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***Convergence and Saturation:
Ecologies of Artefacts in Mobile and Ubiquitous Interaction***

This contribution aims to depict characteristics and implications of convergence from the point of view of mediated interaction, co-presence and mobility.

Convergence is one of the key-words to frame current and future scenarios in communication, and its constitution is multifaceted. Convergence can be associated with both a material, functional and infrastructural process, as well as with discursive frames and symbolic sets of meanings. Patterns of convergence (but also of differentiation) can be observed in the global arena of contemporary technoscapes and mediascapes, where material and symbolic dimensions are constantly intertwined.

The paper will attempt to situate ‘convergence’ in the context of a conceptual grid based on key-words like saturation, hybridity, ubiquity and mobility. These concepts are considered as categories to understand the continuous texture between bodies and environments which are more and more saturated with multiple technological arrays. Such arrays are hybrid as they constantly mingle the human and the non human. Furthermore, they emerge from a constant tension between old and new media: convergence and saturation play a crucial role in articulating such a tension. These key-words will be analyzed with reference to the case of mobile and ubiquitous technologies at large, considered as ecologies of artefacts which comprise both old and new artefacts able to support, foster and transform mobility and ubiquity of social interaction. The ecology metaphor, rather than concentrating on an individual artefact, frames the systemic, co-evolutive and diverse character of information and telecommunication infrastructures, as well as the constant integration/substitution between new and old material devices, routine and innovation in communication.

Ecologies of artefacts will be discussed as theoretical hypothesis in the context of an ongoing research on mobile workers, aimed at understanding the current practices and discourses related to convergent and saturated environments where mobility, hybridity and ubiquity of interaction are enacted and experienced.

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