

In political sciences and philosophy the trend is now focused on deliberative democracy. The high epistemic challenge, recognized by Vinck throughout his book, needs high level of reflection and not only participation. These forums are not the panacea as he describes them, but I think they need as much expertise, know-how and assessment as the research on nanotechnologies. These participative devices could offer good public spaces to confront the different actors, following and defending different definitions of nanotechnologies. Among the requirements of a deliberative democracy, in fact, the main point is the obligation to present arguments. In one of the more prominent theory of the argument (Toulmin, 1958), an argument is composed of different steps. The first one is precisely to agree on data and definitions. It would certainly be a way to continue Vinck's book.

References

- Callon, M., Lascoumes, P. and Barthe, Y. (2001) *Agir dans un monde incertain*, Seuil, Paris.
- Toulmin, S.E. (1958) *The Uses of Argument*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Giuseppina Pellegrino

The Politics of Proximity. Mobility and Immobility in Practice

2011, Ashgate Publishing, 157 pp.

Andrés Felipe Valderrama Pineda

(Technical University of Denmark)

The Politics of Proximity, edited by Giuseppina Pellegrino, is one of the most salient contributions to the field of mobility studies and to sociology in general published in the last few years. The main reason for this is that it takes up seriously the question "why do we move so much?" This question is pertinent at a moment in history when two contradictory developments are happening: on the one hand, we have now all the technological development necessary to reduce corporeal travel and at the same time remain connected; on the other hand, the same technologies could support the old dream of living in the countryside and still be part of the urbanity, being permanently connected. However, never in history humans have travelled so much, and never in history humans have crammed so much into dense and expensive cities. Why does this happen? Why do we pay so much money to live in cities and travel in them and between them so often? In short, why do we take so much pain to be in proximity? This is the question for the politics of proximity that the various authors of this excellent compilation take up and

discuss.

The short and concise foreword by John Urry sets the stage for the book, while Giuseppina Pellegrino's accomplished introduction presents the main questions to be addressed in the book and its contributions. The main contributions are four: first, to take up and discuss "the inescapably political character of proximity"; second, the need to move ahead with (apply and discuss) John Urry's principles for a sociology of mobility and a mobile sociology; third, to perform analyses that take into account the "sociotechnical constitution of our everyday life"; and fourth, to focus on "practice as the situated and material locus of proximity and mobility".

Three parts constitute the body of the edited volume. The first is dedicated to the theoretical discussion of proximity and mobility. The other two present empirical contributions dealing with diverse methods: the second part focuses on issues of identity; the third on global firms and urban landscapes. For space reasons I will not discuss here all the contributions, but I will focus on some aspects that caught my attention.

Marchetti's contribution is a brilliant summary of Urry's theories and a useful discussion on the role of physical and social space. Engelbrekt presents the notion of attainable reach as a useful tool to discuss the politics of proximity. Lamentably, neither of these two excellent theoretical contributions is taken up in the empirical cases, nor in a much-

missed summary conclusion to the book.

Buscema's ambitious attempt to bring together Marxists theories, Foucaultian bio-politics and a superficial reference to social movements in Mexico is incomplete and even dangerous. It misses the opportunity to discuss one of the most salient aspects of the politics of mobility/immobility at a global scale: that for many communities and groups immobility is the result of confinement and aggression. They have not chosen to be immobile, but have been forced to do so because they are allowed to move only under certain conditions.

Gerharz elaborates how some of the inhabitants of Jaffna, in Sri Lanka, became immobile and disconnected during the war. She describes and discusses the various identity clashes occurring when a ceasefire was enforced and emigrants from the city could return after years of exile in various countries of North America and Europe. Unfortunately, she – as a Western anthropologist – chooses to be "stranged" by the way local traditional persons could not understand the Western customs appropriated by the emigrants. Gerharz missed the opportunity to discuss some of the Western perversions, though she reports some allusions to them, as for instance in the following remarkable description by a professor in Jaffna: "Before the ceasefire, Jaffna was a closed prison. Now it has become an open market". Shuffling the adjectives could provokingly inspire more symmetry:

open prison, closed market!

In stark contrast to the sufferings of people from Jaffna, in another contribution Gherardi discusses how middle and top managers suffer or enjoy the hyper-mobility required in their jobs. She ably shows how top managers regard their hyper-mobility as a resource and source of enjoyment, because they are able to establish homes in many places. Meanwhile, middle managers – who are also compelled to travel or re-settle, but have fewer resources – suffer the dislocations of multi-territoriality.

I would have loved to see the managers and the inhabitants of Jaffna treated in the same way as sources of knowledge. In the book, however, the latter are “stranged” while the former are not. As mobilities studies grow in number of case studies and theoretical sophistication, it would be desirable the complete abandonment of the old Eurocentric mania of treating Western and non-Western peoples as ontologically different.

Finally, Paola Jirón’s compelling analysis of mobility practices in Santiago de Chile is worthy of note. This is because it neatly deploys the mobility/proximity analytical spirit to show how people can be “confined in their mobility experiences” (and thus making the point that Buscema misses). These experiences are constituted by a set of choices in which socio-economic aspects play a role. However, the very soul of this contribution is to illustrate how those abstract and sometimes quantifiable

social and economic aspects, become bounded in particular experiences of mobility along fixed routines. Just like in Jaffna during the war in Sri Lanka, in Chile Roberto, Francisco, Catalina and Rodrigo – the protagonists of Jirón’s empirical account – are trapped in the open prisons of their mobile routines.