# FRAME OF NEW NOMAD

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The nomad is regularly invoked as a metaphor for our present technologically mediated mobile lifestyles and identities | The nomad reached zenith with the advent of digital media technologies | Understanding the influence of mobile media on space, time, and place, social relations, and identity in terms of nomadism is attractive and seems almost instinctively apt. | 'digital nomadism' [a] as an empirical claim; [b] as a theoretical construct; [c] and for its neglect of political dimensions of mobility. I why is the nomad such an attractive metaphor? From the outset we must differentiate between what is called 'nomad thought', and the use of nomadism in a literal and/or metaphorical sense to theorize an empirical reality. The first adopt a mode of thinking about postmodern subjectivities and identities that seeks to disengage itself from earlier conceptions of identities as fixed, authentic, and rooted. The second use actual nomadism as an exemplary way of life in order to theorize the influence of (mobile) media technologies on social phenomena.
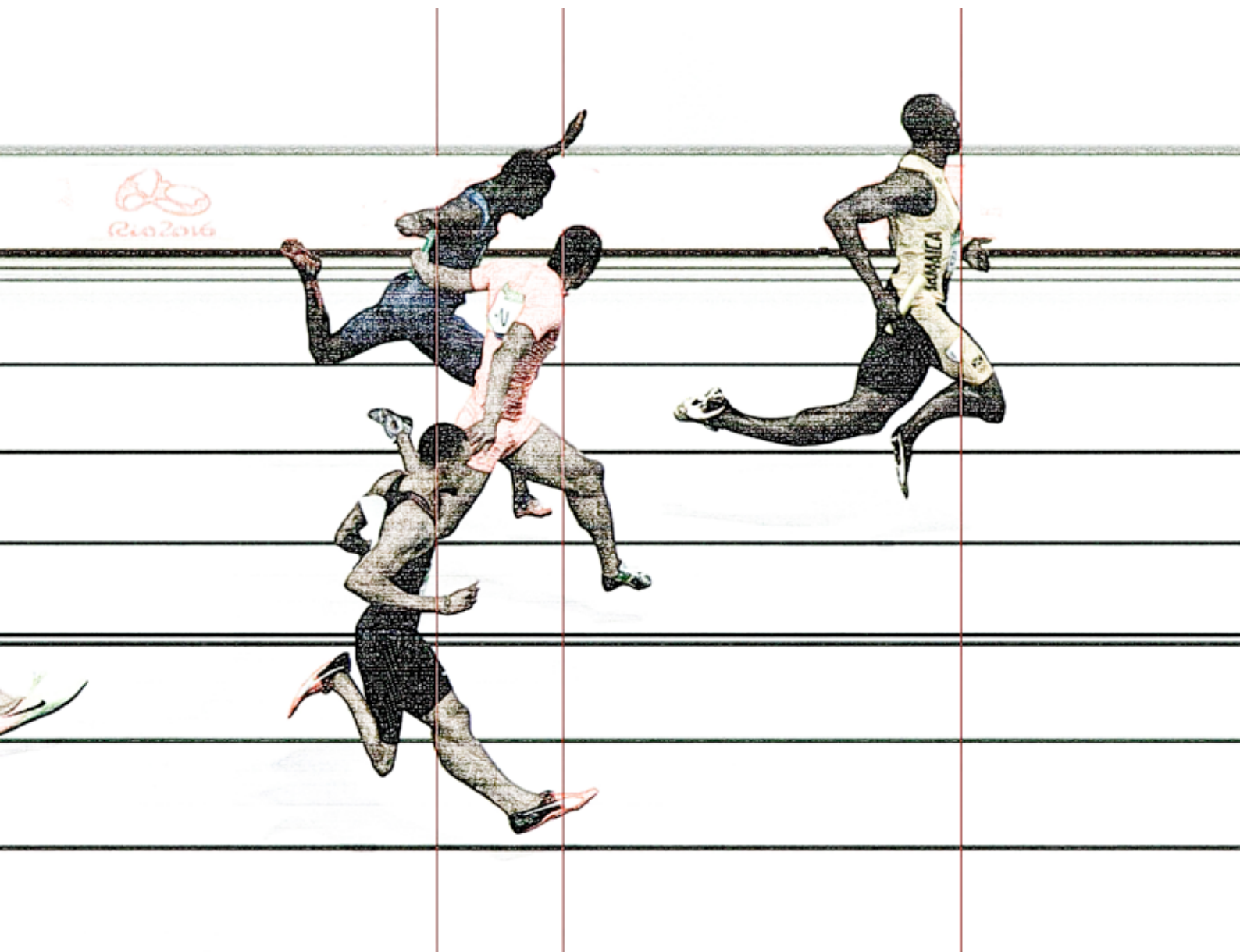
⌗ NEO-NOMADISM | DIGITAL NOMADISM | ELECTRONOMADICS | INFORMATION-GATHERER | CENTRIFUGAL SPATIAL TRAJECTORIES | DISPLACEMENT _ REFUGEES | MOBILITY – SEDENTARY | EXILE, DIASPORA AND NOMADISM | HOME – MOBILITY – HOME ON MOVE | TRANSNATIONAL – TRANSMIGRATIVE | COMMUTERS | MOBILE EMPLOYMENT | CLANDESTINE EMPLOYMENT | ILLICIT WORK | DAILY ACROSSING NATIONAL/LOCAL BORDERS | MOBILE MEDIA AS AN EXTERNAL MEMORY | IMMATERIALISATION OF THE PHYSICAL MEMORY AND PERSONALITY IN FAVOR OF MOBILITY | SPATIO-TEMPORAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES SHAPE SUBJECTIVITY AND IDENTITY | TECHNO-BEDOUINS | LOST BODY | MOVEMENT WITHOUT MOVING | …

>information-gatherer: in this role, "electronic man is no less a nomad than his paleolithic ancestors" (McLuhan, 1994).

>media theorist Joshua Meyrowitz called us **"hunter-gatherers of an information age"** (Meyrowitz, 1985)

> Paul Du Gay described how the Sony Walkman was promoted as an indispensable possession for the sophisticated young **"urban nomad",** that "self-sufficient urban voyager, ready for all weathers and all circumstances and moving through the city within a self-enclosed and self-imposed bubble of sound" (Du Gay, 1997)

> **"Digital Nomad"** Makimoto and Manners predicted that portable digital technologies will usher in a "New Nomadic Age" (Makimoto & Manners, 1997)

> MIT professor in architecture and media arts & sciences William Mitchell coined the term **"electronomadics"** to describe people in a world in which bits and atoms collide. Individuals increasingly inhabit externalized wireless networks as a shield or fabric that envelops the body, just like **Aborigines** who carry very little and live of what the natural infrastructure provides (Mitchell, 2003).

> Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman argued "we are witnessing **the revenge of nomadism** over the principle of territoriality and settlement" in our present "fluid stage of modernity" in which "the settled majority is ruled by the nomadic and extraterritorial elite" (Bauman, 2000).

> On a more critical level, geographer Tim Cresswell noted that "recently, ways of thinking that emphasize mobility and flow over stasis and attachment have come to the fore. As the world has appeared to become more mobile, so thinking about the world has become **nomad thought**" (Cresswell, 2006).

> Communications researcher David Morley wrote that theories of transformations in transport and communications networks have led to often **romanticized accounts of nomadology** (Morley, 2000).

> John Durham Peters established that "the **nomad** is explicitly a **hero of postmodernist thinking**" (Peters, 1999).

> Unlike **exile and diaspora, nomadism** dispenses altogether with the idea of a **fixed home** or **center.** Whereas exile often occurs in relation to some looming authority figure who wields power over life and death, nomadism can involve active defiance of or furtive avoidance of the sedentary authority of state and society (often to the peril of actual nomadic societies). If **diaspora** suggests a **geographically dispersed network,** the **concept of nomadism** suggests a **face-to-face community,** usually linked by ties of kinship stemming from a real or imagined common ancestor, that travels as a unit. [...] For nomads, home is always mobile. Hence there is a subtle doubleness here: being at home everywhere, but lacking any fixed ground. (Peters, 1999)

>Deleuze and Guattari are the founders and main proponents of **'nomad thought'** or **'nomadology'** (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). They extensively dwell upon characteristics of nomadic life. Yet it is not their aim to claim that we have become like nomads. Instead they oppose - in their unfathomable idiom - the **'nomadic war machine'** to the centralized sedentary state in order to liberate thinking about identity itself. The nomad is invoked to overcome sedentary thinking about subjects and identities as essentialized and fixed being. Sedentary thinking posits individual subjects who, paradoxically, cannot exist as truly different in itself but only as the expression of otherness: the state, the territory, universal truth. Deleuze and Guattari develop a way of thinking about **nomadic subjectivity** that has no permanent or rooted essence. This nomadic subject is developed through ongoing becoming along **'rhizomatic'** centrifugal spatial trajectories, as part of temporary "packs". The nomad's relation with technologies is not the traditional subject versus object but composed of man-machine assemblages. Interestingly, this nomad is not the hypermobile person we like to recognize in contemporary road warriors, portable gadget freaks, or global migrants. In fact Deleuze and Guattari assert that the nomad is not even character-

ized by movement in the sense of displacement. That would make mobility always relative to sedentary territories, and subjectivity subordinate to fixed and stable identities.

> Rosi Braidotti - conceptualizes **"neo-nomadism"** as an **"ideal-type of postidentitarian mobility"** in order to investigate "the cultural effects of hypermobility on self, identity and sociality" among Ibiza party-goers (D'Andrea, 2006).

Braidotti uses the notion of **'nomadic subjectivity'** in thinking about identities **"to act as a permanent deconstruction of Euro-centric phallo-logocentrism".** Nomadic subjectivity posits the possibility of **simultaneous and multi-layered identities.** Nomadic subjectivities are tied to specific locations and situations and acknowledge that differences matter. Although her use of the nomad is similar to Deleuze and Guattari, Braidotti pre-dates the use of nomadism in the search for transformative thinking about identities in feminist long before they philosophized it. She explicitly acknowledges that this nomad is a non-existent mythical figure, a political fiction, that enables her to think through and move across established categories based on sedentary notions of identity. Contrary to the migrant and the exile, whose identities are tied to home territories, nomadic subjectivity relinquishes and deconstructs any sense of fixed identity (Braidotti, 1998).

> The duality of distance versus nearness in Romantic thought: **suffering from permanent homesickness and the desire to be at home everywhere** [Novalis Peters]

> The early modern urban archetype of the passionate anti-blasé flâneur: **"To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home;** to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world" (Baudelaire, 1964).

> "The ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable". The flâneur's identity is at home everywhere corresponds with nomadism. **Exile** "locates the home in a homeland that is distant and for the time

being unapproachable". Nomadism, by contrast, "denies the dream of a homeland, with the result that home, being portable, is available everywhere". When extended to debates about identity, "exile goes together with notions of a primordial identity and nomadism with constructed identity" (Peters, 1999).

> In the **exile trope**, people are alienated from their cultural sources since they are removed from their primary home. They are **permanently homeless** in their nostalgia for a home that always recedes behind the spatio-temporal horizon of elsewhere and in another time. In the **nomad trope,** any claim of a fixed identity (and its loss) is considered illusory since there is no such thing as a territorial home. The **nomadic subject** is liberated from homesickness. His mobility is not a traumatic rupture from the 'Heimat' but signifies a permanent becoming.

> **Mobile media** increasingly act as an **external memory.** Instead of memorizing internally, we write away our appointments, contacts, and personal memories of events to our external devices in the form of notes, photos, tags, and videos. We always carry this external memory with us, or otherwise can access this external memory via semi-permanent connections to various online networks and external storage facilities. The question here is: what does that mean for our ability to both remember and forget, and consequently for our identity as narrative?

> Chroniqueur of early modern urban life Walter Benjamin similarly points to this theme of **homelessness** and distancing in the construction of modern identities through the gaze: "For the first time, with Baudelaire, Paris becomes the subject of lyric poetry. This poetry is no hymn to the homeland; rather, the gaze of the allegorist, as it falls on the city, is the gaze of the alienated man. It is the gaze of the flaneur, whose way of life still conceals behind a mitigating nimbus the coming desolation of the big-city dweller. **The flaneur** still stands on the threshold - of the metropolis as of the middle class. Neither has him in its power yet. In neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd" (Benjamin, Jennings, Doherty, Levin, & Jephcott, 2008)

> The distributed accessibility of external services and storage from anywhere is also called **'cloud computing'**. We shall see that similar themes recur here. Leopoldina Fortunati uses the term **"nomadic intimacy"** to describe how people in public situations use their mobile phones to interact with people they already know ["chosen socialness"] rather than interacting with strangers who are physically present ["chance socialness"[(Fortunati, 2002).

> Our sense of **being part of social groups** is no longer based on belonging to fixed places but increasingly about belonging to **communicative networks.** As a consequence, people tend to suffer less from nostalgia, the sense of loss of one's own relationship with 'sacred' places like home, and familiar territory. "So, the use of the mobile phone ends up by reinforcing profane space, constructing a space without addresses, without precise localizations, playing down the specifically geographical and anagraphical aspect. Last of all, the use of the telephone, and especially of the mobile phone, ends up by attenuating the social inertia given by the home's being immobile in space, to the point that the mobile phone in itself becomes a true mobile home" (Fortunati, 2002).

> **Travel and mobility** normally lead to temporary **loss of autonomy and anxiety.** The mobile phone's phatic function, that is being in touch rather than the actual content of the conversation or message, enables us to rapidly regain stability. "This modal personality strengthened by the mobile phone is a personality that manages to reduce uncertainty. [...] It is the possibility of contacting its own communicative network at any moment that has the powerful effect of reducing the uncertainty that mobility brings with it." (Fortunati, 2002).

> Fortunati argues that the **mobile phone favors the development of a democratic society,** because "the mobile has granted the same communicative rights to nomadic persons and those that are sedentary or immobile" and in addition "it has extended individual access to mobile communication also to members of the family [wives and children] up to yesterday ‚invisible' with the fixed phone" (Fortunati, 2002). For Fortunati, the digital nomad is no longer dependent on fixed places but feels at home anywhere and is always in control.

> In an article called **"Global Nomads in the Digital Veldt"** Meyrowitz reiterates his earlier argument about us being "hunter-gatherers of an information age" (Meyrowitz, 1985) and applies it to digital media technologies. He draws a parallel between contemporary globalized post-modern society and past nomadic societies. "As we are moving swiftly into a new era of globalization and wireless communication, we are also spiraling backward, in some key ways, to the earliest form of human association: **nomadic hunting and gathering.** Both types of social organization are characterized by overlapping experiences and blurring of social roles. In nomadic societies everybody lived close to each other. No separate social roles and situations existed. There were no distinctions between workplace and home, between labor and leisure. Further, leadership in these societies was not mystified but based on merit. Meyrowitz sees the same blurring of boundaries between social roles and social situations in the present age. "A key feature of the electronic era is that most physical, social, cultural, political, and economic boundaries have become more porous, sometimes to the point of functionally disappearing" (Meyrowitz, 2003).

> **digital nomad** is spatially mobile, socially connected, and has an opportunistic and flexible mindset and refuses to be tied to any specific place or circumstance. The digital nomad also rears its head in more popularizing literature.

> The Economist published a special report called **"Our nomadic future".** Situated in the north-American context, and asks how digital mobile technologies change our work, our relation to place, our social relations, and our identity. The introductory article **"Nomads at last"** depicts a new breed of urbanites frequenting coffee shops and libraries with free Wi-Fi. These are oases for **"techno-Bedouins"** who live a permanently connected life

through their smartphones and laptops. According to The Economist it is the **permanent connectivity,** not the portability of gadgets, that makes us nomads.

> **Digital nomadism** is not about dragging lots of technologies along. Nomads "are defined not by what they carry but by what they leave behind, knowing that the environment will provide it". Often these **urban nomads** do not even use laptops but only a smartphone. Is this digital nomad your stereotypical corporate executive who travels the world? Not at all. This new nomad may never even leave the city. Manual Castells is quoted saying "permanent connectivity, not motion, is the critical thing". This conception of nomadism thus is somewhat different than the ones above, which also emphasize corporeal mobility. This **nomad** has a **different relation to labor.** New businesses do no longer need an office since people can work from anywhere. Face to face meetings between co-workers of new organizations now often take place in cafés instead of an office. Managing such new organizations requires new rules. The founder of <u>Moveon.org</u> believes clumps of people in physical offices could result in new stratifications. In an effective organization "there mustn't be insiders and outsiders". Therefore he made a rule that no two people anywhere may share a physical office.

> **New nomadism** combines the autonomy of telecommuting with corporeal mobility, allowing "a gregarious and flexible work style".

> **Nomadism changes architecture and urban spaces too.** Private enclosed spaces with a singular function are being replaced by semi-public places with multi-functional purposes. There is an increase in demand for "third places" in addition to first place (home) and second place (work). Travel patterns change because digital nomads move in a daisy-chain pattern, hopping from one place to the next while remaining connected. At the social level, nomadism tends to reinforce ties to people who are already close (friends and family) at the expense of attentiveness to strangers encountered physically. Rich Ling is quoted saying that when **mediated interaction** takes on precedence over co-present

face to face communication, strong ties prevail over weak ties. The **modern nomad** also undergoes shifts in subjectivity, identity, and culture. This is especially visible in **linguistic changes.** Before, people took the time and care to express their thoughts in words. Now it is only speed that matters, not clarity. According to linguist Naomi Baron this is worrying, since "the dominant mindset of nomadic culture is that language does not matter".

> Sherry Turkle warns about permanent anxiety caused by addiction to always-on technologies. The notion of **"publicness"** too might be under strain. Individuals in third places who flip open their laptop or whip out their smartphones, while sipping from a latte with their earbuds in, are hollowing out these traditional meeting places. The report takes a very technology-driven stance. Societal changes are seen as inevitable. The logic of **individual 'nomadic' practices** is extended to society at large. The present "wireless world will soon be upon us", it is said, because "technology underlies all of the changes in **today's nomadic societies".** In a deterministic vein it is claimed that "the lesson of history is that what the geeks and early adopters do today, the rest of us will probably end up doing tomorrow or the day after. It is the pioneers that set the direction; the mainstream will follow in time". We could go on with many more examples. **As a final remark, the digital nomad is evoked not in the least by various corporations selling mobile technologies and touting a highly flexible mobile lifestyle.**

> A number of implicit assumptions are made about nomadism which are extended to present mobile phone practices. We can schematically group these into three interconnected points: [first]: The (potential for) corporeal mobility, and weakening of geographical place and scheduled clock time. [second:] The blurring of distinct social roles that rely on a clear definition of a social situation. [third]: Flexible and overlapping subjectivities and identities. We shall assess these three arguments both from the perspective of 'real' nomadism, and from the perspective of the **digital nomad.**

As is assumed for **'real' nomads, geographical places** and **distinct temporal moments** are no longer important for **mobile phone users.** Fortunati says "physical space […] is emptied of significance" since the mobile phone creates "space without addresses, without precise localizations" (Fortunati, 2002). The use of the mobile "has also changed the spatialization of time", ending up "supporting social thoughtlessness about time" and a "loss of diastemic [i.e. with discrete intervals] awareness in the administration of time".

According to Meyrowitz "we, as global nomads, are able to violate the rules of physical movement and physical limits". Further, corporeal mobility no longer means an anxiety-ridden break from sedentary normalcy. As in nomadism mobility is incorporated into everyday practices, because "the mobile has also extended to dynamic space the same communicative prerogatives as static space" (Fortunati, 2002).
The Economist articles portrays the 10 nomadic worker who is no longer tied to a specific desk and working hours but instead prefers to temporarily throw out her anchor at multifunctional "third places". This nomad is at home anywhere. However, from the perspective of 'real' nomadism, hyper-mobility and independence from place and time are not matters of choice and freedom.

>Inversely, the assumption that in our present society social roles are blurred is dubious. They may have moved away from former typical sociological categories. But not disappeared. Ironically, the perceived urgency of 'nomadic thought' as a way to challenge fixed and essentialized identity categories attests to that. Are personal identities indeed more flexible and experienced less in terms of "sacred" places like the home?

Fortunati uses the term **'modal personality'** to suggest that identity shifts from some essential substance to identity as a conditional possibility. And **'nomadic intimacy'** through the mobile phone increases our sense of security and being at home everywhere. Meyrowitz claims "smaller parts of our identities are tied to, or shaped by, specific locales or

fixed roles. As we face an abundance of easily located information in cyberspace, we are more likely to abandon efforts to gather all we might want and store it in our homes and businesses. Instead, we tend to "store" many items where we found them ("bookmarking" the sites, perhaps), just as nomads leave herds of game and clusters of berry bushes in their natural habitats to be accessed when needed". Integration of experiential spheres at the level of the group is accompanied by a fragmentation and segregation at the level of the individual, who is now faced with a dizzying array of choices. This leads to a new recognition of individual idiosyncrasies (Meyrowitz, 2003).

> From the perspective of actual nomadism the idea of a desacralized home may actually be true: For instance anthropological evidence about Pygmies (in Congo) shows that they maintain a separation between an informal social space inside the village and a religious space residing in the forest outside of their man-made profane territory (Tuan, 1977). However, the conclusion that nomadic life is characterized by **hyper-individualized idiosyncrasy** seems unlikely. It is close to a truism that in tightly-knit bands there is little tolerance towards straying from the group norm.

> From the perspective of the **digital nomad,** the emphasis on idiosyncratic "identities by choice" is one-sided. The image arises of individuals who no longer carefully collect and store their experiences internally as part of their personal narrative. They whimsically construct ad hoc identities and outsource their 'selves' to their digital clouds. But is this really an adequate description of contemporary technologically mediated identities? Instead of sticking to fixed conceptions of, say, 'home', shouldn't we redefine their meanings? Maybe the mobile phone space itself becomes a dwelling place, as Fortunati indeed suggests? And while the maneuvering space for making individual choices seems to have increased, new restrictions and forces come to press on people's shoulders. Individual choice may have become a new social pressure, leading some to speak of the "tyranny of choice" (Schwartz, 2004).

> The thoroughly social character of ICT's (Information and communications technologies) also impose new norms and behaviors on individuals. Theoretical How solid is the digital nomad thesis theoretically? First of all, it draws a completely ahistorical parallel between two modes of organizing society. The nomad appears an attempt to capture the dynamics and fluidity of our present time. To do so it must paradoxically posit the a-historicity of nomadism itself by framing the mutability of our current society into a phase or state, a frozen slice of time. Take the following sentence by Meyrowitz: [...] "those ancient nomadic societies that have survived into current times give us a window into the nature of our deep past" [...]. Or a bit further: [...] "on a basic behavioural level, however, we have returned in many ways to the overlapping experiences and role blurrings of nomads" [...] (Meyrowitz, 2003). Historians and anthropologists would stagger. As if nomads have stood still in time since the ice age ... This rhetorically places other people into another age, an earlier stage of development. Precisely the capacity for flexible adaptation to varying environments lauded in 'nomadism' are denied to nomadic peoples themselves.

> Inversely, even if sci-fi dreams of time-machines would ever be realized, could we truly go back in time and shed the weight of historical knowledge? Obviously, it is not a literal claim of sameness but one of likeness. Of course we haven't really returned to the same nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle as thousand of years ago. Rather we are like nomads from the past. This analogy still remains weak. As argued, the supposed similarities between postmodern societies and nomadic societies are shaky. There is no uniform nomadic way of life. And in many more ways we are not like nomadic people. Media influences involve not a restoration but a modification. At most they bear some resemblances with past practices but they are different. Paradoxically, phrasing this unique See for a critique of "allochronism" and the "denial of coevalness" in ethnography (Fabian, 1983, 1991).

> Not only is the digital nomad a-historical, it also rests on false conceptions of space and place. In her work "For Space" (Massey, 2005) geographer and philosopher Doreen Massey criticizes three common reductive views of space. "The imagination of space as a surface on which we are placed, the turning of space into time, the sharp separation of local place from the space out there; these are all ways of taming the challenge that the inherent spatiality of the world presents" As a metaphor to capture our shifting relations to space, time and place, nomadism refers rather narrowly to people being freed from geographical and temporal constraints. This assumes that space is an entity 'out there', a surface waiting for humans to cross and conquer. It also turns space into time. It defines distance in temporal terms as the speed with which we can transmit information and communication. The idea that a particular place is no longer relevant for the social roles and communication processes departs from the view that places used to have essences. Place once was "closed, coherent, integrated as authentic, as 'home'". Then mobile media came along and caused a decline of this singularity and unicity of place. Mobile media turned us all into nomadic drifters. Both at loss for a fixed place and at home anywhere.

Nomadism presupposes that space and place once were entities to which we stood in opposition. Rather than an external resource that can be subdued, space has always been a product of our placements and movements in the world. After Massey, space is the product of interrelations, heterogeneous, and always under construction. Rather than mourning the loss of clearly defined local place or celebrating our liberation from parochial place, we should accept that places have always been "events" characterized by "throwntogetherness", the "unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now" (Massey, 2005).

In emphasizing (the potential for) corporeal movement of people, nomadism takes a one-sided view of mobility. The metaphor doesn't capture how mobile media technologies play a role in other mobilities: physical mobility of objects and imaginary mobility. Interestingly, the spread of the nomad itself as a metaphor says more about the mobility

of ideas than about the influence of new media technologies.

> The 'jet-setters' are hyper-mobile and in charge of time space compression. Refugees and migrants are people who move but with little control. There are people who are "on the receiving end of time-space compression", like working-class pensioners (Massey, 1993). And for instance there are Brazilian favela dwellers who contribute a lot to the worldwide flow of culture (football, music) but themselves are immobilized and imprisoned in it. So who are these global nomads? Are they highly mobile cosmopolitans, Manuel Castell's "global elite" in the "space of flows" (Castells, 1996)? Are they migrant workers traveling abroad and keeping in touch via their mobile phones? Are they the immobilized people who consume the world through their mobile devices and are virtually and imaginary mobile?

> The **digital nomad thesis** often fails to distinguish between different mobilities enabled and constrained by **power-geometries.** As a last remark, the nomad can be criticized from a critical feminist perspective for its perpetuation of a "phallo-centric" and technologically-driven notion of progress. This nomad fully embraces the dominant capitalist logic of speeding up the desire for ever-new products and services. Notwithstanding assertions that permanent connectivity, not gadgetry and hyper-mobility, are what counts, the digital nomad strongly retains a male-biassed flavor. Toys for the boys. The nomad also reaffirms Enlightenment ideals of hyper-individuality. It re-boxes old identity notions of total personal freedom and autonomy in a trendy term. Rather than perpetually questioning fixed identity categories, as the nomadologists have it, this technologically-driven utilitarian nomad is happy to maximize his own freedom of movement and to optimize personal choices by exerting control.

> In his book "Speaking into the Air" John Durham Peters traces the history of the idea of communication (Peters, 1999). Peters brilliantly shows how in the late 19th century 'communication' became imbued with ideals of a perfect exchange of an individual's inner worlds and thoughts with other individuals. "'Communication' is a registry of modern longings. The term evokes a utopia where nothing is misunderstood, hearts are open, and expression is uninhibited. [...] an apparent answer to the painful divisions between self and other, private and public, and inner thought and outer word..." (Peters, 1999). The paradox arose between mediated communication as both entrenching people further into solipsism and clearing the fog between inter-human contact.

> In fact 'digital nomadism' tries to reconcile the radical newness of mobile telecommunications with lost 'true' communication. The image of nomadic connectivity and intimacy is infused with the rhetoric of perfect communication. The permanently connected nomad symbolizes what is considered lost in and through mediated communication: nearness, transparency, and perfect mutual understanding between individuals.

> The nomad symbolizes a return to the ideal state of small-scale tribal communication, before we fell from grace. 'Digital nomadism' is a deliberate a-historical trope that seeks both a new beginning and a return to a lost state of humanity. The serious downside of any kind of 'tribalization' however is that it goes against humanist ideals of universal communication and 'publicness' as the shared ground for engaging in mutually meaningful dialogue.

Following good nomadic practice let's return to the point of departure. In "On the Move" Tim Cresswell argues that mobility has become a root metaphor for contemporary understanding of culture and society. Cresswell shows there have been two opposing views of mobility: sedentary metaphysics and nomadic metaphysics (Cresswell, 2006). Sedentary metaphysics is an outlook on the world that implicitly takes fixed existence as the norm. It sees sedentary life as rooted, stable, safe, orderly, and rational. Mobility, and particularly nomadic people such as gypsies, wanderers and vagabonds symbolize chaos, disruption, fear, and a threat to society's order. Nomadic metaphysics by con-

trast attaches many positive connotations to mobility. It is progressive, exciting, contemporary, and anti-establishment. Rootedness, stasis, and fixed boundaries are seen negatively as being reactionary, dull, and of the past. The distinction shows how mobility and nomadism are imbued with symbolic connotations and values. On the one hand nomadism means a Romantic liberation from the time-disciplined sedentary life behind the desk. On the other hand nomadism connotes drift, rootlessness, and increased uncertainty in our highly complex "risk society". The distinction is a healthy antidote against the danger of getting trapped in all too easy celebratory (Braidotti) or dismissive (Bauman's thesis of 'liquid modernity') attitudes.

>We should use this metaphor with the utmost caution. On the one hand identity indeed becomes a life-long 'nomadic' enterprise. Our current identities are characterized by constant movements between a number of tensions in life. Yet identities are and cannot be totally nomadic. We need infrastructural and institutional, as well as social and cultural moorings (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Mobile media act as both as "lines of flight" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), and as anchor points to hold on to.

FACTS & CIRCUMSTANCES

> In fact the 'digital nomad' has little to do with 'real' nomadism, that it is misleading as a metaphor, that it rests on shaky theoretical foundations, and neglects political dimensions of unequal access to hyper-mobile lifestyles. Why is the nomad such a fascinating trope for understanding media? One recurring question is whether media technologies function as a chasm or as a bridge.

When we are talking about the new nomadism, we are forced to talk about the situation of the current refugee situation, thus about the reel nomads of today, people they lost their homes without arriving nowhere. The world is currently seeing record levels of displacement, with some 60 million refugees having been forced to flee their homes due to poverty or violence, according to the United Nations. The new norm is nomadic. The vast flows of refugees we are witnessing will remain a permanent feature over the next decades and already seriously affects over 30 countries globally in the North and the South. More than 60 million refugees and some estimate up to a billion other people are in motion. This creates challenges that we need to rethink at the one hand our judicial systems, national

identities, national state constructs and the globalized liberal hypercapitalistic economic system, as well as the arrival and departure cities or urban enviroments. In the digital age, these forces contribute to the 'anytime, any-place, anywhere' phenomenon changing how we interact with space, place and time.

> At least the globalization is everywhere significantly debated. The ineluctable phenomenon has led to homogenization, hybridization, cultural confusion, and social disorders. The resulting chaos has been translated by a loss of landmarks, which has consequently engendered mental and physical displacements. New species, hybrids, have emerged from these various cultural encounters. Displaced, these populations of the border, the 'third' space, have developed their adaptation skills, including choice and negotiation, in order to assert a sense of belonging.

Among the plethora of today's nomads such as refugees, global workers, and immigrants for example, hybrids are species that have mutated. They have become something detached from established orders, and not attached to any specific place. Like nomads, they move and adapt. Neo-nomads, then, in their effort to adapt and build a sense of belonging not bound to place, reminds us of the traditional nomads. By analyzing the hybrid, the ensuing spatiality, skins, and geographies of the neo-nomad, we can have an open-ended discussion about mobility, connectivity and space. These observations can lead us to the conclusion that nomads we were, nomads we are, and nomads we will be, always.

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