

SNAIL TECHNOLOGIES AND CULTURES IN THE AGE OF MOBILITY: MOBILE COMMUNICATION AND IDENTITIES IN THE SHUAR TIME/SPACE

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Abstract

In mobile ontology and in the Shuar dynamic, cyclic, one-dimensional worldview, time and space flow simultaneously (de Salvador y Martínez, 2015b; Martínez, & de Salvador, 2015; Martínez et al., 2015). Authors such as Ling and Haddon emphasised the influence of mobile phones on human movement patterns, pointing out that they offer “freedom of contact”, given their nomadic nature, and the possibility to free ourselves from the spatial context and enter a space of communicative flows, where only time exists. The Where - as a Shuar would say - that is, Space, marches on together with time, in a global spatial-temporal dimension. Since mobile phones draw us closer to a nomadic life, turning us into snails (Fortunati, 2005) that carry a whole network of relationships in the back, an analysis of the uses of mobile phones (from this point of view) by a nomadic people such as the Shuar seems particularly interesting. The endlessly spiralling snail metaphor, which the Shuar use to describe their worldview, and the characterisation of nature resemble today’s mobile technology we all carry about. This essay is intended to emphasise the worldviews of the Mobile Age and the Indigenous, Shuar Age so as to analyse the similarities and differences in the spatial-temporal conception, as well as its impacts on identity.

Keywords

Time; space; mobile phone; Shuar; identities

INTRODUCTION

Today’s Mobile Age has turned mobile communication into its flagship, compelling us to reconsider categories such as time and space, closeness and distance, inviting us to reflect upon the configuration and transformation of identities in a different world (de Salvador & Martínez, 2015b; Martínez & de Salvador, 2015; Martínez et al., 2015). This essay will turn around these two axes: identity and the spatial-temporal dimension. In order to rethink these changes, we must go back to a remote context and put to the test McLuhan’s theory (“the medium is the message”) and also Wajcman’s (2008), who argues that technologies are not neutral, as they push us towards a specific worldview: the masculine western worldview. By placing ourselves in the boundaries of globalisation, in the Ecuadorian Amazonia (a South within the South), where reality is filtered through the “Off the Grid” and the “intermittent connections” (Martínez & Salvador, 2015b; Salvador & Martínez, 2015a) of everyday life in indigenous communities like the Shuar, will make it possible for us to analyse the specificities of a given case study, contributing to the existing *corpus* on the Mobile Age. Thus, we should wonder how the indigenous traditions

of this people from the Ecuadorian Amazonia combine with today's Mobile citizenship scenario, how do the Shuar ancestral worldviews fit in the language of the Mobile Age.

METHODOLOGY

In order to try to find an answer to these and other questions, we will use as a starting point the results of the research project "Ontología Móvil y Tecno-ciudadanía indígena. Caso de Estudio las comunidades Saraguro y Shuar", funded by the UTPL in 2014 and directed by the undersigned authors and on the basis of which we made other publications (de Salvador & Martínez, 2015b; Martínez & de Salvador, 2015; Martínez et al., 2015)¹. Data was gathered between March and July 2014, in Zamora Chinchipe, the southernmost province in Ecuadorian Amazonia, one of the areas of Ecuador where the Shuar people lives.

As it is documented by de Salvador and Martínez, 2015b; Martínez & de Salvador, 2015; Martínez et al., 2015), the study was carried out using a triangulation method combining quantitative (anonymous structured surveys) and qualitative ²(*ad hoc* workshops, in-depth interviews and participant and non-participant observation) methods. The sample for the structured surveys consisted of 135 subjects between 12 and 80 years old, with an average age of 28.7 (50% of the sample was aged between 16.7 and 38.6). The sample was sorted by gender, showing the following result: 48.1% male respondents and 51.9% female respondents. The extended sample (the questionnaire was designed to gather the full data of the relatives with which each respondent lived) consists of 571 subjects, 532 of which are over 5 years old. The average households consist of 4.8 members (50% of households consist of 3 and 6 members). This initial surveyed sample was further completed with a qualitative sample of 22 respondents. As to the in-depth interviews, the age range of the Shuar respondents is between 18 and 55, which guarantees a balanced sample from the points of view of education level and gender.

Participant observation was implemented during the techno-citizen workshops carried out in the communities of Shaime, Tsarunts, Guayzimi, Zurmi, Nuevo Paraíso, Wants, San Carlos de las Minas and Achunts, as well as in the other communities we could access: Tiukcha, Zhacay, San Vicente de Caney, Yacuambi, Zamora, Zumbi, La Paz and Guadalupe, all of them in the Zamora Chinchipe province. Zamora is the southernmost province of Ecuador; bordering Peru, it is divided into nine cantons, and it was in seven of those cantons (Zamora, Yantzaza, Centinela del Cóndor, Paquisha, Yacuambi, El Panguí and Nangaritzá) that this empirical study was made.

The methodology used was designed for the occasion, and it involved a necessary methodological modification during the first stage of the research due to the contextual specificities (de Salvador & Martínez, 2015b; Martínez, & de Salvador, 2015; Martínez et

¹ Information is available at http://smartland.utpl.edu.ec/sites/default/files/ontologia_movil_o.pdf.

² Whereas the quantitative methodology was applied only in the Zamora Chinchipe province, the in-depth interviews were conducted in the two provinces in which the main Shuar settlements can be found, Zamora Chinchipe and Morona Santiago, in the Ecuadorian Amazonia.

al., 2015). It started out with the signature of an agreement with the Federación Provincial de la Nacionalidad Shuar de Zamora-Chinchiipe (FEPNASH-ZCH) and a series of meetings with the Shuar leaders and with the community assemblies, after which we were allowed to access the different communities and carry out the workshops and conduct the surveys and the in-depth interviews. The whole interaction took place in an atmosphere of reciprocity and mutual respect.

SOME BRIEF COMMENTS ON THE SHUAR PEOPLE

As stated in the other publication based on this research (de Salvador & Martínez, 2015b), but it is important to repeat in order to generate a better comprehension of the phenomenon, the Shuar nation is the most famous Amazonian indigenous peoples. And is one of the most famous tribes all over the world. They are also known as the Waterfall People, the Headshrinkers, or the “jíbaros” (de Salvador & Martínez, 2015b). Currently, this nation consists of approximately 110,000 members who live on the border between Peru and Ecuador. More specifically, in Ecuador their settlements are scattered among the seven provinces of the Ecuadorian Amazonia, being more abundant in the southernmost ones, namely, Zamora Chinchipe and Morona Santiago. According to the latest 2010 national census, there are 79,709 Shuar, 5,474 of which lived in Zamora Chinchipe, the Ecuadorian province in which this research was mainly conducted.

The Shuar is a seminomadic people (de Salvador & Martínez, 2015b). They travel around the community-owned lands of the Amazon forest, staying in each area while the soil remains fertile. Their traditional houses are built in perishable materials, which shelter Shuar families during that fertile period. Being mainly gatherers and hunters, the Shuar respect the habitat they live off and worship nature. Their traditional celebrations commemorate the cyclic fertility of the land, represented by the *chonta* (peach palm), which provides them both with food and shelter, as its wood is used to build the pillars of their houses. The fruit of the *chonta* is used to make *chicha*, the sacred beverage of the Shuar. The *chicha* is made by having women chew the fruits, a laborious process in which the whole community takes part. The Shuar have a deep-rooted political tradition of defence of their customs and territories. Globalisation brought about a series of changes in their way of life (de Salvador & Martínez, 2015b), however, the Shuar sense of community is very much alive. Their social-political structure is based upon the extended patrilocal family, with or without blood bonds. A set of families founds a community, choosing a delegate or political representative to represent and govern them outside the community. Their political system is democratic and highly participative. Their delegates, grouped into provincial and national associations and federations, summon assemblies attended by all the neighbours in order to decide about the different public issues.

Nowadays, they no longer wear their traditional outfits and they have started to lose their crafting skills, as folklorisation takes over; yet, they are well aware of the relevance of their language, the Shuar-Chicham, a language of oral tradition that they defend against the growing influence of Spanish in their communities.

This traditionally highly territorial warrior people has now turned into a community physically and virtually connected to the world. Notwithstanding, this connection is “discontinuous” or “intermittent” and has several gaps (Martínez, de Salvador & de Salvador, 2015). The Shuar communities show different access levels, due to technological progress and to road construction in the Ecuadorian Amazonia (de Salvador & Martínez, 2015b).

CYCLIC TIME/SPACE IN THE MOBILE AGE AND IN THE SHUAR WORLDVIEW

According to the theoretician Enrique Lynch “the first relevant result of telecommunication is the fact that it modifies the spatial-temporal relationships among individuals, subsequently changing the reciprocal representation of their respective territories” (Lynch, 2010, p. 78). Such modification, derived from the so-called deterritorialisation that mobile digital technologies bring about, places us in an ever-changing spatial-temporal range. In Félix Duque’s words - quoted also by John B. Thompson -, technology and, more specifically, mobile technology, place us in a “de-spatialised simultaneity” (Duque, 2010, p. 49) where we share a deterritorialised space and a common time-frame. The spatial-temporal changes caused by technologies are perceived as follows by the Shuar³:

Now, in this time, it is the young mainly, rather than the old, because the old do not really make an effort, because this, as we say, these devices, the mobile phones, those issues, do not let us work, because we get stuck on them. Thus, we are left aside, they change technology, we get more phone calls on the mobile phone and this does not let us work or study. (Respondent no. 4, male, 40 years old)

Well, yes, the thing is that there is a difference, because our grandparents knew the sun was rising, they knew it was noon because they heard the rooster sing. In the morning they knew dawn was coming, they knew the sun was about to rise, because of the birds singing and the frogs croaking. They knew when the sunset started because of the different sounds. Yet, now, we do not follow a programme, we just set the alarm on our mobile phones. Thus, for instance, you set the alarm for the time you want because you have to have breakfast and then go out with your child. So, you see! That’s the difference: the mobile phone of the Shuar ringing ceaselessly in the countryside. (Respondent no. 21, female, 43 years old)

Sure, of course there are changes, in the past if you set a date for an appointment; you had to keep to it. Now, though, things are different, for instance, I planned something for a Sunday and that day I had to attend a more urgent matter. Thus, what I use my mobile phone to apologise and

³ The mother tongue of the Shuar, the Shuar-Chicham, is a language of oral tradition whose grammatical and syntactic structures differ strongly from those of Spanish. We have tried to keep their forms of expression intact in the original version, since all the interviews were conducted in Spanish. But in this paper we translate their words into English.

say I have something else to do. So, now things are different. Now everything is easier and faster. And in that case I wouldn't know how to tell him/her, and I would just leave and that would make me look bad, and the person would mistrust me in the future. (Respondent no. 1, male, 22 years old)

It is like a vicious circle and you want to use the device all the time and it drives you crazy or, I don't know, you lose control; but those devices let you organise your time and work even better, because they have specific applications to manage your agenda, work, meetings, etc. They are very useful. I say it is like having all in one thing and it's easy to carry. (Respondent no. 11, male, 28 years old)

Mobile phones have made it possible to organise things better, just because they can also... We generally use it as alarm clocks or time organisers. We can organise our time. I think that is very important, because sometimes you are distracted and the mobile phone can help you see time. (Respondent no. 13, female, 45 years old)

(Mobile technology) Exerts a great influence because, the time changes, and for our grandparents it was a bit difficult to cope with it, but now thanks to technology - at least mobile phones - sometimes it is not so necessary to have a watch and we can tell the time by checking our mobile phones, thanks to technology, and that changes our culture slowly but surely. (Respondent no. 12, male, 35 years old)

In the Shuar dynamic, cyclic and one-dimensional worldview time and space flow simultaneously. As a Shuar scholar said about the Shuar culture: “due to the cyclic conception of space and time, the lives of the Shuar revolve around a single dimension, which marks the difference with regards to the Western conception⁴” (Shakai, 2008, p. 32). Authors such as Ling and Haddon (cit. in Castells et al., 2006, p. 269) emphasised the influence of mobile phones and the so-called micro-coordination on human movement patterns, pointing out that they offer “freedom of contact”, given their nomadic nature, and the possibility to free ourselves from the spatial context and enter a space of communicative flows, where only time exists. Or where, as the Shuar would put it, space and time flow simultaneously in the *Tsawant*, a global spatial-temporal dimension that lacks “time-lapsed stages” (Shakai, 2008, p. 33). One-dimensionality, deterritorialisation and nomadism, with their own characteristics, are three of the features shared by the Shuar worldview and today's Mobile Age. Thus, up to which extent is Shuar nomadism reinforced by the appropriation of mobile technology by these indigenous communities? What are the consequences of today's technologic deterritorialisation on Shuar nomadism? Does the appropriation of mobile technology modify their spatial-temporal conception?

⁴ For further information on the Western conception of time, see, Duque (2014), for instance.

As opposite to a linear, progressive conception, the Shuar worldview is summarised in a single term, *tsawant* that encompasses a dynamic, cyclic thought (the beginning of an efflux whose end is a new beginning), which differs from the evolutionary rationality (rectilinear from the beginning to the end), and approaches Eastern worldview conceptions and, even, reminds us of the cyclic conception of ancient Greece. The *tsawant* dimension, as time and space, as unitary category constituted by both concepts indivisibly, is translated into Kichwa as *pacha*: “the world”. These two cultures, coexisting in southern Ecuadorian Amazonia, would thus share, among other features, a one-dimensional conception of time and space.

The Andean worldview of the Kichwa of Zamora-Chinchipe comprises two worlds: the *allpamama* -the microcosm- and the *pachamama* -the macrocosm-, linked by a bridge. The *pachamama* is the female co-creator, and the *pachakamak* is the male giver of life. The *allpamama*, or Mother Earth, is “dynamic, because it transforms the energy that flows in concentric circles” (Japón, s/f, p. 11). This dual conception - *allpamama/pachamama* - is shared by the Shuar worldview, more similar to conceptions such as the platonic one –Sensible World/Intelligible World or The World of Ideas. The Earth for the Shuar is “an island surrounded by heaven” (Barriga, 1986, p. 63). The World of Life (*Nunka*) is the prelude of the Real or Divine World (*Nayaimp*), which is accessed by means of a liana and to which humans can connect by taking certain substances (such as the ayahuasca or *nantem*), in the company of an old wise man (called *Wea*). The Shuar gods (*Arutam*) are in Nature, the habitat of this nomadic community, which benefits respectfully from the spot of the Amazon jungle where it settles. The *jeas* or *geas*, the Shuar traditional houses, represent the worldview of this indigenous people; thus, the ceiling is heaven, the walls are the horizon that surrounds the Earth, the floor is the Earth itself and, finally, the underground is the divine world of the gods and the souls (Barriga, 1986). The *jeas* are made of *chonta* leaves⁵, and hence are not made to endure. They would last, traditionally, for as long as the family stayed in one place. That is, for as long as they could hunt, fish and forage in the jungle. Nomadism or semi-nomadism determine the living habits of the Shuar; yet, nowadays, migration into urban areas to work or study, mining in the Ecuadorian Amazonia and the subsequent shrinkage of indigenous community lands have transformed the traditional semi-nomadic habits of these people, who have become contemporary nomads. Apart from the aforementioned changes, it is also necessary to analyse the impact of the introduction of mobile devices on the Shuar communities, on their living habits and also on their nomadic nature. Quoting the Shuar, as far as the changes brought about by mobile phones are concerned, it can be observed that:

Well, I think things have changed, since in the past we used it for fun, as I've already told you, to go with the fashion, to be more updated, but now

⁵ The “Uwi nijiamtamu”, also known as the Chonta celebration, is one of the main traditional Shuar celebrations together with the Tsantsa celebration (the celebration of the shrunken heads). During the Chonta celebration, the Shuar sing to the tree of life (i.e., the Chonta), whose fruits are divine. This ritual celebrates the fertility of nature, renewed each time the Chonta flourishes (every twelve months), and represents the spatial-temporal unity that corresponds to one year. Not holding the Chonta celebration means death (Barriga, 1986).

we use it as a general, positive tool to work, study and keep more in contact with our families from afar. Thus, travelling and so on revealed to be no longer so necessary. Then, things got easier. So I think that nowadays we can communicate easily thanks to technology” (Respondent no. 1, male, 22 years old)

(Thanks to mobile phones) “we don’t need to travel half as much. Sometimes we can only communicate by phone, either calling or sending an SMS, and we need not waste our time travelling to places. It saves time, as we don’t need to travel around. (Respondent no. 3, female, 18 years old)

Now everybody has phones to communicate in the countryside, to talk to the family, to call in case of emergency; whereas if we had to go, for instance to Pangui, it would be very far away. If you have to come from Pincho or Pangui for an emergency or the like, you have to travel many kilometres to get here. While you may use your mobile to call, say, ten or fifteen minutes in advance, and you’ll have a car right at the door. (Respondent no. 9, male, 26 years old)

According to the Shuar, the changes brought about by mobile technologies have reduced their traditional nomadic habits, at least, as far as the movements triggered by the necessity to communicate are concerned. In this sense, they also point out the fact that traditional nomadism (travelling on foot) is also influenced by the modernisation introduced by mobile phones, which make it possible to get a means of transport by simply making a phone call, in order to travel longer distances faster and more comfortably.

The non-nomadic or unitary relationship is the essence of both the Andean and the Shuar (Amazonian) worldview, since both conceptions postulate certain specific features, some of which are: the relevance of relationships, communityship and the conception of Nature as an entity with material and spiritual connotations, in a dynamic, spatial-temporal and one-dimensional cycle. The Kichwa-Saraguro are nomads just like the Shuar. A characteristic of their outfit, the saddlebag they use to carry things, speaks of their past migrations from Bolivia (Mitimaes) or Peru (Cusquenos) according to the disparate, discordant theories that try to explain their origins before their settlement in Ecuador. Just like snails, these people carry about them their saddlebags, their homes and now their mobile phones.

The two indigenous nationalities that live in this province of Ecuador share the same conception of the spatial-temporal whole. This logic of the flow of adjoining experiences matches almost naturally that of the contemporary Mobile Age (space-time flows); and, thus, the metaphor of the snail that carries its identity on its back becomes a faithful reflection of that dynamism. Quoting Marcelo Shakai’s words on the Shuar culture: “They got to understand that nature is not static, that it moves generating dynamism, by comparing it to a snail spinning around in an open spiral” (Shakai, 2008, p. 31).

The snail is a double metaphor given its nature: the spiral, spinning around itself - never moving away from its centre - in a one-dimensional movement that reflects the dynamism of nature; and the shell as an identity carrier in which we carry our signs of identity (just as if it was a saddlebag), namely, our home and our network of relationships; which are now carried in the shell-like metal housing of mobile phones: the snail technologies.

SNAIL TECHNOLOGIES: NOMADIC IDENTITIES

Since mobile phones draw us closer to a nomadic life, turning us into snails (Fortunati, 2005) that carry a whole network of relationships in the back - a whole set of real possibilities with each step thanks to hyperconnectivity -, an analysis of the implications of the appropriation of mobile phones⁶ (from this point of view) by a nomadic people such as the Shuar, completed with the worldview of the Kichwa-Saraguro also dwelling in the Ecuadorian Amazonia, seems particularly interesting.

You can take mobile phones everywhere, you can carry them in your pocket or your bag; landlines, though, are home-bound and they can only be used to communicate with those who stay home. (Respondent no. 3, female, 18 years old)

The previous quote, by a Shuar respondent, shows the ontological change between “being on the phone” and “going mobile”, pointed out by Sadie Plant (2001) and Maurizio Ferraris (2005) by the beginning of the 21st century. “Being” becomes “going”, which shows our own mutation. The question “who is it?” (landlines) becomes “where are you?”, since we already know the identity of the caller (whose name appears on the screen). With mobile phones, as the snail metaphor shows, we carry identity, the house, on our back: (mobile phones) “*can be carried everywhere in order to get phone calls*” (Respondent no. 3, 18 years old). That is to say, the identity comes from the mobile phone; hence, not having it or losing it may be perceived as “a great lack”:

Time ago I suffered quite a lot because I did not have a mobile phone. That was a great lack. But since I got one my life has changed a lot from the point of view of communication. Without my mobile I feel I’m nothing. Just as if I had disappeared. And when I use another device or a lent mobile, I do not feel its rightful owner and I am always in fear that it may suffer damage or some other problem and it’s not mine, and so on and so forth. So, I have tried to get myself a good mobile phone to cover my needs. (Respondent no. 11, male, 28 years old)

The Shuar are well aware about the importance of mobile technology nowadays and of their presence as Shuar culture with a specific world view, in these “modern times”:

⁶ Thus, the Shuar appropriation of these technologies would evidence the postulate of Rosalia Winocur (2008, p. 186): “Unlike other technologies, the use of mobile phones underwent a process of symbolic appropriation by different social groups (...), such as the poor, indigenous communities, immigrants, elderly people or children”.

(Thanks to mobile phones) “we can also keep our identity, our culture, and make it part of that technology, because we use advanced technologies. It is no hindrance, because it is also better for us. We must live so that our culture also becomes part of technology in these modern times. (Respondent no. 12, male, 35 years old)

The Shuar are also aware that they carry their network of relationships on their mobile, which would mean a crisis in case of loss, because it is not only the device that gets lost, but a whole set of personal contacts (family, etc.). This crisis reinforces the idea that mobile phones are our sign of identity, our extended identity, in today’s Mobile Age. The lack or loss of the mobile phone is interpreted by Gitte Stald (2008) as a challenge, since it has a triple implication: i) the adaptation to the social network, ii) the own social position, i.e., taking part in social activities, and iii) the self-perception of identity.

Let’s see, an anecdote, I lost my mobile recently. I was travelling to Guayzimi and I put it in my back trouser pocket. When I arrived, I wanted to make a phone call and I realised I had lost it. It was a disaster for me, because I lost all my contacts. Everything was lost. It was awful: I had to get my contacts back again. I even lost my father’s number in Quito. And since I only had it all on my mobile phone, I had to start from scratch. (Respondent no. 7, female, 29 years old)

Years ago I was jealous. Because people had mobile phones and I didn’t. They could communicate and I could not (...) and I felt like I was nothing! I felt I wasn’t important. But I bought myself a mobile, and I could keep my contacts in it, contacts from my childhood and my youth.... (Respondent no. 9, male, 26 years old)

The lack of preset temporal stages among this nomadic people matches the flexibility that characterises mobile digital technologies, a feature scholars have largely praised. The endlessly spiralling snail metaphor, which the Shuar use to describe their worldview, and the characterisation of nature resemble today’s mobile technology we all carry about.

In the Shuar mythology, the Snail *-kunku-* represents the reciprocity between the two female poles *-perseverance (Kunku)* and *prosperity (Nunkui)-*, and when this reciprocity is interrupted, balance disappears and the Shuar can no longer enjoy prosperity. *Nunkui* (prosperity, embodied and symbolised by a little girl) disappears when *Kunku* (the perseverance to take care of *Nunkui*) leaves her alone. When mankind realises the consequences of the loss it tries to retain prosperity (*Nunkui*), but it can only hold on to the recollection of prosperity: the little stones (*nantar*) Shuar women must keep for their vegetable plots to be healthy. Hence, the snail metaphor according to the Shuar worldview is particularly interesting in this context, since it lays the basis for survival through food production. *Kunku* (the snail) is a living condition, which reinforces the snail metaphor as an identity.

The Kichwa-Saraguro, which share the land of the southern Ecuadorian Amazonia (Zamora-Chinchipec province) with the Shuar, have chosen a different snail form, the shell (*churu/churo*), as the symbol of communication, of dynamism. The shell is the traditional Andean means of communication and the Kichwa-Saraguro used it both as a music instrument and to communicate and send messages to the furthestmost communities.

If we focus on today's context, we can see that we are technological snails, with a hard, rigid shell, our mobiles, whose spiral form reminds us of the fact that we can get far from the centre (our own self), yet, the shell will still turn around ourselves. This logic of the spiral, with no beginning and no end, is possible thanks to:

1. The fact that mobile phones are portable devices, and thus we can "leave and stay", as Kittler (2010) said, i.e., bring faraway things to us, to our spatial-temporal present. And since mobiles are portable devices we can also travel to faraway places without losing our own spatial-temporal coordinates, as we have said in the previous section.
2. Phone customization (housing, case, ringtones, stickers, photos, music, videos, etc.), which speaks of ourselves, showing how we are both outside and inside. As a democratic political representative of the Shuar told to another indigenous community of Zamora-Chinchipec:

I sometimes download photographs on my mobile phone, photographs of faraway places, of my wife, my children... and sometimes people ask me whether I have pictures of my homeland and I tell them that I have them right here (on my mobile). (Respondent no. 6, male, 38 years old)

The portable nature and customisable character of mobiles speak of the owner's identity, because one cannot customise a lent device or take it away from its rightful owner; now, if we take these two features and consider the remote context in which they must apply - a place of limited access and intermittent coverage -, it is confirmed that "the introduction of mobile phones in our daily lives modifies, not only the dimensions of time and space, but also our perception and the way we relate to our ecosystem (Fidalgo et al., 2013, p. 545). That is to say, it transforms identities.

CONCLUSION

As we had already stated in other studies (de Salvador y Martínez, 2015b; Martínez, & de Salvador, 2015; Martínez et al., 2015), the appropriation of mobile phones by the Shuar has a series of specific consequences on their spatial-temporal conception, as well as on the configuration of their identity.

The one-dimensionality of the Shuar culture, which considers time and space as a unique factor, seems to coincide with the space of mobile communicative flows and with a timeless time (Castells et al., 2006). Yet, since the appropriation of mobile technologies by the Shuar culture has been influenced by the worldview of the Western culture - whose ancestral habits of work and study have changed -, it involves certain changes that affect the communion with nature, which is the basis of the Shuar dynamism. As one of the Shuar respondents says, mobile phone alarms are starting to substitute the sounds of nature as spatial-temporal indicators for the members of the indigenous communities.

Now, considering the other pole of this snail metaphor, the question of identity, it can be seen that the nomadism of this indigenous group (which, in theory, seems to connect rather naturally with the worldview of the Mobile Age) has been reduced for communicative reasons, or modernized. And now feet have been substituted by the wheels of the vehicles that can come to pick you up whenever you call them from your mobile phone. Once more, the acculturation of these communities may be taken as an example of the gap between the Shuar systems or ideologies and mobile technologies, elements that initially, in theory, seemed to be similar.

As we had already stated (de Salvador y Martínez, 2015b; Martínez, & de Salvador, 2015; Martínez et al., 2015), the appropriation of mobile phones by the dwellers of the Ecuadorian Amazonian rainforest has a series of impacts on identity, not only because technologies bear an ideological load (Wacjman, 2008), but also because the context of this appropriation has already been influenced by Western cultures. The Shuar interviewed for this study lost their worldview way before the arrival of mobile phones; in fact, they appropriate mobiles from the perspective of a foreign culture. As in “modern” societies (Stald, 2008), in Amazonian societies mobiles are an identity appendix. Not having one is a “great lack” that has a series of negative consequences for the individual, who feels the need to recover and preserve this techno-snail. //

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