

RESEARCHES

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Connected Refugees

Ongoing research

Since December 2015, Chinese artist Ai Weiwei has made the refugee crisis the focus of his work. For more than a year, the artist, commissioned by the Mobile Lives Forum, studied the way they communicate, orient themselves and move using smartphones, which for many has become their most valuable tool for survival. In the virtual exhibition *Connected refugees* (available on Artistic Lab), you can follow Ai Weiwei and mobility sociologist Mimi Sheller's art-social science investigation month by month.

Research participants

艾未未 (AI WEIWEI)

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Discover the new videos of the artist on [Artistic Lab](#) as well as a two-part interview.

Click to watch the trailer :

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AI Weiwei - Connected refugees - Trailer from Forum Vies Mobiles on Vimeo.

What role for smartphones in the “immobile **mobility**” of refugees?

Mobility, as a rule seems, to go hand in hand with the ability to communicate – as if, without communication, we were somehow incapable of moving. How can we get information regarding itineraries, transport modes, destinations and the different possibilities without being able to communicate? How do we let others know where we are? This increasingly intrinsic overlap between physical and virtual mobility likewise questions our reliance on the infrastructures that make these new forms of communication possible.

For refugees, these questions are crucial: what if the ability to locate relatives, send out a distress signal, receive money, organize the next leg of the journey or simply figure out which route to take depended on this mobile connection ? While we have long spoken of the “double absence” of migrants (both from their country of origin and from their host country), certain researchers now allude to the “double presence” made possible by ICT and notably smartphones. This phenomenon occurs from the beginnings of their perilous and uncertain journeys, by allowing refugees to stay in touch with their families and organizing their arrival in Europe. With Smartphone use they are able to reassemble their social ties from a distance.

Mobility

Broadly, the word mobility can be defined as the intention to move and the realization of this movement in geographical space, implying a social change.

More

Keywords : [Art](#), [Lifestyles](#), [China](#)

¹ <mailto:eleonore.hermand@sncf.fr>

² <http://artisticlab.forumviesmobiles.org/en/the-refugee-project>

³ <https://vimeo.com/232801991>

⁴ <https://vimeo.com/mobilelivesforum>

⁵ <https://vimeo.com>

⁶ <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/mobility-450>

⁷ <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/mots-cles/art>

⁸ <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/mots-cles/modes-vie>

⁹ <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/mots-cles/chine>