Editorial

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In front of you, dear readers, lies open the thematic issue “Mobility”. Be it digital or analogue, in both ways it can be considered a highly mobile product. As an artifact, the issue is itself a movable object: it can be carried around, thrown, sent out or read in different bodily positions and in different proxemic arrangements. All of these characteristics are also true for the digital version since tablet computers have gained currency and thus point to the movability of objects. At the same time you will find different figures of thought that—being “traveling concepts” (Bal 2002)—come from different geographic zones, schools and cooperations of thought, and are now temporally located in this thematic issue. Likewise, the incurrence of this publication is a result of manifold mobile activities: the complex frameworks of short and long distance transport were used in order to allow for editorial meetings; and virtual and other technological infrastructures enabled us to communicate with sundry spatially absent persons via numerous emails with authors, peer reviewers, the interviewee and the editorial team of this journal.

These different references to the transitivity of the social point to the pivotal purpose of mobility as “movements of people, objects and information in all of their complex relational dynamics” (Sheller 2011, p. 1). This topic builds the shared focus of the contributions of the current issue. Thus it connects to an important subject of the Anglo-American discussion known as the “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry 2006) that until now has found only little response in German-speaking sociol-

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ogy. It revolves around the question: how can mobility be understood and investigated as a cultural practice and which effects do contemporary mobility arrangements lead to? Spatial mobility ranks—as John Urry (2000), one of the protagonists of the paradigm states—among the central features of globalised society. Transnational migration for work, world-spanning transportation of goods, crisis-induced streams of refugees as well as private travelling, urban traffic and trans-local connections of communication have increased considerably in the last few decades. At the same time, mobility serves as a demanding requirement for contemporary subjects. To be (able to be) mobile or stay im-mobile is a question of resources and hence a question of power and inequality.

Within sociology the engagement with mobility is anything but new, since the roots of sociology can be located in the modernisation, urbanisation and therefore mobilisation thrust at the end of the nineteenth century: one only has to think of Georg Simmel's (1903) analysis of the metropolis. However, new is the dynamic and initiating force of the discussion. The emergence of mobility as a research field points beyond a mere phenomenological view by challenging fundamental categories of sociology (see Urry 2000; Cresswell 2006; Büscher et al. 2011). Theories as well as methodologies are expected to capture the fleetingness and movability of the social in order to overcome approaches of local and temporal unambiguity (that are labelled as metaphysical sedentarism, Cresswell 2006). The existing corpus of sociological research methods is to be expanded by “mobile methods” (Büscher et al. 2011). This also means developing alternative concepts, trying out new theoretical notions and investigating scarcely regarded research fields and objects.

Until now, certainly not all aspects of this claim have been put into practice in an all-encompassing way. Yet the investigative attention on mobility has led to a dynamisation of the research field and of adjacent subject areas: a range of empirical studies has shed light on bigger and smaller phenomena of mobility like travelling (e. g. Peters 2006), walking (e. g. Edensor 2000), auto-mobilities (e. g. Sheller 2004; Conley and McLaren 2009) or aero-mobilities (e. g. Cwerner et al. 2009; Adey 2010). These go beyond statistical and often static-seeming research. This theoretical and empirical engagement has led to numerous publications, book series, topic related journals, conferences and so on. In addition, new research areas and notions have come up like the concepts of “motility” or “atmosphere”, as well as interest in “immobilities”, a more complex notion of motion and the establishment of mobile methods.

Furthermore, investigating and discussing mobile phenomena has also distinguished the notion of mobility. Researchers now understand it as a manifold phenomenon that emerges in different situations, forms and assemblages—English-speaking scholars therefore tend to speak of “mobilities” in plural. Such an amplification of the concepts not only captures the mobility of persons and objects, but also the mobility of notions, ideas and ideologies as well (e. g. Urry 2000). This wide and complex concept of mobility has, in a productive manner, brought together different strands of research. Thus views from Science and Technology Studies (STS) have slipped in along with ideas from Material Culture Studies, and from research on infrastructures and from practice theories. The very research area of mobilities studies itself is thus

to be seen as a result of mobile and trans-disciplinary thinking encompassing different schools of thought.

It is not least this manifold dynamic of the very topic of mobilities and the emerging research field which renders the object interesting for German-speaking discussions as well. Similar to a “boundary object” (Star and Griesemer 1989), the topic of mobilities seems to bring different empirical as well as theoretical perspectives into a prolific discussion. It provides us with fertile research questions and challenging imperatives for explication by challenging what seems to be certainty. The current issue tackles this discussion by providing five papers and one interview on the topic.

Starting with an interview by geography professor Peter Adey (one of the first mobilities researchers) provides us with a personal and very insightful account on the emergence of the field of mobilities. He illuminates the trajectories of this field with its underlying traditions and identifies new research directions. In doing so, he reflects on the analyst’s role in mobilities as a political area as well as on the changes within the post-oil (and therewith) post-mobility times.

Following this, Ursula Mense-Petermann and Anna Spiegel in their article shed light on a specific form of working mobilities by analysing the ways expatriate managers deal with mobile affordances. The authors identify the highly mobile working arrangements of the managers as a complex of entangled mobilities, which is described as hyper-mobility. As such it is linked to a gendered division of labour in which the travelled-with spouse takes an active and important part in the management of daily mobilities.

Sophie Merit Müller tackles yet another form of entangled mobility. While mobilities studies have claimed to find mobile methods, in her contribution she focusses on the very practice of ethnographic work and finds it to be a considerably mobile work setting itself. In a complex interplay of mobilities and immobilities, data is stabilised in scientific studies and the researcher is set as a sociological actor.

Martin Stempfhuber and Michael Liegl ethnographically investigate hook-up practices using the smart phone app *Grindr*. While these are usually seen as *location based real-time dating* (LBRTD), the authors find different forms of mobilities: users are not only connected but are set into motion along with different technical artifacts. Furthermore, the app allows its users to create and experience urban space as an erotic landscape.

Katharina Manderscheid’s contribution focusses on the connection of spatial and social mobility. She claims to consider social inequalities that come up with (or are produced by) unequal opportunities and compulsions of being mobile. In this line, she analysis statistical data on couples who commute and move in together. Drawing on Bourdieu’s work she proposes to use correspondence analysis as a preferred method of analysis.

Finally, Petra Dannecker and Alev Cakir invite us to learn about ethnic communities in Vienna as they investigate female migrant entrepreneurs in order to find out how spatial and social mobilities connect. They find that their interviewees understand mobility as an important marker of difference and as the central resource to be economically successful in a society that makes it hard for them to enter the formal labour market.

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