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Texture

A key concept for communication geography

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ABSTRACT The article outlines the contours of an emerging sub-field within media and cultural studies – communication geography. It is argued that post-industrial society nurtures a regime of hyperspace-biased communication, which generates spatial ambiguities tied to mobility, convergence and interactivity. These ambiguities call for a spatial turn within media studies – a turn which implies a problematization of the space–communication nexus, through which communication can be understood as the production and becoming of space. Following Henri Lefebvre, the term 'texture' is advanced as a potential cornerstone for the geography of communication. The concept refers to the communicative fabric that mediates between the structural properties of space and the spatial or communicative practices that (re)produce space. Textural analysis holds the potential to go beyond the duality of transmission and ritual views of communication, as well as to take the material geographies of communication into closer consideration.

KEYWORDS *communication, globalization, Innis, Lefebvre, media, mobility, ritual, space*

Modern mass media used to be understood as means for traversing or connecting spaces. Following the rationalistic ideology of modern society, technologies such as radio, telephone and newspapers were reduced to means of transmission. However, the social implications of television and popular culture coincided with and contributed to a general concern with ritual aspects of communication, which also took into account the mediatized structuration of particular spaces as contexts. During the last decade new technological and social changes again have triggered a need for reconsidering the space–communication nexus. Digital information and communication technology (ICT) networks blur the boundaries not only between perceived and/or conceived spatial categories (public–private, local–global, etc.), but also between the processes (material, symbolic and imaginary) that constitute space itself.

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As this article will propose, the ephemeral character of contemporary culture and society calls for a spatial turn in media studies. There is a need for a new epistemological framework which problematizes how communication is producing and becoming space and how space is producing and becoming communication. There are signs that such a turn is already taking place. But no account has yet been formulated of the full potential. This article will argue that the spatial turn may give rise to a new sub-field within cultural studies: communication geography.

The article is divided into three parts. The first part tries to identify the processes and conditions that produce spatial ambiguities, defined in terms of mobility, interactivity and convergence. Following the theoretical heritage of Harold Innis, it argues that post-industrial society nurtures a regime of hyperspace-biased communication. The second part clarifies why and in what way the transmission and ritual views of communication have to be reworked in order to account for the prevalent issues of spatial ambiguity. The third section, revisiting foremost the theories of Henri Lefebvre, introduces the concept of texture as an alternative view of communication. Texture can be defined as the communicative fabric evolving at the intersection of spatial structures and spatial or communicative practices. The concept highlights that the spatial turn must incorporate a material turn as well – a turn towards the conditions and practices (constellations and movements of people and objects) which put communication in (or out of) place, as well as towards the spatial materialities and sensibilities of communication.

The regime of hyperspace-biased communication and its epistemological consequences

In order to gain a historical perspective of the 'newness' of new media in the early 21st century, one can begin with the work of Harold Innis. In *The Bias of Communication* (1951), Innis ventures into an exploration of the relationship between society's predominant means of communication and patterns of knowledge and power. His analyses range from the earliest of civilizations to 20th-century industrial society and revolve around the groundbreaking distinction between time-biased and space-biased media. While the former are marked by heaviness and durability (such as stone), the latter are light and transportable (such as papyrus). Through this distinction, Innis associates the use of different means of communication with different goals which have governed the exercise of sociopolitical power. While the durability of time-biased media has served the ambitions of religious empires in their quest for eternal monopolies of knowledge, typically, space-biased media have served the interests of expansionist military empires.

While it is notoriously difficult to pinpoint any objective distinction between a time-biased and space-biased medium (since the distinction

largely depends upon the social context in which the comparison is relevant), the very conceptualization is good to think. The 'bias of communication' provides a clear notion not only of technological assets, but also of the broader ideological regimes that circumscribe and articulate media as cultural forms (see Williams, 1974).

So, how can we think about post-industrial western or global media culture? In the essay 'A Plea for Time', Innis argues that industrial society overemphasizes spatial concerns, neglecting more enduring social values pertaining to traditions and communion in time. Innis contends that 'the tragedy of modern culture has arisen as inventions in commercialism have destroyed a sense of time' (1991[1951]: 86) and that 'the essence of living in the moment and for the moment is to banish all individual continuity' (1991[1951]: 90). Thus western, industrial society is a society whose ideological superstructure sustains light, space-biased communication: an orientation that saturates social and economic life in its entirety.

> Devices emphasizing rapid turnover of goods, whether technological (for example, in the substitution of buses for street railways), or commercial (for example, in the introduction of pennies to secure newspaper sales and in an emphasis on changing fashions as in the case of motor cars or the publication of books by popular authors), tend to conflict with long-term investment supported by savings voluntary or compulsory, whether insurance or old age pensions. (1991[1951]: 74–5)

There is indeed a conservative tone to these conclusions. Innis builds his forecast on rather sweeping claims regarding the historical deficiencies of societies failing to strike the balance between governments of time and space – claims which might be interpreted as a social nostalgia integral to the experience of high modernity. Nevertheless, it is precisely through such experiences and theoretical conceptions of a 'speeding reality' that we can gain support for Innis's arguments. Later on, a number of theorists have diagnosed the social consequences of new media and transportation technologies in similar ways. For example, Zygmunt Bauman describes post-industrial society in terms of an ongoing shift from solid (heavy) to liquid (light) modernity:

> Duration changes from an asset into a liability; the same may be said about everything bulky, solid and heavy – everything that hinders and restricts the move. Giant industrial plants and corpulent bodies have had their day: once they bore witness to their owners' power and might; now they presage defeat in the next round of acceleration and so signal impotence. Lean body and fitness to move, light dress and sneakers, cellular telephones (invented for the use of the nomad who needs to be 'constantly in touch'), portable or disposable belongings – are the prime cultural tokens of the era of instantaneity. (Bauman, 2000: 128)

Although the very concept of communication is not sufficiently examined here, Bauman's theory points precisely to its increasingly ambiguous

appearance and how it is experienced. The lightness of new ICTs is paralleled by the lightness and flexibility of clothing, belongings, housing and so forth. Work and leisure, production and consumption, are saturated with the ideology of mobility and connectedness, which is essentially a matter of transcending and/or erasing spatial boundaries by means of communication (see also Castells, 2000[1996]; Virilio, 2000[1990]). As Armand Mattelart puts it in his history of the network society, 'the ideology of limitless "communication" ... takes over from the older ideology of limitless progress' (2000[1996]: 120).

If industrial society was a society of space-biased communication, post-industrial society seems to imply an extension of this bias, making space itself a less reliable category. While older theories of media and communication, and in particular the transmission model, presupposed clear boundaries between media producers and audiences, and between texts and contexts, the post-industrial condition makes it clear that space cannot be understood as a mere context or container of communication. Communication constitutes the lived spaces of human beings and threatens simultaneously to destroy those very spaces. As communication becomes more commonly understood and organized in this way – that is, as space – one may speak of a regime of hyperspace-biased communication. Such a regime legitimizes a range of spatial ambiguities which, it is suggested, are tied to three dominant features of 21st-century media society: mobility, convergence and interactivity. These ambiguities also problematize the epistemological framework of media studies.

First, *mobility* involves the intensified flows of both people and media. While traditionally, media research has dealt with media practices occurring in particular contexts, predominantly the domestic sphere (e.g. Lull, 1991; Moores, 1993; Morley, 1986), the saturation of media texts in everyday life implies that a large share of them are consumed on the move. People walking through an ordinary cityscape, or driving their car on a suburban highway, encounter innumerable texts of various kinds, most of them commercial. Although the majority of publicity images are locally fixed, people's own movement creates a sense of streaming or flowing messages. These cultural encounters in public space occur 'involuntarily', one might say. However, through the organized construction of communication spaces the stream itself becomes less random. For example, (sub)urban dwellers' mobility patterns are mapped in order to know where to locate certain kinds of public advertising. Then, as argued by a number of scholars (e.g. Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998) the so-called 'audience studies' paradigm must be revised. Audiences are not as stable as once supposed. And mediation is an increasingly open-ended process.

The picture is complicated further if we combine the mobility of people with the increasingly mobile character of media technologies. The 'mobile medium' is not new in itself; books and magazines, for example, can be advanced as symbols of the travelling cultures of heavy industrialism,

associated with the leisure time on trains, steam liners, etc. However, in the post-industrial age, stationary and immobile media seem increasingly obsolete, like exceptions from the rule. And as technologies become more portable, they also become more closely attached to the moving body – through headsets, earphones, palm pilots, laptops, etc.

The epistemological issues of a 'mobilized' society have been widely acknowledged during the last few years, articulated in attempts to formulate new research approaches, such as 'mobile sociology' (cf. Urry, 1999, 2003). From a media studies viewpoint, mobility raises ambiguities foremost regarding the status of texts and contexts. Through material and/or symbolic mobility a text may be transformed into a context and vice versa – and it is only, if at all, through rigorous phenomenological research that we may grasp these dynamics. Let us, for example, envision individuals as they enter a railway station; speaking into their mobile phones or listening to MP3 music while checking the times and tracks of their departures, rushing onto the trains, looking for their seats, showing their tickets to a conductor and eventually taking up their books, newspapers and laptops in order to engage in work or amusement. How and when are we to distinguish texts from contexts?

Second, the regime of hyperspace-biased communication involves spatial ambiguities in terms of technological and cultural *convergence*. Technological convergence refers to the development of multimedia networks through which technologies are connected and re-articulated as nodes or hubs of digital information flows (cf. Castells, 2000[1996]). It creates not only new modes of production and consumption, but also rapid alterations within, for example, private and public surveillance (cf. Newburn, 2001; Norris et al., 1998). Altogether, this means that particular media technologies and particular forms of representation become difficult to separate from one another. This is also to say that one of the traditional starting points for media studies, the text, is no longer the given that it used to be, absorbed in complex, open-ended intermedia or intertext patterns.

Cultural convergence points to the blurred boundaries between 'media texts' in their traditional sense (newspapers, movies, etc.) and other cultural artefacts. By means of the aestheticized post-industrial logic of production, that is, reflexive accumulation (Lash and Urry, 1994), the contemporary appearance of consumer culture – or better, image culture (Jansson, 2002) – fosters a successive evaporation of the distinctions between symbolic and material artefacts, between 'texts' and 'commodities'. Commodities are produced or designed to carry meanings as 'commodity-signs'. Media messages are (re)presented and circulated as commodities. Thus the boundaries between imaginary, symbolic and material spaces become negotiable and volatile.

Finally, there are ambiguities tied to *interactivity*, referring to the broadening opportunities for interaction at a distance. Thus far, the term

'interactivity' has been associated predominantly with internet-related phenomena, such as multi-user domains (MUDs) and online communities. However, given the process of technological and cultural convergence, it is reasonable to speak of interactivity in a much broader sense. An increasing share of contemporary TV programming, for example, involves interactive components. Within certain genres the interaction between 'audience', 'producers' and 'participants' is even essential for the narrative (as well as for profit-making). The demarcation lines between 'producers' and 'consumers' and between contexts of production and consumption are problematized, which is not to say, however, that they are disappearing. In some instances, such as the web community, producers and consumers are practically the same. But when it comes to, for example, TV productions, there is no doubt who is at the controlling end or receiving end of cultural and economic flows (see Couldry, 2000; Massey, 1991). Although media narratives may seem increasingly negotiable, one cannot overlook the 'inequality in the power of "naming" social reality which the media themselves constitute' (Couldry, 2000: 22).

Reflexive accumulation also sustains interactivity through the mutual reflexivity among commodity producers and consumers. Refined market research, segmentation and image-making on the one hand, and identity-work and lifestyling on the other hand, make way for increasingly customized products. The materialization of commodity signs is 'narrowcast' rather than 'broadcast'; 'personalized' rather than 'massified'. This is not to say that mass production has become altogether obsolete, that consumers are now free to create 'their own' free-floating sign systems; rather, the circuits of cultural classification and materialization are pluralized and less easily predicted. What media research has to deal with, then, is not just symbolic mediations in space, but also the transformations and rearticulations of spaces that communication produces, directly and indirectly, notably in terms of more free-floating spaces of production or consumption.

In conclusion, this article argues that post-industrial society incorporates a regime of hyperspace-biased communication, which (re)produces increasingly ephemeral communication geographies. This means that media studies faces at least three epistemological dilemmas: the ephemerality of texts; the ephemerality of contexts and the ephemerality of text–context relationships. But do we really have to care about texts and contexts?

The ritual view of communication and the identification of a spatial turn in media studies

Who says what to whom, in which channel and with what effect? The classical transmission view of communication expresses a concern with the linear extension of messages in space (e.g. Lasswell, 1948; Schramm, 1963). Due to its functionalistic stance, its full virtues can be reached only through the theoretical isolation of texts and contexts – that is, symbolic,

social and material spaces – in terms of independent variables. Thus the perspective is neither suited to enlighten the complexities of everyday life, nor the composite cultural transformations of society. In addition, the hyperspace-biased character of post-industrial communications asks for a rethinking of the categories 'text' and 'context'.

If we turn to the main competitor of the transmission view, the so-called ritual view of communication, we encounter dilemmas of an entirely different kind. Formulated by James W. Carey in the essay 'A Cultural Approach to Communication' (1989[1975]), the ritual view was founded upon a critique of western, space-biased society. Revitalizing the heritage of pragmatism, the perspective has many common denominators with the analyses of Harold Innis. According to Carey (1989[1975]), ever since the onset of the age of exploration and discovery, western societies in general and American society in particular, have epitomized a view of communication as spatial transmission. This bias constitutes a social structure through which the older, religiously grounded view of communication as 'sharing', 'participation' and 'communion' has been underplayed in western thought. Carey asks for a revision, that is, a renewed interest in communication in time:

> A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs. (1989[1975]: 18)

However, what must be underscored is that Carey never goes so far as to argue that the ritual view is to replace the transmission view:

> Neither of these counterposed views of communication necessarily denies what the other affirms. A ritual view does not exclude the processes of information transmission or attitude change. It merely contends that one cannot understand that these processes aright except insofar as they are cast within an essentially ritualistic view of communication and social order. Similarly, even writers indissolubly wedded to the transmission view of communication must include some notion, such as Malinowski's phatic communion, to attest however tardily to *the place of ritual action in social life*. (1989[1975]: 22; emphasis added)

Although the ritual view involves a critique of space-biased communication and ideology, the perspective is not indifferent to questions of space – quite the opposite. The cultural turn towards 'ritual action in social life' (also inspired by Raymond Williams' (1980[1961]) writings on culture and communication as common knowledge and experience) is also a turn towards the meanings of place and the places of meaning, which are continually shared through communication. It is, we may summarize, a turn from text to context.

From this follow two epistemological implications. First, the particular acts of writing (encoding) and reading (decoding) become secondary to the sociocultural contexts and their history, in which communication

takes place. The ritual view stresses broad cultural patterns as they are reproduced in contexts rather than the meanings of particular texts. Second, the context of production is no longer seen as the opposite of the context of consumption; places of encoding are not the antipodes of places of decoding. Since the focus is upon meaning circulation and reproduction over time, encoding or decoding processes are immersed in broader structures of historical continuity.

In effect, from a ritual perspective, the ephemerality of texts, the ephemerality of contexts and the ephemerality of text–context relationships are no longer significant epistemological dilemmas. Accordingly, many studies of media rituals have overlooked, or failed to provide an understanding of, how communication in itself produces spatial ambiguities, especially through processes that are not to be understood as rituals, and how spatial ambiguities, in turn, affect communication (whether conceived of as 'trans-mission' or 'ritual'). For example, David Morley's epistemological shift from *The 'Nationwide' Audience. Structure and Decoding* (1980), a reception study of TV programming, to *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure* (1986), which was based on longer interviews dealing with the mediatized patterns of domestic life in British working-class households, involved a reconsideration of media in space. But it did not problematize the boundaries of this (domestic) space, neither how the interplay between material, symbolic and imaginative mediations might have altered its constitution. The same thing can be said about a majority of the ethnographically-oriented audience studies from the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Gauntlett and Hill, 1999; Silverstone and Hirsch, 1992). Therefore, the 'contextual turn' must not be confused with the later spatial turn. The contextuality of communication is not the same thing as the spatiality of communication.

While Carey had stated in the 1970s that the ritual view could not provide the final solution to communication as social phenomenon, there is no doubt that his arguments have been used as weapons in the paradigmatic battle between 'functionalists' and 'culturalists'. So, then, could a deepened dialogue between these two strands solve the dilemmas of hyperspace-biased communication? Indeed, triangulation leads to a broader understanding of media in time and space. But still, combining the transmission view and ritual view does not eliminate the problems associated with the former's predisposition to disentangle distinct texts and contexts and the latter's underestimation of spatial dynamics related to 'non-ritual' processes. A third way is needed, and it would appear that such a perspective is about to take form.

The spatial turn in media studies must be understood partly as a response to the regime of hyperspace-biased communication itself, involving more specific changes to the media landscape such as the development from terrestrial to satellite television; from stationary to mobile telephones; from bulky office computers to networked laptops. It has been influenced

also by theoretical developments taking place outside the discipline itself. For example, in *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour* (1985) the social psychologist Joshua Meyrowitz combined the medium theories of Innis and McLuhan with Erving Goffman's interactionism, asserting that electronic media not only changed people's perceptions of space or place, but also contributed to the alteration of social roles and communities. From a more macroscopic viewpoint, in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990) the geographer David Harvey introduced the concept of time–space compression as a means for grasping how late 20th-century communications contributed to perceptions of a shrinking world and blurred geopolitical boundaries. Within the discipline of media studies, a broader concern with spatiality can be discerned from the mid-1990s onwards. The nature of the reorientation can be grasped, for example, through the work of David Morley, who published the books *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (with Kevin Robins) in 1995 and *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* in 2000. While *Spaces of Identity* is concerned with the new cultural geographies of Europe in an era of global media and political integration, *Home Territories* can be regarded as a more direct continuation of *Family Television.* It problematizes the concepts of home or homelessness, household and family. Surveying a vast range of empirical material from around the world, Morley moves from the domestic spaces of the British working class to the open-ended identities of 'cosmopolitan' and diasporic communities. Space is seen as a negotiable, (re)mediated structure in which the interplay between imaginary, symbolic and material dimensions saturates identity work.

Home Territories is in many ways significant for a broader epistemological trend, through which both the spatiality of media practices and flows and the mediality of space are problematized. Two other examples are Nick Couldry's *The Place of Media Power: Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age* (2000), which focuses upon the experiences of people who have themselves entered the scenes of mediation (as 'witnesses' or 'pilgrims'), and Anna McCarthy's *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Spaces* (2001), which explores the integration and use of television in public spaces. Integral to this trend is also a development towards interdisciplinary work. The distance between anthropologists, sociologists, geographers and communication scholars is decreasing, which is obvious in anthologies such as the anthropologically grounded *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* (Ginsburg et al., 2002) and the interdisciplinary collections *Virtual Geographies: Bodies, Space and Relations* (Crang et al., 1999) and *MediaSpace: Place, Scale and Culture in a Media Age* (Couldry and McCarthy, 2004).

MediaSpace must also be advanced as the most promising attempt thus far to delineate the contours of a spatial theory of communication – a reorientation which would involve the ambition to integrate media

studies and geography. In the introductory chapter Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy outline *MediaSpace* as a conceptual realm, discerning five analytical levels ranging from the study of 'media representations' to 'how media-caused entanglements of scale are variously experienced and understood in particular places' (2004: 5, 8). This is a valuable systematization. However, what is not highlighted is the new agenda that spatial theory might bring to media studies. *MediaSpace* does not only demarcate a new conceptual realm; it anticipates an emerging sub-field within media and cultural studies: communication geography. The next section will advance the term 'texture' as an epistemological keystone for such a field.

Textural analysis and the re-emergence of materialism in communication theory

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1961) presents a vivid example of the street as a scene. The example comes from 'her own' street in New York, Hudson Street, and illustrates the regularities and ritual character of everyday life in a public setting. The morning rituals are easy to observe: the hairdresser puts out his chair on the pavement. A Mr Goldstein arranges the coils of wire, which proclaims that the hardware store is now open. Schoolchildren flow in different directions on their way to different schools. Well-dressed men and women appear from the side streets heading for the bus stop, the subway or catching a taxi, which miraculously appears at the right moment. Jacobs describes these movements and interactions, which have been quite stable for more than 10 years, in terms of an established and non-random street ballet – a metaphor related to Erving Goffman's (1959) famous notion of social life as performance. In the third chapter Jacobs also tells the story of Mr Joe Cornacchia, who is not only a shopkeeper but also a 'key-keeper', which means that the locals turn in their apartment keys to him if they are expecting visitors while away from home. This intermediary function between private and public, which makes Mr Joe a 'public character' and his shop a social node, is based on trust and an unspoken agreement of integrity. Jacobs' overarching point is that the material–functional spatiality of a city determines not only movements, but also public life, that is communication.

The point here is that inasmuch as Jacobs' observations deal with scenes, rituals, performances and informal networks, they also deal with *texture* – the communicative fabric of space. Jacobs' descriptions show, very much in line with Goffman's (1959) theories of regionalization, that:

1. spatial and communicative practices within any given setting are structured according to pre-existing spatial arrangements and resources, as well as according to temporal regularities (most often of a cyclic character);

2. material and symbolic mediations in a particular space tend to follow formal and informal rules pertaining to that particular space; and
3. while communicative practices hold a spatializing potential, be it material, sensory or merely representational, spatial practices (localizations, movements) hold a communicative potential.

The patterns of spatial or communicative practices ('performances') and flows that emerge according to the structure of resources and rules ('scene' or 'stage') and which also (re)produce the same structural characteristics, establish a meaningful and mediating texture. The term 'texture' derives from the Latin *textere*, meaning 'to weave' and refers to both the thing woven (textile) and the feel of the weave (texture) (Adams et al., 2001). Texture thus helps us get past the sense of space as either 'container', or 'text'. It allows us to conceive of space in general and mediatized space in particular in terms of a communicative fullness or density, without having to imagine any kind of 'essence' of space. Texture captures the ongoing process of communication producing and becoming space, and space producing and becoming communication.

As proposed by Jacobs' text, texture can be observed and sensed. However, this is not to say that texture is 'objectively' definable. Rather, the sensing and appropriation of texture is guided by the imaginative structures of the lifeworld, formed through lived experience (see Schutz and Luckmann, 1973). Textural knowledge is a precondition for (inter)actions in regions across space through which textures are also (re)produced. This means that space is both produced and understood through texture, that is, through a spatial materialization of culture.

How then can we study textures, and why? Any deeper understanding of texture must depart from the Geertzian ideal of 'thick description'. This is not only a matter of recording and mapping phenomena such as Jacobs' 'street ballet'. Textural analysis is above all about unveiling the meaningful spatial structures and manuscripts that enable these performances, which in turn contribute to the texturation of space:

> Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour. (Geertz, 1973: 10)

Regarded as a working out of sociocultural manuscripts, texture (through texturation) is not only a mediator between material, symbolic and imaginative realms of space. It is also, in a way similar to Giddens' (1984) notion of structuration, a mediator between spatial structure and communicative agency; between regularities (shaped behaviour; rituals) and incoherencies; between the past and the becoming. Hence, the analysis of texture does not belong to any exclusive domain of communication studies. Rather, the analysis of texture has its foundation in social and

cultural theory. But at the same time, texture can be advanced as a key concept for the emerging field of communication geography. Textural analysis deals explicitly with the space–communication nexus: how is communication producing and becoming space, and how is space producing and becoming communication?

Following this reorientation we may view the epistemological dilemmas of hyperspace-biased communication from a new perspective. Approaching communication as 'spatial production and becoming' does not imply that we now have a method for defining or isolating clear-cut texts and contexts – the ambition of the transmission view. Neither is it a strategy for sidestepping the very question of (vanishing) texts and contexts – the consequence of a strict ritual view. Approaching communication as 'spatial production and becoming' implies that we can interpret the ambiguities of texts and contexts in terms of *texturation*. In other words, textural analysis is not just a perspective in its own right; it can provide also a bridge between the transmission view and ritual view.

On the one hand, texture provides a tool for understanding the relationship between spatial transformations and communicative processes, which in turn sets the stage for analyses of 'texts' and 'contexts'. Investigations of textural alterations, such as the introduction of new surveillance technologies in public spaces, can create a backdrop for more confined studies of 'transmissions', 'receptions' and 'effects'. On the other hand, since texture embodies the sediments of past spatial and communicative practices, it enables analyses of the historicity, or the ritual character, of a spatial structure. For example, Jacobs' description of Hudson Street bears witness to a texture with strong historical continuity: a texture closely tied to spatial structure.

The notion of textural historicity also brings us to Henri Lefebvre's (1991[1974]) theory of spatial production, which until recently has been overlooked within communication studies. Its foundation is a triadic interplay between spatial practices, representations of space and spaces of representation (or representational space). Spatial practices refer to the activities and material conditions that prevail in a particular space and define its social nature. Representations of space are symbolic mediations, such as maps and drawings, which show space as it was, as it is, or (perhaps most importantly) as it could be. Representational space refers to the realm of imagination and experience, that is, the myths, ideologies and pre-understandings through which social subjects come to understand space and its representations. It is striking how neatly the term 'texture' finds its way into this framework:

> Paths are more important than the traffic they bear, because they are what endures in the form of the reticular patterns left by animals, both wild and domestic and by people (in and around the houses of a village or small town, as in the town's immediate environs). Always distinct and clearly indicated, such traces embody the 'values' assigned to particular routes: danger, safety,

> waiting, promise. This graphic aspect, which was obviously not apparent to the original 'actors' but which becomes quite clear with the aid of modern-day cartography, has more in common with a spider's web than with a drawing or plan. Could it be called a text, or a message? Possibly, but the analogy would serve no particularly useful purpose and it would make more sense to speak of texture rather than of texts in this connection … Time and space are not separable within a texture so conceived: space implies time and vice versa. (1991[1974]: 118)

Lefebvre's example stresses that textures are produced not only in space but also in time. Studying texture is not to study random occasions of spatial and communicative practice, although such may be significant for textural change and rupture, but the dominant paths and patterns that are (re)produced through the repetition of practices within a more durable spatial structure. The unveiling of such scripted patterns articulates textural historicity and provides a hermeneutic platform for closer analyses of the negotiated character of particular communicative situations. From this follow two important points.

First, texture must be understood as a site of ideological reproduction and negotiation. Since texture is 'informed by effective knowledge and ideology' (1991[1974]: 42), it also embodies and expresses competing notions of how space and communication are to be organized in society. As we have seen, all such ideological patterns are inherited through historical knowledge, myths and manuscripts, i.e. through representational space. In this connection Lefebvre's (1991[1974]) discussion of how the trialectic of spatial production has taken on different shapes under different historical regimes provides a fascinating parallel to Innis' notion of the ideological bias of communication. While the textural historicity of space enables certain spatial and communicative practices (for certain groups), it restrains and sanctions others. This does not mean that subjects are imprisoned by textures. But they can alter only slowly and to a limited extent (sometimes through subversive and revolutionary practices) the textural properties of any given space or place. According to Lefebvre:

> [T]he *texture* of space affords opportunities not only to social acts with no particular place in it and no particular link with it, but also to a spatial practice that it does indeed determine, namely its collective and individual use: a sequence of acts which embody a signifying practice even if they cannot be reduced to such a practice. (1991[1974]: 57; emphasis in original)

In spite of the relative durability of textures, the regime of hyperspace-biased communication implies a historical shift – a textural revolution similar to the one imposed by industrialism. This revolution saturates both private and public spaces, both material structures and symbolic interaction. Paul Virilio, for example, argues that the '*audiovisual speed* [of new media] will at last be for our interior domestic architecture what *automotive speed* was already for the architecture of the city' (2000[1990]: 22;

emphasis in original). But hyperspace-biased communication also changes the city. What has happened to the texture of Hudson Street since the 1960s? New technologies, whether integrated in space or carried by people through space, not only enable new forms of communicative practices but also impose the adjustment of spatial practices according to the anticipated presence and influence of new means of communication. People expect others to carry mobile phones (switched on or off, depending on the region); behaviour is regulated according to the presence of surveillance technology, and so forth. Ideology operates by means of textural taken-for-grantedness.

This seems to confirm Marshall McLuhan's (1964; see also 1961) classical statement that 'the medium is the message' – that 'the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale, pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs' (1964: 8). However, we must not overlook the fact that new technologies and their implementations are fostered by ideologies of communication, which in turn are tied to other ideological structures in society. For example, according to several commentators, the expansion of closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance in public spaces has occurred in symbiosis with the proliferation of private security initiatives and 'populist crime control politics' (Newburn, 2001: 843). Nevertheless, while such ideological regimes work towards textural uniformity, their social and technological imperatives can never abolish older patterns altogether, but are negotiated across space according to the patterns of textural historicity of particular locations. Local history and tradition may even function as the groundwork for the formulation of alternative textures, such as the 'Slow Food' or 'Slow City' movements.

Second, Lefebvre's (1991[1974]) theory stresses the inseparability of spatial and communicative practices. A conversation between two persons on a bus not only produces texture by means of representing space through speech acts. The conversation is also fundamental to texture inasmuch as it is taking place at a particular location and in a particular way, which in turn obeys (or disobeys) the communicative rules and resources of the particular region. As Jo Tacchi (1998) argues in a discussion of 'radio texture', communication produces and becomes space, by way of texture, in a very material sense. Similarly, Lefebvre stresses that texture (as opposed to text) is more than a representation of space: 'It has more in common with a spider's web than with a drawing or plan' (1991[1974]: 118). While this condition could be seen on a very fundamental level in Jacobs' picture of urban life, its relevance has been accentuated through the regime of hyperspace-biased communication and the social significance of mobility, convergence and interactivity. However, this is not an obstacle for textural analysis, since the very objective of such an analysis is to decipher the integrated spatial patterns that arise within a region (or between regions) from spatial as well as communicative practices.

From a media studies perspective, then, the spatial turn must include a material turn. What is more, the mediatization of communication in itself accentuates the need to study the material geographies that media generate and which, in turn, make communication possible. These are foremost the structures established for the distribution and management of media texts and technologies. As argued in the aforementioned collection *MediaSpace* (Couldry and McCarthy, 2004), the 'annihilation of space/time logic' must be contested. As Lisa Parks puts it in her essay 'Kinetic Screens: Epistemologies of Movement at the Interface', this logic has 'served a fantasy of digital nomadism that imagines the web navigator is able to move freely, change identities at will and travel the world without restriction' (2004: 38). Parks argues that cultural inquiry must pay closer attention to the sociomaterial geographies of communication that interactive mobility and nomadism take for granted: that is, the 'real' places of the interface. One such geography or texture could be grasped by means of mapping the actual flows of information that web navigation generates. Another, and socially much more explosive texture, is found in the socio-material environments created at the 'endpoints' of the digital information circuits. One such endpoint is the townscapes found in developing countries, where people make a living out of breaking down and burning imported computers. Here, Parks argues, 'wires from the West's obsolete computers becomes the earth's ground floor and again, as machines are disassembled, it is impossible to separate the village topography from the computer's insides' (2004: 50).

Park's critique underscores that communication geography must provide a corrective to the commonplace spatial fascination attached to sociological theories of liquidity and decentred networks of global control. The argument in this article is that textural analysis provides such a corrective. While not ignoring the expansion of hyperspace-biased communication, textural analysis may grasp the material underpinnings and social locations of issues such as mobility, convergence and interactivity, as well as the seemingly 'placeless' power geometries encompassing informational society.

Conclusion

This article has tried to outline the contours of an emerging sub-field within media and cultural studies: communication geography. The ephemeral character of post-industrial society, reproduced through what this article (following Innis) has called the regime of hyperspace-biased communication, incorporates spatial ambiguities tied to mobility, convergence and interactivity. These ambiguities, in turn, undermine the status of many basic concepts, such as text and context. The regime of hyperspace-biased communication calls for, and has to some extent resulted in, a spatial turn within media and communication studies, which implies a consideration

of both the mediality of space and the spatiality of media practices and flows. Such a perspective, which defines communication geography, can be based only on a combination of spatial theory and communication theory. Following Lefebvre, this article has introduced the term 'texture' as a key concept. The concept refers to the spatial fabric of communicative processes, which mediate between the structural properties of space and the spatial or communicative practices that (re)produce space. Texture allows us to consider communication as the production and becoming of space and vice versa. It opens up a new possibility of overcoming the duality of the transmission and ritual views of communication, as well as of resolving the often-neglected interplay between the material, symbolic and imaginary aspects of spatial production.

Given the communicational and spatial complexity of post-industrial society, it makes sense to believe that communication geography will be established soon as a semi-autonomous field within the broader terrain of cultural studies, manifested foremost through collaborations between geographers and media researchers. The new sub-field also may be closely related to other expanding areas of research such as urban studies, tourism studies, visual (culture) studies and the study of material and consumer culture. Moreover, given the 'material turn' discussed in this article, textural analysis sustains a broadened view of communication, taking into account thematic approaches such as material and virtual design, architecture urban planning, etc. Even within the prevailing regime of hyperspace-biased communication, there are, as Lefebvre puts it, projects 'embedded in a spatial context and a texture which call for "representations" that will not vanish into the symbolic or imaginary realms' (1991[1974]: 42). Such material projects provide the underpinning for 'liquidity' itself.

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