

MOBILITY, MEDIA (TIONS) AND CULTURE

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Nowadays, in Europe and the world, we experience the continued effervescence of mobility, dislocation, travels and comings and goings. Through effective and bodily movements, or through virtual displacement, current societies are, in their structures, intrinsically constituted by the power of mobility, the possibility to leave, to go back and forth.

Over the years we have seen the growth in the number of researches about the reasons why people leave a geographical space. We have also witnessed the increasing number of investigations about the reasons why people choose certain places to live, to work or to do tourism. The approaches on such an array of reasons and conditions are still valid.

However, the current time appears to be marked by phenomena that are now much less linear than they were decades ago. The mobilities are not only increasingly multi-form, but are also triggered by substantially different configuration purposes. Not to mention the very nature of politics and how it shapes and makes people inclined to mobility and migration (as it so happens in political and/or religious persecution circumstances). But we may also refer to social phenomena such as work, leisure, network transport, structure and modes of relationships and of family experience, the human trafficking networks, natural and/or human catastrophes, terrorism, wars and armed conflicts. These are presented today with features and dynamics inscribed in the experience of financial and informational globalisation, to which the place - understood in the strict sense - makes little difference. All those phenomena are marked by variability, flexibility, opacity, uncertainty and unpredictability. Sometimes they are even paradoxical.

In addition to the nature of phenomena related to mobility and the possible typology of mobility and migration today, the fluidity, the contradiction, the fragility and uncertainty that mark contemporary political frameworks also deserve to be highlighted. These instances, observed from a macro-structural level, seem to have failed to have policy frameworks responding to the interests and ideals of human subjects, on one hand, and to be connected with the mobilised interests of the global financial economy, on the other hand. Other mobilities and migrations are planned and discovered: in cities under the ground, under water, or beyond Earth. In this sense, mobilities are one of the main objects of consumption, and also constitute a focus of prevention, estimation, monitoring and planning.

In fact, mobilities can be viewed as a total social phenomenon, since they constitute an interlacement of events and processes that go beyond the act of movement in space and time, and include reception and integration processes, as well as discrimination, selection and hostility. Various processes of recollection and of (self and other) identity classification flow through the mobilities, collecting interpretations and evaluations carried out under specific ideological paradigms.

Sheller and Urry (2006) introduced, in the mid-nineties, a concept they called “new paradigm of mobility.” The authors pointed out that, unlike the mobility that characterised the world until the nineties, sophistication, the widespread use of information and communication technologies, and the strengthening of interdependencies worldwide are linked to the continuous experience of mobility that mark the identities and lifestyles in modern society. Among other contributions, the authors have shown the relevance of employing qualitative techniques to analyse these new forms of appropriation and experience of space-time, which provide investigations of unequivocal interest about the ways of living and experiencing movement, displacement and public or private transportation (such as the automobile). The already mentioned authors (Sheller & Urry, 2006) drew attention not only to the major structural elements that condition and constitute political action platforms. They also called attention to the small details of everyday life “where” the history of the senses, emotions and sensitivities is made. That is, spaces “where”, therefore, happens the appropriation, consumption and reflection of the confluence of tastes, styles and ways of being that are increasingly standardised.

More recently, following neo marxist paradigms, other authors have exposed the subversive character of mobilities, dislocations, travels and passages, since those are not only connected with new patterns of lifestyles and new ways of being in space and in time, but with much more. For example, Gehardi (2009) proposes the concept of ambiguous mobility, pointing out the most obscure and difficult sides of the life of individuals who are in almost permanent mobility, due to obligation to the models of regulation of work and the economy that require full availability of certain workers. The same author, along with Pierre (2013), clarifies that mobility feeds not only the economy in the material sense, but also the working ethos within the techno-scientific capitalism.

From this point of view, mobilities and migrations are not only one of the central narratives of our time that gain different nuances among the discourses and forms of expression of the various social groups. They are a major axis of identity definition of peoples and societies, and establish from within their own paths and future. Therefore, they are a key element of politics. Admittedly, in this immense framework of possibilities open to mobilities, which are often analysed from a perspective that conceives them as a result of successful random encounters and as processes that mark the flow of transactions between people and nations, it has been created a representation that, in a sense, naturalises physical and virtual mobility itself. But the approach we intend to portray, as editors of this number, is also, in line with the debate initiated by Woolley (2014), a political approach that reveals some of the mobilising structures of these movements and displays how today’s prevalence of more traditional forms of migration – as illustrated by the refugee who crosses the border – lets us glimpse the “subversive” forms triggered by the people who “resist” the mechanisms by which globalisation operates, establishing themselves as concrete “places” of contradiction and of cultural and political dissent. The existence of these “places” of dissent is possible due to the fact that there are two kinds of mobilities: a “required” and a “chosen” mobility¹.

¹ On this subject, we would like to mention the framing and critical analysis elaborated by Woolley concerning Appadurai’s (1996) approaches.

The massive displacements that currently occur towards Europe have shown how relevant the diverse forms of mobility in the contemporary world are to the analysis of the processes of identity construction and negotiation of individuals, groups and populations. These forms of mobility are increasingly linked to the power of penetration and appreciation of various forms of media and to the information and communications technologies. Appadurai (1996) even considers that being on the move is a peculiar trait of the modern narrative, which is marked by the pervasive experience of information and communications technologies, and by the increasing ability to transcend distances and dispel times. Such transcendence can happen by the increase of the speed of circulation, or through hyper-imposition of the virtual space. In the same context Bauman would argue that we live in increasingly liquid environments (Bauman, 2004).

This point of view generates new classifications to the subjects of this new era, in which almost everything can be nomadic, even without moving, and in which virtually everything can change places without breaking links and dependencies. From the new spatiality and temporalities arise new ways to experience intercultural relations that take place in increasingly transnational types of spaces, given the nature of the capital market in a world that remains uneven in the form of concentration and distribution of resources.

In effect, as Sheller says, when thinking about mobility in modern societies one cannot reduce the issues to the act of bringing to the conceptual plan the notion of flow or of identity fluidity created in spatiotemporal intersections. Reflection and research on mobility nowadays must involve structural elements such as colonisation, post-colonialism or globalisation (Sheller, 2011, p.2-3).

In accordance with the conceptualisation of culture as a political-cultural instance, as proposed by Hall (1997), it is possible to say that the relationship between media and mobility is shown through the perspective of culture that is perceived from the construction and affirmation of identity in space and time (expressed, for instance, by the experience of mobile workers). The digital technologies and the media in general contribute to the assembly of the mobility narratives, by providing information, but also by transmitting images, representations and stereotypes about spaces and places and about who is moving and why they are moving.

A French emigrant told us that, being retired, he used to babysit his grandchildren, who live 500 kilometres away. We asked him how that possible, to which he was replied: “via Skype”. And added: “we gather everyone in one room to play and we stay online, talking and watching them. I will ask what they need, where they are going, and inspect what they do during the time their parents are not in. We are also connected to the hospital and the police services”. This experience shows the existence of an approach to life that is increasingly more typical in modern society and that can be interpreted both as negative or positive.

For several years, researchers have been exploring how media can affect citizens' views about immigrants or moving in general, influencing their behaviour towards people who arrive in new countries. There are also studies on the ways media can influence policy programs aimed at issues of mobility and migration. Some researchers have, also,

indicated how media can be operating the construction of identity in different scales (individual, national and transnational). In this regard, in the book *Media and Migration*, edited by King and Wood (2001), it is argued that the media is capable of influencing and inducing migratory movements, as well as the establishment of various diasporas.

Mobilities in this sense also mean complexity, strengthening of the planning, of organization and of control. The movement of people and the flow of information are processed today by increasingly elaborate surveillance codes, to which digital technologies greatly contribute. This vigilance is made in response to the evolution of said technologies, which became a key element of the financial capitalist global society. But it is also made in response to the proliferation of fear on the part of institutions, populations and individuals. Such fear is also a constitutive element in the interstices of the relational fabrics in physical or virtual time and space and is built via the fast circulation of images and media content through all the virtual spaces, causing the emergence of incentives for action and of new realities.

An emerging line of studies promises to show the multidimensionality of mobility and migration phenomena in the context of the reconfiguration and production of new (and other) identities in the light of the techno-scientific establishment of culture. Hence, said studies address phenomena such as mediation operated by technology in the preparation and during the experience of mobility and/or migration. The use of audio-visual medium of fast access, such as mobile phones and other communication devices, favour the creation of heterotopic spaces of “in between”, through which today’s “everyday adventure” – to use Certeau’s (1990) expression – is built.

In parallel, other researches, with backgrounds in different fields of Social Sciences, address, under the same umbrella of cultural transformation inscribed in the triple relationship between space-time motion/identity/erosion, the role of digital media, including social and other networks. The aforementioned investigations refer mainly to the role of said media in the constitution of the migratory narratives, helping to deconstruct its sense of identity in micro and macro-sociological levels. These are investigations that examine the structure, form and content of the personal stories whispered (and revealed) “through” virtual spaces and in which are reflect the desires, resentments and gratitude of migrants towards the places that are abandoned, the places they go through and the places in which they remain. Thereby, videos, selfies, images and sounds play increasingly deeper roles in the composition (with continuous disclosure) of the individuals on the move, to the point where their biographical stories take the form of artistic products, or have artistic elements (Nurse, 2014).

This issue of “Communications and Society” brings together articles that discuss the relations between mobility and media, following a number of perspectives and addressing different objects. We have divided this issue in three main thematic groups: i) diaspora, dynamic mobility and media, ii) mobility, cultures and technological universes and iii) varia.

The first group includes four articles, three of which address, in a somewhat sharp manner, the question of migration and mechanisms for marking and labelling that

interact in cultural contact situations marked by discriminatory processes. The remaining article that compose this thematic group discusses the city space and its complexity in terms of mobility. It is relevant to point out that the authors refer to mobility as a component of lifestyles and of an assertion of values.

The article written by Igor Sacramento and Izadora Machado continues the line of questions posed earlier about migration, but addresses, especially, how Brazilian media treated the Ebola crisis, specifically discussing the mobility and reception of people coming from Africa. The authors point out the colonialist and ethnocentric bias that is present in the media when debating Africa and the disease itself, and also demonstrates, supported by an empirical analysis, that Brazilian media conveys stereotypical and discriminatory images and representations of the African migrants, especially when they appear susceptible to connotations that frighten society, due to ignorance.

The article written by Mauricio Nihil focuses on discussing the concept of e-migrant, pointing out, through an empirical research held in Uruguay, how information and communications technologies constitute specific types of communication and interaction between Spanish immigrant and residents, facilitating the construction of diasporas. Thereupon, the author is interested in discussing how information and communications technologies create identity reinforcement areas in the countries of reception and how this is reflected in the intensity and quality of political participation of the e-migrants in the host country, but, especially, in relation to the country of origin - Spain.

In the context of migration and intercultural communication, Teresa Alves discusses, in her paper, the transferences, transactions and identity transmutations that happen between Portugal and Brazil, in the specific context of Brazilian programs dedicated to the Portuguese communication within that territory. Alves deals with explicit content, but also focuses on the most silent aspects of cultural and symbolic exchanges, presenting a perspective that integrates the analysis of colonial and post-colonial dimensions.

Felipe Gustsack and Sandra Rocha are the authors of the fourth paper, which is dedicated to a more microsociological aspect of mobility. The authors explore the relationship between mobilities and the emergence of cultural settings that shape life experiences centred on the quest of individuals for the revelation of their subjectivities in the public space, following mechanisms similar to the narrative expression, but being, in this case, self-identitary. The authors apply content analysis on sentences and captions located on bumper stickers, and propose that this material is a kind of narrative process that not only configures an individual mode of expression, but also composes a collective, cultural and identity manifestation, given the mischief game expressed by the stickers, that involves showing and hiding identity traits from others.

The second group of papers deals mainly with the issues of culture and technological universes and is composed by four texts.

Digital technologies continue to be the focus of the next article, written by Francisco Conrado and Luis Santos. The authors propose a consideration on the growth of the second screen technology, which is a result of the significant increase in investment made by large broadcasters. The analysis, undertaken by the authors, of the existing offer

of this technology, displays second screen's potential as an entertainment product and in the electronic commerce.

Catarina Sales, in her paper, crosses results obtained by the employment of various techniques and, based on such findings, proposes a possible insight into the time intervals that mediate the passage of time while individuals use daily transportation. Putting into perspective the implications of information and communications technologies in the spheres of sociability, labour and other instances, the author debates the ways in which technologies that favour full ownership of time without relevance of the space are treated.

Meanwhile a comparison of Iberian radio stations is the focus of the article written by Teresa Pinero and Fabio Ribeiro. The authors develop an exploratory analysis of the current policies of the main Spanish and Portuguese radios in mobile applications, seeking to assess the degree of interaction and participation mobilised on these platforms. The main findings emphasize that the mobile platforms are, to the traditional FM radios, less of a medium with its own new language and expression and more of a supplementary channel.

Saleta Salvador Agra and Yolanda Martínez Suárez, authors of yet another paper present in this journal, set forth the results of a case study on mobile ontology and indigenous techno-citizenship held with the Shuar indigenous community, located in the southern equatorial province of the Amazon (Zamora Chinchipe), Ecuador. From reflections on ownership of mobile phones by members of this community, the authors highlight and analyse the triggering of a series of idiosyncrasies related to the conception of space-time, as well as to the identity configuration processes of the Shuar people.

In the section "varia", we have inserted two texts which refer more directly the international labor market, the use of digital technologies and the transformations concerning the production relationships at a global level.

Teresa Cristina Furtado Matos e Serge Katembera Rhukuzage deconstruct some of the implicit mechanisms of domination that characterize the relationship between North and South countries. The authors situate their discussion on the issue of information activities. They follow through a discussion about the subjective experiences of bloggers that work for a french firm. They work from African countries without being paid. On the basis of the research, the authors state that those bloggers somehow accept this subordinated place as they envisage their position as temporary and as a time during which they try to gain visibility and social recognition. In this sense, the text leaves several pertinent questions that allow us to reflect about how production relations are entangled in a global world oriented to the perationalization of neoliberal presupposes as regards capitalization and circulation of knowledge and information.

Izabela Wagner crosses several methodological approaches and brings us an article that, in a way, summarises the main issues around which lie the previous texts, and explains the unspoken facets implied in the mobility of researchers, especially those who move from Europe to the United States in search of better career conditions and, as a consequence, recognition. Participant observation, along with information retrieved from interviews, are the empirical aspects that build an approach to the mobility of researchers.

Said approach shows the difficulty of researchers to find fair selection and promotion mechanisms in the United States, given the differences that they demonstrate regarding the so called “ancillary features”, i.e. qualities which, although not directly included in the scientific work, end up influencing the construction of a representation on the competence and suitability for the job.

Finally, we present two analyses of published books. One, written by Diogo Cunha, discusses “Society of Fatigue” by Byung-Chul, and the other, written by Esser Silva, deals with the work “Aesthetic Capitalism in the Age of Globalisation”, by Lipovetski and Serroy. Respecting both works and the context in each production, those reviews close this issue of the journal appropriately, by evidencing two major axis of mobility, and going beyond the emphasis on the media uses: the first one deals with the subjective experience of time and the contradiction of the capital, which makes an effort to extract the maximum financial return on human time; while the second one debates the intrinsic relationship between the financial and global capitalism and aesthetic reconfigurations that, moving accordingly, smoothen the continuity of the consumption and dependence, from micro to macro levels. ✍

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