

Editorial

This summer a small airplane was suspended between high trees on a lane in a posh neighborhood of Amsterdam. Part of a display of contemporary art, the plane is one of Joost Conijn's self-built contraptions in which he flew all the way to Africa, regularly reporting on his "performance" in one of the Dutch national newspapers.¹

In Western histories of mobility, voyages to Africa—on foot, by ship, in litters carried by indigenous people, in trains, by car or motorbike, and in planes—symbolized in the popular mind an aggressive colonialism. Such trips demonstrated Western superiority as much as they involved utilitarian journeying or reconnaissance of land to be conquered. Anxious about staying aloft, Conijn mimicked in his adventures the pioneering spirit of colonial exploits while at the same time giving them a postcolonial twist. In his case, the return to Africa was a self-consciously humble venture, one that threw into comic relief assumptions of western superiority and the right to unfettered mobility. At the same time as his low-tech vehicle questioned the rationality of mass tourism in supersize Boeings, it reminded us of an era after the car began to be domesticated, when aviation promised to be the more advanced successor of individual motorized transport.

Yet Conijn's aerial construction is emphatically art. His plane is a descendant of Duchamps's *urinoir* and the catalyst for a hilarious confrontation with a row of airfield officials prepared to bend the rules of international aviation in order to accommodate a silly Dutch artist in a shaky flying machine. Why do we need an artist, a regular reader of the *Volkscrant* reports might ask, to direct us to the contingency and relativity of current-day mobility systems and structures? The fact is that artists like Conijn and their work help scholars (whether historians or social scientists) and professional transport experts to see mobility afresh. They provide new perspectives that we should heed if we take our mission to "rethink mobility" seriously and honor our intention to publish scholarship that is both solidly certified and provocative.

This second issue of *Transfers* confirms this insight. Like the first, and hopefully followed by many others over the coming years, it functions not only as a collection but as an exhibition as well. It aims to provide a broad vista on mobility past and present. As we stated in our first Editorial, we are not after the string theory of mobility, but we would like to stimulate reflection and transnational conversations on the current transition from (if we are allowed two more metaphors) the age of the freeway into the age of the cloud, of the linear paradigm to the network and beyond.

We open this issue with controversy: Kudzai Matereke's contribution "Breaking Free from Epistemic Enclosures': Re-imagining 'Travel' and 'Mobility' in Discourses of Cosmopolitanism" had our referees engaging in a spirited debate over the relationship between Kant's philosophy of cosmopolitanism, modernity, and the mobilities of colonial and postcolonial subjects—as well as the article's relevance to mobility studies. Matereke's essay will surely generate further discussion among our readers on the relationship between cosmopolitanism and mobility. Matereke's intention is to uncouple the notions of cosmopolitanism and global awareness from their colonial origins and locate them firmly within new mobility studies debates.

Matereke's article represents the type of new approach and perspective that will find sympathetic consideration from this editorial collective. We hope during the coming months to receive submissions on the transformative role of mobilities in our contemporary life as well as in the past. We look forward to receiving reflections on how new mobilities, including wireless mobilities, lead to new ways of interacting—within and across communities, with subaltern "Others," with the environment, in the West and in the non-West, in the mainstream, but also in alternative and subversive practices.

In this second issue we also continue our coverage of bicycling as a democratic form of mobility with Ruth Oldenziel's and Adri de la Bruhèze's contribution, "Contested Spaces: Bicycle Infrastructures in Western European Cities, 1900–1995." They use an historical analysis to attack the idea that building bicycle paths will stimulate bicycle use. De la Bruhèze was one of the authors of a seminal publication in the Netherlands more than a decade ago, which compared the role of bicycling in several western-European cities. That publication may well now receive the international attention it deserves in the middle of a new "bicycle boom." In any event, we will continue to feature bicycling scholarship in the issues to come, and encourage the bicycle community to embrace *Transfers* as one of its high-quality platforms.

Transport history, one component area of mobility studies, produces scholarship of broad interest, raising questions that cross narrowly conceived disciplinary borders. One of these is the question of "coordination." The historical and still vibrant struggle between road and rail is one of transport history's subfields and enables research into the intersection of history and policymaking. In this edition we use history as inventory: a more descriptive than analytical overview of three areas (the Netherlands, Belgium, California during the inter-war years) to help set the stage. Ruud Filarski's "Motor Bus Politics: Dutch Transport Policy during the Interwar Years," Donald Weber's "Road against Rail: The Debate on Transport Policy in Belgium, 1920–1940," and Gregory L. Thompson's

“Public Policy or Popular Demand? Why Californians Shifted from Trains to Autos (and Not Buses) 1910–1941” all focus on the passenger side (as opposed to the freight side) of the coordination debate. Whereas the Dutch and Belgian contributions tell the story of “wild buses” as an alternative to the steam tramways that covered the country with their local and regional networks (presenting an alternative to road transport never again seriously considered), the Californian analysis goes one step further by addressing the question of why the motor bus did not satisfy American transport needs.

We present this debate as our first mini-special forum, a feature we intend to repeat in the coming volumes: three or four articles on one topic preceded by a contextualizing introduction written by a specialist (in this case, historical) and followed by a brief commentary by an expert on current-day policy and planning, intended to help bridge the cleft between such separated specialisms as history and policymaking. As we stated in our first Editorial², setting up an interdisciplinary journal is more than just putting different scholars in one issue: we need translations, transfers, from one field to another, and back. In this case, we invited Gustav Sjöblom (who has just finished a dissertation comparing German and British coordination debates) and Vincent Kaufmann (an internationally renowned sociologist of mobility weighing in on the Swiss situation) to write the introduction and commentary, respectively. The core articles of this special section could function as models of information gathering necessary to judge and analyze current coordination policy and planning. The papers are the result of one of the three workshops organized by the Dutch Ministry of Traffic and Water Management in 2008 and 2009. They were dedicated to six crucial thematic areas in the state-of-the-art history of mobility: the emergence of the train, the decline of the tramway, the rise of the car, the coordination debate, freight hauling, and mass motorization. The workshops and the decision of the Ministry to support the publication of a selection (undertaken by an independent commission) of the papers written by more than forty international experts form one of the cornerstones on which the current journal has been built. They may help unearth much more “crucial areas” of research than the six identified two years ago.

As usual (if we are allowed to say so after having prepared only two issues) we have our regular sections on museum reviews, film reviews, and book reviews, with a guest author for our Art & Mobility section, Tracy Nichols Busch, providing a contribution on New York’s High Line project. Meanwhile, we found Fernanda Duarte, specialized in “locative art,” to replace Charissa Terranova as Art Review Editor. We also introduce a new format for our “Ideas in Motion” section: whereas in the first issue we dedicated the space to two book review essays on cycling, this time we devote it to Frank Uekoetter’s provocative analysis of the Arab uprising and its relation to mobility.

As the attentive reader can see, we are still experimenting with how best to address our mission, rethinking mobility. If you would like to be a part of this experiment, please let us know: submit your paper, propose a special section, suggest a quintessential book, exhibition or film to be reviewed or give us ideas on how to improve our formula. We share Conijn's irreverence of the spirit and deep seriousness toward ideas, and we suspect that our readers share it too. We look forward to further adventures together.

Gijs Mom
Editor

Georgine Clarsen
Associate Editor

Cotten Seiler
Associate Editor

Notes

1. <http://www.joostconijn.org>.
2. Gijs Mom (together with Georgine Clarsen, Nanny Kim, Cotten Seiler, Kurt Möser, Dorit Müller, Charissa Terranova and Rudi Volti), "Hop on the Bus, Gus': Editorial," *Transfers* 1 No. 1 (Spring 2011) 1-13, here: 5.