

Editorial

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The final months of 2014 have seen many critical events in respect to mobility: Apple introduced its Apple Watch, a cyborg technology that adds a novel, substantially corporeal layer to our “always on” connectedness—what Sherry Turkle has termed the “tethered self.”¹ Moreover, it is said to revolutionize mobile paying systems, and it might finally implement mobile body monitoring techniques into daily life.² Ebola is terrorizing Africa and frightening the world; its outbreak and spread is based on human mobility, and researchers are calling for better control and quantification of human mobility in the affected regions to contain the disease.³ Even its initial spread from animals to humans may have had its origin in human transgressions beyond traditional habitats, by intruding into insular bush regions and using the local fruit bats as food. Due to global mobility patterns, the viral passenger switched transport modes, from animal to airplane. On the other hand, private space flight suffered two serious setbacks in just one week when the Antares rocket of Orbital Sciences, with supplies for the International Space Station and satellites on board, exploded, and shortly after, SpaceShipTwo crashed over the Mojave Desert. These catastrophic failures ignited wide media discussion on the challenges, dangers, and significance of space mobility, its ongoing commercialization and privatization, and, in particular, plans for future manned space travel for “tourists.”⁴

While these events demonstrate how interwoven the mobilities of people, things, data, and viruses are with our current everyday life and our ambitions for its future shaping, the present issue of *Transfers* has an emphasis on looking back to past mobilities. The majority of articles follow the line of historical analysis of mobility, but at the same time, they use a multitude of methods and represent different disciplines—reaching from sociology over communication studies to urban planning. But another—rather accidental but significant—red thread connects the articles in this issue: a focus on representations of mobilities and on imaginative mobilities. We might see this as a sign that mobility studies increasingly has moved beyond the traditional analysis of mobile objects and people toward media and media content and the exploration of links between media and mobility, as well as media studies and mobility studies.

Vanessa Stjernborg, Mekonnen Tesfahuney, and Anders Wretstrand introduce us to current social and inequality problems in Seved, a segregated and underprivileged quarter of Malmö, where they underline the uneven power



structures, limitations, and constraints of mobility. Sweden's past is strongly associated with the welfare state, but the authors remind us that—after another wave of globalization and neoliberalism—Swedish cities (along with many others in Western Europe) struggle with segregation, inequality, and a “white flight” out of troubled neighborhoods. A pervasive surveillance seems to go hand in hand with a growing fear of being victimized. Applying critical discourse analyses to newspaper articles, the authors demonstrate that Sweden is represented as an unruly place without safety and laws, even though the actual exposure to violence is much lower than perceived. In this way, media content adds to what Doreen Massey has framed as “power geometry”: an uneven distribution of possibilities, chances, effects, and constraints of mobility and globalization.

A popular children's book from 1929—*Emil and the Detectives*, written by the German author Erich Kästner—along with its film adaptations serve as a springboard for Lesley Murray to critique contemporary social science studies on children's mobility. In this historical text and more recent movies, the twelve-year-old Emil, together with his newly gained friends, has many adventures in the streets of Berlin. Although new to this capital (Emil just traveled from his village to visit his aunt, but was robbed on the train), Emil finds his way around in the city, sometimes with the help of adults. He walks the streets, crosses intersections, climbs the tramway, and so on. By exploring the imaginative situations of Emil's mobility, Murray emphasizes the need to incorporate children's agency inside studies on children's mobility instead of assuming parents determine what children can, should, or must not do in traffic. Moreover, by contrasting the early twentieth-century (literary) setting with current experience, she makes readers aware of how drastically children's mobility patterns have changed from playing in streets and exploring the environs to becoming passengers inside parental cars. In doing so she introduces another novelty in our pages, bringing her own and her ten-year-old son's experiences into her narrative.

In 2014, *Transfers* published many articles on urban transport, “organic” mobility (pedestrians, animals), and railways. We start the first issue of 2015 with a special section on the automobile road, or more precisely, on its representations, introduced by guest editor Massimo Moraglio and coauthor Bruce Seely. Here again, the articles reach beyond traditional road history by analyzing media representations of mobility, be it maps, models, or other visualizations of mobility. The section discusses three different European countries (Belgium, Germany, Norway) in critical phases of their mobility development: the initial appropriation of cars for urban traffic; the Nazi version of the *Autobahn*; and postwar mass motorization. The articles suggest what leading protagonists of visual studies, such as the art historians Horst Bredekamp or William J. T. Mitchell, have proclaimed with the so-called pictorial or iconic turn, namely, that images—due to their potential polyvalence on one hand

and long traditions of ways of seeing and of depicting on the other—have a life of their own. Besides, images, models, or graphics create, shape, and mediate knowledge.⁵ As this special section suggests, and in particular the comment by Peter Merriman (whom we invited to illuminate the topic from a social science point of view), future research in mobility studies might explore more thoroughly the links between the iconic and the mobility turn.

At the start of the fifth year we look back on a year in which we, as a team, produced 515 pages: 17 main articles, 30 book reviews, and 3 contributions each for the Ideas in Motion, Mobility and Art, Museum Review, and Film Review sections. The bulk of the topics were approached from a historical angle; most of the four exceptions had at least a long-term perspective. Four articles dealt explicitly with colonialism, race, and modernity, five with media and literary history, and four with classic transport history. Of the total set, four articles continued the new subfield of “slow traffic,” including rickshaw studies. In terms of “mobility modes,” we had two articles on roads/cars (including electric vehicles), eight on urban transport, four on pedestrianism/animals, five on railways, and three on general mobility issues.

As far as the topic country is concerned, we had seven articles on Asia, two on Latin America, seven on Europe, and one on the United States, which means that we already reached our target of having more than 50 percent of the articles on non-Western topics. However, there should be a more balanced divide between North American/Australian and European contributions, and we call upon our American and Australian/New Zealand colleagues to submit articles. We had two special sections/issues (Railways and Literature and our second Asia issue) and one “free” issue.

In short, at the start of the fifth year of *Transfers*, we look back on a period in which, as Georgine Clarsen’s Ideas in Motion section outlines, we celebrate our success but also look forward to new ways to organize our work. We have just established a number of portfolios of special interest, each mentored by members of our editorial team. These portfolios are intended to encourage and elicit submissions in areas we believe are particularly important and productive fields of mobilities scholarship. Our wish is that they will help us take innovative mobilities scholarship onto new ground. If you would like to join one of these portfolios as a commentator or in another role, please go to our website and contact one of the “portfolio holders.”

Finally, we take this opportunity to announce changes in our editorial team. Last year we had to say good-bye to our book review editor, Liz Millward, who made that section an excellent exhibition of the field’s variety. She will be succeeded by Sunny Stalter-Pace. In our Museum Review section, the excellent work of editors Deborah Breen and Katariina Mauranen will be taken over by Anne-Katrin Ebert. This is also the moment to say good-bye to Nanny Kim, who virtually on her own built up our China strand. She will be succeeded by Stéphanie Ponsavady on the editorial team and Dagmar Schäfer

on our editorial board, both “portfolio holders” of our Asia portfolio. In the coming months we intend to continue our editorial team and editorial board reorganization in order to accommodate the other portfolios.

The *Transfers* team does not see ourselves as passive receptacles of the field’s scholarship. We intervene and propose strands, angles, and topics we deem important for mobility studies to thrive. That is also why our other regular sections are so important: the film, art, museum, and book reviews allow us to comment on the field’s frontiers. As always, we hope you like who and what we selected. To celebrate the start of our fifth volume, as we have done at the start of every volume so far, we publish a special text, this time a translation by Guillermo Giucci of some pages of his new work in Spanish. We thank him for his generosity.

Notes

1. Sherry Turkle, “Always-On/Always-On-You: The Tethered Self,” in *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies*, ed. James E. Katz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 121–137.
2. See Apple’s promotional homepage, with statements such as: “Now your inner circle [of friends] is always nearby”; the watch “gets your attention the way another person would—by tapping you”; an accelerometer serves “to measure your total body movement”; in the United States, Apple Pay will be introduced as novel, mobile, and contactless payment technology where one will “hear and feel a confirmation from Apple Watch once your payment information is sent.” <https://www.apple.com/watch/features/> (accessed 12/11/2014).
3. Cf. Amrai Coen and Malte Henk, “Wie das Virus in die Welt kam,” *Die Zeit*, no. 44 (7 November 2014), <http://www.zeit.de/2014/44/ebola-virus-krankheit-entstehung> (accessed 12/11/2014).
4. Cf., e.g., Theo Emery, “Sir Walter Raleigh and the Uncertain Future of Space Travel,” *The New Yorker*, 6 November 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/sir-richard-branson-sir-richard-raleigh-future-private-space-travel> (accessed 12/11/2014); Manfred Lindinger, “Private Raumfahrt: Der trügerische Weg ins All,” *FAZ.net*, 1 November 2014, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wissen/space-ship-two-der-trueegerische-weg-ins-all-13242433.html> (accessed 12/11/2014).
5. See, e.g., William J. T. Mitchell, *Bildtheorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008). As overview on the iconic turn debate: Martina Heßler, “Bilder zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft: Neue Herausforderungen für die Forschung,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 31 no. 2 (2005): 266–292.