

TIME AND MEDIA: INTRODUCTORY NOTE TEMPO E MÉDIA: NOTA INTRODUTÓRIA

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What is the time of media today? Is there a time of and for the media? In *A obra de arte na era da sua reprodutibilidade técnica* [The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction] (1934/1994), Walter Benjamin thought, in a seminal way, about the impact of reproduction techniques on modern perception. According to the author, the massification of photography and cinema consumption contributed to a “spatial-temporal reorganisation” (Hansen, 2012, p. 210) capable of producing “new ways of experiencing society” (Schöttker, 2012, p. 43).

If we are immersed in a context in which media culture products are massively promoted through images and sounds, it is highly important to understand in what ways can said innovation bring profound changes, not only in dealing with and understanding time, but also in the political, social and emotional dynamics that converge with the development of technological and digital objects. Even before the advent of smartphones and the Instagram, YouTube and Facebook empires, Flusser had already predicted: “it is not about possession anymore, but the information (not the hardware, but the software) that gives power; and it is not about the economy anymore, but the communication, which constitutes the infrastructure of community and society” (Flusser, 1999, p. 155). This true epistemological revolution would lead the author to question “to what extent does the historical criteria of ‘true and false’, ‘said and done’, ‘authentic and artificial’, ‘real and apparent’ no longer applies to our world” (Flusser, 2008, p. 45).

New concerns arise: which theoretical resources can we mobilise to understand the media activity of today? Which new reconceptualisations are presented regarding the way media handles social, historical and cultural time and (trans)figures it? And, what are the conditions and consequences for groups, organisations and individuals? In fact, the communication phenomena are also time processes that encompass various time, duration and temporality dimensions. The rise of photography, a technical image paradigm, marks the beginning of a new era in the media, which is established and deepened by the emergence of new digital media and synthetic images. Throughout the 20th century, the implications of these transformations in the social-anthropological, cultural and political dimensions were investigated by many authors. Concerning the temporality of technical images, Vilém Flusser describes the paradox that is before us: “images come and go, like lightning”. However, they are “everlasting”, because they are kept in memories and are also “immediately” recoverable. Therefore, there is no longer “space: we are all here together, regardless of where we are”. Therefore, there is no longer “time: everything is with me now, regardless of when it happened” (Flusser, 2008, p. 149).

To articulate time, communication and media, it is important to understand two ways, complementary to some extent, of devising time. On the one hand, chronological time, measurable with a clock, predictable and under protection and, on the other hand, subjective time, which is lived and is object of the memory and experience of individuals, systems, communities and groups.

In the first perspective, the relation between time and media implies some problematisation regarding how different media has established themselves as time accelerator agents, in the same way they have benefited from a technical acceleration over the last decades. This is one of the most widespread theses in the areas of sociology of time and sociology of communication and media. There are several topics and dimensions of analysis to consider regarding these assumptions. In fact, new galaxies have been opened up after Gutenberg's, influenced by the expansion of communicational theories, and the design and implementation of a wide range of technological resources that contributed to the effective compression of space-time, conceptualised by David Harvey (2002). In practice, mass media have made the flow of information easier and faster, leading to a generalised access of all types of content, by the population. Referencing technological resources, closely related to the expansion of digitalisation, as well as the flow of information and contact processes.

Following the approach of Hartmut Rosa (2015), it can be argued that the technical acceleration is an inherent process of the intensification of social acceleration, which is closely related to the expansion of communication and media. As Irfun Appadurai explained, society is mediated, composed of mediascapes, that operate in various directions some operate in the intensification of globalisation and the "global village", with the associated risks and challenges; while others are directed to the emergence of new activities and work categories, lifestyles and culture. Appadurai mentions that:

mediascapes, whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-centred, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well those of others living in other places. (Appadurai, 1996, p. 53)

The sociology of time has been determining the relation between the processes of acceleration, information and communication speed and sociocultural transformations. It is not just the line between busy and free time that fades as digitalisation transforms work spaces and time and increases the possibilities regarding leisure time. New companies, capable of meeting the social acceleration needs, also emerge, dedicated to providing services and goods characterised by instantaneity, partial time and, as mentioned by Richard Sennet in 2006, "non-linear sequencing" (p. 53). The offer provided by different media is increasingly larger, sometimes inconsistent, however, most of the times diverse and complex, leading to what Mike Featherstone (2009) calls time ubiquity: be everywhere and nowhere at the same time. With this in mind, studies show the

life experience of someone who works directly with and in information and communication media, meeting this crescendo of acceleration which is also a response to the competition and inherent need to control and access resources, by organisations operating inside the media and information system. We are within the scope of the new capitalism (Sennet, 2006).

It is not just about determining the variations of work schedules, or their absence, but also, and most importantly, about the constant need of being connected, as an essential feature of conformation and integration. On another level, the time of and for communication or information disappears as a unique entity in the universe of the population's tastes and lifestyles, since, in the same way, the daily experience is broadly composed of communication mediation time. Studies regarding the uses and impacts of information and communication technologies are vast. Nowadays, they are included in this debate concerning the socio-cultural impact of the different forms of technoscience on daily life, highlighting its effects on culture.

From a second perspective, the individual and collective experience time is also object of analysis, with emphasis on the construction of time horizons phenomena – past-present-future and (ir)reversibility. One of the features of the digital technoscientific society is the unprecedented ability of these technological resources to store and use (disseminate) information, while allowing, (almost) instantaneously, the manipulation of time horizons, triggering effects on knowledge, evaluation and judgement, regarding both the historical experience and expectation. Two of the implicit assumptions that characterised history up to the digitalisation expansion – designated as the process that – consisted in suggesting that time could not be stored and that past events (therefore irreversible) would be accessed through a memory or registration objects.

The present time is executing, in an increasingly digital manner, what Appadurai said:

the past is now not a land to return to in a simple politics of memory. It has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios, a kind of temporal central casting, to which recourse can be taken as appropriate, depending on the movie to be made, the scene to be enacted, the hostages to be rescued. All this is par for the course, if you follow Jean Baudrillard or Jean-François Lyotard into a world of signs wholly unmoored from their social signifiers (all the world's a Disneyland). But I would like to suggest that the apparent increasing substitutability of whole periods and postures for one another, in the cultural styles of advanced capitalism, is tied to larger global forces, which have done much to show Americans that the past is usually another country. If your present is their future (as in much modernization theory and in many self-satisfied tourist fantasies), and their future is your past (as in the case of the Filipino virtuosos of American popular music), then your own past can be made to appear as simply a normalized modality of your present. Thus, although some anthropologists may continue

to relegate their Others to temporal spaces that they do not themselves occupy (Fabian, 1983), postindustrial cultural productions have entered a postnostalgic phase. (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 47-48)

Digitalisation, however, offers very different contexts from these assumptions. Not only because it allows one to store time (series of happenings and events that remain registered in the moment they occur), but also because it deeply transforms the nature of the memory, both individual and collective. A child can see herself/himself when she/ he was a baby, or in previous phases of her/his life, and observe the interactions with her/his family, how her/his life space was, and is even able to reach her/his own conclusions about her/his family and social acceptance and integration. This action of observing oneself is surely complex, because the child can see what was unconscious to him at a certain time in his life. A society, or a group, can see itself in the past, revisiting events they were not aware of, due to political control or other reason.

Additionally, media provides content regarding past (irreversible) historical events, registered in such a way that makes them reversible, bringing them to the present as images, speeches and others, and transforming them into an object of new experiences, more than a memory or a recall, with potential impact on individual and collective identities. Movements such as MeToo, or revelations about the Church and celebrities regarding paedophilia and harassment accusations are an example of how media can recover the past and transform it into an object or subject that is constantly urgent, leading to legal reviews, also focused on the time-object of a crime or sanction. In this sense, time is not just an instrument for mediation and creation of objects (content and/or events). It is also, in itself, an exchangeable object (in the form of what can happen and what could have happened).

In addition, media simplifies the constant experience of urgency, in cases in which phenomena and events persistently remain and are continuously shared online, giving rise to various interpretations over time. Little is known about the consequences of this possibility of creating constant urgency in and through media about society, and particularly, about people. For now, we only know that any event that occurs and that is shared on social media, becomes immediately available, but also storable and reversible (not the event itself, but its time and media form). Some of the content that is subject to flow and consumption, is purely a demonstration of the inconsistency of what has been said over time and what is being said “now”. In this regard, media and its logics of interpretation provide a clear demonstration of what it considers to be contradictions, incoherencies or “a turncoat stance”, precisely because technological resources easily allow a confrontation between times. This is done with different interests and reasons in mind, but what truly matters are the resulting effects.

As can be observed, there are several ways of understanding the relation between time and media. The theoretical frameworks that allow its analysis include authors with different perspectives regarding the impact of information and communication technology. Manuel Castells (2011) stated, for example, that in the context of digital society,

social networks represent space-time in the relationships of power that affect the position of the agents in the space of opportunities. However, social networks are also characterised by reducing the waiting time between relationships, a feature that can affect the ability for planification and execution of actions by the agents while, simultaneously promoting and catapulting them to irreversible levels of attainment. From a critical perspective, Zygmunt Bauman considered in the book about globalisation analysis and its human consequences (1999) that the ability to compress the time and space provided by technology was a source of growing power and social inequality, parallel to globalisation. The author referred to this sort of technical and social acceleration that creates “new polarisation” as “new speed”, because:

to put it in a nutshell: rather than homogenizing the human condition, the technological annulment of temporal/spatial distances tends to polarize it. It emancipates certain humans from territorial constraints and renders certain community-generating meanings exterritorial – while denuding the territory, to which other people go on being confined, of its meaning and its identity-endowing capacity. For some people it augurs an unprecedented freedom from physical obstacles and unheard-of ability to move and act from a distance. For others it portends the impossibility of appropriating and domesticating the locality from which they have little chance of cutting themselves free in order to move elsewhere. With “distances no longer meaning anything”, localities, separated by distances, also lose their meanings. This, however, augurs freedom of meaning-creation for some, but portends ascription to meaninglessness for others. Some can now move out of the locality – any locality – at will. Others watch helplessly the sole locality they inhabit moving away from under their feet. (Bauman, 1999, p. 24)

A theoretical model we consider very useful in the questioning of the relation between time and media, belongs to Niklas Luhmann (2005). This author develops the theory of systems applied to various areas of society, and in particular mass media. The author, refusing the propensity of the unit, explains that the systems are *procedural* realities, characterised by the ability of self-reference and autopoiesis. As a result, time is considered a central element in the media communication system, because the system needs time to reproduce and manage change, explained by the differentiation.

In the book *The reality of the mass media*, Luhmann (2005) argues about the particularity of the communication systems, emphasising that:

the mass media spread information far and wide so that instantaneously everybody will count on its being known to everyone else (or that not being aware of it “looks bad”, therefore one does not admit that one did not know (...)). In that sense, the mass media give rise to social redundancy, on a broader scale in society, in other words, a need directly connected to this redundancy of having new information. Just as our differentiated economy,

depending on the flow of money, creates a never-ending need to replace money as soon as it has been spent, so the mass media create the need to replace information that has become redundant, that is non-information, by new information: *fresh money* and *new information* are the central motives of modern social dynamics. (Luhmann, 2005, p. 45)

In the author's perspective, the acceleration of time, in information, comprises a global neurosis of a differentiated production of goods and services. Consequently, mass media are not only time users, but also time producers, regarding how they are received and the routines they establish (for example, the schedules of certain programmes structure daily time) and that are subject to change over time.

Therefore, the exploration of the relations between time and media does not end with the analysis of the sociological phenomena that characterise great trends in the today's society, and which we have already referred to, such as features associated to the birth of new patterns of the use and valuation of time, relationships between social groups and individuals through media devices that influence time management, control and discipline in the use of the time pertaining to isolated people, groups or families. There is also much to say about how individuals access such devices of observation and manipulation of time, interests and strategies, since the control of time is also a form of power and domination. Thus, the topic of relations between time and media lead us to phenomena of power and war, as well as risk, safety and surveillance.

A necessary note concerns the relation between time, media and art. This note is worth mentioning, not only because time applies to the context of art flowing in and through media, but also because media, as well as art (analytically considered in its individuality), are temporally assembled, meaning that time makes a difference in its structure and conception, even being able to function as a distinctive feature of the content and the pieces.

Again, we are not only referring to the chronological and measurable dimension of time, but also to how it represents the identity of the content and the pieces, being object of deliberated analysis and aesthetical disposition. Resuming the definition of system proposed by Luhmann (2005), it is possible to see that time also has a discursive presence in the media, given it is part of the content, of the clear messages that flow in various spaces, composing the architecture of such messages and content, in ways that are unquestionable to individuals. Advertising produces language and semantics that are time specific and the same happens in the world of social media.

Social theory is filled with authors persistently appealing to the core of the questions regarding time – life, used, requested, manipulated, provided, controlled – in current societies, which means it is also necessary to question the need for structuring an appropriate pedagogy concerning the use of time, in the context of digital actions.

This issue does not exhaust such a vast subject, as we just mentioned. It compiles some topics that have been suggested by the authors themselves, following various theoretical guidelines, namely through the definitions of duration, wait, synchronisation and acceleration in the information context.

We began this themed issue by reflecting on the definition of time and its relation to the media, from a transdisciplinary perspective, in connection with modern physics. In the text “Time and chaos: the ‘imagination of possibilities’ and the media”, Gustavo Castro and Florence Dravet seek to understand how the definition of time mediates the perception and aesthetics of space/time and order/chaos. In that sense, they analyse the narratives “Cosmicomics” and “T Zero”, by Italo Calvino, in the film *Melancholia*, from Lars Von Trier, and the interpretation of the physicist and Nobel Prize in Chemistry, Ilya Prigogine, using a descriptive, interpretative and critical method.

A different type of space-time is addressed in “Comedy’s time spell”. Nuno Jerónimo and Carlos Alexandre highlight the importance of time in the construction of comedy, as a form of art that is also undeniably subject to the fast pace of the digital technologies of today. In this text, instead of acceleration and compression, the analysis focuses on the discursive and performative resource of comedy, which, according to the authors, possesses unique features in relation to temporality and is an example of suspension in daily life.

In the text “The time of fear *versus* the time of science”, Simone Evangelista and Marcelo Garcia address the discrepancy between different temporality regimes regarding the same event: the Zika virus and microcephaly epidemic in Brazil, in 2015/2016. Starting with a case study about the dissemination of information regarding this epidemic, the authors analyse the time spent by the population (full of doubts and uncertainties) in search of answers, and, on the other hand, the time of data dissemination by the scientific institutions regarding the same matter. At the core of this debate, as suggested by the authors, lies the role of media, especially social media, as a mediator of the discursive disputes regarding the disease.

A text by Susana de Noronha, “The chairs of hereditary cancer: understanding time and illness using creative ethnographic drawing”, addresses the experience of the disease and the persistence of waiting, as an analytical category of a suspended life. Painting and ethnographic drawing are privileged ways through which the author enters the period of experience of another Being suffering from cancer.

In the article “Corruption and the media – a journalists’ look about the relevance of time”, the authors discuss the relationship of time with the media, in a perspective that considers the power relations between the Judicial, mediatic and political systems. The practices of corruption involving politicians are the focus of the research, in the light of the patterns of time control that permeate those systems.

Priscilla Porto Nascimento Fansani signs the text “Temporalities embedded in the intensive body during the experience of the artistic project SoundSystem”, where she explores the various forms of expression of the time achieved by the art, arguing that the artists resist Chronopolitics and propose a time of the event. Dance and music allow the body to be freed from its utilitarian and organic movements.

Next, we move on to another debate regarding the role of media in the relation with time, now from the perspective of perception of acceleration, time and speed elimination. Ivone Santos and José Azevedo write a text about the new *flâneurs*, suggesting a review of the state-of-the-art related to literature that emphasises the post-structuralist

vision of time. In “Compression of space-time and hyper-localisation: the new *flâneurs*”, the authors resort to an extensive bibliographical and concept review to discuss the time set by the media, as well as its ubiquitous and pervasive character, which contributed to the perceptions of the deterritorialisation and temporalisation.

Vitor Sousa’s reading of Byung-Chul Han’s book, *O aroma do tempo. Um ensaio filosófico sobre a arte da demora* [The scent of time. A philosophical essay on the art of delay] and its paradoxes in current societies evidences the timeless character of philosophical and anthropological questioning over time, demonstrating the interest in discussing the temporalities and the uses of time in parallel with the social dynamics. ✍

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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