The metropolis of network capital: socio--spatial mobilities and urban inequities

A metrópole do capital de rede: mobilidades socioespaciais e iniquidades urbanas

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Abstract

The circulation of bodies, objects, and information is intrinsic to the definition of city. However, what asymmetries in access arise from these movements and what mobility regimes stratify them within our globally interconnected world? By approaching mobility as both the object of analysis and the analytical framework, I propose the idea of "metropolis of network capital" to account for territorialities that organize themselves on a continuum between physical and digital spaces, in which multiscale movement becomes a "way of inhabiting." Such territorialities find, in the ambivalence of mobility – simultaneously a right and a coercive device –, their main factor of stratification. These epistemological reflections presuppose that cities are relational and politically contested spaces of systemic mobilities – the expression of intersections between infrastructures, materialities, and signs.

Keywords: mobilities turn; inequity; access; epistemology.

Resumo

A circulação de pessoas, objetos e informações é constitutiva da própria definição de cidade. Mas que assimetrias de acesso são geradas por esses movimentos e que regimes de mobilidade os hierarquizam no mundo globalmente conectado? Tomando as mobilidades como objeto e lente analítica, proponho a noção de "metrópole do capital de rede" para dar conta de territorialidades que se organizam em um continuum entre espaços físicos e digitais; nas quais o movimento em múltiplas escalas se torna uma "forma de habitar"; e que encontram na ambivalência da mobilidade – ao mesmo tempo direito e dispositivo coercitivo – seu principal fator de estratificação. Essas reflexões epistemológicas pressupõem que as cidades são espacialidades relacionais e politicamente disputadas de mobilidades sistêmicas, expressão das intersecções entre infraestruturas, materialidades e signos.

Palavras-chave: *virada das mobilidades; iniquidade; acesso; epistemologia.*

Introduction

The first sociological reflections on mobility were intricately interwoven with ontological, epistemological, and normative challenges posed by urban life. This historical alignment between pioneering theoretical framings of mobility and the rise and expansion of modern metropolises was not a happenstance occurrence.[1]

From the 18th century on, the so-called bourgeois city was interpreted as either a stage for the individual right to move and the free circulation of goods and money (Liberalism); or a stage where industrialization and the circulation of commodities occurred, and the mobs upheave (Marxism). In both cases and for a number of disciplines, mobility was to be understood as a value and an imperative of a specific geohistorical organization. An intellectual construct and empirical reality, the metropolis was directly linked to and dependent on the control and management of flows across various scales.[2]

This article doesn't aim to delve into the genealogy of the term mobility and its semantic field. However, it's worth noting that originally (15th century), "mobility" (*mobilitatem, mobility, mobilité*) and "mobile" (*mobilis, mobile, mobile*) referred to physical movement and mutability, speed, and inconstancy, finding their opposite in fixity and stability (Oxford, 2003). As sociology evolved, the focus shifted from these spatial aspects to socio-economic concerns.

Throughout the 20th century, a hegemonic sociology of stratification established an equivalence between mobility and occupational transitions within a specific time frame (an individual's life cycle and/or from one generation to another). Despite a rich body of scholarship that examines the complex overlapping between migratory flows (i.e., spatial) and the pattern of socio-economic mobility,[3] it ended up prevailing the idea that "social mobility" equals "socio-occupational mobility". Until the present, thus, far less attention has been paid to the sociospatial aspects of mobility.[4]

In dialogue with the mobilities turn (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006; Sheller, 2017; Zunino Singh, Jirón, & Giucci 2018; Zunino Singh, Jirón & Giucci, 2023), this article redefines the concept of urban mobility by considering two intersecting axes: the vertical one related to the hierarchies of wealth and prestige; and the horizontal one that spotlights how distances within a specific territory affect access to opportunities and help to produce, overcome, or perpetuated inequalities of various kinds. By advancing the traditional approaches to urban mobility, my aim is to draw out a broader epistemological debate suggesting mobilities as a cognitive operator. The premise here is that mobility is "a desirable asset" (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 9), a coveted value, while also functioning as an imposition or coercive imperative (Urry & Elliott, 2011; Freire-Medeiros & Lages, 2020). Inequities within *the metropolis of network capital* can only be comprehended if we

consider such ambivalence that leads to a rearrangement of experiences related to time and space, presence and absence, as well as proximity and distance.

Challenging reductive assessments, I understand urban mobility as constituted by the amalgamation of various mobilities within an urban territory. Reliant on intricate hybrid systems, urban mobility encompasses corporeal, physical, communicative, virtual, and/or imaginative dimensions.[5] Therefore, diverse practices and representations that shape mobile life, carrying embedded rationalities, meanings, and emotional aspects, should be considered (Cresswell, 2006). In the subsequent section, this article engages with the notions of *dwelling in motion* (Sheller & Urry, 2006) and *grammar of displacements* (Freire-Medeiros, 2022), which complement each other and provide an analytical framework for understanding the hybrid nature of the metropolis of network capital, where interactions occur via physical proximity and digital mediation.

Engaging with Bauman's assertion (1999) that the ability to govern one's mobility is a form of capital, or a stratification factor, section three examines mobility as an asset unevenly distributed, intersecting the notions of *mobility regimes* (pertaining to structural or systemic constraints) and *network capital* (pertaining to agency and competencies). According to Bourdieu (1983), each form of capital possesses its distinct "currencies": economic capital encompasses material resources, incomes, and possessions; cultural capital embodies educational qualifications, diplomas, and other certifications; for social capital, what matters is "a *durable network* of more or less *institutionalized relationships* of mutual acquaintance and recognition – [...] membership in a group, providing [...] the backing of collectively possessed capital" (ibid., p. 7; emphasis mine). Within the realm of network capital, social networks also serve as a currency, albeit differing in nature. Rather than enduring, they might be punctual, intermittent, maintained remotely, and forged through what Granovetter termed "weak ties" (1973).

In the final section, I emphasize that both mobility regimes and disparities in access play pivotal roles in unraveling the complexities of the metropolis of network capital. While the global city is associated with the rich North and the megacity is associated with the global South (Sassen, 1994; Roy, 2011), I think about the metropolis of network capital moving from a topographic or topological ontology toward a mobilities ontology. As a cognitive tool, it refers to urban dynamics influenced by global movements across various societal strata, encompassing both marginalized urban refugees and the kinetic elites (as well as everyone in between). In the metropolis of network capital, power asymmetries stem from unequal access to transportation, data structures, and communication networks; abilities to manage "negotiated time" (Elliott & Urry, 2010); and a proper grasp of the grammar of displacements. Additionally, it’s contingent on the level of control one holds over their own journeys and those of others.

Seeking a more comprehensive definition of urban mobility, throughout this article I assume that cities represent relational spaces comprising both flows and fixed elements. They are contested political expressions, situated in specific temporal and spatial contexts, that embody intersections between infrastructures, moorings, and signs.

Urban life, mobile life

In "The New Mobilities Paradigm," Sheller and Urry (2006) introduced the idea of *dwelling--in-motion*, engaging explicitly with Martin Heidegger's (1993) thoughts on dwelling and being. Its usage, nevertheless, predates the duo's manifesto-like text and is related to their discussions on the automobilities system, deemed the defining feature of the 20th century. The dossier "Automobilities," organized by Mike Featherstone (2004), foreshadowed ideas that would be expanded through collaborations between Urry and Sheller, but also amongst scholars like Nigel Thrift, Tim Dant, Tim Edensor, and Peter Merriman, who had the Center for Mobilities Research (Cemore) at Lancaster University as a common ground.

"Dwelling-in-motion" challenges the technocratic perspective prevalent in much of the transportation research conducted within the hard sciences. Such studies often overlook the fact that everyday life occurs within a continuum, not as discrete and compartmentalized units of time and space. By equating travel time with unproductive or void time, travel costs and travel time are overfocused,[6] but also a "green turn" is overrated.

The analytical framework of "epistemic sedentarism" (cf. Urry, 2000) insists on empirically irrelevant or descriptively ineffective distinctions between spaces of production and reproduction, or between various uses of time. Within such framework, the current regime's emphasis on speed and efficiency as primary performance benchmarks are reinforced. Electric or autonomous vehicles, so-called state-of-the-art public transportation, congestion reduction through "smart apps", and other technological solutions, that are part and parcel of smart cities worldwide, are rarely effective in addressing long-lasting inequities.[7]

Through diverse theoretical lenses, Portes (1997), Tarrius (2002), and Roy (2009) contend that both the "global cities" of the rich North and the "megacities" of the global South are constituted by transnational flows — whether of people, goods, ideas, policies, technologies, or waste. Through the framework of mobilities, these circulations and the profound reconfigurations in racial, class, and citizenship policies they trigger are understood as systemic. The relational, sprawling spaces constituting the metropolis of network capital are crossed by everyday mobilities, intrametropolitan mobilities, internal migrations, transnational migrations,

and tourist mobilities. All spatial mobilities occurring at local, regional, national, and global scales are intrinsic parts of the production and reproduction of contemporary urban space.

"To dwell-in-motion" entails both flows and organic and non-organic elements that are fixed, as well as frictions that occur between them. It involves understanding the dynamics of mobile and immobile elements, examining potential movements as well as barriers, and how they impact territories. The researcher's task is to delineate the interactions — be they harmonious or conflictual — between these mobilities, exploring the spaces where coexistence and exclusion occur and analyzing the multidimensional transformations that arise from these dynamics. The movement of people using various modes of transportation is merely one aspect to consider. Regardless of distances or the duration of travel, it is essential to recognize individuals as more than isolated entities (Caiafa, 2013) or detached from a racialized and gendered body. These bodies are perceived as bearing certain qualities in reference to an ageist and ableist classification grid (Sheller, 2008, 2018; Martínez & Claps, 2015; Santarém, 2021; Silveira, 2022). We are never isolated from other human and non-human entities, obligated to care for family members and bound by networks of affiliation and affection.[8]

Transportation studies more often than not have overly focused on modes of transport. This reductionism is part of a dominant framework within urban studies which ties dwelling solely to the home and local community. By emphasizing that the neighborhood is the exclusive realm of identity, trust-based relationships, and conviviality, it overlooks the broader societal issues of segregation and inequality that transcend these immediate spaces. In the metropolis of network capital, the urban poor navigate through precarious conditions, seeking physical and communicative mobilities, engaging in innovative forms of action that defy geographical borders and resist long-lasting definitions (cf. Peralva & Telles, 2015; Menezes, Magalhães, & Silva, 2021).

The structural inequalities ingrained within the metropolis of network capital surpass mere housing issues or what's dealt with as "urbanity deficit" (cf. Ivo, 2013). According to Vera Telles (2011, p. 10), tensions between the formal and informal urban realms transcend the commonly perceived boundaries of the so-called poverty culture.[9] These tensions persist in everyday interactions, occurring both face-to-face and through mediated technological means. If *grammar* denotes a set of rules or constraints followed by individuals within a specific temporal and spatial context (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991), there exists a *grammar of displacements* continually acquired and tested by individuals navigating not only physical and contiguous spaces, but also engaging in digital journeys, spanning various scales, that communication and transportation devices provide.

In his seminal essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (originally published in 1903), Simmel underscores the importance of regulated movement, synchronized with the clock, in facilitating the emergence of modern subjectivities. These subjectivities often navigate a tension between the elusive pursuit of individual autonomy and a simultaneous yearning for communal belonging. Simmel contends that urban existence within a city like Berlin during his era would have been inconceivable without the heightened mobility, adherence to punctuality, and emphasis on calculation. These facets continue to exert considerable influence on our contemporary perceptions of time and space, sculpting them into an amalgam marked by fragmented yet measurable time and transient yet interconnected spatial experiences within the urban landscape.

By bringing together within a singular space diverse social strata and a plethora of tangible and intangible entities – or "stimuli," in Simmel's lexicon –, the metropolis has become a hub of objective culture, monetary economy, and interactions among strangers. Within the mobilities turn, several authors acknowledge Simmel as a pioneer in regarding mobility, rationality, and individuality as fundamental aspects of Modernity (Urry, 2007; Kaufmann, 2002).[10] By intertwining the dynamics between proximity, distance, and movement in the modern city, Simmel inspires us to observe a grammar of displacements that encompasses not only bodily mobility but also the mobility of other material and symbolic entities. This set of rules presupposes, furthermore, that positive associations can arise from transient encounters – the "fluid associations" Simmel discusses.

The metropolis of network capital takes these logics and principles to the extreme. Its physical boundaries do not correspond to the limits of the potentiality of its relationships since it is connected in various ways to other places on different scales and in real-time. It is, therefore, a spatiality inconceivable without the set of requirements that are inherent to life intertwined with absent-others, without the mastery of a grammar that enables navigation through hybrid spaces where the physical and the digital converge:

> Sociology has tended to focus upon those ongoing and direct social interactions between peoples and social groups that constitute a proximate social structure. [C]entral to sociology should be both the analysis of those processes by which such co-presence is only on occasions and contingently brought about, and the forms of socialities involved when one is not involved in ongoing daily interaction, but with which a sense of connection or belonging with various 'others' is sensed and sustained. One should investigate not only physical and immediate presence, but also the sociabilities involved in occasional co--presence, imagined co-presence and virtual co-presence. (Urry, 2002, p. 256)

In these "temporary congregations" that we participate while being "mobile with", we aren't just following routes; we interact with and give meaning to different environments, generating intersubjectivity, and, as Goffman (1972, p. 17) puts it, "avoiding collisions".[11] Thanks to communicative and miniaturized mobilities provided by increasingly ubiquitous devices such as smartphones (Elliot & Urry, 2010), all mobile individuals – especially women – manage the needs of both humans

and non-humans that remain distant and on pause while they move. To paraphrase Michel Agier (2015), there is a continuous "city--making" while – and because – we move.

Doreen Massey (1993, p. 61) argues that different social groups establish distinct relationships while on the move: some are more responsible for mobility than others; some initiate flows and movements, others do not; some are more on the receiving end than others; some are trapped. In dialogue with Massey and other feminist geographers, several authors have consistently critiqued urban studies for its overlooking of gender as a structuring factor in transport usage (cf. Sheller, 2018; Jirón, 2017; Jirón & Gómez, 2018). Proper attention to the grammar of displacements, to the interfaces between intersectionalities and mobilities, gains depth by the inclusion of two key categories: care, viewed not just in its affective dimension but as part of a network extending from the household to public spaces; and *interdependence* that reveals asymmetries in the distribution of caregiving obligations and mobility practices.

Mobilities thus play a dual role: while a force producing social experience, it's a key concept for understanding changes in urban ontologies, in the relevant political issues, and in the resulting inequalities. In the metropolis of the network capital, the grammar of displacements currently reinforces systemic and unequal mobilities: as more and more tangible and intangible entities are on the move, an increasing number of material and immaterial boundaries regulate circulation. Hence, the metropolis of network capital is, par excellence, the domain of disputes and resistances inscribed in mobility regimes that generate both prohibitions and incentives for circulation, defining rhythms according to intersections of various orders. In what follows I think through the logics and ambivalences of such regimes.

Mobility regimes, network capital and sociospatial inequities

Mobility regimes wield influence in constraining or enhancing flows of tangible elements and signs. The Foucauldian inspiration is evident: akin to the "regime of practices," the notion of mobility regimes revolves around the tripod from which power spring up – territory, populations, and their relationship – emphasizing what is inherent in the sociomateriality of circulation.

Throughout the 18th century, the spatial, legal, administrative, and economic unfastening of the city – i.e. mobility in its various forms – led to a classification of populations based on their mobility patterns: "floating populations" were associated with various crimes and disorders (Foucault, 2008, p. 17). Efforts were made to organize circulation, eliminate risks, distinguish good circulation from bad, and plan external access (ibid., pp. 24-25). Foucault did not overlook the spatial nexus grounded in at least one definition of governance: to impose a straight path.

The increase in the circulation "of things and men" across national borders and beyond was met with techniques and knowledge focused on managing risks and mechanisms of security/freedom (ibid., p. 90). Various historical sources (official documents, journalistic reports, political propaganda texts, pamphlets, etc.) reveal that in metropolises that experienced substantial population growth in a relatively short period prevailed the association between physical and mental ailments, crime, sexual perversions, and poverty-stricken places (cf. Bresciani, 1994; Koven, 2004; Valladares, 2005). Even in their most privileged areas, these metropolises faced serious sanitation problems and hardly concealed all sorts of filth behind their modern cafes and theaters. However, it was the physical proximity to the places of residence of the poor and their bustling flows – their bodies, smells, and pleasures – that primarily caused anxiety among the elites.

The scientific perception of the urban environment as a laboratory for compiling, verifying, and synthesizing information about fertility rates, moral degradation indices, and revolutionary potential gained momentum. Meanwhile, experiments in the inclusion, control, and surveillance of urban poor were legitimized. Throughout the world, laws addressing poverty relief, assistance, and investigation burgeoned seeking to regulate the actions of both governmental authorities and philanthropic institutions. Alan Gilbert's critical genealogy (2007) starkly illustrates how the objectification of the impoverished and their living spaces became an area deemed worthy of investigation. John Torpey's (2001) research, inspired by Foucault, reveals that, in parallel with internalized control measures, conditions for surveilling populations beyond the confines of nation-states were woven. In the Western context, the creation and administrative use of passports and other documents for identification and movement control were crucial in shaping both what we recognize as nation and citizenship and the corresponding subjectivities. The author demonstrates how the international system of States monopolized the "legitimate means of movement," (p. 3) making people dependent on state authority for mobility – especially, though not exclusively, across international borders.

Against barbarian invasions, diseases, and mass migrations, a set of values, structures, regulations, and infrastructures were created to both facilitate and impede the "right to circulate." According to Mimi Sheller (2018), this is crucial: mobility regimes rely on intricate combinations of movements, pauses, and interruptions, resulting in discriminatory frameworks that selectively channel flows across various scales. A number of actors from public, private, state, para-state, legal, and illegal spheres manage the mobilities patterns of the most vulnerable populations under a regime that functions based on both compassion and control.

Through the notion of mobility regimes several authors impel us to recognize the inherently political dimension of mobilities. Some of them are aligned with the new

mobilities paradigm, such as Peter Adey (2010), Sven Kesselring (2015), and Apoena Mano (2021); others come from different theoretical backgrounds, like Ronen Shamir (2005), Nina Glick Schiller, and Noel Salazar (2013). Anna Tsing (2022), while not explicitly using the term, provide insights into the constitution and operation of mobility regimes in the contemporary world. Within what she terms the "capitalism of the supply chain," intricate productive structures function beyond the purview of national and transnational policies and regulations while leveraging the mobility infrastructures provided by states.

And what happens at the city scale? Social exclusion corresponds to spatial limitations at specific moments in time that one needs to overcome to "gain access to informal networks of work, leisure, friendship, and family" (Urry, 2007, p. 193). Regardless of the network one intends to engage with, there will always be a "mobility burden", *a deficit in access* that widens because "leisure, family, and professional life have become (on average) more far-flung, more extended and less overlapping" (ibid., 194). In the metropolis of network capital, the economic aspect remains the primary determinant of access, i.e. the possibilities for participation. But us researchers also need to consider other aspects such as physical (ability to travel distances, operate machinery), organizational (logistics for road access, Wi-Fi networks, etc.), and temporal (transport at regular times, availability of schedules, etc.). The notion of network capital encompasses these other dimensions that are crucial for understanding the globally connected world, where dealing with various objects and technologies or ways of networking is mandatory (ibid., 197). Individuals with high network capital know how – and can – navigate these non-economic inequalities that are economically mediated.

Network capital comprises a set of competencies aimed at both generating and sustaining long-distance relationships yielding emotional, financial, and practical advantages. Other notions and concepts also critically address mobilities as a resource unevenly distributed and as a vital element of stratification in contemporary societies. Sheller (2015) speaks of *uneven mobilities,* Kronlid (2008) suggests the notion of *mobility capabilities*, and Xiang (2021) brings the concept of *immobility capital* to refer to the privilege that some had to shelter in place during the isolation policies resulting from the covid-19 pandemic.

In "Rethinking Mobility" (2002), Kaufmann defines *motility* as the potential to be mobile and the ability to actualize this potential. Key factors include access to mobility, an individual's capability to utilize this access, and the ensuing application of these variables, converting potential into actual mobility. Like Urry's approach, Kaufmann's perspective integrates social and spatial dimensions into the contextual understanding of mobility. However, while motility focuses on individuals and stresses physical mobilities (of bodies and

things), network capital comprises the symbolic dimension that is also part of sociotechnical networks which enable groups to guarantee and expand their capital.

More specifically, what I am arguing here is that the concept of network capital can better illuminate the relationship between mobility hierarchies and distinctions within a particular mobility regime (cf. Freire-Medeiros & Lages, 2020). Beyond the inherent inequities related to economic, social, and cultural capitals, yet another stratification is at play based on how capable individuals are to flexibly manage time. This flexibility extends to coordinating geographically dispersed collaborators and attending in-person events where trust bonds are reassured. The analysis of the intersection of socioeconomic and socio-spatial distances demands questioning the premise that accumulating connections indiscriminately suffices to generate wealth: network capital emphasizes that mobilities do nothing by themselves (Urry, 2002, p. 27). From an empirical research perspective, it is mandatory to go beyond contrasting mobilities against immobilities or flows against infrastructures; rather, it is about identifying the mobility regimes that arbitrate (either facilitating or hindering) movements – be they desired or coercive – in each observed situation (cf. Freire-Medeiros, Magalhães & Menezes, 2023).

Within the same phenomenon – let's consider tourism as an example – there is a mobility regime acting according to overlapping logics and/or across different scales, contingent upon the active network capitals at play. On one hand, the mobility regime governs VFR (visiting friends and relatives) flows, which are historically intertwined with migration, diasporas and normative codes that predominantly revolve around affective and familial obligations (Larsen & Urry, 2006; Urry & Larsen, 2021). Stringent surveillance structures are imposed, subjecting often racialized bodies to scrutiny, creating embarrassing situations during discriminatory screenings of their attire and belongings at airports and other borders. On the opposite end, the mobility regime governs the flows of businesspeople, i.e. global kinetic elites, aiming to ensure that these executives work and enjoy themselves while traveling. They can meet in person and communicate remotely with clients and colleagues, all at the expense of immobilizing a legion of staff responsible for their travel logistics (Urry, 2004; Kesselring, 2015). Not only do special passports and visas guarantee them privileges across borders, but there are also less explicit arrangements in place.

Final remarks

In *Offshoring* (2014), John Urry argues that the neoliberal world isn't merely governed by market logics; rather, it's a realm where power and wealth increasingly cross clandestine routes. Communication and transport technologies have enabled companies to fragment their production processes and scatter them across different parts of the

globe. This triggers a worldwide reorganization of labor and production, impacting how products are manufactured, services delivered, and resources distributed. When offshore companies establish themselves beyond the territory where they're registered, the very notion of territory is challenged. More and more, they also blur what is understood as the State and the very concept of democracy.

In addition to island tax havens and special economic zones, the offshore landscape encompasses spaces created by mega-events, financial districts, various maritime vessels, casinos, refugee camps, battlefields, waste sites, oil fields, and prisons. In short, any exceptional area lacking tax regulations, legal control, or social oversight. Once a corporate tactic, offshoring has evolved into a guiding principle of financial capitalism, impacting labor, leisure, energy production, and waste management. This leads to significant spatial shifts as different production phases scatter globally and introduces a mobile lifestyle based on temporary work. Furthermore, operations across time zones demand non-linear work schedules and 24/7 availability, altering temporal frames of reference.

As a verb – "offshoring" –, it alludes to "moving or hiding" to ultimately "evade democracy." The de-composition and re--composition of sovereignty and territoriality that offshoring embodies spread across numerous institutions and places to the extent that it's now "impossible to draw a clear division between what is onshore and what is offshore" (Urry, 2014, p. 36). In a context of weakened social protections, globalized economies, and a fractured and unequal system of state sovereignty, kinetic elites have enough network capital to surreptitiously navigate against state control. They benefit from a mobility regime that criminalizes the "undocumented" but encourages other circulations that also bypass the law. In the very same islands where they "conceal" their financial investments, the super-rich host their parties and engage in both legal and illicit tourism and leisure activities. By definition, their gains are portable and can be enjoyed in places far from where the value is actually extracted.

Mobilities only serve as a useful analytical tool if one considers how flows, pauses and frictions impact on each other (cf. Freire-Medeiros & Lages, 2020). To become identifiable, the systemic properties of mobilities need to be 'localized'. Even though kinetic elites benefit from offshore tax havens, that is not where they live most of the time. London, the “plutocratic city” (Atkinson, 2020), and other metropolises built upon the legacies of colonialism, welcome oil barons, high-ranking Chinese bureaucrats, Russian oligarchs, media moguls, notorious leaders of criminal groups, and billionaires of all sorts, who after flying around the world in their private jets, find their mooring in the most sanitized and securitized areas of the metropolis of network capital.

It is evident that offshoring practices are hostile and corrosive to state authority and, by definition, 'offshoring and democracy are in direct conflict' (Urry, 2014, p. 178). This does

not prevent, as we know, a considerable portion of political elites in command positions within the state apparatus from having connections to offshore tax havens. These tensions call for a deeper theorization regarding the mutable forms of state, sovereignty, and territoriality that the enhancement of mobilities – the main tool of power and domination (Bauman, 2009) – allows on a global scale.

According to Urry, network capital is a "prerequisite to living in the rich 'north' of contemporary capitalism" (2007, p. 196). Given all that has been discussed here, it is evident that is just as important to examine what it means to accumulate network capital for those who inhabit metropolises where highly arbitrary mobility regimes prevail, producing hierarchies and perpetuating inequalities. By avoiding the certainty of a straightforward correlation between segregation and isolation, we can critically undermine the preconception that informality and illicit markets are exclusive to the megacities of the global south. As a long list of scholars have demonstrated, in the rich north these are not merely residual practices confined to ethnic enclaves or managed by migrant groups resisting an anticipated 'cultural assimilation' (cf. dossier organized by Freire-Medeiros, Motta, and Fromm, 2023).

It's important to insist that the notions of mobility regimes and network capital can be insightful in examining the long-distance connections that bring together territories that are geographically apart. These connections would be impossible without constant physical, imaginative, and communicative mobilities. From such connections emerge solidarities that aren't contingent upon diasporic associations and do not solely evoke an identity-driven or partisan agenda. Instead, such meaningful ties speak to the material reality and pressing urgency of precarious lives.

As I conclude this article, journalist Gizele Martins, PhD candidate in Social Communication and community leader in Favela da Maré (Rio de Janeiro), once again employs her network capital to remind us that in both Palestine and the Brazilian peripheries, strikingly similar mobility regimes operate. Supported by the same militaristic logic, facilitated by socio-technical devices marketed by the same warlords, and legitimized by the "paradigm of suspicion" (Shamir, 2005), these mobility regimes ensure the enclosure and immobilization of racialized populations, depriving them of the supposedly universal right to freedom of movement. "As soon as I got there, I saw the same violence experienced by Maré, but intensified by apartheid," Gizele recalled while mediating the panel "Insurgent Communication: from Brazil to Palestine" during the VIII Black July, an international initiative against violence, militarization, and racism. Even before the escalation of conflicts triggered by the Hamas attack on October 7th and the Military Police Operations in the Favela

da Maré which coincidentally began three days later (see Campos, 2023), she was already linking both territories: "Palestine has the most sold weapons in the world, and they are the same ones that come to the favelas of Rio."

These and other insights from Gizele Martins, along with the testimonies of event participants, are part of the article signed by Amanda Baroni Lopes (2023), a journalism student and resident of Morro do Timbau. On quoting the participants, Lopes's piece allow us to see how network capital results from geographical and epistemic displacements, from connections established during both physical and symbolic journeys. “There, I managed to step out of my own context,” explains Gizele, “and understand that violence is an international State project.” These insurgent communications, primarily led by grassroot organizations from global peripheries, expose a network capital that emerges against the tide, persisting in constructing bridges that are larger than “all the invisible barriers of these conflicts” (ibid.).

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Notes

(1) Academic research aligned with the mobilities paradigm is evidently concerned, as I am here, with understanding "the metropolis". Nevertheless, a growing body of scholarship in Brazil and elsewhere is also engaging with smaller and medium-sized cities, as well as quilombos, indigenous lands, and the intricate network of Amazonian roads. See Souza and Guedes (2021) for interesting examples.

(2) Cf. Park (1915); Simmel (2005); Rolnik (1988); Urry (2007); Telles (2011); Massey (1994); Sheller (2017); Zunino Singh (2018), among others.

(3) For an overview of Brazilian literature on rural-urban migration and social stratification, refer to Jannuzzi (1999); for an analysis of MA thesis and PhD dissertations on international migration in Brazil, see Vilela and Lopes (2013).

(4) Ribeiro and Carvalhaes (2020), in their overview of Brazilian research on the sociology of mobility and social stratification, indicate a notable lack of attention to sociospatial mobilities. For a noteworthy exception, refer to França (2017).

(5) The new mobilities paradigm suggests a framework that encompasses five overlapping types of mobilities: 1) physical mobility; 2) object movement; 3) imaginative mobility (circulation of images across diverse media); 4) virtual mobility (real-time circulation facilitated by technologies that diminish geographical distances); and 5) communicative mobility (circulation of messages and information).

(6) I do not deny what has long been true in the case of Brazil and other Latin American countries: those who use the public transportation system in our increasingly strained cities pay a high price for a service that is uncomfortable, poorly planned, and unsafe. In addition to José Álvaro Moises' classic book (1978), see Vasconcelos (1991), Baiardi and Alvim (2014), Silva (2014), Bittencourt and Giannotti (2021), and Logiodice (2023).

(7) Despite the absence of a singular definition, the idea of "smart city" converges towards the use of sociotechnical systems. These systems, grounded in intricate architectures of information systems, supposedly have the capability to integrate multiple data sources and intervene in the routine planning, monitoring, and operational maintenance of urban areas. Due to their access to historical event data stored in data clouds, smart cities would be better equipped to address crisis situations. See Hollands (2008), Dameri (2013), and Freitas (2018) for a critical perspective.

(8) For networks of obligation telemediated on a transnational scale, refer to Madianou (2016).

(9) See also Nascimento & Barreira (1993); Valladares (2005); Feltran (2015); Fromm (2022).

(10) Drawing on the triad of mobility, transitoriness, and fragmentation, Walter Benjamin (1989) approaches Modernity with its "phantasmagorias" – expressions par excellence of the dialectic between presence and absence. Benjamin argues, as Simmel does, that the experience of time, space, and causality has become more discontinuous, and this alteration in the formative dimensions of human sociability can be grasped in its entirety and consequences within the scope of the modern city (Featherstone, 2000, p. 56). See also Buck-Morss (1989) and Harvey (1992).

(11) See also Caiafa (2013); Frehse (2018); Imilan & Jirón (2018).

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