



Meet more, travel less!?

Theorizing the mobilities of work and labour
in the age of mediatization

Sven Kesselring
Professor in Automotive Management:
Sustainable Mobilities
Nuertingen-Geislingen University
sven.kesselring@hfwu.de

Outline

1. Spotlights
2. From the idea of social change to the metamorphosis of modernity
3. The mediatized construction of reality
4. Work mobilities in the age of deep mediatization
5. Conclusions & outlook

'In search of global labor market' (ZIF research group, Bielefeld 2017-18)



DEPARTURES

| Time | Profession | Destination | Flight |
|-------|--------------|-------------|--------|
| 17:25 | ENGINEER | CAPE TOWN | BZ517 |
| 17:30 | PHYSICIST | BERKELEY | CW812 |
| 17:45 | DANCER | MOSCOW | JS953 |
| 18:00 | THERAPIST | MELBOURNE | NC170 |
| 18:20 | PHOTOGRAPHER | VANCOUVER | SR819 |
| 18:30 | DESIGNER | SAO PAULO | AR558 |
| 18:30 | JOURNALIST | PEKING | NX742 |
| 18:45 | NURSE | CHICAGO | ER993 |
| 18:50 | CONDUCTOR | AVIGNON | SA222 |
| 19:00 | CARPENTER | NEW DELHI | KR220 |
| 19:25 | ACTRESS | PARIS | FB239 |
| 19:30 | TEACHER | KRAKOW | HA250 |
| 19:50 | OFFICIAL | BERLIN | UA282 |

Working hypothesis I

- So far the equation is the following:
 - ‘More communication generates more travel’ (Lübbe 1995).
- It has been a major (old) hope that communication could substitute travels: ‘Meet more, travel less’ (IKEA mobility management).
- Couldry & Hepp (2017) say that a new form of socially constructing the world through media is arising.
 - Old question new: Is it possible that in a not so far future ‘mediatized mobilities’ can replace corporeal travel?

Let's get started with some

SPOTLIGHTS

Spot 1: WannaCry - vulnerabilities of digital age

**More than 150 countries affected
wo**

“Oops!” (Der SPIEGEL; 20/05/2017)

Analogous solutions

Spot 2: Tesla 3 cockpit

Automated driving

Tesla 'Space X' cockpit

**Blurring boundaries
between 'here' and
'there'.**

Working hypotheses II

- Modern societies are in an advanced stage of digitalization, mediatization and miniaturization.
- None of these developments is completely new or comes fully as a surprise.
- BUT:
 1. They are about to change the fundamentals of social life: communication & travel.
 2. They foster the 'banal cosmopolitanization of everyday life' (Ulrich Beck): dealing with distance 'light'.
 3. They also transform the basic conditions for business – often invisibly but steadily.

Bigger wheels: silent transformations

Ironically, capitalism's decline is not coming at the hands of hostile forces. There are no hordes at the front gate ready to tear down the walls of capitalist edifice.

Quite the contrary. What's undermining the capitalist system (and its mobility regime; sk) is the dramatic success of the very operating assumptions that govern it.

Rifkin (2015: 2)

Social change through changing infrastructures and technologies

- 19th century: steam-powered printing & the telegraph became the communication media for linking and managing coal-powered rail and factory systems.
- 20th century: the telephone, radio & TV became the communication media for managing and marketing the oil & car based mass consumer society.
- 21st century: the Internet is becoming the communication medium for managing renewable energies, automated logistics and transport in an increasingly connected world (Rifkin 2015: 28; Kesselring 2008).

Metamorphosis

“(…) we live in a world that is not just changing, it is metamorphosing. Change implies that some things change but other things remain the same (...). Metamorphosis implies a much more radical transformation in which the old certainties of modern society are falling away and something quite new is emerging. To grasp this metamorphosis of the world it is necessary to explore the new beginnings, to focus on what is emerging from the old and seek to grasp future structures and norms in the turmoil of the present.”

Ulrich Beck (2016: 3)

Directionality and irreversibility

‘Sociologist Norbert Elias elaborated how social developments move in particular directions and occur in a certain sequence, even if they are reversible and even though opposing trends can occur simultaneously.

This means that despite all contingency, social processes display a certain “directionality” (Richtungsbeständigkeit, Elias, 1995, 248).

(...). ... a development such as increasing individualism cannot be reversed from one day to the next.’

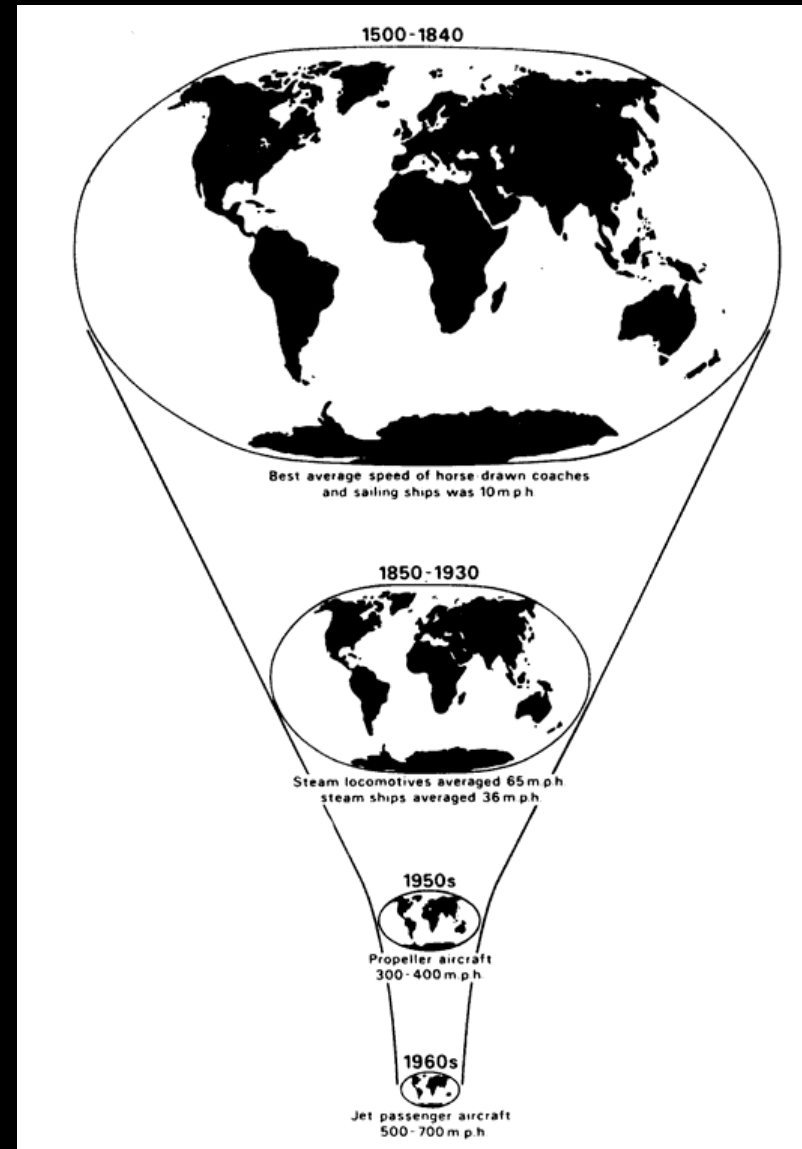
(Sommer & Schad 2015: 137)

First conclusions

- In the same way as individualization, rationalization and globalization, the process of mobilization 'cannot be reversed from one day to the other'.
- 'Time-space compression' (Harvey) and 'time-space distancing' (Giddens) are at work - simultaneously.
- But, as Simmel put it, the **forms can change** how these process become applied.
- In this way the question is: **what are the forms, the means, the modes and the media of mobility in the digital age?**

Speed

- ‘(...) any material object has to have coordinates in time and space. Movement, as the displacement of an object from A to B, involves a passage of time and, simultaneously, a traversal of space.’ (Cresswell 2006: 4)
- ‘The annihilation of space by time’ (Karl Marx)



Expansion as a modern principle

„Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it. (...) All labour required in order to throw the finished product into circulation (...) is from capital’s viewpoint a barrier to be overcome (...).

(Marx & Engels, Grundrisse: Notebook V –
The Chapter on Capital)

Simultaneity

„We are in the epoch of simultaneity (...) of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at the moment when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time and that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein (rhizom).“ (Foucault 1986: 22)

Immediacy

‘Mechanical velocity is still with us in abundance; the Night Mail still runs. (...) distance and the physical effort to overcome it still stubbornly persist.

But now we have something else. Now we have the phenomenon of immediacy, which, in its light, effortless, easy ubiquity, has more or less displaced (...) the cultural attachments of an earlier speed.

(Tomlinson 2003: 57)

Social theory

THE MEDIATED CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Social constructivism

- ‘If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences’ (Thomas & Thomas 1928).
 - Berger & Luckmann (1966):
 - what we consider as being real is based on an iterative process of interpreting and experiencing other people’s actions.
 - This leads to social roles and an institutionalization of interactions patterns.
 - Knowledge and people's conceptions (and beliefs) of what reality is become embedded in the institutional fabric of society.
 - Reality is therefore said to be socially constructed.
- ➔ **Normalization** (i.e. business travel as a normality)

No mediatization at all

- Still Berger & Luckmann (1966) didn't give the media an important role.
- Even in Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) media was basically seen as newspapers.
 - Television was mentioned only three times!
- Footnote: 'mediatization' first mentioned in Ernst Mannheim's 1933 book *The Bearers of Public Opinion*.

Media in first modernity

Media in second modernity

Media of the third modernity?

- We increasingly see (socially construct) the world through digitalized and mediatized 'lenses'.
- The 'stuff' of the 'social is being transformed by data-based processes' (Couldry & Hepp 2017:4).
- We are increasingly living in hybrid, multi-layered socio-material networks set together from complex 'figurations' (Elias) of material, physical, digital, medial elements, code and signs.

Mobile mediality

‘Through everyday practices of moving around cities, people are creating new ways of interacting with others, with places, and with screens while moving, or pausing in movement.

Many emerging forms of mobile communication are assisted by new devices and accomplished in motion, leading to practices of "mobile mediality", understood as new forms of flexible and mediated spatiality.’

(Sheller 2013: 309)



WORK MOBILITIES IN THE AGE OF DEEP MEDIATIZATION

A historiography of mobility types

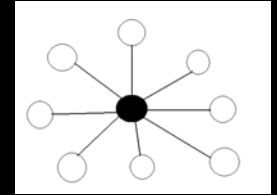
| Mobility concepts | <i>Traditional mobility</i> | Territorial mobility | Global mobility | Digital mobility |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Socialization Patterns | Movement without mobility | Nation-states as the basis and point of reference for movement | Movement beyond the nation-state | Mobility beyond the time-space-continuum |
| <i>Traditional societies</i> | The 'poor traveller' Pilgrim Conquistadores Trader | | | |
| <i>Modern (industrial) societies</i> | | Goethe type traveller Day laborer Commuter | Humboldt type scientist Cosmopolitan Emigrant & Immigrant | |
| <i>Mobile risk societies</i> | | | (Mass) tourist Trans-migrant Business travelers | 'Digital nomad' Net surfer teleworkers Mobile workers |

Mobility pioneers project (1999-2006)

Socio-geographical positionings

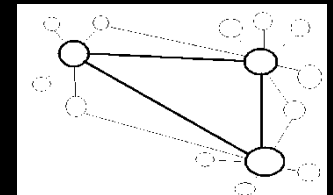
- **Centred mobility management**

- Stability core from social belonging and fixities;
- Highly gender specific pattern;
- Low individual freedom but high effectiveness and efficiencies.



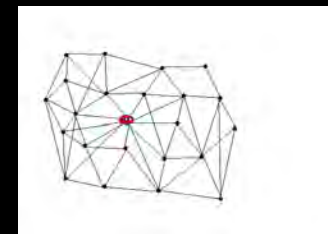
- **De-centred mobility management**

- Pluri-locality (plug & play spatialities)
- High level of individualization and relatively high level of individual decision making
- Post-traditional models for families and intimate relations.



- **Networked mobility management**

- High complexities and diversities in social and geographical networks and affinities;
- Very high levels of individualization and ind. decision making
- The 'virtualization' of social relations



Mediatized mobilities

- Holographic representation

<https://vimeo.com/207253893>

A Connected *life*

by BMW Connected Drive

01:51



HD

The future of mobility?

KONVERGENZ VERSCHIEDENER TRENDS IN DER AUTOINDUSTRIE MIT DEM POTENZIAL, MOBILITÄT RADIKAL ZU VERÄNDERN.

Automated



- Besserer Verkehrsfluss
- Weniger Unfälle
- Erhöhte Sicherheit
- Erhöhte Produktivität

Connected



- Optimiertes "Eco-Routing"
- Multimodalität fördern
- Früh warnen
- Bessere Sicherheitsfeatures

Electrified



- Lokal emissionsfrei
- Erhöhte Energieeffizienz
- Weniger Lärm
- Erneuerbare Energien

Shared



- Weniger Stau
- Weniger Autos in Städten
- Alte Autos werden ersetzt
- Weniger Pkw-Fahrleistung

THEORIZING WORK-RELATED MOBILITIES

Typology of work-related mobilities

| | Centered Mobilities | Decentered Mobilities | Mediatized Mobilities |
|------------------------|---|--|---|
| Normalization | Long-distance commute Public transport | Digitalization of everyday mobility Automobility system | Holographic meetings Sharing mobilities |
| Rationalization | Transport planning | Work on the move Mob. Management Coordination | Augmented realities Meet more, travel less |
| Individualization | Mobility as distinction Mobility as power | Pluri-locality Hypermobility Blurring boundaries | Mobile immobility |
| Time-space compression | Directional mobility Tracks <i>Trains</i> | Reversible mobilities Roads & airlines <i>Cars</i> | Non-directional mob Socio-mat. Networks <i>Internet</i> |

Scenarios for future work mobilities

1. Linear mobilization
 1. Increasing physical mobility
 2. Increasing connectivity
 3. Ideal type: mobile worker with high level of mobility competence
2. Plug & play mobilities
 1. Global infrastructures
 2. Interchangability of labour markets
 3. Ideal type: expat with high level of mobility capital
3. Mobile immobilities
 1. Mediated technologies
 2. Global socio-material networks
 3. Ideal type: elancer with high level of mobility

Concluding (or opening) questions

- Are we witnessing the optimization of the modern mobility regime?
- What are the principles, rules & norms?
- Are mediatized mobilities an indicator for a new mobility pattern?
- Does corporate mobility have a future? Or is mobility the privilege of the few and virtual travel the everyday practice of the many? (social inequalities, mobility justice etc.)
- What are the consequences for sustainable mobility and for sustainable development?

MANY THANKS.