



Last summer [2010], while having a drink at the "cafés" of the small seaport where I spent my holidays, clients of various ages were connecting their laptops to the Internet and checking their email. I felt as surprised as when, during the first half of the 1990s, in London, I saw passers-by talking on the mobile phone. I knew about these technologies but I was not aware of their massive social use, especially in holiday places or out on the street. Such changes take place extremely fast, but they make us think about the technological, social, economic and cultural causes and consequences of those alterations, which is what I do here. In order to understand them, I work concepts such as relation between transportation, communication and culture (Carey, 1992; Packer, 2006; Urry, 2010), networks (Castells, 2002), consuming places (Urry, 2003), contraction of time and space

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<sup>2</sup> Paper presented at 6th Annual Communication Graduate Caucus (CGC), Conference *Neglected Media*, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, March 2011.

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(Virilio, 1995, 1996; Urry, 2003), public and private life (Flichy, 1995), strong and weak bonds (Urry, 2010; Castells, 2002) and cultures of speed, mobility and hypermobility (Urry, 2003, 2010; Vannini, 2009), and their prosthesis, extensions (McLuhan, 1997) and biomechanical additions (Virilio, 1995).



**Paul Virilio**

The text seeks to understand the relationship between means of communication and transportation in society and stresses the impact of new electronic devices on people's lives and, especially, on their holidays and free time. Having as a base the empirical observation and the readings already done, my text stems from two ideas as theoretical hypothesis, the first one being that people, while on a nomadic life during their holidays, do not abandon routine tasks such as checking their email. The second one is that, in spite of the fact that the postmodern idea of global village means similarity, each place is different, which makes people travel to know them. Although unable to produce a scientific confirmation, due to the casual and superficial contact with reality, I detected two types in the observation: short connection time, use of computer for useful purposes (email, social networks). Besides the computer, which they carried in hand, indicating that they were going from their place of residence during the holidays to the café, people used the mobile phone. Thus, the esplanade, the café and the garden become places that are also virtual, of contact not only with the people who are sitting at a table or bench, but equally around the world, prolonging the idea of public space in Habermas (1984).

For me, communication and transportation follow distinct but close lines. The starting questions for this text are: which developments in transportation and communications? Which

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permanent reconfigurations in the two activities? In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which are the most important: those in transportation or in media? If the media adopted the possibilities of transportation (mobility, speed), what is the impact? To pursue with an analysis, I evoke curious events from the history of Portuguese media, from my investigation in the area, and recognise the theoretical debt owed to texts by Carey (1992) and Urry (2003, 2010).

I divide the text in three sections, the first of which deals with the emergence of the term communication and its development and separation from transportation. The second section studies the impact of time and space in communication and transportation, while the third and last section reanalyses the articulations between communication and transportation.



### **I) Transportation, communication and media**

In this section, I give emphasis to the relation between media, transportation and society. I look at the value of the noun *communication*, of its common use to differentiation, mobility and technologies. I start with Carey (1992), who observed the use of that noun to designate transportation and communication. In the same sense, I defend the broad use of the word communication, which includes that of the media.

James Carey (1992: 18) talks about two distinct notions of communication: *transmission* (the extension of messages through geography with the purpose of control) and *ritual* (sacred ceremony which unites individuals in the community and solidarity). The same author also considers as central the idea of the transmission of long-distance signals or messages with the purpose of security (Carey, 1992: 15). From the perspective of transmission, the newspaper is seen as a means of disseminating news and knowledge, sometimes *divertissement* (in the original), long distance; from the perspective of ritual, it shows and confirms a general idea of the world, it portrays the forces struggling in the world (Carey, 1992: 20).

Carey revealed the importance of the telegraph, which made transmission of information independent from the physical means of transportation (Carey, 1992: 15), making one of his attentive readers, Jeremy Packer, (2006: 79), alter the equilibrium of the relation. Packer writes that transportation has become increasingly more independent from communication, considering the same issues of control (speed) and security. For example, aviation has become safer with the radio, but its application determined the limits of what is considered safe to travel (Packer, 2006:87). Since the use of the automobile is more individual than that of other means of transportation, such as the airplane, train or ship, it has a specific place in Packer (2006, 2008). The author analyses the evolution in terms of driving an automobile: learning to obtain a driver's license, traffic rules, and its presence in films, television and the press. Safety regarding driving risks has less to do with real dangers than with the drivers' identities. Furthermore, it indicates that there are specific cultural values associated to automobile driving and its dangers: women drivers, motorcyclists, lorry drivers, hitchhiking.

Another idea I consider essential is that of mobility, inherent to transportation, communication and the media. The new use of media as I described at the beginning of the text entails a complementary mobility: that of having holidays far from home and the need to have permanent virtual contact. Urry (2010: 45), in order to define what he means by paradigm of mobility, emphasizes those objects with different availabilities concerning mobility. Thus, he distinguishes objects in terms of being *fixed* in a place (railway, hotel), temporarily *parked* (automobile in the garage, rocket at the launch pad), *portable* (book), *bodily linked* (walkman, watch), *prosthetic* (pacemaker, mobile phone), *constituent* of a system of mobility (automobile, airplane). If Vannini (2009: 5) centres mobility in a historical period marked by an individual's daily transport to ever greater distances, by the gradual increase of distance between the workplace and the place of residence, until we reach nomadism during the holidays (he also calls hyperautomobility to this situation), Urry stresses that forms of mobility have radical effects in the way individuals *experience* the modern world, an aesthetic reflexivity of what surrounds them. On writing about tourism and the social organisation of the trip, Urry analyses organisational innovations, such as the potential leisure brought by the growth of railways, the voucher system of the first tour operator, Thomas Cook, the emergence of hotels in the cities' centres at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Transportation technologies associate themselves with new social interests related to leisure and the

discovery of places. Very close to us, the massification of low-cost flights created new needs to travel with itineraries made almost on an individual basis.



**MP 3**

Bissel (2009) analyses the relation between media and transportation, especially the train. By presenting the train trip as something occurring in a public space, where conflict and cohesion can coexist, he stresses the enjoyment of the observed landscape when travelling by the window and passengers' responsibility and sociability and relationship among strangers in a closed space, bodies that occupy a space close to other bodies (Bissel, 2009:68). On the other hand, he emphasizes the use of the mp3, capable of creating a private area close to other people, and refers to the fact that mobile phone conversations may irritate other passengers close by. To this panoply, I add smells (perfumes, body odours). I register here one of the first results of my reflection: the interconnection between transportation and communication, in which one area gets support from the other, rather than considering one dependent on the other. Communication frees itself from physical transmission (transportation) but advertises landscapes, which make an individual travel in a physical mode of transportation.

On a closer register to media and communication, Flichy (1995) associates the evolution of the means of transport with the genesis of technical networks and the circulation of inventions (roads, harbours, the telegraph, electricity, the radio and television), and delineates a history of media and transportation in three periods: State and market communication (1790-1870), familiar (1870-1930) and global (1930 onwards). From the titles of the stages, it is easy to perceive the relations between individuals and society, the privatisation of the means and their universal extension. Communication and transportation

networks grow and adapt to the needs of social groups and individuals. From his point of view, Virilio (1995: 67) identifies three revolutions: transportation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (rail system, automobile, and aviation), transmission of electromagnetic waves in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the radio, video), transplants (and implants), at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, new technologies in transportation mean namely comfort and speed. For Virilio (1996), speed brought about profound changes. While with the media technologies such as photography and cinema, the world's vision became objective, greater speed in means of transportation, such as the high-speed train, translates itself in a reduction of time and space, resulting in a loss of the correct vision of the landscape that is observable from the window of the mode of transportation (Virilio, 1996: 34).

Packer (2006) dedicated special attention to the means that developed due to the new needs felt by transportation, for contact and control, such as the telegraph, the radio, the radar, GPS (Global Positioning Systems), *via verde* (green lane), mobile phone, virtual reality teaching. They were not created specifically to complement transportation, since they have their own explicit functions, such as the telegraph and the radio, both used to transmit information, one from point to point with particular data and with only one sender and one receiver, operating in a public place, and another addressed to many receivers, who hear in their own homes music programmes and news. But such means were extremely important to control schedules, especially the telegraph (McLuhan, 1997: 250; Flichy, 1995: 39; Carey, 1992: 201-202).

Carey (1992: 153), who studies Harold Innis, stresses the importance of New York and its railway. Already a centre of the information systems and commerce with the north of the country, Canada and Europe, the city becomes more dominant with the opening of the transcontinental line. The information and culture routes trace the railway lines and the river routes, even before those of the motorways and airways. Local culture would become national and international, with the generalisation of goods such as cinema, newspapers and television, spreading from the centre – New York (Carey, 1992: 154).

Winston (2005: 8) adds complexity when referring to prototypes before the success of an invention, separating them in either rejected or accepted, and in concentration of social forces interested in an innovation. For example, television was suggested in 1877, but at that time there were no applications for the project to come into being. The same happened with

computers and mobile phones, with their consequent applications. The same applies to the prototypes of transportation technologies. The globalisation we all talk about so much today began as a set of computers linked to the stock exchange of several countries, enabling people to make an immediate transaction anywhere in the world and at any time. Before being physical, globalisation existed thanks to the lines of virtual communication. Prior to that globalisation, there are urban centres, as Castells (2002) identifies.

Transportation and communication have an interconnected existence. Both activities generate communities, strong when they are real (public transportation, highways completely jammed during the week-end, going back to Godard's film) and weak (surfing the social networks at the café's computer).

## **II) Time and space**

Time and space are categories that are explored by sociologists and philosophers who have studied transportation, communication and the media. I now make a brief reflection, presenting authors such as Simmel (2001), Foucault (2009), McLuhan (1997), Virilio (1995, 1996), Urry (2003) and Castells (2002). Simmel (2001: 35) points out punctuality, calculability and exactitude imposed by metropolitan life and he admits that, if all the clocks in Berlin suddenly broke down, even for only one hour, the disruption in the entire commercial and economic life would have a lasting effect. Foucault (2009: 145) refers to the fact that time used (and paid) has its quality measured by the absolute control and annulment of anything that might disrupt and distract, with the body applied to its exercise; thus the need for the authority to exercise regularity and accuracy. If the clock defines the seasonal rhythms of men and becomes an instrument of synchronisation for human work (McLuhan, 1997: 153) and an indicator of business discipline (Giddens, 2000: 356), the network society leads to the fragmentation of linear, irreversible and predictable time (Castells, 2002: 561). In this synthesis, there is the picture of the succession of a rural economy to an urban one and of the latter to an informational one.

McLuhan makes it known that free time is not the same as leisure, for this one does not accept the division of work tasks, an argument I contest. For me, there are similarities between consumption times and work times, with an attenuation of boundaries. The geographical distance that increases with holiday travelling is reduced by the electronic

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proximity of the computer or mobile phone, with an opposite movement of contraction and expansion that is useful for my perspective. Thus, we could apply, although in another sense, Virilio's (1996) distinction between sedentary and the modern (rediscovered) state of nomadic. The tourist, as a new nomad, frees himself from the constraints of time, punctuality and repetition of tasks. But he does not abandon completely useful and routine activities, such as the case of the client at the café who checks his electronic mail.

In John Urry (2003: 23), the compression of time and space leads to fragmentation and disorientation, what is meant by postmodernism. Among other explanations, he talks about the lesser durability of products, contracts and relationships, in the ephemeral nature of fashion, in the growing weight of advertising, culture of promotion, simulation techniques and information technologies. But, to the collapse of space, by its reduction, and contrary to the global village (McLuhan), where everything seems similar, Urry observes the perception that each place (neighbourhood, city, region) strives for the affirmation of its specificities, by presenting itself as attractive to investors, employers and tourists. In another of his books, Urry (2010) highlights mobility as having four types: hypermobility, the moving crowd (mob), social mobility, and mobility in the sense of migration and other types of geographic mobility. On the other hand, Vannini (2009: 7) highlights objects and situations associated to mobility: drink machines, telephone connections and access points to the Internet, as floating meanings of everything that is liquefied, compressed, nomad and globalised in contemporary culture, a sequence of Berman's (1989) and Bauman's (2007) thought, especially of the latter, who establishes the distinction between solid modernity (stable, repetitive) and liquid modernity (flexible and fickle), when individuals are predisposed to abandon commitments and loyalties.

If Benjamin (2001) separates office from home, work place from the place where one lives, Castells (2002) prefers to point out commercial neighbourhoods as production plants of value based on information and where the head-offices of big enterprises and the financial activity acquire a substantial weight, that is, production and management networks (Castells, 2002: 503). Urban issues, human geography and spaces were the first work fields of Manuel Castells; that is why he frequently uses metaphors related to transportation and media, such as the Net. Castells (2002: 470-471), who writes about strong links in the real community as opposed to weak links in the Net, analyses in another book the compression of time (fluctuations in the financial markets) and space (opposite conditions of employment and unemployment) (Castells and Catterall, 2002: 23).

Space in the city has a special place for writers, with Calvino (2008) describing a man who travels and does not yet know the city that awaits him and, along the way, asks himself how will it be the royal palace, the barracks, the mill, the theatre, the bazaar, and Ribeiro (2010), who sees the city not from the perspective of the tourist, marvelled by the architecture or the gastronomy, but by objects of culture. As for myself, I like to think of the cities and commercial and creative European neighbourhoods, that I know better, whose historic and cultural stratification are a world reference. The individual, who goes on holidays, looks for the city, the countryside or the beach, with a distinction between work and leisure, will try to accommodate the divisions perceived in the previous lines and rearrange them. I notice a distinction in the two experiences described at the beginning of the text. That of the mobile phones means the liberation of communication in relation to the place, but the use of the computer with access to the Internet at the café means the implosion of the place (lack of differentiation of space) in relation to communication, in which transportation represents the differentiating factor. I apply Urry's (2003) notion of specificity of places to the idea of the tourist who is in another place that is not his own but performs similar tasks, such as checking electronic mail. Urry (2010: 166) highlights the importance of networking and keeping face-to-face contact as important factors in the working world, which does not have a defined place and is replaced by the organisation of informal "clubs", of conversation, brainstorming and rumours, such as the café, a space for meeting and working, where colleagues, professionals and clients have conversations. In a network, distinctions between social and professional life, friends, colleagues and clients disappear or become attenuated. In the following lines I try to justify such assertions.

### **III) Examples of articulations between communication, media and transportation**

To the interconnection between communication, media and transportation and urban spaces conjugated with the division of time, I call *extramedia*, *horizontal* level. Through this interconnection we understand the existing two-way relation, although with dependence of transportation in relation to communication. I would like now to organise my empirical assessment at another theoretical level, that of the articulation of the media with other media (the telegraph, the radio, newspapers) and the impact of the newspaper in television news (disseminate information, follow the agenda), as if it were an *intermedia* movement, a *vertical* line.

Without abandoning transportation, I bring some relevance to communication and the media and how the latter portray the former and recall some historical occurrences of the media in Portugal (the radio, television), coordinated with means of transport. The first one is about Abílio Nunes dos Santos Júnior, owner of Grandes Armazéns do Chiado [Chiado's big storehouse] (Lisbon) and weaving factories, a sportsman [in the Campo Grande race track (Lisbon) he drove a Bugatti and achieved second place in the 1932 race, at an average speed of 93.948 kilometres, or 58.37 miles] and with a radio station broadcasting between 1924 and 1938. When there were breakdowns at CT1AA, the station's code, the press would announce the suspension of the programmes (Santos, 2005: 236). In order to buy equipment, such as microphones and electronic valves, he travelled by ship, quite frequently, from Portugal to the United States. His record collection would reach two thousand records, a quantity that was considered extremely high in those days.

The second story happened in the summer of 1935, when announcer Fernando Pessa was told that he had to do work outside the studio, with the microphone hanging on his neck to describe a festival of acrobat pilots near Lisbon. Pessa did not speak the language of the winner pilot, so he improvised a translation of the pilot's comments. He was afraid of being fired, but when he got back to the station he was praised for being able to get around the problem and for his sense of humour (Santos, 2005: 306). Pessa would become known, during the Second World War, as the Portuguese announcer at BBC international.

Later, in February 1957, English Queen Elizabeth II came (went) to Portugal on an official visit. Since regular emissions of RTP, the Portuguese Public Broadcasting Service would start on the following month, BBC and ITV brought coverage teams. Ahead of time, the BBC prepared the places the queen would visit. A 30-metre reel film was made, with shots produced in strategic places. A jet plane from the British Air Force waited at the Lisbon airport for the arrival of a courier with that and other films made by English cameramen. Three hours later, England was watching images of the queen in Lisbon (Teves, 2007).

These three events show, on the one hand, experimentation, the unexpected and improvisation and, on the other, the new organisation and the division of tasks, guaranteeing the growth of mobility with live and taped events. Between these events, there were important developments in transportation and its associated networks. I remember one, highly promoted by the media (cinema, television and billboards), the scooter, geared for

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university students and women, easy to drive and park in cities where road traffic is becoming extremely dense (Rodrigues, 2010). The popularisation of the scooter (Vespa, Lambretta) happened at the same time as the appearance of the bikini (1946), the new look by Christian Dior (1947), the first portable radio by Sony (1954), washing machines, vacuum cleaners and record players. Sachs publicity in 1956 said: “This is the scooter that is demanded everywhere in the world by Ladies, Priests, and Gentlemen of all classes”. Cinema would also popularise the scooter, such as in the film *Roman Holiday*, in which Audrey Hepburn appears wobblingly driving a scooter, immediately aided by Gregory Peck.



If the scooter represents the massification of mobility, although at fairly short distances (with no luggage carrier as the automobile and of limited speed, which reduces autonomy), the portability and miniaturisation of the transistor radio, first, and the mp3 afterwards, have the same meaning of limited autonomy in terms of space. The radio was no longer used only indoors, in the living-room of the sedentary bourgeois home, a habit created during the 1930s to the 1950s, and became a moving, wandering, nomadic practice. Nowadays, speed fragmented programmes (Urry, 2003: 22) and they can be heard or seen at different times (podcasting, video). It was the beginning of hypermobility (Urry, 2010; Vannini, 2009).

In Portugal, the use of the transistor radio to listen to *Simplesmente Maria* [*Simply Mary*] (1973-1974), a soap opera, took sociologists and media analysts completely by surprise. Transmitted by Rádio Renascença, with five hundred episodes, Maria’s story, an unwed mother before ascending from a small town seamstress to becoming the owner of a chain of stores in the capital, would provoke strong interaction with the public. In the soap opera,  
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when Maria marries, listeners sent to the radio station a pair of gold wedding bands (Maia, 1995: 210). After, when she has a son, listeners sent 48 layettes, once more to the radio station. Fiction and reality got intertwined, at a time when the country was undergoing a profound alteration of political regime (from the fifty year-old dictatorship to a parliamentary democracy). At that time, portable radios came with loudspeakers (and not with earphones), which forced listeners to keep the radio close to their ears, so that they could listen properly – when they didn't raise the volume of the sound, high enough to share it with other listeners, as if it were a new type of public space.

The media, as in transportation, acquired the restlessness and nomadism that were characteristic of populations throughout the centuries, and which tourism is bringing back. Or their mobility, transportation's favourite term, now applied to communication and digital convergence, resulting in the metaphors of "Information Highway" and "Net", this last one associated with the fusions of telecommunications enterprises during the 1980's (Brigg and Burke, 2002: 268). Flichy (2007: 22), when referring to the history of the United States, compares the automobile society with the infrastructure of the information society, both built by the government, one and the other utopias that link work and entertainment.

### **Conclusions**

From the readings and reflections of what was empirically observed, two central ideas emerged. On the one hand, in spite of the nomadism of the holidays, the individual does not abandon his activities; on the other, he performs them in distinct places, although the postmodern contraction of time and space may predict that all places are similar and indistinguishable. There has been a common development to means of communication and transportation, aimed at speed and improvement of the objects in terms of comfort (transportation) and ubiquity (electronic). Thus, in my understanding, they continue as distinct activities, without one becoming subordinated to the other, with communication aiding transportation, such as the GPS, and transportation making adaptations to the media possible, such as the mp3. Media show new places and experiences, that individuals complement by travelling to those places – which proves that the virtual needs the real, and vice-versa. The fact that activities, which until now were considered to belong to the world of work (having access to the Internet to answer e-mail), have spread to holiday places, highlights two situations: a diminishing of boundaries between work and leisure; holiday places, in spite of

offering tranquillity and/or activities that are different from the world of work, want to compete as places that have the comfort of modern communication offering, free of charge, Internet services to attract tourists.

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