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Imagination in people and societies on the move: a sociocultural psychology perspective

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Complete List of Authors:	Zittoun, Tania; University of Neuchâtel, Institute of psychology & education
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Abstract:	This paper proposes a sociocultural psychology approach to mobility. It distinguishes geographical mobility, drawing on mobility studies, from symbolic mobility, that can be achieved through imagination. After the presentation of a theoretical framework, it examines the possible interplay between geographical and symbolic mobility through three case studies: that of people moving to a retirement home; that of a young woman's trajectory through WWII in the UK; and that of families in repeated geographical mobility. The paper thus shows that imagination may expand or guide geographic mobility, but also, in some case, create some stability when geographic mobility becomes excessive. More importantly, it shows that over time, people engage in trajectories of imagination: their various geographical and symbolic mobility can eventually transform their very modes of imagining.

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Imagination in people and societies on the move: a sociocultural psychology perspective

Mobility studies have invited social scientists to question their implicit static norm – whether in the field of migration, or of knowledge production (Sheller & Urry, 2006). As an epistemology, mobility invites to conceive movement as fundamental – which is compatible with a developmental perspective (Valsiner, Molenaar, Lyra, & Chaudhary, 2009) or a process ontology (Stenner & Brown, 2009). However, as it has been shown in the field of migration studies, taking mobility as a norm may involve the reverse danger of ignoring the fact that, in some case and in some conditions, the mobility of people is imposed, constrained or forbidden (Amelina & Vasilache, 2014). Also, in cases documented both by clinical work and the arts, people may move geographically, but their heart and mind seem to remain elsewhere (Remarque, 2015; Womersley, 2019). On the other hand, social and cultural psychology have largely shown the power of ideas – real or imaginary, these can change the course of history, and people's lives (Duveen, 2000; Moscovici, 2000; Salazar, 2011a; Wagoner, Jensen, & Oldmeadow, 2012). At the crossroad of these two lines of thought, as sociocultural, lifecourse psychologist, I wonder: how do people experience such issues of geographical mobility? How is their imagination changed by mobility, and how can their imagining follow, or resist, geographical movement? How can they be symbolically mobile – travel in their mind, expand their knowledge and experience – while being geographically static? And in the long run, how does people's experience of geographical movement and imagination transform them, and thus, their very capacity to imagine? Exploring geographical and symbolic mobility may help us to identify forms of incitation and controls of mobility; it may also highlight people's capacity to defy constraints on their geographical mobility, as when political detainee may continue to travel in their mind through fiction. I therefore propose a theoretical exploration of the parallel, co-dependent yet mutually liberating power of geographical and symbolic mobilities, and through them, of people's trajectories of imagining, in a world in transformation.

Starting from a perspective interested in people's lifecourse, I consider in this paper two independent, yet deeply related movements: on the one side, people's geographical mobility, that is, their movement in social and material spaces across time; and on the other side, people's symbolic mobility, that is, the movement they can do through imagination. These two movements are likely to be interrelated: as a person moves through space, she is likely to be presented with new situations, changing views of her past and possible futures, real or imaginary; reversely, people's imagination may lead to move, or to stay immobile. Eventually, how people imagine may change as people move; I will thus propose to examine the trajectories of the person's imagining. By this, I want to emphasize that, because of people's geographical and symbolic mobility over time, the very modalities of their imagining may change as well. In what follows, I first build a consistent theoretical framework, before examining three contrasting case studies.

Theoretical positioning

I approach imagination and mobilities from a sociocultural psychology perspective, a psychology that considers the mutual constitution of the person and her social and cultural environment, with a focus

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on the experiencing person. This psychology is developmental: it considers that humans strive toward change while maintaining a sense of continuity and integrity (Erikson, 1968; Hviid, 2012; Valsiner, 2000; Vygotsky, 1929; Zittoun et al., 2013). It also admits that while the person's developmental trajectory takes an unique route, it also is located in the social and cultural world which, first, gives the person the very conditions of living (it takes a group of human beings and centuries of transmissions to turn a new-born into what we would consider a human), and then, creates the condition for life to unfold, and for the person to make unique choices and conduct which will both define her life trajectories, and affect the world she is part of (Cole, 1996, 2007; Rosa & Valsiner, 2018). This stream of psychology, which has roots in Russian psychology (inspired by Spinoza) (Vygotsky, 1997) as well as American pragmatism (Dewey, 1934; James, 1907; Peirce, 1868), among others (see also Valsiner, 2012; Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000), is non-dualistic, dialogical, dynamic and pragmatist; it considers the embodied, acting, feeling and meaning-making person, interacting with present and absent others, with objects and ideas, as said, in specific sociocultural environments (Marková, 2016).

This paper is located at the crossing of two recent lines of enquiry in sociocultural psychology: one exploring imagination, and the other developing new approaches to migration and mobility. On the one hand, sociocultural psychology has a long-standing interest for imagination (Bartlett, 1928; Vygotsky, 1994, 2004). If classical psychological approaches to imagination tend to see it as an individual and cognitive process, based on the reproduction of mental images, often negatively seen as incomplete for of reasoning (Piaget, 1992), recent theorisations have redefined imagination as a much more complex dynamic. Imagination appears to be a highly creative, multimodal, socio-culturally rooted, embodied yet often shared process (Hargreaves, MacDonald, & Miell, 2012; Jovchelovitch & Hawlina, 2018; Joy & Sherry, 2003; Trevarthen, 2012). Imagination thus appears to be active in a wide range of activities classically treated as separate, such children's play (D. G. Singer & Singer, 1992), daydreaming (Freud, 1959; J. L. Singer, 2014), reasoning (Larraín, 2016), creating or experiencing the arts (Glăveanu & Gillespie, 2014; Stenner & Greco, 2018; Zittoun & Rosenstein, 2018), as well a scientific and collective innovations or transformations (Brescó de Luna, 2018; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2018). I will present a definition of such imagination in the next section.

On the other hand, moving beyond classical approaches to migration in psychology (e.g., Berry, 2001), sociocultural psychology has also more recently tried to define new approaches to mobility, both taking in account current social science research, and the person's experience (Fleer & Hammer, 2013; Greco Morasso & Zittoun, 2014; Kadianaki, 2009; Märtsin, 2010; Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012; Zittoun, Levitan, & Cangiá, 2018). These studies have thus proposed to take seriously people's need to make sense, and realised that "experiencing" and making sense of a place, does not simply follow being located, geographically and physically, in that place. Conversely, being physically present does not guarantee symbolic recognition by (Ellis & Stam, 2017). Hence, from a sociocultural perspective, it is worth distinguishing people's geographical, physical move, from their semiotic or symbolic move (Gillespie & Zittoun, 2015): local residents might not acknowledge one newcomer's very presence, or one person recently arrived in a country may have their mind turned toward the home left behind. More generally, moving geographically is often faster than the psychological integration of new experiences, that is, symbolic mobility, and imagining past places or future ones is often an important component of mobility (Salazar, 2011a; Schwartz & Ryan, 2003). Here, I thus propose to draw on these two lines of enquiry to examine the relation between geographical movement and

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symbolic movement, or imagination. I first define a theoretical grammar, and then examine three contrasting cases of the interplay of geographical trajectories and trajectories of imagination.

Life trajectories in a changing world

The world in which we live can be theoretically analysed from two contrasting postures: first, it can be described from a distant, or "third person perspective": we, as social scientist, can identify certain specificities of the socio-material location in which people live, some of the rules that govern these, or some of the power games in place. Although people may perceive some of these elements, these social or cultural forces usually exceed what is relevant for the person on a daily basis. Second, the same experiences can be described more phenomenologically, from a "first person perspective", where, as scientists, we try to capture how the person experiences the world in daily encounters, and what matters to him or her (Hviid, 2015; Zittoun, 2016). In what follows, I propose some concepts to capture both.

Mobility

The "mobility turn" in the social sciences has invited researchers to question the primacy of stability of the world, and to envisage that all phenomena are primarily mobile - whether people, information, or goods (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006). This has then led authors studying migration to question the exceptionality of geographical mobility (the so-called "sedentary bias"), and to realise that migration is mostly defined in terms of national borders (or "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002)). These scholars have thus proposed to consider migration as one case of mobility of people, which could take many forms (from daily commuting to international repeated mobility to refugee trajectories) (Dahinden, 2016; Kalir, 2013; Schiller & Salazar, 2013). In line with these studies, I consider "mobility" as designating the movement of people in the geographical and sociomaterial environment, without delimitating the amplitude of that move.

To describe geographical mobility, one thus needs to be able to account for the "real world" in which people move, from a third person perspective. Drawing on our past work (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015a), I will call here *context, or environment*, a portion of the social, geographical and material world, governed by certain sets of rules, institutions and authorities, with the presence of various people which can be, according to the matter at stake, organised into sub-groups, which creates fields of forces, power, etc. The notions of context and environment have been widely criticized for being too open, or necessarily relational (Grossen, 2001; Marková, 2015); I will not refute or address these criticisms here, but simply say that these terms have to be further specified when used. I will use the concept of *setting* to designate specific social arrangements in material/geographical locations, in which people act, interact, and experience the world: a classroom, or a house constitute such settings (Zittoun & Perret-Clermont, 2009). Again, settings have spatial, material and social specificities, which are organised by certain rules, implicit or explicit, and that makes that people may be more or less competent within, etc.

Second, we need to identify people's experience, or something coming closer to a first person perspective. Here, a more phenomenological vocabulary is required; drawing from approaches such as Alfred Schütze's and Kurt Lewin (Gillespie & Zittoun, 2015; Lewin, 1936; Schuetz, 1944, 1945; Schütz & Luckmann, 1973; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015b), we have defined the notion of *sphere of*

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experience, as designating a sort of recurrent experience or activity which a given person experiences as being "the same", as it involves certain conducts, ways of doing, of relating to others, and engage certain interest, aspects of one'd identity, emotional and embodied qualities; they are enabled by certain material places but not necessarily bounded to one (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016b). One can thus experience "having a family dinner" as one sphere of experiences, with certain emotional qualities, relations, typical activities, mediating objects, etc., even though the meal may vary, it may take place once at the restaurant or another time at one member's home, etc. During a normal course of a day or a year, we alternate such spheres of experience, sometimes as we move places, other times when we change activity in the same place (reading the newspaper, vs cooking in the kitchen); we can even move place and maintain the same sphere of experience (e.g., working at home or at the work place).

Spheres of experience can be said *proximal*, when they take place in the here-and-now of one's embodied location, and can be materially supported and mostly socially acknowledged (as in, cooking in the kitchen). Spheres of experiences can be said to be *distal*, when the person is experiencing something partly or fully detached from the embodied and materially here-and-now. A person's memory of his first childhood room, or the imagination of one's holiday project, offer such distal experiences, which may totally background the person's actual location. Although such distal spheres of experience are renewed every time they are explored or convoked, they can have certain stability as defined above. Also, cultural experiences (of watching a movie, of engaging with an art piece) are distal experiences: one is physically in an art room, but one's mind is in the world suggested by the semiotic guidance of the art work. Note that spheres of experiences change status: a current proximal sphere of experience will become, in the future, a past distal one (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016b). It may however keep their value and meaning, and infuse new proximal spheres of experience – as when an adult still dialogues with the memory of a parent in another country. A person's life can thus, at a certain moment in time, be seen as a configuration of proximal and distal spheres of experience, across which the person moves without particular difficulties. Experienced ruptures in their trajectories may in contrast call for a reconfiguration of these spheres of experience, with the disappearance of some, or the need to create new ones, while maintaining a sense of continuity and integrity.

In the terms proposed here, a person's migration or *geographical mobility* could thus be described as a spatial-temporal movement across (social, national, geographical) environments or contexts, which brings her to be confronted or located within a series of different settings. Accordingly, from a more subjective perspective, a person will engage in reconfiguring some of her proximal spheres of experience: he or she will may have to recreate spheres of experience related to her experience of home, but is she continues the same occupation, will hardly have to change such professional spheres of experience (Zittoun et al., 2018). The person will have to change some distal spheres of experiences, too: what was once a project or imagination of the future has now become actual, so what new imagination does emerge? Will the previous place become one of these spheres of experiences related to the past, such as a cherished memory? Importantly, the speed at which these moves occur differ: moving across environments and settings takes "real time" –the actual few hours of the traveling hours, the couple of weeks of the administrative time, the months needed by one's furniture to follow, etc. Moving through spheres of experiences, and especially through distal spheres of experience, may be extremely rapid, labile, and reversible, or at times, resistant and slow (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015a). One may be on a ten-day-long hiking trip from A to B, yet one's mind can

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move at full-speed back and forth, from one's starting point to the ending point, through all possible other places, real or imaginary, in which a mind can go. This is what can be called semiotic (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015a) or, here, *symbolic mobility*, in contrast with geographical mobility.

Imagination

It is imagination, understood as a dynamic process (the process of imagining), that allows us to move across spheres of experience. We have thus defined imagination as the process by which our consciousness temporarily uncouples from the here-and-now of an unfolding proximal sphere of experience, to explore past, future or alternative distal spheres of experiences (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016b). That does not mean that imagination is purely "mental"; one can imagine while role play or doing sports (Gfeller, 2017), and our body is very much moved by fiction (a form of guided imagination); imagination can thus be described as embodied looping dynamic. Yet this uncoupling is temporary; we loop out , yet come back and recouple to our proximal experience, when the daydream ends, or when the film finishes (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016b). Imagination, or more precisely, imagining is thus "an embodied practice of transcending both physical and sociocultural distance" (Salazar, 2011b, p. 577). Such dynamic conceptualisation of imagination just contrasts with a static version seeing imaginations as "imaginaries". ""Geographical imaginaries" are thus static semiotic social constructs that can be defined as

> unspoken representational assemblages are powerful because they enact and construct peoples and places, implying multiple, often conflicting, representations of Otherness, and questioning several core values multicultural societies hold, by blurring as well as enforcing traditional territorial, social, and cultural boundaries (Salazar, 2011b, p. 576).

Drawing on a wide review of the literature, and on a variety of empirical cases (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016b; Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018), we have thus shown that imagination can be described as being usually triggered by some events – boredom, a suspension of action, an experienced rupture -, that is unfolds while fed or supported by a wide range of material used as resources (personal experience, cultural artefacts, communication with others, social representations, geographical imaginaries, etc.), and that it ends up, when looping out, into various consequences. Imagining being on the beach rather than at work may have as an output simply a small relaxation; imagining traveling to New York may bring one to buy plane ticket; imagining a different political regime may lead to certain actions and communication, which may be picked by others, diffracted, and lead to a revolution (Awad, 2017; Wagoner, Moghaddam, & Valsiner, 2018). We also proposed three analytical dimensions on which imagination may vary: the first dimension is temporal: imagination can be about the past, the future, or some alternative present; the second concerns the degree of generality of imagining – one may imagine the taste of coffee (very concrete), or a better world (very general and probably abstract or fuzzy); finally, imagination can be considered, in a given setting or even in a specific environment, as plausible or non-plausible, which can often be socially acknowledged or condemned. Imagining flying in the 12th century was implausible (it was beyond the imaginative horizon (Crapanzano, 2004)), and it is now, that we have access to planes, parachutes and other devices, totally plausible; imagining studying is implausible for a woman in certain specific religious settings, but not if the woman moves away (Lawrence, Benedikt, & Valsiner, 1992), and so on and so forth (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016b, 2016a).

In such a view, imagination is therefore a process, which is both personal and intrinsically sociocultural: what nourishes imagination, and the resources people draw on, are social and cultural: the books they have access to, the social representations they may draw upon, the semiotic systems they master are sociocultural in nature : it needs experience of art to develop musical imagination, of maps and pictures of places to develop geographical imagination, etc. In that sense, imagination is, in Vygotsky's words, a higher mental function (Vygotsky, 2004; Zittoun, 2016). Consequently, resources for imagining may be socioculturally supported, controlled or punished. Hence, the access to online resources and new media has provided people all around the world with new material to develop geographical imaginaries of Europe, or new possible lifecourses (Appadurai, 1996). Conversely, some nation-states control the cultural elements people have access to, and with it attempt to refrain their imagination of alternative lives; these would also usually control or forbid the outcomes of imagination, if these are statements, writings or art pieces that question the setting (Zittoun, 2018). Of course, things are not so linear, as people may engage in personal or even underground imagining escaping political control; and also, in apparently free national environments, administrative governance may actually subtly limit and channel imagination (Marková, 2018). Finally the outcomes of imagination can be very personal – it can lead to new action or change one's life trajectory, or can be social – if, as mentioned, these are shared, carried on by others, etc., and lead to revolution, major innovation (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2018), or massive flow of migration and mobility.

What needs to be highlighted here, thus, is that imagination is the dynamic at stake in symbolic mobility. Even though imagination is to a great part experienced "in one's mind" (and mostly body), it is also enabled and constrained by environments and setting-specific social and cultural forces. However, how social and geographical mobility is supported and constrained may be very different from how symbolic mobility, that is, imagination, is supported or constrained.

Trajectories of mobile imagining, three contrasting cases

Mobility and imagination having been defined, I now want to examine different trajectories of geographical mobility, as these are combined with variations of imagination. In order to do so, I will highlight how, and in what respects, geographical mobility, and its control in certain settings, may or may not constrain symbolic mobility, that which is supported by imagination. The two first examples are briefly presented, but are chosen for their contrasting effect; the third one is presented more extensively so as to highlight some of its constitutive complexity. Through these three case studies, I this I intend to reason theoretically (Marková, 2017; Zittoun, 2017).

Minimal geographical mobility

The first example comes from an institutional case study of a retirement home in the Swiss mountains, aimed at documenting people's transition, and examining how places and objects could be used as resources. To build the case study, we used a variety of techniques including analysis of documentation and the administration, interviews with residents, in their rooms or during accompanied walks, also using visual methods – asking people to take pictures of places that mattered to them, or when too difficult for them, presenting them with pictures made on their request (Zittoun, Grossen, & Salamin Tarrago, in preparation).

The move to a retirement home can be characterized as a single geographical mobility, mostly not chosen – recent falls or physical degradation command it – and often quite minimal – in this case,

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most residents came from the village or the nearby valleys. On the person's side, it demands a massive reduction or reconfiguration of a person's spheres of experiences. Indeed, most activities constituting a person's everyday life have to be cancelled, or reshaped: no more hikes to the church or the nearby village, no more meetings in the local cafés, or taking care of one's garden, or cooking, but also, no more meals at any time of the day, solitude, or privacy. In effect, in the retirement home, people need to adjust to a constraining setting – a total institution (Goffman, 1961) – controlling time and schedule, movements in or around the building, or even sitting arrangements; carers can enter at any moment in a room, which is mostly shared anyway.

Our analysis however highlighted that people could define two types of mobility within that setting. First, some residents could use the non-descript spaces – corridors, entrance halls, parking slots – to create or recreate personal proximal spheres of experience: knitting on one's preferred chair at the end of a corridor, or making tours around the parking on one's wheelchair rather than on the prescribed promenade pathway around the building (called "the snail trail"). Similarly, some would freely interpret the assigned meaning of public spaces, such as coming to the socially shared living roomin order to be alone. Second, and more importantly here, residents could usually bring some objects from home – pictures, ceramics, trinkets, and for some, even pieces of furniture. These material objects played an important role in people's lives, as enabler and supporter of symbolic mobility. Hence, Isabelle, as others, showed us the frame next to her bed with pictures of her family:

> These are pictures of my family… You see, here is my daughter, and here are my children and great-grand-children, on this frame there are the kids on holiday, these are the last pictures they gave me. I look at them and I think of them; I think of good memories, I wonder what they do, I hope they are well, and that they will have a beautiful life. I live in these pictures; it's hard to explain; my children, grandchildren and family, that's my life (Isabelle)

Pictures become here the semiotic resources which support Isabelle's imagination, which allows her to explore the past ("good memories"), alternative presents ("what they do") and the future ("I hope that they will have a beautiful life"). The imagination consists in a psychological movement, or symbolic mobility through distal spheres of experiences, loops back and forth, which come and illuminate Isabelle's everyday life, beyond its actual geographical limitations.

Similarly, Clara shows the statue of the Black Virgin close to her bed, and comments:

> I like very much this statue of the Virgin. I think often of Lourdes when I pray. It is the most BEAUTIFUL pilgrimage you can possibly do. I would very much like to go back there before I die. This year I could not go but next year I will (Clara)

Here as well, the statue as material object becomes a symbolic resource by which Clara becomes symbolically mobile, so as to explore her past trip to Lourdes, and imagine and anticipate her next pilgrimage, beyond her actual present lack of mobility. Like Isabelle, Clara can thus feed imagination of the future, an important aspect of one's sense of being and engagement in life (Freeman, 2011; Villa, 2010).

To sum up this first example, the residents we have interviewed had lived through a minimal geographical move, within a given environment, as they entered in the new setting of a nursing home. It was however accompanied by a drastic limitation of physical mobility, and also a

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reconfiguration of spheres of experience; this move is unidirectional – there is no return until one's death. However, these residents could use specific objects as symbolic resources for imagining, thus allowing for symbolic mobility, in the future, far beyond institutional and embodied spatial-temporal constraints.

Inland mobility

The second example comes from the single-case study of a diarist, a collective analysis which we undertook over ten years. We closely analysed the war diary of a young woman, June, during WWII in the UK, part of the Mass Observation archive. We also carefully documented the social, cultural and political environments in which June lived, and developed many of our theoretical concepts through the in-depth analysis of the case (Cornish, Gillespie, & Zittoun, 2013; Gillespie, Cornish, Aveling, & Zittoun, 2008; Zittoun, Aveling, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2012; Zittoun, Cornish, Gillespie, & Aveling, 2008; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015a).

Here, I will summarize the last, most complete analysis we undertook (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015a), highlighting the geographical and symbolic trajectories involved. What we learned through June's diary is that during the years of war, June lived in one same country, where the environment went under drastic changes, from being a country at peace, to a country at war. Consequently, during the years of the war, June was encouraged to join the home-front, which brought her to an internal geographical mobility: after growing up and experiencing the beginning of the war in the South-east of England on the coast with her mother and sister, selling petrol in the family garage, she moved inland, where she lived in a hostel and worked as land-girl. During the last years of war, due to health problems, she moved setting again, this time working at the desk of a shop for workers, still living in a hostel with peers.

Here I wish to highlight first, how the entrance of the country at war transformed the social imaginaries: the radio broadcasts, the films, advertisement, adult education courses, rumours, were carefully controlled by the UK government, supporting solidarity and commitment, notably through the "digging for victory" campaign, aiming to make the country self-sufficient, and Bevin's call, inviting women to be actively engaged in the war through the women's home-front. In this context, we could highlight how June's diary retraces intense dialogues with others and herself, to define what she would do as part of the home front, using any available information or discourses to imagine her possible futures: would she leave home, would she become engaged in the forces as nurse, would she become a teacher, or a gardener? Part of the conflicting imagining is part of the fact that her mother and others would consider being a nurse as putting her at risk of becoming "that type of girls", which are "brainless" and go with men; becoming a teacher would respond to her admired teacher's advice and avoid the war duty; and becoming a gardener would allow her to leave her house, responding to the call, yet doing something they had experienced as a family (gardening) – that is, maintaining a continuity in her spheres of experiences. This indeed would then happen.

During the war, in her new proximal sphere of experience, June's commitment to gardening brings her to deepen her knowledge of agriculture, changing her body, and leading to new social recognition. In parallel, her new acquaintance with many charming young men make her engage in intense imaginary dialogues with distal past experiences – such symbolic mobility lead her to examine what would her mother say, or her community, would they see how she behaved? It is thanks to the changing social imaginary – related to the fact that it is admitted that the war offers a

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state of exception - that she can allow herself to actually enjoy her new freedom –as she is "young only once".

Towards the end of the war June has to consider her next geographical move, as the country is going back to normal and the state of exception dissolves: will she go back home, to her community and family's mode of life, move to her boyfriend's farm to become his wife, or rather, keep moving, as her newly experienced freedom would invite her to do? Here again, her diary shows days of intense imagination of possible futures and alternative lives, a symbolic mobility going back and forth to past distal and future spheres of experience. She finally will opt for the third option, implying moving geographically and socially toward the unknown. This however takes place at a time where socialist women movements started to emerge, and to which she is attracted; these new social imaginaries related to the changing role of women in society allow her to shape this new distal and proximal sphere of experience for herself; they also contributed to the transformation of the role of women in the British society.

Our analysis did thus suggest that, as the whole social context and its imaginaries were in transformation, June undertook a trajectory of geographical mobility through diverse settings, which should have been temporary, and allowed her to return to her starting point. Yet as the war goes, June engaged in an intense symbolic mobility, through her rapid and accelerated exploration of past and future distal spheres of experiences, enriching new actual experiences, and eventually leading to a deep transformation of her ways of understanding the world. In that sense, one can observe her resulting trajectory of imagining – her movement through space enabled her to engage in radically new modalities of imagining about her past, her possible lives and her future.

International repeated mobility

The last example I will expose in more details comes from our current study on families in repeated mobility (Cangià, 2017; Cangià & Zittoun, 2018; Levitan, 2018; Zittoun & Levitan, 2019; Zittoun et al., 2018). One or more members of about thirty families were interviewed as they were posted in Switzerland because of the professional expertise of at least one parent; some of the interviewees, and especially children, were also asked to show on Google map five places where they felt home, or local.

Families in repeated mobility are in a condition more or less chosen, usually professionally driven, whereby the family moves every few years, from a county to another one; that geographical mobility is justified by the fact that the job of one of the partners at least demands it. Also, when people speak about their reasons to be engaged in repeated mobility, they use a series of argument partly nourished by social representations about mobility and places, partly built on their personal experience. First, they draw on social representations related to professional development – that is, the "mobility regime" nurtured by corporations, academia, etc.; this is ventriloquated in people's discourse, when they say that "they have to" be mobile if they want to achieve their professional or academic goals. Second, people often refer to what can be called the "cosmopolitan experience", an idea of becoming a "traveller of the world", valorised and diffused as social representations through the media, advertisement, and even in scientific literature; they thus speak about their "adventure" of discovering the world. Third, they draw on a combination of personal experiences and social representations or even geographical imaginaries when they justify their need to escape from, or avoid specific countries. Finally, some of these people have actually grown up as mobile children; and

for them, repeated mobility appears as the only possible way of life (Gyger Gaspoz, 2013; Langinier & Gyger Gaspoz, 2015).

In any case, geographical mobility is also supported by specific symbolic moves, socially guided or more personally built. This can be illustrated by the case of Frank, a father of two children and separated from his wife. Having grown up as mobile child, he chose a mobile professional career as only possible choice, and is very aware of the implication of such choices, for instance excluding the illusion to ever "settle in". Reflecting about his choices of posting, he expresses a very matter-of-fact discourse of practical imaginings, articulating past examinations of possible future, his present proximal sphere of experience, and also an uncertain future:

> I think that, when we looked at moving to- abroad [out of our US town], we wanted to move to Europe. I think that was- it's an interesting option. A:nd since none had spoken any other language, other than, you know, slight Spanish, there's not a lot of options where you can move a:nd and kind of easily integrate. Because, like moving to to France, I mean, it's very French, you know. Yeah, moving to German- Germany, I mean, and and quite honestly, I'm not qualified for the jobs there because I don't speak the language. (..) Geneva in general, is just easier to move to knowing English, and that being the only thing. Now, I do think that we- since coming here, I think we underestimated the need to know French, mhm and since that time, yeah, we all have, at least the the kids and I, we've much better French than we started with, mhm for sure. (…) I can't imagine at this point, being after (May) here. (Frank)

Frank speaks as person whose geographical mobility is extreme, having grown up and living as a mobile professional. On a more symbolic plane, he is fully aware of being on the move, yet imagining the adequacy of specific possible postings in view of his past mobility specific location. Interestingly, although he does not seem to hold a clear future distal experience ("I can't imagine... being after here"), he doesn't seem to question the very principle of his mobility. In some way, his trajectory of imagining seems aligned to his geographical one, if not, in some way, being less mobile.

The second example is given by Olga, who grew up in the UK from a non-mobile family; she and her husband share an international business, and a general imaginary of mobility of search of diverse experiences. They have three children, Oliver (9 and half), Vicky (7) and Gina (5). Olga's mobility is guided by the idea that one needs to "go and experience other things". As part of their former trips, she and her partner had identified Switzerland as place to come and live. They chose to live in a small village, and to be part of the local life, as they did in Asia, with the possibility of going out for a hike or climb, and sending their children to the local public school. Reflecting about her future holidays, she plans to travel all around Europe to visit all its capital cities during the summer, and to go back in Asia during the fall. This is also completed by the fact that they exclude moving back to the UK, a place which, they feel "it's not a bright future for our children there" because of the poor infrastructure and professional opportunities, and the Brexit. On the other hand, such imagination of permanent mobility and actual geographical mobility is accompanied by the maintenance of very stable configurations of proximal spheres of experience and stable distal experiences. This can be visible in three of the strategies displayed by Olga and her family (Levitan, 2018). First, she strongly maintains stable proximal spheres of experiences:

> I don't think our life changes that much. It is always the same routine for the children in terms of when they get up and when they go to bed. So preserving the same routine. (…) I

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suppose you know wherever we lived there was swimming and running around and climbing in all that sort of things. (..) So, there's always been--they always know that there's always going to be half an hour each day or an hour each day where we gonna do something which is going to be in French or German or Mandarin or maths or whatever. Because even things like maths, the way they do maths in Singapore, the way they do math in England, the way they do math in Switzerland--completely different.

Second, they move with a light set of objects, leaving behind their furniture and buying new ones every move, focusing on small objects that allow establishing and maintaining distal experiences:

We have like-- the children have-- we have this five boxes like this, which is what the kids call, "Life in a box," which have photos and, you know, their first shoes and their first piece of hair and that sort of thing. That's what comes with us. Everything else is new each time.

Third, Olga and her husband try to reinforce the tightness of the nuclear family:

[My husband] and I, we're interchangeable, so we share everything. We share work, we share childcare, we share… (…) Because [the children] are so close in age, they're very good friends, so it's like a little team. And we always, it's a-- we always talk about it being an adventure. And we're on an adventure and as long as we stay in a very closeness and very tight group, then we'll have fun.

This, we can suggest, may encourage the creation of overlapping spheres of experiences; activities being shared, sets of skills and identities being common, each person's sphere of experience is congruent with others, and mutually reinforce each other. This goes against a tendency observed in other mobile families, where the spheres of experience of each member are extremely different (e.g., the professional parent, vs. the local experiences of the parent staying at home, vs. the experiences of children, etc.) (Zittoun et al., 2018).

Interestingly, this example suggests that in case of heightened geographical mobility, Olga and her family seem in contrast to develop an as-stable as possible symbolic mobility; as their spheres of experience are necessarily expanded at each new move, they exert a centripetal force so as to reinforce the tightness of proximal spheres of experiences, and the stability of distal spheres of experiences.

To nuance Olga's propositions, however, it has to be said that in her family, the three children did not experience the moves made in the same way. Deborah Levitan asked each of the children to describe the places where they felt home. Interestingly, although they mention the same settings, their experience of them were contrasting: Oliver liked the island in Asia because he could snorkel, but Gina because there was a Santa house; Oliver also liked to swim in Singapore, while Gina found it too dirty to swim and Vicky remembers the street; all like their grandparents' house, but Oliver for playing, and Gina for the beans in the garden. Hence, Oliver and Vicky seem to have very overlapping spheres of experiences, and therefore, comparable imaginations of their past. Gina, however, has different experiences of the same places. One may thus think that from the same geographical mobility, the children will actually develop different symbolic mobilities, and contrasting imaginary moves. Also, as other children's difficulties with repeated mobility (Adams & Fleer, 2015) Oliver expresses his confusion about the many places in which he moves, which become blurred in his

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memories, and expresses his preference for settling in their current location (Zittoun & Levitan, 2019). Here also, the imagination of the future of Oliver is not consonant with that of his parents – it still may evolve.

Finally, this example was meant to explore an extreme case of geographical mobility, that of families in repeated "chosen" mobility. My reading proposes that first, such mobility is guided and supported by a very general, socially promoted, imaginary of mobility (Jayaram & Salazar, 2016); second, that the actual geographical mobility may be triggered by quite factual imaginations of the future. Third, at the level of symbolic movement, mobile families tend to reinforce stability of proximal and distal spheres of experience. Fourth, even so, experiences of actual geographical mobility and symbolic mobility may be disjoined, and quite different among members of a same family. As a whole, I would suggest that such subjective experience, the symbolic mobility, may actually play a crucial role in the overall experience of the person; that the trajectories of these adults' imagining may turn out to be much more stable than their actual geographic mobility; yet that children's trajectories of imagining may develop at different speed than their geographical mobility.

Opening: on geographical and symbolic mobility

In this paper, I have proposed to approach (im)mobility and imagination from a sociocultural, developmental perspective. This has brought me to distinguish the materiality and spatiality of geographical human mobility, from the more symbolic, experiential mobility, given by people's reconfiguration and transformation of spheres of experience, both proximal and distal. From such a perspective, imagination may be what supports or encourages geographical (im)mobility. Finally, as people's geographical mobility unfolds through social and material places in "real" time, people's trajectory of imagination may take different routes.

I presented three contrasting cases of mobility and imagination. In the first case, that of the retirement home, the social environment is very static, and the settings strongly constrains the geographical mobility of the person; however, thanks to symbolic resources, the person can support imagination and therefore symbolic mobility; my suggestion would be that this symbolic mobility, as well as the trajectory of imagination, play a vital role. Paradoxically, living in retirement home may thus demand a trajectory of increasing imagination. In the second case, the social environment was undergoing transformation, inviting people to a geographical move; this, in turn, brought June to an intense symbolic mobility, which eventually opened a new horizon of possible imagination for herself and her social environment – the trajectory of imagination brought about radical new options, in terms of both symbolic and geographical mobility. In the third case, the social environment promotes an imaginary of mobility, which brings people to actual geographical mobility, to which they may adjust by stabilizing their more symbolic trajectory; what consequence this may have in the long run for these people, their families and its members' trajectories of imagining, is still to be explored.

I hope to have contributed to a more integrative theoretical framework of heuristic value, and that pursues the explorations of difference and mutually dependence between spatial, geographical movement, and symbolic (or semiotic, or semantic) ones (Gillespie, Kadianaki, & O'Sullivan-Lago, 2012; Gillespie & Zittoun, 2015)). Distinguishing analytically geographical and symbolic mobility, one may also be able to account for obstacles to human mobility - whether semantic barriers (Gillespie et al., 2012), symbolic or social boundaries (Dahinden & Zittoun, 2013; Pachucki, Pendergrass, & Lamont, 2007), or actual geographical, sociomaterial obstacles. One may also open routes to

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examine the conditions of overcoming them, through means of nourishing and fostering new trajectories of imagination.

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