

Katharina Manderscheid

## **Mobile Inequalities: Conceptual and methodological challenges**

Global Conference on Mobility Futures, Lancaster 4-6 September 2013

# Outline

- Social structuration
- Governance of mobile bodies
- Mobilities as objects of knowledge
- Methodological questions

## Mobile social formations, inequalities and structures

- Nexus of mobilities and inequalities:
  - (Mobile) spatial and structural frame, within which dimensions of inequality are contested and defined
  - Role of movements within relations of inequality
  
- Network capital should be analysed against the background of the structuring context: social and spatial position within a specific social or geographical space.

## Controlling moving bodies – governance of mobile subjects

- Imagery of globalisation characterised by metaphors of seamless flow and openness
- Globalisation also about changing forms of control of mobility, of channelling flows of bodies, things and ideas

„We are witnessing the emergence of a global mobility regime, oriented to closure and to blocking of access, premised not only on ‚old‘ national or local grounds but on a principle of perceived universal dangerous personhoods. [...] [G]lobalization actually announces an unprecedented agenda of ‚integrated risk management‘ as a prominent feature of social organisation. This emergent integrated risk-management system, in turn, is a central feature of the global mobility regime. (Shamir 2005: 199f.)“

→ Mobility as political technology, as a way of governing (Bærenholdt 2013)

## Discursive formation of mobilities and immobilities as objects of knowledge

→ Mobilities shape our thinking, knowing and being in the world

“Some of the foundational narratives of modernity have been constructed around the brute fact of moving. Mobility as liberty, mobility as progress. Everyday language reveals some of the meanings that accompany the idea of movement. We are always trying to get somewhere. No one wants to be stuck or bogged down.” (Cresswell 2010: 21)

“(…) the conceptualization of travel as a point-to-point journey was a key innovation in urban circulation. Thinking travel as transport provided a rationale for the ordering of urban movement and the street spaces in which that movement took place. It was through this ordering that a **hierarchy of urban travel** was established and those travellers who were the **fastest** (specifically motor car operators) were positioned and **prioritized** as the **most efficient**.” (Bonham 2006: 62)

## Methodological implications and challenges

- Bias towards data collection on conscious and active movement and experience (Bissell 2010)
  - Need to develop methodological tools to excavate pre-conscious un-reflexive, habitualised aspects of movement and immobilities (e.g. Bourdieusian habitus analysis)
- Typically, individual persons are taken as unit of analysis, thereby abstraction from their social networks
  - Danger of reproducing the figure of the autonomous subject as origin of mobility behaviour
- Need to develop tools to contextualise mobility practices within their social and spatial structures (D'Andrea et al. 2011) (e.g. multiple correspondence analysis)
- Bias towards directed, “pointilist” movements (Bissell 2012)
  - Elaboration of focus on relations beyond direct interaction or communications

## References

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