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Mobilities in Asian Contexts

Editorial

HENRYK ALFF / ANDREAS BENZ / MATTHIAS SCHMIDT*

Guest Editors

Introduction

Rural dwellers in Afghanistan's northern provinces move to the sprawling city of Mazar-i Sharif in search of labour and security, struggling to adapt their livelihoods and at the same time transforming urban space and the meaning of social categories. Consumer goods from China are shipped across the border to Tajikistan on a newly-built mountain road, leaving immediate borderland communities largely unaffected and questioning the Soviet modernization achieved here via yet another, nowadays largely abandoned road. Javanese Muslims returning home from *umroh* or *hajj* re-imagine their own selves and Indonesian Islam in engagement with the Arab other and with what they conceive as globalized religious values. As distinct as these three examples may seem, they all involve central aspects of how mobilities of people, things and ideas matter for interaction and social change in Asia. The present special issue seeks to explore these links in an empirical and conceptual way.

The study of mobility in recent years has gained substantial attention, leading to what has been referred to as the mobility turn. The particular concentration on (and sometimes scholarly obsession with) mobilities and movement in the current discourse have become embodied in the "new mobilities paradigm" (Hannam et al. 2006; Sheller / Urry 2006), which

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questions the sedentarist logic of established social science. Mobility as an intrinsic part of human life has shifted to the very centre of the study of social structures and processes (Kaufmann 2002) and, therefore, has evoked calls for a “sociology beyond societies” (Urry 2000) as well as the application of a “mobile methodology” (Büscher et al. 2010).

Revisiting these concepts, this special issue aims to look at and critically examine the role of mobilities in social interaction in a number of cases drawn from Asian contexts. By so doing, we wish to draw attention to social interconnectedness and multi-scalar power asymmetries as decisive factors for both the process of becoming/being mobile and/or staying put (or even both at the same time) (Cresswell 2012). Analysing mobilities helps to elucidate the constantly transforming social networks (or connections) and practices that often link people and places to social change at various levels. Yet, both networks and practices may materialize only across/along particular groups, periods or locales. The explorations of mobilities in the articles in this volume, therefore, share a similar post-structuralist approach to challenging constructed and bounded domains such as area or region (within Asia) as arenas for their inquiry. At the same time, they are sensitive to the contextual impact of territorial or social boundaries, fixes or infrastructures on mobilities, and vice versa. Hence, the question asked by all authors is what do aspirations to, constraints on, practices of and exclusion from mobilities of people, goods, ideas and knowledge mean for social change in Asian contexts.

Contemporary Asia is characterized by enormous political, economic, social and cultural dynamics, which have triggered new modes of mobility (and fixity). Along their cross-cutting trajectories, human, material and immaterial flows in and beyond Asia shape trans-local livelihoods and diasporas, economies and power relations, implicating various processes of translation, adaptation and hybridization. Mobilities alter (become restricted and re-enacted) in response to or in anticipation of rules, ruptures, conflicts or borders, but also generate opportunities and alternative paths. In the contrast to the frequently observed accentuation of the newness of these phenomena, people, topics and concepts have been on the move throughout Asian history, often with considerable repercussions on the present and the future.

The foci of current research on mobilities have mainly been shaped by Western perspectives. The expressions, meanings and implications of mobilities in other contexts, consequently, have fallen short empirically or have been attached to particular “areas” or “geographies of knowing” (Van Schendel 2002). Hence, the special issue *Mobilities in Asian Contexts* seeks instead to bring specific meanings and outcomes of mobilities in Asia to the

forefront of analysis. In our introduction we seek to conceptualize and investigate both the term and notion of mobility as well as the empirical phenomena related to it. Accordingly, we discuss concepts of mobility, debate the link between mobility and social change, examine the interrelation of mobilities and immobilities and address the role of power asymmetries therein. Finally, we outline the articles in this issue and relate them to the overall purpose of this volume.

Conceptualization(s) of mobility

The trigger for the mobility turn in the social sciences was the renewed attention given to spatiality in rethinking social theory, commonly associated with the "spatial turn" (Hagerstrand 1982; Harvey 1989; Soja 1989). Movements of different kinds have long been a subject in the social sciences. Scholarship in mobility studies has been considerably expanded and transformed since the early 1990s through emerging new opportunities of communication and transportation (Castells 1996; Kaufmann 2002; Urry 2000, 2007). Oft-cited precepts include Castells' (1996) anticipation of spaces of flows superseding spaces of places and fostering the organization of network societies.

However, Cresswell and Merriman have criticized that notwithstanding the current prominence of mobility "it is still the case that geographical (and not only geographical!) knowledge often assumes a stable point of view, a world of places and boundaries and territories rooted in time and bounded in space" (Cresswell / Merriman 2011: 4). The new mobility paradigm offers a perspective that highlights the paramount importance of mobility in everyday life. Yet it somewhat obfuscates the very conceptualization of mobility and its linkages to socio-spatial metaphors like area, distance, relations, networks and scale. In fact, it is the dialectics of movement and stillness/fixity, of connection and disruption as well as of de- and re-territorialization that have to be addressed to make sense of mobility in an appropriate way.

One of the most common definitions of mobility reads as "movement in real or 'virtual' spaces of people and objects" (Kaufmann 2002). Although broad in its ontology, this definition, however, falls short of denoting mobility as being affected also by a mix of constraints, opportunities, choices and strategies. Moreover, one has to make clear that mobility does not take place exclusively in the geographical realm, but almost certainly also entails a social dimension. Thus, aspects of both spatial and social distance as well as of power asymmetries have necessarily to be included

when examining mobilities, be it in everyday practices or large-scale movements of people, objects and ideas.

In order to address these shortcomings, Canzler et al. (2008) define mobility as a change of conditions (of an object on different scales) by looking at three intersections of mobility: movements, networks and motility. With movement they refer strictly to a geographic dimension, though not only to movement of people, but also of objects and ideas. Networks are considered as frameworks for (spatial and social) movement, whilst motility is the capacity of an actor to move socially and spatially (within his network), including the access and skills to do so (see also Kaufmann 2002). While the relational perspective of their approach appears appropriate, Canzler et al. favour a rather static understanding of mobility, particularly when it comes to networks as social and technical infrastructures that "delineate the field of conceptualized possibilities" (2008: 3). Thus, the insight of networks and relations not being preconditioned, but constantly and dynamically produced and reproduced by mobile practices is missing in their concept.

The focus on the changing configurations of networks and relations in the study of the mobile in fact requires innovative conceptions of space between the bodily and the global scale. With regard to new approaches to area studies, Van Schendel (2002) has called for process geographies in order to emphasize how relations and flows within and across places and areas over time are constantly renewed. Cresswell and Merriman (2011) follow a somewhat similar approach in their conceptualization of mobility, highlighting the three interconnected aspects of practice, space and subjects. For them mobility is a practice that gives meaning to and produces space, in fact, they claim that "mobile, embodied practices are central to how we experience the world" (Cresswell / Merriman 2011: 5). Particular subjects, at the same time, have often been associated with styles, modes and means of moving, which go well beyond individual characteristics. The representation of mobile subjects and practices, often constructed, disputed or deliberately manipulated, makes mobility a discursive phenomenon.

With this notion of mobility as a space-producing practice and discursive process in mind, the emphasis throughout this volume is on overcoming bounded entities, be it distinct people, societies, places, states or regions, as containers within which mobility is performed. We, thus, support Merriman et al. in suggesting that in mobility studies "it is perhaps more useful to think about the ongoing processes of 'placing', 'spacing' and 'landscaping' through which the world is shaped and formed" (Cresswell / Merriman 2011: 7; Merriman et al. 2008; see also Steenberg, in this volume). Therefore, throughout this special issue we seek to emphasize a

dynamic notion of mobility that embraces the constant process of 'becoming' rather than the state of 'being'.

Mobility and social change

Mobility, comprising movements of people, goods and ideas at both large-scale and local levels within daily routines, has undoubtedly far-reaching social and spatial implications, and continually "shapes lives and livelihoods far beyond those of the movers" (Steel et al. 2011: 425). It is not only the acting mobile entity that undergoes and provokes change, but also the structures, societies and environments in which movements are embedded and which are related to them. Mobilities are an integral part of broader social processes. The relationships between mobility and various forms of development and change, therefore, are reciprocal. Consequently, an underlying topic of all contributions in this volume is the question of how development processes in a broad sense shape – and are shaped by – mobility and interconnectivity.

Particularly when it comes to the nexus of migration and development, decades of research and numerous studies from related fields such as diaspora and, more recently, transnationalism studies have shown that there is no definite positive or negative link between the two (De Haan 1999; De Haas 2010, 2012). Obviously, mobility in its various forms has the potential to serve as a means of escaping poverty (Ellis 2000; Leinaweaver 2008; Wenzel, in this volume), but the outcomes of mobile practices are far from homogeneous. In response to macro-theoretical and paradigmatic shifts in academia and development policy, views on mobility have oscillated between development optimism and scepticism. Neo-classical migration theory and modernization theories of the 1950s and 1960s considered migration an important driver for development by securing an optimal allocation of production factors and reducing disparities. In contrast, from the historical-structuralist perspective of dependency theories (Frank 1966), migration was held responsible for exacerbating problems of underdevelopment and deepening social and spatial disparities by depriving communities of their most valuable members (Myrdal 1957). Following this argumentation, mobility contributes to the "development of underdevelopment" (Frank 1966).

This opposition of neo-classical developmentalist perspectives and structuralist notions reflects the paradigmatic division of agency and structure in social theory. While developmentalists highlight the capacity of individuals to be mobile and to reshape structures, structuralists emphasize

structural factors as constraining or enabling mobility on account of the institutional, political, economic or social context (De Haas 2010). As the examples provided by the papers in this volume show, mobile people are important agents of change and thus influence their physical and social environments. At the same time, their movement or spaces of mobility are confined by structures enabling or channelling mobility. It is not only political constraints, such as restrictions on migration and pastoral mobility (as in Schütte's example from Afghanistan, in this volume), or economic facilities that define the ability to move, but also physical infrastructures that sketch mobility-scapes, as the example of the Pamir Road in Mostowlansky's contribution illustrates.

Social constraints, opportunities and aspirations informing the behaviour of mobile people must be seen in a wider social context, since the family or the household is usually the most important decision-making unit (Stark 1991). As livelihood approaches have shown, mobility strategies of people are primarily not oriented to maximizing short-term profits, but to minimizing and spreading risks under conditions of change (Chambers / Conway 1992; De Haan 2000, 2012; Scoones 2009). This becomes manifest, for instance, in the case of a young Uzbek woman who, as Ismailbekova shows in her article in this volume, left the city of Osh (Kyrgyzstan) for security and economic reasons after violent, ethnically labelled clashes considerably changed social interactions within her home community.

Yet, not only particular socially embedded strategies of mobility matter for an understanding of social change; the flow of things, values and ideas is just as important. The classical example of remittances in the form of cash or goods sent by migrants, as in Ismailbekova's article (in this volume), may be mentioned in this regard. While remittances are often considered an effective instrument for poverty reduction and economic growth (Jones 1998; Ratha 2003), depending on context and their allocation to production or consumption (Entzinger 1985; Lewis 1986), the non-material outcomes thereof, sometimes termed "social remittances" (Levitt 1998), such as skills, practices and ideas can potentially have a huge impact on societies. For instance, the much criticized brain drain could turn out to be a significant brain gain (Stark et al. 1997) when returning migrants, transmigrants or other movers act as agents of innovation and change. The returning international graduates from Kyrgyzstan described in Thieme's paper and, in a broader sense, even the Javanese pilgrims in Lücking's paper are cases in point.

That said, mobility is often a highly selective process and remittances are unequally spread within the society. In most cases, remittances flow neither to the poorest societies nor the poorest community members, but

only reach people from certain socio-economic backgrounds. In this way mobility and its outcomes increase inequality in the form of growing income gaps or of growing differences in education and knowledge. A dampening effect on social selectivity might occur in the course of the gradual evolution of migration networks. Pioneer migrants, often from wealthier households, usually rely on their own resources. With the formation of social networks, the costs and risks of mobility decline and reduce the barrier for poorer community members to move, which, consequently, can bridge or reduce inequalities (Cohen 2005). Wenzel (in this volume) outlines in his paper the role and possible supporting function of networks of kin- or friendship between rural areas and urban environments.

Immobility and ruptures of mobility

Mobility is never a uniform, homogeneous process, but necessarily entails inequalities and discrimination, which result in unequal participation in movement, inclusion and exclusion, and access and deprivation (Castles 2010). Mobility is a fragmented and ruptured process along spatial, temporal, socio-economic and political lines. While some people, objects or information in some places under particular “power geometries” (Massey 1991: 26) and during particular periods of time have mobility, at other times, in other places or for other people, objects or information immobility prevails. Mobility and immobility are two sides of the same coin. Inequalities are expressed in socio-economic disparities, spatial fragmentation and temporal ruptures of mobility. Further complexity is added by the fact that mobility is a composite concept comprising spatial and social mobility, which are neither synchronized nor unidirectional (Faist 2013; Favell / Recchi 2011).

In the course of the mobility turn, scholarly attention was drawn to all forms and conditions of mobility and flows. The counterpart, stillness, stuckness and ruptures, has long been overlooked and the mobility-immobility dichotomy only recently received broader recognition (Castles 2010: 1567; Cresswell 2012). Migration studies largely focused on migrants and less attention was paid to those who stay behind and their “diverse experiences of ‘staying put’” (Reeves 2011: 555). If considered at all, those left behind have often been treated as a rather homogeneous group of passive recipients (of remittances, information or care), while agency and an “active role” is attributed only to the migrant (Reeves 2011: 557). In recent debates on the migration-development nexus the migrant has been even increasingly stylized as a “migrant hero” (Sørensen 2012: 62) contributing to development through remittances. Since “not leaving” also can be a

deliberate decision and an empowering strategy (Reeves 2011: 557), instead of simply repeating the standard question of migration research of why people are mobile, we should likewise ask why people are not mobile (Pries 2001: 21).

Similarly, it has been overlooked that rising mobility for some often directly implies increased immobility for others. According to Ahmed (2004: 152), a strong mobility bias has partially led to “the idealization of movement, or transformation of movement into a fetish, [which] depends upon the exclusion of others who are already positioned as not free in the same way”. Hannam et al. (2006) point out the forgotten dark side of the mobility euphoria in times of time-space compression and globalizing travel infrastructure: “There is the proliferation of places, technologies and ‘gates’ that enhance the mobilities of some while reinforcing the immobilities, or demobilization, of others” (Hannam et al. 2006: 11). Other observers identify a new global divide between the mobility rich and mobility poor in a world in which access to “multiple mobilities become[s] central to the structuring of inequality” (Urry 2007: 186). A highly mobile global capitalist elite is increasingly disconnected from “the locals” and “the mobilized global poor” (Sørensen 2012: 66). Similarly, more than a decade ago Bauman (1998: 45) pointed out that “[g]lobalization [...] polarizes mobility – the ability to use time to annul the limitation of space. That ability – or disability – divides the world into the globalized and the localized.”

In line with Faist’s argument that “any analysis of spatial and social mobilities needs to go beyond descriptions and start accounting for the mechanisms underlying the production of social inequalities” (Faist 2013: 1), the contributions in this volume pay a lot of attention to the unequal, power-charged and ruptured characteristics of mobility processes. These inequalities are expressed along spatial lines, where fragmented mobilities exist in and between certain territories, areas, regions, places, neighbourhoods or with respect to the moorings of travel infrastructure, shifting routes and changing geographical groundings of flows. In “process geographies” created by “trans-areal” flows of objects and people moving through particular localities and contributing to their rise and fall (Van Schendel 2002: 662), the mobility-immobility divide becomes manifest in individual places. Flows largely depend on “immobile material worlds” such as airports, petrol stations and roads, and are configured by “spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings” (Hannam et al. 2006: 3), thus creating specific localized mobility-immobility interplays between flows and “spatial fixes” (Harvey 1989; Jessop 2006). Such spatially fragmented (im-)mobilities become obvious, e.g., along trunk roads carrying traffic of highly mobile people and goods, while the populations in the vicinity along the road and their goods

often stay put and immobile (see contributions of Mostowlansky and Nadjmabadi in this volume). Popitz (1986: 29–31) points to the double character of power inherent in any technical and infrastructural artefact and the acts of its creation, which not only manipulate the physical environment, but also deeply and in unequal ways affect the living conditions of humans. Accordingly, technical structures have been interpreted by Galtung (1975) as possible media of structural violence.

Unequal mobilities also become manifest in the temporal dimension in the form of ruptures, frictions, rapid rises or declines, long-term trends, frequency and rhythm, slowness, stillness, waiting, queuing, pauses, fast-tracks and speed. For example, sudden border closures or erratic road blocks from natural hazards in high mountain regions can effect an immediate breakdown of previously flourishing mobility (Mostowlansky, in this volume). Recent mobility research shows a growing interest in such temporalities (Sheller 2011: 4) and the interdependence of the flowing and the still, based on the insight that “stillness is thoroughly incorporated into the practices of movement” (Cresswell 2012: 648). Adey suggests “that the issue of the relations between mobilities and immobilities is not just an academic observation but is a relationship that is directly involved in social life and the production of space” and considers social life as operating through “constitutive relationships of movement, relative immobilities and differences in speed” (Adey 2006: 77).

Stillness, pausing and waiting while moving (Cresswell 2012: 648), moving without being mobile, being mobile without moving, and moving and being mobile (Canzler et al. 2008: 4) constitute new fields of inquiry. Afghan refugees in a marginalized *mohalla* of Mazar-i-Sharif stuck on their way to an uncertain future (Wenzel, in this volume), Indonesian *hajj* and *umroh* pilgrims waiting for their flight call in the departure lounge of Jakarta Airport while setting off to Mecca and Medina (Lücking, in this volume), and Iranian truckers, drivers, tillers and dwellers intermingling and socializing while pausing on their criss-crossing trajectories through Nashtifan, colloquially known as the “most mobile place” of Eastern Iran (Nadjmabadi, in this volume), are just some examples for mobile stillness.

The dialectics of stillness and movement also characterize the intricate interplay of social mobility and spatial mobility. Spatial mobility may not only lead to a new state of spatial immobility, e.g. refugees stuck in detention camps, but also to a worsening of the conditions of life. Labour migrants may be “trapped in marginal positions in destination areas” (Skeldon 2012: 43), and stuck in a state of marginalization and structural exploitation which leaves them even worse off than before moving (Castles 2010: 1568; De Haas 2012: 14; Faist 2013: 6). Such instances of “migration

out of poverty and into marginality” (Skeldon 2012: 51) highlight the central importance of socio-economic inequalities and power relations. In her article, Ismailbekova (in this volume) provides an example of this in the case of Uzbeks from Osh who struggle to navigate their new lives as bazaar traders in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg after fleeing from violent conflicts and discrimination in Kyrgyzstan.

Power geometries of mobility and mobility capital

More than two decades ago, Massey pointed out the specific “power geometries” which shape flows and movement. She observed that different groups and individuals are differently placed with regard to their ability to benefit from increased mobility. “Some people are more in charge of [mobility] than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it” (Massey 1991: 26). The “issue of who moves and who doesn’t” (Massey 1991: 25) is determined by unequal power geometries deeply embedded in the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres. Rights and access to mobility and travel are highly uneven and vary for different categories of people, depending, among other things, on class, gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, family status, position in the household, the kind of passport a person holds, group affiliation, nationality, migration laws, border regimes and security discourses (Tefahune 1998).

Critical mobility research, often strongly informed by gender and feminist theories, is crucially concerned with such “gendered, raced and classed (im)mobilities” (Sheller 2011: 3). Social exclusion is often not a result of poverty and social inequality per se, but is enforced by factors of distance, inadequate transport and limitations on communication, as stressed in recent debates on access to mobility and claims for “rights to movement” (Urry 2007: 190). Nussbaum (2000: 78) ranks the freedom of mobility in third place in her list of the “central human functional capabilities” which she considers indispensable for leading “a complete good life for human beings” (Nussbaum 2000: 74). The perspective of human capabilities, or what has become known as the capabilities approach, focuses on “the ability – the substantive freedom – of people to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the real choices they have” (Sen 1999: 293). Capability deprivation, i.e. deprivation of the substantive freedoms for leading a life people value, is seen as poverty. From this perspective, the state of deprivation of mobility capability is a form of poverty. The notion of capability as the potential for mobility that a person has or does not have

(Kellerman 2012) allows one to distinguish between immobility as a deliberate strategy and forced immobility. The same outcome, e.g. immobility, often describes very different experiences: "What is free choice for some is cruel fate for some others" (Bauman 1998: 43).

Kauffmann et al. also stressed the potential aspect of mobility when they suggested the concept of motility as "the capacity of entities (e.g. goods, information or persons) to be mobile in social and geographic space" (Kaufmann et al. 2004: 750). This concept considers mobility a form of capital (Kaufmann et al. 2004: 751–752), whose unequal distribution has a major bearing on access to resources, work and income, learning, healthcare and other key services and activities as well as to new opportunities. "Poverty of access" to essential resources and services is, as Urry stresses, directly linked to the question of mobility access and results from "various mobility-related aspects of social exclusion" (Urry 2007: 191). Unequal mobility capital decides selective access to student mobility from Kyrgyzstan (Thieme, in this volume) and preselects the Indonesian Muslims who may travel to the holy sites in Saudi-Arabia to perform *hajj* and *omrah* (Lücking, in this volume). Mobility capital forms an asset in times of conflict and crisis and decides who has the capacity to flee from disaster and who has to stay in misery, as Urry (2012) demonstrates with the example of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and as Ismailbekova (in this volume) demonstrates for the city of Osh in times of ethnic conflict. The close relation between mobility capital and what Urry calls "network capital" (Urry 2012: 28) becomes obvious from the way in which refugees from rural Afghanistan employ social networks to organize their flight, resettlement and everyday life in Mazar-i-Sharif (Wenzel, in this volume). The need for a relational perspective on mobility capacity is also stressed by Reeves (2011: 555), based on the insight that "the movement of some can constrain (or compel) the mobility of others". Therefore, unequal opportunities of mobility, embedded in particular socio-political contexts and shaped by power-freighted discourses of a "politics of mobility" (Reeves 2011: 557; see also Schütte, in this volume), may not only lead to "coerced immobility" (Elliott / Urry 2010: 63), but also to coerced mobility. An example of this is Smolarz's account (in this volume) of the importance of the experiences of individual enslaved tsarist Russians for the functioning of the Central Asian slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Contextualizing mobilities across Asia

The contributions in this volume examine mobility as generated and shaped by, and at the same time producing or interrupting, social interaction. In this way, they demonstrate the diverse impacts of mobility as a phenomenon that is both constantly subject to and enacting social change. Although diverse in their thematic orientation, the articles in this volume map manifestations of intersecting social and spatial mobility onto a context of connectivity, tension and transformation in Asia. By so doing, they explore analytical concepts such as trans-locality, examine emic experiences of mobility for processes of self-identification and othering and focus on frictions in mobility under conditions of peripherality or marginality. While the contributions engage with all these topics to varying degrees, thematic considerations and the central foci of analytical inquiries may serve to structure the present volume.

Three contributions explore mobility as a feature of trans-local social connectedness in conflict environments. In his article, Christoph Wenzel looks at internal migration in Afghanistan. The notoriously insecure situation in rural areas of Afghanistan and the desire for better job and life opportunities trigger a constant flow of people to the cities for shelter and a better future. Wenzel takes the example of a suburban neighbourhood in northern Afghanistan's city Mazar-i Sharif to show how migrants from the surrounding provinces struggle to adapt to their labour and housing arrangements and often remain mobile within the city. Wenzel highlights the way in which the protagonists create social networks based in particular on common origin, the search for informal work and accommodation and even financial support from international humanitarian organizations dedicated to internal refugees. Yet, he concludes by arguing that the spatial and social mobilities and their outcomes are deeply intertwined in the lives of his interlocutors.

The interplay of spatial and social mobility in coping with conflict is also at the core of Aksana Ismailbekova's inquiries. Her contribution compares the experiences of Uzbeks from Osh in southern Kyrgyzstyan who were either forced to leave the city or left voluntarily for the Russian city of Yekaterinburg after the 2010 inter-ethnic riots. Her approach involves exploring the different strategies of risk-taking, enhancing security and survival. The article demonstrates how the migrants seek to navigate and position themselves between past experiences of conflict, relatives and property left behind and more promising socio-economic opportunities in their current lives as bazaar traders in Russia. Hence, mobility of people, goods and remittances alongside social ties provides the common background for the very different aspirations and visions of a better future, as narrated by both migrant groups.

Customary forms of mobility and their adaptation in response to current political developments and new threats are the focus of Stefan Schütte's paper on pastoral mobility among the Pashtuns of northern Afghanistan. Pastoralism is central to the livelihoods of many households in rural Afghanistan and, consequently, access to pastures and secured utilization rights are essential for survival. While the mobile Pashtun groups' movement to the remote summer pastures is not only a challenge in terms of duration and distance, but also threatened by the widespread practices of livestock theft and harassment at checkpoints, where armed power holders collect revenues. By connecting mobility with the concepts of territoriality, identity and economic and social relations, Schütte shows how questions of space, power, control and meaning are closely intertwined with mobility practices.

Another central topic of this volume is the mobility of people and knowledge as an emic experience. Three contributions draw in particular on the reflexive narratives of their protagonists to portray processes of self-identification or self-development and imagining the other. Elena Smolarz's intriguing article on Russian slaves in the Emirate of Bukhara in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is located at the interface of historical and anthropological research. Her inquiry into modes of lived mobility explores archival writings of and on former slaves who were set free or fled after years of captivity in Bukhara. Representations of the encounter with the other through forced mobility in three selected life stories reveal the changing social positions of slaves in Bukhara. Yet, Smolarz's example portrays the sudden ruptures of social and spatial mobility between captivity and freedom as experienced by her protagonists as often largely dependent on special knowledge and skills.

Susan Thieme's article also covers the aspect of knowledge in mobilities, though from a different angle. Her contribution on return migration of Kyrgyzstani graduates after completing their studies abroad illustrates how bridge-building and translation between different knowledge communities takes place in practice. Thieme's work sheds light in particular on the strategic networking and brokering of returning students seeking a professional career back home. In their intentions and future aspirations they relate emic experiences and different types of knowledge acquired during their studies to the context of real-life situations in Kyrgyzstan.

Mirjam Lücking investigates the complex, multi-layered interplay of self-perception and othering using the example of Javanese *haji* and *umroh* pilgrims. Lücking shows that an increasingly popular pilgrimage tourism from Central Java to the Arabian Peninsula strongly impacts upon the imagination of "Arabness" and the pilgrims' self-identification as (Indonesian)

Muslims. The emic accounts of her interlocutors illustrate that pilgrims, encountering the Muslim other, become more conscious of global trends in Islam and develop a sense of differentiation from the other. At the same time, they emphasize their connectedness with the Arab World, which involves exchange and adaptation of values and customs. At stake here is a trend towards hybridization produced by mobility and interaction in a centre-periphery scenario.

These deliberations tie in well with the third major topic: (ruptures in) socio-spatial mobility at the margins of the state. Taking the example of the eastern Pamirs of Tajikistan, Till Mostowlansky shows how overland roads can enforce and disrupt socio-spatial mobility. Since the 1930s the Pamir Highway has been the hallmark of and is still widely associated with Soviet modernization. Having once provided access to the centre, the highway is poorly maintained nowadays. The recent construction of a new road across the Chinese border has been promoted by political elites in the same way, yet promises of renewed progress and mobility have not yet materialized for the local population. Mostowlansky's contribution elucidates how social representations of people on the post-Soviet periphery embrace roads as trajectories to a modernity that is situated in the past rather than in the future.

The mobility-immobility dichotomy and the need for spatial fixes become obvious in the paper on the changing spatiality and genealogy of the house in Kashgar (Xinjiang) by Rune Steenberg. Rapid modernization and transformation processes in China's Far West have increased the mobility of large parts of the population, thus de-localizing the concept of the house as a social unit. As Steenberg shows, the social organization into units such as the house often serves as a form of adaptation and, in the case of Kashgar/Xinjiang, can be seen as a result of the many changes and instabilities that characterized the history and social environment of this area. Thus, as a unit the house continues to function as an intact and flexible, though no longer spatially fixed, social foundation that is even gaining new strength in view of the current political instability, demographic changes and tremendous economic transformations on China's periphery.

Finally, Shahnaz Nadjmabadi's case study from the district of Khaf in Eastern Iran is nested in a similar context of forged connections and exclusion from spatial and social mobility. Sweeping infrastructural projects along a north-south highway have been promoted by Iran's government to bring development to the people and have raised local desires for greater participation in economic progress. Yet, as Nadjmabadi shows, political ambitions to become the missing link in the freight transport chain between the land-locked countries to the north and east and the coast have failed due

to closed borders and embargo politics. While a few people have successfully ventured into mining, trade or logistics domestically, a large part of the local population lacks financial capital and access to the constantly reconfigured social networks that drive socio-spatial mobility.

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