

EXTENDED MOBILITY FOR THE CITY AS A COMMON

Furthering the Right to the City in
Global Perspective

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Introduction

The Extended Mobility framework conveyed by this book focuses on an integrate triad of concepts – motility, accessibility, and porosity – in order to: (1) understand mobility in our metropolises as a whole social phenomenon, as it is embodied at the micro-level and unescapably political at the macro-level; (2) demonstrate how transport systems offer both limits and emancipatory opportunities to peripheral communities; and (3) reveal how marginalized city inhabitants respond when facing the lack of Extended Mobility. Building from these insights, the overarching objective of this book, then, is to analyze if and how these three concepts, and their analogous terms, have been considered (either together or separately) by citizens’ movements or in public policy. In Part II, we are concerned with this task in Rio and Milan, whereas the contributions in Part III extend this discussion to a global context.

By grounding our theory of Extended Mobility in philosophical debates surrounding the social production of space, the right to the city, and the potential of the city as a common, we suggest the concept discloses the parameters established by the constitutive differences of particular social orders (as in Bourdieu’s habitus), by Rancière’s distribution of the sensible – that is, “the mechanism that oversees and controls the field of possible experiences” (Stavrvides, 2019, p. 9) – and by the way people and material artifacts affect each other (Spinoza, 2017). In so doing, it becomes also possible to imagine another combination of potentialities in which these limits may be overcome by destituting constitutive differences (i.e., dismantling structural barriers to motility), by expanding the possibility to experience the city for all urban inhabitants (i.e., fostering an inclusive and welcoming accessibility),

and by promoting positive affections and aligned rhythms (i.e., materializing the porous city). It is by striving to realize these cumulative objectives that we may empower citizens to exercise their power to act (Spinoza, 2017) and to perform (Stavrídes, 2024).

This “ideal” combination resonates with Lefèbvre’s right to the city (1968) in its utopian character. However, developing our argument in Chapter 1, we suggest that the destitution/constitution movements (from Hardt and Negri, 2004), the potential as possibility (as mentioned in Benjamin *apud* Weber, 2008, and in Agamben, 1999), and a politics of aligned rhythms and affections (from Antonioli et al., 2021) together point toward a non-utopian city of commons, precisely because it functions as a premise and not as a promise (Pelbart, 2011).

Learning from Maré and San Siro

There are many differences between the favelas of Rio and the public housing districts of Milan including their in/formal and institutional genesis, their spatial and infrastructural conditions, their socioeconomic opportunities; and the mobility regimes that shape everyday life in these places. Yet there are also a number of converging but still latent processes revealed when comparing the two contexts. For example: (1) as Holston (2008) notes, some European peripheries are increasingly being modeled both as shelters and entrapment for marginal existences, due to their economic and juridical status with respect to national and local regulations; and (2) informal dwelling regimes, in a variety of different arrangements, have been widespread in the European periphery (Chiodelli et al., 2021). Such trends suggest the emergence of significant similarities across peripheries in the global North and South, a sort of “favelization” that reflects a wider process of “planetary urbanization” – that is, the extension of infrastructures and the harsh logic of late capitalism over the entire surface of the planet (Brenner, 2018).

Although poverty in the two contexts refers to very different dynamics and standards, measures, and understandings, some elements of discomfort and deprivation appear ubiquitous, particularly:

- the concentration of poverty and of health and economic vulnerabilities, compounded by institutional difficulties in addressing social problems and a lack of appropriate infrastructure and facilities;
- a degree of informality in housing, labor, and community services that allows interest groups to “privatize” entire neighborhoods through informal and illegal practices, which serves to weaken the public sphere;
- the stigmatization of inhabitants and negative public narratives produced by both the media and institutional policies; and

- the subaltern role of marginal areas as “economically necessary inputs,” through which the poor enter the labor market with the lowest incomes, often barely enough to meet their basic needs.

These convergences illustrate the importance of global comparative work that can bring cases such as Maré and San Siro into dialogue, contextualizing the center-periphery dichotomies and starting to look at the center through peripheral lenses (Gillespie & Mitlin, 2023). As Scott (1998) points out, the lenses with which the state views contexts and society are “intentionally ultra-simplistic” because effective forms of understanding and control require the compression of diversity. For Porter (2010), such frames represent a colonial practice in complex postcolonial contexts.

Comparing extended mobilities in Rio and Milan

Both Maré and San Siro lack good urban structures as well as public or private cultural, sports, leisure, and commercial amenities. While Maré is somewhat far from downtown and the city’s wealthier areas, and suffers comparatively more with limited accessibility, with no trains or metro lines nearby, San Siro is closer to the city center, adjacent to well-to-do neighborhoods, and enjoys a high degree of accessibility to public transport. Maré was not formally designed by the state but left to be occupied by Brazilian Northeast migrants, although it has received some social housing projects for the poor. As a social project for poor Italian migrants, San Siro, in contrast, was planned to be peripheral. The current situation of both neighborhoods is the result of public policies that have determined low spatial capital and engendered a low expectation habitus, as they suffer from an unequal “distribution of the sensible.” Consequently, inhabitants of both Maré and San Siro articulate a low desire and limited ability to move in order to realize their personal aspirations – they both disclose low motility.

Maré’s low accessibility is not due to lack of transportation options but to the cost of public transport to the poor, given its low quality. The financial constraints configure an even lower Extended Mobility under which many are unable to pay for the fares to reach eligible opportunities across the city. San Siro exhibits a comparatively higher level of accessibility (considering its proxy, relative ease of displacement) and the neighborhood’s inhabitants travel around the city seven days a week. Yet this is mostly to work. Despite great differences in terms of mobility possibilities, they all live the city rather restrictively.

Notwithstanding differences regarding neighborhood location and transport services, the connection between accessibility and embodied micro-practices related to motility and porosity is central. In both cases what matters is the *perception* of being able to access opportunities and of being welcomed

by the city. It is this relation that nourishes Maré and San Siro inhabitants' conditions of emancipation (or lack thereof). Another trait that seems common is their positioning in a visibility-invisibility continuum. They are distinct and different subjects and their bodies move through space-time driven or limited by economic relations, sociopolitical meanings, and cultural representations. As mobility is also loaded with subjectivities that pose prohibition, restriction, or reception on bodies while in places and territories of the city, presenting oneself is an act of visibility mediated by mobility agencies in both neighborhoods – their residents choose to go invisible most times, except when performing through art and social movements.

The territorial marginalization inhabitants are subject to is significantly premised upon corporeal differences rooted in skin color or religious preferences, forging a low expectation habitus. In Maré, there is a lot of racial pride in leisure and cultural activities that take place in the Complex, but inhabitants do not feel at ease in Rio's well-off areas due to concrete, corporeal, and negative affections – like being beaten and harassed by the apparatus of the state or by racist individuals and groups. On the other hand, its inhabitants have developed a number of strategies to overcome the negative affections they are subjected to during their trips outside the Complex, including walking in groups, adopting Eurocentric dress codes, choosing to travel by less stressful means or times of the day, and talking, joking, and helping each other while on buses.

In San Siro, migrants face a number of colonial prejudices – often regardless of their education level and personal history – which lead to challenges, for instance, in securing legal status, accessing basic rights (such as language training or health services), or finding a decent home. This also generates low self-esteem and a desire for invisibility. The result is that San Siro's migrant inhabitants recognize themselves as negatively affected by white Europeans, since the city does not offer them a lot of porosity.

The coexistence of many different nationalities in San Siro, combined with poor sociopolitical organization in the neighborhood, further impairs participation in the city dynamics. Foreigners do not engage much in what Western cultures define as leisure and cultural activities and do not travel outside of San Siro for these purposes. Consequently, they end up not mingling in easily, ostracizing themselves, or mimicking Italian cultural patterns in the hope that their kids can climb the social and racial ladder in the future and “whiten” their ethnicity. Second-generation migrants feel in between multiple identities and multiple worlds, but travel outside the neighborhood more frequently for culture and leisure.

None of the groups in Maré or San Siro participate in their cities' decision-making processes or have any say concerning urban mobility issues. They find themselves distanced from processes of commoning through Extended Mobility. Maré is, however, home to a number of commoning local experiences, pointing to possible emancipatory urban futures. We see hopeful examples in the Casa

das Mulheres, which raises women's consciousness and promotes opportunities for them; the Corners' Cooperative, a common of places, vehicles, and processes that forge a community among other poor communities in the city; and the umbrella organizations Observatório de Favelas and Redes da Maré. San Siro, on the contrary, has several common courtyards and public spaces, but they barely entail the type of commoning practices that have recently been proposed by participatory and/or including initiatives like Mapping San Siro and the Comitato Abitanti San Siro.

Commoning mobilities

Recollecting our arguments about Extended Mobility and the common in Chapter 1 – as well as our emancipatory framework of destitution/constitution movements, potential-as-possibility, and a politic of rhythms – we turn to Tonucci's (2017) analyses of the most important critical theories on the common. They help us understand and contextualize the various collectives constituted as responses to a lack of Extended Mobility in Maré and San Siro.

Tonucci (2017) groups current theoretical perspectives on the common into four key categories: (1) the *community ontological commons*, mostly formulated by Nancy (1991), and concerned with the desire of “being-in-common”; (2) the *common as autonomic reproduction* in face of state and capitalist structures, articulated by authors such as Federici (2010) and De Angelis (2007); (3) the *common as a political principle* in opposition to the hegemonic neoliberal rationale, based on co-activity, reciprocity, and sharing, mainly proposed by Dardot and Laval (2015); and (4) the *common as biopolitical production*, which concerns material and immaterial production as instituted by the multitude, pictured by Hard and Negri (2004, 2014). Building from Tonucci's schema, we argue that together the collectives discussed in this book can be grouped into five main types:

- 1 conforming to the ontological commons, they are “inoperant communities” (Nancy, 1991), that have no program goals or projects other than the desire to be together, to share, and to relate. These collectives may be the seeds of important personal and community change, although not oriented by specific themes. Examples are religious and female groups that create intersubjectivities and territories of sociability;
- 2 groups of autonomic reproduction driven by commoning practices, actions, and activities that expand their access to “more and better.” Such groups “re-create” (in Lefèbvre's sense of appropriation) opportunities, spaces, and centralities outside the state and capitalist institutions (De Angelis, 2007) and/or promote their access to established centralities. Examples include information networks, the “Sabores da Maré” and the “Corners” in Maré (Rio);

- 3 some groups bet on their collectives as a political principle in response to neoliberalism. They do not have to yield immediate impacts on their commoners' material lives but may function as ethical and aesthetical milestones for other groups as they push for a more inclusive and mobile city. They choose to present themselves to the Other through (hyper)visibility. Examples include cultural groups such as rap and hip-hop circles and the "Motorcycle conflict gathering" group in Rio;
- 4 other groups also bet on their more institutionalized collectives as a political principle. They institute commons and commoners based on co-activity, reciprocity, and sharing in an ontological turn that drives them toward a common city (see Chapter 5) and enhance people's self-esteem and individual possibilities. Examples include the Mapping San Siro and the Comitato Abitanti in Milan; and the Observatório de Favelas and Redes da Maré in Rio;
- 5 yet other groups work to create networks of material and immaterial production. These collectives are instituted by the peripheral multitude and represent "challenges to the empire", setting the conditions to fertilize and spread alternative values practices (Hardt & Negri, 2014). Examples like the Neapolitan "Acqua bene comune" and the "Movimento de Trabalhadores sem Terra - MST" in Brazil could not be pictured in our case studies but have been influential in our theorization of types 1–4.

While the four (out of five) collective groups identified in the case studies are affected by and respond to the limitations discussed in Chapter 1 – that is, motility constraints, restricted accessibility, and negative affections – some groups seem to particularly react to one of these limits over others. Types 1 and 3 are groups of people who propose positive affections and operate on solidary rhythms – choreorhythms – in order to achieve a more porous city and society. Type 2 groups certainly operate toward more and better accessibility to opportunities, thus proposing that their potentials be transformed into real possibilities. By proposing an ontological turn through co-activity, reciprocity, and sharing, type 4 groups look to overcome social order constitutive differences and instead enhance people's self-esteem and personal projects, thus expanding their motility. The encounter of these three emancipatory dimensions to their fullest would forge more than an Extended Mobility. They would foster a city of rights where all have the power to act and to perform everywhere; a common city, as Figure 7.1 shows.

We therefore argue that Extended Mobility and the common are the seeds *and* fruits of each other. If Extended Mobility is about the use value of the city mediated by the act of sharing, rather than its exchange value, it is first and foremost about commoning. While type 5 collectives described above realize and spread these alternative values and practices (Hardt & Negri, 2014), types 1–4 are pregnant with them and their conjunction may offer generative grounds to support the extended mobile and common city.

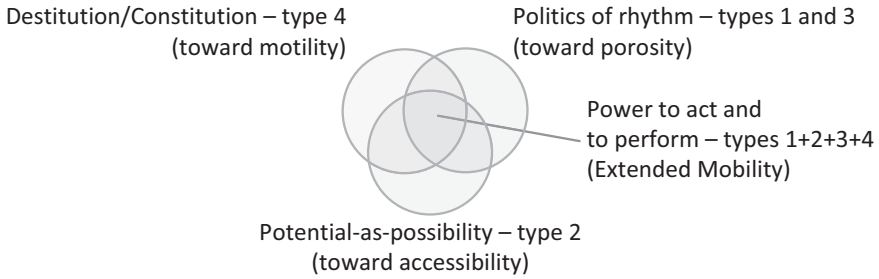


FIGURE 7.1 Groups for destitution/constitution, potential-as-possibility, and a politics of rhythms toward the power to act and to perform.

Source: The authors.

Extended mobility, the common, and the ontological turn

The visibility of corporeally and territorially stigmatized subjects who inscribe fractures and fissures in the urban routine with their acts of self-presentation and to others while moving in the city, are already achieving recognition and representation in society, and are placing themselves as practical references of radicalizing the right to the city in face of private property, state regulation, and the hegemony of the capital market (as do the groups of type 3 above). These experiences, together with appropriating and commoning the city, pose challenges to the reproduction of modern-colonial urbanism, since they elevate their agendas of social, political, and identity change to the scale of the metropolises. Other insurgencies of solidarity and generosity (such as groups 1, 2, and 4), even when operating on small scales of social life, are “viable novelties” (Tommasino, 2025) under construction in the face of the coloniality of power and knowledge reproduction. We take the horizon of the ontological turn that involves subjects and territories in their corporealities as a concrete reference of democracy, justice, and autonomy for agendas of urban transformation toward the right to the city.

While prejudice and a concealed apartheid concerning favelas have solidified during the past 100 years in Rio, Maré inhabitants have found several fertile interstices and have been able to build a culture of pride of their own. This has increased their social awareness but has not, with rare exceptions, improved their motility or desire to live a city where they are not welcomed. In San Siro, on the other hand, a recent renewed process of segregation and prejudice is taking place and developing its own dreadful path – emphasizing the need to implement public policies to counter resurgent segregation-building logics and institute a urban decision-making that values incoming workers and their families, whatever their capital and migratory history, as needed and cherished, though different, citizens of European society deserving a full right to the city and to Extended Mobility, as argued in Chapter 6.

In order to (1) overcome the most simplistic and typical representations linked to fear and prejudice that codify Maré, San Siro, and their peers around the world as threats and terrains that generate their own impoverishment, degradation, unemployment, and social and youth delinquency; and (2) stop attributing problems to residents trapped by narratives based on historic processes of coloniality and racism (Nethercote, 2022), we propose reading these marginalized conditions under a multi-scalar sociospatial historic perspective, as advocated in the introduction to this volume. In analyzing Maré and San Siro, we tried to understand how their inhabitants' migration histories have helped shape their chances at better lives, and how their limited motility, accessibility, and porosity have combined to cause different access to different opportunities, corporeal and territorial stigmatization, and processes of brutalization in and of urban peripheries.

It is through our relationships with many “elsewheres” that we can understand their (and our) internal conditions. The logic of capitalism requires marginal and subordinate populations and areas around the globe. It needs (im) mobility regulations that open and close gates as well as functional gray zones that receive, “domesticate,” and filter newcomers – that is, the favelas and urban peripheries that concentrate and endure historically violent dynamics, keeping them at the margins of wealth and recognition. But marginality also has a generative nature because it produces the very places capable of offering a radical vantage point from which to look, create, and imagine alternative futures (Hooks, 1989). We now turn to consider the utility of our Extended Mobility framework beyond Rio and Milan. The chapters in Part III situate the potential of Extended Mobility in a global perspective as an all-encompassing goal of our time.

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