

# Editorial

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Peter Merriman, Georgine Clarsen, and Gijs Mom

It is June and at the time of writing the 2016 UEFA European football championships are in full swing in France and on television channels across the world. Royal Ascot, one of Britain's premier horse racing meetings, has just finished, and the Wimbledon lawn tennis championships will begin next week. Thousands of similar sporting events—professional and amateur, international and local, involving humans and animals—take place throughout the world on a daily basis, with a broad range of embodied movements performed and observed. Such sporting events—whether involving individual embodied actions, choreographed maneuvers, skillful exertions, teamwork, or driven by powerful economic interests—reveal the complex movements and forms of embodied mobility entailed in such feats, but rarely do such movements feature in mobility journals. Despite the broadening of mobilities scholarship to include media circulations, tourism, and embodied leisure practices such as walking, running, and rock climbing, practices involving processes of transportation (between point A and point B) still dominate mobilities scholarship. Does a latent conservatism still reign in much mobilities scholarship? Is the new field of mobility studies simply a subtly realigned transport studies and transport history, reframing very similar debates through the concept of mobility? We would not go this far, for there is no doubt that the best scholarship on mobility *has* actively sought to think about how the politics, meanings, and subjective experiences of movement are evident across a diverse array of mobility practices, from dance movements and embodied practices in the workplace, to immigration and the production of mobility in the airport.<sup>1</sup> If, as mobility scholars, we want to understand the diverse meanings, embodied practices, subject positions, politics, economic forces, knowledge practices, and representational logics that gather around human and nonhuman movements, then it is not only important that scholars think *across* the fuzzy boundaries separating mobility studies, transport studies, mobility history, transport history, and media studies. We must also engage with approaches, methods, and debates from disciplines such as dance, performance studies, film theory, contemporary philosophy, leisure studies, and the sociology of sport, as well as those already incorporated from anthropology, geography, history, media studies, and sociology.

This issue of *Transfers* includes a special section on “Travel Writing and Knowledge Transfer” put together by guest editors Florian Krobb and Dorit



Müller. In an age of digital technologies and hi-tech mobile media it is easy to forget that “travel writing” and “texts that travel” served as some of the earliest forms of mobile media, from ancient scripts and royal letters, to ship’s logs and travelers’ diaries. As Miles Ogborn has so effectively shown in his research on the role of written texts in the political and economic networks of the East India Company in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, printed texts not only circulated representations and knowledges between distant places, they also cultivated imaginative geographies of people and places, and enabled authorities to exert political and economic control at a distance.<sup>2</sup> Moving texts and representations have reshaped popular geographical imaginations, but they also actively constitute global networks. It is in this sense that forces of globalization are also forces of mobilization, whether the mobilization of texts, images, commodities, or bodies.<sup>3</sup> And, of course, it is not just “travel writings” that connect, relate, and travel. Nearly all written texts (certainly all that are read) relate, connect, mobilize, and translate, demonstrating the ways in which writing itself is an important practice and form of mobility. Indeed, we would argue that mobility scholars should not simply concern themselves with written texts (and other sources) for what they can tell us about movement, mobility, and transport. Mobility scholars should also concern themselves with written texts precisely because they have served as vital forms or modes of mobility and mobilization in past and present societies. The special section includes four articles and an introduction by the guest editors. In an effort to enhance the interdisciplinary scope of our journal, we invited literary scholar Steven Spalding (who edited an earlier special section on “mobility and literature”) to write a concluding comment.

The issue opens with two standard articles, one by Panagiotis Zestanakis and the other by Bret Edwards. In his article, “Motorcycling in 1980s Athens: Popularization, Representational Politics, and Social Identities,” Zestanakis examines the rapid expansion of motorcycling in the Greek capital between the 1970s and 1990s. During this time motorcyclists were frequently stigmatized by the press and represented as deviant, but the popularization of this mode of transport led to the gradual transformation of social practices, and the cultural, political, and gender associations of motorcycling. In “Governing Global Aeromobility: Canada and Airport Refugee Claimants in the 1980s,” Edwards considers federal government responses to the rapidly increasing arrival of refugees at international airports during the 1980s, and the national debates that this generated. He documents the national ambivalence toward global aeromobility, in spite of Canada’s formal policy of multiculturalism.

Our forum section, *Ideas in Motion*, is dedicated to a brief history of “smartness” in mobility by Kathleen Frazer Oswald, a timely contribution considering the efforts among transport experts, policymakers, and planners worldwide, to enhance the performance of infrastructures without expanding their physical size. Is “smart” just a new form of window dressing of a disci-

pline in crisis, faced with an urbanizing, congested world, or is it the answer to centuries of “stupid” transportation?

This is followed by our regular review sections, on art, museums and exhibits, films and books, the latter including a review of a novel, and most of them specially selected to enrich the theme of travel writing with inputs from other fields and media.

## Notes

1. These are, for example, some of the key practices discussed in Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman, eds., *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).
2. Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
3. Peter Merriman, “Mobility,” in *Globalization in Practice*, ed. Nigel Thrift, Adam Tickell, Steve Woolgar, and William H. Rupp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31–34.