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1. Runners & The City

The total amount of runners moving through any space seem to be an independent flow from the rest of city's circulation. This is true in the sense that green spaces are mainly designed for leisure and as out-of-traffic zones. On another hand, yet, it is not quite true that runners are independent from other flows because car-traffic and other types of non-running traffic intercept the runners way and, hence, make them stop: breaking runners' momentum[1]. Runnners, just as all others, depend on getting path available as they go. This has two major implications:

- To move through the city there needs to be paths to begin with

The need for paths to circulate in

This has a huge dimension in which nonhumans get into play. For each space that is used in the city one could follow a science studies method: to determinate all the objects and people that came into action to deliver a single object. The generic city as a civilized construction has always a setter of layers upon which it has been built: be it an arid, or rocky, or damp or even forest-like, or any kind of environment there are ways of setting in. Humans have customized spaces for millennia. Only the past couple of centuries, at the most, have taken into account the use of delimited areas of public space for new purposes such as leisure.

- No two objects/people can be at the same in the same place

The need to share space

Truism as it may be, this last point seems to be overseen in today's flawed automobility system[2]: not only do cars (and drivers) burn fuels, and leave a durable carbon footprint, also private vehicles can get quite impractical with the normalcy and abundancy of traffic jams. LeCorbusier, in his Athens Letter (1933), settled the four main modern uses of urban space: living-inhabiting, working, circulating and recreating. Granted that this view has a somewhat non-layering of functionalities, and a oversimplification of uses; however, it was intended to

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[1] Ettema, Dick. "Runnable Cities. How Does the Running Environment Influence Perceived Attractiveness, Restorativeness, and Running Frequency?" *Environment and Behaviour*. Pp. 1-21. 2015. P. 17.

[2] Sheller & Urry.

take into account the liveability for human beings, hence prioritizing the housing and green parts on urban planning. Also, communication/transportation was the lesser considered element, in a period where automobile overpopulation had only just recently began. It now seems, in the XXIst century, to be a much more a critical time, where these old proposed functions are, at least generally speaking, collapsed. How do runners find non-occupied paths in such a overflowed system?

The need to share times of use

The physical environment is not used at all times in the same way. Social space has areas in which one acts among other people and others in which this *presentation* is left aside: this is what has for long been called the front and back regions of human conduct, also well known as frontstage and backstage[3]. So attention is shifted in one situation and into the other. It could be arguable that of the classic functions presented by LeCorbusier, three of them are to be pursued as part of social and even animal life: working, sleeping and *horseing-around*. Transportation, even if exagerating and stretching a bit too far the argument, as a means to an end has no general actual function. It seems that all time lost in traffic is time in the backstage with no actual point. However, runners do seek to transport, but with a whole other meaning, closer to leisure in free time (even *serious leisure*), or even the mental-rest aspect of sleep time.

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2. Autoethnography

The plan of work proposed here sets axis on which to develop future ideas, these axis being: materiality, affect and the body. These *sensitizing concepts* (rather than restrictive prescriptions) shall be guiding points to suggest directions where to look at, as germs of analysis on how and where to collect information. Data finding also relies on the researcher's agenda: "What sorts of pattern one is looking for depends, of course, on research focus and theoretical orientation". Benefits of in-field immersion include not only direct access in general but additionaly to non-structured conversations in which "[unusual participant terms] may mark theoretically important or interesting phenomena". In the same coin concepts may also be, alternitavely, "observer-identified"[4].

The axial concepts are not be used as fixed tautologies to give a taken-for-granted understanding of behaviours. The approach here is first *exploratory*, before than

[3] Goffman in Hannerz, Ulf. "The City as Theater: Tales of Goffmann". In *Exploring the city: inquiries toward an urban anthropology*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1980. P. 206.

[4] Hammersley and Atkinson. *Ethnography: principles in practice.* 3rd ed. London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2007. P. 164 ("Sensitizing concepts" is Blumer's), 163.

explanatory. The deeper understanding of behaviours and use of tools, resources and knowledge in general shall come later, during research. The intention is first to gather data, concepts, and a series of insights from in-field work.

Ultrarunning has a certain tension in the way it connects participants with people from the outside social worlds.

- On one side, it is a very public activity, runners are exposed to permanent contact with other runners (and nonrunners as well) in the open, and races depend on a wide amount of actors, both participating and non-race related: in sum a very wide orchestrated and coordinated social activity.

- On the other side, ultrarunning entails a certain *Loneliness of the long distance runner*[5]. Running ultra distances may well be among the most *outdoor* activities or sports. It involves several hours, even days sometimes "out in the blue", amongst the almost untouched nature and wild green spaces afar from city in country-side races. And in training season, even in city context: the silent early night-to-dawn moment (from 4 to 6 am) is when nearly no normal person is going about, and birds have not even began to chirp. In the same coin with lonely spaces, running has many many solitary moments in which runners get to collect themselves and revolve in their thoughts, the bareness of the surroundings, and at many flowing times: to just not think in anything and be in the moment.

The *in situ* work is intended to grasp these two areas (intimate-personal; and social-network-dependent) in ultrarunning: the 1st, during training; and the 2nd, during specific ultrarunning events.

1. The first aspect, training, is to be tackled through autoethnography, not as a biographical account, but as means to grasp the main topics that are dealt with. Many of the available material on ultrarunning in text and video documentary depict narratives from the sole perspective of runners, in 1st person, and how they prepare their practices with various ways of running and post exercise cool downs and stretching as well as general nutrition and rest time. The researcher may well take a similar approach without being an outsider of common practice in this social world.

   > Gertrude Kurath (1960) recommended etnographers to "learn the movements" and Adrienne Kaeppler (1978) proposed that etnographers learn certain movements and to recieve instructions of what is done "incorrectly", or "differently" with a methodology that would allow to understand better. [José Bizerril has argued that the practical formation of the researcher has its advantages.] This knowledge

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[5]Short story by Alan Sillitoe, published in 1959.

allows an access to aspects of the research topic that otherwise would pass unnoticed if only done with a distant approach based on observation and interview. [the vivential dimension makes it possible to get entry to the experience and] "to the psico-physic and -why not say so-, to the spiritual states that that this experience triggers[6].

Of course autoethnography may work with a potential source for bias, but at the same time provides both the most inner side view possible, and reveals the teller's interests, perspectives and presuppositions; to which one can always add contrast with other references to compare and find the most reliable common ground[7].

2. On the second aspect, on racing events, there is very little material in academic research on events from a qualitative approach. There are scarce material, and when so, only done through surveys or measurement based. Hence the importance to move forward. Some of the key features of an *ethnographic approach* are taken into account in the present approach: to prioritize the insider perspective highlighting the experiential, an active immersion in the field during a reasonable amount of time, minimal interference to gather data to be triangulated[8]. And not to focus on *measuring* variables, but rather on *collecting and constructing new variables* to build up ever more complex concepts: this adds nuance to the understanding of the phenomenon, and provides material to suggest new questions and aspects to be worked on[9].

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[6] Aschieri, Patricia. "Hacia una etnografía encarnada: La corporalidad del etnógrafo/a como dato en la investigación". *X RAM- Reunión de Antropología del Mercosur*. Córdoba, Argentina, 2013. P. 16.

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