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## **Geographical re-placement**



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### **Short definition**

Re-placement is defined as the crossing of functional boundaries of geographical space without crossing the social and cognitive boundaries that result from the socialization to the geographical space of the individual who has moved. The concept of re-placement relegates the functionalist approaches of geographical accessibility and the notion of potentiality to the background, in order to emphasize the relationship to geographical space and examine socio-spatial segregations from the standpoint of daily mobilities.

### **Long definition**

Re-placement is a proposed concept to analyze geographical mobilities based on grouping destinations according to spatial category, in order to grasp their regularities by analyzing the relationship to the individuals' geographical space rather than by more cognitive notions such as routines or habits. Unlike the notion of mobility centered on location, this concept makes it possible to approach people's daily mobilities according to a relational approach that uses an important interdisciplinary concept in social science: that of position, or placement. Re-placement therefore refers not to the act of moving from one location to another, but to one's repositioning according to one's geographical, social or cognitive affinities (Ramadier, 2017).

To re-place oneself is to cross the functional borders of the geographical space without crossing social and cognitive borders. A relational and socio-cognitive

approach complements the interactionist and rationalist approaches (skills, constraints, preferences, habits, etc.) which have so far been dominant. With re-  
placement, geographical regularity is no longer a competence to be mastered by  
people (a habit or a routine), one that can predict a spatial practice, but a specific  
relationship to geographical space.

From a geographical point of view, what makes it possible to understand how the  
regularity of daily mobility is organized is not the observation and recording of an  
absolute location (to be or not to be somewhere) but a type of frequented place, that  
is to say a spatial category constructed by the researcher from hypotheses  
formulated on people's processes of spatial categorization.

Re-placement addresses mobility not from a single space, but by thinking of  
geographical space, psychological space (the cognitive space or the space of  
representations) and social space as inseparable. Re-placement thus helps us to  
understand the reasons why daily trips are geographically very stable, since 70% of  
daily trips are spatial regularities (Ramadier, 2017), all the while differing from one  
social group to another in terms of destination. It also makes it possible to renew the  
analyses of social segregation in space, this time including daily mobilities. Indeed,  
until now, this issue has been almost exclusively studied on the basis of mobility and  
residential settlements.

To return to the analysis of the regularities of frequented places, an analysis based  
on their socio-historical forms (historic town centers, urban town centers, former  
suburban village-centers, large housing estates, residential areas of the first or  
second suburban rings, etc.) makes it possible to illustrate the notion of re-placement  
in the context of daily travel.<sup>[1]</sup> After drawing up a map of the urban forms of  
Strasbourg (Ramadier et al., 2011), we calculated, from the household travel survey,  
the share of destinations which had the same socio-physical characteristics as the  
place of residence (all trips below 500 meters were however excluded from the  
analysis). As shown in the table below, the most frequent destinations are  
systematically those which "resemble" the urban form of the place of residence (with  
the exception of trips originating in the village centers of peri-urban areas). In other  
words, through a narrow analysis of re-placement, namely a displacement towards a  
place that is equivalent to that with which the individual is most familiar (the urban  
forms of the place of residence), we find that re-placement represents between 12  
and 36% of daily trips. Insofar as social segregation in space is strongly correlated

<div class="logo logo-mobile"> <a href="https://fr.forumviesmobiles.org/">[^2]</sup> the introduction of a relational approach into a geolocation system, initially built from a geometric frame of reference which tends to essentialize places. However, in this relational approach, accessibility is only an additional spatial quality which is generally subordinate to the geolocation system. Travel practices are not far off, but they remain implicit and in the background, although they are also constructed and analyzed with mathematical flow models. These practices don't yet have a direct link with accessibility. The former contribute to the analysis of how existing infrastructure functions while the latter intervene in their construction. Re-placement is also based on a relational approach to the localization system by considering a location no longer as merely a geographical object, but as a socially constructed spatial category.

### **... to potentiality as a dimension of spatial practices**

From the mid-1970s, daily trips were apprehended more from an instrumental approach than from a technical one. Directed towards the resources coveted by the traveler, daily trips are here constructed at the individual scale and defined as being subordinate to an activity (Cullen and Godson, 1975). The concept of accessibility is now based on services and facilities (health, shopping centers, etc.). However, its calculation and analytical reasoning (access to a particular resource, number of accessible resources, etc.) have not undergone any major transformation, making accessibility a dimension of practice that is more theoretical than empirical. This is partly because activities are studied from a list of georeferenced resources established by the researcher, regardless of whether the individual is aware of them or if they are really resources for him. The cost of travel becomes a central dimension, the modalities of which vary according to the disciplinary approach: price, mental workload, physical effort, interpersonal relationships, etc. The notion of geographical potentiality retains an important place and compounds the confusion between accessible and existing resources. In this model, an accessible resource is an existing resource that is more or less easy to reach depending on the context of the practice (equipment, household structure, etc.). Re-placement seeks to remedy this pitfall by limiting itself to actual spatial practices in qualifying accessibility. Only resources within the realm of possibilities and coveted by the individual are

considered in the analysis.

From the mid-1990s, the “mobility paradigm” partially helped overcome this issue by further focusing the notion of accessibility on individuals and their social and cognitive conditions. This time it is based on the individuals' ease of movement, that is to say on their mastery of geographical distances and their movements.

Accessibility is now a component of the practice, something which was already proposed by Time Geography (Hagerstrand, 1970) all the while limiting the analysis to the individuals' spatio-temporal context. However, what is targeted is not the various ways of doing things but the amount of control individuals have over travel modes, and their attitudes and values with regards to travel. Grouped around the concept of motility (Kaufmann, 2001), this interactionist approach duplicates the potential of a displacement by attributing it partly to the geographical space and its arrangement, and partly to the individual, as proposed for instance by the notion of reversibility.<sup>[3]</sup> Potentiality retains an important place, as evidenced by the definition proposed by Levy and Lussault (2003) who include it in their definition of mobility.<sup>[4]</sup> One can wonder what the reasons may be for such relentlessness in giving so much importance to the notion of potentiality in a geographical displacement.

## **The stability of geographical movements**

This insistence on securing a place for potentiality stems from a scholastic bias in favor of those who observe the spatial practices of others (researchers, managers, traders, etc.) instead of the ways in which people move about. For example, the potential is reintroduced into the cognitive notion of a habit to emphasize the predictability of practices (or the obstacles to behavioral change). But one may wonder whether being able to plan for a known destination or ensuring a certain familiarity once there (a socio-spatial condition that can be transposed geographically)<sup>[5]</sup> is the reason why 70% of weekly urban trips are to destination for which the individual doesn't consider any alternative or particular planning, much less any indirect opportunity linked to a geographical location (passing nearby, for example). Especially since the strong stability of daily trips can be observed in Quebec just as in Strasbourg, whether one is retired or working (Ramadier, 2010).

With re-placement, we argue that destinations relate to something other than automatic reflexes, habits or routines. Indeed, research based on these notions

analyses the modes of travel or planned activities much more than the destinations, which thus become a blind spot of geographical constancies. They are not automatic reflexes because nothing tells us that the geographical stability of movements observed at a given time has the same geographical content at another. They are not routines either because a stable destination, for a given activity, can be subject to temporal adjustments if the context requires it (for example, the habit of shopping in a particular store but changing, on different occasions, the day of the week and/or time of the day). Finally, they are not habits insofar as what breeds a feeling of familiarity (environmental meanings, ways of behaving, etc.) in some contexts rather than others, is less the learning of a skill through repetition than a specific relationship to the geographical space based on socio-cognitive dispositions. A habit is a concept which, in a way, makes a bet on future practices based on past regularities, which is why the notion of potentiality is still very much present. Re-placement seeks to grasp the regularities of people's relationship to space from the reconstitution of places as spatial categories which are already practiced.

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<!-- Notes -->

[^1]: To our knowledge, only the articles by Slater (2008) and Anstiss et al. (2018) explicitly use the notion of re-placement in terms of the socio-cognitive relationship to geographical space, without however using it for research on daily mobility. [^2]: Geographical maps with metric distance between objects that are calculated with non-geographical distances, such as travel time. See Denain and Langlois, 1998. [^3]: In the case of reversibility, the accessibility of a location would be linked to the available infrastructure, not just to reach that location but to return to one's place of departure according to the constraints of one's lifestyle (for example, returning the same day). [^4]: "For each actor, mobility is both a proven process, which translates into effective movements, and a potential, an unrealized virtuality, which is precisely what authorizes the realized movement" (p. 613). [^5]: For example, the ease with which one is comfortable taking a seat in a pizzeria is transposable to any other restaurant of this type, while it isn't always easy to transpose this in a world-famous restaurant offering a different kind of service.

Mots clés

daily mobility

psychology

re-placement

Visuel



Activer

Activé

Niveau de profondeur

Balise H2 + H3

Ajouter le trianglesi ce contenu est affiché dans la quinzaine

Désactivé

Auteur lié

Thierry Ramadier (Psychologue)

Thématique

Living environments

Inequalities

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Representations

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