Spatial Mobility in Social Theory

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Abstract. While the concept of 'mobility' lends itself to a variety of metaphorical meanings, 'spatial mobility' is in fact poorly theorized in the history of sociology. Nonetheless, it plays an underrated role in the theories of all the classics of the discipline: Marx and Engels, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, and the Chicago School. The paper explores the role of 'spatial mobility' in these classics and its re-emerging importance in more recent social theory. The influence of geography is highlighted, as John Urry's 'mobility turn' draws on the earlier 'spatial turn' of human geographers. After reviewing the controversy about the use of mobility as a conceptual framework for the analysis of migration, the paper calls for stronger attention to the spatial dimension of human life in sociological theory altogether, rather than confining 'mobility' to a specific research field and, ultimately, treating it as yet another dependent variable to be accounted for.

Keywords. Mobility, space, social theory, migration.

The concept of 'mobility' is frequently used in a number of areas of sociological research, yet with different meanings. One way of defining mobility, which aligns with common sense, is a movement in physical space. 'Mobility' thus describes travels, tourism, migration, and commuting, quite a diverse array of phenomena in terms of geographical span, temporal duration and individual motivations. Nonetheless, they share an essence – being 'sociological facts formed spatially', to borrow Georg Simmel's original formula (Bagnasco 1999). For such social actions, the geographical component – the 'places' where they occur (Gieryn 2000) – is key. There are, however, non-physical spaces that are of paramount importance in social life. After Pierre Bourdieu (1993), we call them 'fields': arenas of competitive interactions to gain or preserve access to particular resources. Examples are the economic-occupation field (that is, the social structure), the political field (that is, in democracies, the political system in which parties and candidates compete for offices), the affective field (that is, the sphere of personal relationships). In all these instances, the spatial dimension of 'fields' is merely metaphorical, yet it helps to outline the capacity of actors to change their relative position vis-à-vis others. Thus, the term 'mobility' has been adopted to denote social phenomena that have no geographical anchorage but nonetheless express some change in a relational system. In the three fields mentioned above, there is 'social mobility,' a shift among positions within the social structure; 'political mobility,' a change in voters' preferences; and 'affective mobility,' a move from one romantic relationship to another. According to Michael

Walzer (1990: 11-12), along with freedom of spatial mobility, these three forms of mobility substantiate liberal societies[1]. The study of mobility is therefore a way of dealing with the nuts and bolts of social life in the modern age. Spatial mobility, in turn, seems to be the more quintessential form – one can hardly imagine social life without human movements.

SPATIAL MOBILITY AMONG THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF SOCIOLOGY

While mostly neglected in traditional accounts of their thought, insights on 'spatial mobility' can be found among all the classics of sociology of the late 19th-early 20th century: Marx and Engels, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel.

To start with, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels[2] are deeply aware of the role of population movements in the emergence of capitalism. In its early stage, industrialization demands workers as an instrument of profit-making and pulls them away from the countryside (Engels 1962: 119; Marx 1961: 632). Lenin and Luxembourg (and others in their footsteps, like world-system theorists) point out that, in a more advanced stage of capitalism (the imperialist phase, in Marxist terminology), such a demand for an exploitable workforce concerns less developed countries. Immigration feeds the 'industrial reserve army', the main lever of the exploitation of the working class, which in turn forms the *sine qua non* of capitalism in all its manifestations (Castles and Kosack 1973).

On top of this, Marx recognizes an additional function of an internationally mobile workforce: divide proletarians and thus weaken their potential for class consciousness and action. In 1870, Marx evokes the enmity between the English working class and immigrant Irish workers as well as the confrontation between poor white workers and black slaves in the US:

Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker

he regards himself as a member of the ruling nation and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is much the same as that of the "poor whites" to the Negroes in the former slave states of the U.S.A. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rulers in Ireland (Marx 1975: 224).

According to Marxist thinkers, there is a further advantage for capitalists in these immigration-related discords within the working class:

The antagonism between Englishmen and Irishmen is the hidden basis of the conflict between the United States and England. It makes any honest and serious co-operation between the working classes of the two countries impossible. It enables the governments of both countries, whenever they think fit, to break the edge off the social conflict by their mutual bullying, and, in case of need, by war between the two countries (Pröbsting 2015: 333).

Eventually, international migration depresses the possibilities of internationalism – that is, the original scenario of a Communist revolution as envisaged in Marx and Engels' *Manifesto*[3].

Population mobility stands out as a chief interest of Max Weber as an empirical sociologist involved in the research activities of the *Verein für Socialpolitik* in the 1890s. Central to the Verein's interest was the immigration of Poles into the North-Eastern areas of Germany and their consequent displacement of German-speaking peasants, as landlords relied on them as a cheaper immigrant workforce. The spatial mobility of the Poles therefore triggered the out-migration of Germans, many of whom ended up moving to the Americas (Abraham 1991). Weber points out that, by replacing traditional relationships in which land-owners cared about their farm workers, capitalism in rural settings accelerated both class struggle and the loss of (German, in that case) national identity. In Weber's analysis, population mobility is a force of social and cultural disorganization, revealing the latent conflict between cultural groups that is at the core of social life. Incidentally, the so-called

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[1] To be precise, Walzer uses the term 'marital' rather than 'affective' mobility. Changes in norms about personal relationships in more recent decades suggest replacing this adjective, as marriage is no longer the exclusive institutional framework of couple formation and recognition in the Western world.

[2] Possibly, Engels touched upon the issue of human mobility before Marx, in his 1845 book on the condition of the working class in England.

[3] An original argument for the capitalists' interest in boosting international mobility is to be found in a less well-known Russian Marxist, Evgenij Preobrazenskij (silenced by Stalin's purges in the 1930s), who claimed that alienation and pauperization would progressively exclude larger parts of the workforce from the labour market: 'This immobilization of a growing part of the pauperized native unemployed encourages the capitalists to look for more mobile, less demoralized labor forces—the migrants' (Pröbsting 2015, 335).

'Polish question' is a litmus test of Weber's normative positioning in defence of German nationalism and, at a more general level, his commitment to a 'national image of society' (ibid.: 47; see also Mommsen 1990).

Even though he does not speak about it explicitly, spatial mobility plays a key part in one of Emile Durkheim's most famous theories. In a crucial passage of *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), the French sociologist imputes the rise of 'moral density' in modern societies, from which the division of labour ultimately depends, to the intensification of social interactions stemming from immigration into cities and the development of transportation means (Durkheim 1933: 258 and 291-2). The capacity of moving more rapidly and at longer distances is the root cause of further social and cultural differentiation: "the greater mobility of social units which these phenomena of migration suppose causes a weakening of all traditions" (ibid.: 293). Durkheim insists further on the liberating effect of geographical mobility: mobile people – who form the backbone of great cities – are "freed from the action of the old" (ibid.: 295). The same idea is later reformulated in the discussion of the 'organic solidarity' of modern societies. Durkheim predicates it on individual autonomy, which in turn is enhanced by spatial mobility:

More mobile, he [the modern individual] changes his environment more easily, leaves his people to go elsewhere to live a more autonomous existence, to a greater extent forms his own ideas and sentiments (ibid.: 400).

Among the classics of sociology, Georg Simmel has a prominent place as precursor of research on spatial mobility. In particular, his 1903 essays *The Sociology of Space* and *On the Spatial Projections of Social Forms* (later merged and revised as a single chapter in his *Sociology* of 1908) and his most famous essay *The Stranger* (written as an add-on to that chapter) point out that spatial mobility creates the conditions for otherwise impossible social relations. By joining physical proximity and cultural distance, strangers' encounters with natives are an epitome of the sociological outcomes of mobility. More generally, "humanity – Simmel writes (2009, 587) – achieves the existence that we know only through its mobility". Mobility promotes social differentiation, and particularly "wandering individualizes and isolates in and of itself" (ibid.: 590). Thus, the rise of individual mobility in space goes hand in hand with "the extraordinary increase in the difference of needs among modern people" (ibid.: 589). As is typical of Simmel, however, these two tendencies – the rise of mobility and social differentiation – are intertwined but have ambivalent outcomes. On the one hand, migration enhances auton-

omy and individualization, but on the other it makes people more vulnerable and therefore in demand of solidarity and protection. This explains the bonding force of ethnic diasporas, which – like in the paradigmatic case of the Jews – are at the same time containers of highly individualized persons and remarkably tight communities. Simmel's thoughts touch also upon a very contemporary issue: the relationship between technical progress and spatial mobility. His rather paradoxical view is that travelling has become somewhat less necessary than in the Middle Ages:

What we gain in consciousness of solidarity through letters and books, checking accounts and warehouses, mechanical reproduction of the same model and photography had to be done at the time through travel by persons (ibid.: 594).

The expansion of large-scale travels since the second half of the 20th century has partly disproved this. Travel-friendly technologies have gained enormous traction since Simmel's times, and travel-saving technologies (like the telephone and the Internet) have been more incentives than brakes to mobility until recently (Urry 2007: 21). However, as we will discuss further, it is not impossible that in the future environmental concerns may eventually contribute to the use of technology – virtual reality, for instance – to curb rather than increase human mobilities.

THE CHICAGO SCHOOL: MIGRATION AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN THE CITY

As is well known, Simmel's influence has been particularly strong in the development of urban sociology, given the popularity of his essay on *The Metropolis and Mental Life*. After Simmel, urban sociology was largely constructed in reference to rural ethnology (Agier 1996), framing the city as an environment that is defined by mobility and social distance, as opposed to the notions of roots and community that are associated with rural space. Even though the radical asymmetry between a sedentary rural space and a nomadic urban space is historically unfounded, this opposition explains the centrality of mobility in the analysis of urban phenomena. Like European sociologists, for the Chicago school, mobility embodies the spirit of modernity. Thus, for William I. Thomas, the mobile man forges universal and abstract knowledge and diverse social abilities, while the knowledge of the sedentary man (the peasant) is local, practical and based on 'personal acquaintances' (Thomas 1909, 169). Thomas in some way already makes the distinction between strong and weak ties (Granovet-

ter 1974) on the one hand, and mobility capital vs. local capital on the other (Renahy 2010).

The urban ecology approach, forged by Robert E. Park, emerged in the particular context of intense demographic growth that marked the beginning of the twentieth century in North American cities, especially Chicago. The term ecology refers to the city as an ecosystem encompassing heterogeneous entities that are interconnected through a complex set of social and spatial relations. Specifically, Park defines the city as an 'institution' that includes:

The places and the people, with all the machinery, sentiments, customs and administrative devices that goes with it, public opinions and street railways, the individual man and the tools that he uses, as something more than a mere collective entity (Park 1915: 577).

This results, according to Park, in the fact that "the city possesses a moral as well as a physical organization" (ibid.: 578), the adjective 'moral' referring to a set of socio-demographic characteristics, dispositions, habits and lifestyles that would be described today as 'social' or 'cultural.'

Thus, urban ecology is interested in the way that different entities (social but also material) that make up the city are distributed spatially, with the hypothesis that the spatial organization of the city reflects its social organization:

Physical and sentimental distances reinforce each other, and the influences of local distribution of population participate with the influences of class and race in the evolution of the social organization (ibid., 578).

It is in this sense that the city can be thought of as a 'social laboratory': at once a microcosm – a miniature society that can be observed by the naked eye (which explains the importance of ethnographic methods and the empirical nature of the Chicago School approach) – and a novel historical context of urban growth (Burgess 1925).

The diversity of city-dwellers and the way in which the city organizes this melting pot is of central importance in the perspective of the Chicago sociologists, which explains their interest in immigrant communities. For William I. Thomas and Florian Znanecki, who offered one of the very first large-scale studies of international migration with *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1996 [1918]), immigrant status represents a particularly interesting lens for understanding the interrelated process of normative 'disorganization' and 'reorganization' that is generated by mobility. Thus, for Burgess:

Disorganization as preliminary to reorganization of attitudes and conduct is almost invariably the lot of the newcomer to the city, and the discarding of the habitual, and often of what has been to him the moral, is not infrequently accompanied by sharp mental conflict and sense of personal loss (Burgess 1925: 38).

The social and spatial segregation of immigrants results, in this context, from the incompatibility of new immigrants' norms with the new environment, supposedly only temporary (Park 1914). For Burgess, it is a 'natural' process by which individuals are integrated into the large urban body:

This differentiation into natural economic and cultural groupings gives form and character to the city. For segregation offers the group, and thereby the individuals who compose the group, a place and role in the total organization of city life (Burgess 1925: 39).

This assimilationist perspective has been largely criticized since the 1960s and 1970s for two reasons. First, because the systemic and political dimension of segregation is largely omitted by the naturalist approach of the Chicago sociologists. Second, because the persistence of segregation strongly undermines the hypothesis that it is merely a transitory phenomenon (Heisler 2007). Moreover, analysing mobility as the 'transplantation' (Thomas et al. 1921) of populations from one environment to another has been vigorously challenged by the transnational approach (Glick-Schiller et al. 1995).

Yet, by focusing on the settlement process of new populations, their reciprocal relationships as well as norms, values and the process of social iteration that follows international mobility, the Chicago School made a fundamental contribution to establishing sociology of migration (Réa et Tripier 2008) and paved the way for numerous fields, from theories of segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001) to the social construction of ethnic identity (Barth 1969; Alba 1985).

'TAKING SPACE SERIOUSLY': THE SPATIAL TURN IN SOCIAL THEORY

Historically, more than sociology it is human geography that focuses on the mobility of individuals and populations in physical space. Since the 1950s, this discipline's core aim is to study the role of distance in the functioning of social organization (Claval 1991). Indeed, it is a human geographer, David Harvey (1989), who first popularized the idea of 'time-space compression' as the

hallmark of our age, for the joint effect of technical progress in transportation and telecommunications and the international expansion of capitalism. In turn, such a 'compression' acts as the playground of globalization[4].

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new research agenda in the social sciences called the 'spatial turn' highlighted the role of space in history, sociology and in the production of inequalities (Massey 1994; Harvey 1996; Soja 1989). More broadly, this spatial shift arose from a new interest in space and time, with roots both in social theory and radical geography. The latter emerged in the late 1960s with American geographers David Harvey, Neil Smith and Edward Soja and the British geographer Doreen Massey. This geography is 'radical' in two respects: first, because it diverges strongly from any reference to physical geography, space being defined as relational rather than material. And second, because this perspective argues that space contributes to producing and reproducing power structures, in a particularly strategic way. Radical geography emerged in the context of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and feminist struggles, as a counter power to official geography (Gintrac 2012). This field became more structured and grew in popularity in the 1980s and 1990s. Adopting a critical Marxist perspective, these geographers thus reaffirmed the importance of considering the spatial dimension of society and the social construction of space, at a time when space seemed to be increasingly compressed and when the concept of globalization emerged and the shift towards political neo-liberalism occurred in Western countries.

The thought of radical geographers and the concept of 'time-space compression' developed by Harvey (1989) resonate with the social theory developed by Giddens about the process of 'time-space distanciation' (Giddens 1979). This refers to the expansion of social interactions through increasingly large distances. It also describes the fact that modern Western culture has introduced a distinction between the notions of space and time, a distinction that has enabled the 'emptying' of these notions. This explains, according to Giddens, why the terms were often apprehended by the social sciences as simple 'containers' of human activity. Thus, Giddens is interested in historical time in order to show that it is not the 'natural' result of linear time that is passing, but the product of accumulated social dynamics that make up society. By forging his theory of social structure, Giddens

(1979) wants to break with American functionalism by arguing that social systems do not have necessary functions, but are rather the result of specific historical and social trajectories. A similar perspective is developed by Henri Lefebvre (1974; 1986) with the regressive-progressive method, which is based on the principle that social facts must be analysed at once 'horizontally' and 'vertically,' meaning through present (the 'analytical-regressive' phase) but also past (the 'historical-genetic' phase) structural arrangements. Moreover, both authors devote a central place to practices. For Giddens, "all social action consists of social practices, situated in time-space, and organised in a skilled and knowledgeable fashion by human agents" (Giddens 1981: 92). Thus, structured social systems are "simultaneously medium and outcomes of social acts" (ibidem) via individual practices. For this reason, social interactions, which can now take place across large distances and between social units which were before relatively independent from each other, fundamentally disrupt the process of social structure for Giddens. For Lefebvre, the notion of 'globality' represents above all an expansion of existing power relations, and thus an extension of the hegemony of the dominant Western classes. It is in daily practices, to the contrary, that we find a potential for resistance and change:

> *A revolution happens when people (not only a class) no longer want to live and no longer can live like before. So they are unleashed and invent (by seeking) another way of life* (Lefebvre 1986: 112).

Despite being controversial, even within geography, what could have been called the 'spatial turn' thus initially comes from a critical re-examination of time and space as fundamental social constructs that have been neglected in social theories:

> *One of the most general underlying notions in all my arguments is that time-space relations have to be brought into the very heart of social theory, in ways in which they have not been previously* (Giddens 1981: 91).

For Lefebvre as well, the analysis of the spatial-temporal dimensions of societies is essential for understanding the way they work, particularly capitalist society: "the mode of production organises – produces – simultaneously with certain social relationships – its space and its time. In this way it fulfils itself" (Lefebvre 1986, IX). The early analyses of Lefebvre and Giddens thus call for 'taking space seriously' in social theory (Gieryn 2000) by investigating the real spatial consequences of globalization and in particular the power processes at work. It is therefore quite logical that these perspectives

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[4] Radical versions of this idea foresee the 'end of distance' in social relations, in analogy with the organization of the global financial system, in which investments flow electronically and boundlessly. This vision of a deterritorialized world, originally put forward by Deleuze and Guattari (1980), is empirically unsubstantiated and unconvincing, especially at a time of returning nationalisms and geopolitical tensions between sovereign states.

have been particularly interested in the social dimension of space, what Lefebvre calls 'social space'[5], and through it, the question of inequalities.

However, up until the mobility turn, the lessons of the spatial turn have been relatively rarely used in sociology, except for urban sociology. The rediscovery of Lefebvre's work by critical geographers in the US has revived interest in this author, particularly around the notion of the right to the city. Similarly, the urban context has been investigated in particular to illustrate Harvey's relational theory of space, departing from the conception of a city as a 'time-space container' (Graham and Healey 1999) that was dominant in the ecological perspective, to describe the uneven character of time-space compression processes. Indeed, the "relational theory of spatio-temporality indicates how different processes can define completely different spatio-temporalities, and so set up radically different identifications of entities, places, relations" (Harvey 1996: 284).

THE EMERGENCE OF A SOCIOLOGY OF MOBILITY: THE MOBILITY TURN

In the wake of the spatial turn, with which it has a number of shared references and concepts, a new approach emerged in the early 2000s: the 'mobility turn'. British sociologist John Urry created a 'mobile sociology' (Urry 2010), intending to surpass the 'static and sedentary' nature of the discipline, and even go beyond the very concept of society (Urry 2000). Thus, Urry criticizes sociology for undermining the importance of spatial mobility, by reducing the notion of mobility to movement between *places*, belonging to the social order, which are both un-situated (occupational categories, for instance, do not contain any indication of space) and static in time and space (Urry 2000). Therefore, the aim is to put mobility at the heart of classic sociological analyses (in particular, social stratification and social mobility), while also applying the precepts of the 'spatial turn' for describing the relational dimension of social life.

More broadly, Urry's 'mobility turn' is meant to be a new paradigm for sociology in late modernity, urging it to focus on the 'flows' rather than the 'structures' underlying social relations. For the mobility turn theorists, mobility is the new dimension through which the 'production of social phenomena' occurs. Indeed, the emergence of digital tools has not erased space, but has rather provided additional opportunities for 'multiple mobilities' – material, human and virtual. It is therefore now

a question of determining the shape of a 'post-society' (Urry 2000) with fluid characteristics (Bauman 2002a), where the notion of motility, meaning the ability to be mobile, is decisive (Kesselring 2006; Kaufmann 2002; Kaufmann et al. 2004).

The originality of Urry's contribution consists in the definition of the forms of mobility (that he simply calls 'mobilities') that substantiate much of social life in late modernity: 'corporeal travels', 'physical movements of objects', 'imaginative travels' (through the passive perceptions of the media), 'virtual travels' (through active interactions with distant places), 'communicative travels' (through letters, phone calls, emails, chats and social media) (Urry 2007: 47). These mobilities are interconnected and amplify each other. For instance, virtual mobilities feed into the aspiration to have face to face contacts rather than replace them. The outcome is an exponential growth of different types of mobilities, and thus of physical movements of individuals across space, with a variety of motives and aims. In this regard, Urry (2007: 10-11) draws the following classification of physical mobilities of individuals:

– asylum, refugee and homeless travel and migration;
– business and professional travel;
– discovery travel of students, au pairs and other young people [...];
– medical travel [...];
– military mobility [...];
– post-employment travel and the forming of transnational life-styles within retirement;
– 'trailing travel' of children, partners, other relatives and domestic servants [...];
– travel and migration [...] within a given diaspora [...];
– travel of service workers [...] including the contemporary flows of slaves [...];
– tourist travel [...];
– visiting friends and relatives [...];
– work-related travel including commuting.

This list encompasses a broad spectrum of behaviours that are usually examined by different areas of sociology. However, at a closer look, it is possibly redundant and hinges on quite shaky logical criteria. Some forms of mobility are identified on the basis of motivations (business, study, health, or military activities). Other forms are ill-defined – how to distinguish 'travel of service workers' from 'professional travel' and 'work-related travel'? Others overlap – for instance, is a Chinese woman following her husband and finding a job abroad a case of 'trailing travel', 'diaspora mobility', or

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[5] As is well known, this concept is also part of Bourdieu's vocabulary, but largely devoid of geographical references.

'work-related mobility'? At the end of the day, Urry does not bother much about a systematic analysis of the types of mobility, which his classification fails to distinguish neatly. His paramount concern is rather with 'systems of mobility' and, in his later work (Elliott and Urry 2010), the consequences of mobility on social actors. Let us thus consider each of these two points in greater detail.

According to Urry, human history is marked by prevailing 'systems of mobility' – possibly, an echo of 'modes of production' in Marxism. Such systems include not only transportation means (physical and virtual: the telephone is a key part of a mobility system as well), but also users, infrastructures, actors that produce and maintain the system, as well as associated symbols and messages. The system of mobility of late modernity hinges around the automobile. Although cars are overlooked by scholars of globalization, Urry contends that their capacity to organize social life and individuals' mobility is pivotal and unsurpassed (albeit increasingly challenged: Dennis and Urry 2009). With the TV set and the personal computer, the automobile is the icon of the second half of the twentieth century. To begin with, Urry (2007: 115) notes that "one billion cars were manufactured during this last century and there are currently between 500-600m cars roaming the world". Industrial production has largely evolved after changes in the production system of the automobile sector. Conceptually, 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism' reflect the primacy of the automobile industry in shaping the dominant mode of production. And there is more. 'Automobility', as Urry calls it, has totally altered human habitats. Landscapes and natural environments have been transformed by highways, parking lots, bridges and shopping places that are tailor-made for car users. Moreover, the expansion of access to private cars has entailed an individualization of mobility, which triggers an emerging sense of apparent personal control of space and time. Echoing Baudrillard (1968), Urry underlines that automobiles are a promise of unprecedented autonomy for human beings. Having a car means access to (almost) any place, without particular help from or coordination with the rest of society. This potential of freedom goes hand in hand with the personalization of the vehicle, which leverages on the aspiration to status and distinction of consumers (Bourdieu 1983). In sum, the automobile epitomizes the key material object *and* the foundational ideology of advanced capitalism: speed, individual control of time and space, personal freedom, and the idea that identity expresses itself through consumption choices. Each system of mobility, however, yields 'scapes' that co-determine individual action and culture with unintended effects. 'Automobility' makes people think to save time

and expand their horizons, but generates unforeseen spatial and temporal constraints. Mass motorization feeds into inaccessibility and frustration. The car is the concrete version of "Weber's 'iron cage' of modernity [...] People inhabit congestion, jams, temporal uncertainties and health-threatening city environments through being encapsulated in a domestic, cocooned, moving capsule, an iron bubble" (Urry 2007: 120).

These remarks lead us to the ultimate messages of Urry's analysis of spatial mobility. The first one is the increasing complexity and interconnectedness of mobility systems. Even an apparently simple movement between home and the workplace requires the interface of a series of organizational and technological systems – automobiles, traffic, information, railways, control and supervision. Given their interdependence and expansion, such systems of mobility are vulnerable – as connections grow, so are possibilities of errors and malfunctioning that spread along a multiplicity of routes. Mobility-linked crises can paralyze societies, revealing its inherent 'risk' nature (Beck 2000). But there is more. At the heart of Urry's interest are the consequences on culture and personality:

Freedom of movement is the ideology and utopia of the twenty-first century [...] The existential question of where are our lives supposed to be going? That answer has come in the form of 'going elsewhere', being somewhere else (Elliott and Urry 2010: 8).

This hunger of 'place consumption' is not satisfied by the expansion of communication and transportation means, which in fact amplify it further. The point is that the articulation of mobility systems, linked to their (partially false) promise of freedom, can generate addiction, loss of control, fetish-like attachments to the (physical or virtual) tools of mobility. Urry's conclusion is therefore in line with some of the key themes of the founding fathers of sociology (from Marx to Weber to Simmel): system-derived rationalization weakens the meaningfulness of individual action to the extremes of alienation. Urry is aware of such consonance with the classics when he dismisses

the notion that mobilities are simply new. However, what are new are the following: the scale of movement around the world, the diversity of mobility systems now in play, the special significance of the self-expanding automobility system and its awesome risks, the elaborate interconnections of physical movement and communications, the development of mobility domains that by-pass national societies, the significance of movement to contemporary governmentality and an increased importance of multiple mobilities for people's social and emotional lives (Urry 2007: 195).

MOBILITY AND FLUIDITY IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY

The relationship between the mobility turn and the spatial turn is obvious, in that this new conception of mobility (as both a central process in contemporary societies and as a social construct) comes from the renovation of the space-time approach developed in the spatial turn. Yet, the mobility turn also developed out of other social theories that were built around concepts that have more or less direct ties to the notion of mobility. This is first and foremost the case of the 'network society'. A network refers to the relationship between different points between which items are exchanged – whether material (electric signals, water) or immaterial (information, ideas), animate or inanimate. The idea of exchange contributed to the development of the notion of mobility (mobility of the item that is exchanged), linked to communication media used (for instance, terms like 'immaterial mobility' or 'telemobility' to designate exchanges made through communication and information systems).

Moreover, Urry's view of mobilities sets out from his earlier work with Scott Lash on the end of 'organized capitalism' (Lash and Urry 1987), which relates the advent of a post-industrial and post-Fordist economy to the dispersion and internationalization of production and consumption on the one hand, and the loss of nation state sovereignty on the other. Such macroeconomic and political changes are mirrored at the micro level by changes in social relations, which have become more unstable and volatile. This theme, dear to other social theorists of the 1990s and early 2000s like Giddens (1990), Beck (2000) and Bauman (2002a), is further elaborated by Urry in line with Manuel Castells' (1996) reading of globalization as the advent of a 'network society'. Multiple and dynamic connections, finding in the Internet both an organizational model and its technological support, are held to inform social life in all its domains. Social structures are no longer the a priori of social relations, but rather relations (re)shape social structures through the intensified mobility of actors. Thus, as Faist (2013) notes, "certainly the concept of network society has an elective affinity with mobility".

The spatial turn, the mobility turn, and theories of globalization have participated in a renewed interest for international mobility, whether from the angle of the spatialization of inequalities or the expansion (or compression) of space-time. For Harvey (1989), the notion of mobility includes the expansionist nature of capitalism, which is constantly seeking new ways to expand further and faster. Capitalism's possibility of mobility is precisely what enables it to find a 'spatial fix' to prob-

lems caused by the over-accumulation of capital. In this perspective, international migrations are caused by an imbalance between capital and labour, namely a surplus of capital and a shortage of labour. The main inequality linked to mobility is thus above all the opposition between capital, entirely and instantaneously movable, to fixed humans, societies and the environment. It is out of the desire to go beyond this fixity that the technological obsession of capitalism is born, in particular for communication technologies. This perspective joins Immanuel Wallerstein's (1982; 2004) analyses of the world-system, which revolves around the international and transnational division of labour. In world-system theory, international mobilities are the result of globalized labour markets and international power relations, as shown in certain sub-sections of the labour market, such as care (Hochschield 2000), sports (Maguire and Bale 1994), or particular spaces such as global cities (Sassen 1991 and 1992).

Further, the notion of mobility has been refashioned in post-colonial and feminist criticism, from the perspective of spatial domination and intersectionality. This is notably the case of Doreen Massey who, with the notion of 'power geometries', criticizes the dual view of Harvey, who opposes work and capital while omitting other dimensions of power relations, particularly ethnicity and gender:

> The degree to which we can move between countries, or walk about in the streets at night, or take public transport, or venture out of hotels in foreign cities is not influenced simply by 'capital' (Massey 1994: 60).

Finally, the mobility turn argument is frequently rooted in the increase of international migration as being one indicator of the global expansion of mobility. International mobility has indeed soared in these past decades along three dimensions: quantity (number of people), diversity (types of mobility) and spatial scale (the areas concerned). The multiplication of forms of migration at the global scale has produced a rich and abundant literature focused on interactions between globalization and mobility (Skeldon 1997; Cohen 2006). Starting in the 2000s, there is increasing reference to 'global migration' (Czaika and De Haas 2014) or 'global mobility' (Smith and Favell 2006). All international movements of people are thus presented as several facets of the same phenomenon:

> The global order is increasingly criss-crossed by tourists, workers, terrorists, students, migrants, asylum-seekers, scientists/scholars, family members, businesspeople, soldiers, guest workers and so on (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006).

Similarly, the figure of the 'trans-migrant' (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; see also Appadurai 1996) and diasporas have become central in descriptions of globalization.

TOURISM, TRANSPORTATION, MIGRATION, MOBILITY: OVERLAPPING SOCIAL AND RESEARCH FIELDS

Despite the attempts of the mobility turn to reunite all mobilities under a single theoretical framework, mobility as an object of inquiry in the social sciences remains largely fractured, approached from a wide range of different disciplinary traditions, such as demography, geography, sociology, and urban planning, as well as a growing number of interdisciplinary fields: transportation studies, mobility studies, tourism studies, migration studies, and so forth. Mobility as an object therefore remains pulled between an (impossible?) search for theoretical unity on the one hand and an increasingly strong division across specialized sub-fields. This boom of studies is related to the specific 'competitive dynamics' of academic social sciences and the desire of scholars to form an autonomous discipline. Research tends to showcase the ambition of 'going beyond' disciplinary borders, by seeking to 'accumulate' and 'combine' the contributions of different specializations (Réau 2017: 226). In addition, there is a growing demand of expertise in the non-academic environment: the tourism industry, governments, and political and economic interests contribute to shaping a 'space of the thinkable' in which research fields are structured (ibid.). Defining the boundaries of a unified international mobility field is particularly complex, given that it covers several sub-categories that have historically been structured in different ways. Kaufmann (2000) distinguishes four basic types of mobility: daily, residential, migration and travel. In turn, these are categorized according to 1) their geographical scope (within or outside of a local area) and 2) time, specifically its cyclical or linear aspect. In a context where certain individuals' 'local' surroundings have an international scope, can we still talk about travel and migration? Moreover, the intention of return that is contained in temporal or cyclical linearity is not always a given: cyclical movements can become definitive, and to the contrary, a movement that is conceived of as definitive can become cyclical. For selected populations, transnational back-and-forth movement may imply long distance on a daily basis (Vincent-Geslin and Kaufmann 2012), just as international migrations can be circular, while travellers can become permanent residents, like people with 'lifestyle mobilities' or 'lifestyle migrations' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Cohen

et al. 2016), whose experiences span between residential mobilities, tourism and international migrations. Thus, the 'mobility acceleration' described by the mobility turn is also characterized by the conflation of different scales of mobility – whether real or virtual.

Equally, in the field of migration studies, the borders between mobility and migration seem to be more blurred than ever, and the terms are frequently used interchangeably or juxtaposed (Boswell and Geddes 2011; Favell 2014). If the classic geographical definition considers migration as a particular form of mobility (Lévy 2000), it is obvious that a more generic conception of the term mobility is increasingly used to describe, and even manage, international migration (Labelle 2015). The plurality of migratory phenomena has indeed led certain researchers to diverge from a definition of international migration that is considered too tight, particularly concerning the issue of duration. Thus, as the temporal aspects of geographical movement are both unpredictable and very difficult to measure, the difference between the two concepts cannot be boiled down to a clear and uncontroversial distinction.

Some scholars criticize the growing use of the word 'mobility' to describe international migrations, seeing it as a kind of celebration of geographical movement (Waldinger 2006; Portes 2010; Dahinden 2016). Mobility, an individualized, de-socialized form of migration, would represent the avatar of neoliberalism, rooted in a new imaginary of modernity that is more ideological than empirical. On top of this, the mobility turn is blamed for its tendency to magnify mobility by extrapolating from the personal experiences of academics, who are among the most internationally mobile populations. Friedman (2002) gives the example of some studies that include reflections about the authors' personal experiences. These narratives, which are frequently used as examples or in prefaces, nonetheless convey the biased perception of international mobility as a universal feature from the standpoint of privileged white males (Massey 1994; Skeggs 2004). Another criticism of the mobility turn is the alleged linearity of the relationship between spatial and social mobility. In particular, the idea that 'different degrees of 'motility' or potential for mobility [...are...] a crucial dimension of unequal power relations' (Hannam et al 2006) seems to neglect the persistence of inequalities between migrants and natives in receiving societies and the pre-eminence of national frameworks in determining opportunities and life conditions (Faist 2013).

On the other hand, the criticism of methodological nationalism has pushed other authors to adopt the term mobility in order to render the complexity of migration dynamics as well as the importance of migrants'

agency in their geographic and biographic trajectories (Morokvasic and Rudolph 1996; Morokvasic 1999). Mobility is used as a concept that helps widen the scope of migration research. Similarly, a plethora of empirical studies have shown that the permanent character of moves attributed to international migrations is largely disputable (eg, Wyman 1993; King 2002; Beauchemin 2018). As the 'narrative of departure, arrival and assimilation' (Ley and Kobayashi 2005: 112) is more and more discredited, traditional research on migration is accused of an in-built 'settlement bias' (Hugo 2014). Moreover, the mobility turn has contributed to incorporating migration among the facets of 'bottom-up globalization' to be explored with a variety of methods – from ethnographies to big data (Tarrius 2002; Smith and Favell 2006; Recchi 2017).

Divergences about the relation between mobility and migration are partly explained by the very different theoretical origins of these perspectives, noted throughout this article. Sociology of migration, rooted in the Chicago School, approached migration from the angle of labour and inequalities, via the formation of a new urban working class. This original take has guided research to focus on low-skilled migrants from less economically developed countries, as the question of migration increasingly became a new social problem in receiving countries (Fassin and Fassin 2006). Sociology of international mobility, in contrast, comes first and foremost from the sociology of elites. Thus, research that has focused on the international migration of high-skilled managers in the context of an internationalized economy has used the term 'mobility' since it is the 'indigenous' term used by corporations and international organizations to describe the expatriation of their employees (for an example, Forster 1992). Moreover, the time-based distinction between permanent migration and temporary mobility has led sociologists of elites to adopt the latter term, since the international trips of the upper classes are most often not considered definitive (Andreotti et al. 2013). Sociology of international mobility has thus developed around the upper classes and focused on the formation of what can be called 'international capital', namely the social and economic returns of international mobility (Wagner and Réau 2015). The term 'mobility' has entered sociology of international migration as the result of a hybridization of different traditions divided into sub-fields. Its relative success also reflects a form of 'normalization' of migratory practices, once imagined from the perspective of marginality, exception and anomy which were ideally absent in ethnically homogeneous societies. Add to this the growing awareness of the complexity, flexibility, and reversibility of migratory practices, which research in non-Western contexts has emphasized. The profiles of international migrants have diversified, blurring the borders previously established by sociology of *im*migration (that is, with a focus on receiving countries) between highly skilled migrants and low skilled migrants. The conceptual distinction between migrations and mobilities is therefore questioned in current sociology. Neither a disciplinary, nor a geographic, nor a status distinction helps discern 'movers' from 'migrants' in the literature.

CONCLUSION

After this attempt at a non-exhaustive summary, it seems that spatial mobility undercuts all of the major fields of sociology, from the founding fathers to contemporary theories. Still, it remains an object of inquiry that is strongly scattered across the discipline.

On balance, the call to develop an integrated approach to spatial mobility, stemming above all from the advocates of the mobility turn (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007), has only modestly been received in empirical research. At the same time, social theory has not really taken stock of empirical studies of spatial mobility, also because empirical research remains strongly compartmentalized within distinct fields. Thus, few studies have sought to describe and analyse different scales of spatial mobility together (for an exception, see Bassand and Brulhardt 1980 and 1983). It must also be recalled that a number of disciplines define and treat mobility in different ways (Kaufmann 2000). Beyond distinct approaches (literature, concepts, definitions, methods, hypotheses, perspectives and research aims), the multiple dimensions of mobility studied have also given rise to new fields of research that are relatively independent. An adjective is therefore often appended to the notion of mobility (Epstein 2013). From transportation studies to tourism studies to urban studies, the analysis of mobility is at once central to numerous fields, while uniquely lacking, following Georg Simmel, any theoretical unity. Similarly, and despite the originally interdisciplinary ambition of the spatial turn, spatial sociology has never been organized as a separate field (Gans 2002). For most sociologists, space remains a lateral issue rather than a socially meaningful object of inquiry (Fuller and Löw 2017). This difficulty notably stems from the tenet that any social fact is also a spatial fact (Gieryn 2000). Thus, by acknowledging the relational dimension of space, the spatial turn has given rise to a paradoxical de-spatialization of space: emptied of its physical content, space becomes ungraspable. Yet,

there is wide room to advance knowledge on the spatial dimension of social relationships, spatial socialization, or proximity effects (Torre and Rallet 2005), especially in an age where virtual spaces have an increasing influence. New conceptual and methodological tools are needed to include spatial mobility among the dimensions of general sociological analysis rather than keep it confined within a specific and circumscribed research field.

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