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Mobile lives, screens and vision (I)

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Auteur(s) (texte brut)

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Chapô

The use of vision, like the other senses, has evolved alongside technological changes. How much have histories of this affected current trends, and what may this tell us about possible futures?

Présentation longue

<p>
 A distracted

gaze</p><p>Mobile lives are increasingly played out in front of screens. Displays illuminate living rooms, corridors, bars, cars, buses, metros, planes, waiting rooms and offices. Most of us also have a screen permanently attached to our person in the form of a smart phone or tablet. Intermittently but unfailingly our eyes are diverted towards a permanent flow of information, each one seemingly updating, or rather outdated, the information consumed earlier and momentarily interrupting the task at hand and punctuating daily activities. While conforming to a new imperative to communicate and 'to be informed', these new habits have also generated concern about the potential impact on work productivity (compulsion to check Twitter and Facebook in the workplace), intellectual capacity (shrinking memory) and social cohesion (self-absorbed indifference to travel companions). Some commentators speak of a crisis of attention. But is this dystopia of social disintegration the necessary outcome of a possible future of high-tech mobilities, and is this 'crisis' anything new?</p><p>Cultural historian Jonathan Crary has established interesting parallels between our time and the end of the nineteenth century in his book Suspensions of Perception. Organised around a discussion of three paintings by Manet (above), Seurat and Cezanne, produced between 1879 and 1900, the book discusses how then, as now, there was a perceived crisis of attention. Again, mirroring today, this was related to social, urban, and industrial environments being increasingly saturated with new sensory stimuli. And then as now mobility and

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Cambridge, The MIT Press.</p><p>Debord, G. (1968) The Society of Spectacle. New York, Zone Books.</p><p> </p>

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