

Mobile Culture for Tourism Communication

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INTRODUCTION: WHY MOBILE CULTURE FOR TOURISM COMMUNICATION?

Mobile culture is emerging as a new paradigm of social action and discourse. It works as a sort of template for practicing, learning and applying information and knowledge, within multiple economic, political and cultural activities within the urban fabric. This phenomenon involves capitals, persons and objects, which are profoundly on the move across global and local arenas. According to John Urry (2007) and Mimi Sheller (2006), *social mobilities* even constitute the leading process shaping contemporary societies and urban cultures. Likewise, interpretation methods of all social realms are being shaken by quick and deep discursive movements, for instance in what concerns the analysis of cultural heritage (Cessari, 2011; Andrade, 2013) or mobilities (Giannotti, 2008).

However, such mobilities of cultural goods, services and interpretation are not desirable or even possible, without adequate *communication* among the main stakeholders involved in this novel reality. In other words, contemporary societies face a critical *intercultural* process (Piller, 2011; Paulston, 2012), that is, the encounter or clash between national citizens and foreigners, be them tourists (Andrade, 2014) or immigrants (Benson, 2012; King, 2013). And the correspondent communication of local, national or international information and knowledge are being activated, more and more, through *digital mobilities* and the underlying discourses. Among the central instruments which facilitate this communication, *mobile devices* such as cell phones are becoming prominent (Ling, 2009). For instance, according to André Caron (2007), when exchanging text messages, young people don't just share information, but develop verbal performances that create knowledge and culture. And, beyond culture, mobile devices are becoming a cult (Goggin, 2006), a posture that, occasionally, may bring pleasure but also some risks, within the present *risk society* (Beck, 1992, 2008).

In sum, mobile devices are transforming the way we understand and sense urban and intercultural processes. Recently, mobile devices users are dealing with sophisticated new information and knowledge technologies, via *Virtual and Augmented Reality* apps, which may help them to get more and deeper experiences and understanding of their everyday life in urban places, contexts and territories. Following this trend, city planners are developing intelligent strategies for experiencing and interpreting practices, knowledge, culture and arts related with urban mobilities. Such initiatives aim to redefine not just local life and national citizenship, but also, at an international level, intercultural exchanges between the citizen and the Other, that is, visiting foreigners such as tourists or immigrants (Arvastson, 2006).

Within this perspective, the purpose of the following text is twofold: firstly, to define the main ideas and concepts which clarify the process of mobile culture, activated through the use of mobile devices (cell phones, etc.). Secondly, inquiry why and how mobile culture and its devices facilitate or difficult one of the most relevant processes in the contemporary city, that is, *urban mobilities* and its *modes and means of communication*. This text considers just one of such mobilities, the tourism travel, and focus on

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3473-1.ch112

the most relevant social and cultural exchanges of competences and performances among, on one side, native citizens of a destination place and, on the other side, tourists visiting this locality (Andrade, 2017).

BACKGROUND: STATE OF THE ART ON MOBILITY CULTURES AND TOURISM

Mediatization can be briefly defined as a social process which translates, shapes and frames all other processes and discourses within contemporary society. It was studied, among other authors, by André Jansson (2017), in connection with the ideas of individualization and globalization, and mainly in what regards mobile middle-class lives and *post-tourism*. In particular, it is important to know how mediatization is culturally legitimized, in a moment when connectivity and mobility are central elements of self-realization.

Within such media hegemony, *digital media* acquired an even more protagonism. Some practical applications of these ubiquitous digital media include tourism, banking and health. In fact, digital devices are profoundly transforming human experience and knowledge. This is visible at a global geographic dimension, within processes of deconstructing and reconstructing urban environments, local life worlds, infrastructures, networked practices and even global geopolitics. Identities are also changing along subjective, perceptive, and affective levels, in terms of digital users' engagement with the spatial world (Felgenhauer, 2017).

This *digital daily world* is a context based on *mobilities*, which are circumscribed as social processes of displacement among diverse areas of cities, regions, countries or other social spaces, at a local and global levels. Mobilities are simultaneously shaped and feeding economy, politics, culture and all other realms of society. Within this context, everyday life is an arena where examples and applications of such phenomena can be easily found. Sara Paiva (2018) inquires how recent technological innovative platforms may develop daily mobility of visually impaired people. The ultimate aim for these social actors as users of such appliances, is their societal inclusion. In this sense, some practical applications are obstacle detection systems, indoor and outdoor navigation and transportation sustainability systems. At a macroeconomic and policies level, such improvements may be undertaken by companies as well as by municipalities, in order to enhance *global and urban mobility* (Kolke, 2014).

Likewise, tourism is an activity where mobilities are to be found in the most unexpected ways, within the intersections of globalized mobility and everyday *mobile tourist* practices. Kaya Barry (2017) points out the apparently irrelevant action of packing a bag for a travel. The author shows how idealized tourists destinations influence their daily actions, and specially their everyday experiences of movement such as this minimal action of preparing a bag for a voyage. To prove such thesis, Barry uses multiples photographic documentation and interviews collected with tourists in hosteling accommodations.

Many of these mobility phenomena are more systematized within one of the seminal books written by John Urry and Jonas Larsen, with the title *Mobilities, Networks, Geographies*, and published in 2016. The authors defend that, as for social mobilities, physical meetings aren't less fundamental to human life than virtual travels. In effect, both are interconnected and equally necessary. Moreover, the book establishes an interesting typology of modes of mobility, in our world where there is a substantial increase in long-distance travels and in communicating through mobile phones, text messaging, emailing and videoconferencing. These geographies of social networks include the following five *interdependent mobilities*: physical travel of people; physical movement of objects; imaginative travel through mass media; virtual travel inside cyberspace; and communicative travel via other more primitive means e.g.

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