

Aesthetic Attention Laboratory: Poetic Propositions for the Decolonisation of Attention

Laboratório Estético de Atenção: Proposições Poéticas para a Descolonização da Atenção

VIRGINIA KASTRUP

Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Psychology Institute,
Postgraduate Program in Psychology, Brazil
virginia.kastrup@gmail.com

LUCIANA CALIMAN

Federal University of Espírito Santo, Department
of Psychology, Postgraduate Program in Institutional
Psychology, Brazil
calimanluciana@gmail.com

Abstract

Due to the massive coupling with digital technologies and social networks, the colonisation of attention in current times has been discussed by various authors (Stiegler 2008; Crary 2014, 2023). The objective of this article is to analyse strategies developed in an aesthetic laboratory of attention, where the wager is that poetic propositions can create conditions for the displacement of the regimes of alert, vigilance, and dispersion, and for the cultivation of a joint attention open to the plane of affects. Based on the approach of the ecology of attention (Citton 2014, 2018) and inventive cognition (Kastrup 2009; Kastrup and Caliman 2023, 2025), the study proposes an expanded concept of attention, beyond the individual gesture of paying attention and the regime of focalization. It takes as its field of analysis the experience of an aesthetic laboratory of attention (LAB) held with university students gathered in regular meetings at the Institute of Psychology of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil. The research conducted is based on the cartographic method (Passos, Kastrup, and Escossia 2009; Passos, Kastrup, and Tedesco 2014). The analysis relies on the use of field notes and written accounts from participants. As a result, the research indicates that aesthetic experience in a group situation is capable of displacing colonised and naturalised forms of attention, which are hegemonic in current times. Moreover, it concludes that the cultivation of joint attention produces as effects the sustaining of

Keywords

attention, the formation of groupality, and the experience of rest.
ecology of attention | aesthetic laboratory of attention | colonisation | aesthetic experience | joint attention

Resumo

Em função do acoplamento maciço com as tecnologias digitais e com as redes sociais, a colonização da atenção na atualidade tem sido discutida por diversos autores (Stiegler 2008; Crary 2014, 2023). O objetivo deste artigo é analisar estratégias desenvolvidas em um laboratório estético de atenção, onde a aposta é que proposições poéticas podem criar condições para o deslocamento dos regimes de alerta, vigilância e dispersão e para o cultivo de uma atenção conjunta aberta ao plano dos afetos. Baseado na abordagem da ecologia da atenção (Citton 2014, 2018) e da cognição inventiva (Kastrup 2009; Kastrup and Caliman 2023, 2025), o estudo propõe um conceito de atenção ampliado, para além do gesto individual de prestar atenção e do regime de focalização. Toma como campo de análise a experiência de um laboratório estético de atenção (LAB) realizado com estudantes universitários reunidos em encontros regulares no Instituto de Psicologia da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, no Brasil. A pesquisa realizada inspira-se no método cartográfico (Passos, Kastrup, and Escossia 2009; Passos, Kastrup, and Tedesco 2014). A análise baseia-se na utilização de diários de campo e em relatos escritos dos participantes. Como resultado, indica que a experiência estética em situação grupal é capaz de deslocar formas colonizadas e naturalizadas de atenção, que são hegemônicas na atualidade. Além disso, conclui que cultivar a atenção conjunta produz como efeitos a sustentação da atenção, a formação de grupalidade e a experiência de descanso.

Palavras-chave

ecologia da atenção | laboratório estético de atenção | colonização | experiência estética | atenção conjunta

I. The colonisation of attention: critiques and displacements

Attentional problems have occupied a prominent place in the educational field, as well as in the sphere of work and daily life. Most of the time, complaints revolve around difficulties in focusing and paying attention to a task, and suspicions fall upon the diagnostic and individual explanation. For some time now, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has become a popular diagnosis, in rapid expansion across the globe, as has the pharmacological treatment almost always linked to it (Bergey et al. 2018; Caliman, Citton, and Prado 2023; Caliman and Prado 2019, 2020). In studies and research

on ADHD, the hegemonic cognitivist perspective predominates, supported by the biomedical and cerebral model, in which attention is considered as an individual mental process that operates on the binary logic 0-1, attention-inattention. In a certain sense, the predominance of the cognitivist perspective in studies on ADHD reveals a process of epistemological colonisation internal to attention studies that obscures the political and collective dimension of attentional processes, as well as their diversity, complexity, and joint aspect. Such an understanding has received a series of consistent critiques and has been the object of intense problematization (Kastrup and Caliman 2023; Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 2003; Depraz, Varela, and Vermersch 2003, 2006; Depraz 2010, 2015; Crary 2013, 2014, 2023; Citton 2014, 2018).

According to critical studies of the cognitivist model of attention (the enaction, inventive cognition, and ecology of attention approaches), attention is a complex process that is not reduced to the gesture of paying attention and focalization. Distraction is not a lack of attention, but one of its regimes. Concentration cannot be confused with focalization, and many other attentional gestures can be experienced (Kastrup and Caliman 2023, 2025). Attention is not an individual process, but an individuating one (Citton 2014). It is not simply a condition for learning processes, but it can be learned, cultivated, and educated (Ingold 2010, 2015, 2020; Lachaux 2013).

In line with the studies and research guiding this article, the understanding of attention is based on the concept of the production of subjectivity, proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1997), and is, therefore, always collective, produced by material, technological, aesthetic, economic, and political vectors. As Citton (2014) demonstrates, in addition to being collective, it also possesses a joint aspect insofar as we are influenced by the attentional exchanges that sustain the group relations in which we are embedded.

Thus, the ubiquity of attentional problems and their epistemological colonisation by cognitivist studies require, first of all, a broader and more complex diagnosis of attention in contemporaneity, capable of analysing what Kenneth Rogers (2024) calls the attention complex. It is a regime of power that brings together diverse fields of knowledge, digital technologies, the pharmaceutical industry, economic interests, ideological agendas, and pedagogical and health policies. In the attentional mille-feuille indicated by Citton (2014), it can be said that the attention complex makes explicit its collective aspect (collective attention). Maintaining close relations with the world of capital, the logic of colonialism, patriarchy, and ableism, the attention complex conditions what must be seen and valued collectively and individually. At the same time, it bears directly upon the constitution of hegemonic attentional regimes and gestures that in current times are strongly characterised by dispersion, alertness, and vigilance.

In the article herein, when addressing the collective side of attention, we give prominence to the analysis of its crossings by digital technologies, whose presence has become a dominant vector in the processes of subjectivation, producing notable effects on contemporary cognition. Not by chance, in his latest book, Jonathan Crary (2023), one of the great current thinkers on attention, conducts a thorough analysis of the effects of

the “internet complex” on perception. For Crary, the problem of online life is not merely the creation of consumer profiles and the production of continuous surveillance. In his view, the extreme speed of online connections fuels individualism and indifference to public and common life outside the screens. Relationships between people and the world become crossed by the monotony of digital systems, producing what Bernard Stiegler (2008) calls the colonisation of consciousness, the homogenization of experience, and the anaesthesia of the senses. It is, above all, a process of colonisation and incessant regulation of attention, whose effects directly interfere with our capacity for the constitution of a common and diverse life.

The gaze, the voice, and the face are particularly affected by the internet complex described by Crary. In the online world, simple and homogeneous forms and pasteurised colours colonise the gaze. Crary (2023, 148) states that paradoxically, the visual object capable of capturing the gaze corresponds to the one that is shallow and devoid of complexity. The ambiguous, strange, or problematic object finds no place. Everything must be of easy and immediate apprehension, allowing no room for uncertainty. Constituted by easy-to-use interfaces that demand almost no effort, in which scrolling is infinite and click-driven, online platforms channel our visual engagement from one point of fixation to the next. The objective is to generate predictable and routinised responses. Furthermore, it is a gaze isolated from the other senses and from embodied experience.

The capacity to listen to the other is also modulated and affected by the uses of online platforms, especially when the voice assumes a slower, hesitant, and reflective rhythm. The singular speed of a film or a voice message left on *WhatsApp*, with its spaces of silence and pauses, comes to be seen as unnecessary and uninteresting. The use of 2.0 speed prevails, creating an accelerated mode of listening and speaking.

For Crary (2023), we are also altering our capacity to see a face in its temporal nuances and its emotional expressiveness, especially when marked by ambiguity and the ambivalence of feelings. Emotions, in the age of the *emoji*, are almost always shared in a stereotypical manner. In the colonisation of facial perception and its expressivities, it becomes increasingly difficult to be sensitive to a strange expression that does not fit into a pre-defined and recognitive category.

In a certain sense, in the colonisation of attention, whether through the gaze, the voice, or the face and its emotions, it concerns the transformation of our relationship with alterity and with difference. In our view, the colonisation of attention by the informational complex described by Crary is an important source for understanding the multitude of lonely individuals, immersed in their screens, and, at the same time, the growing disinterest in community and face-to-face relations in public spaces. Crary is emphatic. It is, ultimately, a risk to democracy and to public and shared life, to the necessary cultivation of the common through practices of collaboration and solidarity.

The diagnosis of the collective aspect of attention resituates the understanding of attentional problems in current times and demands that we be able to construct exits distinct from the cognitivist interventions and perspectives that understand attention

as an individual capacity, which reinforce and fuel the individualism that, in turn, is one of the main effects of the colonisation of attention. It is in this direction that the concept of joint attention offers possibilities of displacement and resistance in the creation of new possibilities, especially in its articulation with aesthetic experience.

The notion of joint attention emerges in developmental psychology in the 1970s (Scaife and Bruner 1975). It describes a tendency in infants, at the end of the first year of life, to follow the mother's gaze when she shifts her gaze from the child to observe something in the space that both occupy. Recently, the concept has been expanded and used in other fields of knowledge, being understood as a phenomenon that accompanies us throughout life (Kastrup and Caliman 2023, 2025). For Yves Citton (2014), joint attention is what occurs when there are attentional exchanges in a situation of co-presence, of attentional reciprocity, and of affective attunement. It takes place between people, but also between people, things, and phenomena, opening space for the transformation of subjects and worlds.

The objective of this article is to analyse strategies developed in an aesthetic laboratory of attention, where the hypothesis is that poetic propositions can create conditions for the displacement of the regimes of alert, vigilance, and dispersion and for the cultivation of joint attention, open to the plane of affects. Based on the approach of the ecology of attention (Citton 2014, 2018) and inventive cognition (Kastrup and Caliman 2023, 2025), the study proposes an expanded concept of attention, beyond the individual gesture of paying attention and the regime of focalization. It takes as its field of analysis the experience of an aesthetic laboratory of attention held with university students gathered in regular meetings at the Institute of Psychology of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil. Throughout this article, we will present the proposal of the laboratory and, through the cartographic research with the analysis of participants' accounts, we will discuss some of its effects.

II. The Aesthetic Laboratory of Attention (LAB): an invitation to the experimentation of concepts

Seeking to resist hegemonic regimes and produce displacements regarding the problems of attention present in contemporary subjectivity, we created the Aesthetic Laboratory of Attention as a course open to the community at the Institute of Psychology of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, in 2022. It was a course with 12 meeting classes, lasting 2 hours each. The Laboratory's objective was to study and practice attention, with a view to the experimentation of concepts and the cultivation of different gestures and regimes of attention, beyond those that predominate and are valued in contemporary subjectivities, such as paying attention and focusing, and the regimes of alert and vigilance. It was conceived and conducted by professors and proposers who possessed some proximity to artistic practices and familiarity with aesthetic experience in literature, visual arts, music, and corporal practices.

The concept of the Aesthetic Laboratory of Attention (LAB) finds inspiration in the work of Yves Citton (2014) and in the way he understands aesthetic laboratories, which are at the centre of interest of the ecology of attention. A museum, a cinema, a book, or a performance hall can be aesthetic laboratories of attention when they are lived as attentional ecosystems that favour immersion in the aesthetic experience. The term “laboratory” evokes a scientific research apparatus in physics, chemistry, biology, or experimental psychology, being also used in the field of art. The laboratory is characterised by an attitude of joint experimentation. It is a space of investigation temporarily isolated from everyday life, where we test and surpass the limits of knowledge, of what can be perceived, felt, thought, and discovered. The aesthetic laboratory of attention aims to elicit an attitude of experimentation and encounters that produce dissonance in relation to the hegemonic regimes of attention in contemporaneity.

Citton (2014) evokes the etymology of the word laboratory, which initially includes *labour* — work. The aesthetic laboratory requires a working attitude — of the artist, the object itself, and the onlooker — who can be the listener or reader of a poem, the artist, or the appreciator of a show or performance, etc. In the case of the aesthetic laboratory of attention, it concerns, in the first place, an attentional work on the part of the participants, for an effort is needed not to yield to the seduction of easy categorisation, of recognition. It requires a work on oneself, on sensibility and affects, involving suspension, delay, deceleration, and the opening of attention. It also involves an effort by the proposers and the proposed activities to summon the participants’ attention and sustain it, as well as causing the crossing of attentions in their joint dimension. In the aesthetic laboratory, the proposers must be aware of the unpredictability of the experimentation process and the effects that will be produced. Citton (2014) also mentions a *praying attitude*. The laboratory is a *labour* oriented by prayer, insofar as we pray that some unlikely and random encounter takes place and that communion is possible, or rather, the creation of a common that leads us to experience a more ethical, free, and singular form of existence, connecting us with something that is greater than us and that expands us.

The notion of the aesthetic laboratory is developed by Citton (2014) when discussing the work of an international collective called the *Order of the Third Bird*, a group of people who, in different places around the world, dedicate themselves to a certain type of *attentional performance* in art museums. Its mission is to cultivate the attentional capacity and aesthetic experience of the group members through the sustaining of their gazes and bodies before a work that is contemplated jointly. Through the attention granted to it, the work gains value. This joint attention/value invites other gazes and attentions, thus multiplying the existence and value of the work, sometimes forgotten in a less noble space of the museum. More recently, this experience was unfolded and expanded by the creation of an *attentional activism* network named *Friends of Attention*¹,

1 An important part of the production of this collective can be accessed at: <https://www.friendsofattention.net/about>.

which, in a similar direction, continues the proposition of attentional practices in their relation to aesthetic experience. In a certain sense, the *Order of the Third Bird* and the meetings held by the *Friends of Attention* are experiences that dialogue with the LAB and find resonances with it.

The Aesthetic Laboratory of Attention articulated two objectives. The first was to cultivate concentrated and open joint attention through practices with poetic propositions. The second was to hold face-to-face group meetings in an attentional ecosystem conducive to the relationship between bodies in their multisensory dimension. It aimed to create conditions for an encounter of bodies in their diversity, activating processes of embodied joint attention.

It is necessary to highlight that the poetic proposition is not a task. The distinction between a task and a proposition is that the task has expected, predefined results, right or wrong answers, while propositions produce effects with a margin for inventiveness, unpredictability, and openness to multiple layers of meaning. Propositions create conditions for aesthetic experience. In turn, aesthetic experience is understood as an experience of problematization. Indistinction, ambiguity, uncertainty, and estrangement are constitutive of it. It is distinguished from the experience of recognition, where the form is directly recognised and followed by categorisation. Estrangement, disturbance, shock, discomfort, surprise, astonishment, admiration, fright, and curiosity are expressions of the experience of problematization and modes of embodiment of aesthetic experience (Kastrup 2012; Bishop 2024). We can say that, running counter to the sensorimotor immediacy that is hegemonic in contemporaneity, aesthetic experience operates the permeability between perception, memory, and creative imagination. Without fitting into a single meaning and into a preformed category, it summons us to produce meaning, or rather, multiple layers of meaning.

Thus, aesthetic experience suspends the experience of recognition and automatic responses, characteristics of the mechanical stimulus-response functioning. A dissonance occurs between what I perceive and the categories available to me, suspending the experience of recognition and eliciting an attentional style that Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2015) describes as a delay of categorisation. This delay in categorisation, this hiatus in memory and prior knowledge, gives way to a back-and-forth movement between what I perceive in the present and what I am led to think, remember, feel, and imagine. By this path, aesthetic experience slows down experience and gives rise to the dimension of self-attention and reflected attention. There is a back-and-forth between the attention that turns to the object or situation and consults its limits and the self-attention, opening conditions of possibility for other modes of feeling, perceiving, thinking, and acting. In this sense, attention in aesthetic experience plays a role in the production of subjectivity and in the processes of individuation.

Regarding group aesthetic experience, we recall that we never pay attention alone (Citton 2014). We are interfered with by a collective dimension that conditions our attentional habits, such as the “internet complex” described by Cray (2023) and the

attention complex analysed by Kenneth Rogers (2024). However, as seen previously, in addition to being collective, attention is also joint. We are at the core of joint attention when we are in co-presence and cultivate relationships marked by *reciprocity* (without symmetry), by the effort of affective attunement, and by improvisation-invention. In the LAB, the cultivation of joint attentional relationality is joined by the proposal to slow down, to “waste time”, to activate spontaneous and unprogrammed modes of being together. We experience a form of attentive relationality, marked by an embodied, concentrated, and open joint attention, capable of inaugurating a singular attentional experience, less hostage to its homogenising, collective, and recognitive aspect.

The wager was that group aesthetic experience, the body-to-body encounter, and the cultivation of joint attention have the potential to activate modes of attention that are being constantly limited and inhibited in online relations and even in many of our face-to-face ecosystems. Hence the idea of promoting meeting classes, going beyond the verbal transmission of information about theories of attention. In the LAB, we inquired: Is the experience of estrangement and suspension facilitated when lived in an ecosystem of groupality and joint attention? Is it transformed? In which directions? What are its effects?

The LAB ecosystem

The concept of ecosystem has as its starting point Félix Guattari’s (1990) three ecologies: environmental, social, and subjective. We conceive the aesthetic laboratory of attention as an ecosystem favourable to the experimentation of attentional gestures and regimes in a situation of joint attention, implicated in the poetic invention of self and world. There is special care with the prior arrangement of the classroom in which the meetings will be held. Initially, in the classroom, there were chairs arranged in rows and the teacher’s desk at the front. After all, we were in a university, where the hierarchized model of teaching still prevails, centred on the figure of the teacher and based on the transmission of information. It was necessary, therefore, to start by reorganising the spatial dimension of the ecosystem, making it more conducive to the realisation of practices of attention cultivation. Most of the time, the chairs were moved aside, making room for the movement of bodies and other ways of inhabiting the room. We formed circles and, depending on the activity, we made use of beach sarongs, papers, speakers, and other objects, which came to form part of the ecosystem. In other situations, the proposition led us to go out and wander through the university campus.

Furthermore, in each practice, the careful management of the proposing duo was guided by the cultivation of relationality, of the participants’ joint attention to each other, but also to the materiality of the poetic proposition in progress — the text read or performed; the image observed and expanded in imagination; the various experiments with the body and its multisensory nature. In all these dimensions, our belief is that

cultivating joint attention can facilitate access to the aesthetic experience in its potential for producing subjectivity, just as openness to the relational plane of affects can create favourable conditions for the invention of shared existential territories.

The group and the dynamics of the work

The group was composed of 16 regular participants, including undergraduate and graduate students in psychology, as well as a postdoctoral fellow. One of the graduate students was visually impaired, which brought an interesting direction to the joint work, requiring everyone to displace visuocentrism, a quite naturalised cognitive policy in our everyday practices. To this extent, the concern with touch, hearing, and the sensitive activation of the multisensory body gained special inflexion and crossed throughout the work. The group also comprised three professors and four proposers responsible for the conception, conducting, and handling of the meeting classes.

The initial 4 meeting classes were dedicated to providing a theoretical basis for the practices that would follow. A diagnosis of attention in contemporaneity was presented, its hegemonic characteristics, and the limits of the cognitivist approach. We discussed the concept of attention, taking into account its different gestures, regimes, and modes of being attentive. We presented the traditional conception of attention and the displacements operated by the approach of inventive cognition and the ecology of attention. We also discussed the concepts of aesthetic experience and of the Aesthetic Laboratory of Attention.

From that point on, 8 meeting classes based on a guiding poetic proposition were conducted by a proposer pair, always involving bodily experimentation and articulated with a theoretical reference text. The earlier reading of the text was part of preparing the body for the class. These meeting classes began with a warm-up practice that we named “arriving” (chegança), aiming at cognitive deceleration and making the multisensory body more available. It was requested that cell phones be turned off, and then the proposition of the day was presented. At the end, a conversation circle was held for the exchange of experiences, which could include the reading aloud of fragments of the reference text and comments that related the text and the practice of the day. At the conclusion of the course, the proposal also included the writing of accounts of the experience by students and proposers, to be prepared at home and shared on the drive that had been made available. We sought to produce an ecosystem conducive to sensitive and poetic communication.

The “arriving” (chegança) and poetic propositions

Every meeting class dedicated to the experimentation of a poetic proposition began with a practice we named “arriving” (chegança). The “arriving” proposes activities to *arrive* in the classroom, to *arrive* in one’s own body, and to *arrive* with/in the group, given that, with the acceleration of everyday life, we are not always truly *present* to the experience. The purpose was to produce a cognitive deceleration and to experience the opening of bodies to their multisensoriality. The “arriving” was fundamental in the production of availability for the aesthetic experiences that would be lived and for the cultivation of groupality. Subsequently, the group was guided and invited to the experimentation of the poetic propositions.

The first meeting class was based on the shared reading aloud of poems and short prose texts, followed by the recording on paper of words emerging from the experience and the production of an improvised collective narrative, mobilising the joint dimension of attention and creation. The second meeting, in turn, had as its proposition the sustaining of attention to an enigma-image, in pairs and in silence, followed by sharing through the verbalisation of the experience, guided by the problem of the sustaining of joint attention.

The third meeting class brought the proposition of mobilising attention to ourselves — to body, movements, voice and joint attention — using a set of sound production activities through one’s own body. Traversing *back-and-forth* movements of attention, directing it “inward” and “outward,” it was possible to create an “in-between” and a common rhythm. A melody, a collective voice, *took shape*, giving life to an ecosystem of attention. The *acting* that assembles the composition of *joint acting/feeling* constituted the core of this practice.

In the following week, the group was invited to leave the classroom and experience another attentional ecosystem. Its proposition was to go out wandering through the university campus in small groups, experimenting with singular modes of walking, observing body and attention in movement. The experience of wandering and getting distracted in a *joint walk* opened space for the noticing of *things never perceived before*, to stop at them and observe them in greater detail.

Another proposition was for each participant to pay attention to their experience at breakfast, as well as to describe it in a written account, to be read and shared with the group in the following class. The activity would be carried out at home and without the presence of the group. It especially summoned a process of self-attention, a cultivation of attention to attention that offers a path and possibility for the knowledge and management of one’s own attention. Self-observation here assumed the dimension of self-production.

In the sixth meeting class, the proposition was to cultivate attention in the listening of sound compositions in three attentional dispositions directed towards: 1) *the source of the sound*, 2) *the heard sound*, and 3) *the felt sound*. Each sound composition was played

through a portable speaker, and the experimentation sought to diversify and expand the repertoires of sensibility. Participants were invited to notice the effects of such attentional dispositions on the listening experience and describe them in writing at the next moment, by exercising self-explanation. At the end of the activity, the accounts were shared with the group in a conversation circle. The practice suggests that the cultivation of self-attention — unfocused, peripheral, and receptive — can favour contact with the resonances that certain sound stimuli produce in us and that can produce inquiries regarding some micropolitical effects in the experience of self and of the world.

The seventh meeting class had as its proposition to cultivate a sensitive attention to micromovements, directed at the same time to self and to the other. The proposition was conducted in three moments. The first, of cultivation of self-attention, through a standing meditation called the *Small Dance*, practised in the context of Contact Improvisation dance (Paxton 1977). The second, of cultivation of joint attention, through the experimentation, in pairs, of an attentional disposition towards somatic touch, which invites tactile listening. The third, of creation of an attentional ecosystem for the collective experimentation of the work *Outragem*, an object that enables the encounter of two bodies in a state of listening. We sought in this practice to cultivate an attention situated in the zone of passage between self-attention and joint attention, to sensitise the body in its encounter with the other — the attentional experience of self in relation, a self in a state of tactile listening, in the encounter, in an ecosystem.

The last meeting worked with the proposition of paying attention to the other, at the same time as the other pays attention to us, through the practice of attentional sustaining. It was constituted on a non-verbal relational plane open to the duration of the meeting, slowing down and suspending the utilitarian and everyday habit of identifying and naming the other. In a state of reciprocity, the attention directed to the other coexists with a layer of self-attention, to one's own participation and function in this relation. Sustained attention to the other co-emerges with the attention sustained by the other.

III. Methodological strategies and effects

Methodological strategies

With a view to tracking the LAB process and analysing its effects, the course was accompanied by a research based on cartographic method (Deleuze and Guattari 1997; Rolnik 2006; Passos, Kastrup, and Escossia 2009; Passos, Kastrup, and Tedesco 2014). The method of cartography provides interesting clues, starting with the one of the cartographer-researcher's attention (Kastrup 2009), which defines it as concentrated and open to the collective plane of forces (Escossia and Tedesco 2009) and which is mobilised by aesthetic experience. Throughout the realisation of the LAB, we undertook the writing of field notes with a cartographic orientation—an embodied writing,

from within the experience (Gurgel 2023; Passos and Benevides 2009; Kastrup 2023).

The propositions conducted during the LAB meetings were accompanied by a constant exercise of writing. Initially, writing gave textual form to the aesthetic propositions and instructions. The proposing pair wrote an open protocol of what the day's practice would be, and this was shared with the research group. Writing took place during the meetings, by the proposing pair in field notes. Sometimes, the LAB's proposal for that day also included a writing session, in which participants were invited to engage in written recording. In the final stage, we asked students to write about their experiences during the 12 LAB meetings, highlighting a practice that had particularly touched them throughout the process, emphasising its effects. It was based on all these textual records that the research and the effects of the LAB were analysed. All participants authorised the use of their accounts in the writing and publication of scientific articles. The research analysis was based on content analysis and cartographic understanding of the analysis process (Bardin 1977; Barros and Barros 2013).

Effects — sustaining, groupality, and rest

The articulation of the two lines that configure the Aesthetic Laboratory of Attention — eliciting aesthetic experience through poetic propositions and offering a face-to-face ecosystem that favours joint attention and its cultivation — wagers on the potency of group aesthetic experience to face the challenge of transposing the limits that circumscribe contemporary subjectivity. The poetic propositions aim exactly to elicit the suspension of recognition and its immediate response. They enable the experience of problematization, produce a pause, and demand a slowing down of perception. It is necessary to pause in the movement. Faced with this, the invitation is for participants to arrive gradually, slow down, and reconnect with themselves, with the people, and with the elements and affects that constitute the ecosystem. The regularity of the meeting classes did not lead to mechanicity, to immediatism, and to a greater speed of attention to deal efficiently in a multitasking regime, but gave way to a differential and inventive repetition that opens gaps, suspends recognition, frequents the not-knowing, accepts estrangement, and welcomes the unusual. The three attitudes sustained in the laboratory — joint experimentation, work of cultivation, and the wager on the creation of an always unpredictable common — give body to the idea of producing modes of attention capable of resisting hegemonic regimes (alertness, dispersion, vigilance, and multitasking) and cultivating joint attention in times of digital addiction and exacerbated individualism. The challenge was not small.

Problematizing and critiquing the generalised medicalisation of attention is important. But even more important is to offer other possible paths (Caliman, César and Kastrup 2020). The aesthetic laboratory of attention points in the direction of art and aesthetic experience to operate bifurcations and paths that are at the same time gentler,

lighter, careful, and potent. Faced with the experience of problematization elicited by the poetic proposition, distraction is welcome and composes with memory and imagination for the production of multiple layers of meaning. Sustained, concentrated, and open attention to forces and affects was widely and repeatedly experienced. Practices with literature, with sounds, with the body, and with visual images offer conditions for multisensory aesthetic experience.

From the beginning and throughout the experimentation, we wagered on the potency of aesthetic experience in its relation to joint attention. The work carried out allows us to affirm that the feeling-with accessed in situations of joint attention facilitates and invites the experience of shared sustaining. If we identified that one of the problems of contemporary subjectivity is its difficulty in maintaining sustained, concentrated, and open attention, we expanded the understanding of this problem and indicated some ways out. We realised that the sustaining of attention is a joint work and emerges with the conditions of resonance established in a given relation. Affective attunement, as the sharing of a rhythm, a conjunction of proximity and intensity between bodies that meet, enables the duration and the sustaining of attention and presence. The affective bond sustains. To a certain extent, sustained attention to the other co-emerges with the attention sustained by the other and by the shared attentional ecosystem.

We realised that aesthetic experience, by inciting the suspension of automatisms and inviting access to the plane of sensible forces, places us in a disposition of openness that can be sustained and expanded when lived in conjunction with others who also embark on the experience. There is, then, sustaining and support. What is sustained is the openness, the active receptivity, and the expansion of the field of observation that open concentration enables. Sustained, at the same time, is the back-and-forth movement of self-attention and attention to the world, permeated by access to corporality and sensoriality. Sustaining here approaches the notion of duration. The experience of time appeared in several accounts throughout the practices. The invitation to duration in aesthetic experience — duration in the encounter — was a characteristic present in all practices.

Based on the accounts of the participants and of the proposer group itself, the work carried out in the Aesthetic Laboratory of Attention produced, therefore, effects of joint sustaining of attention, but also of formation of groupality and the experience of rest. Although the question of group aesthetic experience was present since the beginning of the work, the degree of proximity that would mark the relationship between the participants had not been foreseen. At the beginning of the work, there were 16 participants and 7 proposers, totalling 23 individuals. But a set of individuals is not yet a group (Lage 2021). With the continuity of the meetings, it was possible to perceive that the welcoming of the aesthetic experience and of the participants themselves triggered affective relations that connect the participants, enabling the formation of groupality as proximity, intimacy, and mutual care. It takes concrete form through the exercise of a peculiar form of reciprocal attention, with openness and availability towards the other, a touching and letting oneself be touched, responding attentively to this call. It necessarily

involves an attitude of correspondence, highlighting the relationship between attention and care (Campo 2024).

The third effect was the experience of rest and relaxation narrated by several participants in their accounts. It is necessary to remember that hegemonic contemporary subjectivities suffer from what is known today as digital fatigue. It is a matter of an experience of permanent tiredness, felt even by young people at different moments of the day, often already upon waking up. The phenomenon is attributed to the difficulty of living with the pause and silence, even when the body asks for rest. After a long day of work, study, and commuting in the city on often slow and crowded transport, recourse to the company of the cellphone is almost inevitable. Even when we lie down in bed, the cellphone comes with us and with it a multitude of news, posts, and random information. There is no true pause. Even the hours of sleep are invaded and stolen by social networks (Crary 2014). The effects of digital fatigue on attention still need to be better studied, but we know that it interferes directly with our capacity for concentration.

In the laboratory, we agreed that everyone would turn off their cellphones or not consult them during classes. For our part, there was an initial concern as to whether such an agreement would be kept, but it soon dissipated. There were a few students who consulted them from time to time. Some of them, more attached to the device, abandoned the course in the first classes. Soon, cellphones disappeared definitively from the LAB ecosystem. The agreement also applied to us, the group of proposers, and this was one of the reasons for the LAB not having photographic records. The account of the experience of rest and relaxation was also present at the end of many classes. Several times, participants made sounds with their mouths, yawned, stretched their bodies, and stretched out. We heard phrases such as “I arrived so tired, but it seems I rested here...”, “I came running, arrived late, but when I entered and saw the dimly lit environment, I already felt the atmosphere of the class, much lighter than outside”. It was unusual for us that the poetic propositions and the cultivation of joint attention would produce rest and relaxation in the so-called “rush” of everyday life. A feeling that also speaks of the relaxation of the hard and stiffened lines of an exacerbated individualism that distances us from alterity in us and in the world. To be able to relax and let one’s guard down at the University is not a trivial gesture. Often experienced as an ecosystem of evaluation, judgment, meritocracy, and ableism, the university can scrutinise, separate, and classify, in addition to automating and naturalising this functioning. To experience it as an attentional ecosystem that welcomes and allows one to be and to exist was also an effect of the work experimented.

Conclusion

The Aesthetic Laboratory of Attention starts from the realisation that one of the most important problems that attention faces in contemporaneity is the colonisation, by digital

platforms and social networks, of visual perception, auditory perception, and the perception of the emotions of a face. The tendency is for attention to be able to tolerate only objects, images, and texts whose meaning is instantly apprehended and the reaction is immediate. The problem of attention in contemporary subjectivity is not reduced to a lack of focus. We seek to highlight the importance of another problem that demands a critical discussion: the difficulty in maintaining sustained, concentrated, and open attention in the face of objects, images, and texts that carry some degree of ambiguity and uncertainty. The colonisation of the gaze, of the voice, and of faces provoked by the massive coupling with social networks and the entire internet complex reinforces individualism, creating obstacles to dealing with real people distinct from those who inhabit the digital universe. It is a matter, above all, of our relationship with alterity — in us and in the world — an ethico-political and clinical problem. Cognitive acceleration is also one of the perverse effects of capitalism and of the productivism that it incites.

This study was based on the ecological approach to attention (Citton 2014) and the inventive cognition approach (Kastrup and Caliman 2023). Its aim was to analyse the effects of attentional ecosystems that work with poetic propositions and the experimentation of concepts through bodily and multisensory practices carried out in groups. Articulating the three ecologies proposed by Guattari (1990) — environmental, social, and subjective — these ecosystems proved favourable to the cultivation of joint attention and the formation of group dynamics, as well as to the cultivation of sustained attention and the experience of rest. Poetic propositions create conditions for the deceleration of cognition, hegemonic in contemporary times, and for sustained attention, insofar as the aesthetic experience requires pause and a slower time for the experience of problematization, which does not fit into the immediacy of recognition. In this sense, the Aesthetic Attention Laboratory (LAB) proposes a new pedagogical policy — based on poetic propositions and not on tasks — contributing to the decolonisation of attention.

Finally, the study appears to yield interesting and promising results regarding the power of aesthetic experience and the experimentation of concepts in pedagogical ecosystems more conducive to improvisation and invention. It was based on cartographic research that followed a course on the theme of attention with university students of psychology and related fields at a Brazilian public university. We hope that the study can inspire other investigations that explore the use of aesthetic propositions and their effects on subjectivation at different levels of schooling, in diverse pedagogical contexts.

Acknowledgments Agradecimentos

The authors thank the students who participated in the Aesthetic Attention Laboratory, contributing with accounts of their experience.

Funding Financiamento

The study was partially funded by the PQ grant (process 308558/2021-9) from CNPq—Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico, Brasil.

Conflict of interest Conflito de interesses

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

Authors contributions Contribuições dos autores

Both authors contributed to all stages of this study.

Data availability statement Declaração de disponibilidade de dados

Not Applicable.

AI tools Ferramentas de IA

No AI tools were used.

References Referências

- Bardin, Laurence. 1977. *Análise de conteúdo*. Lisboa: Edições 70.
- Barros, Leticia Maria Renault de, and Maria Elizabeth Barros de Barros. “O problema da análise em pesquisa cartográfica.” *Fractal: revista de Psicologia* 25 (2013): 373-390.
- Bergey, Meredith, Angela Marques Filipe, Peter Conrad, and Ilina Singh. eds. 2018. *Global Perspectives on ADHD: Social Dimensions of Diagnosis and Treatment in Sixteen Countries*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8676.12637>.
- Bishop, Claire. 2023. “Atenção desordenada.” Interview by A. D. Ramos. *Electra* 23: 121-135. <https://doi.org/10.11588/xxi.2025.1.110105>.
- Caliman, Luciana Vieira, and Mariana Ramos Prado. 2019. “Prise de psychostimulants et attention: l’expérience de deux adolescents...” *La Nouvelle Revue — Éducation et Société Inclusives* 85: 261-276. <https://doi.org/10.3917/nresi.085.0261>.
- _____. 2020. “TDAH na França: experiência das famílias.” *Educação em Foco* 24: 849-878. <https://doi.org/10.22195/2447-5246029169>.
- Caliman, Luciana Vieira, Janaina Mariano César, and Virginia Kastrup. 2020. “Práticas de cuidado e cultivo da atenção...” *Revista Educação, Artes e Inclusão* 16 (4): 166-195. <https://doi.org/10.5965/198431781642020166>.
- Caliman, Luciana Vieir, Yves Citton, and Mariana Ramos Prado. 2023. *L’attention médicamente: La Ritaline à l’école*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Campo, Enrico. 2023. “Repensar a política da atenção: entre a medição e o cuidado.” *Electra* 23: 71-84. <https://electramagazine.fundacaoedp.pt/editions/edicao-23>.
- Citton, Yves. 2013. *Suspensões da percepção*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.
- _____. 2014. *Pour une écologie de l’attention*. Paris: Seuil.
- _____. 2014. 24/7: *Capitalismo tardio e os fins do sono*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.
- _____. 2018. “De l’écologie de l’attention à la politique de la distraction...” In *Bébé attentif cherche adulte(s) attentionné(s)*, edited by M. Dugnat, 11-27. Paris: Érès.
- _____. 2023. *Terra arrasada*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.
- Depraz, Natalie. 2003. *On Becoming Aware: A Pragmatic of Experiencing*. Philadelphia-Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- _____. 2010. “De l’‘inter-attention’...” *Symposium* 14 (1): 104-118. <https://doi.org/10.5840/symposium20101416>.
- _____. 2015. *Attention et vigilance*. Paris: PUF.

- Depraz, Natalie, Francisco Varela, and Pierre Vermersch. 2006. "A redução à prova da experiência." *Arquivos Brasileiros de Psicologia* 58 (1). <http://www.psicologia.ufrj.br/abp/>.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1997. *Mil platôs*. Vol. 1. Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34.
- Escóssia, Liliana da, and Silvia Tedesco. 2009. "O coletivo de forças..." In *Pistas do método da cartografia*, edited by E. Passos, V. Kastrup, and L. da Escóssia, 92–108. Porto Alegre: Sulina.
- Guattari, Félix. 1990. *As três ecologias*. Campinas: Papirus.
- Gurgel, Veronica Torres Gurgel. 2023. "Pistas para a escrita..." *Revista Interinstitucional Artes de Educar* 9 (Edição Especial): 139–159. <https://doi.org/10.12957/riae.2023.80649>.
- Ingold, Tim. 2010. "Da transmissão de representações..." *Educação* 33 (1): 6–25. <https://doi.org/10.12957/riae.2023.80661>.
- _____. 2015. "O dédalo e o labirinto..." *Horizontes Antropológicos* 21 (44): 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-71832015000200002>.
- _____. 2020. *Antropologia e/ou educação*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Kastrup, Virgínia. 2004. "A aprendizagem da atenção..." *Psicologia e Sociedade* 16 (3): 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-71822004000300002>.
- _____. 2007. *A invenção de si e do mundo*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica.
- _____. 2009. "O funcionamento da atenção..." In *Pistas do método da cartografia*, edited by Eduardo Passos, Virgínia Kastrup, and Liliana da Escóssia, 32–51. Porto Alegre: Sulina.
- _____. 2012. "A atenção na experiência estética..." *Trama Interdisciplinar* 3 (1): 23–33. <https://editorarevistas.mackenzie.br/index.php/tint/article/view/5000>.
- _____. 2023. "A escrita cartográfica..." *Revista Interinstitucional Artes de Educar* 9: 160–175. <https://editorarevistas.mackenzie.br/tint/article/view/5000>.
- Kastrup, Virgínia., and Luciana Vieira Caliman. 2023. *A atenção na cognição inventiva*. Porto Alegre: Editora Fi.
- Lachaux, Jean-Philippe. 2013. *Le cerveau attentif*. Paris: Odile Jacob.
- Lage, Mariana. 2021. *Ecologias do grupalizar*. PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.
- Paxton, Steve. 1977. "The Small Dance." *Contact Quarterly* 3: 23. <https://myriadcity.net/contact-improv/learning-contact-improvisation/steve-paxtons-1977-small-dance-guidance>.
- Passos, Eduardo, and Regina Benevides de Barros. 2009. "Por uma política de narratividade." In *Pistas do método da cartografia*, edited by Eduardo Passos, Virgínia Kastrup, and Liliana da Escóssia, 150–171. Porto Alegre: Sulina.
- Passos, Eduardo, Virgínia Kastrup, and Liliana Escóssia. eds. 2009. *Pistas do método da cartografia: Pesquisa-intervenção e produção de subjetividade*. Porto Alegre: Sulina.
- Passos, Eduardo, Virgínia Kastrup, and Silvia Tedesco. eds. 2014. *Pistas do método da cartografia: A experiência da pesquisa e o plano comum*. Porto Alegre: Sulina.
- Rolnik, Sueli. 2006. *Cartografia sentimental*. Porto Alegre: Sulina/UFRGS.
- Rogers, Kenneth. 2024. "Quick Bites..." In *The Politics of Curiosity*, edited by E. Campo and Y. Citton. New York: Routledge.
- Scaife, Michael, and Jerome Bruner. 1975. "The Capacity for Joint Visual Attention in the Infant." *Nature* 253: 265–266. <https://doi.org/10.1038/253265a0>.
- Schaeffer, Jean-Marie. 2015. *L'expérience esthétique*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Stiegler, Bernard. 2008. *La télécratie contre la démocratie*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Varela, Francisco, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. 2003. *A mente incorporada*. Porto Alegre: Artmed.
- Vermersch, Pierre. 2002a. "La prise en compte de la dynamique attentionnelle." *Expliciter* 43: 27–39. https://www.expliciter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/dossier_attention_et_phenomenologie.pdf.
- Vermersch, Pierre. 2002b. "L'attention entre phénoménologie et sciences expérimentales." *Expliciter* 44: 14–43. https://www.persee.fr/doc/intel_0769-4113_2004_num_38_1_1717.

Biographical notes Nota biográficas**VIRGINIA KASTRUP**

Doctor in Clinical Psychology at Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP/Brazil). Full Professor at Instituto de Psicologia, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro and researcher in Cognitive Psychology at Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq/Brazil).

ORCID

[0000-0002-9101-3282](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9101-3282)

LATTES ID

[0516666558156215](https://lattes.cnpq.br/0516666558156215)

Institutional address Morada institucional

Instituto de Psicologia — Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Avenida Pasteur, 250. Campus da Praia Vermelha. CEP: 22290-902 — Rio de Janeiro — RJ, Brazil.

LUCIANA CALIMAN

Doctor of Collective Health (IMS/UERJ), Collaborating Professor in the Postgraduate Program in Institutional Psychology at the Federal University of Espírito Santo, Brazil. She has published several articles and books on attention and its medicalization processes.

ORCID

[0000-0001-8558-6562](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8558-6562)

CIÊNCIA ID

[A31A-67D6-1FBC](https://ciencia.id/A31A-67D6-1FBC)

LATTES ID

[9364329546327845](https://lattes.cnpq.br/9364329546327845)

Institutional address Morada institucional

Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Avenida Fernando Ferrari, Av. Fernando Ferrari, 514 CEP: 29075-910 — Vitória — ES, Brazil.

How to cite Como citar [Chicago]

Kastrup, Virginia, and Luciana Caliman. 2026. "Aesthetic Attention Laboratory: Poetic Propositions for the Decolonization of Attention." *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens* (64): 87-104. <https://doi.org/10.34619/22i4-wozb>.

Received Recebido: 2026-01-27

Accepted Aceite: 2026-06-13

© 2026. Virginia Kastrup, Luciana Caliman. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.