



# Networking Knowledge

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*Volume 13 Issue 2 December 2020*



## **Standard Issue**

Edited by Bissie Anderson

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## Editorial Introduction

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This standard issue features six contributions from postgraduate and early career scholars working at the intersections of media, communications, education, sociology, and technoculture. In spite of the numerous challenges faced in 2020 due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and its knock-on effect on universities around the world, we are delighted to be closing the difficult year with the publication of this collection of articles. This is a reason for celebration – celebration of the authors whose work is featured herein, of cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary connections that allow us to engage in academic dialogue across borders, of our resilience as a global collective of researchers, and our ongoing commitment to knowledge exchange.

The articles in this standard issue differ in their objects of inquiry – from sound in digital games, social networking sites, and digital technology in education, to broadcast journalism and romantic comedies, but they broadly converge around a common focus on temporality and time. Between them, the articles present a good mix of empirical work and significant conceptual development, moving forward theoretical debates in the fields of media and communications. Concepts are either developed, through in-depth engagement with the extant literature (Amaral 2020; Martins and Piaia 2020), or tested through empirical studies using a variety of methods – from surveys (De Andrade and Calixto 2020) to digital ethnography (Polivanov and Santos 2020) to participant observation and interviews (Gomes, Vizeu, and De Oliveira 2020). In some cases, altogether innovative methodological approaches for analysing artefacts are proposed, as in Luersen and Kilpp (2020), whose article opens this standard issue of the journal.

In ‘Anachronic sonorities of technoculture in digital games’, Eduardo Luersen and Suzana Kilpp develop a conceptual approach to contemporary technoculture through the prism of digital games, and specifically, their audible dimensions. Luersen and Kilpp review the extant literature on digital game sonorities and suggest a conceptual reframing, placing games as key technoculture artefacts within the broader media landscape and paying analytical attention to the mnemonic aspects of their sounds. They propose an archaeological approach to sonorities in games - excavating their genealogical traces to reveal how new and old technologies converge. Drawing on cartographic approaches, the authors conclude with a methodological proposition for genealogical analysis of sound in digital games through the method of “estranged listening” and the operationalisation of sound ‘constellations’.

In the second article of the collection, ‘Collapsed Temporalities in Social Media: Cuban Immigrants in Brazil and Facebook’, Beatriz Polivanov and Deborah Santos examine the perception of time on social media networks through digital ethnography, more precisely, the analysis of Facebook activity of Cubans living in Brazil. Polivanov and Santos propose the concept of ‘*collapsed temporalities*’ to describe expats’ efforts to communicate with both communities in their homeland, and friends and acquaintances in their new home, in Brazil.

The authors find that while social networking sites, especially Facebook, promote staying in touch with people and realities expats left behind, they also create “time gaps” and a feeling of distance and displacement, which expats attempt to fill by adopting an intermediary communicator role between their country of origin and their adopted country.

The third article in this standard issue presents findings from the large-scale *Inter-Relations Communication and Education project in Basic Education* carried out by the research group *Mediações Educomunicativas (MECOM)* at the University of São Paulo. 3700 students and more than 500 teachers in Brazil took part in the study, which examined how the use of digital technologies impacts the teaching and learning process. Authors Rogério Pelizzari de Andrade and Douglas Calixto employ a theoretical framework around the concept ‘social acceleration of time’ and offer empirical evidence of its concrete manifestation in the context of education. The study findings point to both teachers’ and students’ altered experience of time and their changing perceptions of knowledge acquisition and construction, driven by digital technologies’ ephemeral nature and acceleration mechanisms. In the conclusion, De Andrade and Calixto reflect on the design, implementation, and impact of their project, and discuss future directions of research at the intersection of education, communication, and technology in Brazil in the context of the COVID-19 reality.

In the fourth contribution to this issue of *Networking Knowledge*, Ana Beatriz Martins and Victor Piaia revisit the legacy of social theorist Alfred Schutz by critically positioning his work on time and memory in the context of mediated social realities. Martins and Piaia argue that a contemporary rereading of Schutz contributes to a much-needed dialogue between social theory and media theory, by bringing them together around a common theme – the concept of time, particularly in two of its dimensions - its acceleration and its relation to memory. To build bridges between media theory and social theory, the authors propose temporality as a “constitutive dimension” in the construction of social reality. They problematise the axiomatic conception of ‘the acceleration of time’ found in most of the literature, arguing that this perception is created by our more conscious awareness of the passing of time, compared to the past, since our digital lives force us out of the continuous flow of experience, or being in the present, into the time-space dimension of reflexivity. Martins and Piaia then move on to discuss how our perception of memory changes in a world of abundance of tools to build memories, and by extension, consciousness. They import Schutz’ concept ‘stock of knowledge’ to explain how individuals relate to/share social understandings of the world, based on collective memory, which has the potential to drive action and social change. Martins and Piaia conclude that the expansion of mediated interactions and increased exposure to information alter the process of memory construction, significantly affecting the knowledge generation process, and thus, the formation of social life.

The journal issue then turns to journalism, zooming in on the process of TV production and newsroom routines. In ‘The Decisive Instants in News-making: Individual and Collective Temporalities in Broadcast Journalism’, Elane Gomes, Alfredo Vizeu, and Jocélio de Oliveira argue for an analytical attention to temporality as an important category that drives production and even functions as a news value in its own right, particularly in time-based

media products such as TV programmes, whose temporal dimension is a defining feature. Gomes, Vizeu, and De Oliveira explore the impact of temporality of broadcast journalism on the production process, through participant observation in the Cabo Branco TV channel newsroom and interviews with key TV producers employed by the channel. Time, in its multiple manifestations - as a set of instants, moments, rhythms of newswork and routines - has a structuring effect on the decision-making processes in broadcast journalism in terms of deadlines and other 'decisive instants' that determine editorial judgements in a fast-paced production environment. Gomes, Vizeu, and De Oliveira distinguish between collective and individual temporalities in the production of a newscast, and they illustrate these concepts through empirical examples from their ethnographic work. Ultimately, the authors argue, time is the unifying principle of journalistic practice and values, and it is therefore a concept that merits considerable attention in studies of professional journalistic culture.

In the final article of this end-of-2020 standard issue of *Networking Knowledge*, Carolina Amaral introduces the concept 'temporality of the almost' to describe the micro-narrative structure of a popular film/TV genre – the (serialized) romantic comedy. Exploring the temporal connections in rom-com, and its storytelling strategies such as character development, suspense, and plot, Amaral argues that the 'almost' is a narrative element that characterizes the genre, whose performative power rests in its strategic temporal constructions and play with time (through postponements, cliffhangers, plot detours, and obstacles). The temporal deferral and control functions, making erotic resolution between the main characters 'almost happen', serve to intensify the desire between the protagonists, but also create narrative cravings in the spectator. Thus, romcoms' play with time, through temporal conventions such as suspense, anticipation, curiosity, mystery and surprise, foster viewers' affective involvement in a "temporal game between audience and story", a relationship which, as Amaral aptly puts it, "is still on after the *ever after*."

I hope you enjoy this stimulating collection of articles by postgraduate and early career scholars in media and communications. Personally, I would like to thank the authors for their trust, patience, and active engagement in the editorial process, in spite of a number of obstacles we had to overcome in putting this issue together. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to all the reviewers, without whose thoughtful and constructive feedback this issue would not have seen the light of day. Let's keep working together, across cultural and disciplinary borders.

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## Biography

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# Anachronic sonorities of technoculture in digital games: A preliminary questioning

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## ABSTRACT

This article offers a preliminary questioning of the extant research on the sound of digital games and situates these extensively disseminated contemporary artefacts in a wider technocultural frame of reference, in order to develop an approach capable of articulating communication, memory, and culture.. To achieve this goal, we propose a partial revision of prominent works dealing with the sonorities of digital games, contrasting them through the theoretical-methodological contributions of Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history and media archaeology. Through the conceptual approach developed in this article, we are able to reformulate questions being asked about the sounds of digital games, taking them instead as compelling objects for inquiry regarding our contemporary technoculture and a memory of media that surpasses them. Having reconceptualized our research object, we suggest a method for an empirical research still under development.

## KEYWORDS

digital games, sonic traces, temporalities, memory of media, technoculture

## Introduction

In this article, we initially try to present a few perspectives on the research of digital games, showing how we position our object of study in relation to epistemological assumptions about these media. The following subsection defines the theoretical and methodological references that we deem most pertinent to analyse the objects under investigation and justifies some implications of these choices. In the third section, we weigh in on what we understand as the sonic *traces* we have been looking for; and finally in the last section, we suggest the current research alignments and our understanding of the relationship between the sonorities of digital games and a memory of technically mediated sounds, in which we intend to situate our research within communication studies.

As we see it, the current work on the audible dimension of digital games does not properly situate games within a broader media landscape. The conceptual reframing that we suggest here is, from our perspective, an appealing opportunity to explore under-analysed aspects of digital games. For this reason, in the concluding section of this paper we also suggest some methodological procedures to be employed in further investigations.

## State of the art

Until recently, it was fairly common to justify investments in digital games in two directions: initiatives that proposed the need to take games as “serious cultural objects”, as more than casual amusement artefacts (Carvalho 2013; Newman 2004); and remarks that the proposals that took these artefacts as their *corpus*, as communicational objects, were still incipient or unsettled (Perani 2015).

However, there is nothing between these two instances that would justify a restriction on the way of looking from the first to the second (to take casual artefacts seriously), as we understand it. Quite the contrary, we see in the trivial dimension of digital games, also manifested in the somewhat playful logics that appear exponentially in a great diversity of fixed and ubiquitous screens, some of its most prominent characteristics. The more casual the use of media is in our daily life (the more it appears to be "natural" to the ecosystem of audiovisual media), the more its own logic also tends to engender itself in technoculture. To echo an argument of Wendy Chun (2017), this suggests that media become more important when their status is no longer perceived as 'new' and moves toward the 'usual'. If one cannot state that this is the case for videogames today, given the surprising effect that digital games still carry when they are inserted in the most varied fields of debate, this seems to be precisely the case of audiovisual media to which we are already so accustomed that we hardly perceive their persistence in our daily lives - let alone the persistence of their languages in the ways in which other contemporary media such as videogames themselves build their worlds. But let us begin our discussion of the state of the art from the second assertion, about the incipience and the unsettlement of the proposals on video games as communicational objects, to move gradually and subsequently toward the more complex first question.

It has been only a few decades that research projects on digital games have been developed under Communication Studies, but today they are already very frequent in the field. Our review of articles published since 2015 tends to corroborate the conjuncture that Mônica Acevedo (2013) describes: the proliferation of studies on digital games in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts occurred a little more slowly than in other fields of knowledge, such as IT Sciences and Engineering; approaches on the aesthetic dimensions of games took a while to develop; and the angles that proposed to problematise these objects from their imagery and sonic constructs did not achieve the same prominence as other perspectives until more recently.

Although we cannot disregard this so-called delay, it is not necessary here to hide even more the proposals that sought to regard digital games as relevant objects for audiovisual communication research. David Sudnow's *Pilgrim in the Microworld* (1983), for example, is one of the most detailed accounts of the relationship of the player's body to the machine we've encountered so far. A very peculiar work, with phenomenological contours, in which the author, a social scientist and jazz pianist, narrates (making associations between the experiences of "interfacing" through video game and a musical instrument) his experience with the game *Breakout* (1978, Atari 2600), the images and sounds that were produced, and the finger movements they demanded.

The current state of game studies points to a variety of studies interested specifically in the sonorities of these artefacts. *Game Sound: an introduction to the history, theory and practice of videogame music and game design* (2008), by Karen Collins, Winifred Phillips' A

*composer's guide to game music* (2014) and the collection *Game sound technology and player interaction: concepts and developments* (2010), organized by Mark Grimshaw, are works that in certain parts describe the sound expressions in digital games and that present us, above all, material elements and design models related to it. However, they are not works that openly intend to discuss the historical conditions of their experience, or their association with the aesthetics of other media, except for the work by Collins (2008), who attempts to establish a broader relationship between games and other media drawing from observations by Lev Manovich (2001).

The article *Sound in electronic gambling machines* (Collins et al. 2011) explores similarities between the uses of sound expression in digital games and electronic gambling machines, pointing out how sound in the latter builds mainly reward effects. The text makes detailed descriptions of casino machines, with the concern of thinking how these sounds can be used in sound design practices of current games. However, the former article (Collins et al. 2011) presents two themes we try to problematise in our work: firstly, because the authors focus on the description of the casino slot machines, some forms remain unnoticed, such as the ways home games already update tendencies that were in a somewhat 'standing-reserve state' in those machines; secondly, the text presents the game-sound-player relationship in terms of causal effects, and much of what would be rich communicational processes between these instances and environments is understood in regard to *one-step flow* models<sup>1</sup>. In a more recent work, though, Collins (2013) unfolds her arguments in a more composite direction: the experience of sound involves all senses, moving the body, stimulating emotional responses and generating associations with space and textures, even if one listens with closed eyes. To explore this argument, she derives from Merleau-Ponty's (1998) phenomenological approach and Michel Chion's (2008) sound studies with films.

Particularly under the understanding of the experience of game worlds, the perspective of Lucas Meneguette's work is pertinent. In *Situações sonoras e jogos digitais* (2013) (*Sonic situations and digital games*), he circumvents the dichotomy between "virtual environment" and "real environment" through consideration of the sensorial stimuli incited by games. Meneguette suggests that the experience of the game is dependent on a kind of communion between the perceptive subject and the potentialities of action in the game environment, under an affection regime (immersion). He also makes slight approximations between games and films, pointing out traces of contamination between these languages.

In his article *Worlds of sound*, Michael D'Errico (2015) follows a similar path, suggesting analogies between techniques, aesthetics and creative practices of contemporary game design and experiments of generative art and music with computers in the second half of the twentieth

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<sup>1</sup> It would equate only the part of the phenomenon, more specifically to the part of the technique that Peter Krapp (2018) calls *Ping*, in an analogy to the testing of sonar and radar signals. *Ping* corresponds to the computer-computer information transmission model, which analyses the signal and confirms or not its receipt. The design of videogames depends, however, on the establishment of conditions of human-computer interaction, which plays a critical role in their technical-aesthetic development, as the author shows. This form of relationship, therefore, before operating under a ping-ping logic, would operate in a ping-pong relation, by which *Pong* refers to the programmed management of the reaction movements to the initial signal through the interface, and from which it is installed an interdependent meddling between the consecutive movements realized between the human and the machine.

century, such as the compositional techniques of Stockhausen and Koenig, the indeterminate music of Cage and the *phasing* of Steve Reich. For D'Errico, some initiatives in digital art and modern music share aesthetic and technical aspects with ways to operationalise computer resources in game design such as *Fract OSC* (2014), and *Proteus* (2013). D'Errico's argument seems to converge implicitly with the ideas of authors who understand that this procedural point of view brings to the forefront of the game its rules and mechanics, as well as directing (again) the visual and sound repertoire towards abstraction instead of verisimilitude. Generative audio application in games would be intrinsically linked to "real-time" sound synthesis, while most games would still work with pre-recorded audio samples, in which other cinematic cues such as audio samples from capture and post-production practices of sound effects are applied. According to Ian Bogost (2015), this is a recurrent problem in both game studies and game criticism. In his view, there are two converging dangers that unfold from this bias: the first is a linearly progressive view on games; the second is based on the perspective that technical development would carry by itself the aesthetic development of media. Bogost points out that videogames are technical devices, with applications and operations connected to their mode of operation, but they are also means to express other experiences of use.

Such a perspective, though, can be problematic if we think about the design of game interfaces. If we are to consider digital games as expressive media, we must observe that the forms of agency and operability of digital games, relying on the usability of "stable" interfaces (Fuchs, Mañas, and Russeger 2013, 32), tend to promote a rather linear and allegedly "universally applicable" method of usage. Instead of nurturing a more properly "ludic" agency between user and machine, this usual stability of digital games interfaces connects them to a quite traditional property of mass media, inscribing gameplaying as part of contemporary attention economics. This is particularly so if we consider the current permeation of society with methods, metaphors, and attributes of games (Fuchs 2018).

The possibilities of interfacing with sound are also to be considered. This could start by hearing the computer itself. As Stefan Höltgen points out, even computers of the pre-electronic era were already very noisy: their peripherals have always made sounds "with their motors (tape and floppy drives, printers, scanners), rotors (fans), movable heads (hard disk and floppy drives), or relays (in built-in cassette recorders and power supply choppers)" (Höltgen 2018, 216). This perspective draws our attention towards the infrastructure of communication technologies in which digital games are embedded. This is a very intriguing approach to be combined for example with Nikita Braguinski's (2018) observations on "retro game audio". According to Braguinski (2018), the somewhat fuzzy notion of "8-bit aesthetics", used largely in today's popular culture to label voluntarily produced "low resolution" sounds, beeping noises, simulated crashing sounds and alike, hardly correspond to the sonic experience of dedicated audio chip sounds of videogame consoles of previous generations. Furthermore, our reception of such sounds cannot possibly be alike because the very conditions of possibility of our perception have changed. Braguinski draws the conclusion that the imitations and evocations of 8-bit-era sound aesthetics (and we could extend it to other so called "retro" sounds, such as pre-electronic-era's) are technologies themselves, and as such they must at least partially originate from cultural desires. He raises the question in order to assess what those desires would be. We seem to be on a very similar path towards the mnemonic aspects of technoculture in digital games.

In contemporary technoculture, phenomena like these can be thought as more than a sophisticated effect of media technologies, reaching towards what Peter Krapp (2018) defines as aberrations of cultural memory. While arguing over cliché pop music programming in radio, Krapp states that the hits of a “more remote” past are more often remembered, while the trending music of very recent past is set to be forgotten. Such a phenomenon is very similar to the case of so called 8-bit-era videogame sounds. The fact that most of the players of contemporary games probably have not tried the first generations of videogames makes the phenomenon of retro aesthetics even more curious. Perhaps one of its key driving impulses is this fascination with the construction of a past that was necessarily not experienced.

We also reviewed other works that touch upon the technical-aesthetic dimension of games, speaking tangentially (Bogost 2007) or directly (Fischer 2013; Galloway 2006; Manovich 2001) of a technocultural context that endures in them. We approach them in terms of how they inscribe games in broader discussions on media and cultural habits. Regarding this aspect, the work of João Ricardo de Bittencourt (2018) interested us for what he addresses as the playful, mechanical and audiovisual layers of *gamic images*, proposing a way of understanding (and showing) the different visualities produced by videogames in a larger framework. In his research, Bittencourt describes the pixel, for example, not only as an isolated technical element, but as a central exponent of the marks of the technocultural processes of image production in contemporary times. The multiple presence of pixels in different contemporary images therefore testifies about the wide circulation and porousness of the technical images of gaming. Our perspective stems from very similar aspirations, yet, instead of looking at the pixels on the screen we ought to hear the noises of gameplaying.

Works as these might get us closer to how digital games are articulated with temporalities and, more specifically, with practices that may contest the recurrent “novelty-driven” rhetoric associated to game aesthetics and technologies – inscribing them, instead, as cultural techniques where the old and the new coalesce. This formulation is closely aligned to our research goals, as we will comment below.

### **Questions concerning the temporalities of media**

We are aware that we have left important topics, such as the cultural anthropological theories of sound design and audio technologies (Schulze 2019; Bijsterveld and van Dijck 2009), out of this review. But from this discussion on the research of digital games as audiovisual media, we wish to move in another direction, because what we propose to contribute to the debate is, first of all, a way of highlighting what we listen to in games. In this way, we are assuming that there are still many opaque areas of the life of these objects, areas the research about which has been seldom visited, or touched only as a passing note. We believe that a quantifiable-driven research about the sonorities of *games* and an overly recurrent historical narrative of the constitution of these media (Guins 2017; Höltgen 2018; Huhtamo 2005) are related to this phenomenon, which imparts very regular demarcations<sup>2</sup> to the history of digital gaming, with only sporadic mention of the machines of images and sounds to which their languages relate. The lack of reflection on how these objects develop in *time*, combined with their recurrent

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<sup>2</sup>From generation to generation of consoles, audio cards, linearly according to a quantifiable difference in terms of depth of bit rate or availability of sound channels.

arrangement in solidified chronologies, produces the occlusion of the intimate points of contact that videogames present with broader trajectories of the way we communicate through techniques, aesthetics, and audiovisual codes.

In experiencing the games by listening to them, the impression we have is that there are more traits associative to the aesthetics of other media than the theoretical review suggests. Attention to these traits can help us to understand a little more about the audiovisual memory that is updated through them, in the soundscape of the designed gameworlds, in the sound mixing of the characters' voices, in the relation of the sound effects with the images, and in the way the sonorities interface with the player/user.

Exploring some of the assumptions in current videogame sound design research and the rhetoric that accompanies technical-aesthetic developments in audiovisual media, we find that the problem of such narratives is tightly connected to a broader discussion that goes back to the study of aesthetic expressions regarding media and art history more broadly.

According to Philippe Dubois (2004, 33):

'For each historical moment in which they have emerged, these image technologies [photography, cinema, television, video, computer image] have always been new - which, we shall see, proves to be at least relative, restricted to the technical dimension and not necessarily reaching the aesthetic terrain. [...] In fact, it is clear that this idea of "newness" associated with the question of technologies works first and foremost as a language effect. [...] This occurred both in the emergence of photography in 1839 and in the arrival of the cinematograph at the end of the nineteenth century, in the expansion of television after World War II, or in the current globalization of the computer image'.

We recognize the similarity between the assumptions on the sonorities of contemporary games and those teleological discourses aimed at the image technologies that Dubois (2004) emphasizes when writing about video. According to Dubois (2004, 35), the confusions arising from such claims of innovative forces are extensively cultivated and dispersed discursive formations that tend to be consistently repeated throughout the history of technology. The innovation rhetoric frequently postulates prophetic visions of the future, subscribing to an advertising logic that voluntarily promises prompt, decisive ruptures with what has gone before:

The amnesic discourse of novelty completely obscures everything that can be regressive in terms of representation (concealment of aesthetics to the benefit of what is purely technological), or stresses the eminently traditional character of some great issues, such as the real (and realism), that of analogy (mimicry) or material (materialism).

This rhetoric of novelty is often a thin-veiled expression of an ideology of blind progress that undermines more nuanced understandings of the potentialities and limitations of emerging technologies. Two main ideological frameworks are evident in the rhetoric about sonorities in videogames, and they are emblematic of the cases we seek to investigate: first, the notion of uniform progress, due to practices that refer to sound recording and reproduction techniques, which attributes the judgement of an advance toward the ideation of "sound fidelity" of the phonofixation techniques to the aesthetic scope of sonorities - a finalist fantasy that in sound

studies was known as the ideal-model of *perfect sound forever* (Devine 2013, 10) and that is at least as old as Edison's public demonstrations of the phonograph; and a second, which operates under the logic of the *tabula rasa*, and which we find repeatedly remarked in statements about the new technical possibilities of audio produced in the guise of computer mediated design. The ground-breaking features of dynamic audio and the possibilities coming from procedural regimes of "real time" computer synthesis would push the sonorities of games towards completely new, unprecedented directions.

However, we notice how certain previous aesthetic tendencies are updated in games when sound is performed synchronous to the action of the player, a main feature to the images and sounds association in videogames. Also, it does not seem reasonable to consider the quest for crystal-clear sound as the sole perspective for game audio design. The very texture of the sound and noises of older media becomes an aesthetic effect in many games, i.e. in the production of the voices of characters and the simulation of the use of audio artefacts in their sonic expression. Effects like these already testify in favour of a greater complexity in understanding the sonorities of games with regards to its temporalities, observing the contradictory relations between its technical conditions of development and its aesthetic expressions. Similarly, the possibilities of dynamic audio, and the ability to address responses between the actions performed by both the machine and the player, rely heavily on the recall of audiovisual synchrony effects.

Thus, videogames seem to revive, albeit perhaps unintentionally, aesthetic experiences based on the materialities of communication, mimesis, similarity-dissimilarity dialectics, among other remote topics on the history of representation. This observation has enabled us to position our research object transversally to the epistemological problems that comprise media studies and art history, finding some ways to make the study of game sounds less confined to the more autophagic tendencies on game studies, displacing (or repositioning) digital games to an observation environment in contact with temporalities research and memory studies.

In this way, therefore, we try to look for genealogical traces that inhabit in an irregular, divergent and unequal way the diverse formations and materialities of the means of representation. We recognize, therefore, the need for a theoretical-methodological movement towards the archaeo-genealogical aspects (Fischer, 2013, 11) of the sonorities of digital games. Also, Erick Felinto (2010) suggests that archaeological approaches combined with an attention to the materialities of media are capable of wavering the triumphalist rhetoric that often returns to the debates on media and technology, without however drifting into apocalyptic or nostalgic discourses. Such a look would open the horizon to the heterochrony, the leaps and discontinuities that accompany media culture and that allow us to probe other stories of these artefacts.

A similar perspective is proposed by Raiford Guins (2014, 2), who argues that it is up to the researcher to perform:

‘actions that seek to untangle, and to then re-entangle, historical narratives that have all-too-easily calcified into a narrow perspective - game-centric, design-centric, invention-centric, innovation-centric, user-centric – [...] that regards the task of the historian to be one of endless surveying to populate a pre-established record rather than the labour of careful research. [...] Part of the task is to intervene on how the history of games is currently being practised’.

Although archaeological approaches to videogames are not that rare, the sonic dimension of game machines and game world environments demands much more attention. That's not, however, a problem that is unique to the research in digital games, as Siegfried Zielinski (1999, 35) recalls while evoking the image of a 'wasteland' to refer to the state of the archaeological research of the technical-aesthetic impressions and expressions of sound in audiovisual media. Recently, several efforts have been made in this direction, but as we have previously emphasized, sonorities and game histories are rarely taken simultaneously.

These questions were taken into account when constructing our object of study based on the method of intuition, as developed by the philosopher Henri Bergson and later systematized by Gilles Deleuze (2004). According to this method, research problems should be dealt with more in function of time than space. In this way, and because we perceive contacts, contagion and tensions between the sound languages of other media that leave traces in the way games sound today, the research question that guided our first empirical observation was:

RQ1 What do the sounds of the games communicate about themselves as traces of other sonorities?

### **From the traces in digital games to the resonances of technoculture**

Thus, we have shifted the emphasis of our work from games to the memory of media and technoculture. We now consider that the way a game seeks to model the human experience contains traces of other media formations, which also depend on the relation between images and sounds to shape the conditions of their experience, which allows users of these artefacts to relate to them (apparently) in a more familiar way.

This perspective led to the formulation of a second research question:

RQ2 Through which techniques and aesthetics does memory resonate, imprinting traces of other temporalities and layers of technoculture in the sonic constructs of digital games?

According to Terry Eagleton (2009, 32), the treatment of these traces in research practice acts upon the object:

'The traces inscribed on an object's body are the web that undoes its self-identity, the mesh of consumptional modes in which it has been variously caught. The erasure, preservation or revivals of traces, then, is a political practice that depends on the nature of the traces and contexts in question: the object may need to be treated as a palimpsest, its existent traces expunged by an overwriting, or it may secrete blurred traces that can be productively retrieved'.

As the objects are excavated, however, new sediments are shown. Therefore, there is an epistemic question that plagues those who wish to follow traces, according to some important considerations by Benjamin (2009, 841). In the *Arcades Project* (1927-1940), Benjamin suggests that the experiences of those who pursue traces (*Spuren*) have neither sequence nor system, and that such activity is configured as a rather primitive form of work. Faced with this, the knowledge produced is, in part, a product of chance, and carries within itself the mark of being essentially endless. In this regard, one must be reminded of Jeanne Marie Gagnebin's (2002, 128) argument that the action of trying to decipher the traces, by extension, is also

marked by traces of this unintentionality - which often leads the researcher to the repeated search both for the processes that left traces, and for the apparatus that promotes their erasure.

It should be said, under this line, that the sonic traces in videogames can be left over without the developers themselves being aware of the traces that associate them with those of other media. Such a sensation itself seems circumscribed to the constant, recurrent and vast dialectic that marks the process of habituation to the new media that we discussed earlier, on which Bolter and Grusin (2000, 5) remark:

‘Our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them. [...] The logic of immediacy dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented: sitting in the race car or standing on a mountaintop’.

As for remediation, Bolter and Grusin (2000) complexify what we have pointed out earlier in describing the dual logic that permeates media and its conformation in technoculture. We must search for and find proposed invisible, imperceptible and, in our more particular case, perhaps inaudible traces of mediations. Eventually, we can use a strategy similar to that adopted by the authors of *Remediation* (ibid.) to explore media traces that disappear while promoting the illusion of transparency, including in the probing of empirical objects games that work in the opposite direction: games that seek to expose the layers of mediation that arrange hypermediation. Sound design, when well-built in the sense of being transparent in the experience of digital games, hide the multiple mediations necessary for the realization of such an effect. This feature is at the heart of contemporary games’ strategy to produce in the player the sensation of being inside the diegetic world, an effect that is reached largely due to sonic technical mediations.

Recovering in the discussion of games a place for the issue of memory also allows one to regain from Walter Benjamin’s (2002, 854) critique on the linear conceptions of time:

‘Events unfold before they [the dreaming collective] as always identical and always new. The sensation of the newer and more modern is in fact both a dream form of events and the "eternal return of events." The perception of space that corresponds to this perception of time is superposition’.

The question of the new and the old in dichotomous disposition; the ideation of a present and a past expressed in diachronic narratives; a history of beginnings etc., are some formulations related to a thought about history that would seek to reconstitute "things as they really happened." Benjamin referred to it as the "great narcotic of the nineteenth century" (2002, 863), criticizing conceptions that thus conceal the creative aspects of memory and becoming. Rouanet (1996, 56) points out that such utopias and dreams are overflowing with images that allow us to reflect on the extemporaneity that animates the objects and devices that we operate. Thus, by inserting our object into a deeper, memorial time, we are tracing anachronistic efforts and performances of the sonorities of digital games, seeking to arrange them as unstable apparitions in a montage of heterogeneous sounds. Under this movement, we seek to set the sonorities in oscillating associative relations in historical time, past and present.

Thus, the sonorities of contemporary digital games are resonant manifestations of virtualities that act in the present just as they acted in other ways, perhaps in the past, resonating with the

same virtualities that allow harmonizing or disharmonizing the contemporary *dispositif*<sup>3</sup> of any culture at other stages of technical development.

### **Mapping sonic constellations: A methodological proposition for analysing sound in games**

All the issues dealt with thus far have led us to two decisive questions:

- Beyond the ideology of novelty that surpasses discourses about gaming, what do the sonorities of digital games say about media habits of today?
- What kinds of historical urgencies resonate within contemporary technoculture?

To address these questions properly, we elaborated a method, which we are using to conduct our current research (in progress at the point of this article's publication). We rely on a methodology based on cartography and constellations (Kilpp 2015; Canevacci 1997). Cartography, as a craft, refers to the drawing of maps. Led by the researchers' affections, this methodological action of research begins, in our case, with the conceptual mapping of sounds, drawing aspects of game audio from the phenomenological experience of gameplay. Associated to the cartographic work, we practice the writing of 'listening diaries,' in which some excerpts of the games' sonorities are highlighted to be reassessed later. This methodological gesture is required for assembling constellations from the affinities found among digital games' sonic expressions. The core setting of each constellation points toward its genealogical traces, where new and old tropes intermingle (Canevacci 1997), to challenge often too regular assumptions on gaming. Looking for alternative narratives (Trammell 2019), often concealed by the chronological historiography of this medium, the constellations aim to grasp differences in regard to the established knowledge about videogames, while the researcher modestly maps the variations in the uncanny valley of human culture (Thacker 2015), in the manner of an estranged cartographer.

The analysis of the sounds gathered in the constellations demand a set of technical procedures, to perform what we are calling an "estranged listening". This methodological gesture derives from a series of listening exercises<sup>4</sup>, comprising sonological and audio-visual analysis - explored in more detail elsewhere by Luersen (2018). These procedures are to be taken as speculative actions, aiming to denaturalize the player/researcher's listening (Chion 2008), already accustomed to the perceptive habits of audio-visual media experience.

The main objective of this paper was to present key concepts and perspectives for the construction of a research object that takes digital games as a palimpsest of the historical conditions that shape contemporary technoculture. We argue that the enduring sonic traces in digital games produce qualities that are encoded in technoculture. Through their resonance, they render the current transformations in our media ecology audible. In the particular ways

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<sup>3</sup> With the concept of *dispositif*, Foucault (2017, 364) seeks to define a heterogeneous set composed of discourses, laws, philosophical propositions, institutions, scientific statements [we would like to include here audiovisual techniques and aesthetics]; the constant play between the elements of this set, which makes them interchange their function and position with each other frequently; a formation that, at a certain historical moment, has as its main function to respond to an urgency of the *dispositif*.

<sup>4</sup> To put it briefly here, these exercises mix procedures such as spectromorphological analysis of sound (Cook and Leech-Wilkinson 2009), audio-visual masking (Chion 2008) and acousmatic listening (Schaefer 1993).

that each medium builds its sounds, we can discern tendencies that last and that are spread to a wider universe of codes which we mobilize to communicate ourselves using audiovisual techniques. Through the methodological proposition we outline in this article, we suggest arranging the genealogical traces inscribed in contemporary game sound design into four constellations:

- 1) *anthropomorphosis*, in which the sonic forms that make it possible to produce voices within the game through avatars are highlighted. Vocal sounds perform the experience of an active presence in games, also differentiating personas, attributing certain affective aspects to the computational construction of the voice – building voices as user interfaces;
- 2) *rhetorical synchronizations*, which brings together sounds that punctuate actions, suggesting persuasive senses to the player's activities during the game. Mediating the agency between player and game, the sonic forms gathered in this constellation functionalize the user's relationship with the apparatus, turning audible an effect that is widely spread in contemporary technoculture;
- 3) *immersibilities* – this constellation gathers sounds to engage the player in navigable user-centred computer spaces, using sound envelopes to acclimatize him/her to the game environments, rhythms, and moods - showing the capacity that games have to build models of other worlds and other times based on certain sonic memories and the ways of entangling them;
- 4) *machinic ruins*, in which researchers gather sounds that resemble other media and even other games within digital games. Such sonic traces manifest the contemporary exponential profusion of ruins, and their relation to the current dispersion of audiovisual production tools. As these are all phenomena that show a set of cultural, ideological, and imaginary aspirations, digital games can make a set of technocultural tropes audible.

Through this conceptual article, primarily, we intended to contribute to the research of digital games by leaning towards the resonances of a technocultural dispositif that surpasses them. We shall deal with them somewhere else, as our purpose here was first and foremost to outline some of the crucial conceptual stances to guide such research.

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# Collapsed Temporalities on Social Media: Cuban Expats in Brazil and *Facebook*<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Social network platforms raise complex questions regarding the perception of time. They can also produce a feeling of “co-presence” (Miller, 2011), mixing temporalities of “past, present and future”. Within their affordances, social network platforms generate “collapsed contexts” (Marwick and boyd, 2010). When it comes to migrants who leave their home countries, such tools are frequently used in order to maintain a connection with family, friends and land that were left behind. This paper proposes the concept of “collapsed temporalities” to reflect upon Cubans who (voluntarily and legally) moved to Brazil. Apart from the theoretical discussion, we analyze self-narratives on *Facebook* of two Cuban expats, who had agreed to participate in the research through online interviews. We argue that, once displaced, they have to deal with multiple layers of temporalities that affect their own self-narratives in terms of language and content.

## KEYWORDS

Migration, Collapsed Temporalities, Facebook, Brazil, Cuba.

## Introduction

The condition of being a migrant – either voluntarily or not, permanently or not – produces reflections about one’s identity and ways of experiencing connections with their homelands. For many, social network platforms – such as *Facebook* – are the most used means of communication nowadays to keep in touch with family and friends. Not only do they allow a relatively fast, cheap and easy exchange of messages, but they also enable a feeling of “co-presence” (Miller 2011) among individuals, via the publication of pictures, videos and texts from everyday life.

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<sup>1</sup> A primary version of the paper was developed within the “Literary Cultures of the Global South” project, held at Universität Tübingen, and supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with funds from German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF). The authors would like to thank these institutions for their valuable support.

Social network platforms brought, in the late 1990s, two major changes in comparison to previous online forms of communication: 1) the structuring and organization of public or semi-public networks around individuals' profiles, and 2) the possibility of combining different forms of communication (inbox or private messages, post on profiles' timelines, comments to posts, among others) – both synchronous and asynchronous, more or less ephemeral – also using different “languages” (written texts, pictures, videos, emoticons, gifs etc.) within the same platform. This generates complexities in the ways social actors will manage their self-narratives and interactions with their network, related to who is part of their connections, and how to communicate with them (two aspects which are intertwined). As Alice Marwick and danah boyd (2010) – and afterwards other authors have argued – social network sites create “collapsed contexts”, in which “physical arrangements, social relationships, situational definitions, temporal moments, and distinct locales” are present simultaneously (Davis and Jugerson 2014, 477).

When it comes to migrants, who build a cross-cultural network of friends / followers, this context gets even more complex. In this paper we focus on a specific group of social actors and their use of *Facebook*: people who voluntarily migrated from Cuba to Brazil, due to professional and educational reasons, thus establishing a relation between two countries from the Global South.

By interviewing J. and R.<sup>2</sup>, both ‘qualified migrants’<sup>3</sup> settled in Brazil since 2014, and having observed their profiles on *Facebook* since 2017, we argue for adding the more specific idea of “collapsed temporalities” to the notion of “collapsed contexts”. These migrants have regular access to social media in Brazil, and their networks are mainly composed of Cuban people (family, friends, colleagues) from their “past” lives, and Brazilians from their “present” lives, all “living” together in the same space of their profiles. This creates challenges at least in terms of two aspects for such individuals: the attempt to a) process different layers of time as a “receptor” of their contacts’ postings; and b) discursively recover and organize these layers in self-narratives that could be understood by a heterogeneous and temporally dispersed network.

This paper aims, therefore, at proposing the notion of “collapsed temporalities” by investigating how Cuban expats<sup>4</sup> living in Brazil use *Facebook* in order to create their self-narratives and communicate with their networks. In order to do so, first we will proceed to a literature review of the relationship between migration and social media; second, we will briefly present data concerning the use of social media in both countries; third, we will present and discuss the notion of “collapsed temporalities”, bringing the results from our empirical research.

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2 In order to keep their anonymity, the research's participants are going to be here referred to by their initials. This paper is part of one of the author's PhD thesis, which is being developed in Brazil, and the participants of the research mentioned here have agreed to share their discourses and posts.

3 The term “qualified migrants” was proposed by Brazilian researchers Denise Cogo and Maria Badet (2013) to refer to people whose access to the reception country are attached to their educational and professional specialization in a certain area.

4 We use the term “expats” in this paper to refer to such “qualified migrants”, but it is relevant to mention that many people in this situation choose to keep both countries as official /legal homes, in what they call a “circular immigration”.

## Relationship between migration and social media: A literature review

According to the *World Migration Report* published by the IOM<sup>5</sup> in 2018, the number of migrants worldwide has reached 244 million. This represents approximately 3.3% of the global population, a percentage that shows the increase of migration waves compared to the early 2000s. Milton J. Easman highlights the proportional relationship between increasing migrant flows around the world and globalization: “Fast, cheap, safe, and reliable airline transportation has facilitated international travel, while instantaneous, inexpensive communications technologies, telephone and e-mail, enable migrants to keep closely in touch with families and friends in their former homeland” (2009, 4).

This way, in the context of contemporary global flows, one must look at the diversity of channels that have risen and may potentially facilitate transnational mobility. More efficient transportation has stimulated displacements, as media spheres have also gained more reputation and relevance. Nowadays, social network platforms are an explicit example. A research conducted by Rianne Dekker and Gofried Engbersen (2014) allowed them to argue that these digital environments actively transform the nature of migrants’ social networks, becoming mechanisms that stimulate mobility. According to the authors:

First, they enhance the possibilities of maintaining strong ties with family and friends. Second, they address weak ties that are relevant to organizing the process of migration and integration. Third, they establish a new infrastructure consisting of latent ties. Fourth, they offer a rich source of insider knowledge on migration that is discrete and unofficial (Dekker and Engbersen 2014, 1).

Considering such statements, could we point out a connection between the intensification of digital networks and the growth of migratory flows? Denise Cogo’s study with Brazilian migrants in Spain showed that the acceleration of use and consumption of digital spaces contribute to the “reorganization of the migratory flows and networks and, consequently, to the configuration of transnationalism in the migratory sphere” (Cogo 2012, 4). According to the author, social media not only facilitate new sources of information to create conditions for a displacement, but they also contribute to maintaining a certain sense of community of the displaced subject, by allowing contact with other homeland *selves*. There is actually empirical data proving how the frantic social dynamism produced by technological capitalism worldwide has a concrete impact on the quantity, and even the quality, of migratory flows nowadays. In an article that traces Philippines settled in the United Kingdom (UK), Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller argued that “there are clear links between the intensification of emigration and developments in the telecommunications industry” (Madianou and Miller 2012, 30).

By embracing the relationship between social media and migrant’s everyday life, we assume there is no boundary, other than the access and the literacy ones, that prevents migrants from boosting their social capital, once displaced, and that a division between an on and an off-line world does not stand, as Daniel Miller and Don Slater (2000) have already pointed out. The authors explain how these platforms can be perceived by users as *concrete* spaces: “In much

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5 Source: <https://www.iom.int/>. Accessed 28 April 2019.

of our research, email communications or websites were experienced as comparatively concrete and mundane enactments of belonging, rather than as virtual” (Miller and Slater 2000, 5).

Another perspective on the topic is that from Mohammed El Hajji and Camila Escudero, who, by discussing the concept of *webdiaspora*, argue that it “allows to construct and reinforce communities social, economic, political and transnational cultural networks without dismissing the edification of a symbolic space” (El Hajji and Escudero 2015, 14). Both authors seem to concur with Easman’s argument, who, in a previous study, remarks the existence of digital diasporas; understood by him as “organized and sustained through the internet, fostering cyber-communities among individuals of the same ethnic provenance who happen to be scattered geographically” (Easman 2009, 20). As Brignol argues, the internet can provide:

support regarding the construction of migratory projects, and the maintenance of links between families and transnational relationships; in the informative links with the country of origin; in the consumption and cultural production; in the learning of local languages; in the obtaining of information related to juridical citizenship; in the uses of migration media, as companionship and leisure, in the technologically mediated political participation (Brignol 2015, 107).

So far, we might have pointed out only the positive effects Internet has had for migrants, encouraging support, mobility and solidarity. However, a deeper revision of the literature has shown evidence that technology also provides realistic awareness of the risk of migrating, as Heather Horst’s (2006) study with Jamaican people suggests. Apart from that, bringing different social groups on the same platform may cause complications for the process of self-presentation. Hence, we must assume that, despite their positive effects, social media platforms may contribute to feelings of displacements as well.

From our perspective, the link that connects with more intensity social media with migratory experiences worldwide is the fact that both deal with the lack of co-presence in corporeal terms. The feeling of an absent homeland, and consequently absent familiar bodies, may lead migrant subjects to enact strategies that approach them to, on one side, those who have been left behind and, on the other, to those who potentially become new social connections. Somehow, migrant subjects experience the dimension of the virtual relationship construction, as they constantly need to recreate those absent bodies in their everyday lives.

In such situation, multi-related thinking (Baumann 2001) makes itself present all the time through migrants’ narratives in social media, represented by multi-layered languages, constant claiming of an absent nation while including in their social agendas topics related to the host country political and economic logics, among others. This understanding of social media as a community-formation booster is especially relevant to sustain our arguments, because it is the possibility of creating and maintaining clusters that allows an isolated migrant subject to take part of a *diaspora*, as a collective objectification of displacement.

Academic production regarding the tensions between migratory experiences and the use of social media is somewhat new. The literature review allows us to state that the majority of the researchers dealing with this topic belong to what we know, geopolitically speaking, as the Global North (Madianou and Miller 2012; Brinkerhoff 2006; Horst and Miller 2005). However, we also noticed that these productions aim to look at the global flows formed, precisely, in the

so-called underdeveloped countries, which sets an important precedent to our research. The fact that the main target of this research is no other than the Global South<sup>6</sup> migratory flows is not a coincidence. It responds to a social fact which reinforces that most of migratory flows originate from the developing or underdeveloped countries towards the developed ones (Easman, 2009), turning those communities into “more accessible” and obvious research objects. In addition, academic institutions from the so-called ‘developed countries’ tend to stimulate this kind of research by financing academics to develop their work. Despite this scenery, we also found some attempts of studying the matter from the academic Global South that shows a persistent and continuous movement, particularly coming from Brazilian researchers (Cogo 2012; El Hajji and Escudero 2015; Brignol 2015) and Cuban academics living abroad (Gutiérrez 2015; López 2015).

### **Use of social media in Cuba and Brazil**

Brazil is considered a country with “continental dimensions” (Rigotti 2011). It is the fifth largest country in the world in terms of geographical area, and has a population of almost 210 million people, according to Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)<sup>7</sup>. The country is considered of “high human development”, occupying the 79<sup>th</sup> position in the rank of Human Development Index (HDI), similar to Cuba, which is listed in the 73<sup>rd</sup> position<sup>8</sup>. In spite of that, Brazil is marked by strong social inequality and disparities. These are related not only to cultural and social regional differences across the country, but also to a conflicting disproportion in terms of “progress”, being the Southeast of the country considered the most “advanced” part of it, where migration levels are historically higher, both from within the country and outside.

In terms of internet access, the latest “Global Digital 2019 reports” informs us that

Despite controversy around privacy, hacking, fake news and all the other negative aspects of online life, the world continues to embrace the internet and social media. Global digital growth shows no sign of slowing, with a million new people around the world coming online every day. This growth is clearly fueling social media use. 45% of the world’s population are now social media users (We are social 2019, online).

In Brazil, however, according to the same report, 70% of the population is an internet user and 66% are active social media users, numbers considerably higher than the global average,

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6 The notion of “Global South” is usually associated with post-colonial studies and is sometimes taken as a synonym for “Third World” or “Developing countries, from a geographical perspective. Nevertheless, we here follow the perspective that: “the term Global South should be understood here as constitutive of entangled temporalities, and therefore considered less as a category that can be clearly delineated, and instead as an “ex-centric” location (Comaroff, 2012) that calls into question the “world dis/order” (Levander and Mignolo, 2011) [...] it is the sense of Global South as an extended location that is here recognized and taken as fundamental for us to understand that time itself is much more a problem of entanglements rather than specific established and fixed models” (Resende and Thies 2017, 2).

7 Source: <https://www.ibge.gov.br/apps/populacao/projecao/index.html>. Accessed 22 April 2019.

8 According to the latest report released in September, 2018. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_Human\\_Development\\_Index](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index). Accessed 22 April 2019.

despite a low speed in internet connection<sup>9</sup>. As in the rest of the world, the most used social network platform in the country is *Facebook*, and Brazil is usually ranked as the third country with higher numbers of this site's users worldwide<sup>10</sup>. Social media play an important part in many Brazilians' everyday lives, and the access is provided by several private companies. When it comes to Cuba, the scenario is somewhat divergent.

According to the island's National Statistics Office (ONE), in 2017 the number of users of Internet services in that country was 5 975 300. A year before, only 4 529 200 Cubans living on the island were surfing the *World Wide Web* using several means for it; which showcases a growth of 1 446 100 of new users in 2017. For an island inhabited by 11 221 060 people, 2017 stats represent a 53% of Cubans online, without considering those living abroad. Despite these growing numbers, there are some particularities concerning Cuba's way to manage and distribute Internet access that may be worthy to highlight, if we consider a world subsumed under capitalist dynamics of "free enterprise" economies. Cuba's communication and technology are related to a social policy of access that puts the State as not only a main manager, but also the only one allowed to distribute and to guarantee social access to information and social media platforms, legally speaking. This statement sustains the prerogative of an Internet experience conducted by governmental interests, as the "Integral Policy to improve society's computerization in Cuba"<sup>11</sup>, published by the Telecommunication Ministry in 2017, shows. The document constitutes the guideline to improve computerization of Cuban society, in the absence of a Telecommunication Law. In Cuba, the institution responsible for distributing internet access is the Ministry of Telecommunications, on whom *Cuban Telecommunications Enterprise S.A* (ETECSA) is dependent. In a State-centered economy, such enterprise is the one responsible for creating the infrastructural conditions to be online, distribute access and establish the prices for doing so – along with Cuba's Ministry of Finances and Prices. Correspondingly, a remarkable topic in this discussion is the question of who are, financially speaking, those having daily access to the Internet in Cuba, a country with a minimum salary of approximately 30 USD<sup>12</sup>. If we consider an hour of wireless connection to full Internet access costs one USD, it is still a high price to pay.

Despite these economic barriers, there are Cubans surfing the Internet on a daily basis, and the tendency is for Internet use to grow annually, as data taken from the Global Stats Website<sup>13</sup> shows. According to the stats pointed out by the site, from July 2018 until July 2019, 98.87% of Cubans residing in the island prefer Facebook to all other social media platforms, followed by Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube and Twitter. A year before, the percentage of use of the

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9 One may even refer to the expression "Brazilian Internet phenomenon". See, for example: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\\_in\\_Brazil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_in_Brazil). Accessed 22 April 2019.

10 As of January 2019, Brazil and Indonesia had 130 million Facebook users each, while the USA had 210, and India 300. Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/>. Accessed 22 April 2019.

11 Source:

[http://www.mincom.gob.cu/sites/default/files/Politica%20Integral%20para%20el%20perfeccionamiento%20de%20la%20Informatizacion%20de%20la%20sociedad%20en%20Cuba\\_0\\_0.pdf](http://www.mincom.gob.cu/sites/default/files/Politica%20Integral%20para%20el%20perfeccionamiento%20de%20la%20Informatizacion%20de%20la%20sociedad%20en%20Cuba_0_0.pdf). Accessed 28 April 2019.

12 Source: <http://www.one.cu/aec2016/07%20Empleo%20y%20Salarios.pdf>. Accessed 28 April 2019.

13 Source: <https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/cuba>. Accessed 22 August 2019.

platform was 46.5%. We believe this growing number directly responds to the habilitation of the 3G service on the island since December of 2019 by ETECSA<sup>14</sup>.

There is no doubt, however, that Cuba remains an isolated experience towards diversification and massive access to the Internet. Prices continue to be high. Yet, connectivity rates are low-priced compared to previous years, and new means of connection have been facilitating access for users, as the debut of mobile data experience has been showing since 2018. Cubans living on the island have been paving their way to guaranteeing their presence online, particularly on social media. Being online and able to connect with others beyond the screen is a priority for many, especially for the youngest who are financially capable of paying the taxes (Bacallao 2015).

### **Collapsed temporalities: use of *Facebook* by Cuban expats in Brazil**

#### **Cubans migrating to Brazil in the XXI century: a brief contextualization**

Cuba has historically been a central source of migration in the Caribbean region since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cuban researcher Antonio Aja Díaz (2011) identifies the United States of America as the main host country for migrants from the island; mainly due to the geographical proximity as well as to the legal advantages they have in that country, when compared to other Latin Americans intending to reach US borders. According to the website *Cubadebate*, “about one million and four hundred thousands of Cubans are settled in more than 120 countries, the majority of them in the United States”<sup>15</sup>. If at the beginning of 2017 the total of inhabitants residing in Cuba was 11 239 224<sup>16</sup>, then we could state that the country’s diaspora represented in 2018 about 12% of its total population, which leads us to an understanding of Cuba as a significant source of migration nowadays.

Despite Cuban migrants’ historical concentration in the US territory, Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez notices that “Cubans’ flow to countries that were not traditionally recipient ones of these migrants is gradually establishing Cubans relatively important groups or settlements abroad” (1999, 138). Although there is no reference to Brazil in the mentioned text, Cuban numbers arriving in the country are, at least, keeping stable, if not increasing. According to information presented by the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), 2.373 Cubans requested to be recognized by Brazilian government as refugees in 2017, becoming the second country with the most significant number of requests, after Venezuela<sup>17</sup>. In fact, at the beginning of 2019, Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* published a note<sup>18</sup> referring to the increase of requests for shelter coming from Cuban doctors after the medical

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14 Source: [http://www.etcusa.cu/inicio/se\\_amplia\\_servicio\\_internet\\_en\\_cuba/](http://www.etcusa.cu/inicio/se_amplia_servicio_internet_en_cuba/). Accessed 22 August 2019.

15 Source: <http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2018/08/03/los-cubanos-residentes-en-el-exterior-participaran-en-el-debate-del-proyecto-de-constitucion-infografia/#.XU8UCONKjIW>. Accessed 22 August 2019.

16 Source: <http://www.one.cu/aec2016/03%20Poblacion.pdf>. Accessed 22 August 2019.

17 Source: [https://www.acnur.org/portugues/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/refugio-em-numeros\\_1104.pdf](https://www.acnur.org/portugues/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/refugio-em-numeros_1104.pdf). Accessed 22 August 2019.

18 Source: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2019/01/dobram-pedidos-de-refugio-de-cubanos-no-brasil-apos-saida-do-mais-medicos.shtml>. Accessed 22 August 2019.

program “Mais Médicos” ended<sup>19</sup>. Despite statistics remarking a significant number of Brazilian leaving their country to seek more “stable” destinations (Cogo, 2012), it seems the number of Cubans coming to the country has continued to grow over the last decades. The data by the Brazilian Observatory of International Migrations (OBMIGRA) in 2018 identified an increasing number of Cubans moving to Brazil, and specifically to the Southeast region. According to this report, the main causes of this growth are the *Mais Médicos* Program and family reunion provisions.

An interesting observation regarding Cubans coming to Brazil is it constitutes a particular phenomenon within migratory flows worldwide: a flux from a Global South country to another one. Despite being statistically inferior, South-South displacements (Blanco, 2006 apud Brignol, 2015) constitute a plausible option for migrants intending to leave their homeland who do not have the proper means of doing so to reach developed countries. Moreover, certain policies of cooperation between Cuba and Brazil since President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s administration have gradually put the continental nation in a spotlight position for Cuban professional class until now. Not having to put themselves into a risky position by migrating illegally, nor having to give up on their civil rights in their homeland for “abandoning” the country, made this academic / professional mobility an interesting choice for those potential Cuban migrants, despite language barriers and equal rates of development in both countries. Easman (2009) notices that the movement to middle-income countries or even the low-income countries instead of the developed ones might happen because migrants can benefit from job opportunities that were not available in their countries. In the case of Brazil, scholarship programs and employment contracts were some of the options those scientific working forces chose in order to obtain visas and other legal guarantees, scenarios which are uncertain under the current Brazilian government<sup>20</sup>.

### **Cuban diaspora in Brazil: the use of Facebook and the problematics of time**

Considering the fact of a displaced subject facing narrative challenges, we believe that temporarily dispersion also emerges because of context collapse, as it was defined by boyd and Marwick (2010). The notion that social network platforms generate “collapsed contexts” can be explained by Alice Marwick and danah boyd: “Social media technologies collapse multiple audiences into single contexts, making it difficult for people to use the same techniques online that they do to handle multiplicity in face-to-face conversation” (Marwick and boyd 2010, 114). As Polivanov has argued:

One may say that the “context collapse” also refers to the fact that, in the same online environment, such as Facebook or Twitter, social actors have to deal with people that come from multiple social contexts which, before the social network sites, did not use to be a part,

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<sup>19</sup> Cuba decided to “leave” “Mais Médicos” Program after several conditions imposed by Jair Bolsonaro’s government at the end of 2018.

<sup>20</sup> After his election in 2018 and even during his presidential campaign, current Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro has sustained hostile narratives regarding the Cuban government and people, using a very particular group of temporary Cuban workers in Brazil, the “Mais médicos” professionals, as a way to confront the Labor Party’s foreign policy towards Cuba, which was of proximity between both countries. This rhetoric provoked belligerency between both States, and the anti-Cuba narrative has gained territory in the Brazilian institutional scenario. Due to that, it is expected that the flux of regular Cuban migrants to Brazil will decrease during Bolsonaro’s administration.

simultaneously, of their audiences, such as people from family, work, college friends, and so on. Extending the authors' argument, it is possible to state that this context is collapsed both from a synchronic, as well as diachronic perspective, i. e., it involves both the fact of having to deal with people from different social circles in the present, as well as the accumulation of people that were part of our lives in the past [...] such dynamic offers complexities to the processes of self-performance (Polivanov 2019, 116, our translation).

In the case of Cuban expats in Brazil, this process brings forth a sense of a collapsed temporality between two contexts: that of the homeland, which represents a mist of past (where they came from), present (where their beloved ones live) and the future (to where they may return or not one day); and that of the current land, where they compile a mix of past projections concerning what life would be like there, their present-day reality and doubts concerning their future in the country. By rising a discussion about *timescapes* in the Global South, Resende and Thies (2018) seem to indirectly dialogue with boyd and Marwick's notion of context collapse, when they connect the capacity of producing and sharing different regimes of temporality with the situational contexts in which subjects are embedded: "We all partake of different regimes of temporality at the same time and are highly competent in swapping our roles according to the situational context" (Resende and Thies 2018, 3). Our proposition, however, is that for migrant subjects in social media this perception of different regimes of temporality gets clearer, and the swapping of roles more complex.

Once displaced, subjects move themselves not only from locals where they learned to experience and express time with a specific tempo (Levine, 2006), but also start to establish a new relationship with the territory left behind, based on narratives that recreate the time once lived and co-created by them. Following this idea, we understand social media's agency not only as context collapse facilitators, but also as provokers, on one hand, of access to fragmented temporalities through which homeland is constructed for expats by their people; and on the other, a mixed convergence between temporal registers, where past and present conditions are not always clear.

The case of Cubans in Brazil shows us that, since expats' homeland-based social connections are the main source for them to consume narratives about Cuba, the discursive absence or low presence of these peers in social media platforms directly affect the amount and synchronicity through which Cuban expats reach their distant territory. Despite the fact that the repertoire of social media available for Cubans seated in the island has grown, taxes continue to be high, which makes the daily presence of these actors in social media often limited. According to J., one of our research participants<sup>21</sup>:

When I got out from Cuba and had the opportunity of an everyday connection to the Internet, the feeling was something like: I am finally going to meet everyone. We – Cubans – go out from the country willing to socialize with everyone in social networks, because it is something we don't have so easily there.

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21 Participants have been interviewed via Facebook Messenger, Whatsaspp and/or Skype since the beginning of 2017. J. is a 33-year-old software developer, from Havana.

In parallel, R.<sup>22</sup>, another participant whose narratives we have been observing on *Facebook* since 2017, posted on her wall: “Here is another proof that time passes by, no matter how hard we work not to see it or pretend to be in the picture. Same with last year and the previous one”. The text was accompanied by a picture of two of her friends where she appeared as a drawing made by herself using the software *Paint* in order to guarantee her “presence” in the picture. She was complaining about the consequences of being especially temporarily displaced, absent from her goddaughter’s birthday. In similar approach, Madianou and Miller found “SNS [social network sites<sup>23</sup>] are heavily used for posting photographs that keep one in touch with diaspora family, through mutual awareness of activities such as holidays and family gatherings and meals (2012, 114). Moreover, SNSs allow users to “freeze’ interactions that can subsequently be revisited and relived (Madianou and Miller 2012, 122).

Both statements from the participants of our ongoing research reinforce social media platforms’ role as gathering spaces where expats can reach dispersed temporalities and construct their own by bringing together those time gaps they are interested in showing through self-narratives. Analyzing exiled populations of Cubans living in the US allowed Cristina Venegas to state that “the Internet potentially transforms the exiles’ longing and intensifies their temporal and spatial dislocation” (2010, 166).

One of the migrants’ challenge is which language to use in their communication with a diverse audience. As J. stated: “there is always a gap between those posts [written in Portuguese] and what your Cuban contacts receive, because the use of a different language makes it difficult for them to understand you”. This particular case displays an awareness of what being a displaced subject narrating themselves to lagged social environments means. Feeling of *clusterization* seems to intensify for migrant subjects online who are daily challenged by the need of satisfying several groups and, therefore, several temporal demands. The notion of *timescapes* in the Global South as tactics developed by social actors to deal with the challenges imposed by temporal regimes may serve as a broad comprehension of this phenomenon in digital environments as well. Timescapes can be understood as a result of being exposed to and also “act upon multiple and conflicting regimes of temporality” (Resende and Thies 2018, 3). It is interesting to point out that, sometimes, taking narrative actions within these collapsed temporalities can turn subjects’ public discourses into a mosaic that will eventually fail in its purpose of targeting both homeland and host country connections, which forms a heterogeneous *imagined audience* (Marwick and boyd 2010).

Discourses (in posts) intending to continue debates originated in the homeland agenda, from which expats are displaced, usually do not directly reference the original narrative that constitutes the center of the discussion, when it comes to important news. This way, several misunderstandings between the migrant subject and their social connections online potentially emerge, once the posts appear to be isolated and lacking context. This is often a consequence of the insignificant presence of Cuban official sources of information on social media, which

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22 R. is a 30-year-old PhD candidate in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

23 In the current scenario we believe it is more appropriate to refer to “social network platforms” instead of “sites”, since they also became smartphones and tablets’ applications. Therefore, they can be either sites or apps nowadays.

makes Cubans end up consuming more content generated by Brazilian media – to which Cuba’s issues are not a priority. Therefore, news related to Cuba lose immediacy to these subjects, who, most of the time, depend on friends’ and families’ posts to keep synchronically updated, or on a selective exposure to news about Cuba in those media platforms that remain updated.

We observed several attempts from the research participants to update their social connections from Cuba about current Brazilian political and social scenario through posts. One of the main indicators of such purposes was the use of the Spanish language when talking about topics that involve exclusively Brazilian reality. Somehow, the displaced subject ends up imposing to him/herself the mission of transmitting information about Brazil to their Cuban friends and families, and about Cuba to the Brazilian fellows. One of R.’s posts during the process of Cuba recovering after an unexpected tornado shows that:

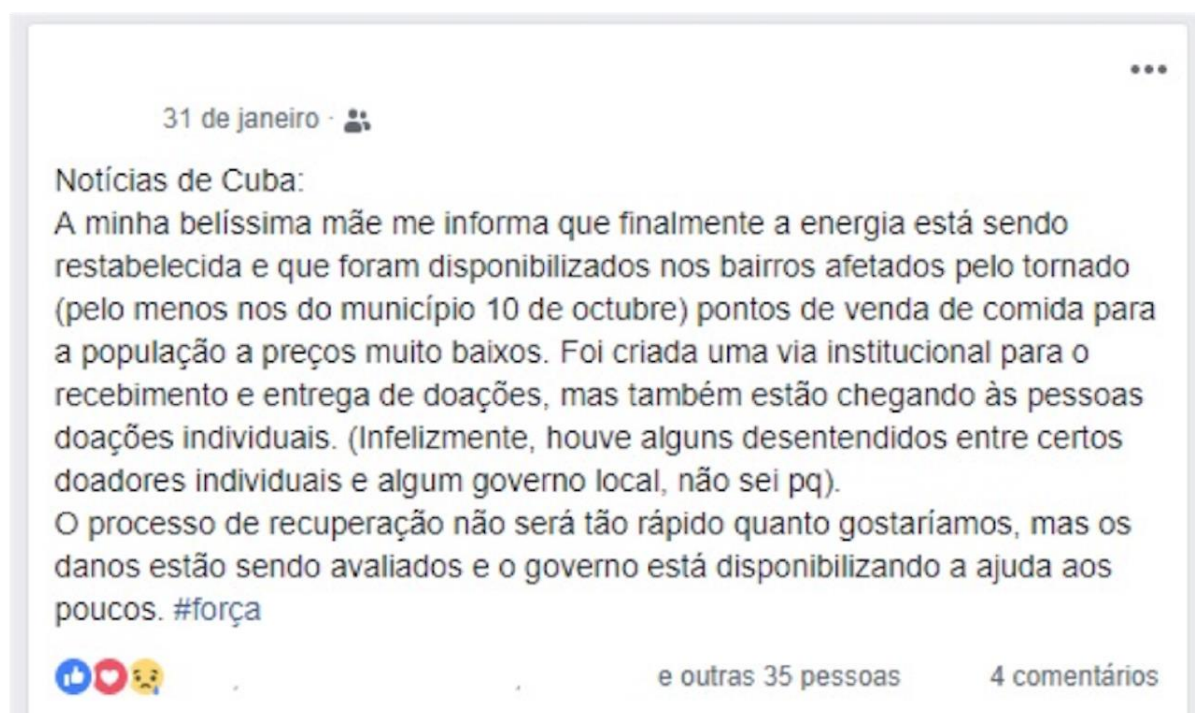


Figure 1. R.’s post published in her personal profile on Facebook on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019.

Using a heading entitled “News from Cuba” and written in Portuguese instead of Spanish, the post clarifies the message aimed at her Brazilian social connections instead of the Cuban ones, at least not the Cubans living in the island, who already knew what was happening there.

The example shows how this particular event in her homeland was being experienced, and spread by R. as an active and self-conscious practice of context collapse conciliation through the organization of socially-anchored temporalities. Thus, “time can be understood as a product of communicative practices which exact certain intercultural competences on behalf of social actors” (Resende and Thies 2018, 5).

## Conclusion

Based on primary empirical data we argue that online environments such as Facebook could become a key scenario to assemble and also disassemble layers of time. While the platform

allows expats to keep in contact with people from their homelands, it also provokes a feeling of displacement and distance given by time gaps that narratives reinforce, especially when seen as a part of a wider, intersectional, and intercultural repository.

When Cubans leave their country for Brazil one of the first things they seek is to get connected through social media, as they feel they were somewhat isolated on the island before. Brazil is known for being an “internet phenomenon” and the country is widely immersed in a social media culture. This makes some migrants occupy the position of filling a communication gap between the two countries, almost as news producers (which is something that seems to be changing since the last presidential election in Brazil, with the fear of deportation). Further research is necessary to better understand such dynamics.

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# Communication, education and the social acceleration of time in Brazilian schools

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## ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of the social acceleration of time goes beyond the limits of societal macrostructures and starts to resonate in different spheres of daily life. Based on empirical research applied to 3,700 students and more than 500 Brazilian teachers, this article aims to demonstrate how new temporal perspectives, generated by the dissemination of digital technologies, affect the daily lives of teachers and students. With the results of the study, we will seek to demonstrate how educators are subjected to stressful working hours and how they live intensely with acceleration mechanisms. Among students, the data reveal that, through their smartphones - used, even in the classroom - they rearrange the experience with time and the very sense of education.

## KEYWORDS

Educommunication; social acceleration; smartphone; students; teachers

## Introduction

The school and the teaching-learning processes are affected by the phenomenon of social acceleration. Among the elements that contribute to the effects of suppression and compression of time in classrooms are digital technologies. Especially through mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, the media cross the spaces and experiences of education, mediating the relationships between the different actors that comprise the school community.

In the Brazilian reality, marked by the low salaries of teachers and the absence of adequate infrastructure, the daily life of haste and speed gains specific contours. Teachers are obliged to undergo long working hours, often in more than one teaching unit and teaching different subjects for which they have often had no appropriate training. Among students, the social acceleration of time is related to the high use of digital social networks for social interaction. Ephemerality, impatience with school content and, above all, the

intense use of smartphones are significant marks of the temporality experienced by young people in the school context.

These findings were generated from the research *Inter-Relations Communication and Education in the Context of Basic Education*, developed by the group Mediações Educomunicativas (MECOM), which has an institutional link with the School of Communications and Arts of the University of São Paulo, Brazil (ECA- USP). The study included a survey, which was carried out with a group of 3,700 students and more than 500 Brazilian teachers in the second half of 2018. The initial objective of the research, even before the concept of the acceleration of time was included, was to identify how the media reconfigure sociability and interactions among Brazilian public education students.

Among the central hypotheses that guide the investigation is the perception that the shortening of the present, as well as the temporal experience marked by students' impatience, tense the school routine. The basic premise is that the social acceleration of time gives the contemporary world a structural mark, and the two fields of knowledge (Communication and Education) are re-signified, either by the logic of ephemerality of digital technologies, or by the compression of school time. These transformations represent an evident problem: there are, more and more, difficulties in concentrating and absorbing knowledge in the classroom, and the lack of tolerance and lack of interest in school contents are evident when subjugated in the face of technological fascination and the imperatives of haste and consumption. In this respect, the research aimed to test the hypotheses about temporal acceleration, obtaining data that could offer us analytical elements about this phenomenon in the teaching-learning processes.

Over the next few pages, we will present the research structure, based on the hypotheses raised, in addition to the choices and methodological criteria that guided the stage of formulating the questions and applying the research instrument. Then, we will deal with the theoretical framework that underlies not only the study, but also the outline proposed in this article, as well as discussing the data obtained from teachers and students. We will conclude with the analysis of information on the acceleration of time in the school context and the general comments regarding the social and economic macrostructure strained by the accelerated time.

### **The construction of research**

Started in September 2018, the research *Inter-Relations Communication and Education in the Context of Basic Education* sought to gather data that contributed to the observation and analysis of changes in the school context due to the interaction of students and teachers with technologies, which, in our understanding, are strained by a new form of temporality.

We start from the perspective that accelerated life, which, according to authors like Crary (2014), tends to be enhanced by the media, crosses the school's daily routine, influencing, even, the activities in the classroom. In this sense, the set of questions formulated was

basically organized in four blocks, which had the purpose of eliciting the following information: (i) the basic profile of the students and teachers who were part of the sample; (ii) the relationship they both have with the media; (iii) the extent to which the media are present, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, in formal education; and (iv) whether and how students and teachers are or feel impacted by the phenomenon of accelerating time.

The research design and application involved sixteen researchers<sup>1</sup> directly. They were responsible for distributing the questionnaires used as a research tool in the five regions<sup>2</sup> that make up the Brazilian territory, reaching 23 of the 26 states of the federation. In all, 509 teachers and 3,708 students in basic<sup>3</sup> education answered the questions. Among students, 57.4% attended elementary school II and 39.8% high school. Questionnaires were disseminated among teachers during visits to teaching units (on site) and through online strategies (at a distance), using physical and virtual<sup>4</sup> forms. They were composed of 55 questions, 19 open and 36 closed. The same method was adopted with the students, among whom we circulated the instrument used to capture data both on digital and on paper, each adding 41 questions: 12 open and 29 closed. At this point, it is worth reiterating that the questions that make up the research were not restricted to topics related to the temporal issue, having also been investigated, for example, the changes in social relations in the school context due to new media habits. For this article, we cut out the specific questions on the form related to the topic studied here.

We chose to work with a non-probabilistic sample and, therefore, the study is devoid of statistical intent. Despite this, criteria were defined that would allow us to make the survey as comprehensive as possible, reaching the largest number of individuals, without it concentrating only on one or a few teaching units. Especially in relation to students, we established that the quantity of forms distributed could not exceed 10% of the total enrollment of the schools visited.

The procedure adopted for disseminating the questionnaire allowed for a variable range of possibilities. Visits were scheduled over the phone, we distributed digital versions

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<sup>1</sup> Led by Professor Adilson Citelli, MECOM and the research involve the following associate researchers: Ph.D Ana Luisa Zaniboni Gomes, Ph.D Elisangela Rodrigues da Costa, Ph.D Eliana Nagamini, Ph.D Helena Corazza, Ph.D Maria do Carmo Souza de Almeida, Ph.D Sandra Pereira Falcão and Ph.D Rogério Pelizzari de Andrade; M.A. Edilane Carvalho Teles, M.A. Gláucia Silva Bierwagen, M.A. Suéller Costa, M.A. Douglas Calixto, M.A. Michel Carvalho da Silva and M.A. Wellington Nardes; Master student Roberta Takahashi Soledade; and Scientific Initiation student Rafaela Treib Taborda.

<sup>2</sup> The sample was distributed as follows in these regions: 1.2% in the North, 20% in the Northeast, 4.5% in the Midwest, 35.8% in the Southeast and 32.8% in the South.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Brazilian education system, basic education is integrated at three levels: early childhood (up to five years old), elementary (between six and 15 years old) and secondary (between 15 and 17 years old). Primary education is divided into two parts. The process of literacy and learning basic math operations, among others, marks the first, which runs from the 1st to the 5th year. In the so-called “early years”, classes are divided into a few subjects and taught by multipurpose teachers, trained in pedagogy. The second comprises 6th to 9th grade. In it, students have contact with a greater number of educators, who are divided by subject. High school (1st to 3rd year) is intermediate to higher or technical. At this stage, basic subjects (languages, history, geography...) are incorporated, such as chemistry, physics and sociology.

<sup>4</sup> Made from the Google Forms platform

through an email list on the pages of official education agencies, and there were those who went directly to the school and those who used Facebook profiles and fan pages and WhatsApp groups.

### **Theoretical framework: social acceleration of time**

Before presenting the results obtained from the above method, we propose a theoretical review of the phenomenon of social acceleration of time and its implications in the school context. The questions formulated for the research start from the basic premise that, in addition to the instrumental and technical sense, the media play a determining role in the acquisition of knowledge, in the ways of being and perceiving the world. In other words, it is about the recognition that technologies are fundamental for the development of languages and for school sociability itself.

The research group MECOM develops works in this area, analyzing how the media, in the last decades, operates as a mediator of the teaching-learning processes. As Citelli (2004) states, “the classroom has become a place where - although not always visible or systematic - a complex intersection of diverse discursive orders and not necessarily adjusted or complementary.” (p. 18)

Among the references addressed over the past few years, Rosa's (2019) perception of the paradox surrounding our relationship with technologies stands out. As much as the new devices are essential for optimization and saving time, which, in theory, would mean more freedom and flexibility, less occupations and responsibility, we simply do not have the time.

I conceptualize the acceleration process exposed here as a symptom and consequence of the fact that modern societies are able to stabilize only dynamically, to be systematically and structurally willing to grow, transform and accelerate more and more in order to preserve their structure and stability. (ROSA, 2019, X)

Our argument is that the structural changes experienced by contemporary society, at different levels, end up in the school's daily life. The classroom, affections and the very constitution of sociability between teachers and students are closely linked to the wider context of transition engendered by the fast pace of technologies and the operations of the economy. In this context, one of the central aspects of the work developed by MECOM researchers is to verify to what extent:

(...) rhythms traditionally accompany school speeches, tinted by slower movements, in line with the needs of reflection in their knowledge maturation pathways, coexist, dialogue or oppose the phenomenon here called the social acceleration of time. (CITELLI, 2017, p. 9)

The process of accelerating the organizing structures of social life characterizes contemporaneity. The permanent pressure for efficiency, profit and competitiveness are hallmarks of the neoliberal dynamic, which results in new ways of relating to the world. We live under the aegis of an economic and normative system that extends the logic of capital-to-human relations. As a consequence, according to Dardot and Laval (2016), even individual behaviors are modulated to create an "accounting subjectivity due to systematic competition between individuals" (p. 30). Technologies meet the communicative demand to shorten deadlines, accelerate productivity and meet the global logic that "time is money". Morozov (2019) points out that the development of Silicon Valley and the Internet giants results in distrust of everything that is minimally consolidated, that is, the acceleration and frantic pace imposed by technologies create an environment in which our social existence can only be possible within transitory and ephemeral frameworks. The neoliberal subject, the neosubject (DARDOT & LAVAL, 2016), wrapped in applications and digital tools, represents, ultimately, the triumph of the productive logic that transforms time into a financial asset.

The rhetoric of "technological advances" naturalizes the understanding that it is necessary to produce, consume and live at a pace 24/7, that is, twenty-four hours seven days a week (CRARY, 2014). Regarding this process of acceleration and fragmentation of life, Cray indicates that the demand for availability, functioning, intensity and permanent vigilance grows, which refers to an inability of lasting organizations, of rhythms and social stability. For Lipovetsky (2004), there is a new culture, which demands immediate satisfaction, the urgency of individual pleasures and ephemeral relationships. "In hypermodernity, there is no choice, there are no alternatives, but to evolve, to accelerate so as not to be overtaken by evolution" (p. 57).

The cult of novelty, speed and affect is the imperative. As Rosa (2019) proposes, the accelerated experiences are motivated by the technological development itself, which offers solutions to a market that is in a hurry and is eager for speed. Expressions such as fast food, speed learning, speed dating, power-nap, and multitasking exemplify the intensification of the pace of life and the shortening of the present, through the multiplication of digital and technological possibilities.

The fact that time becomes a scarce commodity represents in itself, in the face of the various technological accelerating phenomena, a paradox that requires explanation. For this reason, there is no doubt that the intensification of the rhythm of life through the multiplication of episodes of action and / or experiences per unit of time - which, in turn, is linked to the scarcity of temporal resources and the consequent "urgency for time" - represents a third autonomous category of social acceleration in modern society (ROSA, 2019, p. 129)

It is in this sense that the temporal transformations reconfigure not only the perception of how the hands of the clock move, but also the structures that give order to social life. Thus, the understanding of the concept of communication is reconfigured from the idea that time has started to be accelerated socially. With this observation about the

phenomenon, it is worth saying that the theoretical perspective that guides our research understands the nature of transformations in transit in the contemporary world from a pulsating philosophical line in the Latin American context: the theory of mediations. It is a theoretical-methodological approach, which recognizes communication, different media and technologies, within a broader concept of society, observing how sociability, culture and socio-political aspects interfere in the processes of media reception. The concept of mediations refers to the finding that, between the broadcast and reception by the media, there is an intense cultural and experience exchange between the subjects, determining how content is interpreted. In other words, the media does not configure passive subjects in face of messages and content, but rather triggers meanings and affections within a hybrid and complex game with the media. Or yet:

For us, communication has become a question of mediations rather than means, a question of culture and, therefore, not only of knowledge, but also of recognition. A recognition that was, at the beginning, a methodological shift operation to review the entire process of communication from its other side, that of reception, that of the resistances that have their place there, gives it appropriation based on its uses (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1997, p. 28)

Communication and education studies in the Brazilian territory, the locus of our research, are highly influenced by the mediation theory. It was in this perspective that authors such as Paulo Freire, Mario Kaplún, Guillermo Orozco-Gómez and Jesús Martín-Barbero, from the 1970s onwards, developed theoretical models alternative to the idea that the media relate in a unidirectional way with the “audience”. The proposal, despite the particularity of each author, was to reconfigure the understanding of what communication is even before discussing insertion in the media at school. For these authors, the areas of communication and education must be worked in a relational way, without polarization, which implies the epistemological renewal, shifting the axis of analysis of communication from the sender-receiver to the relational-ecosystemic one.

In the current situation, in which liquidity, the ephemeral and the processes of deregulation in the economy prevail, mediation theory articulates the areas of communication and education to contribute to the observation of how the social acceleration of time enters the school territory.

The research *Inter-Relations Communication and Education in the Context of Basic Education* was guided by this theoretical framework, which shifts attention away from the effects and impacts of the media in the school context to the social reconfigurations generated by a socially accelerated time. The ideas presented here on the theory of mediations, in addition to the theme of social acceleration and its impacts on current societies, guided the process of defining methodological criteria, instruments and data collection that will be described and analyzed below. Considering the historical scenario marked by globalized capitalism, guided by the transitory, we seek to observe the impacts of temporal transformations in a specific space, which, especially after the multiplication of mobile communication devices, is crossed by the media: the school.

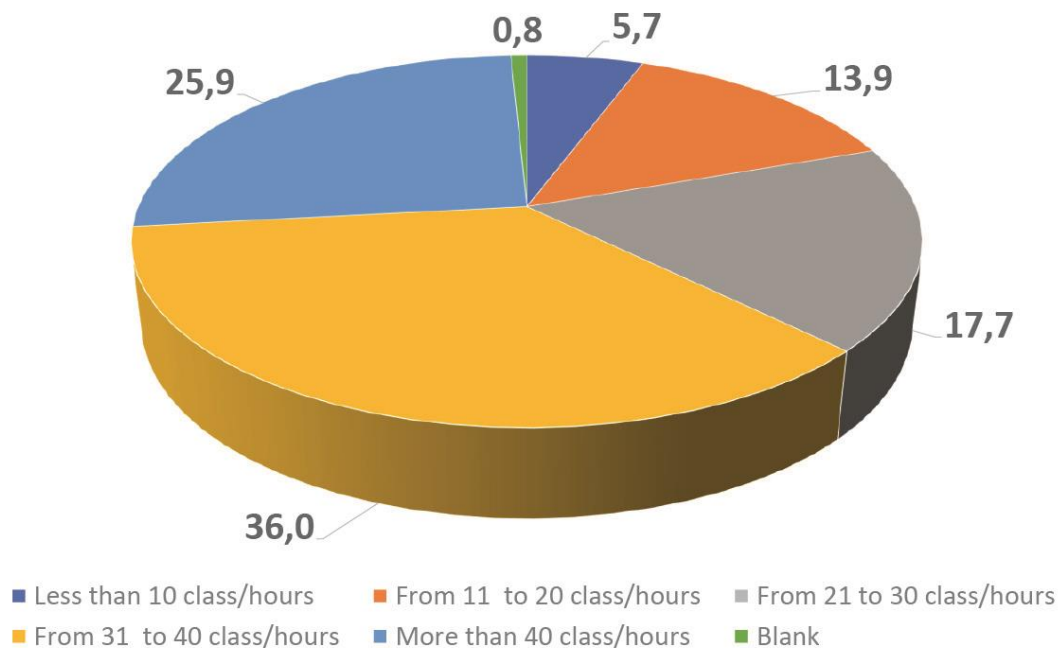
## Search results

### *Results obtained from teachers*

Among the data obtained by the research, the first point that deserves to be highlighted is the strenuous workdays to which teachers are subjected, which result from low wages, precarious infrastructure and, of course, the accelerated dynamics of everyday life. Only 33.2% of the survey participants said that they carry out their activities part-time, that is, either in the morning, or in the afternoon, or at night. The others fulfill two periods (49.7%) or triple the workday (16.5%).

A little more than a third of the sample (35.2%) works in more than one school and 15.9% stated that they are even obliged to travel between cities to take on the second or third shift.

Another variable that confirms the overloaded daily life among teachers is the weekly workload allocated to them. Almost two thirds of respondents (61.9%) stated that they work more than 30 hours and just over a quarter (25.9%) above 40 hours.



Source: MECOM, 2019

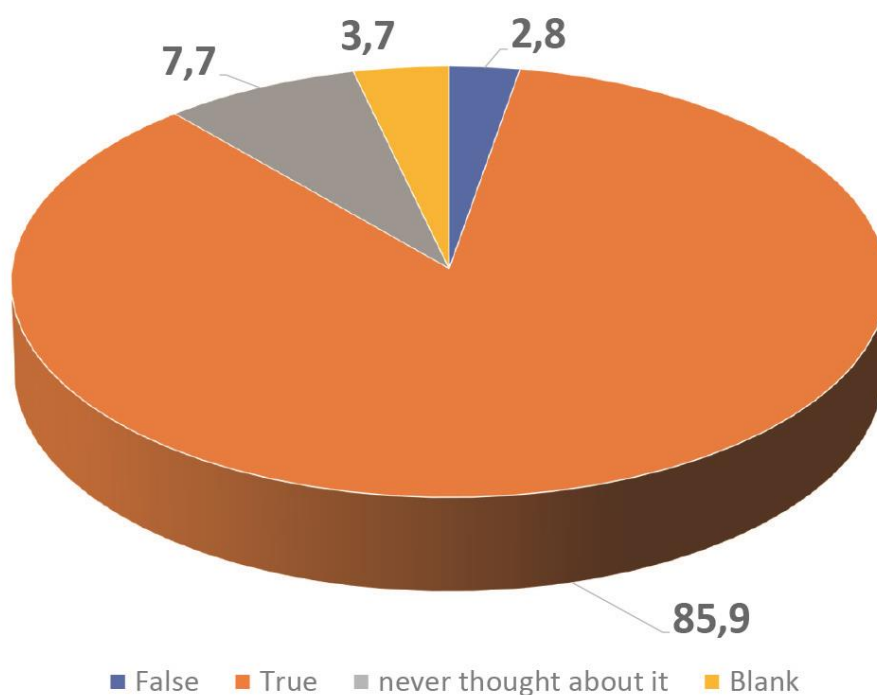
**Graph 1 - What is your weekly workload?**

Thanks to communication devices, such as smartphones<sup>5</sup>, in addition to classes and other teaching duties, all exercised in the physical environment of the school, there are also responsibilities that go beyond these environments. The figures reveal that 34.2% of educators dedicate five hours or more of their week to the development of didactic activities with the aid of a computer and 44.2% stated that they use the internet to interact and share materials with students.

These data are likely to help explain the fact that more than half of respondents (52.7%) consider the time available to prepare classes inadequate. In addition, the data obtained indicate the accumulation of tasks, which goes beyond formal obligations, and physical and mental exhaustion compromise the teacher's necessary relationship with other spheres of life, such as leisure, entertainment and idleness.

Asked how many hours of the week they invested in activities disconnected from professional obligations, such as going to the cinema, walking with the family and sports, among others, the majority (44.6%) answered from 1 to 5 hours and only 12.2% indicated more than ten hours.

**Graph 2 - The statement “There is a feeling that time is passing too fast” is:**



Source: MECOM, 2019

In view of the statement “There is a feeling that time is passing faster”, 85.9% of the teachers who participated in the survey considered the sentence to be valid. In addition

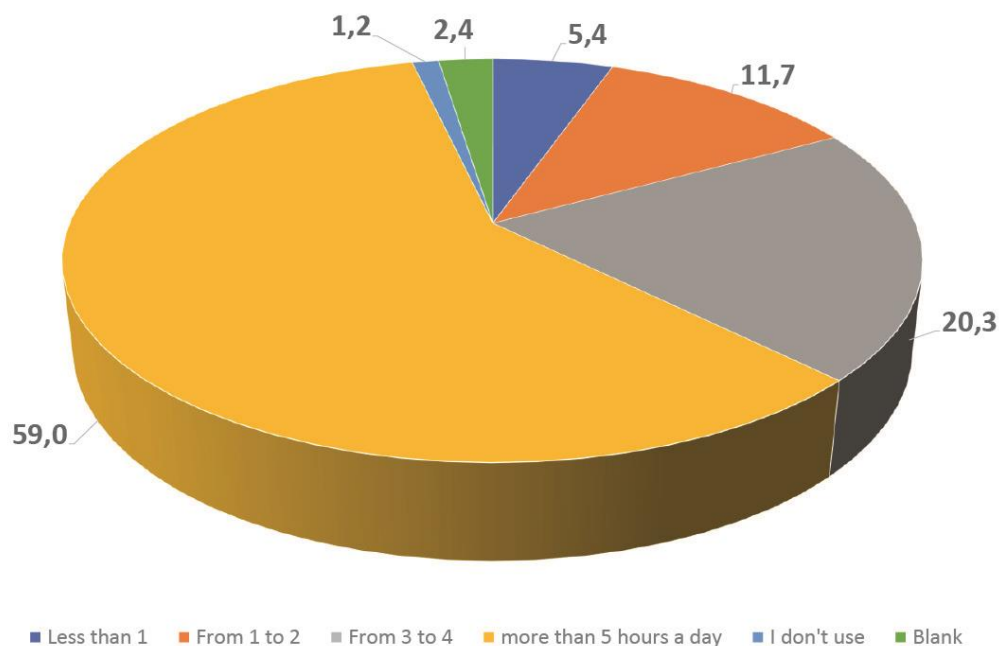
<sup>5</sup> 80% of educators use smartphones as the preferred means of accessing the Internet. Next are notebook / laptop (66.8%) and desktop (41.3%).

and complementarily, we believe it is worth mentioning that in the understanding of 77.6% of teachers, social acceleration affects their pedagogical activities and 70.1% understand that it has some type of reflection in the behavior and practices of students in the classroom.

#### *Results obtained from students*

The general set of data collected by the survey indicates the growing importance of digital networks for the learning of reality, for media consumption and, above all, for the development of sociability among students. Although it has become commonplace to say that “new media” reconfigure the school context and that they insert “digital natives” in the dynamics of contemporary times, the result of our investigation points out that some applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube are the main sources of information for these young people.

Among the hypotheses raised so far, this means that students are immersed in a networked logic, which, in essence, obeys acceleration flows. The timeline of social media on the Internet meets a communicative demand for fluidity, speed and personalized content, which does not require great reflections, maturation and patience for reading - practices that are fundamental in the teaching-learning process. Therefore, the main activities developed in these spaces value the exercise of the ephemeral, with little margin when looking in depth.



Source: MECOM, 2019

**Graph 3 - How many hours per day do you use the Internet?**

A significant percentage of the participants (59%) admitted to using the Internet for more than five hours a day, indicating that contact with the acceleration mechanisms is common even among the youngest students. Another fact that stands out in the survey is that students access the Internet mostly through smartphones<sup>6</sup> (86%). The performance obtained is far superior to the second (notebook, with 32.4%) and the third (SmartTV, with 24.6%) places. The lack of mobility and the limitations imposed by desktop<sup>7</sup> browsing make this feature uninteresting and obsolete for teen audiences, since the conventional microcomputer does not face the transitory possibilities of mobile devices, which can be everywhere - in the classroom, transportation, on the couch at home ... -, nor does it meet the desires for a permanent link with the “on-line”.

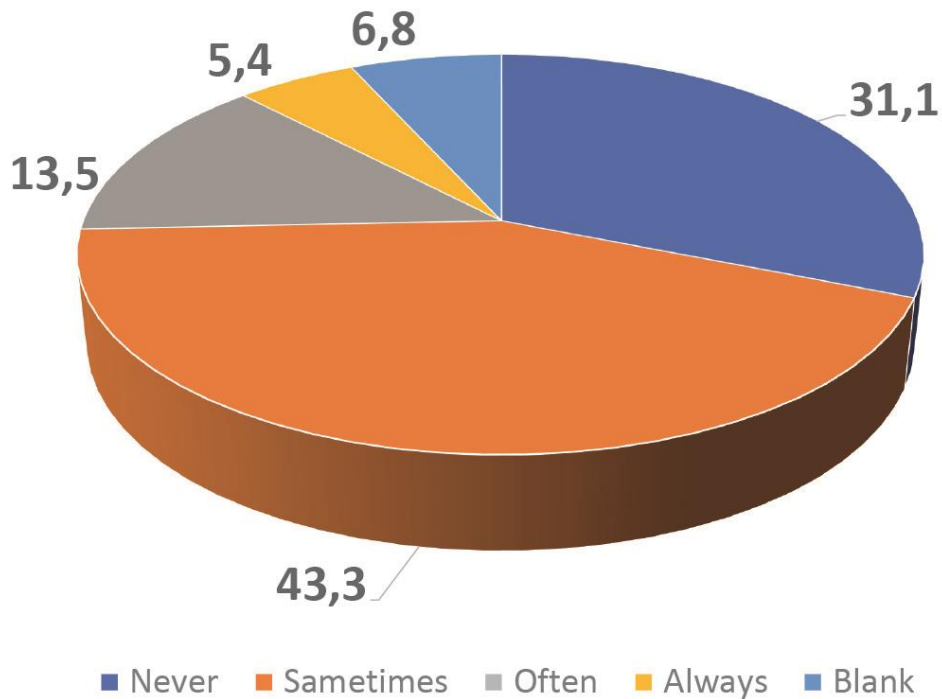
Still in this perspective, when asked if they have already stopped doing any school assignment because they spent a lot of time on the Internet, 62.2% acknowledged that at least “sometimes” they exchanged their homework for the virtual environment. Likewise, 49.8% said that, at least, “from time to time” they access their cell phones during class and 39.1% that they share material with their friends, such as photos, memes and music, even while the teacher exposes content.

It should be noted that only 5.4% of students said they did not have a smartphone. The number draws attention considering the fact that Brazil is an underdeveloped country with enormous social contrasts. In addition, it is important to remember that the survey reached 23 of the 26 Brazilian states, more than 90% of the participants were from public schools and almost the same percentage was between 10 and 17 years old - factors that, in theory, should contribute to a higher sample proportion of people do not have a mobile communication service.

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<sup>6</sup> Participants could choose as many alternatives as they wanted.

<sup>7</sup> Selected by 23.2% of participants.



Source: MECOM, 2019

**Graph 4 - Have you stopped doing any school assignments because you have been connected to the Internet for a long time?**

Several testimonies collected from the 3708 students in open-ended questions point to signs of impatience and complaints about a time that passes slowly “outside” the Internet.

We believe it is appropriate to emphasize that the young people interviewed have little identification with printed publications. Altogether, 78.3% declare not to read newspapers and 66.7% affirm not to read magazines in physical format, not even eventually. Multi-screen interaction, with several digital applications, generates more interest from students, which is confirmed by the finding that Facebook (65.2%) and WhatsApp (68.5%) appear as favorite options in a question about means they use most to get information.

**Analysis and discussion**

The set of data presented demonstrates how the phenomenon of the social acceleration of time goes beyond theoretical abstraction and manifests itself concretely in the educational context. The responses collected indicate that, when transported to school, the feeling that the days are shorter and that “lack of time” materializes in the impatience and disinterest of students in the classroom, with the excessive workload for teachers and with the fragmentation and simultaneity of experiences in both cases.

Stress, haste, impatience, pressure for results, long journeys and disinterest, points out the result of the research, are the imperatives raised by the questionnaire respondents to express how the phenomenon of social acceleration manifests itself in the educational context. In fact, we observed based on the responses obtained, that digital technologies, especially smartphones and digital social networks, are among the main vectors of the acceleration mechanisms.

As Crary (2014) reminds us, the disconnect function lost its meaning in the era of digital technologies, so that the time of work, study, leisure, rest etc. ended up overlapping, mixing and becoming one. In the book “After the future” (2019), Franco Berardi expands this discussion and proposes reflection from the centenary of the publication of the Futurist Manifesto, by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, in 1909, in the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. Berardi discusses the contrast between Marinetti's optimistic view of machines and technologies at the beginning of the 20th century and the despair scenario of our day. According to the optimistic perspective outlined at the beginning of the last century, the good news materialized in innovations, in the expansion of electricity, in the mechanization of the world, in discoveries and inventions: science indicated a future of conquests and prosperity. Progress would give man a better, more just, more dignified life, with more quality.

Capitalism, which is the “system of constant economic expansion”, of which it is impossible to speak without thinking of “accelerating working time” (2019, p. 18) and expanding the productive capacity associated with the increase in speed, contributed to the deterioration of the best expectations announced in the text that circulated on that already somewhat distant February 20. Over the little more than one hundred years that have passed since then, the future of positivity and perseverance has become the gift of inconstancy and pessimism. Conditions worsened with the development of digital technologies, since we quickly realized that the expansion of cyberspace couldn't be accompanied by the prolongation of the time of concrete life, of the here and now.

When each millimeter of terrestrial space had been colonized, the colonization of the temporal dimension began, that is, of the lived, of the mind, of perception. Then the century without a future began. The question that arises here is the one of the relation between unlimited expansion of cyberspace and the limits of cyber time. Cyber time is mental time, the attention that society is able to maintain. (BERARDI, 2019, p. 19)

If physics clarifies that it is not possible to subvert or lengthen the seconds, minutes and hours of a day, what remains for us is to review the way we occupy each unit of time and intensify the parallel and simultaneous activities, with a view to maximizing of experience. As Dardot and Laval affirm, “The new subject is required to produce“ always more ”and enjoy“ always more ”and, in this way, connect directly with a 'more-to-enjoy' that has become systemic.” (2016, p. 355)

Starting from the premise of Rosa (2019) that modernization is an accelerating experience, we observe that the occupation of time mostly done on social networks

reveals that students are undergoing a broad process of acceleration. In this sense, not only Rosa's ideas, but also those of Berardi, Crary, Dardot and Laval, reflect the results obtained from the data collected in the research. The most solid, structured and lasting relationships lose space in the face of fragmentation, short videos and immediate pleasures. During the application of the questionnaires, we collected a series of testimonials from students who declare their preference for reduced formats for interacting with knowledge and acquiring knowledge. The choice, in general, is directed to short audiovisual content, memes and other languages that meet the logic of ephemerality and instantaneity.

It is no accident that fragmented formats, such as speed learning, have also gained prominence in recent times. Students, in general, show little patience when dealing with denser, more reflective readings that do not meet expectations due to haste and customization. In practice, the change in access and information consumption habits reconfigures the logic not only of classroom practices, but also in the way we deal with textual communication in its physical version. This is because a book, newspaper or magazine, for example, tends to promote slower experiences, as they usually offer longer content, in some cases permeated by advertisements and other products not necessarily interconnected.

Now the preference is for fast digital information, found in multiple formats and, in general, added to hypertexts. This context enhances the experience of absence of fixed hours and transforms the screens of mobile devices into a kind of primary source of knowledge. Short videos, memes, GIFs and other narrative expressions from the internet, composed of direct and instant messages, are opposed to textual productions that demand more close contacts and with which students have to interact in formal education. This fact reveals that the shortening of the present occurs not only in reading, but also in the very constitution of language.

However, to deepen the analysis, it is essential to consider that the phenomenon of social acceleration of time does not act unilaterally in the interactions of teachers and students, although the results indicate that the shrink present perfect gives a structural mark to the school experience. In the Brazilian context, there is a serious scenario of inequalities, which further strain the already troubled daily life of ephemerality and loss of meaning in the classrooms.

According to the “Brazilian Yearbook of Basic Education 2019”, published by the civil society organization Todos pela Educação, which gathers information from different sources such as the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), in 2018, the average salary of the little more than 2.2 million teachers who are part of the public school system was R\$3,823 BRLs or US\$ 916.61<sup>8</sup>. Distributed by the 26 states of the federation, this contingent of

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<sup>8</sup> Quotation by the Central Bank of Brazil on October 16, 2019, available at: <[https://www.bcb.gov.br / conversion](https://www.bcb.gov.br/conversion)>. Accessed October 17, 2019.

educators contributes to the training of 48.4 million students (INEP, 2019)<sup>9</sup>, who, as indicated by national and international assessments, do not perform well even in the basic subjects. In the latest report published by the International Student Assessment Program (PISA), for example, young Brazilians were among the last positions in a ranking with more than 70 countries. According to the study, our students were ranked 59th in reading and 65th in mathematics (OECD, 2015)<sup>10</sup>.

The context of social inequality and public services that do not effectively affect the majority of the Latin American population is reflected in social interactions, in individual and collective experiences linked to knowledge. It is these premises that, added to the phenomenon of social acceleration and technological growth, end up severely impacting the dynamics of the classroom. In practice, this means that the acquisition of knowledge and the construction of knowledge itself are not autonomous processes, which work despite inequalities and technological implications.

## Conclusions

The *Inter-Relations Communication and Education project in the Basic Education Context* is the breakdown of activities started in the second half of 2015. Supported by the first readings on the topic, researchers linked to MECOM proposed the initial approximations between the issue of social acceleration and concerns occupying the field of Educommunication<sup>11</sup>. In addition to participating in congresses inside and outside Brazil, the discussions yielded ten individual studies, which involved empirical surveys and were published in the work *Communication and education: the challenges of the social acceleration of time* (CITELLI, 2017). The construction, planning and execution of the research instrument occupied 2018. In 2019, the work focused on tabulation and analysis of data that motivated the production of this and other papers. Five years after the first dialogues and reflections, which started from more comprehensive concepts

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<sup>9</sup> Information on numbers of registered teachers and students can be obtained from the national survey published by INEP annually. National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira. Statistical Synopsis of Basic Education 2018. [online]. Brasília: Inep, 2019. Available at: <<http://inep.gov.br/web/guest/sinopses-estatisticas-da-educacao-basica>>. Accessed October 17, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> The full report is available at: <<http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf>>. Accessed on October 17, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> The neologism Educommunication, according to Soares (2014), “designates a field of social intervention at the interface between communication and education” (p. 16), which developed in Latin America from the second half of the twentieth century and approaches the ideas formulated by Cultural Studies. The theoretical framework that guides this “field of social intervention” includes authors such as Paulo Freire, Mario Kaplún and Jesús Martín-Barbero. The School of Communications and Arts of the University of São Paulo (ECA / USP) offers undergraduate and graduate education (specialization, master's and doctorate) courses in this line of research. The Educational Communications Group (MECOM) is formally linked to it.

towards specific problems, we confirm the hypotheses formulated even in the period of approximation of the theoretical framework. They referred to the impacts of social acceleration on formal education, motivated by variables such as the exhausting routine of teachers, in addition to the daily life of the school and its actors, which is marked by the presence of communication devices. Furthermore, the attentive look at the data collected allows us to observe the gap between times: “we can deduce the existence of a picture in which there is an evident tension between the movements of institutionally school time and that crossed by the acceleration devices” (CITELLI, 2019, p. 11).

In July 2020, as we write the last lines of this article, we are compelled to state that MECOM discussions will necessarily turn to the transformations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The adaptations of human relationships imposed by the need for social distance, as well as the emergence of new forms and experiences of communication and, in the case of teaching, the challenge of introducing comprehensive distance learning methods and strategies in such a short period of time - especially in a country of continental dimensions and marked by so many contrasts - they offer new elements to studies whose interests focus on the convergence between the themes of social acceleration, communication and education.

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## Biographies

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# **Time, Social Theory and Media Theory: Contributions of Schutz to the understanding of new social realities**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article aims to contribute to the debate about time and the new social realities resulting from recent changes in the media field bringing social theory and media theory together. For this, we propose a rereading of a well-known author in social theory: Alfred Schutz. Schutz was one of the most productive authors of social theory and designed a broad theoretical framework involving many aspects of social life. He also emphasized the importance of media and brought significant contributions to the debate through the discussion of the concept of time. The author did not think time only descriptively, but opened a deep and conceptual dialogue that, we believe, is useful for understanding new social realities brought by the internet, both for media theories and social theories. The article has two sections, each corresponding to an approach to time made in Schutz, and in media theories and recent social theories. The first one focuses on a possible acceleration of time and the second one discusses the relation of time to memory. We bring Schutz's contributions to these phenomena, fostering the debate between social theory and media theory, as well as contributing conceptually to recent reflections.

## **KEYWORDS**

Time, Acceleration, Memory, A Schutz, Media

## **Introduction**

Much of contemporary sociological theory has been slow to incorporate media studies and their impacts on social relations in Sociology. Schroeder pointed to the weak consensus in the Social Sciences about the impact of the recent changes brought by new technologies (specially the internet) in our societies. He also warned that “Sociology has - with few exceptions - left the study of new media to the discipline of Media and Communications” (Schroeder, 2018, 1).

Media theories, on the other hand, while giving significant attention to the effects of media and its complexity in recent years, have been - sometimes - overly concerned with how media has spread and influenced other fields of social institutions (Sodre, 2014), such as Politics

(Stromback, 2008), War (Horten, 2011), and Religion (Hjarvard, 2011). The consequence is inadequate development of this theoretical framework and a very descriptive approximation of phenomena. Couldry and Hepp, in their recent book “The Mediated Construction of Reality” pointed out this problem, and went further, showing a lack of dialogue between these two fields (Couldry and Hepp, 2017). Also, they claimed that social theory would not have longevity unless it turns to this dialogue and gives more importance to the phenomena currently studied by Communication and Media Studies (Couldry and Hepp, 2017, 12).

This article assumes - following Couldry and Hepp (*ibid.*) - this lack of dialogue, and that it is a problem, since a theoretically informed media theory could better analyse the new phenomena using concepts from social theory as a tool to instrumentalise the discussion in a more theoretical and systematic way. On the other hand, communication and media theories could help social theory to give proper importance to non-physical relationships by analysing our societies and the profound changes it is undergoing. So, the purpose of this article is to offer ways of bringing these two elements together. To do so, we propose a rereading of time approach via Alfred Schutz.

The discussions about time can contribute to the creation of bridges between these two areas of study (social theory and media theories), once temporality is a constitutive dimension of the construction of reality, and a fundamental element for the structuring of the two disciplinary fields. In Social Theory, we can see this dimension of time since the classical sociology, more directly with Durkheim (1903) and Simmel (1902), to the contemporary sociology with Elias (1984), Luhmann (1976, 1995), Giddens (1984, 1990), Adam (1990), Baert (1992), Urry (1996), among others. In Media Theory, we can see this dimension of time as well with McLuhan (1964), Augé (1996) and Virilio (2006).

Time is also an element that both areas have addressed in recent years when dealing with the changes brought about by new technologies, as seen in the writings of Rosa (2013), Adkins (2018), Hassan (2007, 2009 and 2010), Castells (2009), Schroeder (2018), Keightley (2012), Wajcman (2014) and Levy (2000). Schutz, in particular, is one of the main authors to articulate the centrality of space-time displacement of mediated interactions and its importance for the experience of individuals. The profound interweaving between new communication and information technologies and everyday life radicalizes the social impact of the temporal disengagement typical of mediated interactions. In this sense, Schutz's contributions on the subject of time can help to re-establish a more constant dialogue between media theories and social theory, in addition to symbolizing a common theme around which we can discuss contributions from both fields.

The new technologies brought changes in the way that we elaborate on the concept of time, and it is commonly discussed from two perspectives: Time and Acceleration, and Time and Memory. These are two main dimensions that constitute the temporal experience and have been the focus of several reflections that seek to understand the impact of new technologies. The first approach discusses the scope of subjectivity, that is, the current sense of acceleration of time, routines, and interactions, as well as the paradox of having “more time” (under new

technologies) and feeling with “less time”. What are the causes of this acceleration? How to conceptualise these changes?

The second approach discusses the reality construction and the action orientation: how have new ways of accessing memory changed social dynamics? How has this changed our relationship with the past and present? These two approaches (memory and acceleration) are connected, as will see below. Memory, since the advent of the internet, is built differently, and affects our reflection on time and space, pushing us out of the pure *durée* and making us more reflexive, giving us the sensation of acceleration.

These two ways of thinking about time (in relation to new technologies) are explored, respectively, in the two sections of this article. In them, we give a brief presentation of how the approaches have been constructed; what are the interpretative and theoretical advances that have been made for the understanding of this phenomenon, highlighting the problems that remain unanswered; and we offer some ideas present in Schutz’s work that can respond and contribute to each of them. At the end of the article, we systematically return to the questions posed, as well as the answers offered.

### **Time and Acceleration**

There is a common consensus that time would today be at a different pace compared to a few years ago and that time is accelerating. It is not uncommon to see people on the streets and in casual encounters commenting on how fast time is passing, how they do not have time for activities A or B, or how much time pressures them at a fast pace. Within a double hermeneutic process (Giddens, 1984), the elaboration of time acceleration, as well as its consequences, has become one of the main themes relating to new communication technologies and time. This theme generally reflects the hypothesis of acceleration of individual experiences. Its central argument is linked to the ability of technological devices to accelerate processes and interactions, compressing stimuli and responses to a temporality that is increasingly close to face-to-face contact.

This topic of temporal acceleration (or simultaneity) has been worked out by leading social science authors (such as Simmel, 1902; Giddens, 1990; Castells, 1996; and Urry, 2000) and can be generally divided between those who analyse this change in a structural way and those who favour the impacts of change on the individuals’ experiences. That is, among those who thought time within a macro dimension, relating it to history and the great processes that occurred in society; and those who thought about time within a micro dimension relating it to everyday experience.

The first group worked on the notion of time and its recent acceleration from the perspective of how new communication technologies would be at the heart of recent structural transformations in the fields of economics, financial markets, politics, as well as patterns of production and consumption, introducing a new rhythm to the dynamics of these fields, specifically. Here, we highlight works by Adkins (2018) on time and the financial market, Laclau (1990) on time, socialism and democracy, and Castells (2009) on time and capitalism. The second group, on the other hand, starts with the acceleration brought by technological

innovations to think about how they impact the individual's experiences (which, however, does not mean that they think just on individual level). Some (such as Hartmut Rosa) though about the structural level as well. One of the main concerns of these authors is the so-called *time-pressure paradox*, which refers to the paradox of having more free time - since new technologies collaborate in the accomplishment of various daily tasks - and feeling pressured by a growing sense of lack of time, as indicated by various researchers.

According to Rosa (2013), we can distinguish between: i) technological acceleration; ii) acceleration of social change, and iii) acceleration of the pace of life. The latter refers to the "*speed and understanding of actions and experiences in everyday life*". What is the relationship between them? Rosa says there is a paradox between the first and third: if technological acceleration means we need less time to do things, that should mean more free time (leaving the pace of life more relaxed). In this sense, insofar as acceleration is identified in the rhythm of life, it is possible to characterise our context from the idea of "*acceleration society*".

Judy Wajcman (2014) starts from Rosa's elaboration and seeks to identify the causes of this acceleration society, analysing the dynamics of technological innovation as an originally social process - that is, emphasising the social character of technological development and thus distancing herself from the perspectives of technological determinism. However, by focusing its concerns on rebutting the hypothesis of technological determinism, she ends up taking the idea that acceleration is the main consequence of technological development, without conducting a critical reflection on what this acceleration means and how it should be interpreted (from individual experience).

It is possible to say that the problem of acceleration and changing the pace of time lies in some key questions: What is the role of new technologies in this discussion? Are new technologies the cause of the acceleration of time? What are the consequences of time acceleration for the lives of individuals in particular and society in general? How can we organise this discussion without neglecting the role of new technologies while resisting the explanatory impoverishment of technological determinism?

The authors above have sought answers, however using as a presupposition the *a priori* existence of acceleration. That is, they start from the given existence of acceleration, and from it think of the causes and consequences. None of the above authors question whether or not there is a change in the pace of time, nor do they question why - as individuals and institutions - we have this sensation, or whether our lives have been changed by it. The problem, according to Keightley (2013) and Hassan and Purser (2007), is that this kind of analysis is very superficial, as it leaves unexplained the deep connection of the speed of time and, as a result, the interpretation and analysis of the ways in which technology has affected our relationship with time is also hampered.

What we are going to do in this first section is ask ourselves just that, returning to the starting point What causes us - as individuals and society - to feel that time is accelerating? What are the social mechanisms involved in this supposed acceleration that impact so profoundly on both the micro and macro dimensions of social life? How can Schutz help us, theoretically and

conceptually, to answer these questions? We argue in this section that the development and popularisation of new technologies propel the individual out of pure *durée* into the space-time dimension. It is marked, as we have seen, by a reflection on time. As we are encouraged to step out of this flow and reflect on our experience over time, the sense of acceleration sets in, as well as the social pressure that comes as a consequence of it.

In his discussion of time, Schutz uses a distinction previously sketched in Henry Bergson's work between two dimensions, namely the dimension of experience and the space-time dimension (Bergson, 1944). Bergson indicates in his work that the difference between experiences flowing in their pure duration and discontinuous images in the space-time world is due to these two levels, two dimensions of consciousness (Schutz, 1970). The individual and their ego can be in both dimensions, depending on the moment and the situation. In the dimension of pure *durée*, of flow, the ego dissolves into continuous transitions, and does not differentiate between different temporal moments, and does not reflect upon it. Already in the spatiotemporal dimension, the individual leaves the pure *durée*, and claims the reflection on time and their experience with it. Thus, Schutz states that all distinctions, all attempts to separate individual experiences from the unity of duration, are artificial, for when I immerse myself in my stream of consciousness, in my *durée*, I do not find any kind of differentiated experience. It lights up, goes out, new ones appear, and others disappear from the old, making it impossible for the actor to distinguish between now and moments past, since experience is a one-way and irreversible flow (Schutz, 1945).

Of course, it is possible to know, for example, that time has passed and we are older now, however that does not mean we know exactly 'when' it happened, as this cannot be known when we are within the flow, for the consciousness of the *durée* flow presupposes interruption (and reflection) of the flow itself. This reflection and interruption can be thought of as a remembrance (back in the past). Schutz takes this idea of reflexivity further, and it becomes one of his main points. Systematically, what Bergson (and Schutz) seems to want to affirm from these reflections is that there are two dimensions: a spatiotemporal dimension, which is - by definition - the dimension where there are reflection and a retrospective look at life and phenomena, as well as clipped assessment of time; and a dimension of experience within which everything is flow. In the first, there is a discontinuous image; in the second, a pure *durée*. For Schutz, the difference between these two dimensions lies in consciousness.

If the basis for the difference between them is not objective but present in the stream of consciousness, it would not be entirely correct to say that in one dimension there is a difference between successor and previous moments, while in the other there is none. In fact, in one dimension there is awareness of this difference since an individual has come out of the flow and done an exercise in reflection, and in the other - with consciousness immersed in *durée* - this awareness doesn't exist. Because of this, the differential of the dimensions would be the positioning of the individual out of the continuum, where the same - reflexively - strengthens with the ability to notice the temporal differences between what happened and what remained. Despite the general construction, it is possible to make an effort to understand Schutz's elaboration in our daily lives. After all, often submerged in the pure *durée* of everyday life, we

do not necessarily realise the passage of time, and do not distinguish between present, past, and future so clearly.

However, when we stop to reflect on our existence (sometimes on a birthday or festive date), we leave the pure *durée* and are inserted into a spatial and temporal dimension, which leads us to categorise facts and events in order to distinguish space-time variations. This is very interesting because it assumes that the end of a phase does not depend on the phase itself. In other words, the idea of the end is not ontological to the idea of phase. It seems to depend on the actor's interpretation of how they live their experience. That is, time seems to be strictly linked to the idea of the experience. Also, this notion seems to have some impact on Schutz's work, since the idea of experience is one of the strongest and most prevalent in its formulation. What Schutz does not systematise, however, is how these dimensional passages happen in everyday life. Moreover, Schutz does not elaborate whether, depending on the society or the number of stimuli the individual receives, these outputs in the spatiotemporal dimension become more or less frequent.

The conceptualisation that Bergson outlines and which Schutz systematises could serve as a basis for thinking about the acceleration of time. This acceleration would no longer be thought of as an obvious assumption, as socially given, but as a complex mechanism through which individual consciousnesses are stimulated to move from the pure flow of social experience to continuous reflection on time and space.

Several studies highlight the number of stimuli as one of the most striking effects of accelerated technological development. The works on the decentralization of content in the web show information flooding as one of its main characteristics (Andrejevic, 2013; Dahlgren, 2018). Andrejevic and Dahlgren argue that the amount of information produced and circulated on the internet exhausts human consumption and processing capacity. Social media amplify this process by imposing, in different ways, the insertion and understanding of subjects that would not be consumed outside it. In this sense, political discussion groups on Facebook or WhatsApp, as well as Twitter trending topics, "push" individuals into debates and the consumption of unsolicited information (Gil de Zúñiga and Diehl, 2019). The "analogue" repercussions of the digital discussion dramatize the imposition by continually updating it, under penalty of social, professional sanctions, among others.

Informational abundance, in this sense, is just one of the elements that pressure conscience from the number of stimuli. This process also occurs concerning the intensity of interactions established in daily life, in ways of conduct in front of and within different virtual environments, in advertisements and in notifications from various applications, among others. This reflection, when performed continuously and repeatedly, brings the constant sensation of the passage of time, and therefore replaces (or complexifies) the idea of acceleration with the idea of increasing reflexivity and entering the space-time dimension. In other words, we are arguing that the individual suffers an expulsion of pure *durée* (as described above) and starts to reflect about space and time dimension, having the sensation of acceleration more than before.

The richness of Schutz's formulation lies in its theoretical-conceptual capacity, and therefore, explanatory power of a new social phenomenon. If before the popularization of the internet, as mentioned above, individuals performed this reflection exercise only in the face of the death of a loved one, or on commemorative dates, the exercise is now done daily, bringing individual and collective pressure and acceleration. The question that arises in the face of this new formulation is why or how do new technologies increase stimuli and demands for individuals to move out of *durée* and continuous flow into the space-time dimension? The answer to this lies in the broader discussion about new technologies and their impacts on everyday life. After all, much has been said about how the new devices have transformed the way we deal with memories, dating, time control, simultaneity, synchrony, diachrony, and space and time itself.

Being connected at all times to devices that forcefully make us record memories and dealing concretely and reflexively with the themes of space and time force us into the space-time dimension. Examples are notifications of birthdays, events and memories made by social networks such as Facebook; instant markings made by mobile devices about their location in space and time; notifications on instant messaging applications, among other stimuli. These stimuli force us to move more and more constantly out of the dimension of experience and drive us both to the most frequent reflections about space-time and to what Bergson calls *psychic tension*. What once resembled a rhythmic, relaxed coming-and-going between one dimension and another of individual and collective consciousness now translates into psychic tension on both the individual and social levels, generating - perhaps - what extant literature describes as *a time-pressure paradox*.

### **Time and Memory**

As discussed in the previous section, the debate on new technologies and acceleration is the primary approach of the social sciences about transformations in time conceptions. This emphasis, however, eventually obscures other dimensions of temporality that are also affected by communicative changes. One is the debate on the formation of individual and collective memories in a context of deep mediatization (Couldry and Hepp, 2017).

The literature on memory in the social sciences is vast and consensual in the sense of thinking of memory as a constant process of construction and reconstruction (Schutz, 1967; Giddens, 1984, 1995). Thus, past events and experiences would not be fixed references, but ideas and perceptions subject to reinterpretation according to the interactions and stimuli of the present. The construction of memory was deeply affected by media innovations, which allowed the recording of moments and experiences that were previously transmitted only by orality. In this sense, books, diaries, photographs, videos and audios are media supports for the construction of our memories, as well as places, music and movies can also be. That is, memory can be composed of elements produced by individuals as well as elements external to them (Jones, 2006; Keightley, 2012; Keightley and Pickering, 2017).

What, then, would be the changes in the context of deep mediatization? How does the exponential increase in record production and increased access to sensitive content change the way we build our memories? How are collective memories constructed in this context? Using

the concept of domestication, Keightley (2012, 2013) proposes an analysis of the construction of mediated time that escapes technological determinism, and that occurs in the integration of media time and everyday lifetime. In a critical stance, however, it identifies that empirical research on the concept of domestication falls on themes of private life, leaving aside the growing intertwining of the temporalities of public and private dynamics as a result of the domestication process itself.

The author departs from Bergson's definition of *durée* (continuous flow of the real) to argue - supported by Middleton and Brown (2010) - that the elements of the experience of the flow of the real are relative to our particular perspectives, not realities itself. That is, based on the idea - in Bergson - of a model of temporal experience in which time can only be experienced through reflection, the author argues in favour of using the idea of 'zones of indetermination'. Zones of indetermination are places of interaction between temporalities. Keightley argues that we should consider media and text technologies as temporal logics of distinct durations that contribute to these zones of indetermination. The interdependence and interpretation of these different media dimensions have provided conditions for temporal experiences that go beyond the action situated in a specific time and space. The horizon opened by her is undoubtedly too fertile to complexify the understanding of new technologies and how they impact daily life. However, her approach is restricted to a dimension linked to memories and belonging, focusing on their dialogue with identity and affective issues.

This section wishes to go a little further, and - from the concept of the stock of knowledge developed by Alfred Schutz - to think about memories and the constitutive aspects of the subjectivity of individuals as a central element for guiding practical action in everyday life. Therefore, we assume that memory is the mainstay of anticipation so that if there are changes in the way memory is constructed, there are also significant repercussions on the horizon of action of individuals. To think about memory and action is essential to bringing two core concepts that Schutz inherits from Husserl and that enable the flow of lived experience from now to the next (as a continuum): protection and retention. All experience, for the author, is accompanied by retention, that is, a primary memory about it. As we move from now to the next now, the individual retains a memory of their experience. The sum of this movement constitutes a continuous process since there is a formation of memory and various retentions (Schutz, 1959a).

There is, however, a point at which such retentions and memories sometimes become weak and fade. Protection is a tension towards a moment or a moment to follow, a kind of prolonging the current moment. Both - secondary memory and anticipation - relate to past and future conceptions of time. Remembering, as an exercise in reconstruction, makes the past a present experience because it reactivates it and brings it to the now. Anticipating refers to the future because it brings for the present an expectation about what will come. In this way, we retain, produce, anticipate and protect, forming consciousness (Schutz, 1967). The formation of consciousness, therefore, relates directly to memories. Undeniably, new technologies have changed the way we rebuild our memories and the way we deal with the past, remember it, and anticipate the future. This new way, therefore, implies a transformation of the formation of

one's consciousness. However, what is the implication of this for the individual and for society in a practical way?

The conceptual key to answering this provocative question lies in the idea of stock of knowledge. Schutz's stock of knowledge is the basis for social life, as the individual guides their action, reaction, or response to different situations based on their stock of knowledge. In general, we can define the stock of knowledge as a set of shared knowledge, lifelong knowledge, and memories used by the individual to act (Schutz, 1967). The stock of knowledge is partly shared by the society to which the individual belongs, and partly formed in a particular and individual way from the individual's own experiences. It serves as the basis for interactions between people, and it means that when the stock of knowledge changes, there is also a change in the interpretation of reality, and - ultimately - in reality, itself. Individuals, therefore, store individual and collective experiences, forming their experience stocks. This stock is always at hand, ready for use, serving as the basis for individual and therefore, collective action. The basis for the formation of this stock is the memory, which undergoes constant and profound transformation with the development and popularization of digital devices.

Perhaps from this conceptual and theoretical assumption, it helps to think of memory not only as a place of memories but as a place of action and social change. If we think from this perspective, the changes generated by new technologies are not limited to a more accurate recollection of what happened in the past but become relevant and decisive for the formation of individual and social consciences, and consequently for the formation of social life in all aspects. Two phenomena are fundamental to thinking about these changes: i) the increase in the number of action records - in the format of a digital text - in mediated interactions, ii) the selective or accidental exposure of own or others' generated content.

As identified by Zuboff (1982, 1985) there is an increase in computer-mediated interactions accompanied by the production of a stock of register, called by her 'electronic text'. This electronic text (which also refers to any other audiovisual media) contains information about the interaction that occurred: from the content itself to data about time, place, amount of words used, file size sent, among others. Zuboff (2019) focuses her reflection on how this data and metadata are used as instruments of surveillance and domination, highlighting how data economics is today one of the main transformations of capitalism. Zuboff's perspective emphasizes a more strategic and political side of the world in which computer-mediated interactions become increasingly frequent. However, the production of electronic texts may illuminate other consequences of the expansion of mediated interactions.

From a memory building point, social networks and instant communication apps serve as memory and record spaces in which trivial and meaningful actions are stored. The stories are built from interactions established between individuals on closed or open platforms (such as chats or timeline posts) and, depending on the platform, can be easily accessed by the user or others. Thus, we can say that, at least in this sense, interactions have a less ephemeral character and can be revisited whenever necessary. Added to this is the fact that social networks like Facebook and Twitter have tools that induce individuals to expose opinions and preferences indirectly, through likes, shares, and reactions. This type of record differs from posts in which

individuals debate or make a public argument about a given subject, but it continues to add up to the amount of user-generated memories.

The growing production of social media records, along with the dynamics of news feeds on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, leads us to the second phenomenon that amplifies changes in memory production: accidental exposure to content (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2017; Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, and Matassi, 2018). Studies on this topic show that news feeds expose us to content we are not looking for, which, we argue, would lead to increased stimuli and records for individuals' knowledge stock. That is, the practical action of individuals - inseparable from their stock of knowledge - is profoundly affected by the dynamics of new technologies and social networks, which significantly increase the production and exposure to actions, opinions and tastes of others through electronic records.

In this sense, it is possible to say that the impact of new technologies on the temporal dimension affects not only the sphere of memories, belongings and identities but also all the interactions that we establish in everyday life. Schutz's contribution from the idea of stock of knowledge is therefore central to understanding the social dynamics after the development and popularization of electronic devices, as well as central to understanding the role of memory, and the dynamics that derive from it.

## Conclusion

This article used as a starting point the problem enunciated by Couldry and Hepp (2016) about the lack of dialogue between social theory and media studies. The dialogue between these two fields would be essential because of (i) the recent changes in the social world brought about by the new technologies and media, and (ii) the expertise of social theory in systematically thinking about the experiences of individuals and their interactions in society. In this article we have proposed as an ultimate goal contributing to these two fields by bringing them in dialogue. To do so, we worked with a common topic between these two areas: time. And to discuss it, we proposed a rereading of Alfred Schutz.

We presented two approaches to time that are common within the fields of social theory and media theory: (i) time and acceleration; and (ii) time and memory. We also presented the debate, the advances made, and the problems and issues that remain with little dialogue or response. Our reading of Schutz was based on this discussion and the unanswered questions so far. In the first section, we brought a bibliographical discussion that points to an acceleration of time, due - mostly - to technological and communicative advances. We highlighted the concept of *Paradox Time-Pressure*, elaborated from the paradox observed between having more time (due to the ease that new technologies offer us to perform some tasks) yet feeling less time. Despite the advances made by many authors, we observed that there was a central assumption that there is an acceleration of time, without questioning this acceleration or seeking to understand the mechanisms through which it is felt individually and collectively.

With this in mind, we stepped back from the analysis, sought to understand the mechanism behind the possible acceleration of time, and proposed to do so through Schutz's conceptualization of the two dimensions of reality: space-time dimension and dimension of experience. Here is our big and original contribution. We called attention to the idea that what most authors called the acceleration of time (and designated as cause the new technological devices, without asking themselves exactly how this happens) can be thought of as a constant change from the dimension of experience, driven not only by the new devices, but by the use we make of them, leading to a constant reflection on time and space. Instead of assuming the acceleration of time, we proposed a more profound analysis through Schutz, thinking that the amount of stimuli brought by the new social media and the use we make of it causes more significant reflection and a constant need to get out of the flow of experience, bringing a feeling of acceleration.

In the second section, we discussed time in its relation to memory. We built on Keightley's efforts to think about how new technologies impact everyday life and how we construct our memories, identities, and affects. Drawing on Schutz and his concept of 'stock of knowledge', we also thought about how the new technologies and memory registered by them can serve as anticipation, that is, how the built memory resonates in the horizon of individual actions. Therefore, it can be said that this article answered - via Schutz's rereading - two fundamental questions related to new media and time, and contributed to bringing dialogue between social theory and media studies: (i) it provides an original and systematic conceptualization to serve as a conceptual tool for various empirical studies of media; and (ii) it brings to the centre of social theory - through the idea of action, experience and memory - the themes of media and the impact of new technological devices on individual and collective experience. For the dialogue between social theory and media theory to take place in an increasingly meaningful way, contributing to the understanding of new and recent social phenomena, we suggest the joint treatment (as was done here) of other central themes for both fields, in addition to revisiting the ideas of other authors (from both areas) capable of bringing a double contribution and helping to build an increasingly necessary dialogue.

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# The Decisive Instants in News-making: Individual and Collective Temporalities in Broadcast Journalism

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores "temporalities in broadcast journalism" and how they affect the process of television production. We understand temporalities as discontinuous flows of time. They can be experienced collectively and individually in the newsroom: from production and investigation, to decision making by the editor with the news programme on air. Thus, time functions as productive operator, and temporality as a value for the realization of broadcast journalism. We undertook a participant observation in the newsroom of TV Cabo Branco, Globo affiliate in João Pessoa, Brazil, and interviewed the journalists who make JPB 1st Edition.

## KEYWORDS

Time, Temporality, Broadcast Journalism, Journalists, Newsroom Routines

## Introduction

This paper endeavours to think about time as an analytical category of the journalistic construction process in TV. We believe in the idea of an increasingly discontinuous time, established in essential and precise moments that delimit an individual and collective temporality inside newsroom routines, fleeing from a uniform and linear idea. Along this logic of valorization of the present time, the media moves at all times and at full speed, due to digitization and the advancement of technology. We consider the advent of the internet as the culmination of these modern movements. It inaugurated new social structures, allowing for the first time the communication of many to many and on a global scale.

The advent of the Internet as a new medium of communication has been associated with conflicting claims about the emergence of new patterns of social interaction. On the one hand, the formation of virtual communities, mainly based on online communication, was interpreted as

the culmination of a historical process of disconnection between the locality and sociability in the formation of the community, in which new and selective patterns of social relations replace territorially limited forms of human interaction (CASTELLS, 2003, p. 98). Broadcast journalism is inside this context which remodels the news producers' job itself. The implications go mainly about one conception of temporality that includes not only the narrative and discursive means, but also the daily practices and the development of their professional processes.

The issue of temporality in the news appears diluted in a broad set of assumptions and problems concerning the praxis and the professional culture of the TV journalist. These temporalities impact on the routine and perception of journalistic work, which takes place in an environment of acute tension. We see that the Schlesinger's (1987, 2016) thought function as the link between our understanding of time and appropriation in the studies of broadcast journalism and the performance of journalists. The author contributes to the vision of time and its impacts within the news production model.

We argue that it is the temporalities that order the production situations. They function as a news value and even as a criterion, determining the team's decisions, coordinated mainly by what we call the 'clock-time' (marked by the instrument) that points to the symbolic pressure exerted by the deadline. This marker - deadline - must be executed within what Soloski (2016, page 138) calls 'journalistic professionalism'. What occurs when journalists' behavior is marked by two related ways: 1) it establishes standards and norms of behaviors; 2) determines the professional reward system.

We work with the concept of the instant (BACHELARD, 1988), which, when applied to broadcast journalism, is materialized in the decision-making of professionals in a fast and immediate environment. We argue that temporalities reach specificities within the journalistic professional routine, either 1) as an operator that stresses the activity and thus generates dynamism to the collective action within the newsroom; or 2) as an individual practice that was institutionalized within the normative situations of the production of a newscast. Our hypothesis is that there is a set of important and preparatory instants that sets the tone of the news, and that, therefore, sets the temporality of the news. The notions of time discussed are based on a relational perspective, in which we take into account symbolic and material components relevant to the development of journalistic activity. Therefore, time is understood as a discontinuous process, resulting from social and cultural experiences. The sense of the instant addressed by authors like Bachelard (1988) is characterized by a time in discontinuity, which is not related to a temporal fragmentation of continuity, but to a sort of repetition of several instants. Bachelard explains that the idea of instant is formed in an intersection between the dialectic and the interval of the occurrence of decisive or preparatory instants. The defense of the instant and of discontinued time enables a better understanding of how we live in relation to media digitization.

For journalists, time is a stressful and decisive factor. In a day within the newsroom, many precise and timed moments build anxiety, which is usual in the journalistic environment and exaggerated considering the current patterns of broadcast journalism. Medina (1982) says that

there is no other profession where daily life has more weight as in journalism. We return to the discussion of the deadline. This marker of routine in the newsroom shapes decisions and moves the news scene. It is the newscast closure that dictates the rules and promotes the adoption of certain behaviors of professionals in conducting the routine of the newsroom. Within this “dictatorship of time”, Vizeu (2006) reflects: “Journalists and newspaper companies often forget that the how and why in a story are important so that the viewer on the other side of the screen can better understand the world around him” (VIZEU, 2006, page 24). This happens when they are under the control of the clock and obsessed with the new, the immediacy, and the pressure of the “closing” time.

Schlesinger argues that activities, especially work, in Western cultures are “closely regulated by the clock” and as such, fixations with time are considered the norm, but this is not a universal phenomenon:

If it is true that ‘the clock is surely the crucial machine of an industrial civilization’, then our looking at newsmen is simply a case of us, the clock-conscious, watching the most clock-conscious. (...) For cultures and societies which are not regulated by clock-time, the concepts and actions of newsmen must appear curious and alien, and probably quite pathological”. (SCHLESINGER, 1987, page 122).

Situations related to time have always been used as an excuse for professionals who work on broadcast, such as editors-in-chief and producers. The discourse behind the creation, production and execution of a newscast has always been related to the hurry of the journalistic routine, and how it is necessary to take decision quickly. It always appears either as a motivator or as a problem: “They [professional journalists] oscillate between the victim and the controller. (...) Journalists have a specific cultural interpretation of the true meaning of their work, on the basis of which are the excitement and danger that comes from the fact of meeting tight deadlines” (SCHLESINGER, 2016, page 262). Becoming a controller, transcending the capricious character, sacrifice of the news, is what makes news work so exciting.

Once we consider deadline as a time stamp in the journalism field, we begin to understand that process of discontinuous flows as temporality. Ruellan (2017) sees the need to handle the issues related to journalism as a construction and not as a stable reality. Thenceforth, we would have reality subjectivized or transformed by individuals and/or groups that only exist through personal relationships and particular appropriations. In these terms, we relate time studies within broadcast journalism also to questions specific to the investigation of the professional identity and not only to the news product. As Ruellan points out:

No one becomes a professional on their own, and journalists cannot work alone. They exist because they have relationships with colleagues and employers, with their sources, and with the public. They also exist because of the culture (values, norms, and routines) learned throughout training, and over the course of their working lives (...). Journalists also acquire this culture because they, along with the others, help build it. From the beginning to the end of their careers, the world has changed a lot; technology, economy, social relations, everything is different and is also a product of the individual inasmuch as they have contributed to this evolution. In other words, a professional is the result of history, their own history and the history which is bigger

than they are and is rooted in the past. The more complicated, more conflictive, and richer the history is, the more complex the professional identity is. (RUELLAN, 2017, pages 8-9)

That is why it is complex working with time related to the construction of broadcast journalism as a whole; because we have to understand its plural and collective aspects and also its particularities – i.e. the deontological professional codes, the establishment of routines, the professional configuration, and also the speech and the narrative, through its news product. Journalists are accustomed to an environment with acute pressure and would not understand their role within an industrial routine if this pressure did not exist. However, traditions are also followed that create intense pressure because of journalists themselves, who believe that the journalistic environment should be highly pressurizing, and that if it is not, they should make it so. Schlesinger (2016) states that journalists exhibit two attitudes in their professional lives: they feel that they have the domain and control over their activities and, in contrast, they live a more fatalistic path of time, in which the present feeling is of compulsion and obligation: "The reason for this lies in the peculiar situational constraints posed by journalistic production". (SCHLESINGER, 2016, page 261).

This notion of causality is not perceived by those involved in the construction of the news programme, but it provides all the strength of the newsroom routine. It is within this context of seeming disorder that the vigor of planning resides. Routines induce the planning of activities within the newsroom:

“(...) The journalists' action plan is based on obedience to routines and productive rituals. Everything is thinking according to the pre-existing mechanisms for the realization of television news. The group's organization is based on assimilated habits.” (SEKEFF, 2005, page 67).

We carried out experimental research at TV Cabo Branco, a broadcaster affiliated with Rede Globo Corporation, in João Pessoa (Brazil), in August 2018. We observed newsroom routines for a week, in the news programme "JPB 1<sup>st</sup> Edition". We conducted interviews with journalists who work on the front-line of news-making. The results were cataloged in a field diary in order for us to attempt to make sense of the temporal routine in different journalists' practices. Although it is not possible within this kind of data sample to trace a unique ethnography of a TV newsroom production routines, we found an indication of some of the main configurations of how time is felt and used in the construction of television news. This allows us to show how concept and practice interconnect.

### **The presence of time on TV journalism**

Berger and Luckman (2004) state that communication and journalism can contribute to help people perceive the daily life and the context in which they live. In this case, we use time as an analytical category to understand the daily professional context of television journalists. They experience temporalities based on present time and on the acceleration of relationships and things. Journalism is one of the fields of knowledge established, legitimized, and institutionalized in and by the complexity inherent to society. This field of knowledge is always in a natural

process of transformation of the physical world and of human beings before social, political, economic, cultural, and psychological contexts. This process of society's continuous and heterogeneous change reshapes the journalistic field and its productive practices. And it is because journalism is involved in those dynamic movements that it also helps to build them. Journalism in its social history is shaped by the various cycles experienced in the multiple realities and changes originated from different crises from the most diverse periods of society. During this journey, one important aspect of our discussion is the construction of the public space in which the notion of journalism as a public service social mediator takes place. Throughout history, the notion of public space transformations has changed, absorbing what exists in each temporality.

It is appropriate to approach Bourdieu (1997) and Schlesinger (2016), who consider news as a product endowed with infinite perishability. It is because of this characteristic that journalistic production is rooted in market value. Fresh news occupies a privileged place in the journalistic space. It is a recognition strategy and, simultaneously, the currency of the present time within reality. Because it is perishable, the news has the possibility of representing the new. Validation using journalistic techniques needs to be well performed by professionals, choosing the best presentation format for the public. It is necessary that the strength of the novelty be present and that the content stands out keeping an active current. The awareness of this fact impels social actors in the field to continually search for the most recent novelty among the diverse ones that appear in daily life, which leads to a gradual emptying of the meaning of journalistic information, as the new quickly becomes old and, soon forgotten. (MIRANDA, 2005, p. 126)

To master the news content, it is necessary to understand that the effects of time and space determine its meaning. This allows the plurality of forms of enunciation, diverse judgments and consequences on life in society: "If the absolute present of the fact is impossible, it does not matter, the discourse will be organized on the present, this time yes absolute, of the enunciation of the fact: the present of the communicative act itself" (REQUENA, 1989, p.48).

On the other hand, TV journalism also bears the marks of the media that supports it: television, which is understood as part of a 'flow', as described by Williams (2016). In other words, the programming organization is structured in blocks of different contents that are shown in sequence, in a continuous succession. Admission to this movement requires only the act of putting yourself in front of it, in tune with the events shown on television.

The analysis of the distribution of interests, or categories, in a programme, although important, is always abstract and static. In all developed broadcasting systems, the characteristic organization - and therefore the characteristic experience - is of sequence or flow. Then, this phenomenon of a planned flow is, perhaps, the characteristic that defines broadcasting simultaneously as a technology and a cultural form. (WILLIAMS, 2016, p. 97). This characteristic of TV media also shapes the professionals who work in it. Those responsible for television newscasts look for strategies to maintain the audience by creating links between the blocks, to hold the viewers' attention. The promise is that the future is more exciting, sensational, important, or necessary than what has happened so far. The movement is intended to anchor the viewer in the units of time that form the flow. A broadcasting programme, on

radio or television, is, still, formally, a series of units of defined time. What is published as information about broadcasting services still follows this pattern: we can look at the time of a show, or a specific programme; we can connect the device to that unit; we can select and respond to it individually (WILLIAMS, 2016, p. 99).

The interaction between the individual and the TV shows is a particular relationship, mediated by culture under the aegis of technology. However, the repetition of this phenomenon in countless living rooms reveals a social outline that is reflected by Franciscato (2014). He analyzes the complexity of journalism based on the characteristics derived from the socio-historical forms of its constitution. One of the characteristics pointed out by the author is "located in concrete spatiotemporal contexts" and it is precisely because "he is immersed in a concrete spatiotemporal context" that "journalistic formats are the result of historical models of culture, economics, politics and technology development." (FRANCISCATO, 2014, p. 89). Franciscato also affirms that the journalistic product is plural and not a synthesis. It also tells a story about the author's understanding of the oscillating relationship contained within the journalist's individual/collective work. The individual work occurs at the moment characterized by the subjectivity of the professional. The collective work occurs when different profiles of the team share norms, values, and decisions through hierarchies. This alternation takes either by concentration or decentralization in decisions. This directly affects the productive modes and the values aggregated to the product and its forms of production.

We compare the routine of a TV newsroom to something mechanized and industrial. On a daily basis, news bulletins and TV programmes are made on a large scale. Each piece is carved to fit in its proper compartments of time, predetermined by the editor (who assumes a certain leadership in the journalistic organization). The facts must be checked within the cycle of the day, which imposes time limits to the organization of the newsroom, and especially to the nature of the news (SCHLESINGER, 2016). The process of producing news is stratified at different moments, and it involves (1) the choice and discussion of the agenda, (2) going out in the field, with selection of interviewees, and images and illustrations that will compose the news, (3) the cut of the statements and information from those interviewees who will make the news (and those that will be left out, naturally) and, finally, (4) the length and location of the space in which that informational material will fit, within the vehicle of communication (no matter the medium).

Subsequently, we argue that this is created by a set of opinions and views on the facts from a group of people - the journalists involved in the process, from the news producer, going through reporter, photographer/cameraman, to editor and chief editor. To this we must add the limited time the group has to make decisions about the news coverage (SOLOSKI, 2016). When we decided to work with this subject within broadcast journalism, the references alluded to time as a characteristic value of the news that was always taken into account in the newsrooms. These are some statements that we defend: 1) time is a value within broadcast journalism; 2) it assumes the aspect of a central theme and cannot be reduced to a simple indication of what should or should not become news; 3) it is structural, referring to the process of planning configuration and the practical progress for deadline compliance.

## The temporalities in broadcast journalism

We believe that time cannot be determined as a 'thing', but as something relational that is present in our daily life. It does not exist only in our imagination. We relate to it by means of material dimensions that are shared by individuals and social groups, even by means of symbolic values, that figure in the cultural field. One example is to understand that the TV newscast would be, in fact, the summary of the most important events in the local, regional, national, and international sphere. According to Elias (1998), to study time, it must be understood as a fundamental part of a very complex network of relations, in which it appears as the integrating essence of that network.

Bachelard (1988) was affected by the Theory of Relativity, postulated by Einstein in 1905, in which he defended the existence of times in flow, discontinued and non-linear. This fascination moved him to develop reflections that substantiate the importance of the concept of the instant, in an idea of discontinuous time, in visible opposition to what was defended by Henri Bergson (2011), who treated time as a duration. Under this light, we treat temporality in broadcast journalism as a convergence of flows of discontinuous times, and, in some specific moments, the moment emerges. And this is where we appropriate the sense of discontinuous time defended by Bachelard (1988). We understand the existence of a fragmented time in the routine of television production and argue that the instants lived before and during the fulfillment of the deadline form discontinuous temporalities. Together, they make up TV journalism's professional and systematized process. The productive routines, the deadline, the professional configurations, the normative arrangements, and the application of deontological codes in union, provide discontinuous temporalities that reproduce in the product the force of the present time.

The temporality makes all those involved in the production process fit into a great gear coordinated by the clock-time, which materializes the pressure existing within the whole conjuncture. The set of these instants forms rhythms that need to be executed in synchrony so that the product which is in the belt of the gear is delivered within the limits of the time established for the public. We believe that the instant contributes to the formation of temporalities and helps understanding time flows and the importance of decisions. According to Filho (2012), time has thickness and gaps. Such gaps are "understood when we realize that the time of decision, particular and of thought time is verticalized in relation to the common time of things" (p. 59). Elias (1998) visualizes time as reference marks, generating sequential models that allow people to organize and schedule their activities according to time. The regularity of temporal measures can offer predictability of the daily life itself.

We emphasize that the instant is vital for the habit to occur, and progress only occurs because of what Bachelard (2010) calls "eternal restart". One understands the facts, to which they are subjected by means of their perception of them. This same consciousness is expressed only through habits and there is thus an infinity of lived instants. But it is only by the consciousness that we select the relevant ones for the constitution and understanding of being and the world that surrounds us:

Thus, the habit becomes a progress, hence the need to desire progress to preserve the effectiveness of the habit. In all resumptions, it is that desire for progress that gives true value to the initial moment that unleashes a habit. (BACHELARD, 2010, p. 74).

For Bachelard (1988), current knowledge is not the continuation of previous knowledge. Decisions from now can be based on the common habit but could not be based on previous decision. They are not homogeneous; they are disruptive. The same happens with the management of the newscast. As much as it is necessary to put the newscast on air every day, at the point of the deadline, the days are not the same, but habits are, and so is the standardization of the routine. But this route leads to different decisions, based on consciousness, not similarity. It is usual to hear from experienced editors that no newscast is the same as another one and they do not represent continuity; they are endowed with fragmentations that drive the whole.

We continue with an explanatory model of how we view the identification of these temporalities:

- **Collective temporality:** What we call collective, is the way in which everyone is governed by a single time. It is not the routine itself, but the presence of a collective timing, in which all follow parameters and rules so that this time is properly taken advantage of. We take the deadline as an example. For the news to be shown and the team to meet the deadline of each day, it is necessary that all follow an already outlined form of activities, which includes the organization of tasks based on timeclock.
- **Individual temporality:** It is expressed in personal organizations, decisions and particular understandings that interfere in the model of the newscast of the day. Our example is centered on the image of the editor. By the time of closure, it is the editor's decision which format the news will assume. As much as they may be inspired by profession codes, values, and techniques, it is their personal choice and their own experiences that contribute to the decisive instants, giving particularity to the lived time.

### **TV Cabo Branco and the experimental analysis of JPB 1st Edition**

To validate the hypotheses outlines so far in the article, we carried out a field observation in TV Cabo Branco, affiliate of Rede Globo in Paraíba state (Brazil), from August 27 to August 31, 2018. We interviewed three people responsible for the TV newscast: the chief editor, producer, and anchor. We also monitored and evaluated five editions of the newscast. We chose not to identify the interviewees. The behaviors and procedures that are part of the daily ritual of the professional routine of these professionals were analyzed and cataloged in a field diary, as suggested by Lago (2010), in order to better identify the presence of time in the conception of the newscast.

Daily, the news begins to be formatted by the editor when the professional has not yet reached the workplace. Social technologies allow it. The time of arrival at the newsroom does not necessarily mean the start of the activity on the "news day" (Schlesinger, 2016). And this process

of establishing the news before arriving the physical space of the newsroom was questioned in an interview:

*"I have a producer at JPBI's disposal starting at 5:00 in the morning and that's why when I wake up, I can review with it what is interesting so that we can move forward. Usually, we handle matters related to the police area. But the important thing is that the newscast begins to take form early so that we can feel safe from the start." (Excerpt from an interview conducted by the authors with JPB 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Chief Editor, on 08.29.18)*

Repetition is part of television routine, which brings continuity to those involved in the journalistic organization procedure. The newscast begins to be produced before the arrival at the place of work, making the person who works as editor to feel that there will be hours ahead for the news to take shape and, if it needs to be modified, there will be plenty of time to do so and make decisions with ease and some tranquility. Framed in terms of time, this procedure can be used in collective temporality. As much as being informed about the early production of the day has been agreed to be a decision of the editor, the newsroom accompanies that choice, to the point that it is also convinced that it is important that the newscast begins to be produced before its work schedule established by the company, to avoid surprises at the time of opening. This naturalizes a collectively grasped, or shared, perception of time.

Now we get to another outstanding example of the planning of broadcast journalism. With the dissemination of social technologies, it is agreed in a symbolic way among the TV journalism team that the public needs to be heard on a daily basis, as the public play a fundamental role in the development of the newscast, being present, for example, in reports related to the community and in everyday situations. Because of social technologies and instant conversation applications, being connected all the time is a real possibility in relation to receiving suggestions for stories, complementary information or even a "hot" topic that could turn into a live report. The production has the role of monitoring virtual spaces, but the image of the anchor is the one who has greater popularity and that is why this professional ends up receiving more information in its channels, which generates a constant sense of observance, even during the presentation of the newscast. This temporality is **individual**:

*"I went so deep into that (...) The fact is that I was always part of that social network universe, of the internet, and I always received that feedback. I've always paid a lot of attention to that. Because it always directed me to know what to do, it works as a parameter, as an orientation, to bring stories... In short, that became part of our routine throughout the process. From the time we arrive until the next day, and [also] during the exhibition of the newscast, out of the schedules of exhibition... That is very regular". (Excerpt of interview conducted by the authors with TV anchor - 08.30.2018)*

We consider that temporality as individual, because even though that task is performed by the production team, the anchor takes the lead. Perhaps, because the anchor represents the newscast this person is closer to the audience, but to be alert all the time, overcoming the barriers of the newsroom to keep this bond in the virtual environment is something very particular. The virtual experience is present and active. As indicated by Castells (2000), that deals with the existence

of a physical space while we also occupy and act in a virtual place, which acts connected and in flows. Both are real, and we act and live in both realities.

In another situation, 30 minutes before the beginning of the newscast, which is at noon, the chief editor verified, page by page, the progress of the newscast writing. A procedure that is also part of the television routine. However, the editor emphasizes that at 11:30 it is the time for everything to be ready and edited. If it is not, it is the designated deadline for decision-making. This implies a conception marked by the timeclock, but a lonely decision and a particular understanding of time. Personal planning and the establishment of a mental routine delimit the presence of an individual temporality:

*"11:30 AM is my personal deadline, I do not like having surprises and not being prepared for them. I would rather analyze and make good decisions about the progress of the newscast. It does not always work! Since everything is so fast, I see what I can fit, if it is strong and receives due importance and is on the opening. I prioritize what should have priority and adjust with the newscast on air, if necessary. But planning is essential and the awareness of the activities 30 minutes before the programme". (Excerpt from the interview with the chief editor of JPB 1<sup>st</sup> Edition on 08.29.18)*

When the editor wants to take control of total time in any way, the professional indicates that they do not like to be surprised, assuming a controlling role, avoiding being the victim of a sudden and unexpected time. In our interviews, we found a tendency in the professionals to fit into situations that were too stressful, and they pointed time as the main reason.

Daily, the newscast begins to be prepared from 8 A.M., which is the arrival time of the editors, producers, and anchors. This timestamp marks the beginning of the assembly of the news programme in the software available at the station. The rundown of JPB 1<sup>st</sup> Edition is officially open. Notice that this is the official procedure. As we have already mentioned before, there is an extra-official movement, off-set, that occurs directly between editor and producer. During the official execution of this process, some decisions are placed on the table by the chief editor. 1) What opens the newscast? 2) Where and how to exhibit police news? Considering Bachelard's (1988) idea of instants, these decisions represent an important moment within the temporal narrative. They will be those decisions that will engage a collective temporality, encouraging all those who are ready for the news format to work to give materiality to what was decided by the editor and to give meaning to the context.

The "fade" [time available for newscast production] is delivered by the technical team to the chief editor at 8 A.M., but there is a gap in that process. Despite that, the programme that precedes JPB 1<sup>st</sup> Edition in the national schedule always has a short delay, what modifies the sum of the "fade" in the beginning of the newscast and at the end of the first segment. This, in fact, creates insecurity and increased attention for time counting during the execution of interviews and reporters' live reports. This temporality is collective. Although the "fade" is managed directly by the chief editor, the commitment of everyone involved in the process is necessary. This management occurs collectively but is always shaped by the chief editor.

The digitization of the technical processes has made time management easier. The modes of action have been simplified, which in the past were considered obstacles, for example: reedition of the newscast, multiple points of live reports, material storage, receiving images from the public, checking information, editing and exhibiting. This turning-point is essential to perceiving the moving of professionals within the newsroom, with the use of spaces, considered as 'free time'. In this case, the temporality is individual:

*"Digitization is essential so that the routine is not so exhausting, and people find time to organize other things that cannot be left loose during the week. Following social media and e-mail is constant, believing in the idea that something can always be worthwhile. Digitization certainly has sped up the process. Even in the beginning, when we were still getting used to all that technology, everything was slower. Today I feel that we have already naturalized that, and every editor knows how to execute their own work. "(Interview made by the authors with the chief editor of JPB 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, on 08.28.2018)*

In this story, we perceive the presence of individual temporality, since the chief editor is the one who organizes a publishing routine within what that professional considers necessary. The shortening of the team leaves loose ends in the weekly conduction of a newscast, which normally has a production time between 30 and 38 minutes a day, and requires the presence of the editor to lead the guideline and stimulate the team's commitment in the production at other times, such as the afternoon when they are not physically present in the newsroom. This awareness of the chief editor is not part of a collective determination, it is something relational and particular to the editor-in-chief with the awareness of the place of speech that this person occupies within the organizational chart of the newsroom and the respective newscast.

The deadline is marked by the idea that there is little time left for the news to air. The chief editor made it clear to us that this is the only conviction the professional has every day. "The news cast needs to air in any way. The adjustment of time is everything." On the observed days, it was never peaceful to go to the switcher station. In addition to the chief editor, an assistant editor and producers go to the viewing room. This pressure of time is felt collectively. When asked about the limit of the deadline, the interviewees said that, due to the constant presence of social technologies, the final limit is not the scripts printing. This is not new, but it shows up with more emphasis today given the new forms of interaction with the urban space and the explosion of the digital universe, which have sharpened the feeling of ubiquity and reinforced the need for the newscast in that regard. Temporality is once again collective.

The deadline is continuous, complex, and demands more time for checking, and more channels for accompaniment monitoring, in addition to the understanding and comprehension of the many voices acting within this universe. This moment is the centralizer of attention and acts as the touch of collective time. There is always a race for its fulfillment. It is still the most important point of the newscast and what gathers all the work, values, practices collectively.

However, we can see in those examples that the urgency, the immediate, the valorization of the product, and the adrenaline make up the deadline, which leaves the journalistic activity in the TV newsroom full of creative and important moments, which are the lived periods. The

deadline causes these instants to be revealed to the beat of the newscast creation. We state that this collective time is the generating point of an acute sensation of journalistic pressure. The news corroborates with this process but is not the only factor. It is up to the fulfillment of the deadline to move the productive routine and to provide that the individual temporary experiences arise and materialize in a decision-making process.

## Conclusion

We put to the test the application of our concepts of temporality with the observation in a newsroom. We argue for the importance of time in the construction of the newscast, from the understanding of how these temporalities are formed, to an awareness of the situations in which they materialize and live. So far, we validate our hypothesis of discontinued time flows (collective and individual), which are aided by the force of the moment, present and materialized in the decisions of the editor and the entire team. With this analysis it was possible to perceive the force of time in the work of journalism within TV newsrooms. It was also important to understand that the symbolism of time determines all the materialization of a process. It is important to reinforce some theoretical propositions, such as that time is a social and cultural construction, but it is also relational. We understand it because we relate to it in some way. We only become aware of its existence and permanence, when we are led to experience decisive moments that define the experiential memory in gaps, creating the habit by means of resurrections and causing substantial and causal progress in the actions to which we are subjected. To deal with time in broadcast journalism, which functions as a reference point for society, is just to understand the ways of living in contemporaneity, even in regard to the praxis and the temporary standardization of the labor activity of journalism.

We also understand that even being considered the beacon of all actions within the broadcast journalism universe, time and its temporalities, as well as exerting a collective pressure within the television journalistic routine, make acting characters in the development of the process also suffer individual pressures, generating new effects in the context of news-making. These issues of time and temporality should therefore be a central object of discussion in the field of Journalism Studies, which can bring knowledge about ways of experiencing the world and the community in which we live.

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# The Temporality of (Serialized) Romantic Comedy

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## ABSTRACT

Romantic comedies have a temporal structure based on suspense that I call *temporality of the almost*: the micro-narrative structure that repeatedly makes erotic resolution *almost* happen at several points in the story. This article analyzes how this temporality of constant and continual deferral functions as a retardatory structure posing obstacles apparently in order to keep characters apart, but, in fact, increasing the desire between them, and also between narrative and spectators.

## KEYWORDS

Narrative, Temporality, Almost, Romantic Comedy, Suspense.

## Introduction

*I see in the plots we invent the privileged means by which we re-configure our confused, unformed, and at the limit mute temporal experience. "What, then, is time?" asks Augustine. "I know well enough what it is, provided that nobody asks me; but if I am asked what it is and try to explain, I am baffled." In the capacity of poetic composition to re-figure this temporal experience, which is prey to the aporias of philosophical speculation, resides the referential function of the plot.*

Paul Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative* (1984, xi)

This article is about time and a specific kind of narrative: romantic comedies, the temporal structures of romantic comedies and how they organize love in a narrative. Therefore, I will define romantic comedy as a comic love narration. A love narration is usually told from the first meeting of the lovers to a resolution. Broadly speaking, two such resolutions are the most common: marriage and death, corresponding respectively to a comic approach or a tragic one. The comic version brings an optimistic worldview to the story, commonly mixed up with the happy ending convention.

If, as suggested by Ricoeur, narrative is a way human beings have devised to organize time, this article aims to explain how narrative conventions in romantic comedies – with actions well-known as meet, lose and get – are translated into temporal structures. The genre combines the *instant* of the first encounter, with the *ever after* of the happy ending, and *repetitions* of the middle part. It permits translate into narrative terms, affects and emotions such as love and desire. The central conceptual proposition here is that romcoms use a temporal structure based on suspense called *temporality of the*

*almost* (Amaral, 2018): the micro-narrative structure that repeatedly makes erotic resolution *almost* happen at several points in the story. This temporality of constant and continual deferral functions as a retardatory structure apparently posing obstacles in order to keep characters apart, but, in fact, increasing the desire between them, and also between narrative and spectators.

### Temporal connections in romantic comedies

Love stories generally begin with a meaningful first encounter between the lovers. It is also a convention that this encounter is combined with the mystic of a “love at first sight”, even when the significance of this first moment is revealed only later on, when the couple reach a happy ending. This encounter is what screenplay manuals have named the inciting incident: “the first major event of the telling, is the primary cause for all that follows, putting into motion the other four elements – Progressive Complications, Crisis, Climax and Resolution” (Mckee, 1997, p. 181). Love at first sight justifies the moment when everything changes. This first encounter turns something almost “magic” as love at first sight into a narrative scene, with actions and dramatic consequences to explore. There is strength and simplicity both in the imagistic and narrative proposals of a first meet: “something insignificant in appearance, but, in reality, a radical event in microscopic life” (Badiou, 2013, p. 31). It is a break of the routine, an invitation to a journey. In Hollywood romantic comedies this point is so conventional that it even has a name, the *meet cute*: a meet or a series of meets between the central couple which starts the whole story (Mernit, 2001). Thus, the meet cute, this moment when everything changes, can be interpreted in temporal terms as an instant, a thunderbolt, directly related to the *coup de foudre* of love at first sight.

At the other end of the story frame in a romantic comedy is the happy ending. It inscribes that initial instant with a promise of eternal bliss through the myth of romantic love. Romantic love is forever – until it is not – and it brings to the love story the temporal dimension of divine time, the eternal consummation of blissful happiness. So, what unites the instant (love at first sight) to the eternal (happy ending) in love stories is the narrative work of the middle – the usually forgotten middle (Brooks, 1984) – which comprises most of the narrative and stabilizes its meaning<sup>1</sup>. In the middle part resides the temporality of the almost, as I will explain latter on.

In a passionate description of what love might be, French philosopher Alain Badiou highlights that the reason it is so intense is because it attempts to inscribe its eternal potential into a duration. Inspired by Mallarmé, who considered poetry to be “chance defeated word by word” (apud. Badiou, 2012, p. 45), Badiou believes that chance is curbed with a grand gesture: a declaration of love. Many romantic comedies end with

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<sup>1</sup> As Deleyto (2009, p.24) puts it, attention to the middle section will also allow us to explore the important role of humor in romcoms and the flexibility of the genre, and it will help to abandon the ideological determinism critical discussions of the genre usually reproduce.

this moment, when characters declare *I love you* or *yes, I do*, sentences that are more than just words – they are performative utterances since to say something is to do something (Austin apud Schechner, 2006, p. 123).

If “I love you” is always, in most respects, the heralding of ‘I will always love you’, it is in effect locking chance into the framework of eternity. We shouldn’t be afraid of words. The locking in of chance is an anticipation of eternity. And to an extent, every love states that it is eternal: it is assumed within the declaration... The problem then resides in inscribing this eternity within time. Because, basically, that is what love is: a declaration of eternity to be fulfilled or unfurled as best it can be within time: eternity descending into time. That’s why it is such an intense feeling (Badiou, 2012: 47).

Romantic comedy is a narrative in which the adventure functions exactly to unite the instant to the eternal. It builds a dramatic logic, in conventional terms, between meet cute and happy ending. In other words, “the locking in of chance” in a comic story. The understanding of narrative structures and the work of humor will clarify this idea.

Although comedy is a central feature in a romcom, sometimes its importance can be taken for granted. I would like to underline the role of comedy in the genre. Comedy is what makes happy endings possible. The happy ending is not just something that happens at the end; rather it affects the atmosphere of the whole story. Corrigan (1981) says that the only thing present in all comedies is not a narrative structure or effect, but an optimistic attitude facing the troubles and challenges the world might impose. Susanne Langer (1981) goes further and compares the rhythm of comedy with the rhythm of life due to its festive attitude: “the same impulse that leads people since pre-historical times to celebrate happiness rites and all biological phases of our existence is what sustains the eternal interests in comedy” (p. 82).

Therefore, comedy can be seen as encapsulating an optimistic worldview. Deleyto (2009) uses this idea to understand how romantic comedies work: by constructing a narrative space within the story, a safe, benevolent, better and freer space, where all our inhibitions and inadequacies are forgotten and all desires can be fully and fearlessly lived. The author (2009, pp. 31-37) calls this “comic space”. Comic space is the magic space of the romantic comedy and it is built bit by bit by the narrative. It welcomes characters to enjoy their desires freed from day-to-day hindrances. In fact, desire is indispensable in narrative. Characters must desire something so that the story can move on. Discussing characters and storytelling, screenwriter John Truby (2007, p. 7) has adapted the Cartesian *cogito* to “I want, therefore I exist”. New information makes characters act continuously to attain (or not) their desire at the end. Narrative desires differ from text to text. In a romantic comedy, the convention is that characters’ desires are erotic desires, although this desire is never reduced to sex only. The comic space is constructed by the narrative to satisfy the characters’ desires and make the happy ending possible. Comic space changes the environment by, as the story progresses, making it favorable for the expressions of love and desire. It also allies with another narrative strategy: characters’ transformations. An example will clarify this idea. *Tootsie* (1982)

is not frequently remembered as a romantic comedy. Maybe because, in this film, the protagonist's transformation is bigger than his love story. But the two things happen together, as well as the formation of comic space, if we interpret it as a romantic comedy – that is as a comic love narration. *Tootsie* tells the story of Michael Dorsey (Dustin Hoffman), a cynical and selfish actor who can no longer find an acting job in New York because of his temperament. So he dresses himself as a woman, Dorothy, to do an audition for a daytime soap opera. He gets the job and starts to work with Julie (Jessica Lange), a sweet and sad costar in the soap opera. They become friends, but Michael falls in love with Julie. Acting as if he was Dorothy, Michael changes. Not only is he more affectionate and caring, but he also manages to change the work environment of the soap opera with his character's improvisations within the story. Julie's friendship with Dorothy makes her stronger and more confident. They both change and although a romantic relationship between them seems impossible, a magic space that permits characters to be sincere, freer and honest is formed. They are being true to themselves, even if, ultimately, Michael is lying about his identity. There is a convention in romantic comedy that characters tell the truth through lies; and that is why masquerades and other disguises are so common in the genre. Characters achieve better versions of themselves pretending to be someone else, and that changes the fictional space around them.

While Julie terminates her toxic relationship with the soap opera's director, Michael ceases to be the arrogant and self-absorbed narcissist he was at the beginning. At the climactic point Michael reveals the truth to Julie during a live recording episode. She slaps him. Time passes and when they finally meet again, Julie says she misses Dorothy and he answers with these now famous lines:

You don't have to. She's right here. And she misses you. Look, you don't know me from Adam. But I was a better man with you, as a woman... than I ever was with a woman, as a man. You know what I mean? I just gotta learn to do it without the dress. At this point, there might be an advantage to my wearing pants. The hard part's over, you know? We were already... good friends.

The comic space permits characters to be better people and freely experience their desires. Michael was so desperate to find an acting job that his whole life became a role to play. Normally, the comic space is formed on the basis of romantic love and the powers of the comic, but it can also be the result of friendship. For example, in *Sex and the City* (1998-2004) the protagonists' friendship is what protects them and encourages them to engage in erotic fantasies and love adventures. The romcom genre combines characters' transformation and the creation/formation of a comic space. In *Tootsie* the comic space is the result of friendship and romantic love between the protagonists and the intimacy they share.

The deployment of comic space coincides with the narrative transformation towards the happy ending – in temporal terms, eternity. However, the formation of a comic space takes time. A place where desires are fulfilled *all the time* does not correspond to the dynamic nature of narrative. That is why the comic space is continuously charged with threats of not being complete. Temporal control develops the erotic function of

narrative: it prevents desires from being completely fulfilled during the story, but also permits partial satisfaction. Like striptease, romantic comedy undresses piece by piece before exposing the naked vulnerability of its characters.

### **Suspense and obstacles**

Time and space are basic elements of narrative. It has been shown that narrative space in a romantic comedy is related to characters' transformation and the emergence of a comic space. The most important temporal question is: when will the narrative fulfil the character's desires? Therefore, it is common that the fulfilment of desire is also the end of the story. In the meantime, between characters and their desires we have obstacles furthering narrative dynamics. We follow the "successive desire march" (Brooks, 1984) through obstacles. By overcoming these obstacles characters are transformed. Obstacles are a practically omnipresent element in any narrative universe, and they acquire particular relevance in comic formats. For Frye (1973) obstacles to the hero's desires are what results in a comic action. Bakhtin (1981), for his part, associates this kind of narrative to the adventure novel, where obstacles retardate the final couple's union. For Meir Sternberg (1978), obstacles in the hero's way to a happy ending retardate the couple's final union in both the adventure novel and comedy. Sternberg describes this use of obstacles as a retardatory strategy we all intuitively know: suspense.

Although romantic comedies are not analyzed by Sternberg, we may affirm that obstacles to the final couple in the genre work in the same way as described by this and other authors. But romcom combines this strategy with its own conventions, making erotic desire coincide with narrative desire. Erotic desire, often under the guise of "true love", leads characters to take risks, challenge boundaries and accept narrative transformation. Obstacles, which on the surface seem a way to tear couples apart, actually function in romantic comedies as desire propellers. In many examples, characters are their own obstacles and that is why they have to change to pursue their objectives. This type of obstacles – screenplay's manuals call it internal obstacles – function by translating complex internal conflicts into action.

Comparing obstacles in romance genre and in romcoms may make this clearer. Love at first sight is a convention of the romance genre as well. In romcoms this crystallizes in the meet cute, a scene filled with chemistry and tension that often activates the notion of love at first sight in order to confirm it at the end. Thus, obstacles in romances are a real barrier while in romantic comedies they create excitement, an electric feeling that leads to final joy. *A Marriage Story* (2019) may be considered a romance drama in which the happy ending for the woman is divorce. At the beginning, we are presented to the main characters with both man and woman telling us what first attracted them to each other. So, we know what kept them together until now and this relatively short introduction feature the great couple they might be. Then, throughout the film the obstacles to this romance are revealed to the audience during the process of divorcing. These obstacles are formidable and gradually we realize that they will prove insurmountable. The couple

is already broken and obstacles do not create enthusiasm or suspense, even if divorce constitutes the happy ending.

In romcoms, on the other hand, the comic space makes love and attraction not only safe but mandatory. In romantic comedy, the interposition of obstacles keeps the desire impulse strong. It also imposes a rhythm, chopping the main action with impeding events until it reaches the climax. Sternberg (1978, p. 159) describes suspense as a narrative temporal control which functions exactly like this:

one of the prime means of creating, intensifying, or prolonging suspense consists in the author temporarily impeding (“suspending”) the natural progression of the action, especially, its onward rush toward some expected climax, by the interposition of more or less extraneous matter.

Since it is part of the information distribution strategy, suspense is used in a variety of narrative forms, although it is characteristic of detective stories and other variants of the thriller genre. In detective stories, the climax is generally the exposition of the story, that is, the access to the totality of the fictional universe through explanation to the spectator, something that in other genres we find at the beginning. In many detective stories, characters’ transformations are secondary regarding the information management of the plot. On the contrary, romantic comedies do not seek a great revelation towards the end and do not need a great amount of exposition for the audience to access the plot like political thrillers, or historical dramas. What appears in a funny and involving way in the genre is how characters deal with their own desires and objections to them, providing a coherent and gradual transformation. It is what Mernit (2001) calls “intimate journeys”: characters evolve, and this mutual transformation combines with the main plot. Sternberg (1978) denominates this kind of narrative *staircase-like* construction, where the suspense composition is formed by obstacles that prevent the hero’s success, with the end always postponed step by step. The more numerous or formidable the obstacles, the greater the retardatory effect of suspense.

Besides suspense, other temporal control strategies are curiosity, surprise and anticipation; they manipulate time in order to cause an effect in the audience, creating expectations between public and texts. While suspense projects information and actions to the future, prolonging time, surprise appears suddenly, like a shock. Suspense delays a conclusion and increases its gratification when it happens (Lavandier, 2003) while surprise presents a too short gratification but impresses through what Lavandier (2003) calls the “stroke effect”.

On the other hand, curiosity (Sternberg), also called mystery (Lavandier), denies information about the past leaving behind a big question mark for those who follow the story. It also hierarchizes characters that know better than spectators. Finally, anticipation, as suggested by its name, anticipates crucial information about events that will happen later on in story, a mechanism often used in melodramas. With anticipation the audience knows better than the characters. Melodramas use anticipation as their key temporal control strategy: when the protagonist discovers important information we already know, it is frequently “too late” to do anything.

In horror movies, suspense is used to build tension and fear, but the genre's characteristic strategy is surprise: suddenly and "too soon" the monster appears and surprises everyone. Linda Williams ([1991] 2003) has called these temporal narrative strategies used by genres *temporalities*. Williams has studied specific genres such as melodrama, horror film and pornography, which she has labeled *body genres* due to the fact they incite corporal reaction in the audience such as orgasm, weeping and terror. For Williams, when dealing with body genres, spectators mimic similar reactions, performing an embodiment with the movies. This interplay between body genres and the audience is completed by the temporalities of each genre, making things happen "too late" in melodramas, "too soon" in horror movies and "on time!" in porn, which displays perfect timing between desire and performance.

Later (2001), Williams published an extensive study on melodrama recognizing its cardinal importance in American cinema. Williams observes that in melodrama, victims suffering and being saved perform the spectacle of *pathos* and action, and everything happens hopelessly *too late*. Even when resorting to a strategy like suspense, what prevails is the story's temporality, with "the teasing suspenseful retardation of the outcome constantly threatening that it must by now, certainly, be too late" (*ibid.*, p. 35). The author emphasizes that the audience may cry even in happy ending melodramas because the "too late" temporality is already functioning, and it does not matter that "hope against hope, desire is fulfilled, and time is defeated" (p. 31).

By conceptualizing body genres, Williams claims that temporalities rule generic expectations in the audience. She does not analyze comedy, the thriller or musicals, but she recognizes those as body genres, too. If we read the romantic comedy as a body genre, we may imagine the kind of reaction it provokes through its characteristic temporality. I call the temporality of romantic comedy's the *temporality of the almost* (Amaral, 2018), because this continuous retardation, produced by suspense – with the interposition of obstacles in a staircase-like construction – makes the couple *almost* get together many times throughout the story. It suspends a linear action and deals with narrative and erotic climaxes. The *temporality of the almost* in romantic comedies is responsible for organizing this transformation of an instant into eternity through narrative duration. It retards a favorable resolution to the story, joining the characters' erotic desires with the reader's narrative cravings. It is described as *almost* because the happy ending is repeatedly postponed but remains close at hand. By means of this structure, the instant and the eternal remain present but can be transformed into narrative duration.

It is, somehow, a repetitive structure and yet, repetition is also a narrative strategy, slightly varying from time to time (Brooks, 1984). Moreover, Badiou (2012, p.20) recognizes how repetition is a basic structure for love as "one must start time and time again". For the author, it is necessary to declare love over and over, to restart it: "desire is immediately powerful but love also requires care and re-takes" (p. 53). Lynne Pearce (2001) also argues that love is traditionally seen as unique, but that in fact everything about it is wanting "the same again". For Pearce, love is understood only in terms of

repetition. Even love stories that celebrate a non-repeatable love can be repeated. After all, this is what “Western civilization has most wanted to hear” (Pearce, 2001, p. 7).

Thus, the *almost* organizes temporal tensions such as the instant, the forever, the narrative and the repetition. The temporality of the almost is what unites beginning and end, corresponding to the most forgotten part of a romantic comedy: the middle. Again Brooks (1984) recaps the forgotten middles in his analysis of plot, because it is precisely the middle that contains the temporal dynamic of narrative, “the desires that connect narrative ends and beginnings, and make of the textual middle a highly charged field of force” (1984). Brooks calls upon psychoanalytical theory to prove that the middle is charged with tensions and carries the desire that is established at the beginning towards the end: “As with the play of repetition and the pleasure principle, forward and back, advance and return interact to create the vacillating and apparently deviant middle” (Brooks, 1984). In romantic comedies, the *almost* develops this vacillating work between ends and beginnings.

In the romantic comedy genre, the characters’ narrative transformation permeates all narrative space, as was seen in the concept of *comic space*. However, this narrative pinnacle must happen in an exciting climax; protagonists must give up or accept repeatedly the challenge of being transformed. The *almost* is responsible for making the feel-good moment of the end even more pleasurable. But what happens if the romantic comedy lasts much longer than ninety minutes, and is told year by year?

### **Serialized fiction and the romantic comedy**

In the *Arabian Night* tales, Scheherazade, the vizier’s oldest daughter, volunteers to marry the king who has sworn he would marry a girl every night and kill her in the morning after to avoid being cheated again. Scheherazade has a plan to ensure her life is spared: to tell a very interesting story every night and interrupt it at a climactic moment as dawn is breaking. After the first night, the king is so captivated by the story that he cannot kill her and waits until the following night to know the resolution. However, Scheherazade repeats the same ploy over and over, beginning new stories and playing with the king’s curiosity. Thus, after one thousand and one nights, she has saved her life and the life of all girls of the kingdom because the king is convinced to keep her as his wife.

The story of Scheherazade and many others in the *One Thousand and One Nights* create cliffhangers where telling a story is the only way to avoid imminent death. It also serves as a good metaphor for serialized fiction: the audience must be interested, even when the story is paused for a moment. While telling a story and postponing its end to the following night, Scheherazade is using a narrative strategy that has already been analyzed here: suspense. Suspense in serialized fiction normally teases the readers’/spectators’ desire to know more: every end of chapter/episode is a temporary end and audiences are still connected to the story even when it is not being told. As Brooks (1984) puts it: “the intentionality of plot lies in its orientation toward the end, even while the end must be achieved only through detour”.

Brooks describes these detours as the “arabesques” of plot, the forces of the middle that retard the resolution. The specific form this arabesque takes in romantic comedy is the “temporality of the almost”. Although romantic comedies have a long history in cinema and in theater – that goes back to at least Shakespeare – the genre can be easily adapted to a serialized format. This is what happens hundreds of times in serial plots through the well-known formula of “will they won’t they”, when characters perform a long courtship that the audience can engage with and relate to.

In the final part of my essay, I would like to bring together the *almost* of romantic comedy and the cliffhanger of serialized fiction. When postponing the final love resolution of a couple, but making it *almost* happen many times in the narrative, serialized fiction is using a romantic comedy plot and a romantic comedy temporal strategy. This can happen in a romantic comedy series, such as *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015-2019), a sitcom like *Friends* (1994-2004), *The Office* (2005-2013) or *Cheers* (1982-1993), a procedural like *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002), a fantasy drama like *Smallville* (2001-2011) or a thriller like *You* (2018-).

The success of the American version of *The Office* is multifactorial, but it is not wrong to bet on the work of romantic comedies’ conventions as a key one, notably, in its early seasons. The temporality of the *almost* is what structures the plotline of characters Jim (John Krasinsky) and Pam (Jenna Fisher). Their romance is not the main line of action of most episodes, but it gives a thin line that pervades all three first seasons. Larry Wilmore (2020), one of the show’s screenwriters, considers it a romantic comedy because its dramatic center is the story of these two characters, a story of intimacy and seduction. For Wilmore (2020), romcom conventions bring up emotional dilemmas that take conflicts to the next level: they are always there even if not mentioned.

This adaptability is due to the fact that a romantic comedy plot can be mixed with other plots, it even does not need to be the main line of action. The comic love narration can be mingled with other universes and still be identifiable. It also elucidates a characteristic of any genre: “Genres are not groups of films, but abstract systems formed by elements taken from many films. The generic bag contains conventions, structures, narrative patterns” (Deleyto, 2009, pp. 12-13). Mostly, genres are conventions that meet in films, plays, TV series, and books. They are a complex communication system that can bifurcate into new directions and reinvent themselves.

Among many storytelling strategies, romantic comedy’s *almost* is one of the commonest in a plethora of TV series in which romcom conventions appear in combination with many other genres. The genre flares up in other narrative universes, keeping the temporal construction which unites love at first sight and (potential) happy ending, *almost* happening several times in narrative detours.

In serialized fiction, the hiatus between episodes and seasons is also part of the temporal game between audience and story, which is filled with expectations. There is a narrative desire to know more that can be combined with the desire characters feel for each other. In serial formats, characters flirting for a while, and eventually engaging in a

relationship, does not need to be plot A of the story, but certainly, implies two things: it needs time to happen, customarily, seasons; and while rooting for these characters to be together, the audience in some level engage with the story. In TV series, the pleasures of delays that make things *almost* happen benefit from a relationship with the spectator that also happens in time. That is why romantic comedy plots and their postponed desires are so present in TV series: it is a well-known structure that spectators can engage with even when they are not completely aware of its deployment.

"What, then, is time?" is the question Augustine asks himself in Ricoeur's quote. If we go back to Ricoeur's notion that narrative is a powerful way to understand time, which opened this article, the temporality of the *almost* helps us understand multiple temporal possibilities within a comic love narration: instant, eternal and repetition. It also creates and popularizes a pleasant structure that helps people to deal with a traditional magical idea of love and happiness coupled with the narrative logic of characters' transformation. Romantic comedies convert into action (scenes, characters, conflicts) an optimistic view of love and desire. The model, as shown before, is efficient and flexible. Romantic comedy's temporal/narrative structure privileges/celebrates new engagements and new possibilities of happiness and pairing. If, ultimately, every narrative plays a game with its audience placing expectations and then presenting resolutions, the temporal control performed by the *almost* does that in its own way. It also makes spectators engage with the story. Not only as long as it is been told, but also, after the story is over. The relationship between the audience and romcoms is still on after the *ever after*.

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## **Biography**

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