

ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES TO RELAX/ STUDY TO: NAVIGATING BETWEEN SOUND, EMOTIONS, AND THE DIGITAL IN LOFI HIP HOP



Lofi hip hop emerged in mid-2015 and is primarily performed on the Internet. With anime-style drawings and a sound featuring slowed-down hip hop beats and jazz or bossa nova samples, it is often characterized by its “functional” uses, i.e., for relaxation and studying. Considering it as a privileged artistic object for reflections between the social sciences, art, and the digital, this work aims to propose some reflections that intersect anthropological theory and ethnographic practice. Such as: *The digital locus as landscape*: inspired by Tim Ingold, I understand lofi as a builder of imagined landscapes; *Performativity, aesthetics, and symbolic efficacy in the digital realm*: the aesthetic and emotional performance of lofi as an operation of symbolic efficacy mediated in the digital realm; *Navigating between ruins, contradictions, and nostalgia*: lofi lives in the contradiction of producing, being a consequence, and trying to escape macro narratives that threaten to cancel the future. Thus, I propose to situate navigation as a metaphor-tool that accounts for the theoretical-methodological complexity of conducting a sonic, digital, and emotional ethnography. This expression draws attention to the early days of the Internet, but also resides in the etymological root of “cybernetics”, from the Greek *Kubernetes*, meaning boat pilot. Thus, as its very use enunciates the meaning of metaphor as transport/transfer. In other words, in conducting this research, I navigated six years between sound, emotions, and the digital.

KEYWORDS: Lofi hip hop, Digital ethnography, Imagined landscapes (Ingold), Performativity and symbolic efficacy, Nostalgia and futurity, Sonic-digital anthropology



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