(Im)Mobility
Exploring the Boundaries of Hypermobility

Jorinde Seijdel

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This issue came into being in collaboration with guest editor Eric Kluitenberg, a media theorist, writer and organizer of projects concentrating on culture and technology. In 2010, Kluitenberg organized the 'ElectroSmog International Festival for Sustainable Immobility'. ElectroSmog arose out of criticism of the 'growing worldwide mobility crisis' and began as a 'search for an alternative lifestyle that is no longer dominated by speed and continuous mobility'. The festival took place in several international cities simultaneously and was streamed live on the Internet. The idea that communications technology can resolve the conflict between ecology and mobility was by no means confirmed during ElectroSmog, but once again problematized, not in the last place by the recognition of different 'regimes of mobility' that are active on the local and global levels and affect one another.

Sustainability and ecology is merely one dimension of mobility as a social question. In the light of globalization, the new technology and sociopolitical developments on the local and global levels, it is equally about mobility versus immobility in terms of people, data, capital and products. It is also about mobility privileges and the freedom of movement, or lack thereof, of population groups and individuals, about incessant flows of data, the enticements of capital and free commodity markets.

This issue of *Open* explores the internal contradictions of prevailing mobility regimes and their effects on social and physical space. Advanced communications technology, rather than revealing itself to be a clean alternative for physical movement from place to place, seems to pave the way for an increase of physical and motorized mobility. The accelerating flows of data and commodities stand in sharp contrast to the elbowroom afforded to the biological body, which in fact is forced to a standstill. And while data, goods and capital have been freed of their territorial restrictions, the opposite is true for a growing portion of the world's population: border regimes, surveillance and identity control are being intensified at a rapid pace. In short, on the one hand there is a question of an uncurbed and uncontrolled increase of mobility, while on the other, segregating filtrations are taking place.

Kluitenberg explores the contradictory regimes of (im)mobility in his introductory essay and searches for a perspective of intervention. He provisionally arrives at a 'general economy' of mobility, whereby the boundless longing for freedom of movement intensifies to the point of a 'fatal worldwide standstill'. Following the example of Saskia Sassen, he concludes by turning to the local as a context from which effective counterforces can be generated on the global level. From another line of approach, namely the rhizomatics of Deleuze and Guattari, philosopher and jurist Marc Schuilenburg argues for connectivity with the local, introducing a new term in this regard: ***terroir***, a contextualized approach to place and identity in which the emphasis lies on the dynamic relation between objects and people.

Charlotte Lebbe, architecture researcher, and Florian Schneider, media artist and filmmaker, each address the ambivalence of the present border regimes. Lebbe analyses how the external borders of the Schengen Area are being more and more strictly guarded

with the help of new digital techniques, in order to regulate mobility. She sees the rise of a *dispositif* surveillance, the Ban-opticon. Schneider, seeking a new theory of borders and a different approach to mobility, argues in favour of abandoning the concept of the nation-state and advances the notion of 'transnationality'. Architecture theorist Wim Nijenhuis presents a 'dromological' history of mobility, leading to the topical question of what exile means in today's 'exit city'.

Culture critic Brian Holmes examines the technological and cultural side of the capitalist mobility system: he analyses the intermodal distribution and transportation industry, in particular container shipping and the system of just-in-time production, drawing among other things upon Ursula Biemann's video work *Contained Mobility*. Political sociologist Merijn Oudenampsen and architecture researcher Miguel Robles-Durán interviewed the social geographer David Harvey, who theorizes on the spatial effects of capital accumulation.

John Thackara, design critic, reflects upon the limitations of mobility as a challenge for designers, who ought to seek new ways of using space and time. Through a problematization of the mobility of food and its tracking, media theorist Tatiana Goryucheva investigates the preconditions for a democratic design of technology. Architect Nerea Calvillo expounds upon the project *In the Air*, which focuses on collecting data to visualize invisible elements in the urban atmosphere and aims at being a tool for increasing the awareness and participation of city inhabitants. The contribution by design and research collective Metahaven is about the mobility of money. In *Mobile Money*, they envisage new forms of money and capital.

Last but not least, in the column, media theorist Joss Hands, whose *@ is for Activism: Dissent, Resistance and Rebellion in a Digital Culture* recently appeared, discusses the mobilizing capacity of social media in the recent events in the Middle East, and how they can trespass on space, time, movement and personal will.

Jorinde Seijdel is an independent writer, editor and lecturer on subjects concerning art and media in our changing society and the public sphere. She is editor-in-chief of *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain* (formerly known as *Open. Cahier on Art & the Public Domain*). In 2010 she published *De waarde van de amateur* [The Value of the Amateur] (Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam), about the rise of the amateur in digital culture and the notion of amateurism in contemporary art and culture. Currently, she is theory tutor at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Head of the Studium Generale Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. With Open!, she is a partner of the Dutch Art Institute MA Art Praxis in Arnhem.

Tags

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