TERESA P. R. CALDEIRA

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TRANSITORINESS

Emergent Time/Space Formations
of Urban Collective Life

Analyses of modernity never fail to associate it with notions of temporariness and ephemerality. Instability, improvisation, impermanence, uncertainty—inseparable from poverty and precariousness—have always marked the lives of the majority in cities worldwide. However, the ways in which these conditions are experienced shift over time, as I argue by focusing on practices of the everyday in the peripheries of the city of São Paulo, Brazil, over the last forty years. I use the notion of the *transitory* as a way of accessing important changes in combined practices and conceptions of time and space as well as the new formations of collective life they anchor. On the one hand, the transitory refers to perceptions of time that disconnect from notions of linearity, directionality, progress, ascension, and development that served as organizing parameters in previous modes of perceiving time. The movement in the case of the transitory is horizontal and lateral, not ascendant. The transitory does not imply a direction toward a certain desired and anticipated future that is supposed to be better or more advanced or developed. On the other hand, spatially the transitory points to constant circulation; to not being able or willing to settle down; to not investing in fixed spaces; to dislocation; and to going back and forth. Of course, notions of linearity, progress, and ascension continue to articulate several dimensions of the everyday, and there is still investment in fixed emplacement, but not in the same hegemonic way as in the past.

The normalization of transitoriness as a way of articulating the everyday—ranging from leisure and cultural interventions to labor, housing, organization of households, gender identity, and interactions in digital spaces—is especially clear among young people. I analyze some of these dimensions from the perspective of the peripheries of São Paulo, where I have conducted fieldwork since the late 1970s. This historical-ethnographic archive allows me to juxtapose materials from various periods and to identify emergent processes that are being articulated according to the logic of the transitory.[1]

Transitoriness

Transitory means impermanent. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as "Not lasting; temporary; brief, fleeting; impermanent" and adds: "Of the nature of a passage or transition; transitional." Etymologically, the word relates both to the French *transitoire*, temporary, and the Latin *transitorious*, transient, passing, relating to traffic. Although *transitory* and *temporary* may be used synonymously, I use transitory instead of temporary because of the former's association with transiency and transit, which implies a dislocation, an act of passing through or across a place. Thus, transitory carries a spatial connotation in addition to a temporal one. The focus of my analysis is on a shift in interrelated practices and conceptions of time and space, which cannot be thought of in isolation from each other.

Analyses of the modern and of modernity have always associated them with notions of temporariness, a quality of fleeting, ephemerality, rupture, and fragmentation. Indeed, Marx and Engels's famous (1996 [1848]) account of modern bourgeois society as that in which "all that is solid melts into air" is a synthetic representation of the complex condition of modernity. As Marshall Berman argues, this condition is marked by a "thrill" and a "dread"—the paradox being represented by the thrill of constant change and the will to change, on the one hand, and a "terror of disorientation and disintegration, of life falling apart," on the other (Berman 1988 [1982], 13). The transitory is thus inherent in the condition of modernity. However, I argue that at the present moment it is experienced in a particular way that should be distinguished from that of modernity.

Without rehearsing the lengthy arguments on modernity and the modern, it is necessary to recall that if modernity has always been marked by

processes of rupture, fragmentation, and fleeting, the idea of progress was a powerful way of channeling and directing "the transitoriness of things" and producing a sense of historical continuity (Harvey 1989, 11). Obviously, the notion of progress does not resolve the contradictions of the Enlightenment project, but progress and its associated notions of development and modernization have definitively directed perceptions, practices, and policies in powerful ways, shaping the experience of modernity across disparate parts of the globe.

The notions of modernization and development capture both the power and the optimism associated with progress as an organizing narrative. Although obstacles to these processes and reversals have always existed, they did not dislodge this linear narrative from its position of a central organizing feature of modern life all over the world. But current changes indicate that narratives of progress and development are now losing their force. This means that things may not have become more transitory or ephemeral (though this may also happen), but rather that people's perceptions and practices are different, as not all individuals necessarily see progress, growth, social ascension, modernization, and development as being desirable outcomes. The transitory, fragmentary, and non-connecting are coming to the forefront as dominant perceptions, and people no longer think of their practices as ordered in some kind of linear path that would make them add up to produce a better future. There is a sense of lack of directionality, which may be substituted by repeated experimentation. Movement is constant, but it is lateral—a passing through and across, not going somewhere recognized as better.[2] In the practice of residents of cities of the Global South, this means that their efforts to solve their housing needs may not lead to finding the dream house of one's own that was possible under the autoconstruction model; efforts to acquire formal education do not materialize in social mobility; qualifications may not translate into a professional career; experiments with modes of inhabiting do not coalesce in the formation of families; gender identities may shift from essentialist approaches to performative ones, and so on. There are only a series of lateral moves, dislocations, experiments, and transitory arrangements.[3]

The normalization of transitoriness does not mean that other perceptions of time and space cease to exist. In fact, linear and cyclical notions of time, which have been dominant in modern Western societies, continue to orient people's practices and perceptions in many ways. As Koselleck has argued, at each historical moment, there are different sediments of time that result from different experiences. Historical times, he argues, "consist

of multiple layers that refer to each other in a reciprocal way, though without being wholly dependent upon each other" (Koselleck 2018, 4). These different layers can be investigated both historically and ethnographically. Anthropological analyses have clearly shown that notions of time and space are culturally specific.[4] Ethnographic research reveals not only the multiplicity of sediments of time operating at a certain time and according to their cultural specificity, but also emerging experiences and configurations that point to new formations. Thus, assuming that in contemporary societies we will find several sediments of time and practices of space, I use the notion of transitoriness to conceptualize simultaneously a mode of perceiving time and of organizing practice accordingly that differs from both the cyclical and the linear (or progressive) notions that have been dominant in industrial societies, *and* a mode of perceiving spatial practices that emphasize mobility and circulation instead of the production of fixed places and attachment to them. Transitoriness is an articulation of time-space that is becoming increasingly prevalent.

From Autoconstruction to Transitory Arrangements

Many metropolises around the world have been largely constructed by their residents according to the mode of city making that I have referred to as peripheral urbanization and that is articulated around autoconstruction (Caldeira 2017). This formation is still prevalent across the Global South, but is undergoing significant transformation. Although this is not the place for a full analysis of autoconstruction, it is important to keep it in mind, for three reasons. First, it is a historical reference in relation to which it is possible to discern change and emergence. Second, it clearly embeds a linear perception of time associated with notions of progress and social mobility and thus contrasts the transitory. Third, this perception of time is embedded in the production of space and thus demonstrates the intertwinement of temporal and spatial dimensions.

Under autoconstruction, city residents are agents of urbanization, not simply consumers of spaces developed and regulated by others. They build their houses and their cities in a complex process that involves a certain temporality. It happens step-by-step, according to the resources that residents are able to put together at each moment and over a significant period of time. Each phase involves a great amount of improvisation and bricolage, complex strategies and calculations, plus constant imagination

of what a "nice home" might look like. House transformations demonstrate a slow and continuous process of change and improvement. Over time, houses, streets, infrastructures, and lives end up being substantially modified and improved. Houses and neighborhoods thus become the material embodiment of progress and social ascension.

In interview after interview that I conducted with residents of the peripheries of São Paulo since the late 1970s, and up to several years ago, I invariably heard the same narrative. When people moved to their neighborhood, they reported, it was the bush, and all that existed were dirt roads and a bunch of shacks; but after many years, the city finally arrived. Year after year, people worked on their houses. All their savings and extra time were channeled into the long process of building their houses and making them into better places. Much collective effort was also put into political organizing that forced the state to improve the quality of the infrastructure and the built environment and to provide better services, ranging from schools and clinics to cultural centers. After forty-some years, the results in the areas I worked in are palpable: better, larger, and carefully decorated houses and urbanized neighborhoods. This process fixed people to their spaces in the city's peripheries. Commonly, people who autoconstructed seldom later moved away, but rather circumscribed their everyday lives to their neighborhoods, the place in which their social mobility could be read.

However, this project of materially and spatially embedded social ascension either is becoming more difficult or seems significantly less interesting to a younger generation born in the peripheries but who want to live other lives. The types of housing available to the poor have diversified significantly in the last two decades. This diversification includes options that are both more and less precarious than autoconstruction. If until the 1990s to autoconstruct a house from scratch was the main possibility in São Paulo's peripheries, in recent years several options have emerged: the house became a commodity that can be purchased as a finished good in the market even by low-income residents; a market of low-cost apartments in buildings constructed by large developers has emerged over the last fifteen years and has been growing; the state, in partnership with private developers, has sponsored a substantial program of social housing (*Minha Casa, Minha Vida*, or "My House, My Life"); rental options have increased, especially under the form of subdivisions of enlarged, autoconstructed houses; and land invasions, usually as part of organized movements, have become more common.

In 2018, some residents of São Paulo's peripheries articulated a different narrative. Because they had several options, many young people didn't even

contemplate autoconstruction, a process they considered to have high costs in terms of time, energy, and money. They thus ended up transiting among different possibilities. What seemed to be an increasing number of people decided to rent and therefore moved from place to place, both around the peripheries and sometimes also in central areas of the city. Some people move to a unit in a *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* development, but not uncommonly this is a temporary arrangement as many move back to favelas, for example, to avoid the utilities and condominium fees. People renting may consider joining an organized occupation movement, but this is also a demanding option (as people are required to work on the construction). Some try to buy either a finished house or an apartment, if they can make the down payment and mortgage payments. Frequently people move between these options, circulating around several areas of the city. Thus, for young low-income people to inhabit an enormous city such as São Paulo (population some 12 million) is becoming a practice of repeated dislocations instead of one of direct and strong commitment to a place and a house. People invest a significant amount of effort in each move, but these do not necessarily coalesce into something like a permanent home that can be read as progress, improvement, betterment, or ascension—with the exception of those who purchase an apartment or a house. The multiple dislocations are not necessarily articulated by a dominant project, such as one's urge to become the property owner of an autoconstructed house. The moves are both transitory and horizontal. People have greater spatial mobility and circulation than in the period when autoconstruction was the dominant option, but not necessarily more social mobility. These movements are similar to what AbdouMaliq Simone describes as "parking" in Jakarta, Indonesia.

> In Jakarta, the favorite word now is parking. You know, we need a place to park. I need a place to park my 80-year-old mother. I need a place to park my belongings. It's not about home, it's about parking. And if you're parking you are not really investing in the long term. It doesn't mean that you don't end up staying where you are for a long time, but you also act as if you are not fully "there." So inhabiting becomes something different. It's about your itineraries. It's about arranging short-term stays (Simone 2019, 18).

In sum, the ethnographic record, in São Paulo as well as in Jakarta, indicates that practices and experiences of inhabiting the city, especially among the youth in the peripheries, are no longer necessarily directed by a linear project and no longer restrict them to living in a certain location, but rather embody transitoriness, frequent dislocations, and lateral movements.

New Ways of Living Together

These lateral movements in arranging shelter do not happen in isolation, as they are intrinsically connected to ways of living together. Autoconstruction has been strongly associated with the nuclear family in São Paulo. The diversification of types of housing correlates not only with the emergence of several housing alternatives and the types of available transit among them, but also with the experiment with various types of household arrangements. The nuclear family, comprising a heterosexual couple and their children—the type of household configuration that was dominant in that city until recently and was associated with autoconstruction—is currently a minority arrangement. In 2015 in Brazil in general, only 42 percent of the families were characterized as nuclear, compared to 57.7 percent twenty years earlier.[5] In Jardim das Camélias, a neighborhood in the periphery of São Paulo where I conducted socioeconomic surveys in 1980 and followed up in 2013, the proportion of households formed by a nuclear family dropped from 59.4 percent to 45.9 percent.[6] During the same period, the proportion of households headed by a woman increased from 11.9 percent to 30.8 percent. A recent study revealed that in peripheral neighborhoods in São Paulo, on average half of the women who have children are "single mothers" (that is, they do not live with the fathers of their children), compared to only 17 percent in wealthier neighborhoods.[7] Young people, in particular, are experimenting with new arrangements for living and with ways of having and raising children. This tendency may have been emerging for a while, but young folks are now explicitly articulating the different arrangements as new alternatives.

New modes of living together is a dimension of social life in relation to which the inadequacy of existing data and categories of analysis is especially stark. How can one refer to a group of people (including children) who are not a family but still live together and want to experiment with possibilities of collective living? Demographic and social economic statistics are collected in ways that preclude the visibility of new modes of living together, as they tend not to account for non-heteronormative arrangements. The established categories predetermine the collection of information, whose specificities are overlooked so that they can fit the categories, even when it becomes clear that they don't actually match. The inadequacy of existing categories and their inability to capture new social phenomena became especially evident to me when I tried to analyze the results of the survey I conducted in Jardim das Camélias in 2013 and found out that I

could not classify some 20 percent of the households according to categories usually used by sociodemographic analyses. For example, how should one classify the arrangement formed by two women who are friends and not necessarily a couple and who live together with their children, who are not biologically related but in practice raised as siblings? I ended up grouping all types of nonclassifiable households under the somewhat vague category of "complex arrangements." That became a strong sign of an emerging phenomenon that my current research tries to problematize, document, and understand.

My preliminary analysis indicates that the way in which alternative modes of living have been interpreted is especially problematic. Usually, several of these alternatives and the increase in "single motherhood" are interpreted as signs both of poverty and of the deterioration of the conditions of life in São Paulo's peripheries.[8] They would indicate that people lack the means to live according to desirable heteronormative standards. The ethnographic research I have conducted in those peripheries in 2018, however, directly contradicts this argument. On the one hand, there has not been a deterioration in conditions of life in the peripheries, but rather significant improvement, especially regarding the quality of the housing stock, transportation, and urban infrastructure. On the other hand, what seems to be under way is a profound transformation of the ways in which women are shaping their own lives. They are forging new subjectivities that enhance their autonomy and rejecting established patterns of male dominance and the frequent violence that pervades domestic life.[9] Our preliminary investigations indicate that young women want to live other lives, quite different from the ones of their parents, and especially of their mothers, who worked mostly as domestic servants when they were not housewives. Younger women are educating themselves to participate in a better position in the expanding service sector of the job market. They conceive of motherhood not necessarily as a step into marriage, but rather as a path (even if a difficult one) away from their families of origins. They think of friendship, sisterhood, and participation in organized collectives as new ways of building networks that will allow them more autonomy and engagement in urban life. In our interviews, it also became clear that women are experimenting with their sexuality; several openly discussed their bisexuality. In this sense, these women are reinventing themselves, and their ways of living are changing accordingly. For those women who are reinventing womanhood and motherhood, to autoconstruct or to buy a house is simply out of the question, being not only unaffordable but also

undesirable. They require flexible and transitory arrangements as they experiment with various possibilities of living and of conceiving of their subjectivities, and as the composition of their households changes. If for their parents' generation the house was the core of a collective project, for the younger generation, their projects have other foci. The house becomes only a transitory space, subordinated to other projects.

Rearticulating Gender and Sexuality

Needless to say, changes in women's lives affect patterns of gender relations in general both in a country and in working-class neighborhoods where, until the last generation, the authority of men and their roles as the main family providers were not widely contested. Yet much is still unknown about new articulations of gender roles. Where are the fathers of the children raised by solo mothers living? Do they live with their own single mothers, as rap and other artistic interventions produced in the peripheries suggest? Are many young children in the peripheries in fact members of the second (or even third) generation of children raised with absent fathers? What does this mean in terms of a formation of collective life? Although much is to be discovered, it is evident that this kind of transformation lies at the basis of a great deal of anxiety and insecurity articulated during Brazil's 2018 presidential electoral campaign under the form of attacks against something that the elected president and his allies call *ideologia de gênero* (gender ideology). What this means exactly is never made explicit, but the phrase became the right-wing shortcut to demonize anything associated with women's and LGBTQ+ rights and with other modes of life that diverge from a stereotypical, caricaturized heteronormativity. That this theme was determinant in the electoral campaign and the right-wing victory is a clear indication both of the depth of the transformations and of the anxiety they generate.

Significant transformations in women's lives, including a diversification of options in terms of sexuality, are part of broader changes in articulations of gender and sexuality. Central to them is the role of LGBTQ+ people (the term stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other people"), often organized in collectives, whose presence in the public sphere has increased dramatically. LGBTQ + activism is everywhere, with the nation's several Pride parades attracting millions and activist demands reaching the national congress, which finally approved same-sex marriage

in 2013. If in the past openly LGBTQ+ people in São Paulo were restricted to a few neighborhoods downtown, now they are increasingly present across the city, including throughout the peripheries. But little is known about their daily practices and modes of living together.

Some of the most powerful interviews we conducted in the peripheries in 2018 were with LGBTQ+ people. They explained their living arrangements, but also articulated a performative and malleable conception of gender and sexuality that points to other dimensions of the transitory. Young LGBTQ+ people in the peripheries live in diverse ways, but not necessarily with their partners, who tend to be temporary. A majority live with relatives with whom they have differing types of disclosure about their sexuality and from whom they get different types of support—or opposition. Although they feel that it is becoming possible to disclose their sexuality or gender publicly in the spaces of the peripheries, this is a decision to be made carefully. Thus they consciously perform gender and sexuality differently, depending on the context. They "play" with their gender and sexuality.

Some of the most powerful articulations of this performative approach come from "genderqueer" people we interviewed and who used the expression *bicha cebola* (onion bicha)[10] to characterize themselves.[11] The expression alludes to the ways in which they put themselves together to travel between the peripheries and the central neighborhoods where most of the LGBTQ+ parties and encounters happen. They pay great attention to their looks and spend considerable time, money, and resources to *se montar* (literally "to mount" themselves), that is, to dress up in a feminine register (wigs, nail polishes, makeup, dresses, jewelry, and the like). But they cannot leave peripheral neighborhoods *montadas* (assembled), so they add several layers of clothes to cover up, ranging from hoodies and hats to baggy pants and sweaters. Then, as they move from the peripheries to the center of the city, they peel off the layers and may add others that they carry in their backpacks, so that they arrive at the parties totally *montadas* (assembled). The reverse happens on the way back, when the layers peeled off are put back on. *Bicha cebola* "é a bicha que se desmonta pra se montar" (meaning: "is the *bicha* that disassembles itself in order to assemble itself"), according to Artur Santoro (2019). This expression treats identities as a complex combination of multiple layers and as something people construct in the everyday dynamics of dislocation and circulation around the city. The term reveals both the instability and the flexibility of the construction of gender and sexuality along with people's agency in assembling or disassembling their

identities, as well as in constructing them according to the circumstances, especially their relationships to space. It reveals the transitoriness of each assemblage. The people we interviewed talked at length about their multidimensional lives and selves, depending on contexts—not only the peripheries and city center, but also spaces of work and within their homes. In sum, *bicha cebola* is the opposite of the fixing of an identity; it is about the possibility of *un*-fixing identities, of constructing and performing them, but also retreating from them. Thus *bichas cebolas'* dislocations and experiments are embodiments of transitoriness. The same is true for people who refuse to label their sexuality in one stable way.

Rolês: Moving around and Resignifying the City

The *bichas cebolas'* movements, as they assemble and then disassemble themselves whenever they traverse various spaces of the city, resignify these spaces. As they appropriate areas of the city for different performances—by closing streets for some of their parties, as done by the cultural group Helipa LGBTQ in Sao Paolo; by marking subway and train stations as appropriate spaces for the peeling off of their layers; by establishing some shopping malls and streets as relatively safe for their encounters—transgender people and members of other LGBTQ+ populations simultaneously elaborate their public identities and change the character of space. This resignification/appropriation of urban spaces is transitory, in that it happens especially as practices of circulation and movement, rather than as marking the boundaries of territories. This type of relationship to space is, in fact, common among diverse youth groups in the city and in their practices.

Moving around the city for fun, to mark it transgressively with painted tags, in search of encounters, to join cultural events, or as a form of sociability, were not among the practices of a past generation. Up to the 1990s, young people in the peripheries would leave these spaces to work, but otherwise would largely restrict their movements, leisure, and sociability to their immediate neighborhoods, if not strictly to their streets of residence. Circulation as a dominant mode of experience among the youth in São Paulo's peripheries began to become evident in the 1990s, when hip-hop started to become the main cultural production of these spaces.[12] Nowadays, young people do not want to be limited to their own neighborhoods, and many want to claim the whole city. "A City only exists for those who can move around it" stated a famous graffiti painted in downtown São Paulo in

the late 2000s. The young people who demand to be able to move around the city, who graffiti it and tag its walls and monuments, who skateboard, break dance, practice parkour, motorcycle here and there, go to funk balls and LGBTQ+ events—these folks are transforming their city into a space of mobility, experimentation, pleasure, and also risk (see Caldeira 2012).

It is only fitting, thus, that the argot of young people includes several expressions referring to circulation, the most prominent of them being *rolê*. This term, in Portuguese (not French), is used by various groups of young people in São Paulo with sometimes different meanings, but always to refer to practices of circulation, leisure, and sociability throughout the city. *Rolê* comes from *rolar*, to roll. *Pixadores*, the "Paulista" taggers, say that they will *dar um rolê* (literally, give a roll) when they go out in groups to tag. Rappers use a similar expression to refer to their practice of circulation in search of events and parties. LGBTQ+ people call some of their spaces of sociability, such as parties, events, and balls, "*rolê*." Gatherings of young people hanging out in shopping malls, usually organized via social media, are called *rolezinhos*, meaning small *rolês*. These events, which in fact are typically very large, usually scare both regular consumers of the malls and even the police. Encounters of large numbers of people in street balls or funk balls or sometimes in other types of cultural events are referred to as *fluxos*, or fluxes.

All the *rolê* practices involve movement and minimal attachment to marked territories. Some refer simply to circulation, as in the continuously moving around of skateboarding, motorcycling, and parkour. *Pixadores* also move around intensively not only to imprint all types of spaces with their tags, but also because many of them work as *motoboys*—couriers paid to move all types of goods around the metropolis (Caldeira 2012). Other practices are hosted in temporary spaces, such as the funk balls and some LGBTQ+ gatherings in public spaces: they may happen today in one street or empty lot and tomorrow in another one, or may occur frequently for a while and then vanish. Transitoriness lies at the core of all these practices.

This constant moving around, this non-fixity, has at least two important and sometimes opposite dynamics. One is that it signals a certain relationship to the city: a relationship of exploration, conquest, and possession, even if only temporary. It marks one's refusal to remain restricted to one's neighborhoods in the peripheries and frequently becomes transgressive in its use and marking of spaces in the center. The second dynamic is that the constant dislocation is also a tense response to the stiffening of repression and violence, especially of the police, but also of private security agencies. The more that young people from the peripheries circulate, the greater

that some city residents feel anxiety about the presence of their bodies—predominantly male and black—in their own space, and the more intense the violence that can be waged against them. In fact, at the moment when *rolês* of any kind involve large numbers of young people, they are usually treated as dangerous, as a threat to order, and, not rarely, with repression and violence. Thus, if the *rolês* move from place to place and if young people circulate, it is also to evade violent control. Transitoriness and movement are ways of evading this control, of subverting the gaze to prevent being targeted (Simone 2019, 18), and of transgressing and re-creating spaces of freedom. They are the modes under which those who are relegated to segregated spaces claim other spaces as well as the city itself. It is significant that *rolê* has become a common expression to designate not merely several forms of leisure and circulation, but sometimes also tactics of survival.

Digital Spaces and Multiple Time/Space Formations

Digital platforms constitute crucial spaces where we conduct our lives nowadays. These spaces of flows, to use the expression Manuel Castells (2000 [1996]) coined to analyze them, are associated with experiences of time that differ in significant ways from previous conceptions. This digital time/space configuration is a fundamental articulation of the transitory.

The use of digital platforms is very high in Brazil, especially in urban areas, and even among low-income residents.[13] This use has exploded in recent years and not only has molded everyday interactions but also has had significant political consequences, as the presidential elections of 2018 were disputed on the internet, making "old communication technologies" such as the television basically irrelevant. In São Paulo, around 80 percent of the residents had access to the internet in 2017. The access is unequal, but even in the poorest areas of the city some 70 percent of the residents have access, basically due to several policies of digital inclusion put in place by the municipal government (Wissenbach 2019, 118). This access is almost universal—96 percent—among the younger population (18–34 year old) (NIC.br 2019, 136). Although computers are not widespread in the peripheries of São Paulo, cell phones are. It is via such phones that 85 percent of the low-income Brazilians who access the internet do it daily, and intensively.[14] Telephone land lines have never really arrived at the peripheries. They were bypassed by the cell phones that are now in virtually everybody's hands. While one spends countless hours moving around the city for all possible

reasons in packed public transportation, while one inhabits the territories of the peripheries, while one works in all types of spaces (from factories and offices to atop motorcycles), one also inhabits the space of flows, articulating the most different types of encounters, engaging with strangers in chat rooms, following one's own work schedule and attending to the next delivery, playing games, listening to music, watching films, scrolling through countless WhatsApp group messages, and thus assembling and moving among transitory worlds.

"Space organizes time in the network society," argues Manuel Castells (2000 [1996], 407). For him, "space is the material support for time-sharing social practices" (441). Physical spaces, such as cities, streets, neighborhoods, homes, and so on, are some of the main supports of social practices and thus constitute the "space of places" where we live our everyday lives. Superimposed on them, or parallel to them, and also part of our everydayness, there is the "space of flows"—the space of the internet, a circuit of electronic exchanges whose form is a network clustered in hubs and nodes, which selectively connects places to one another (Castells 2000 [1996], chap. 6). For Castells, the crucial characteristic of the space of flows is to establish an environment with a different, nonlinear logic. It is a spatial context whose logic is based on real-time interaction, no matter where its elements are physically located.

Digital technologies were, of course, not the first ones to allow instantaneous transmission of information regardless of physical location. The telegraph did exactly that, but these two technologies have different logics and became associated with completely different notions of time. Up to the 1840s and before the spread of the telegraph, there were a proliferation of local times. The telegraph allowed the unification and standardization of time on the basis of a time signal transmitted simultaneously from a central point to vast territories.[15] "In 1880 Greenwich time was adopted as the legally enforceable measurement of time throughout Britain and Ireland. Four years later it became the "world standard time" (Morus 2000, 469). In other words, the telegraph supported a centralized, integrated, and unified project: the standardization of time. It brought together nations and enabled empires, in addition of course to serving the reproduction of capital and exploitation of the labor forces that were brought to the schedule of what E. P. Thompson (1967) famously described as time discipline.

The notion of time that the space of flows and digital technologies articulate is quite different. Instead of unification and standardization, digital technologies support the opposite experience of time—its dispersal and

the proliferation of localized and transitory temporal experiences. By design, the internet disperses instead of centering. As is well known, the internet originated in a U.S. Defense Department project during the Cold War as a way of preventing a Soviet takeover or destruction of the American communication system in case of a nuclear war. The internet is not hierarchical, but rather is constituted of dispersed networks of autonomous hubs and nodes that have numerous ways to link up and cannot be controlled by any center (Castells 2000 [1996], 6). The conception of time associated with this techno-spatial architecture represents a radical departure from previous conceptions; Castells coined a nonsensical expression to characterize it—"timeless time."

Castells (2000 [1996], chap. 7) clearly acknowledges that in contemporary societies time is heterogeneous: there is not a single dominant temporality, neither clock time nor biological time (the time of the life cycles), nor the temporality of the space of flows, timeless time (Castells 2000, 499). But he is especially interested in understanding this temporality associated with the space of flows. For this, he anchors the analysis of time in the network society on Leibniz's definition of time and space, according to which "space [is] an order of coexistences as time is an order of successions" (494). Correspondingly, Castells understands time as sequencing, so the perturbation of sequences becomes its denial—timeless time.

> Timeless time . . . occurs when the characteristics of a given context, namely, the informational paradigm and the network society, induce systematic perturbation in the sequential order of phenomena performed in that context. This perturbation may take the form of compressing the occurrence of phenomena, aiming at instantaneity, or else by introducing random discontinuity in the sequence. Elimination of sequencing creates undifferentiated time, which is tantamount to eternity" (Castells 2000, 494).

Virtual reality, hypertext, instantaneous exchanges in global financial transactions—all would come to represent perturbations in the sequential order of phenomena. In this informational society, Castells argues, the space of flows "dissolves time by disordering the sequence of events and making them simultaneous, thus installing society in eternal ephemerality" (497). However, one should ask whether this understanding of time in the network society is the only one possible. It seems clear that contemporary societies are not on their way to dissolve time, but rather to live it in unprecedented ways. Thus, it is important to examine alternative forms of understanding time.

The debate on how to characterize time in the space of flows and in contemporary societies is still unsettled. Several authors have focused on the question of acceleration of time.[16] But Castells's analysis points to other crucial issues that he does not necessarily analyze: simultaneity, lack of synchrony, superimposition of multiple lateral temporalities, dispersal, and the transitory. Sequence and succession are not the only ways to conceive of time. Michel Foucault, whose philosophical work has had as one of its central undertakings the critique of evolutionist and progressivist ways of conceiving time and history, suggests other possibilities, such as the one articulated in "Of Other Spaces," his essay about heterotopia, from 1967: "Time probably appears only as one of the various possible operations of distribution between the elements that are spread out in space" (Foucault 2008 [1967], 15).[17] In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), he develops the notions of distribution and genesis as some of the disciplinary techniques that constitute docile bodies. In sum, though the idea is not to apply Foucault's framework to the study of the network society, his works remind us that time can be conceived in alternative ways—distribution, geneses, laterality—and not necessarily as successions.

But what *are* the experiences of time associated with the space of flows? The internet accustoms us to the possibilities of "real time," the immediate time of interactions online regardless of physical presence or time zone. The space of flows certainly also accustoms us to the transitory. This can happen at different levels. At the most obvious, the space of flows, and especially social media, contains apps in which exchanges and images disappear after a certain time, such as the posts in stories on Instagram and Facebook or the exchanges in SnapChat. At a less-obvious level, most information posted in social media is simply ephemeral: technically, it remains and can be retrieved, but in practice it is displaced as new information gets in and the old is bypassed and moved away from main screens. Additionally, the internet allows not only instantaneous communications, but also juxtapositions. Several things may happen independently or get combined at the same time. Space-time contexts become fragmented and multiplied. One can participate in different chat rooms simultaneously. One can open several tabs or applications on one screen and move from one to the other, shifting conversations, transferring images and sound and other information, and either merging them or simply letting them sit side by side. There are at least two experiences here: one is simultaneity, meaning all that goes on at the same time in one's devices. The other is the superimposition of pieces of information from different sources or contexts. Some of these

juxtapositions may resemble avant-garde collages. However, while these collages are often intended to produce shock, on the screens of digital devices all is possible and surrealism is meaningless. Decontextualization guarantees that "everything goes," more like a pastiche. In fact, the spread and acceptance of fake news may actually be understood as part of these routine online practices of assembling decontextualized images. In sum, the space of flows frustrates ideas of continuity and progress and promotes senses of simultaneity, superimposition, transitoriness, and dispersion.

Koselleck's (2018) analysis, mentioned above, indicates that many sediments of time can be seen in contemporary societies. These sediments interact with each other to produce our multiple temporal experiences. Of course, the rhythms of the cyclical time of the life cycle, of seasons, of weeks and months, constitute some of these layers. Of course, we still operate with standard-time and work-time discipline. Even computers and interactions in the space of flows, such as Zoom meetings, for example, are regulated by standard clock time. But the internet adds other layers of time to standard time and to cyclical time, thus provoking significant transformations in experiences of time. I would argue that the dominant experience of time nowadays—in São Paulo and elsewhere, where digital technologies are ubiquitous—is neither standard time, nor cyclical time, nor network time, but rather the experience of operating with and across these different temporalities as they intersect in the everyday.[18] Although the possibilities of articulation are multiple, transitoriness seems to be one of the main products of these intersections.

Think of a woman interacting in a chat room who has to interrupt the chat to breastfeed her baby. Or of a student attending a class via Zoom in the living room of a house in which other household members are busy in the same room with other tasks. Or of someone simultaneously answering email, navigating the web, and performing manual labor. Young people I talked to in the peripheries of São Paulo keep a constant eye on WhatsApp and social media, while they perform all types of tasks, such as delivering documents or merchandise on their motorcycles, cleaning other people's houses, attending classes, sewing clothes in a neighborhood factory, preparing food in a fast-food restaurant, building a wall in a construction site, or riding the bus to work. Thousands of people ride together on buses and trains to different places, each holding a communication device that keeps them plugged to diverse interactions and time/space configurations disconnected from their commuting experiences. Then when they reach their bus or train stop, they close their devices and enter their boring jobs,

maybe in a call center, a bank, or a delivery outlet. The previous interactions online have vanished. Other interactions will come whenever possible. People check email, text their mothers, arrange a party, pay a bill, all while eating lunch at the established lunch time at the firm for which they work. In sum, one goes in and out of the space of flows while performing various activities framed by other times and spaces. The resulting experience of time is thus of transience and alternation between various framings of time. As central elements inserted in the most varied moments of the everyday, digital technologies intensify senses of fragmentation and transitoriness, of oscillation and lateral movements, and of displacements between spaces and times.

Transitoriness and a New Political Landscape

I have argued that transitoriness is becoming normalized as an organizing logic of the everyday and is thus an important way of articulating different dimensions of lives in the peripheries of São Paulo and elsewhere. Lateral dislocation and the abandonment of notions of progress and ascension, moving between housing options, experimenting with new ways of living together and shaping family relations, assembling and disassembling performances of gender, circulating and resignifying the city, and inhabiting digital space/time configurations—all are practices marked by transitoriness and lateral dislocations. The same could be said about other crucial aspects of social life that I cannot discuss here, such as the transformations in labor that make temporary jobs and improvised arrangements the norm (Ferguson and Li 2018). Transitoriness also marks transformations in the political landscape.

Large mass demonstrations have framed the political landscape in São Paulo since 2013. Following the footsteps of the Arab Spring, the Indignados in Spain, the Occupy movement in more than nine hundred cities around the world, and the Turkish uprising, protests in São Paulo mushroomed into a series of events that brought to the streets of multiple cities around Brazil millions of people addressing a huge spectrum of issues.[19] The main features of these protests are well known by now and include the following: a symbiotic relationship with the internet and social media; the diffused and spontaneous organization through networks; the capacity of attracting thousands of participants in a short period of time; the heterogeneity of the participants, who may or may not form coalitions; a high

participation of young people; and the disregard for established political institutions and their ways of organizing the political, among other features. In so many words, the logic of the transitory shaped deeply the ways in which the protests unfolded. In São Paulo, issues related to the city lay at the core of the protests: their trigger was the proposal of a small increase in the fare for public transportation. But the issues soon became about the right to circulate freely. In fact, "a city only exists for those who can move around it" had been the motto of the movement that started the protests, and of course resonated deeply with all practitioners of *rolês*, primarily cultural producers and young people wishing to move around the city without being the victims of police violence. The protests also resonated deeply with those who for years had been organizing themselves in *coletivos*, or collectives, throughout the city and especially in the peripheries. Collectives are small groups of people who get together around various forms of cultural production, identity-related interests (such as the experiences of Afro-Brazilians, women, and LGBTQ+ people), or anything else, such as creating collective gardens or addressing the needs of a neighborhood.

But the protests also unleashed other forces, equally decentralized and dispersed, but basically reactionary and authoritarian. They coalesced around issues of corruption and so were highly instrumental in the impeachment process of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and three years later in the election of Jair Bolsonaro. The political process that brought Bolsonaro to power is exemplary of a new political landscape. Two issues related to the themes discussed in this chapter are central to this political landscape. First, Bolsonaro is a figure from outside the political landscape, regardless of his history as a federal deputy. He was not a member of a relevant political party and had almost no presence in established spaces of political campaign, such as television and debates among candidates, in which he did not participate. The main media for his campaign were WhatsApp and social media, and he relied significantly on the circulation of fake news. Second, the rancors he and previous protests powerfully articulated included a strong backlash against several of the deep transformations reshaping Brazilian society, such as the remaking of the role of women, their new modes of organizing their lives, and the new practices of LGBTQ + people.

The new political landscape in Brazil is thus marked by a peculiar articulation that exposes the ways in which practices associated with transitoriness have become normalized. On one side, decentered and dispersed formations within networks that sometimes coalesce in public protests

and rely heavily on social media became the mode of political intervention across the political spectrum. They may have started in the spaces that articulate rights discourses and that forge new political identities and spaces of freedom, but they ended up being overtaken by the other side of the political spectrum, erasing the differences between right and left political tactics. On the other side, the right-wing articulates a strong backlash against all the new formations associated with transitoriness, especially the transformations associated with gender roles. Yet they do this by using the possibilities of digital platforms. In fact, the reactionary forces became masters in the use of pastiche, superimpositions, and fake news, thus excelling in the transference of possibilities of time/space formations from digital platforms to people in the streets and to the broader political landscape. Jair Bolsonaro continues to explore the possibilities of the manipulation of social media (he tweets daily, as did ex-president Donald Trump), his family and supporters articulate constant campaigns of fake news, and he continues to vociferate against women, LGBTQ+ people, cultural producers, and a range of others. Bolsonaro does all this while openly supporting a military coup, the use of weapons and torture, the utility of other authoritarian initiatives, and displaying what is recognized as one of the worst attitudes worldwide in relation to the coronavirus pandemic. In a perverse way, Bolsonaro embodies both the possibilities and the worst dangers of a political landscape shaped by transitoriness, but also by the absence of any other powerfully articulated alternative able to deconstruct either the pastiches that he constantly produces or the prejudices he expresses without accountability.

Notes

1. Over the last forty years, I have conducted numerous research projects in the peripheries of São Paulo, mostly by myself but sometimes in collaboration with others, such as Cynthia Sarti in the late 1970s and James Holston since the late 1980s. In this article, I rely on materials from previous research, but especially on data generated in 2018, when I worked with a team of six collaborators: Katia Ramalho Gomes, Danielle Regina de Oliveira, Luiz Paulo Ferreira Santiago, Artur Santoro, Mayara Amaral dos Santos, and Renata Adriana de Sousa. In 2018, I was affiliated with the Fundação Getúlio Vargas and NEV-USP, the Center for the Study of Violence at the University of São Paulo, with a visiting professor fellowship from FAPESP. Fieldwork in the peripheries in 2018 was supported by FTAS, the Fundação Tide Setubal. I

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2. This lack of directionality is what differentiates the transitory from the provisional. The provisional refers to "Of, belonging to, or of the nature of a temporary provision or arrangement; provided or adopted for the time being; supplying the place of something regular, permanent, or final. Also: accepted or used in default of something better; tentative," according to the OED. The provisional thus assumes a directionality, a more-permanent or better referent that will come to replace the tentative and temporary arrangement. The transitory does not assume this directionality.

3. AbdouMaliq Simone has been elaborating similar arguments (2018; 2019; 2020). Simone is one of the collaborators on a project investigating formations of collective life in which I participate, together with Gautam Bhan and Kelly Gillespie. Our dialogue over the years has been important for the formulation of the arguments I develop here.

4. Classical analyses of the cultural specificity of notions of time and space include Evans-Pritchard (1969 [1940]) and Thompson (1967).

5. http://www.ipea.gov.br/retrato/.

6. I have been doing research in Jardim das Camélias since 1978, when it was located in one of the poorest districts of São Paulo, called São Miguel Paulista. By 2013, it was no longer one of the city's poorest.

7. In several neighborhoods in the peripheries, the percentage of "single mothers" runs as high as 60 percent. Source: 2010 census data analyzed by Ibope/Estado, http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/impresso,chance-de-ser-mae-solteira-na-periferia-e-ate-35-vezes-maior-,1030951,0.htm. I use "single mother" (*mãe solteira*) with quotation marks because this is a category in dispute. Many women who opt to have children on their own in São Paulo call themselves *mãe solo*, or solo mother.

8. In fact, the percentage of single mothers is frequently used as an indicator of the level of vulnerability and poverty of neighborhoods, together with data of homicide rates. For example, see Cardia et al. 2003.

9. The pervasiveness of domestic violence in Brazil is clear, and its victims are largely women and children. According to data from IPEA analyzed by Cerqueira and Coelho (2014), countrywide approximately 527,000 rapes or attempted rapes take place each year, of which only about 10 percent are reported to the police. Some 70 percent of the victims of rape are either children younger than 13 (50.7 percent of the total of victims) or adolescents from 14 to 17 (19.4 percent). They are usually victimized inside the home and by members of their own households.

10. The literal (and unsatisfactory) translation would be "onion fag." *Cebola* means onion. *Bicha* is an expression hard to translate and thus I will keep it in Portuguese. The most direct translation is "fag." That is a derogatory word that many gay and transgender people have resignified and use to refer to themselves. If used by others to refer to them, it would be offensive.

11. The interview with a group of transgender people who live in the peripheries and organize large LGBTQ+ parties via social media was conducted by Artur Santoro and myself. Artur has been developing the analysis of LGBTQ+ groups and highlighting the importance of the use of the notion of the performative inspired by the work of Judith Butler to analyze their construction of gender.

12. This mobility is also associated with the fact that public transportation has improved significantly in São Paulo over the last two decades. Although moving around is still very time consuming, the expansion of both subway and train lines has allowed for faster movements. In the past, buses were the almost exclusive mode of transportation, and the lines served the peripheries poorly. Buses have also improved and are complemented by networks of van services. Additionally, large numbers of young people, especially men, own motorcycles.

13. In 2018, Brazil had 126.9 million internet users, or 70 percent of the population. While 92 percent of upper-class Brazilians access the internet, only 48 percent of the low-income classes did so in 2018, but this meant an increase from 30 percent in 2015. https://cetic.br/publicacao/pesquisa-sobre -o-uso-das-tecnologias-de-informacao-e-comunicacao-nos-domicilios -brasileiros-tic-domicilios-2018/.

14. https://cetic.br/publicacao/pesquisa-sobre-o-uso-das-tecnologias-de -informacao-e-comunicacao-nos-domicilios-brasileiros-tic-domicilios -2018/.

15. See Stephens (1989) for the American history of the telegraph and Morus (2000) for the British history.

16. For example, Paul Virilio, David Harvey, Judy Wajcman, Stephen Kern, and John Urry.

17. Interestingly, in this 1967 essay, Foucault also argues that "We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a great life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" (pg. 14).

18. Robert Hassan (2005; 2007) has written a series of works on what he calls, following Barbara Adam, the timescapes of the network society. He characterizes the time of the network society as "asynchronous," since they are multiple and "not synchronized to or sublimated by, the logic of the clock" (2005,

7). My argument is that in everyday experiences we cannot disentangle these different logics of time, as people operate simultaneously with all of them.

19. I have analyzed the 2013 protests in Caldeira (2013). The literature on the protests around the world is vast.

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