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The injunction to mobility



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Mots clés

mobility

immobility

mobile immobile

injunction

Discipline

Sciences humaines

Sciences sociales

Mode de transport

Tous modes de transport

Visuel

Alt

Auteur

Christophe Mincke (lawyer and sociologist)

Fichier vidéo

Transcription écrite

The question of how we relate to mobility evolves over time. I focused on the transition, in the 1960s, between an industrial society and a post-modern or post-industrial society.

The modern industrial society is a society that is tremendously mobile and that places great importance on mobility. It is no surprise that this is the society that invented trains, planes and transatlantic liners... It is also the society that invented the 100m race, and that eventually created Concord. Clearly, there is an ever-present imaginary of speed and mobility.

The hypothesis I've developed is one of a society in which mobility has become an end in itself - it is no longer a means to achieve a goal. Mobility is a good in and of itself. Just look at the number of people nowadays who are digital nomads, look at how public discourse and advertising continuously sell the idea that being simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, constantly on the move, is a good lifestyle etc.

At that point, we're no longer in a system that says: "You were at point A, you're going to point B." We're in a system that says: "You have to constantly be on the move, because movement is life, it is good, it is vitality."

The relationship that we have to space and time evolves. We formalized the mobility ideal, which is this injunction to mobility, this promotion of mobility in and of itself. We thought about how to characterize it, in order to make this concept a useful one for the social sciences. We divided it into four imperatives: activity, activation, participation and adaptation.

Activity is the imperative to which we are almost all subjected, to be active at all times - in our private lives, in our professional lives, in the evening, in the morning. All the time. We have to be active. Even when we retire, we don't just rest and go fishing, we become active senior citizens. And when we're children, before ever entering an active life, we are already required to learn languages, to do sports, to perform a thousand extracurricular activities... It's like this in all aspects of life: it is an injunction which is really a prohibition of rest.

Second imperative: activation. Being active is not enough.

You have to get yourself moving and not wait on others or on an external command to become activated. This is a command that is often directed at those who receive government welfare, who are expected to be proactive. They are told: "You need to look for work, you have to get training, you have to build a professional project."

What does projecting yourself mean? This is the third imperative, the imperative of participation. It's not enough to work on your own. You are expected to participate in collective projects. The form taken by the collectivization of activity is not a strict hierarchy, it is not the army, it is not discipline. It's become the collective project. It is a relatively horizontal system in which a group of people is recruited and is an important resource. These projects are obviously temporary projects. That is the very

definition of a project.

You don't have a career. You have professional projects. And when one comes to an end, you're expected to find another one. People nowadays are ideally flexible and resilient, because they have to bounce from project to project. This is how life is presented. There are projects that come to an end, and the value of a person is demonstrated by his or her ability to bounce back from that finished project and to find a new project to initiate or join.

The fourth imperative: the contemporary individual needs to be able to adapt. This is the imperative of adaptation. We hear calls for flexibility, innovation, resilience, self-questioning... This is typically an imperative that weighs on individuals who manage many projects in parallel. The phone rings, it's my wife: I move from a professional attitude to a familial one. This was not something that happened at work before.

What we are seeing here is the need to constantly juggle a whole series of concurrent projects. The idea that life is a succession of projects implies that we have to adapt each time. Because in every project, we are met with new actors, we don't necessarily have the same function, or the same mission.

Capitalism is a system based on production. Logically, with a productivist mindset, you want the machine to never stop. That's why we invented night shifts and machines, because that way work never stops.

Capitalism comes with a kind of obsession with downtime and a desire to be constantly productive and active. That is what lean management is today: identify points of slow production and make it the workers' responsibility to eliminate these bottlenecks.

This way of prohibiting rest has spread outside of factories and schools, outside of places of discipline. Today, there is a general idea that rest is bad. We stigmatize unemployed people - the very same people of whom we have nothing to demand in terms of production.

When, for example, we fill up our children's schedules, we are spreading the idea that rest is harmful. That is why we now have psychologists claiming that being bored is important. Boredom is educational. But it's a problem because we don't have the framework for thinking about it today.

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mobility.

It is somewhat inevitable that our mobilities will have to be justified once again. Why? Because we are realizing that mobility has a cost, including a gigantic environmental cost. The climate issue is going to become so pressing that at some point it will be necessary to have very good reasons for emitting CO2.

This question, why do we move about? Or why do we make things come to us? Or why do we make information come to us? This question will have to be asked again, because at some point, we will realize that mobility cannot be infinite, and that we have a limited quota of sustainable mobility. We will need to choose between acceptable and non-acceptable mobilities, between those that are possible and impossible. And then we'll come back to the question of meaning: why do we travel, at the end of the day? Is it really worth it?

Activer

Activé

Niveau de profondeur

Balise H2 + H3

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Désactivé

Chapô

Christophe Mincke, who studied the emergence of mobility ideology in *La société sans répit* (2019, La Sorbonne), investigates the idea of mobility as a social injunction. In a society where mobility has become an end in itself, where being constantly in motion is the norm, what room is left for each individual's aspirations? And, finally, is the ultramobility of the 21st century a source of liberation or constraint?

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