

MOBILITIES OF HUMANS AND INFORMATION: A COMPARISON AT THE 'THIRD GENERATION' INTERSECTION

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The term *mobility* has received its sociological connotation within the context of *social mobility*, referring to status transitions of individuals and social groups along societal strata. This same term *mobility* has received a rather physical connotation within human geography, referring to the very movements of physical objects, whether humans or merchandise. The recent telecommunications/information revolution has given the term *mobility* yet another meaning, namely the potential and actual flows of a rather abstract entity, information.

The mobility of people has been extended and enhanced mainly during the first part of the twentieth century through successive innovations involving various modes of transportation technologies. These technologies have enabled a reduction in the *friction of distance*, an extended *distanciation*, as well as the *compression and convergence of time-space*, to mention just a few of the sociospatial interpretations and consequences.

By the same token, innovations in telecommunications and information technologies, as of the second half of the twentieth century, have eventually permitted almost instantaneous transmissions of all types and forms of information, notably through the Internet. In the first phase of these developments, information was made to be stored and moved electronically, followed by the more recent introduction of sophisticated mobile information machines. These developments called for a seeming *death of distance*, side by side with the emergence of *virtual cyberspace*, as well as that of the *space of flows*, to mention just some of the sociospatial interpretations and consequences. The technological changes in the movements of people and objects, as well as in the transmission of information, have enabled, among other changes, their globalization at the spatial scale, and the intensification of human activities, at the temporal one.

With these relatively long-standing trends in mind, special attention should be given to the currently emerging and so-called *third generation* of information flows. This rather technological 'generation' refers to the wireless transmissions of all forms and types of information, whether through laptop computers, or through mobile telephones. This generation implies, therefore, an intersection between the growing ability of humans to move fast and efficiently across the globe, on the one hand, and their parallel ability to move with them their business and personal connections, as well as their personal 'libraries', and other sources of information, on the other. This presentation attempts, therefore, at a comparison between the mobilities of humans and information, focusing on the following aspects: modulation; diffusion; physical infrastructure; logic; contents; networks; movement; and consumption.