

## **E-REALITY, V-REALITY: New Scenarios of Virtual Heritage**

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The virtual is, first of all, an environment and an ecosystem: in fact there are important relations between cybernetics, system theories and cognitive sciences. According to certain instances of ecological thought, the living being must be comprehended in terms of relations: the living being is an autopoietic system because it is self-produced and self-organized. In short one can define virtual reality as an autopoietic system reflecting processes of mutual interaction. In this contribution we want to discuss the concepts of virtual reality and cultural heritage according to an ecosystem's perspective: the Virtual represents a complex of relations, the virtual translation of heritage is explainable according to a connectivity of information able to create a system. An environment can be recognized in relation with an organism of which it is an environment; the VR is ontology by virtue on the relations that are created with the actor/observer of the system. Cultural landscapes, museums, artifacts, exhibitions, objects, have to be re-contextualized in terms of relations, connections, perceptions, activities: without context there is no communication (Bateson, 1972). The digital cultural transmission is a crucial issue of this millennium and a hard challenge for the future. In this scenario a comparison between epistemological and technological instances of the Virtual is needed, so communicating the Virtual is a key argument for the world of the cultural heritage. In the ecological cybernetics the map is not the territory, therefore we could consider the Virtual as Map, the Real as territory, according to an ecological interpretation.

The application of digital technologies in the cultural sector, supports the development of new ways for enjoying heritage, as well as new professional profiles and new enterprises, as the exhibition "Building Virtual Rome" has shown (Rome, September-November, 2005). The "Building Virtual Rome" World Exposition, organized in Rome (Trajan's Market Museum), was the first exhibition dedicated to offering the general public, academic institutions, and professional entities a global view on developments in three-dimensional stereoscopic content based on the Roman Empire and the ancient city of Rome. In this paper, starting from the above-mentioned exhibition, many virtual heritage case studies will be discussed according to a technological and epistemological approach.