

Editorial

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The publication timeline of the issues of volume 10 of *Transfers* has been informed by its own history and our now shared global history. Issue 10.1 commemorated the journal's 10th anniversary and sought to take stock of the past, point to future avenues, and react to the immediate present. Issue 10.2/3 is a double issue that moves the journal further into a new era. It both reaffirms our commitment to interdisciplinarity, diversity, and cutting-edge theorization and remains faithful to our engagement to question accepted histories, especially in the case of infrastructures, these seemingly perennial elements of our lived environment. Editing this journal remains a collaborative and interdisciplinary effort. As such, this double issue presents a collection of research articles on aeromobility, human-elephant relations, LGBT refugees in Germany, and mobility justice in Australia, followed by a special section on railways in Europe and Asia. In both parts of this issue, the articles weave together acts of authoring and reading mobility, by challenging our understanding of our field's accepted terms and concepts, developing their semantic richness, and asking of us to fully reflect on their meaning today.

In "How We Understand Aeromobility: Mapping the Evolution of a New Term in Mobility Studies," Veronika Zuskáčová sets out to review the concept of "aeromobility" and its related terms, and provides a much-needed contribution to the field of mobilities studies by synthesizing the literature since the first use of the word in the early 2000s. Her article not only draws attention to its semantic richness and its meaningful nuances in academic discourse, but it also reminds us to be mindful of its use, and to avoid the deception of relying on "a great word" and assuming a shared common-sense meaning. Finally, Zuskáčová invites more abstract thinking about aeromobility and urges scholars to keep rethinking and theorizing aeromobility and to go beyond the overreliance on Western and Anglophone aeromobile experiences.

One way to integrate the term and experience of aeromobility in languages other than English is to look at fiction literature. In "Aeromobilities of Student Newcomers in Francophone African Fiction," Anna-Leena Toivanen deploys the concept in the field of postcolonial literary studies. Her article argues for a better and more inclusive integration of concrete forms of mobility by literary criticism scholars, who have for far too long overlooked mobilities and have limited their understanding of the term to migrations. Toivanen explores the formal functions of representations of aeromobility and its effect on narrative structures and tropes. Reading scenes of aeromobility in Francophone Afri-



can novels from the 1980s to the 2010s, she draws attention to the affective afterlife of colonial relations as anxiety strikes unaccustomed air travelers and African newcomers flying to the former colonial center.

Telling stories of migration and using mobile methods, in “LGBT Refugees and the Visual Representation of Transnational Mobility,” Ernst van der Wal examines how photographic interviews can be used to represent the life stories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender refugees in Germany. He argues that transnational movements across borders have a significant impact on the self-representation of such refugees. Van der Wal focuses on a photographic interview project, *The Story That Travelled*, which Hanna Resch and he coordinated, thus presenting a multilayered text, featuring himself reflecting on his own practice as artist and as scholar doing ethnographic work, teasing out ideas surrounding community, citizenship, and transnational mobility as interpreted and visualized by refugees. Through their photographs incorporated in the body of his text, his subjects’ stories continue to travel, as the reader bears witness to a renewed performance of self-authorship across borders.

In “On the Trails of Free-Roaming Elephants: Human-Elephant Mobility and History across the Indo-Myanmar Highlands,” Paul Keil brings our attention to the relations between human populations and free-roaming elephants in the highlands defining the Indo-Myanmar border. His article expands on our understanding of Zomia,¹ a geography defined by the regular movement of people, to include an ecology shaped by the movement of its elephant population. It argues that the patterns of migration, history of colonization, and identities and practices of communities must be understood in relation to wild elephants. His critical emphasis on the interconnectedness between human and non-human actors on the one hand and colonial and ecological temporalities on the other hand bridges a political divide that has often kept separated the histories of empires and their environments.

Bridging the gap between art and academic discourse, Katie Maher’s “Traveling with *Trained Man*: Decolonizing Directions in Railway Mobilities” boldly and elegantly posits the railways as a decolonial option for moving toward mobility justice. Starting with an examination of the photographic artwork *Trained Man* by Ngalkban Australian artist Darren Siwes, her article artfully and strategically deploys the polysemy of “train,” as noun, verb, and alternate politics. Her contribution reminds us that mobilities are inseparable from relationships of racial and colonial domination. Railways carry “two lines of destiny,” pointing not only in a colonial direction but also toward a potential for decolonial mobilities.²

The second part of this double issue also invites us to think with railways in an expanded special section edited by Peter Schweitzer, Olga Povoznyuk, and Stephanie McCallum. Railroads are a relatively new object of attention for anthropologists. The special section clearly demonstrates how anthropological perspectives on railroads can help facilitate a more com-

prehensive analysis of these promises and threats of these infrastructure objects. The articles make salient the relevance of anthropological approaches to railways in different parts of the world, in Europe and Asia notably. They show how the promises of modernity, embodied by railroads, take up different meanings and play out differently for different actors in different situations. Railroad construction has promoted the ambitions of the state and the interests of investors and private companies. They have brought desired forms of mobility to some. Railroads have also held the hope of socio-economic development, which rarely ends up materializing for the local communities although they typically have borne most of the environmental costs of their construction. The special section also demonstrates that railroads have paradoxically brought or increased isolation and immobility. In her response to the special section, Heather Anne Swanson makes salient the necessity of studying railroads now. She shows why railroads have been important in rethinking the issues of modernity, ruination, affect, and state governance. She reminds us of the need to connect the ethnographic and the historical, and stresses that studying railroads prompts new forms of comparative scholarship. Moreover, she examines these infrastructure objects in relation to wider environmental conversations, especially ongoing public debates about climate-friendly transit. Ultimately, taken altogether, the introduction, response and articles of the special section urge us to continue to explore the political, social, material, environmental, and affective lives of railroads.

For *Transfers*, as for most if not all of us, 2020 has been a turning point. We will continue to take stock of the past and advocate for new approaches and renewed mindfulness in our endeavors. In these complicated times, we are extremely grateful to the authors, reviewers, and editors of this double issue for their work and diligence. We also want to thank the Thomas and Catharine McMahon's Memorial Fund at Wesleyan University for their support.

Notes

1. James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).
2. On decoloniality, see Walter D. Mignolo, Catherine E. Walsh, and Duke University Press, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018). On decoloniality and its potential for academic research and political activism, see, for instance, Malcom Ferdinand, *Une écologie décoloniale* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2019).