

# Forced mobilities, new moorings

## Editorial

## Extended Abstract

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People that are fleeing use maps and, if they are too poor to plan their trip themselves, they rely on directions from traffickers. They look for routes to take them out of the violence or misery in their home countries, they apply for visas and invitations in potential host countries, they activate their system of friends or build new networks, and they study or imagine the ways of life and job opportunities in the countries where they hope to eventually arrive. *Mutatis mutandis*, accounts by Jewish refugees in the 1930s sound completely similar to the situation of people from the Global South forced into mobility.

What are we witnessing right now? The events of 2015 that shook people in the Middle East and Africa significantly affected Europe. They provoked political debate, and they are challenging western societies and the cultural and social sciences. The second issue of *Mobile Culture Studies. The Journal* (*mcsj*) addresses forced mobilities and new moorings as seen in current ethnographic studies. We investigate what these unsettling and enriching mobilities—from large-scale to individual movements—entail for a culture beyond national boundaries, and for actors, lifeworlds, institutions, structures, ideologies, and worldviews.

Our still young journal continues to encourage multilingual and international contributions. Different regions offer insights into different kinds of mobilities in different historical times. However, they share the passion of connecting the diverse perspectives of mobile actors and the multiplicity of structural frameworks: to consider events, actions, and emotions along with discourses, and to correlate political structures with historical attitudes and concepts. Apart from conventional texts, this issue also includes sound and video items that transcend the voicelessness seen in many unlikely and illegitimate migratory incidents.

Fortunately, communication is about to emerge within the various thematic fields and methodological approaches, a dialogue between the so-far separate fields of conventional exile studies, migration studies of all shades, diaspora studies, urban studies, and tourism studies. It challenges categories of mobility practices that are taken for granted and delimited areas of work, and it opens up an exchange regarding sources, methods, theories, and representations. This is the context of *Tony Kushner's* (University of Southampton) study of the “hot spot”: the redeeming shore but also nightmare for many migrants to the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa. He studies how the cultural memory of the current migratory process is lived and discusses how the term “illegal migration” as coined during the British Mandate in 1948 is overlaid on what is happening now. This leads to the denial of even forced landing, and the twentieth-century drama of the *SS Exodus* is the rejection of boat refugees in the twenty-first century.



The trend towards the increased permeability of these fields of study bears on the fact that the disciplines that have so far been commanding the topics of exile and migration—(political) history and literature studies, together with migration studies with the traditional “push-pull” explanatory model—are increasingly being challenged by a multitude of approaches brought forward by cultural studies, economics, and history of law. The complex lifeworld of the migration actors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are studied in their “capillaries” with regard to their cultural signification. The histories and biographies of individuals, families, or groups “on the move” are scrutinized as sets of practices, from the preparation for a trip to its aftermath in memories. This leads to the adoption of not only transnational and postcolonial concepts, but also the study of material culture, gender studies, or the history of memories.

*Oya Topdemir Koçyiğit* (University of Istanbul) compares the current situation to past developments, drawing a *longue durée* panorama of generational experiences of flight and loss that transcend the individual. She explains how differences between “own” and “other” ground the persistence of exclusion, rejection, and denunciation.

*Alejandro Miranda* (Western Sydney University) presents the example of an artistic professional mobile practice. He uses a mix of travel and migration as the backdrop for his differentiated ethnographic study of unspectacular and everyday mobilities that create a livelihood and produce an encounter, exchange, and transformation of cultural practices and knowledge.

*Artur Depner* and *Simon Goebel* (Augsburg) analyze the political rhetoric of the German parliament in the wake of the migratory events. They show how meaning is produced under the effect of global social moods. Their cultural analysis of political reference to flight and immigration offers insights into the interdependence and interactivity of language and action, and the resulting private and public reasoning over migratory issues.

*Christine Egger* (University of Passau) re-narrates the concrete and visible effects of the 2015 migration in the German town of Passau, which more than one million refugees passed through in a single one year. Energy, empathy, engagement, and inspiration guided the city’s population. It is a city where the memories of earlier arrivals of migrants was still alive.

The importance of place and the local is also present in a contribution by students. *Lisa Eidenhammer* and *Omar Khir Alanam* (University of Graz) provide a snapshot story of an encounter of an Austrian student with a Syrian refugee, the identification of disparate perceptions of the migratory events of 2015, and also the van attack in the city center of Graz that honed the emotional participation of the two interlocutors in different ways.

Representing mobilities in movement is the aim of artist *Michael Hieslmair’s* and architect *Michael Zinganel’s* (Vienna) video animation, accompanied by a text: it shows the rise and fall of border checkpoints as a function of the modulation of migratory processes, border regimes, and seizing local opportunities.

The conversation with historian *Peter Burke* (Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge) allows us to listen to his long and rich engagement with historical lifeworlds and their respective logics. The historian is also challenged to find appropriate concepts and terminologies in order to provide a realistic account and interpretation of mobilities, which are much more needed at a moment like this when the overall coverage of events tends to overemphasize emotional and defensive aspects.



These contributions offer directions for the cultural analysis of the post-migrant era. We hope that they encourage young scholars to engage in it with their research. We wish you stimulating reading.

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