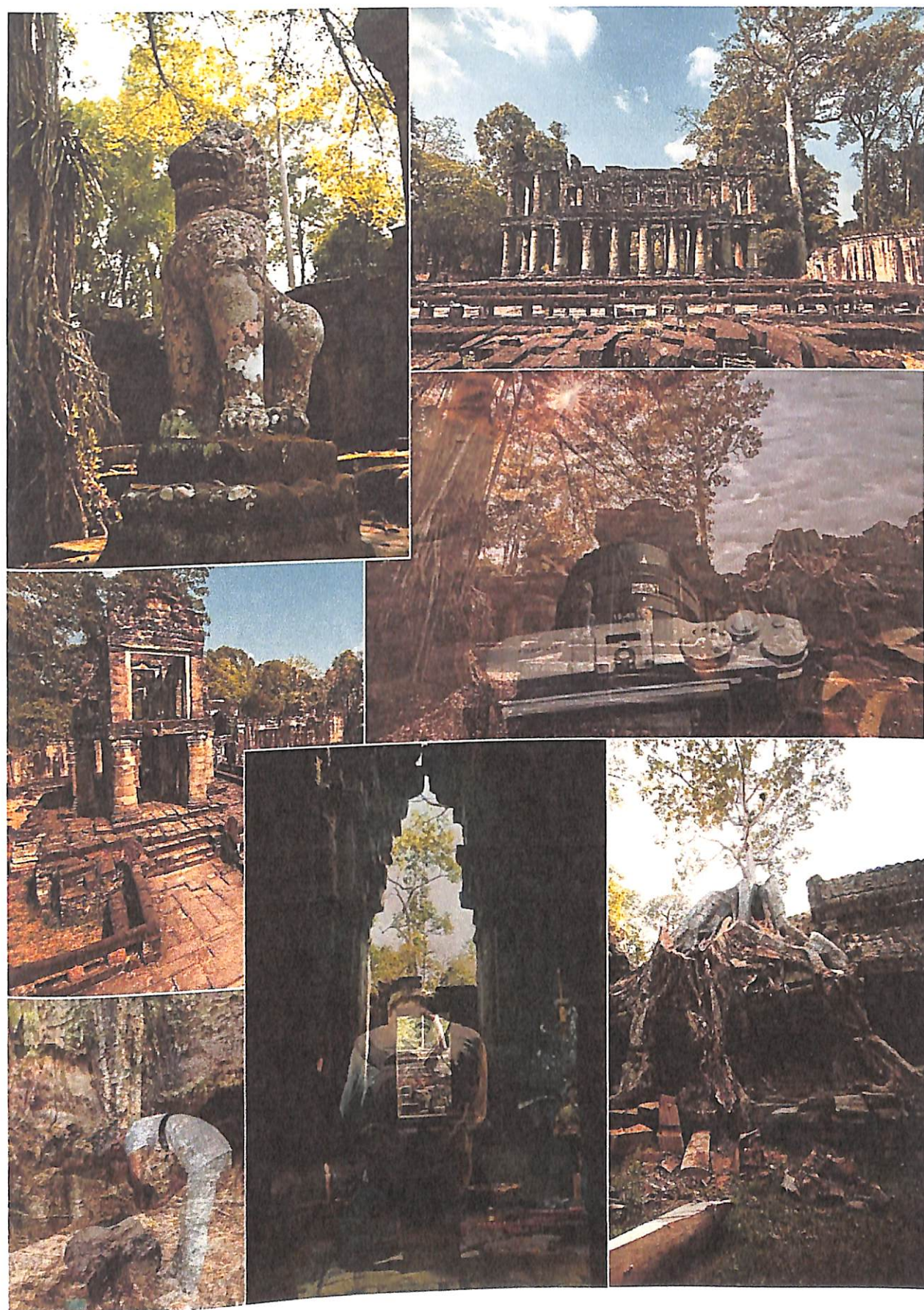


Figure 4.12. GALLERY: Preah Khan

Plateau Ta Prohm

RHIZOMATIC ENTANGLEMENT OF BECOMINGS

East of Angkor Thom, Ta Prohm is closest to Banteay Kdei. It is a monastic complex considered as one of the largest sites at Angkor. The whole complex is rectangular in form. Its buildings are low; one level is connected with passages and galleries. Ta Phrom's shrines are cloaked in a muscular embrace of root systems like cobwebs locking the structure while dismantling its edges (*Fig. 4.13*). Mysterious. Enigmatic. Capturing bodies while being captured by camera. While nature may not have succeeded in conquering back Preah Khan, Ta Phrom demonstrated the power of what ecology can do: giant trees have overtaken the complex, shrouded in the jungle. Fig, Banyan and Kapok trees twist and creep their roots above, under the laterite walls, pillars, and towers of the shrines pushing structures into disarray, creating its own architecture of the field.

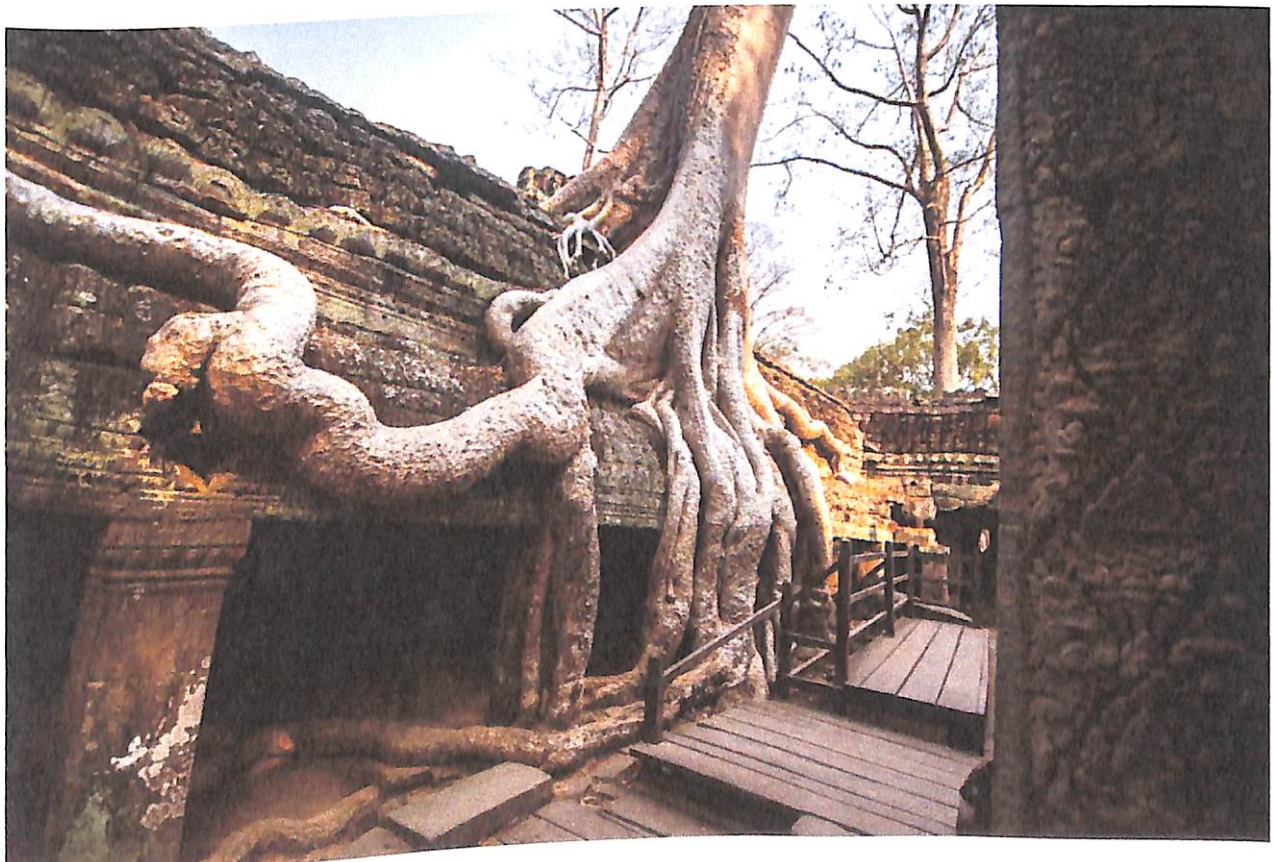


Figure 4.13. Ta Prohm Inner Sanctuary.

These roots spreading across the complex served as our navigation tool, an extension of our veins. We tightened the harness of our body camera, checked its battery status while some became conscious if it would stand the heat for longer periods. As it records our encounters, it struts and folds along with bodies and sounds of cicadas. (Field Notes)

Entering from west *gopura* offers photo opportunities for the temple's scenic spots. Passing through its narrow chambers leads to shrines dotted with *apsaras* in floral beds of motifs carved in gradation of green and reddish sandstone hues, while strangler figs embrace the shrines edges. These colorful gradations are nature's way of hailing the gaze of every visitor. From our multiple points of view, we took various shots of massive banyan trees growing along the sides of the shrines. Cha hurriedly sneaked through a small passage and found himself surrounded by giant roots that now claim the temple coupled with the solid, accelerating sounds of cicadas that are difficult to ignore. He previewed the shots multiple times. Not satisfied, he dropped his bag on the paved stone, cleaned the lens judiciously by a damp tissue before plugging it in the body of his DSLR camera. He soon found a perfect spot at the corner to capture the shrine's structure and its magnificent carvings.

Hak took several movements and positions to get the best angle. He then suddenly settled by propping his entire strength of body at the walls for support, one leg resting on the base of the shrine, bending down while tilting the camera in diagonal position. Body became submissive to ecology's infrastructure.

While Cha dominated the corner spots, I moved towards the middle of the wooden platform to get a wide-angle view of root stretching widely across the temple's roof. I leaned my body on the shrine's pediments to get an angle of the sun's rays illuminating a part of the root. Cha stepped backward, propped his camera on one of his legs and leaned his back on the blocks of sandstone ruins while taking a low angle shot of the shrine's *gopura* shrouded by massive twigs of trees behind.

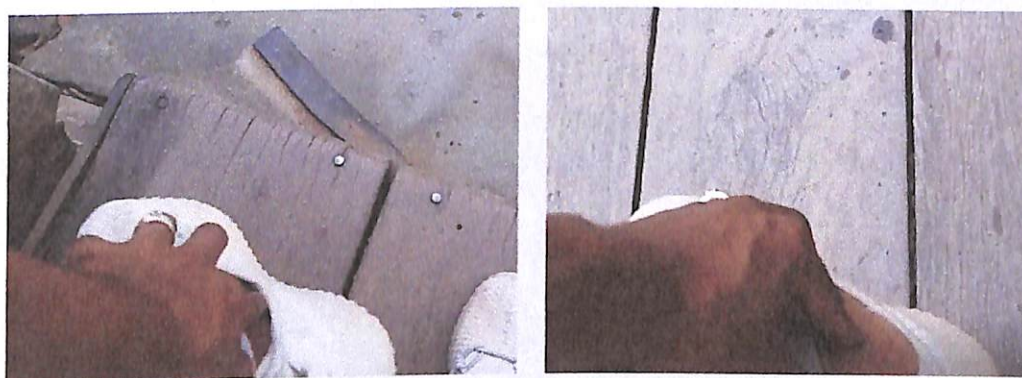
While preparing our cameras, Hak got curious of Fujifilm's latest X-series camera. I passed it to him and attempted to compare both cameras by holding them side by side and took shots of the same subject. (Field Notes)



Curious of what was hidden in the farthest inner side of the shrine, I walked past from where Cha was located. Seeing the magnificent carvings behind piles of sandstone covered with moss caught me off-guard. The corner was blocked by a small cord to prevent visitors from climbing the ruins. I went closer, stepping

sideways at the edge of the structure, my eyes fixed on the walls, when I suddenly slipped with my foot falling from the edge. But I was able to support my body by pressing my hands against the paved sandstones. Eventually, I took a snapshot of the wooden cord that nearly broke me.

Glancing back at Cha, while his body was anchored on the pediments of the shrine, ants took advantage, crept into his shoes, explored the stranger's feet, and suddenly started to bite. Perhaps he stepped into a colony since he loves to get into smaller alleys. This goes to show how human bodies surrender to the vitalities of nature. An assemblage of nature and technology intra-acting to disrupt, (re)produce phenomena. This led him to take another shot away from the territory of ants. (Field Notes)



Nature appears as an agentic force. Donna Haraway (2016) speaks of this process. She suggested the term sympoiesis for “collectively-producing systems that do not have self-defined spatial or temporal boundaries. Information and control are distributed among components. The systems are evolutionary and have the potential for surprising change” (p.13).

In this plateau, posthumanism and new materialism (Barad, 2003, 2007;

Bennett, 2010) offer a lens to examine the affective intra-actions of aesthetics' ecology in photographing Ta Prohm, and to think differently about the bodies' relations with the world as we ascribe to Barad's (2003, 2007) notion of process, whereby "reality is composed not of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena but things-in-phenomena" (Barad, 2007, p. 140).

Passing along its courtyard, piles of stones covered in velvety moss and canopies invites an adventure into a jungle that now owns Ta Prohm. Shrines that are ornately decorated with false door carvings, *apsaras*, and floral motifs are clambered by blinds of strangler figs, while felt green moss creeps along the edges. The rays of sunlight add volume to the sight revealing its unparalleled beauty



Figure 4.14. *Ecological Assemblage*

embracing the sandstones in soft mist. This almost perfect intra-action of nature's ecology hails our bodies constantly communicating; its sensation is hard to resist.

Lured by these vital matters, our bodies were bending, climbing, adjusting to the positions of meters-high trees, structures, chasing rays of light, while being seduced by the sound of critters and birds and other co-inhabitants of the place. Feasting our eyes on the beauty of ecology's own architecture, we were poised to capture anything. But what we realized was that we were the ones captured by it (*Fig. 4.14*).

https://youtu.be/gBzyw_EkyMA

As we navigated, a thick mantle of vegetation covered the sides of the causeway. Entering the east *Gopura*, an age-old Banyan tree cloaked the sandstone *Gopura* whose roots grew in between the laterite enclosure. From its frontal view, we paused for a while, traced the extent of its growth through the back part of *Gopura*. The massive tree stretches its roots on the corner of the walls throwing the sandstone pillars and walls into disarray, extending downwards, creeping towards a few meters on the ground. We situated our bodies along different points on the ground, each with our own points of view in shooting the best angle. The roots, bodies, structure, sandstones, and camera lens form an assemblage.

<https://youtu.be/tdbntk3t6UE>

Walking past wooden planks, there are ruins of piles of stones everywhere, mostly covered by velvety moss. These piles of stones at the foot of the trees, are evidences of the deformation of the temple's structure as roots continuously grow across it. Towards the inner sanctuary, twigs of trees shroud the pathway making our bodies bend, surrendering to its form to be able to pass through.



Figure 4.15. Hidden Buddha Assemblage.

From the courtyard, getting into the inner sanctuary needs passing through narrow makeshift wooden stairs. The towers in the inner courtyards are guarded by gigantic roots of tree coiling on top of the shrine's lintels throwing its walls and parts of towers into rubble. Despite this, the union of trees and stone magnificently creates an astounding masterpiece demanding different angles, techniques, and lens in photographing it. Because of the narrow pathways, we had to move, squeeze our bodies along pillars as we followed the rays of sun that partially illuminated its roots. On inner shrines, strangler figs hung like fine streaks of hair behind walls and corners hiding faces of divinities while the sunlight dramatically enhanced the scene. My voice reverberated when I told them to follow the rays of the sun!

At the backdrop, a Khmer singing a traditional song, someone talking from the two-way radio competed with the chirping of birds and critters. These became louder when the three of us got closer to the shrines. I was thinking if we might have disturbed the solemn sanctuary of Ta Prohm inhabitants as sounds of cicadas became louder as if an intruder was invading the site. (Field Notes)

Shooting the entire complex demands propping our entire strength of bodies on the sandstone for support. Once form was identified, we began choosing the right lens, bending our bodies, following roots that could lead us more to hidden structures - only to realize that we were caught by the lure of nature. Body becomes submissive to nature's strength. Such assemblage of trees, stones, sounds, and sun's rays belong to an immanent field where upon encounter with the body, form emerges. Sensations make us act.

We as photographers only emerge as well from this intra-action. This figure is reconfigured as the content: where one works to subtract other matters and creatively experiment how to best depict the form. Figure in its pure becoming--- content. Moving our bodies, adjusting our cameras. Our encounters are manifested through visual photography. The photograph as an expression, an expression of not just the figure but of sensation. In this plateau, the ecology of nature is of crucial importance. It is a machinic assemblage.

<https://youtu.be/Ki9rxdJu7SE>

Within these assemblages, the trees, critters, cicadas, bodies, and cameras constitute companion species. As Donna Haraway (2016) puts it, it inhabits the multispecies crowd (p.178) intra-acting (Barad, 2012) as heterogeneous elements constituting an assemblage (Deleuze, 1987). Union of multispecies does not predict their relatings, it is precisely what comes out of the intra-relating of fleshy, significant, semiotic material-being. Thus, aesthetic does not come out a priori: rather, it comes out of the intra-acting phenomenon when matters, humans, and other species collide forming the visual assemblage.

This intra-action is communication. A looping story of figuration, of ontics and bodies in the making, of play wherein all the messmates are not human (Thompson, as cited in Haraway, 2016). The human "I" celebrated in cogito is simply a subjectivation emerging only from the intra-acting assemblages in the virtual plane of immanence. Photographers, photograph, and even the identity of Ta Prohm only



Figure 4.16. Cameras as Companion Species

arise from these intra-acting species and matters, thus, we are "bodies in braided ontic, and antic relatings" (p. 165)

The camera is a companion species in relation to the body, the body in relation to dust, the tree, stones, the body camera, and even the wooden planks (*Fig. 4.16*). These assemblages of the virtual are where the actual arises of coming into being through meldings with the physicality of other matters; all of which produce a vital, living, photographer.

The camera as an apparatus developed a symbiotic relationship with other bodies when I played around with other peer's lenses, passing on my camera to any one of them, stones and roots serving as cushions for the apparatuses when assembling and changing lenses. The body camera, on one hand, gleefully records these becoming, as it unites with other critters in the field. Blending these footages where points of *becomings* "glow" reveals the chaos in motion, the entanglement of humans and non-humans, a full deterritorialization from the powerful Khmer empire to nature's peaceful sanctuary.

(In)Conclusion

Premise 3: Human subjectivity is not separated from ecology but is entangled and produced through intra-action. Photographing Ta Prohm is an ecological assemblage where humans and visuals arise.

To produce aesthetically-pleasing photographs is an intra-acting phenomenon

between matters and bodies, an ecological assemblage. It conceives communication as an event through a melding of matter, camera apparatuses, forces, bodies, casting of images on the camera, sensation as movement. **Subjectivity is produced in-between the welding of these machinic assemblages--the becoming of a photographer and the becoming Ta Prohm. There is no doer before the deed instead, there were assemblages in its constant *becomings* before signifying ourselves as photographers and assigning meaning to the monument as Ta Prohm. Thus, the subject is only produced by the phenomena where existence means coexistence.**

Photographing Ta Prohm is a sheer reminder that our subjectivity and "being" only arises from the intra-action with humans and non-humans. Taking into account response-ability on the ecology of matters is an ethical move. A communication that acknowledges not just human superiority but dynamic agency of matters in creating phenomena. The fate of Ta Prohm is a mute testimony of ecology's power over other powers.

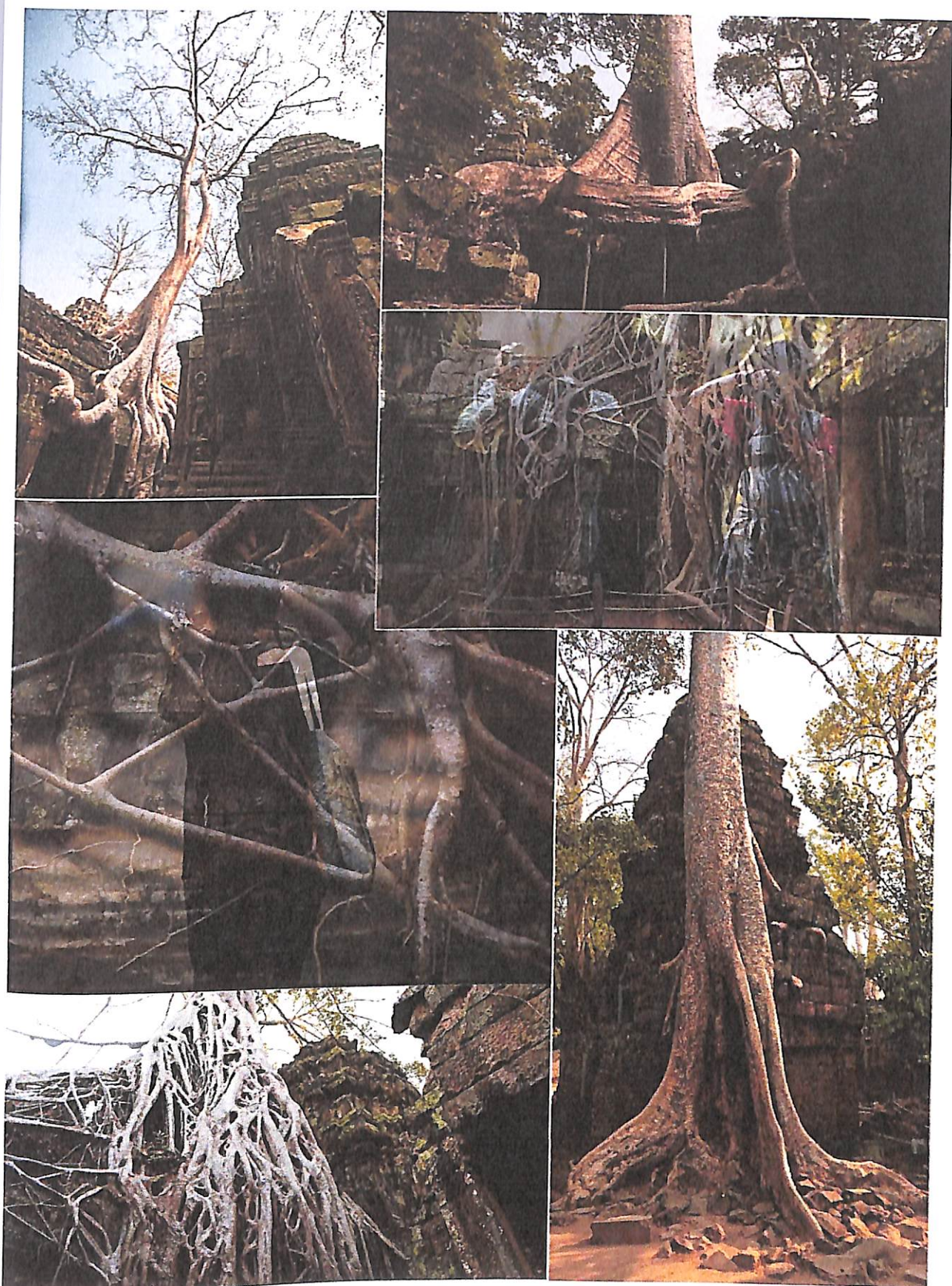


Figure 4.17. GALLERY: Ta Prohm.

Emergent Plateau

WEAVING THE NEW ONTOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

Photography as Surface Event of *Becomings*

This experiment yielded multiplicitous phenomena that demonstrate how photography comes to matter: from its molecular *becomings* to deterritorialization to its entangled expression. The following premises were generated:

Premise 1: Photography as assemblages of molecular becomings;

Premise 2: Photography as rhizomatic diffraction, a re-deterritorialization of open-ended potentialities; and

Premise 3: Human subjectivity as not being separated from ecology but is entangled and produced through intra-action. Photographing Ta Prohm is an ecological assemblage where humans and visuals arise.

Sub Thesis: Photography as surface-event of *becomings*, a rhizomatic entanglement of encounters with bodies and matters.

As a surface event, photography accounts for the transformation from the virtual plane of immanence to actualizing it through the photograph. When matters within the immanent plane that are unformed, not yet organized, and unsigned encounter bodies, sensation works within bodies. These matters become "form", a subtraction process that eliminates intervening matters. Sensation insists and subsists within bodies during the process of apprehension. As a movement of thought, it is constantly moving, gliding, and shifting affecting bodies and other

matters. Through constant subtraction and selection, formed matters become content, a new *becoming*. The organization of form, substance and content in a pictorial plane form compounds called expression, that is, the photograph---a surface event. This surface event is what Deleuze (1986) calls movement, a transversality from one form to another:

"Movement is a translation in space. Now each time there is a translation of parts in space, there is also qualitative change in a whole.(...) Our error lies in believing that it is the any-element-whatevers, external to qualities, which move. But the quality are pure vibrations, which change at the same time as the elements move" (p. 8).

Becomings are rhizomatic movements of intensities, and each *becomings* forms new assemblages, new images. Photography therefore is an infinite movement-images. Through the relations, the whole is transformed qualitatively (Deleuze, 1986). There are no bifurcations between form, content, and expression; rather they are part of assemblages. What lies in between this transition is difference/*becomings*--an expression that does not contain the same molecular formula as content. *Becomings* are rhizomatic lines of flight.

A photograph as an assemblage of rhizomes has the capacity therefore to deterritorialize, form new territories, and push towards absolute line of flight. A photograph is produced as a surface event of molecular *becomings*, a rhizomatic entanglement of bodies and matters and forces and intensities. Like rhizomes, it is never the same and will never be the same as content and expression is always in constant motion; they intermingle (Deleuze, 1987), always reterritorializing and deterritorializing. Humans as part of the assemblage are constructed and

reconstructed from this movement of *becomings*. We only emerge from these chaotic moments of signification.

Rhizomatic *Becomings*: A Communication Phenomena

Before I give space to a possible ontological concept of communication in the Posthuman lens, I will trace back Mumby's (1997) conception of Postmodernism and Communication, its differences, and folds.

The modernity project of enlightenment has ensued for centuries and has become normalized. Because of this, Mumby's Postmodernism questions the notion of "Truth" and the universal standard practices of arriving at the Truth. This means, disrupting the "God's eye view" in research practices where human subjectivity reigns. The human subject in postmodern thought is decentered, truth and power are not separated, rather, they are co-implicated, and there is no bifurcation between signifier and signified. Identity is destabilized. There are only differences in every repetition. Because of the decentering of the human subject "I", Mumby (1997) attempts to propose conditions for postmodern thought:

Communication is (Im)possible: "the social" consists of a complexly articulated set of discourses that attempt to "fix" meaning in particular ways for social actors - but this meaning is always, by definition, partial, incomplete, and subject to slippage and transformation" (p.16);

Communication is political when communication privileges certain worldviews

than others;

Communication is for self (de)construction, which focuses on the productive character between the relationship and the other, that humans are the products of sedimented discourses.

All these conditions lead to conceptualizing communication as being subjectless.

While these typologies are helpful, I would argue, that, this notion is still centered on social actors. Such bifurcation proliferates to the very roots of arborescent trees because the focus has been on man as the center of agency. Although this has been the subject of recent sociomaterial research, empirical studies only reduced it back to dichotomous dualisms demonstrating matters as simply articulated in language: the trap of representation. Hence, the concept is still within the “molar” field.

Departing from Mumby’s typologies, the inquiry was able to uncover what drives these meanings or experiences to render it (im)possible, and subjectless. Doing this means looking at the whole assemblage on how meanings are actualized: the triggers and its transitions. It can be gleaned that what drives humans to act are the non-human actants (Latour, 2013). From the inquiry on photographic practices, Photography is always becoming, a genesis, a communicative act: from molecular to molar/virtual to actual (molecular *becomings*: Plateau Banteay Kdei), it ruptures from being captured (deterritorialization: Plateau Preah Khan). Hence, subjectivity is

produced from infinite *becomings*, always entangled: the becoming of Angkor and of photographer (rhizomatic entanglement: Plateu ta Prohm). Communication happens within assemblages composed of humans and non-humans, species, viruses, and objects that constantly intra-act and therefore cannot be reduced to mere dualities. Instead, it is always co-constitutive; always becoming. What triggers this *becomings* is an abstract machine "*that emit and combine particles that have two very different modes of existence* (original emphasis)" (Deleuze, 1987, p. 56). It draws the cutting edges of decoding and deterritorialization.

Communication operates within these abstract machines that drive the intra-action of assemblages (humans and non-humans) to its *becomings*: reterritorialization and deterritorialization. These surface-event of molecular *becomings*, are effects of communication. **In other words, photography is communication in its pure *becomings*, and *becomings* are rhizomatic in movement.** Rhizomes consist of assemblages, that is, humans and non-humans. It drives the movement between content and expression vice-versa. It organizes the strata yet can deterritorialize. As a rhizomatic phenomenon, it is always connected and heterogenous, non-hierarchical in a flattened ontology, exhibiting multiplicity and is a cartography of movements in thought. Rhizomes are assemblages in motion. Such assemblages, however, can fall into black holes or be captured by regimes of signs as often the case when visuals are used and manipulated to accrue more power, and propaganda to serve capitalist interest and oppression. To push deterritorialization to the absolute is to create new possibilities, the line of flight that will set the hard fibers of rhizome free from being solidified.

Going back to Braidotti's(2013) notion of Posthuman where humans are entangled with forces of living matters, there is a need to rethink the concept of communication as a sole province of thinking subjects. Instead, we can reconceptualize humans as always imbricated in the process of becoming.

MAIN THESIS: COMMUNICATION AS RHIZOMATIC BECOMINGS

From the immanent field, communication arises as a surface event of *becomings*. Human subjectivity, therefore, only emerges from these *becomings*, in the intra-action, a communicative act. To stay in between these forces of communication, to stay in trouble, to make kin with other species and matters (Haraway, 2016) is a rhizomatic plight.

While scholars fear the demise of subject signals the dissolution of communication as a field, I contend that communication in fact, is now foregrounded in every discipline rather than it being an exclusive field.

Chapter 5

WEAVING RHIZOMES in the ontological turn: a future practice in the doing of communication inquiry

This Plateau is NOT an end but a MIDDLE, a rupture into new assemblages that are about to come. This plateau proposes the *Weaving Rhizomes* as an approach to communication inquiry that is attendant to *becomings* in communication. From the immanent plane, it invites us to extend the lines of flight, create new ones, revv up intensities, and allow us to drift into the woods of assemblages. Trust that the new will always kick in as a phenomenon never sleeps.

Preamble: Communication as Rhizomatic Becomings

The inquiry on photographic practices opens up possible discourse that communication is **a force of relations within assemblages that drives *becomings*. These forces move as a rhizome.**

It is communication that constitutes the intra-action where humans and matters emerge and dissolve. Within this sphere, communication is what drives the organizing of matters and bodies to create phenomena. Communication should be viewed as relational, where humans are not only the able bodies that can communicate: rather, communication phenomena exist within the ecology of matters and humans continuously intra-acting. In other words, what makes worlding is communication.

The inquiry on photographic practices was able to demonstrate the molecular *becomings* of a photograph as a surface event that moves as a rhizome. Such surface events are communication phenomena, a genesis of infinite *becomings*. To understand communication as assemblages of *becomings* is to use an approach that will attune to such *becomings* within a flattened ontology.

This inquiry's contribution is a knowledge-creation approach that emerged from my speculative inquiry. As a probable approach in doing postqualitative inquiry in communication, ***Weaving Rhizome*** is suitable in studying the various entanglements and *becomings* in communication phenomena.

Ontology

Moving away from methodological to speculative inquiry (Springgay and Truman, 2017) is a risky but liberating ride. What emerges from this inquiry is a process of knowing I call ***Weaving Rhizomes***. This novel approach in studying communication phenomenon is anchored on Deleuze's Ontology of Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism. This means that the creation of the new is within the immanent field where there are no subject/object: rather, multiplicities of intensities and forces where potentialities might arise.

Since its inception, weaving practices are attributed to symmetrical forms of art where the generation of its repetition produces the same old patterns. While this patchwork is rigid and follows a pattern, rhizomatic weaving disturbs and disrupts this colonial pattern, breaking the rigid lines by reconfiguring the weave towards the creation of the "new". It breaks free from its normalized structure making the fibers

flee to different directions as this follows thought in motion while putting into account the *becomings* from virtual to actual: a communication phenomenon.

Following this thought is a rhizomatic way of thinking towards the new.

Interlacing, overlays, combining multiple fibers create rhythm of the new. This is consistent with the Ontology of Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism, that is, weaving as an approach is the creation of the new while being entangled in the dynamics of assemblages within research-creation. It is attuned to postqualitative inquiry's ethico-ontoepistemology where the act of knowing is by doing. Weaving Rhizomes is a research creation that explores the intersection between philosophy, art, and practice. It is putting the philosophy of rhizomes into practice of research creation, which cannot preexist or be separated out from research practices and thinking-doing (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2018).

Theoretical Ground

Weaving Rhizomes comes from thinking with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) Theory of Rhizome. Rhizomes exists within the plane of immanence where the virtual as not yet constituted singularities are actualized through movements in-between. This dynamic blending of matters and bodies that are constantly changing is an intra-acting phenomenon that forms a Rhizomatic Weave. Think of rhizome fibers as constitutive of matters, objects, humans, etc., all intra-acting in infinite movements. This is a molecular fiber. Some are captured, colonized, becoming molar. While some active rhizomes deterritorialize (molecular). Fibers that diverge create new *becomings*.

Ruptures in rhizomatic paths are caused by the dynamism of the agential properties of intra-action diffracting towards creating the "new". Diffraction means the researcher is engaged in the phenomena of research-creation; therefore, s/he is never separated but part of the phenomena in its continuous *becomings*.

From the experimental inquiry on photographic practices, we were able to theorize ***Communication as rhizomatic becomings***. It is always connected and heterogeneous, non-hierarchical, exhibiting multiplicity, and is a cartography (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) of movements in thought. To account for these *becomings* is to stay in-between without any presupposition. It is letting the phenomena unfold and infold as I engage in its pure *becoming*.

Thinking along these concepts invites us to see the sublime: the movement in between matters that accounts for the relationship within creating phenomena. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) encourage us to grow rhizomes and follow the lines of flight to reveal new potentialities, that is, new knowledge. Barad (2007) asks us to situate our bodies on performativity to be part of the transversality and phenomena, to respond as response-able researchers.

To weave is to make rhizomes diffract. Rhizome and diffraction co-constitute each other to explain communication phenomena where matters and bodies infold and unfold. Enacting this is Weaving Rhizomes. To weave means entangling ourselves including our apparatus of knowing as part of the phenomena that is about to unfold. Therefore, in this approach, there is no "I". Instead, the researcher and object only emerge from the phenomena. Dualisms like subject/object are refused in

this flattened concept of ontology. Thus, this inquiry is not a replication of *what has been*. Rather, guided by post philosophical concepts, it will give rise to the new. This is navigating the plane of immanence in transcendental empiricism.

Against Stabilizing Method

St. Pierre (2016) reminds us to resist the idea of methodology. To weave rhizomes is to adhere to the flat ontology where subject and object are not separated: instead, they are entangled in research creation. Hence, the Weaving Rhizomes approach does not prescribe specific methods because doing so would be contrary to the very notion of Deleuze's Immanence in Transcendental Empiricism. Instead, it proposes philosophy or concept as method (Koro-Ljungberg et al, 2015; Lenz Taguchi and St. Pierre, 2017). It insists on developing new methods that will destabilize anthropocentric gaze in research. It explores and highlights intersections of philosophy, art, and practice accounting for the entanglement of the knower and known. It advocates transdisciplinary practices that disrupt ideological and neoliberal boundaries. Once fibers are freed from control, they become a relation of dimensions, modularity and vibrations that continue to (re)configure in spacetime mattering. As St. Pierre (2011) states, it is "undoing the ruins that were once framed by the dogmatic image of thought".

To Weave Rhizomes is to think with theory (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012) or begin with concepts or use concepts as methods. Thinking, however, often begins in the middle of the weave; it is where we situate ourselves in the inquiry-practice. Unlike conventional humanist methodologies where phenomena already exist to be mined, it is in the doing-thinking in Weaving Rhizomes that the new arises. From the

plane of immanence, it is letting thought take over to create the new.

In my inquiry in photographing Angkor, it begins with Deleuze's concepts. I attune to the *becomings* in the doing of inquiry. The photographic practices show the various assemblages involved that configure and reconfigure images, a communication phenomenon of infinite *becomings*. Fibers deterritorialize at points unexpected. Rhizomes are open-ended: therefore, methods only arise during the ongoing interaction of bodies and matters in the field.

While the use of visual technologies could Weave Rhizomes, it is encouraged to use and recreate multiple, mundane forms of apparatuses of knowing. Weaving Rhizomes allows for creative experimentation. The plane of immanence is littered with matters and objects awaiting to be grasped. Researchers/scholars must create new lines of flight rather than fix structures like arborescent trees that maintain hierarchy through step-by-step procedures. Growth and becoming happen in the middle of the messiness. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) recommend:

"Lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations (...) broken chain of affects and variable speeds, with accelerations and transformations, always in a relation with the outside" (p. 9).

Analyzing Data: An Entanglement

Weaving of rhizomes are attendant to *becomings*. To analyze data means the researcher is always involved in the interpretation of phenomena---thus, creating a

new assemblage of data, knower, and apparatuses of interpretation. To weave rhizome is to trouble existing conventional methods of interpretation. Language and narratives can be woven as diffractive stories with the researcher's own experiences in-between. In my inquiry, fractal data like video footage, narratives, descriptions, and even parts of field notes are woven together. This created an intimate weave of how our bodies are affected by objects and experiences as I navigated the site. Multiple points of view from the body camera as my apparatus of knowing was imbricated into layers to show entangled relations of the knower and the known.

Ethos

Borrowing from Kathrin Thiele (2018), "How to live a world of difference(s), a world in/as ongoing differentiation?" (p. 35). To live in between this meshwork is by "Taking responsibility for one's entanglements" (Barad, 2007, p. 453,) including the apparatuses or intra-ventions in the world's becoming (Murris, 2020) is the ethics of post philosophical inquiries. This response-ability is the basis of a relational ontology which means that entities do not preexist relationships but rather emerge into being through relationships (Bozalek, 2020, p. 135). Because the process of knowing is by doing, weaving rhizomes is an ethico-ontoepistemological approach that is *response-able* to all material entities intra-acting in the process of inquiry NOT just human.

Acknowledging the role of non-humans and humans means response-able "collective knowing, being and doing, becoming-with each other by rendering each other capable of creating flourishing worlds" (pp. 144).

Implications:

The inquiry contributes to possible ontological discourse on Photography as a surface event that acknowledges the role of humans and non-humans as co-constitutive. As demonstrated from the inquiry on photographic practices, surface events are rhizomatic *becomings*, thus a communication phenomenon.

Establishing communication as *becomings*, I have proposed the practice of **weaving rhizomes** as a pragmatic approach in communication research-creation. This provides an alternative lens in looking at communication as an imbricated process consistent with the ontological and speculative turn that is a performative-material-discursive practice that produces bodies while being *respons-able* to all entities involved in the phenomenon. The proposed approach troubles the anthropocentric process in doing communication research because it looks at the process as a dynamic movement of thought.

This also contributes to the growing field of arts-based approaches. While visual methods have now been widely used in conventional methodologies, the proposed approach allows creativity of thought to flourish, without the positivist trap of coding and categorizing but acknowledging instead its production's *becomings*. The generative form of data analysis that emerged from this inquiry troubles the anthropocentric gaze by overlaying the video footage, thereby flattening the matters and objects in an assemblage. To weave is to disrupt colonial gaze that allows the researcher to create, and transform because researchers are imbricated in sensing data during interpretation.

The inquiry also opens up possibilities of engaging with mobile cameras as prosthetics of the body. The inquiry treats the body camera as the apparatus of knowing that is entangled in research-creation.

For communication practitioners. The inquiry reminds us of the dynamic intra-action of humans and non-humans in our field. This calls for increased responsibility to harness the potential of the virtual field into a more inclusive creation of the new.

Future Researchers:

Although it does not prescribe any methodological tool to allow one's creativity to work, the list below will guide future researchers who are willing to take the risk and uncover the sublime:

1. Anchored on Post Philosophies.
2. There is no "I". The researcher is always entangled in the performativity of knowing (Barad, 2007). The "I" only emerges from the phenomena.
3. It is always experimental; attuned to the *not yet* (St. Pierre, 2011), thus, it cannot be predicted.
4. Partial and tentative, that transgresses generic boundaries, and allows the inclusion of the researchers' voice (Honan and Sellers, 2006).
5. The unit of analysis is not objects or subjects but Phenomena. Phenomena are assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Barad, 2007). Be attuned to differences and *becomings*.

6. Think in movement (Springgay and Truman, 2018), a thought in motion (Manning, 2016).
7. Harness the multiplicity of tools as methods (anything that you can weave to create new concepts: texts, narrative, images, plastics, blocks, fabrics, strings, composites).
8. Since rhizomes are multiplicitous and heterogeneous, research creation should always be interdisciplinary.

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Appendix 1

Humanist Qualitative Research Methodology and Post Qualitative, Post Humanist, New Material, New Empirical Inquiry

Rouhollah Aghasaleh and Elizabeth St. Pierre

December 13, 2017

Some Categories	Conventional Humanist Qualitative Research (Interpretive, critical, positivist)	Post Qualitative, New Material, New Empirical, Post Human Inquiry
Approach	Social Science	Philosophy
Epistemology	Rationalist, empiricist, objectivist. Knowledge is produced by the Cartesian <i>cogito</i> . Distinction between epistemology and ontology.	Ethico-onto-epistemology. Epistemology is decentered. Ethics foregrounded.
Ontology	Realist, dualist	Ethico-onto-epistemology. Transcendental empiricism & immanence (Deleuze & Guattari). A flattened ontology. No depth or height. Entanglement. Assemblage.
Human subject	Descartes' <i>cogito</i> . Stable, present, coherent, rational, conscious, knowing, intentional, agentive human that exists ahead of language and cultural practice with a unique, essential core that stays the same throughout space-time. Human/non-human, human/nature, human/matter, mind/body binaries operative.	The human is decentered. Pre-human. More-than-human. Post-human. Not-quite-human. Not only human. Always already entangled with everything else. No binaries. A folding. "Pre-individual singularities and non-personal individuations" (Deleuze).
Language	Meaningful. Representational. Phonocentric (focus on authentic, unique human <i>voice</i>). Logocentric.	A mode of action. Non-representationalist. Minimum unit is not the word or the human but the <i>assemblage</i> (Deleuze & Parnet).
Research Questions	Study begins with questions to produce "findings." Epistemological approach.	None. Study begins with Experimentation.
Methodology	Cartesian "methodological solipsism" (Rorty). Research assumes the knowing subject and pre-existing research methodologies (qualitative, mixed methods), research designs (e.g., case study, grounded theory, ethnomethodology), methods of	Post-methodology and methods. Thought does not need a method (Deleuze). Method is always out-of-date and inadequate to the task at hand. Begin inquiry with theories and concepts that create different orientations for thinking and asking questions,

	data collection (e.g., interviewing, observation) and methods of data analysis (e.g., thematic analysis, coding).	not with pre-existing methodology, research questions, research designs, methods, process, and practices.
Data	Words transcribed in interview transcripts and field notes. Data preferably collected face-to-face in participants' natural settings. Images, documents, other artifacts	Conventional concept <i>data</i> not thinkable in this image of thought. All is entangled from the beginning. <i>Data</i> does not have a separate existence from the <i>human</i> , so it cannot be <i>collected</i> .
Methods of Data Collection	Observations. Interviews.	Not thinkable in the entanglement of this image of thought.
Methods of Data Analysis	Thematic analysis. Grounded theory analysis. Coding.	Analysis might be thinking and writing or any other creative activity, though analysis cannot be described. Thought as diagrammatic (Deleuze).
Validity (e.g., truth)	Multiple methods, theories, & researchers. Extended time in the field. Peer debriefing. Thick description. Negative case analysis. Member checks. External audit. Clarification of researcher bias. Triangulation.	Not thinkable in this image of thought. Ethics. "Interesting, Remarkable, and Important" (D&G, What is Phil, p. 82)
Contributions to Literature	Often assumes incrementalism, the positivist idea that knowledge steadily accumulates and contains gaps that need to be filled (e.g., the <i>building blocks</i> theory of knowledge).	Inquiry contributes to the literature but does not assume incrementalism.
Limitations	A positivist concept still used in interpretive and critical qualitative methodology.	Not thinkable in this image of thought.

Note: Rouhollah Aghasaleh (former UGA student) wrote the first version of this chart. Elizabeth St.Pierre (UGA) worked on it next.