

The length and breadth of Italy: redefining rhythms and territories through mobilities

Bruna Vendemmia

To cite this article: Bruna Vendemmia (2017): The length and breadth of Italy: redefining rhythms and territories through mobilities, Applied Mobilities, DOI: [10.1080/23800127.2017.1342066](https://doi.org/10.1080/23800127.2017.1342066)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23800127.2017.1342066>



Published online: 03 Jul 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 65



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



The length and breadth of Italy: redefining rhythms and territories through mobilities

Bruna Vendemmia

DAStU, Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Italy

ABSTRACT

How far have changes in mobility practices transformed the relationship between people and territory, and altered urban rhythms? In which way can urban planners deal with these transformations? What are the new spaces and habits of people on the move? In answering these questions this article investigates some cases of highly mobile people in Italy, and tests an innovative research method based on the direct observation of people's mobilities and their stories of this mobility. The article takes on a double perspective: on the one hand it tries to offer an overview of the Italian case, collecting general data about changes in the structure of society and mobility behaviours; on the other hand, it describes and maps in detail stories of highly mobile people, investigating mobility paths, the reason behind their choice and, finally, their consequences. The final results are expected to open up new lines of research in the design of mobility: first and foremost, a more holistic approach to mobility may help to better identify mobility demand and define mobility strategies on a territorial level; secondly, the use of a sensitive approach to mobility analysis, one that considers the feelings and perceptions of mobile people, may bring about a more conscious and performing design of mobility spaces and services.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 29 December 2016

Accepted 29 May 2017

KEYWORDS

Mobilities; mobility practices; maps; mobility design; mobile methods; mobility stories

1. Introduction

Due to increased mobility worldwide, territorial relationships are becoming less sedentary and more dynamic. At the same time, these transformations have brought about new ways of inhabiting space, and have changed traditional relationships with territory. This paper aims to build a framework which will illustrate those changes in territorial relationships and urban spaces, with a special focus on the case in Italy.

In order to analyse these phenomena, the paper illustrates some stories of highly mobile people in Italy,¹ with particular reference to their mobility behaviours and mobility paths, and tries to clarify the reasons behind their choices of mobility. As the article will demonstrate, there has been an incredible increase in mobility in Italy over the last few decades. A deeper and more realistic understanding of emerging mobility practices will permit a more efficient and incisive management of mobility as a whole, including both the design and

conception of mobility spaces, and the management of mobility services and transport schedules.

Starting with mobility stories, I will describe some of the spatial transformations that follow on from the diffusion of emerging mobility practices. At the same time, the analysis of aggregate data also highlights important changes in mobility behaviour at a national level, demonstrating the significance of the subject.

In the following paragraphs I will try, first of all, to build a framework of the Italian situation by looking at changes in the structure of Italian society and the sphere of work, as well as analysing transport behaviour and its transformation due to the existence of new mobility services. Then, I will briefly introduce the research method. After that I will present mobility short stories and their graphical translation on individual maps, synthesizing some profiles of territorial relationships which reveal both changes between people and territory, and the coexistence of different temporalities in urban space. Conclusions will open up lines for future research on mobility design.

This paper will highlight the need for more innovative and mobile methods to describe mobility practices. It will, in fact, demonstrate that approaching mobility through individual stories and graphical maps is an important methodological tool with which to explain changes in urban space. Furthermore, mobility can be understood “as both a knowledge and a policy tool for understanding and regulating the process of transformation of the contemporary city” (Pucci 2016, 4).

This work is rooted in the field of mobility studies, and applied to the design of urban spaces. For the purpose of this research, space is not intended to be “a container for social processes” (Sheller and Urry 2016, 12), but as “an inherently dynamic simultaneity” (Massey 1994, 3), made of “juxtaposition” and “co-presence” of a network of social relations. It is for this reason that I begin with the analysis of mobility space by examining individual paths rather than fixed places.

2. Looking at the Italian context

According to the ISTAT 2011 general census,² the employment rate in Italy is 56,9%, which is lower than the European Union average (64,3%). Both the job market and financial crisis³ engendered changes in Italian societal structure, sharpening phenomena such as: the need to rely on family and solidarity networks, work related instability, the expansion of the job-searching basin, a delay in starting a family (in Italy the birth rate remains far below the replacement level and the number of marriages also decreased in 2011) and, more generally, changes in family structure.

All of these factors have had powerful consequences on residential and mobility choices. Mobility behaviours have also been strongly influenced by the improvement of transport services and communication technologies.

In terms of transport behaviours, there are 29,000,000 people who commute every day for work or study,⁴ the equivalent of 48.6 % of the resident Italian population. Commuters increased by 2.1 million people since the previous census in 2001. Two thirds of these commuters travel for work related reasons. Workers make longer journeys than students. Mobility time has also increased since 2001, as number of people travelling for more than 45 min every day.

Regarding modal choice, Italians continue to prefer travelling by car, although there has been an increase in train use along some specific routes, as reported by NTV.⁵

Trenitalia, the main company for train transport in Italy, first conceived the prospect of a High Speed Train line in 1990. Currently the company offers three different services to its High Speed passengers: the Frecciarossa has been active since December 2009 on the Turin-Milan-Naples-Salerno axis that accounts for 65% of the mobility demand⁶; Frecciargento trains travel from Venice to Rome and Naples, and connect also Verona, Brescia, Bolzano, Bari, Lecce, Lamezia Terme and Reggio Calabria; lastly, Frecciabianca is active between Turin – Milan – Venice, and Turin – Milan – Genoa. Trenitalia, with RFI, built the line “as a legal monopoly” (Beria and Grimaldi 2011). Since 2012 NTV has also been active on the same lines, and offers Italo train services between Turin and Salerno and from Venice to Bologna.

From 2009, parallel to the increasing economic crisis that had an important impact on the expansion of the job-search basin, Italians have had the opportunity to choose a new and faster way of travelling, and it seems that the implementation of the HSR has encouraged more people to use trains. According to NTV, in the period from 1990 to 2009, the use of cars increased from 54 to 59%, air travel from 11 to 20%, while the demand for travel by train decreased from 36 to 21%. Between 2009 and 2012, however, while the use of HSR train services increased from 39 to 54%, the use of cars decreased from 28% to 21% and the use of flights from 26 to 21%.

People travelling on High Speed Rail, according to NTV, are⁷:

- (1) New commuters on the High Speed Line, that is to say people who have changed their city of residence, work or study thanks to the reduction of travel time due to the implementation of the HSR line, and who travel daily or weekly between home and work-place;
- (2) People who work or study far from the place they come from and, thanks to the new offer of transport, travel back home more often.
- (3) And finally, people who, thanks to the reduction in price (due to the competition provided by NTV), travel more for leisure.

The subjects analysed in this research belong to categories 1 and 2.

3. Research methods

In order to answer the research questions, I decided to adopt a qualitative research methodology based on semi-structured interviews, travel-alongs and mapping. The information collected by implementing these strategies are rewritten as mobility stories.

I personally interviewed 11 mobile people; I travelled alongside 8 of them, and asked them to draw interactive maps of their lives and personal activities. The small number of participants selected meant that I could afford to explore the rich details of their activities. The study was not designed to provide a complete survey of spatial effects due to changes in mobility practices, but to be interpretive rather than statistical.

For each person I conducted a thorough investigation that, through interviews and direct observation, covered all the different domains of the interviewee's life and the spaces that he or she inhabits. The interview lasted approximately 50 min, while the travel-along varied from 1 to 4 h. The structure of the interview was designed in order to catch the complexity of mobility management, and to investigate the reasons of mobility and the relationships that allow the development of a highly mobile lifestyle. It had a special focus on the mobility generated by job conditions; nevertheless, it covered different domains of life, with specific attention paid to spatial consequences generated by mobility practices. All of the interviews

were conducted in Italian and translated into English at a later stage by the author. They were conducted telephonically.

Interviewees were selected using the snowball technique, and are people who correspond to certain basic requirements:

- They all experience emerging mobility practices and they are, for example, Long-Distance/Long-Time Commuters, Shuttlers or Overnighters.
- Their practices of mobility began mainly for reasons related to work, but have extended their influence over many different domains: in particular, over personal and family life.
- Due to their mobility practices they all simultaneously occupy various and diverse life basins

Eight of the interviewees accepted my participation on a travel-along experience. The travel-along consists of following people on their usual journeys, observing them while they practice mobilities: their personal relationships, their use of transport and mobility space, the people they travel with or meet during the trip, and finally the devices and, more generally, the objects that “travel” along with them.

Finally, I have used maps in different phases of the research. During the travel-along, I asked interviewees to design their activities on a map. In this case, the map was both an object that helped people to talk about their mobility behaviours, and an important source of information, at a later stage. Then, in a final phase, I made a graphical translation of the mobility stories on synthetic maps. The latter, as will be clarified later in this article, are description of the interviewees’ mobility behaviours, and are key to understanding spatial changes due to the emergence of mobility practices.

4. Short stories of mobility

As stated before, the information collected during the research flows into the construction of mobility stories. The stories describe the mobile lives of the interviewees. The names used in the text are false in order to preserve the privacy of the interviewees. All the stories are narrated individually except for Gennaro and Alessia, and Lorenzo and Veronica. Gennaro and Alessia are both colleagues and friends and they commute together every day. I decided to present their stories together to show the importance of the relationships established thanks to mobility and the configuration of mobile communities. Veronica and Lorenzo are a couple and their mobilities are the consequence of one another. In this case, introducing their stories as one highlights the consequences of a highly mobile life on the couple.

The decision to describe spatial transformation due to mobilities through the narrative of mobile people’s everyday mobility was inspired by recent work on mobility such as *Mobile lives* (Elliott and Urry 2010); *Slices of mobile lives* (Ravalet et al. 2014); *Eurostars and Eurocities* (Favell, 2008), and *Riciclare spazi e Forme della Mobilità* (Fabian, Donadoni, and Velo 2015). It provides an opportunity to deliver a “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of a process of spatial transformation in happening, more than to define a space fixed both in time and space. According to Vannini, it may be said that examining spaces of mobility through the narrative of the zig-zag line described by people’s stories (Vannini 2015) is an attempt to represent the process of movement as opposed to outlining mobility spaces as fixed in time and space, and helps in understanding the connection between the different activities and places.

4.1. Sandra

Sandra lives in Caivano, a small town in the suburbs of Naples, with her parents. She is highly qualified and has a PhD in Environmental Architecture, though it has been very difficult for her to find a job in her field of studies. Following her PhD, Sandra moved to Bologna for one year and worked as a technician for the army. The army gave her a good salary and accommodation in Bologna, but the job was temporary. Therefore, after eight months she went back to Caivano, to live with her family once again, and began the search for another job.

At the moment, she is working as a substitute teacher in Rome. She has a fixed-term contract and her salary doesn't permit her to rent a house there. These uncertain working conditions make her life extremely mobile. Currently, she is a double resident of Caivano and Rome. She would love to move to Rome but she says

the salary I get for this job isn't enough to rent a house, so three days a week I stay at some friend's house or in a hotel. I start working at 8 o'clock in a neighbourhood 20 min by train from Rome central station, and leaving from Naples every morning would be too much.

Sandra would prefer to live in Rome but she is unable to do so because of the insecurity of her job and her low salary. As she cannot live in Rome

I can't do it now, it's not my choice. I would love to live in Rome and be less mobile in my everyday life but I can't afford it – but refuses to commute everyday – I wouldn't like to be a LDC as I wouldn't enjoy the time I spent in Rome, I'd only spend more time on the train,

She has decided to be a shuttler so that “when I am in Rome I can also meet people and spend time with friends, go to the theatre, visit exhibitions, I use the time I am in Rome for my relational life and for cultural activities, or leisure”. She was also able to make this decision as she is not in a stable relationship nor does she have children.

4.2. Giorgio

Giorgio was born in Arezzo. He is a freelance costume designer and counts many Italian TV channels among his clients. Giorgio is mobile because his job moves. “I work in show business, we are like gypsies, how do you think they can live without travelling? My work is always on the move, it's not a static job” he says. Due to the fact that he is freelance, and he follows different television programmes, he moves continuously between the many studios located in Milan and Rome. In Milan he works during the day from Monday to Friday afternoon, but on Friday night he travels to Rome to follow another show. Even though he lives in Milan for most of the week he keeps all his mobility facilities in Rome: “When I arrive in Roma Termini Station I take a taxi and I go home. I have my scooter there. If I have to work, I drive my scooter to the studios”.

Giorgio likes to be mobile “I like to travel, I think it's part of my lifestyle”, but this is also because he chose his job and his mobility is its direct consequence. Furthermore, by being more mobile he can earn more money and have better job opportunities. His clients refund his costs of transport, and his journeys are comfortable as he travels in business class. In addition, the context of his life is mobile as his colleagues are also always on the move, which is one of the main reasons why he is completely at ease when doing so. Lastly, he is not currently in a stable relationship nor does he have children.

Giorgio's mobility is a necessity linked to his job. Mobile jobs have always existed, and it is the ease and speed of Giorgio's trips that make the difference and gives him the chance

to work in various geographically distant places, managing his work and his private life over a very large territory.

4.3. Valentina

Valentina was born in Pavia, and she is a LDC between Milan and Turin. Milan is not only her place of work, however, as she lived there for 20 years.

When she started her family, Valentina decided to move to another city. This city offered her better opportunities of finding child care, mainly due to the support of her partner's family "Leonardo's nanny is Federico (her husband's sister)" – she says – "We pay her for this, but at least he is always with a member of the family. I feel more relaxed"; the new city also offered a more affordable house market and the possibility of living in a more comfortable urban environment.

At the same time Valentina has open-ended contracts and would not find the same job conditions in Turin, nor could she work in the same sector. Thus, she is a Long-Distance Commuter struggling with her career and professional opportunities, on one hand, and family life, on the other. To this regard she affirms

My everyday mobility has a strong impact on my life, in particular on the way I relate to my child. It is my husband who takes care of him. I have to concentrate all my personal activities in Milan so that when I am in Turin I have more time for my family.

It is clear that Valentina's mobility is also possible thanks to her husband's immobility. Valentina has an open-ended contract in Milan, while her husband is a building contractor and his company and working relations are in Turin. While her job is more secure and her salary higher than that of her husband she is forced to spend the majority of her life 150Km away from her family. Valentina's mobility is a choice that was made by the couple due to the economic balance of the family. She needs to travel to have a well-paid job and her partner has taken on a greater role in family management and childcare.

Valentina feels at ease while on the move, however, and takes advantages of the situation to develop her personal interests and relations

I have breakfast with my friends in the station. I can also meet friends for a drink before going back home, and I go shopping with them. My activities are all in the station: Milan Central or Garibaldi. (...) Tonight I'm going to meet a friend from Bergamo. We meet at the central station as she comes from Bergamo and I'm travelling to Turin. Tonight I'll go to the central station, I'll meet her, we'll have a quick drink together and then I'll go back to Turin. (...) I don't care about the place. I love spending time with my friends. So, even the station can be a nice place to meet people.

For Valentina, however, mobility spaces are also comfortable working places. When I travelled-along with her, for example, her computer was open on the table and she was doing some work. Valentina explained to me that she had not been able to work at home the evening before, and so she had to catch up before arriving at the office.

4.4. Beatrice

Beatrice was born in Asti but moved to Turin to study. She met her boyfriend there. They have lived together in Turin since 2008, but she works in Milan. She has been a long-distance commuter for four years, travelling five days per week by train. Recently she got the chance to rent a small apartment in Milan and started to shuttle between the cities, living in Milan

from Monday to Friday. As a consequence, she began a long-distance relationship. She is also an overnight traveller and commutes to Veneto and around Europe for her job.

Beatrice works in fashion. The company she works for is based in Veneto though Milan is the place where her clients come to view the merchandise. For this reason she needs to be in Milan. She prefers to be mobile, rather than permanently moving to Milan, as her significant others, family and friends, are in Turin:

If you ask me where I live, I say Turin. Later, while I was putting my life on the maps I realized that all my activities are in Milan. There is another part of my life, which is the relationship with my partner, who is in Turin. So I can say that I live in Turin, because my loved one is there, but the rest, my personal interests: cinemas, theatres, exhibitions, are in Milan.

Beatrice considers her time spent in Milan as an opportunity and she has completely different life styles in the two cities:

I do not cook when I am alone in Milan I always go out for dinner. In Turin my boyfriend cooks for me. When I'm in Milan I always go out with friends, and at the week-end I'm very lazy.

Officially, she is still resident in Asti, the city where her parents live. Even though she left 12 years ago, she rents an apartment in Turin but spends 5 days a week in Milan where she neither rents nor owns a house. Furthermore, considering that she does not commute every day, she is not even included in the official statistics of workers that enter Milan by train, even though she uses the city and its services.

4.5. Gennaro and Alessia

Gennaro and Alessia are LDCs between Milan and Turin.

In the cases of Gennaro and Alessia, it was the specificity of their jobs that led to them becoming commuters. They work in the sector of public relations for design companies, and Milan is a very attractive city because of the many events that are hosted there throughout the year, in particular during Milan Design Week. Furthermore, Alessia began working in Milan just as the financial crisis was reducing the number of job opportunities and she therefore felt that it was not possible for her to refuse this chance

I was a bit down – she says – when I had to start working in Milan. It was a difficult decision, because I didn't want to live there, but it was my choice to take the train. And, at the start, working in Milan was very tiring. The idea that I had to travel for so long to go to work every morning and to come back was not even imaginable for me, but it was the beginning of the financial crisis and I couldn't turn it down. I thought it was something temporary and I would soon get a job in Turin.

Subsequently, she has become immersed in her work and being in Milan has allowed her to participate in many important events.

For Alessia and Gennaro, being mobile is a necessity as they cannot find an equivalent job in the same sector in Turin, the city where they live. At the same time, they prefer to be mobile, rather than permanently moving to Milan, as their significant others, family and friends, are in Turin.

4.6. Veronica and Lorenzo

Veronica moved to Rome for work, though she is a reporter and often travels around Italy. Her parents live in Naples and she often travels to the city to visit them. Veronica relocated to Rome, but her partner lives in Milan. Subsequently, when she began living in Rome she

started a long-distance relationship. Lorenzo, her partner, visits her every weekend. His own work schedule has intensified in Rome and because he is a researcher, with the exception of the class he teaches in Milan, he can work anywhere. He therefore spends the majority of his time in Rome and shuttles between Rome and Milan.

For Veronica, being mobile was a necessity linked to her job. She is a freelance reporter for Italian television, her job schedules are not fixed, and she may need to travel twice a week. Therefore, it is difficult for her to plan her life. Her partner, however, has a fairly fixed working routine and for this reason, in order to maintain their relationship, he started to travel between Rome and Milan.

Veronica likes to travel for her job, but would prefer to be less mobile in her personal life:

When I am travelling to join my partner, normally I'm really tired, time goes by very fast. I sleep most of the time and I switch off. But when I travel for work, the train becomes my office: I work on my laptop, I read the newspapers and I use the internet for my research.

As far as moving to Rome was a job constraint for Veronica, Lorenzo's mobility is a consequence of their relationship. This said, they both prefer Rome to Milan because of the urban context "*she is living in a more beautiful environment*" says Lorenzo, and so they consider Veronica's relocation as an opportunity to spend time in a more pleasant environment.

5. Mapping mobilities stories

To better understand the way in which the interviewees inhabit their territory, I have elaborated synthetic maps of everyday mobilities. These have been elaborated both from the information collected and from the interactive maps sketched by interviewees during travel-alongs.

These maps show the distribution of different activities on a user-based territory. The maps have been built by considering the type and frequency of activities related to a place, while also recording activities undertaken while on the move. Looking at the maps it is possible to say that: while in some cases, the different activities are almost homogeneously distributed on the map (Figure 1), in other cases it is possible to identify a preferential relationship with two hubs (Figure 2), in others only with one (Figure 3). This one hub is defined as the "home", the base to return to at night.

It is also possible to note different ways of inhabiting spaces on the move: as far as everyday mobility increases, routes become routines (Nadler 2014, 273), travel time becomes "a way of making time" (Vannini 2009, 11), and places on the move become not only places for transit but also places for "dwelltime" (Sheller and Urry 2006, 220). Therefore, places on the move can be very relevant in the everyday lives of highly mobile people (cf. Figure 1).

Finally, the maps highlight the coexistence of: different territorial scales in everyday territory – from the regional scale to the small scale of the house, or even the train seat; and different speeds – from that of the high speed train or tube to the slow mobility of walking or driving a bike; and, finally, different urban intensities.

6. Mobility spaces and the disjunction between territory and society

By reading mobility stories and maps, it is possible to observe a change in the relationship between people and territory: new practices of mobility allow highly mobile people to establish a less sedentary relationship with the different cities that they use and inhabit. In

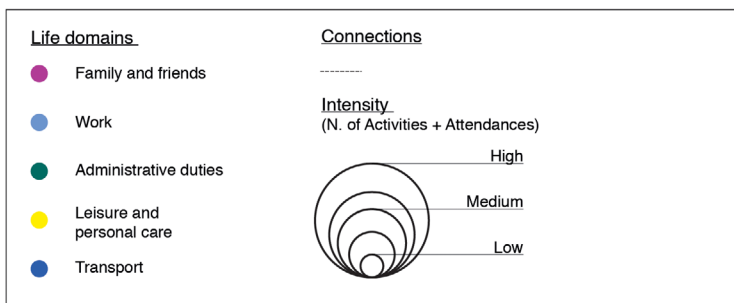
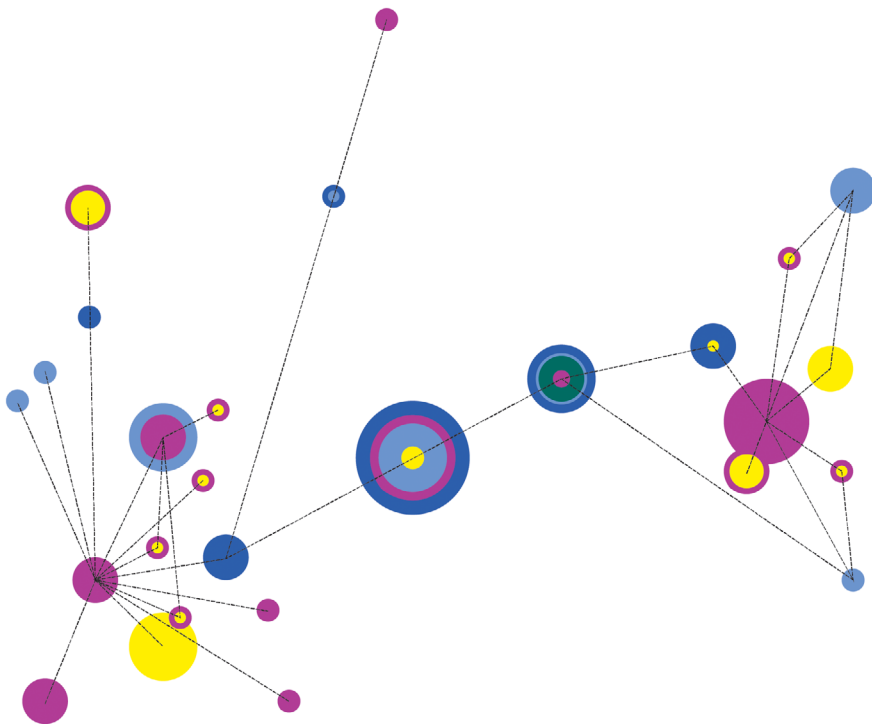


Figure 1. Valentina's everyday mobility.

fact, thanks to the use of technological devices new mobility practices offer the chance to reduce spatial distance while, at the same time, occupying more life domains, even if spatially distant. To this regard François Ascher affirms that

the hypermodern individual inhabits a time space with multiple dimensions, and sails between multiple places and times. Facing this growing variety of space-time dimensions, he chooses techniques that allow him to move as fast as possible in between different domains, trying to catch the ubiquity and the simultaneity that could help him to keep together this scattered life. (Ascher 2005, 53)

As far as mobile people move simultaneously between different life domains where different dimensions of life flow at different speeds in different places, with new means of

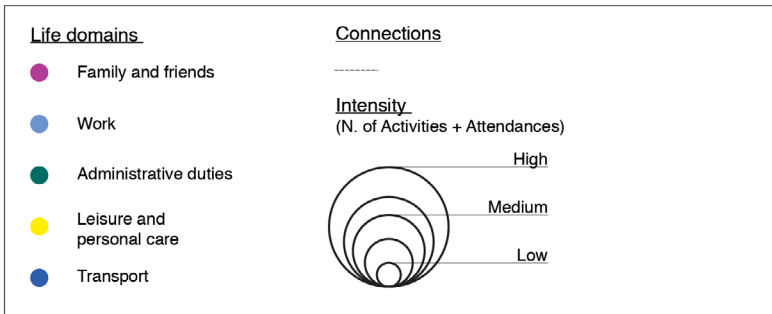
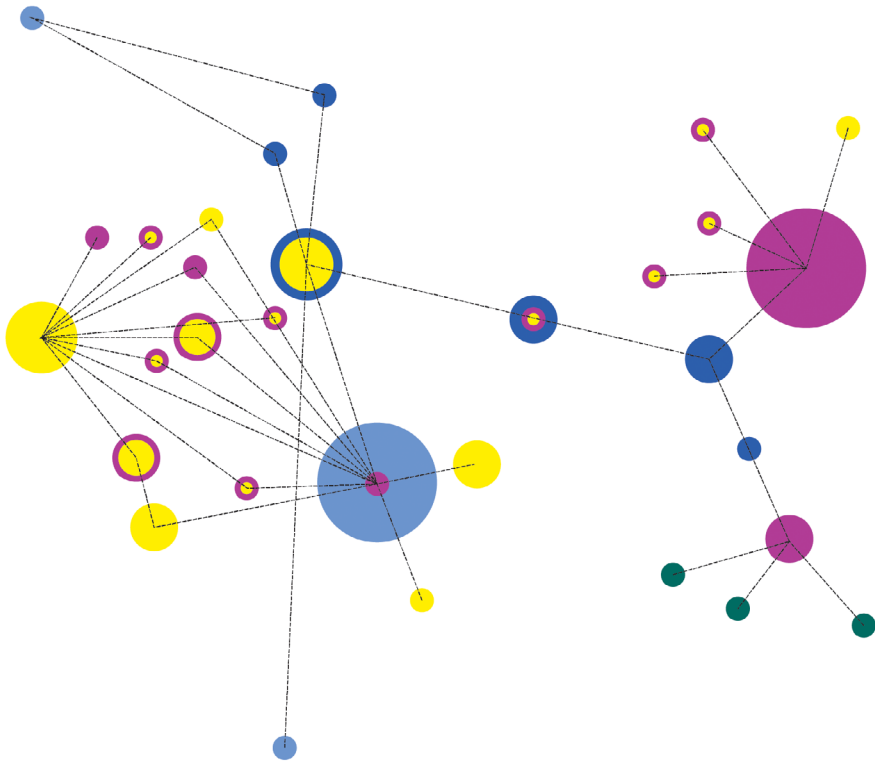


Figure 2. Beatrice’s everyday mobility.

transport and communication allowing people to jump from one dimension to the other, mobility spaces can be identified as all the places that allow this ubiquity and simultaneity to happen. Emerging mobility practices that allow such processes have been defined as “reversible” (Kaufmann 2002, 25), and are actually forms of mobility that use speed in order to “witness a reversible use of space” (Vincent-Geslin and Ortar 2012, 40). It is certainly possible to say that the diffusion of reversible mobilities has led to a disjunction of the traditional connection between society and territory (Pasqui 2008, 123).

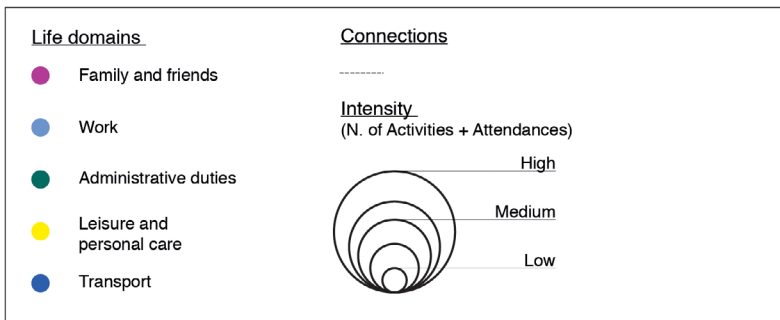
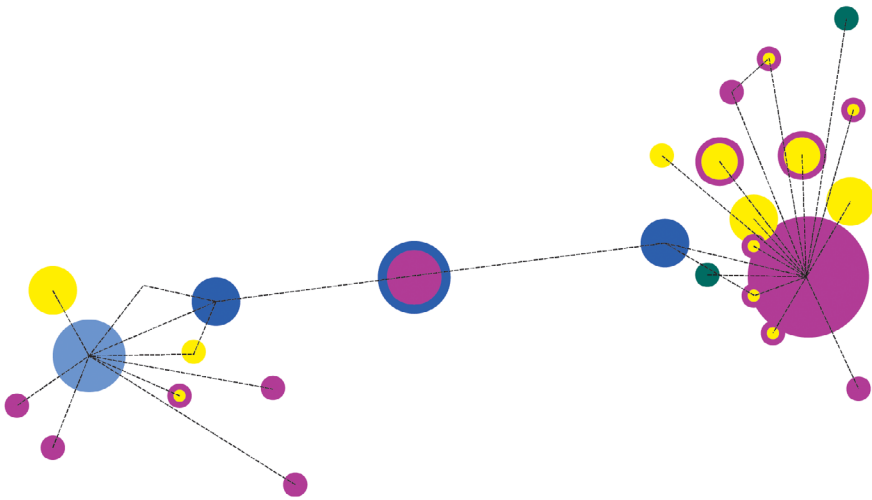


Figure 3. Gennaro's everyday mobility.

6.1. Three profiles of territorial relations

It is possible to outline three different ways of relating to territory (Figure 4) and performing activities in diverse and differently localized "moment-places", which are time territories both at long and short term, that form "a system in a continuous time relationship" (Pradel 2015). Profile A defines people who inhabit an extended space, which includes all of the different places encountered in their everyday life, and who also use space (such as passenger

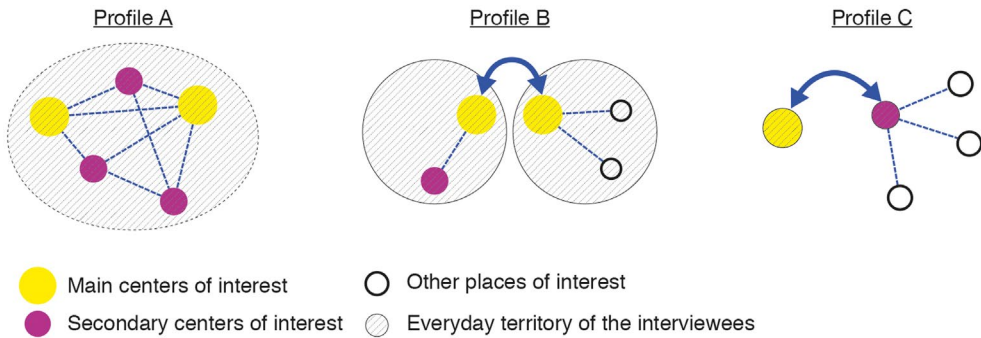


Figure 4. Different profiles of territorial relation.

compartments) in an extensive way while on the move – Valentina, Sara and Giorgio (cf. Figure 1) can be considered as such. Profile B includes people that can clearly separate activities and places, recognizing two main centres of life, for example Beatrice (cf. Figure 2). Profile C groups all the interviewees who experience one of the places as being the most important: “home sweet home”: Gennaro and Lorenzo (cf. Figure 3). And this is independent from the number of other places they inhabit in their everyday mobility.

The profiles are not rigid categories. It was possible to find some characteristics that crossed boundaries, but broadly it was easy to delineate the main aspects. Most of the interviewees, for example, defined their main place of residence as the home, the place where they feel completely comfortable. However, I have not considered all of them as belonging to profile C.

It is certain to say that the people in profile A have significantly transformed their relationship with territory as a consequence of their mobility practices. In this case it is not simple to define one place of residence, nor is it possible to say that they are nomadic or de-territorialized (Deleuze and Guattari 2010). It is more fitting to suggest that they inhabit a larger territory and that they use different moment-places according to different needs. Fast means of transport and mobile devices allow them to adapt to this new lifestyle. The space they inhabit can be considered a rhizome “it is a source of opportunities that are in a permanent state of reorganization” (Kaufmann 2012). The opposite viewpoint regarding this idea of space is characteristic of profile C. Profile C corresponds to subjects who try to reduce to a minimum the impact of mobility on their personal life. They recognize one place as a unique reference point, no matter how many other places impinge on their life through work, leisure, personal relationships or family. This place is clear and bounded, it is an areola space. Nevertheless, changing scale, an areola space can be linked to other spaces by a network.

This consideration highlights the main difference between profile B and C: correspondents to profile B are individuals who inhabit a network space made up of two main points. These subjects tend to identify two places as their main reference, for example home and work; even though, profile C areola space can also be represented as a network, including the different trips they take to reach work, leisure and family. This network is, however, organized on a clear hierarchy and home is the only primary point of the network. Instead, for people corresponding to profile B, travelling between two places means not only returning home or going to work, but passing from one dimension to another: from work and leisure to family and personal activities, for example.

7. The rhythm of the city: alternation of presence and absence, mobility and immobility in the urban system

As considered previously, changes in mobility behaviours have certainly had a significant impact on urban rhythm. To the extent of this research, urban rhythm is the result of the multi-temporal overlapping of single systems of actions and is defined by the dialogue between different temporalities (Lefebvre 2004), they are “the coordinates through which inhabitants and visitors frame and order the urban experience” (Amin and Thrift 2002, 17).

The observation of mobility stories provides a view of these coordinates, even if, in the case of highly mobile people, they are continuously reorganized when passing through different urban scales and time. Understanding their mobility also allows these unpredictable and shifting rhythms to be tracked.

By observing the schedules of the case studies, it is clear to see that the classic organization of the week, with services being available five days per week, does not correspond to their needs, regardless of whether they are LDC or shuttlers, or to which territorial profiles they correspond to. On the one hand, they concentrate their personal needs and duties, such as visits to the beautician, gym, or post office, during the week in order to have more free time during the weekend to spend with family or partners; on the other hand, Saturday and Sunday are days full of activities such as sport with children, shopping for the home or cultural activities. Furthermore, when public offices are open, the interviewees find themselves hundreds of kilometres far from their place of residence and as such if they need to do any administrative duties, they are obliged to work from home, if possible, or to take a day off. Clearly, even though ICT allows these subjects to stay in touch with family and relatives, physical ubiquity is not possible.

The temporality of their presence and absence is determined by the dialogue between the temporality of their travel and their work and family schedules. While shuttlers normally use work places at night, everyday commuters tend to do many activities during lunch time. Beatrice instead does her activities in the late afternoon, as she spends the night in Milan and doesn't like to be at home alone, while during the weekend she stays at home often and considers herself lazy. In the case of people with children, however, the weekend provides the opportunity to concentrate on various activities: Valentina goes swimming with her son every Saturday morning as this is the only way for them to do sport together, and she also visits museums and exhibitions with him.

This alternation of presence and absence also greatly influences the reorganization of the schedule for traditional activities such as shopping for the home or, more generally, the management of the house, causing additional changes in everyday rhythm. The diffusion of 24/7 supermarkets and the importance that such places have gained at an urban level clearly highlight this phenomenon. It is also possible to observe a dynamic of mobility/immobility in a couple: for every mobile component, in a couple with children, for example, there is always another component which is more immobile as in the case of Valentina and her partner. In fact, the presence of one of the partners in a certain place implies an absence in another moment-place of their life. It is therefore the other partner who simultaneously covers these aspects and occupies this space. This generates a multiplication of temporalities that overlap in physical and virtual space, and consequently urban rhythms are altered and confused. As far as urban rhythms are changing due to the coexistence of “near and far connections” (Amin and Thrift 2002, 8) and the overlapping of different functions on the

same place and time scale, urban space is also transforming: it is very common, for example, for the people observed in this research to work at home during the evening or the weekend, or even to manage personal duties while at work. These changes in urban spaces have been observed by Di Marino and Lapintie (2014), according to whom “we are facing the reorganization or even dismantling of the functional division of urban space into basic functions of housing, work, leisure time, and mobility between them”.

It is clear to see that while some places and cities are inhabited 24/7 due to the continuous presence of new users and the need for alternative schedules, it has been highlighted that other places are experienced in a less intense way. The rhythm of the city is also shaped by this alternation of presence and absence, participation in public events and private life, concentration in some places and lack of presence in others, high and low intensities.

8. Conclusions: reframing mobility design

As highlighted in this paper, changes in mobility certainly imply transformation in the way people use and inhabit urban systems. The aggregated data demonstrates the diffusion of long trip mobility in Italy at a national level and an increase in the length of journeys. It does not, however, permit an understanding of the paths of mobile people or how they use their time while on the move. Looking more closely at the stories of a small group of mobility pioneers (Kesselring and Vogl 2008, 5) offers some important insights into these process.

Firstly, the stories reveal an important transformation of the classical relationship between people and territories from static to dynamic. They also reveal the development of new temporalities and uses of urban spaces due to the possibility of inhabiting more places at the same time and building near and far connections, thereby changing urban rhythms.

With regard to the first point, the paper suggests the definition of three territorial profiles that are a consequence of increased mobility. In fact, when forced to relate with different urban contexts that are potentially hundreds of kilometres from their family and “home”, mobile people can react in very different ways: some of them extend their everyday territory along their paths (profile A), some of them create a parallel life (profile B), while others anchor even more strongly to “home” (profile C). According to the way they relate to territory they also appropriate spaces more or less intensely along their path and at their destination.

Even though data at the national level confirms the increase of everyday mobility, it does not allow us to understand what is happening along the way and it does not focus on the activities taking place between origin and destination or on the connection between different activities and places. In this research, the profiles aim at drawing attention to those details in order to design spaces and policies that can better meet the needs of the different users, for example the comfort of space on the move, or the connection between different means of transport and the “connectivity spaces, that is, spaces of interaction, optionality, and contact” (Kesselring 2006, 278).

To the different profiles correspond also different temporalities, changes in urban rhythms and the need for a rescheduling of services in order to effectively match people’s requirements. It may also prove useful to work on time policies in order to accommodate workers’ schedules, or improve practices such as smart-working to reduce the number of travellers during peak hours. To this regard, the study carried out on urban time policies, implemented by the Italian Municipalities according to national law 53/2000, related to parental leave and time management in cities is an important reference (Bonfiglioli 1994; Mareggi 2013, 4).

More generally, these issues stress the need for more flexible and effective methods of research to understand contemporary changes in mobility practices. This research is based on a mobile method that uses direct observation of mobility paths and mobile people, instead of looking at fixed places and mobility infrastructures. Applying this method to the analysis and design of mobility permits: the consideration of mobility as a complex system that embraces all the different forms of mobility (Urry 2007), including physical transport and telecommunication; the use of a more sensitive approach based on innovative and detailed descriptions of the experience of being mobile; a focus on mobile people's effective paths rather than considering them as transport consumers, and an escape from the rigid model of transport based on "business as usual" scenarios and "predict and provide". Such an approach can lead to a more sensitive understanding of mobility and may have a significant impact on reframing questions linked to the design of mobility spaces and services.

Notes

1. This article is part of a PhD research: Vendemmia, Bruna. 2015. "What Spaces For Highly Mobile People?" Politecnico di Milano.
2. 15 Censimento Generale della popolazione e delle abitazioni ISTAT 2011.
3. Regarding the effects of the financial crisis on Italian society, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2014), highlights that Italian salaries suffered losses of up to 12%. The same report also considers that in 2013, youth unemployment in Italy exceeded 40%. The rate of NEET (not in employment, education or training) is higher than in Mexico or Spain. Ires underlines that since 2007 so-called "involuntary part-time" work has increased, having doubled in the last 5 years.
4. ISTAT (2014) Gli spostamenti quotidiani per motivi di studio o lavoro in 15 Censimento Generale della Popolazione e delle Abitazioni.
5. NTV, Nuovo Trasporto Viaggiatori is an Italian company that offers High Speed Train services along national High Speed train Lines.
6. Source: www.rfi.it, accessed 10 December 2016.
7. The source of this information is: Da zero a Italo. Così è nata la concorrenza. A book realized by NTV and edited by Skyra in 2013. AAVV.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by Politecnico di Milano.

References

- AAVV. 2013. *Da Zero a Italo. Così è nata la concorrenza* [From Zero to Italo, This is how competition was born.]. Milano: Skyra.
- Amin, A., and N. Thrift. 2002. *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. Cambridge: Polity Press and Blackwell.
- Ascher, F. 2005. "La Métaphore Est un Transport. Des Idées Sur le Mouvement au Mouvement des Idées." In *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, 2005/1 Volume 118, 37–54. Paris: PUF.
- Beria, P., and R. Grimaldi. 2011. "Una Prima Valutazione dell'Alta Velocità in Italia." *Tema. Journal of Land Use Mobility and Environment*. 4 (3): 15–28.

- Bonfiglioli, S. 1994. *Il Piano degli Orari. Antologia di Materiali per Progettare ed Attuare Politiche Pubbliche*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Deleuze, G., and F. Guattari. 2010. *Nomadology: The War Machine*. Seattle, WA: Wormwood Distribution. Originally appearing in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) Minuit.
- Di Marino, M., and K. Lapintie. 2014. "New Spaces for Work in the Public Realm." In *Annual AESOP Congress 2014 From Control to Evolution – Urban Design and Public Realm*, University of Utrecht/Delft, July 9–12.
- Elliott, A., and Urry, J. 2010. *Mobile Lives*. London: Routledge.
- Fabian, L., E. Donadoni, and L. Velo. 2015. "Ri-ciclare spazi e forme della mobilità." In *Re-cycle Veneto*, edited by L. Fabian, S. Munarin, and E. Donadoni, Rome: aracne editrice. 117–139.
- Favell, A. 2008. *Eurostars and Eurocities*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Geertz, C. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 3–30. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- ISTAT. 2011. *15 Censimento Generale della Popolazione e delle Abitazioni*. <http://www.istat.it/it/censimento-popolazione/censimentopopolazione2011>.
- ISTAT. 2014. *Gli spostamenti quotidiani per motivi di studio o lavoro in 15 Censimento Generale della Popolazione e delle Abitazioni*. <http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/129847>.
- Kaufmann, V. 2002. *Re-thinking Mobility*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Kaufmann, V. 2012. definition of Mobility in *Forum Vies Mobiles*. <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/mobility-450>.
- Kesselring, S. 2006. Pioneering Mobilities: New Patterns of Movement and Motility in a Mobile World. *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 2: 269–279.
- Kesselring, S., and G. Vogl 2008. "Networks, Scapes and Flows – Mobility Pioneers between First and Second Modernity." In *Tracing Mobilities. Toward a Cosmopolitan Perspective*, edited by W. Canzler, V. Kaufmann, and S. Kesselring, 163–179. London: Ashgate.
- Lefebvre, H. 2004. *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. London: Continuum.
- Mareggi, M. 2013. *Ritmi Urbani*. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli Editore.
- Massey, D. 1994. *Space Place and Gender*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Nadler, R. 2014. *Plug&Play Places. Lifeworlds of Multilocal Creative Knowledge Workers*. De Gruyter Open. <http://www.degruyter.com/>.
- OECD. 2014. *Society at a Glance 2014 Highlights: Italy the Crisis and Its Aftermath*, March. Accessed December 15, 2016. <http://www.oecd.org/els/societyataglance.htm>
- Pasqui, G. 2008. *Città, Popolazioni, Politiche*. Milano: Editoriale Jaca book SpA.
- Pradel, B. 2015. "Du long terme de l'ancrage au court terme de la mobilité : système de lieux-moments et échelles temporelles de l'habiter." In *4èmes Rencontres Scientifiques Internationales de la Cité des Territoires*, 25–26–27, mars. Grenoble. https://www.academia.edu/28505313/Du_long_terme_de_l_ancrage_au_court_terme_de_la_mobilite%C3%A9_syst%C3%A8me_de_lieux-moments_et_%C3%A9chelles_temporelles_de_l_habiter.
- Pucci, P. 2016. "Mobility Practices as a Knowledge and Design Tool for Urban Policy." In *Understanding Mobilities for Designing Contemporary Cities*, edited by P. Pucci and M. Colleoni, 3–21. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Ravalet, E., S. Vincent, V. Kaufmann, and J. Leveugle. 2014. *Slices of (Mobile) Life. A Sociological Survey and Manifesto on Work-related High Mobility*. Paris: Loco Editions.
- Sheller, M., and J. Urry. 2006. The New Mobilities Paradigm. *Environment and Planning A* 38: 207–226.
- Sheller, M., and J. Urry. 2016. Mobilizing the New Mobilities Paradigm. *Applied Mobilities* 1 (1): 10–25.
- Urry, J. 2007. *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Vannini, P. 2009. "The Cultures of Alternatives Mobilities." In *The cultures of Alternative Mobilities. Routes less travelled*, edited by P. Vannini, 1–19. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Vannini, P. 2015. "Non-representational Research Methodologies: An Introduction." In *Non-representational Methodologies: Re-envisioning Research*, 2–18. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Vendemmia, Bruna. 2015. "What Spaces For Highly Mobile People? Analyzing Emerging Practices of Mobility in Italy." PhD diss., Politecnico di Milano.
- Vincent-Geslin, S., and N. Ortar. 2012. "De la Mobilité au Racines." In *Mobilit. sans Racine. Plus Loin, Plus Vite ... Plus Mobiles?*, edited by S. Vincent-Geslin and V. Kaufmann, 51–64. Paris: Descartes and Cie.