Editorial

Mimi Sheller and Gijs Mom

This issue sheds new light on one of the classic concerns of mobility studies: transitions in forms of personal transportation. Mobility transitions are arguably one of the key issues of the twenty-first century, as societies around the world face the pressing questions of climate change mitigation and adaptation. A better understanding of recent and historical transitions not only in vehicle technologies but also in urban forms could be crucial to guiding future transition dynamics. At the same time, a deeper appreciation of historical transitions in transportation can also inform how we think about the present: what methods we use, what factors we take into consideration, and what theoretical perspectives we employ.

All of the articles in this issue are concerned in some way with the dynamics of social change and urban form as shapers of mobility. That is to say, they link together understandings of transportation modes such as electric vehicles or railways with wider concerns over urbanization, urban spatial form, and the cultural *imaginaire* of urban mobility whether expressed in plans and maps, everyday discourses of consumers, or literature and film. In line with the mission of *Transfers*, we thereby seek to enrich studies of mobility transitions with a multidisciplinary and international approach that connects the social sciences with the humanities, numbers with poetry, and the past with the present and future.

The two opening articles each sheds new light on the multi-level perspective (MLP) on technological transitions, associated with the Dutch scholars Frank Geels and Johan Schot and various collaborators, especially in relation to the adoption of low-carbon transportation in developed countries (in this case northern Europe, and in particular the potential shift away from automobile dependency). Both articles offer crisp overviews of the MLP for those not familiar with this body of work, and then suggest modifications of the MLP to take better account of social, cultural, and behavioral factors that influence decisions such as driving (or owning) a car or not. They also both seek to include attention to suburban (and even rural) development as much as urban, linking mobility transitions to the dynamics of urban and suburban growth.

In “Transitioning to a Low Carbon Society? The Case of Personal Transportation and Urban Form in Copenhagen: 1947 to the Present” Andrés Felipe Valderrama Pineda and Nina Vogel concentrate on transportation planning in

Copenhagen over the last six decades. Using a narrative approach that might be compared to anthropologist Clifford Geertz's "thick description," they add richness and depth to understanding historical transitions in personal transport in this greater metropolitan region, which they argue occurred in three distinct periods. They call for analysis of spatial and cultural changes to play a more important role in transition theory, moving beyond the idea of "niche" experimentation being merely technological.

Daniel Newman, Peter Wells, Paul Nieuwenhuis, Ceri Donovan, and Huw Davies propose another kind of methodological modification to transition theory, this time aimed at the question: Why have plug-in electric vehicles not been more quickly and widely adopted by consumers? In their contribution, "Learning from Electric Cars as Socio-technical Mobility Experiments: Where Next?", they offer a very interesting review and critique of the MLP as applied to plug-in electric vehicles alongside an extensive meta-analysis of qualitative studies of electric-vehicle-owning households as well as studies of car-sharing. This becomes the platform for the authors' own qualitative empirical study of electric vehicle sharing, leasing and other schemes across a range of northern European countries, which found a willingness amongst a majority of respondents for a "dual shift" away from not only fossil fuel technologies but also away from private ownership of vehicles. The problem of "transition failure" offers important caveats for the application of the multi-level perspective, and poses compelling methodological problems for future research to overcome.

Histories of mobility also present fascinating methodological challenges. The special section on Railways and Urban Cultures revisits the importance of passenger rail (and public transit systems) in the transformation of urban experience, especially through studies of film, literature, poetry and other forms of representation such as maps. Building on Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Railway Journey*, the section is situated in relation to studies of speed and urban metabolism, in the tradition of Georg Simmel, and studies of urban spatial form and rhythm, in the tradition of Henri Lefebvre. Thus it reminds us of some of the theoretical antecedents that have informed the new field of Mobility Studies, and also builds bridges between the francophone theoretical flavor of Paul Virilio's work on speed and politics and the anglophone turn of John Urry's work on mobility. This section is introduced by guest editor Steven Spalding. We invited George Revill to write a comment on it.

Overall our peer-reviewed first part of this issue takes us on enriching mental journeys across mid-twentieth to twenty-first century Copenhagen, London, Paris, and other northern European landscapes, with one foray into Buenos Aires, provoking our own mobility imagination along the way. It also revisits the contribution of French, English, German, Dutch, and other theorists of mobility, a European tradition that in future issues we plan to put into dialogue with wider perspectives from around the world.

In our lightly reviewed forum section Ideas in Motion, we offer you Mathieu Flonneau's opinionated "A City for Woody Allen? The New Banks of the Seine in Paris, a Product of Rootless Sociology and City Planning," followed by our regular art, film, museum and book review sections.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed making it.