
FILMING PAPOULA. MULTIMODAL ETHNOGRAPHY AND EXPERIMENTAL COLLABORATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In august 2018 the authors worked with Kasper, an emerging pop artist from Brazil, to co-create the music video Papoula. The article explores the experimental collaborations that took place during the filming of the videoclip and the reflexive interactions that happened during the multimodal 'writing' process. For that reason, the article is experimental in form, curating and mediating between various multimodal texts: the written word, timelapse animations, photographs and audio recordings. These multimodal dialogical forms of representation describe the web of interactions, encounters, negotiations and frictions that occurred during the creation of the videoclip. The article also explores the idea of space regarded as a 'fieldwork device', space becoming a locus of entanglements between human and non-human agencies. The artist's home and studio (The Kasper Factory) converts into a 'factory' of audio-visual creation during the videoclip production but also into a laboratory for anthropological experimental collaborations. The dynamics of the text fluctuates between the voices of the authors, as anthropologists and their experiences as artists involved in the production of the music video. In this way the article reveals the processes of creation of a music video and the 'anthropological inventions' through a multimodal discourse that takes the form of a collaborative roleplay, having important methodological, epistemological and political consequences.

KEYWORDS

music videos, experimental and collaborative anthropology, multimodality, space

Bio

Mihai Andrei Leaha is a Romanian audio-visual researcher and filmmaker, working in South-America. His films have been shown at various film festivals and won prizes. As a member of the CVA and other organizations, he is involved in curating, promoting and programming ethnographic films at various conferences of festival events. He taught visual anthropology in Cluj and São Paulo, and organized conferences and workshops on visual and multimodal anthropology in Romania, Brazil and Peru. He is currently doing a postdoctoral at the University of São Paulo, researching on the DIY electronic music scene in São Paulo.

Katharina Hilgenberg is a German anthropologist and independent filmmaker based in Brazil. She graduated from the Freie Universität Berlin and has done fieldwork with Pentecostal missionaries in indigenous communities in the northern region of the Brazilian Amazon. Since 2018, she lives in São Paulo, where she works on various artistic and documentary projects.

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VIDEOCLIP *PAPOULA*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYGBhhAtZhI>

I. Introduction

The videoclip that you've just seen, as well as this article, is a result of many kinds of 'experimental collaborations' (Estalella and Sánchez-Criado 2018). In 2018, Mihai was invited by Kasper, an emerging Brazilian pop-musician and audiovisual artist to film the music video for his pop song, *Papoula* (the title translates into poppy flower). Mihai met Kasper during Blum, one of São Paulo's iconic electronic underground parties that, at that time, Mihai had recently begun to research. Eager to establish collaborations and relations that would ease his access into the field, he gladly accepted the invitation to use his skills as a trained cameraman and help make Kasper's dream come true. That night, the Romanian anthropologist and filmmaker also met Katharina, Kasper's good friend who was in charge of the future production of the videoclip. He soon learned that in addition to collaborating with Kasper on documentary and fictional audiovisual projects, she was also trained in anthropology. This encounter seemed to us not only a great opportunity to collaborate in the production of the music video, but also to reflect together about the whole process and maybe to make a film or write something together. The film never happened, but this article tells the story of this encounter and how, through collaboration and reflexivity, we've experimentally and dialogically created a multimodal ethnography of the process of making a music video 'as artists', while reflecting on it 'as anthropologists'.

The authors of this paper played a number of different roles in this process. Besides both being anthropologists, collaboratively analyzing our experiences based on fieldwork practices: Mihai was the cameraman of the clip and Katharina the producer, set designer and one of the actresses. Katharina was also Kasper's roommate, artistic collaborator and a Kasper's dear friend while Mihai was the lighting technician and, in the end, became the co-director of the clip. While this is not a usual fieldwork situation that uses participant observation as its core method for doing ethnography, it is an analysis of art-making as active collaborators in the videoclip's 'musicking' (Small: 1998) which started as a video production and has resulted in this analysis. As Christopher Smalls noted, musicking can be seen as "any form of musical engagement" (1998). In Small's opinion, 'to music' is a verb and describes dynamic encounters that take place in a physical place and a specific social setting. We find the concept of musicking useful in our analysis, mostly because of its openness towards processes and encounters related to any kind of musical activity. Paraphrasing, we were not involved in the making of a videoclip but we were 'videocliping' - in an entanglement of various agencies, processes and trajectories. Regarded in this way, musicking opens up our laboratory of experimentation and collaboration towards the dialogical forms of research (Fabian 2014). Going even further, wouldn't this mean that engaging with these processes in writing is also musicking? We are, after all, interacting with this 'videoclip-making' process in so many ways, first as co-creators, then as anthropologists. By writing about this process as a form of musicking we enable ourselves, through reflexivity, to analyze our collaborative and experimental practices and interactions as co-creators, inhabitants of the same space of production and last but not least, anthropologists.

There are various degrees of collaboration and experimentation in our particular research practice that will be reflected in the discussions: format, structure, and various modes (of communication). It is a programmatic but experimental way to deal with different voices expressed in many types of texts (evocations and reflexive thinking; engagements with theory, abstractions etc.) and audio-visual (video, timelapses, photography) materials that we intend to curate and to put into dialogue. Adolfo Estalella and Tomás Sánchez-Criado point out three modes of experimental collaborations (2018). The first mode is inspired by Fabian's dialogic forms of research (2014), and actually refers to how anthropologists employ various modes of participation in the field that would empower our interlocutors. This mode pays attention to the flow of fieldwork information and the way anthropologists produce them, focusing on the dialogic as a generic alternative to the centrality of participant observation (Marcus 2018). The second mode of collaboration is concerned with the problem of representation and asks further how we co-produce together with interlocutors, anthropological knowledge and representations? As the two authors observe, this mode focuses on "mutual advantages of co-laboring, elucidating and controlling"

and “highlights the capitalization of information” (Estalella and Sánchez-Criado 2018: 10). This is based on older epistemological anxieties contested with questions about ethnographic authority, addressed in volumes such as *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) or *Picturing Culture* (Ruby 2000) this mode underlines problems of textual and visual representation in the production of anthropological texts or films, and invites researchers to be more reflexive and in this way politically aware about their own modes and means of production. The third mode of collaboration proposes an even more radical rupture with the classic methods of doing ethnographic fieldwork and uses experimental collaborations as “a form of engagement that entails field interventions through material and spatial arrangements that enable the articulation of inventive ways of working together” (Estalella and Sánchez-Criado 2018: 20). As a consequence, experimental collaborations could reformulate the notion of fieldwork itself in contemporary anthropology (Rabinow 2008). The field is not just a location for the production of empirical data, that requires long term observation, but, a joint problem-making site, where we are practicing different / divergent forms of being in the field with others. In this sense, the fieldwork becomes a device, a locus of experimentation where we share the construction of anthropological knowledge and its representations with our epistemic partners and not our interlocutors (Marcus and Holmes 2005; Estalella and Sánchez-Criado 2018: 20).

Our own experimental collaborations touch upon all three modes of collaboration and our article intends to address them by evoking them reflexively. First of all, we use the first mode by describing our negotiations in the field in an autoethnographic manner, from the point of view of the roles we played in the actual production of the videoclip. The narration is an auto-ethnographic account informed by post-fieldwork notes or memories of an ethnographic present that offer glimpses into our processes, frictions and negotiations in the field. By sharing, discussing and commenting upon these collaborations, we are actually operating from the perspective of what Heewon Chang and collaborators call 'collaborative autoethnography' (Chang et al. 2012). Throughout the text these passages will appear in *italic*.

An important stake of this article is a formal and representational one. Therefore, we will address the second mode of experimental collaboration by reflexively focusing on the article's representational strategies. We intend to experiment with ethnographic discourse by juxtaposing our written accounts (as reflected in collaborative mode 1) with the audio-visual material we will curate in the article. We will reflect upon our musicking experience by putting photographs and videos together in a multimodal discourse based on our own evocations, combining these with our reflexive and theoretical accounts. As a convention, we will treat each of these elements as voices that communicate together in a dialogical and multivocal form, while assuming the messiness of the writing process and the points of indetermination between each element. This mode is methodologically inspired by recent developments in digital and multimodal anthropology (Pink 2011; Laplantine 2016; Collins and all. 2018; Dattatreyan and Marrero-Guillamón 2019) that reaffirms the role of reflexivity and collaboration in the context of new media ecologies. In practice, our text will combine various audio-visual materials created by us or by other collaborators and juxtapose them with our own reflexive involvement in the process of music video production.

Inspired by the third mode of experimental collaborations, we will treat our fieldwork as a laboratory, a locus of experimentation, a reflection about trajectories and entanglements between human and non-human agencies that intertwine and inhabit it. These collaborations will be reflected in a section on the role of space as a laboratory of creation and experimentation. Our approach is inspired by Rabinow's concept of 'assemblage-work' which is preferred to that of 'field-work' (2008). The author notices a shift in contemporary experimental practices that moved into the arena of various new environments, virtual, or media 'laboratories'. As a result, the object of study of the anthropologist has shifted and is no longer focusing on a community placed in a single locality with fixed coordinates but rather on an assemblage of people, places, objects, concepts and agencies of any kind. The anthropologist's role would be to mediate and to put together all these elements (Rabinow 2008: 1-11). In our process of assemblage, we will treat the space of musicking, as a fieldwork device, a site of entanglements and trajectories that forms the locus of our experiments, artistic as well as anthropological.

We will share our different experiences of the space, our memories and feelings regarding the building and dismantling of the filming set, which was also KH and Kasper's home and tell the story of a trajectory that accounts for the interaction and entanglements between human and non-human elements (Ingold 2010). Reflecting upon the idea of space, as a 'devised fieldwork' (Estalella and Sánchez-Criado

2018) leads us to an experimental position where we can treat all inhabitants of a space as trajectories. Moreover, we will try to answer, through our reflexive evocation and photographs, what is the multisensorial and vanishing characteristic of a space and what is the connection between the intended meaning of the videoclip, the space and the political implications.

In our discursive proposal, a multimodal environment allows us to add the hat of a curator, that invites other peers to affect, conclude and contribute to the trajectories of technologically mediated collaborative practices (Leaha 2019). Assuming the messiness of the anthropological account is also part of our methodology of narrative ruptures, indetermination points and multimedia storytelling. One can't always find a smooth, linear, clear line between various ethnographic accounts but the readers are invited to create their own paths and traces and sometimes read between the lines. In this way, our text is not only a collaborative and experimental discursive strategy, but an invitation to a different reading experience, where the act of reception is an active and politically significant mode of reading/viewing that is constructed subjectively. Participating in a musicking process such as a music-video, not only as anthropologists but rather together with all the other roles we played, positions us in a very meaningful position as co-producers of collaborative experimental and shared anthropological knowledge production.

II. Filming processes. Improvisations, collaborations and reflexivity.



IMAGE 1: *Kasper while filming a scene of the music video.* Photo: Marcelo Paixão.

In what follows, we will use multimodality as a discursive practice that engages various media, while representing shared degrees of authorship, curated in a co-produced and dialogical manner. We will evoke our own ethnographic descriptions and curate various other contributions: the depictions of Tiberiu Mihai Cimpoeriu, the author of timelapses, the voice of Kasper as recorded in a conversation with MAL, the photographs of Marcelo Paixão, the set photographer and various non-human agencies (the set, the camera, various objects at the Castelo). All these elements will be treated in a dialogical manner, the voice of the anthropologist, executive producer, set designer and the talent (Katharina) will dialogue as much with the co-director, cameraman and anthropologist (Mihai) as with the artist Kasper. It proposes a further dialogue through the reflections on collaboration of the anthropologists and with Katharina's affective reflections in regards to her closest friend, Kasper. We believe that by assuming this

reflexive approach one can add various layers of meaning in answer to questions around the role of the anthropologist in the context of collaborative and experimental content creation.

Our first invitation is to watch this timelapse that shows some of the backstage moments of the creation of our music video. One can see here most of the team of the videoclip and part of the actors. It is a mute clip, as it is made from a multitude of photos stitched together in post-production. The camera was panning slowly with the help of a motorized head catching the physicality of the set, the pauses, the tiredness of its inhabitants but also the trials and errors of this kind of intense studio work. What Tiberiu managed to capture with a technique that is based on chance, considering that the author did not have a viewfinder to see what he was doing, nor had any control of what will happen in front of the frame, is a silent conglomeration of human and non-human elements dancing together on the music of improvisation.

<https://vimeo.com/368614112>

Timelapse of the filming of the music video showing backstage. Made by Tiberiu-Mihail Cimpoeru (Assistant of Photography – among the many roles he played in the filming of the music video)

“After everything had been set up, we had infinite possibilities of rearranging the scenography, to construct frames. Obviously, we already had scripted what it would more or less look like but when the scenography was up we could play with ideas of how would this work here or there by adapting to the technical possibilities, so that, for instance, the walls wouldn’t show in the image. Sometimes there were people holding up plants in the background. The technical part was a bit stressful. Like, everything was beautiful and enchanting, but the light, bad. So that was our job, the transformation of the elements which had to be done by the technical assistants and the co-director - because, you know, I’m crazy! You can envision things in a certain way, but real life is a different story.” (Kasper in a conversation with MAL)

We all had to cope with the ‘craziness’ of Kasper in both stimulating and challenging ways. On the one hand, this craziness meant creativity and assumed a sort-of mutual membership of a laboratory of experimentation and creation where all of us could play their parts. That created a good atmosphere to work in and people related easily with one another. The pact was that we were all there to create something ‘beautiful’ as artists. The crew was quite small but diverse and quite international (Romanians, German, French and Brazilians as actors, technicians, designers, creative and auxiliary personnel and Kasper, the star). This mixture could have been a disaster, but we believe that what saved the set was specifically this creative improvisational method that we all adhered to, in spite of all our differences. Surely, not everything went smoothly on set, as sometimes, improvisation also means confusion. There were plenty of frictions between the two directors, Mihai and Kasper and at times, the whole process seemed to get out of control. Mihai didn’t speak Portuguese very well and it was hard to communicate what he actually wanted to happen on set. Kasper, on the other hand, wanted everything to happen the way he envisioned, although this vision was not quite palpable. Nevertheless, we all had to be inventive and find solutions, improvise, collaborate and experiment. The greatest challenge consisted of arranging the elements that had been ‘thrown together’ inside the place of the studio. The participants, the scenography and the technological elements such as lights and the fog machine had to be arranged in such a way that the camera could capture an immersive image, transcending the forms of the constituting elements, transforming them into a distinctly new, mediated reality. This work was about translating an artistic vision so that it could be shared collectively, while adapting it to technical limitations through the process of improvisation and play. During four days of shooting, collaboration became the key in the creation of the immersive filmic reality of the music video. Our small team was posed with the challenge of creating immersive frames out of a chaos of materials. By adapting pre-scripted notions within the technical possibilities, we were creating the cinematic reality of the world of *Papoula* through experimentation. Katharina evokes this process in a fieldnote:

“The images had been so well constructed inside my head during weeks of conversations that they had become so normal and real to me that it almost came as a surprise that other people didn’t share them (yet). Besides the translation of the artistic vision for the clip, linguistic barriers needed to be navigated.

Equivocations were inevitable and the first day of shooting was dominated by messiness and conflict. I had taken on a double role as an observer behind the camera and the head of production that was constantly asked to organize something, provoking a conflict of interest that had to constantly be navigated. I was also the only person who knew how the huge, green structures could be moved and had to take care of the arrangement of plants inside the frame. In addition, Kasper relied on me as a translator, in linguistic as well as artistic terms. I had to take care of hosting the production team, preparing food and drinks and maintaining some kind of order in the space. All of these roles were almost mutually exclusive, but it was the thrill of the immense freedom of the project, that we could take on any role we wanted.” (Katharina)

The independent conditions of filming the music video enabled us to play various roles in the production process. Nobody involved was remunerated and we were proud of it. Kasper’s inspiring promotion of freedom of creation was of higher value. Being a no-budget production, as Katharina describes it, one had to assume more than one role in order to make things happen. In this case, we weren’t there as anthropologists, we were there to realize these other roles. We needed no ‘alibi’ of being anthropologists in order to motivate our presence in the field. We were also not in the situation of many researchers that offer a videoclip as a reward for the interlocutors, as a way of giving something back. From the very beginning, we were plunged into a situation of creation and collaboration that required artistic and technical exchanges. That was our fieldwork, a laboratory of creation where we played different roles, not as anthropologists in the eyes of the others. Ours was an ‘in-depth’ as opposed to a long-term one (Pink 2018). We were immersed in the field by being part of it, by playing key roles. In this way we became our own interlocutors. We are having a discussion right now, in writing, in an ‘ethnographic present’, a hermeneutical process of going back to the fieldwork and back again to our writing (Hastrup 1992). Surely, this is a process that all the ethnographers’ practice. Nevertheless, our field situation was different as our ‘role’ in the field was not that of participant observers. ‘Roleplay’ in the theatre is associated with historical re-enactments or with character switching in ‘Commedia dell’Arte’. Today, roleplay can be associated with videogames or with processes of impersonation in psychology. The alibi for our presence on the set of *Papoula* as anthropologists, was that of cameraman, co-director, producer, actress etc. These were all the roles we ‘played’ there. We had inverted the game somehow and gained our knowledge by playing it alongside our ‘epistemic partners’.

Katharina speaks about her role as an actress in the videoclip and the deep immersion she had in the field and the transformation processes involved:

“Switching sides, from the backstage to being a model on set, was one of the most significant moments of the shot, as it added yet another perspective, making this first experience on a film set one that incorporated almost any possible position in the production process. I remember being very nervous, but over the course of the shooting that feeling was eclipsed by something as banal as the tiredness of my arm. Perhaps, then, my wish to become part of the world of *Papoula* actually led to the deconstruction of the last space of mystery that I had about the clip – the way it felt to be in the picture. The creation of an air of beauty and ease demanded hard and exhaustive work, not only from the production team but also from the actors. The ‘reality’ of the film I was looking for changed its face drastically as I was experiencing being inside of it, putting into question many of the assumptions and illusions I had nurtured growing up in a world obsessed with pictures. Perhaps the ‘reality’ I was looking for exists only in the act of watching, listening and feeling - but probably the way I watch, listen and feel any filmic image will be forever changed by my experience on set and especially in front of the camera.” (Katharina)

Through our musicking, we soon discovered the nuances of experimentation and collaboration in the process of filming. We were inventing everything together. This trajectory of role-playing made us reflect auto-ethnographically on the possibilities of being the other, assuming our experiences and the different roles we played, as an othering device and thinking about ways to communicate them. As Mihai evokes here:

“Being there was surprising from all points of view. On one hand the place had the feeling of the backstage of a fashion show. All these people I didn’t know were coming and going in a rush of leaving their own artistic mark on the videoclip. I painfully felt that often I had to shrink all that energy into one image and somehow put order in it. Kasper, Katharina and Ellias Kaleb have provided all the artistic ingredients:

studio, story, setting, artists, movement, dance, colors etc. but I had to be the one to fill in the puzzle. The place was apparently big but certainly small for my lens. I soon realized we would need to adjust framing, or add scenographic elements to cover the walls, floors and imperfections that could have disturbed the viewer, ponging into the world of Papoula. In the end Kasper and I decided would be best for us to show the imperfections of the setting as a political take against ‘perfect’ videoclips. It is like showing the frame of the production, assuming the indie, ‘undergroundness’ of it all. Actually, during production, all the process had the feeling of being unprofessional, people were late. The smoke machine did not work, I had to do the lighting too, and all seemed to add up and prolonged beyond the limits of acceptability. It was at that point when I became an anthropologist again and took the situation as an opportunity to reflect, take notes and make connections between my role as an anthropologist and my role as a filmmaker/artist in the process of production. I became my own interlocutor; I was answering questions that only I knew how to ask and only I knew how to answer because I wasn’t only playing a role, I was co-directing the videoclip – giving life to it.” (Mihai)

Although, admittedly fascinated and proud of our artistic product and its making, we are far from idealizing it or our experimental collaboration. In reflexively discussing the limits of our method and understanding of the fieldwork processes we also reflect upon the frictions, negotiations and tensions that might arise from this intimate musicking process. In discussing collaboration and intimacy in anthropological practice, Sarah Pink noticed a tension that comes from the word’s historical meaning, not only as a positive, working-together sense, but also as traitor. “To collaborate means to step out of line [with the core conventions, practices and discourses of anthropology] and could perhaps lead to accusations of being a traitor of one’s discipline” (Pink 2018: 205). The effects of our deep collaboration are succinctly expressed by Kasper when describing his experience of living and creating with Katharina. “It’s like letting a spy into your private universe”, says Kasper with a laugh on his face. Further on Katharina reflects upon her own dilemmas in regards to collaboration:

“Kasper might not perceive me as an anthropologist when we were sharing a moment as friends, and neither would I think of myself in that position at all times. And besides anthropologist and friend, I was alternately putting on roles of producer, documentarist, model, photographer, writer, translator and even mother, to only name a few. There were, however, times when my role as an anthropologist became explicit, thus creating the role of the spy - an intruder, even a traitor, a person that cannot be trusted. It was understandably strange watching this part for the first time, but I do understand what Kasper is saying. Ever since we met, we have been almost inseparable, sharing all the highs and lows of each other’s life. If this involves a lot of trust in terms of friendship, it becomes even trickier when one of the parties takes on an explicitly observing and analyzing role towards the other’s life, having access to all sorts of very intimate information. It is nothing unusual for relations of friendship to develop in a field where researchers get so close to their informants, but in my case the roles are inverted - I was first a friend and then a researcher, although the intensity of each position fluctuates.” (Katharina)

The collaborative environment invites a multiplicity of perspectives which add a thickness to the documentation of the creative process. The curation of these media is an ongoing process more than one year after the shooting, continuing to add new meanings to the spatio-temporal event filming the clip, of which this article is but one piece. For us, as anthropologists, these collaborations had some important methodological consequences. Jay Ruby (2009) advocated for reflexivity as an ethical necessity for anthropology, proposing a shortening of the distance between the producer of the message and its receiver in the communicational act. In practice, multimodality as a curational method, takes into account and plays with all the elements of the communicational act. As Mihai said in an analysis of a previous collaboration: “I see multimodality as a return of reflexivity and collaboration practices. Moreover, I believe that the most important aspect of the idea are the political implications of our modes of doing ethnography. In the new and complex media environments, the voice of the anthropologist cannot remain solitary, nor politically unaware” (Leaha 2019: 146). Furthermore, the collaboration of two anthropologists in the production of the clip and our subsequent ‘anthropologizing’ of our experiences as collaborators and roleplaying is a reflexive exploration questioning the limits of traditional ethnography and an experimenting with forms of multimodality and invention. As Dattatreyan and Marrero-Guillamón observe in their recent article about multimodal inventions (2019), there is a certain political understanding related to the idea of invention, which challenges the method of working with

pre-existing 'research questions' very dear to anthropological work. "Multimodal inventions are not constructed around a pre-existing 'thing', 'idea', or 'practice' to be represented. Rather, they enact encounters in which the unexpected, the unforeseen, and the otherwise may be coproduced." (Dattatreyan and Marrero-Guillamón 2019: 224). Moreover, the idea of invention, the authors explain, is relevant to the idea of multimodality as it recognizes that (most) interlocutors transform themselves into skilled theoreticians and that the anthropologists are maybe not the only ones that are 'anthropologizing' about the world. In this sense, the authors reevaluate the relationship between knowing and being in anthropology. The politics of invention in a very complex and commonly shared media ecology where our interlocutors also become content creators, demonstrating the need of new anthropological practices that engage with these environments. Multimodality, as a new way of thinking and engaging with these environments, calls for a reconsideration of the relationship between knowing, being and representing.



IMAGE 2: *Picture with Mihai sleeping on the set on the last day of filming, before the last scene. Exhausted, sick and in love, definitely not an anthropologist. Photo: Marcelo Paixão.*

III. *Papoula* – Space of creation and creation of space



IMAGE 3: Collage showing Kasper ‘dreaming’ in the Castelo, during the shooting of the music video and storyboard. Photos by Katharina and Marcelo Paixão, assembled by Katharina.

This being the case, if I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace. (Bachelard 1994: 6)

“The first time I came to the Castelo it was late, but when the Uber entered the streets close to our destination, they were filled with the movements, lights and colors of a bustling street market, so busy that our vehicle could hardly pass. The car stopped in the middle of an arborous square full of stationed trucks loaded with fruits and vegetables, the air heavy with the smell of rotten fruit. Fat rats crisscrossed the streets. We walked up towards a large four storied art-nouveau building. It might not have been such an impressive site in Paris or Hamburg, with its flaking facade, but in São Paulo, a city of hyper-verticalization and brutalist forms, moreover in this despite the market dark and abandoned area, the delicate motifs of flowers on its heavy iron door and a small rooftop stone tower justified its baptizing as ‘Castelo’. The space inside was beautiful and raw, alluring and sinister at once. The apartment had apparently been used as a storage area before, so that most internal separations were broken down, giving it a studio atmosphere. High ceilings and wooden floorboards gave the space a bourgeois charm. The guests were dispersed on the floor of the living room, or, as Kasper calls it, ‘Studio A’, whose generous windows ‘view overlooking the square is towered by one of São Paulo’s landmarks, the BANESP building, at night illuminated in shifting colors.’ (Katharina)

Our different experiences of the space, our memories and feelings regarding the building of the musicking event of *Papoula* tell an autoethnographic story of a trajectory that accounts for the interaction between human and non-human elements. We ask how place affects our collaborations and itself becomes a collaborator in the making of our music video. In describing the voice of the place we’ve chosen to describe the trajectory of ‘architextural’ (Pallasmaa 1996) elements, and look at them in their becoming, being verbal rather than nominative, dynamic rather than fixed (Ingold 2010). According to human geographer Doreen Massey, a place can be regarded as a spatio-temporal event containing a ‘constellation of processes’ rather than a just a fixed geographical, physical area (2005). Massey’s ideas

develops the concept of place as an entity in movement opposed to fixed, static or inert constructions. Our aim is to interweave ethnographic description, memories, personal reflections, stories and pictures into a thick account of our highly subjective experience of the home and studio on Parque Dom Pedro II which Kasper had affectionately named Castelo, keeping in mind the question of how non-human actors shaped the production of the music video *Papoula*. The 150 square meters worth of space were carefully, although not always successfully, veiled in order to create the immersive mood of the music video. A polyphonic space itself, the Castelo was a studio, known as “The Kasper Factor” and a home to Kasper and Katharina, and a place for parties and artistic encounters that affected all its visitors.

As we took part in the process of making the music video as co-creators, as artists, filmmakers, producers and actresses, our interaction with the materiality of the clip was direct and transformational. This was especially true during the process of pre-production and the construction of the scenography, where the artistic space of the Castelo became a laboratory of materials. The process of learning and experimentation that took place in this space constitutes it as an ethnographic para-site (Estatella and Sánchez-Criado 2018; Marcus 2018). Besides the collaborations with human beings, which we have already analyzed, other types of agencies transformed the process of musicking, especially the place of the Castelo and materials of scenography. Social acts do not happen in a vacuum but are rather woven together with a multitude of voices whose modes of action are perceived as incommensurable with the traditionally conceived social ties, but therefore not less important. Non-human actors lend stability and durability to social interactions, which, by themselves can be considered inherently fragile and constantly shifting (Latour 2005: 64). For Latour, there is a simple question in order to establish if a thing or being can be called an agent: “Does it make a difference in the course of some other agent’s action or not?” (ibid. 2005: 71). We will try to exemplify this through our autoethnographic and reflexive account of how we entered into experimental collaborations not only with human but also with non-human agencies.

III.I. The Castelo

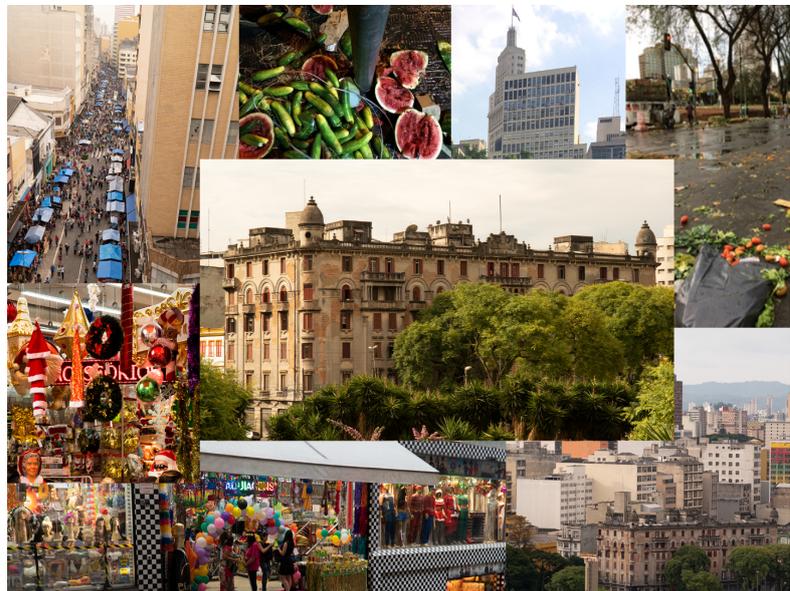


IMAGE 4: *Collage of the Castelo and the surrounding area.* (Photos and collage by KH)

In early 2018, Kasper returned to São Paulo from his tiny rural hometown in Rio Grande do Sul, where he had produced nine songs of his first pop album *Technocolor*. Via online platforms he had found and rented a space in the historical center of the city, near the famous shopping street 25 de Marco, the ‘plastic paradise’ of Brazil, where countless shops sell all the flashiest artefacts of late capitalism, from cell phone cases, over plastic flowers and falsified luxury goods, to carnival costumes - “you can’t go more

pop that that", as Kasper says. In this part of the center, known as Parque Dom Pedro II, a historically commercial area, lies, to the other side of the Castelo, the Municipal Market. While the busyness of the shopping street ebbs down at night, the area around the market turns into a lively fair of fruits and vegetables that goes on from dawn until sunrise. Popular representations of the area around Parque Dom Pedro tend to characterize the activities exerted here as 'irregular' or 'illegal' (Freire da Silva 2014: 14). The heterotopic space of the Kasper Factory invaded the fabric of the area with unprecedented symbolic meanings, provoking friction and wonder. Uncommon bodies, performances and practices were inserted into a neighborhood mostly made up of people working in the informal sector of the surrounding markets and not especially familiar with references of self-expression pertaining to the artistic underground. Kasper, as a gay man with an extravagant fashion style and Katharina as a very light skinned and blonde, obviously foreign woman and their numerous eccentric guests received a heightened attention, in positive or negative and solely curious ways. The existence of the Kasper Factory in Parque Dom Pedro II was a provocation by being openly and extravagantly gay, in a country which counts one of the highest murder rate for LGBTQ people worldwide (Michels 2020) and during a time when a growing conservatism spiked with waves of open homophobia prepared the ground for the election of the ultra-right wing president Jair Bolsonaro in late 2018. Beyond commerce, the area is notorious for prostitution and its dark and unsafe streets. Living in this area "required a lot of courage", as Kasper recalls. Despite, but also because of these factors, he had chosen this place as his art studio and calls it 'The Kasper Factory' in an homage to Andy Warhol's famous New York Studio: "My production company for art and creative content, or simply a place to get really drunk and imagine yourself as who you already are." The Castelo was, first and foremost, a place of daydreams – of imagining ourselves as the deepest expressions of our psyche, at once fantasy and more real than reality.



IMAGE 5: *Kasper and KH in the Castelo, March of 2018. Papoula would be shot in this room five months later. Photo by Andi Otto.*

While the Castelo was a home to Kasper and Katharina during six months, its quality was not that of a private space but rather fluctuated unexpectedly between openness and closeness, such that its face was always changing but continuously empty and ever more chaotic and devoid of comfort. For months, it was a place for after parties, where people passed by, made music, drank and took drugs, slept on the

floors and left again. Artists left their marks on the walls without us ever knowing their names. The place was an event in the literal sense of the term, frequented by people associated with the scene of underground electronic music parties (Leaha 2019; Teixeira Braga 2018). The continuing disobedience of rules and cultural codes, like hosting a party with a huge, professional sound system in a residential building, led to conflicts with the other inhabitants of the building and finally Kasper's expulsion from the Castelo. As he remembers it:

“Of course, the police arrived - and I went down to talk to them dressed up as Peter Pan. So, I closed down / was evicted from my own studio for being a terrible tenant, I was even called into court because of the party. But I always took these things lightly, I don't take this institutional part of life very seriously. I take some inspiration from punk culture - to do things DIY style and not to give any fucks.” Kasper

The other inhabitants had rebelled against Kasper, the ‘unexpected neighbor’ which the ‘chance of place’ (Massey 2005: 151) had set down next to them. The ‘throwntogetherness’ of place always confronts us with the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity (Massey 2005: 141) and Kasper's answer to being confronted with antagonistic institutions was one of unbothered surrealism – dressing up as Peter Pan, the boy who never grows up. Although Kasper had planned to develop a long-term project in the space of the Castelo, he took the expulsion lightly. The negotiations of place thus produced a number of possibilities as well as antagonisms in our encounter with humans and objects. The Castelo was not an easy place to live, rather it felt like it in some way, perhaps as a result of being empty for so long, showed a resistance to being inhabited. On the other hand, Kasper experiences place as a canvas for artistic expression: “Every place I go to, I will create my universe”.

The particular configuration of this universe created during the production of the music video will be the topic of our discussion in the following part. We have thus far analyzed our trajectory through the place – the building called the Castelo and the surrounding area – and shown how its specific configurations influenced its becoming to a temporary artistic space as well as its dissolution. We will now look more closely at how the place and as well as objects contributed to the artistic process of the making of the music video, which was the final project undertaken in the Castelo during the last month before the date of expulsion.

III.II. The set that constructed itself. Interactions with non-human actors during the pre-production



IMAGE 6: *The set of the videoclip in various stages of pre-production. Pictures and assembly by Katharina.*

“I think that one thing leads to another. Just like any action has a consequence, I believe that *Papoula* is actually a consequence of costumes, a consequence of encounters of people during exactly that period of time.” Kasper

The process of pre-production of the video clip was intimately linked to life in the Castelo, shaped by significant coincidences and negotiations of ‘throwntogetherness’ (Massey 2005), our interaction with the environment and the ‘meshwork’ (Ingold 2010) with non-human actors: from the Castelo itself over costumes to construction materials like fabrics, paint, wood, foliage and much more. The choice of aesthetics and storyline in the creation of the universe of *Papoula* originates in a series of encounters of Kasper’s artistic imagination with places, people and objects, as he is completely aware of. It is interesting to note Kasper’s ‘anthropologizing’ in the above quote, which illustrates to what extent he shares the same conceptualizations of space as we do. His perception of space, as a process of encounters and interactions with people and objects underlines the epistemic partnership which pervades our experimental collaborations (Estalella and Sánchez-Criado 2018) and we, as anthropologists, follow the lines of thought of Kasper, the “para-ethnographer” (Marcus 2000), by connecting them to theoretical discussion, while reliving our personal experiences as collaborators, video makers and artists. These elements will be assembled in the following accounts as we follow the construction of the scenario that takes the form of an assemblage (Rabinow 2008) of Katharina's memories, reflections and visual accounts.

The Castelo forms the background of our ethnographic 'para-site'. The fact of living in a studio had an important impact on the choice of creating a scenario instead of shooting elsewhere or using a green screen, or CGI (computer generated images) commonly used in videoclips in order to virtually create scenography without constructing it in ‘real life’. Firstly, the place offered the possibility of creation due to its large size and relative emptiness. Secondly, because we chose to create the clip inside the house we lived in, instead of a rented studio, we could work for as long as we wanted and on our proper schedule. Thirdly, the surrounding area is a haven for decoration articles, construction materials and randomly found articles, which facilitated the production immensely. Some of the only pieces of decoration inside the Castelo were images cut out from collection catalogues of eminent art museums. We co-inhabited the space with these paintings and their world seemed to extend into our reality.

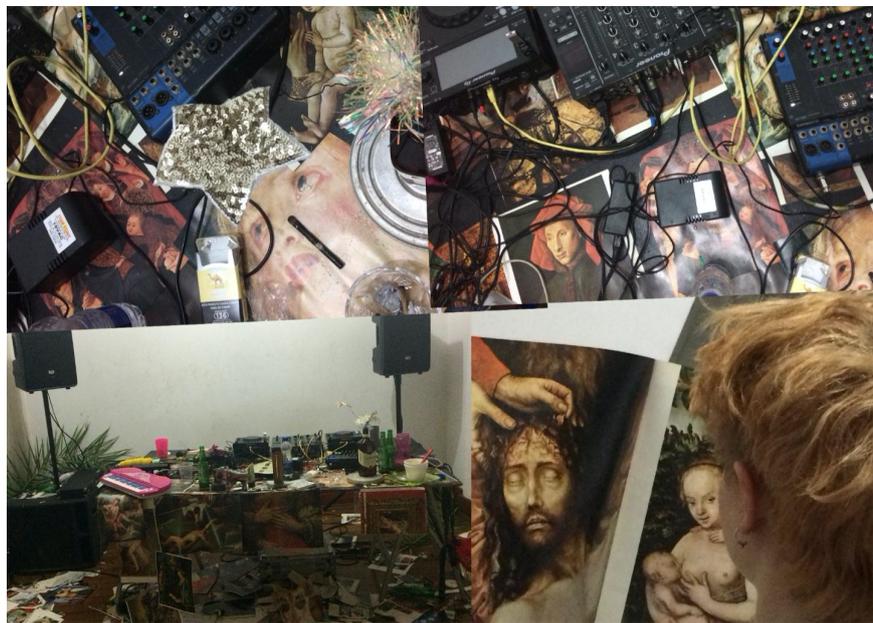


IMAGE 7: *Decorations of a party in the Castelo.* Pictures by Kasper.

Kasper describes how he came up with the idea for *Papoula*: “in the first discussions about the artistic direction, I already had this image in my head, when I heard the song, which kind of took me to the atmosphere of a fairytale, a really lucid world.” These inspirations converged with the images we were living with to form the distinct mixture of references to renaissance paintings and old film adaptations with their specific aesthetics of on-screen theatre plays - specifically *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), which includes a reference to poppies. The first items of production we assembled were parts of the costumes,

which were curated in second hand bazaars already with the aesthetic of renaissance painting in mind and integrated with some essential pieces Kasper already owned: the cowboy boots and hat, the orthopedic belt which he had already used in another performance, and pieces Kasper had designed and produced together with his mother, a modelist. The production of the large constructions of greenery, which Katharina oversaw, were made possible by the abundance of cardboard in the surroundings, of which we bought a big chunk cheaply from a collector working in the streets, and the lucky coincidence of finding a large amount of cut branches in squares around town. The construction of the scenography was a very intuitive and somehow chaotic process – none of the people involved had ever done anything like that before. We therefore began by assuming that anything was possible. In our exploration of materials and textures, we entered into a different mode of collaboration, which we dare to describe as a laboratory of dreams. Katharina had never worked with wood before and in the construction of the forest-structures acted solely on intuition and eyesight. We were in a constant process of experimentation and elaboration of ideas, of which Kasper presented a multitude in endless monologues, ever-changing in form. Katharina's part was to filter out those ideas I thought viable, and interesting to create, and go on creating until the date of the shooting arrived in an open-ended process. The space of the Castelo became a laboratory where we constantly interchanged ideas and inspired each other in our interaction with the materials.

While the set of *Papoula* was beginning to take shape, we continued to live in the Castelo, now being transformed into a film set. “There was no end to it”, Kasper recalls:

“I was living in that forest, between paint and plants and fabrics for almost a month. [...] Everything had its proper life: the leaves went dry, so we painted them green. I was the God of a place I created – a place of infinite possibilities.”



IMAGE 8: Textures and raw materials of the music video as seen during pre-production. Pictures and assembly by Katharina.

It was an intensely sensorial experience: the smell of dry grass, of wet paint, the sound of walking on leaves inside of an apartment, of inhabiting a space created for fictional characters, some of which would never come into existence but whose presence could already be felt. Latour cites the artisan's workshop as one of the few privileged spaces in which the study of objects is facilitated by the fact that there, they “live a clearly multiple and complex life through meetings, plans, sketches, regulations and

trials” (Latour 2010: 80). In the studio, the processes of developing the set design exemplifies clearly the multiplicities of objects, which transformed by labor and imagination of artists, and placed together in a poetic context take on significances that have no prior connection to their materiality – thereby, as Kasper puts it: “giving life to inanimate objects”. Thus, specific colors of paint applied on linen by means of brushes will be recognizable as a sky; foliage stapled to cardboard fixed on wooden poles become a forest. During the process of this decontextualization, objects become our interlocutors as we inquire by way of experimentation and contemplation about their characteristics: how much weight does a nail hold on a wall? How long does a leave stay green? How does the material of this piece of fabric reflect light? Latour states that “there exists no relation between ‘the material’ and ‘the social world’, because it is this very division which is a complete artefact” (Latour 2010: 79). Objects were everywhere – sometimes randomly thrown, sometimes elaborately arranged, and mostly in our way – as we went on somehow living our daily lives, so we adapted our living space accordingly, moving mattresses and other private objects to make space for ever larger constructions. These memories, however, continue to shape the friendships created in the Castelo – in a Latourian sense lending a stability to our social ties by the shared experiences which were mediated by the place of the Castelo.

Thus far, we have discussed the video clip in its materiality, as it shaped our experiences, interactions and social relations, as well as making up an emotional atmosphere, in order to account for the agency of non-human actors in the act of musicking. We focused our attention on the dissection of the agency of non-human actors on the process of pre-production, aware that, as Latour (2010: 80) notes, once in place, objects tend to disappear from view – ever more so as our case study concerns an audiovisual work whose materiality has vanished.

Having moved out of the Castelo two days after the end of the shooting, the place that had given life to Kasper’s artistic world was no more, and in some ways, it felt like *Papoula* was set free from physical confinements. Its material existence was already only a memory, its raw material not yet transformed into the final product that would then be shared with the public and take on a new reality in a virtual space. It is here that the clip takes on a life on its own and develops its proper agency, which will be discussed in the following section.

IV. 'Poppy power'. Political implications and effects of Papoula

In its final form, the music video enters into an encounter with new forms of agency – its viewers and recipients and the institutional context of the music industry, as well as societal and political institutions, beliefs and prejudices. In the following we will consider the effects of the music video in its distribution stage, its receptions and a limited range of its possible interpretations.

The elaboration of a consistent audio-visual universe was only possible by transcending space – the place where *Papoula* was shot is not recognizable: “One thing I love about this clip is how you can lose yourself in it. Someone who didn’t accompany the process has no idea if the space is gigantic or really tiny – you don’t recognize the Castelo” said Kasper. When a viewer on YouTube comments: “I only want to live in that world”, he does not mean the actual physical place of the Castelo but rather a poetic audio-visual world which the video clip evokes. For Kasper, the clip captures the essence of his lived experience in the artistic scene: “You can see the underground in the clip – in the diversity of the casting, including Bianca Della Fancy, a drag queen whose work I admire a lot, and Ilunga, an amazing black singer and performer – and putting these bodies into a fairy-tale world represents exactly what kind of reality we live in: a world of love, a celebration of the freedom of expression that is light and intense at once. See this as a political act”.

He believes that his song is a form of activism, or more likely a subtle activism: “In the political context of today’s Brazil, following an election dominated by a discourse about weapons, violence and disrespect I couldn’t have made a stronger political affirmation than making a song about flowers. I use other weapons – nothing is more delicate than a flower that opposes weapons” (an old flower power argument of pop music, of which Kasper is very much aware). The scenography and performance of the clip constructs the image of a romantic and sensible man, contrasting the traditional norms of masculinity of the highly patriarchal Brazilian society (De la Dehesa 2010, Michels 2020). “One cannot live with fear”, says Kasper. For a young gay man who openly exposes his sexuality, most visibly by his ways of dressing, Brazil has turned into an even more difficult and dangerous place to live after the election of Bolsonaro. Thus, the fantasy world of the video clip is supposed to be a place of escaping a

sometimes-grim reality, a vehicle that could transport the viewer/listener into “the world of dreams” as Kasper affirms. The sensitivity evoked by the materials, lights and colors chosen for the clip contrasts the brutalist forms of the city it originates in, São Paulo: a place full of concrete, cars, plastic, falsification, drug addiction, prostitution, rats and rotten vegetables. It is not, however, an escape to nature either. While foliage plays a big role in the scenario, compared to the reality of the lush jungles of Brazil the constructed forest of the videoclip leaves the viewer with an uncanny feeling. There is an element of uncontrollable intensity in the love for the flower, which borders on obsession, culminating in the final scene of the clip which shows the character in a state of rage, surrounded by red colors in a deconstructed scenario, breaking angels, boxing the decor, ripping out the flower and falling to the ground. The poppy is, of course, the plant from which opium is produced.

The music video is not per definition an act of activism but, in the first place, a tool for promoting Kasper’s work. Even the independent forms of production, the collaborations and the DIY constructions are not per se revolutionary in the post-fordist stage of capitalism. “The aesthetic strategies of the counterculture: the search for authenticity, the ideal of self-management, the anti-hierarchical exigency, are now used in order to promote the conditions required by the current mode of capitalist regulation” (Mouffe 2007:1). The clip does not primarily intend to make a political statement, but is rather a form of creative self-expression: “A way to show a part of my world to people”, as Kasper put it. In his personal quest for fame – he admits carefreely to his ambition of winning a Grammy and becoming a cultural icon – controversy and rebellion are as much an expression of his lifestyle as proven ways to success in the music industry, mimicking strategies of his biggest idol: Madonna. We agree with Mouffe, however, that artists can be critical even and especially when engaging with existing institutions “by creating a multiplicity of agonistic spaces where the dominant consensus is challenged and where new modes of identification are made available” (Mouffe 2012: 1). More than ever, cultural institutions and artistic practices shape identities and new forms of media have opened a stage for new artists to emerge, which challenge traditional forms of representation. As a counterpoint to the violence and repression experienced by queer people in Brazil, artists like Linn da Quebrada, Liniker, Jaloo and, most prominently, the drag queen Pabllo Vittar have celebrated national and international success. Their presence in an institutional context has a potential to challenge what is considered as the ‘common sense’ of society, which is obviously never a manifestation of a ‘natural order’ but the result of sedimented hegemonic practices at a given moment of time (Mouffe 2012:1). In this sense, a music video like *Papoula* can stimulate and inspire new forms of identification and Kasper consciously assumes this position: “I have a huge responsibility, I want to entertain people and make them see things in a different way”. In *Papoula*, this is explored by appealing to the romanticism of flowers and the diversity of the underground and by exploring the enchantment of love and beauty until the limits of alienation, insanity and self-destruction.

V. Conclusions

In the case of this particular collaborative situation, the notion of ‘ethnographic fieldwork’ transforms into a participative performance of musicking, where anthropology happens in the ‘back of our heads’, in writing, during an ethnographic present (Hastrup: 1992). This permits us to think, not only ‘alongside’, but reflexively about the various interactions and frictions that occurred during videoclip production and beyond. In this sense, we argue that this intimate musicking becomes a collaborative experience where others, objects, spaces and ourselves, become the subjects of our own research. This process could have important methodological consequences, changing the way we think about fieldwork practices. As Sarah Pink observes, by using experimentation and collaboration, the notion of long-term fieldwork could be replaced with in-depth fieldwork where we can learn from each other in the field (Pink 2018).

During the production of the videoclip, the Castelo was transformed into a laboratory and ethnographic para-site (Holmes and Marcus 2005). The intense artistic exchanges that took place between human and non-human agencies formed the basis for our reflections about these experimental collaborations which provided a ground for learning, artistic expressions and finally, our auto-ethnographic reflections formulated in a multimodal manner in this article. Our text follows closely our process of roleplay. We assume that the hats we wore in our role as anthropologists are inseparable from all the other hats we wore before, during and after the production of the music video. Our writings are not only inspired by, but became an actual part of the universe of *Papoula*. In some way, this is a cathartic act. Through being reflexive about our positions in “our para-sitical field”, we evoke these memories in

ourselves, shape and transform them, and strengthen our bonds with our collaborators. This dialogic process of becoming ‘epistemic partners’ is also a political act, where ethnographic authority is questioned and shared.

This mode of writing includes, however, a necessary process of selection and trimming that puts us in the position similar to that of a film ‘monteur’ (Marcus 1995). We have to decide to follow some stories and neglect others. To give just one example, the editing process was not discussed here, although it surely played an integral part in the formation of the final product. We have chosen, instead, to focus on the encounters, entanglements and experimental collaborations that happened in the artistic laboratory of the Castelo before and during the shooting. In this way, preserving the centrality of space, seen as a fieldwork device and as a locus of encounters. Moreover, the montage of our multimodal text, does not follow linearity or chronology for that matter. This could be misleading but we have chosen to do this favoring the flow of our ethnographic consciousness, as reflected in our assemblage of text and images. We also acknowledge that images, texts, sounds and other multimodal elements put together in one text, inevitably creates feelings of rupture, and lack of continuities in the narrative. But, as Mihai mentions in another place, “the multimodal discourse is inevitably inflicted with points of indetermination” (Leaha 2019). Switching between text, to audio and back to pictures or moving images again, asks from the reader a more embodied experience, where knowledge is not only communicated through words, but emphatically and corporeally, through moving images or evocative literary texts. When MacDougall was accusing anthropologists for the evacuation of human being from the text (2006: 45), he was not blaming the text itself, but rather its “scientific style” that, unlike “good literature” fail to address human sensorially and fluctuating consciousnesses. Images and sound are better at addressing the humane side as the other concludes. In the context of today’s new media ecologies and technical possibilities offered by various multimedia platforms of publication, the multimodal ethnographer must learn how to write again. It requires an effort of putting together, different, and otherwise conflicting medias, crafted by them and/or others, but more often crafted together. We hope that through collaborative practices, reflexivity and invention could ease the epistemological boundaries of our discipline.

Filming the music video *Papoula* offered us such an opportunity. By being co-creators of its universe, we were actively participating in the ethnographic worlds we were trying to represent. This experience was intense and immersive being a dialogue between our embodied experience of space, an entangling of human and non-human elements that revealed itself through its modulations and sensory feel (Laplantine 2016). Our text tries to express this lived experience and make sense out of it: trough videos, still photos, music, reflexive literary texts as well as anthropological reflections. The messiness of this presentation is important. We trust it resembles our own lived experience during the co-creation of this music video.

Lastly, we wanted to give a brief outlook on the ‘afterlife’ of the videoclip and the collaborations surrounding it. The result of one of these is certainly the present article, which takes Mihai and Katharina’s engagement with the music video to the present moment of writing, almost two years after the production. Another event in which *Papoula* engaged us was its nomination for the Music Video Awards in the category ‘Best Costume’, which took place in December of 2019 at the Museum for Image and Sound in São Paulo. To this date, Katharina and Kasper continue to collaborate on audiovisual projects. Together they shot Kasper’s second music video, *Technocolor*, during their trip to Europe shortly after the realization of *Papoula*. The release date of the clip was delayed due to the COVID 19 pandemic. They are also editing a music film composed of documentary and fictional scenes ranging from scenes shot in the Castelo to Kasper’s recent shows in São Paulo venues.

We invite the reader to listen to Kasper’s *Technocolor* as a multimodal experiment. One can treat the song as if it would be a music that accompanies film credits.

Link to the music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLItJNLTIOg>

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