Chapter 1
Sedated by the Screen: Social Use of Time in the Age of Mediated Acceleration

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ABSTRACT

The social use of time has been progressively affected by the presence of screen devices in people’s daily lives. These devices are of various types: television, tablet, computer, smartphones, etc. However, all of these have a power of seduction that makes people want to use them. In reality, a significant part of tasks are mediated by screens, whether they are playful tasks, socializing, work or training. In this chapter, the authors reflect on some quasi-paradoxical situations triggered by screen time, which shows that one is sedated by the screen. Then, they present the results of a systematic review of the literature focused on the concept of “screen time,” which shows that the excessive use of the screen is causing various health problems, especially in children and young people. And, the results of two empirical studies are presented, one with young people between 12 and 18 years old, and the other with university students. The results of both studies demonstrate the need to develop competences in the management of the social use of time, that is, to develop time literacy.

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INTRODUCTION

The densification of events, information and images makes it impossible to delay. The rapid chaining of fragments leaves no room for contemplative delay. The images that pass fleetingly on the retina, fail to capture lasting attention. Propagates their force of attraction and fade away. (Han, 2016b, 55)

Time is a fundamental element of the organization of individual life and collective life. Societies are organized according to time rituals, whether religious or profane. There continues to be a circularity dimension of the present tense in the repetition of the daily, weekly, monthly and annual cycle. As if the mythical circular time had remained forgotten within the calendars. This circularity allows organizing the routines and establishing predictable cycles. However, in the last century social time underwent a strong acceleration process (H. Adams, 2005) (Rosa, 2013a) (Torres, 2016). This social acceleration was essentially produced/driven by the development of transport technologies. First of transporting people and goods and then transporting streams of various kinds (information flows, energy flows, financial flows, etc.), which becomes an acceleration of social life and the generation of dynamics of alienation (Rosa, 2013b).

The social use of time was modified according to individual objectives and social, cultural and economic dynamics. And these depending on available resources, namely, technological resources. The contemporary context is characterized by an exponential proliferation of digital information and communication technologies, storage, treatment and sharing of information in volume, variety and speed never before existing, which contaminates all psychosocial, political, cultural and economic routines.

The objective of this essay is the time in screen society (Cardoso, 2013), the era of hyperconnection (Oliveira & Baldi, 2014) and hyperconsumption (Lypovetsky, 2007), which leads to screen culture (Ana Melro & Oliveira, 2017). Screen time in a paradoxical society in which social acceleration is a central element, but where people are sedated by the screens, remaining for many hours consuming and / or sharing content, socializing and / or working online or performing tasks in which the screen plays a crucial role.

In a society where the tendency is to spend more and more hours online looking at a screen, which assumes the role of mediation access to information and relationships, it is crucial to understand what role this screen-time plays in people’s lives. What consequences does the increase of occupation of time with the consumption and relationship mediated by the screen have? There will be screen time to cannibalize other types of time (Oliveira, 2017) - time to walk, time to cook, date, participate, study, etc. Considering the lack of time reported by a significant
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