Mobility Pioneers Networks, scapes and flows between first and second modernity

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Mobility Pioneers

Networks, scapes and flows between first and second modernity

(Discussion paper for the Alternative Mobilities Futures conference,
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Sven Kesselring & Gerlinde Vogl

Abstract

The background of this paper is a research project in the Reflexive Modernization Research Centre in Munich, Germany.[1] The project title is "Pioneers of Mobility. Structural Changes in Mobility under Conditions of Reflexive Modernization" (see www.sfb536.mwn.de). We started in 1999 and will end in 2005. The primary research question is how so called mobility pioneers from the IT branch, the media industry and the German armed forces socially construct their mobility in relation to social, material and virtual worlds. What we want to know is how mobility pioneers are embedded or dis-embedded in or from social, material and virtual networks. We ask how these networks influence, support and limit the actors' mobility, i.e. their competence to realize own projects and plans while being on the move.

Mobility, we suppose, is a social concept in transformation. The modern notion of mobility is strongly entangled with the idea that spatial (e.g. physical) movement is a major dynamic factor of modernization (Zorn 1977, Zapf 1993, 1998). We want to investigate if the importance of physical movement for the social construction of (modern) mobility is getting weaker. We ask: could it be that virtual mobility will be the paradigmatic and socially shaping concept for "Alternative Mobility Futures"?

In order to indicate a trace of an answer to these complex questions this paper shows the specific project approach to empirical data and interpretation. It gives a short introduction into the theoretical framework and demonstrates why a subtly differentiated terminology in mobility research is sensible, helpful and opens up new insights in non-directional mobility.

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[1] The research center is headed by Ulrich Beck and Wolfgang Bonss. For more information see www.sfb536.mwn.de.

1. Mobility and reflexive modernization

Theory of reflexive modernization (see Beck 1992, Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994, Beck, Bonss & Lau 2003) always deals with alternative futures, because one of its crucial theoretical thoughts is that modernity fundamentally transforms itself from first to second (or reflexive) modernity. Social change in the light of reflexive modernization theory does not result from rational planning and directional optimisation (Beck 1986, Bonss 1995, Bauman 1992, Flyvbjerg 1998). Reflexive modernization is conceived as a process of unexpected, unseen and unwanted transformations of the general conditions of modern societies. It is provoked by the unintended consequences of successful and powerful modern principles like rationality, individuality, globality and mobility in practice. Consequently theory of reflexive modernization focuses on processes of hidden or subversive, e.g. subpolitical transformations of modern institutions and practices (see Beck, Hajer & Kesselring 1999 and Beck, Bonss & Lau 2001 for empirical examples). In this view the transformation of modernity and mobility as one of its general principles (see Rammler 2001, Kesselring 2001, Bonss, Kesselring & Weiß 2004) is *non-directional*. The interpretation of reflexive modernization breaks with sociological traditions like the Weberian and Durkheimian which anticipate the linear progress of modern capitalism and its institutional and normative settings. In contrast to theorists of linearity like Ritzer (1995) who argues in the tradition of Weber and Durkheim theorists of reflexivity identify a second or "another modernity" and a "different rationality" (Lash 1999).

The concept of first modernity is inextricably connected with the notion of nation-state and national identity. The reference point of theories of (first) modernity is the nation-state institutional and affirmative formation.[2] This perspective is criticised as inadequate to the ambivalences of globalization (Beck 1997, Albrow 1996, Held et al. 1999, Grande 2001). Beck (2002) puts it as "methodological nationalism" and argues for a "cosmopolitan sociology" adequate to phenomena like networks, scapes and flows beyond the nation-state and its structurations. A new terminology with notions like *(socio)spheres* (Albrow 1996), *scapes* (Appadurai 1998, Urry 2000), *transnational social spaces* (Pries 1998), *connectivity* (Tomlinson 1999), *interconnectedness* (Held et al. 1999) *liquidity* (Bauman 2000), *fluids* (Mol and Law 1994) and *mobility* (Urry 2000) indicate another perception of society and its structures as mobile, transitory, transformative and liquid. In the end all these approaches of "mobile theorizing" (Albertsen & Diken 2001) understand the social as such as new configurations and relations of stability and mobility. Ritzer and Murphy (2002) also talk about stable elements in a world of flows. In contrast the very modern sharp view of Max Weber would have identified the mobile in a world of (capitalist) order and stability. As a consequence Beck maintains that theorizing has to skip boundaries and to focus on structurations beyond the nation-state and beyond modern stabilities. Like Urry (2000) he is looking for "societies beyond society" and for re-structuring in a world of dis-embedding. Beck's theory of cosmopolitanism refers to the idea of reflexive or non-directional mobility. The metaphor "roots with wings" (2002, 408) expresses this thought and points to the

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[2] As a paradigmatic position for theories of first modernity Bonss (1995) mentions Parsons (1972) and his functionalistic approach. For a critical discussion of nation state theories see Jessop (2002).

empirical problem if social integration and cohesion is possible under conditions of increasing mobility, liquidity and dis-embedding.[3]

The modern notion of society is connected with the idea of social and technological security and the calculation of risks (Beck 1986, Bonss 1995). Modern thinking and modern social concepts concentrate on stability – and modern theorists assume that also after fundamental changes and transformations systems intend to restructure stability.[4] The "will to order" goes right through the classical modern social theories like Parsons' functionalism. The "reduction of complexity" is seen as a general principle of modernity. Heavy modernity (Bauman 2000) or hard capitalism (Thrift 1997) aim to reduce the fluidity of social structures which Simmel postulates as a general principle of life (Simmel 1920). With Bauman it is possible to say that modernity intends the purification of all its elements and Ritzer (1995) re-formulates the Weberian idea of modernization as standardization and conformation.

But second modernity goes hand in hand with liquidity and permanent transformation. It is the acceptance of permanent change, disorder, unpredictability, and the permanent re-structuring of accepted realities. Catchwords like "networks, scapes and flows" (Urry 2000, Beck 2003), transnational connectivity, interdependency and the dominance of unintended side effects (mad cow disease, GM food, traffic congestion etc.) indicate that second modernity is an era of instability, insecurity and uncertainty. Liquid modernity refers to a social situation of continuous "boundary management" (Beck, Bonss & Lau 2003), of permanent change and mobility. Under the conditions of reflexive modernization and global complexity the idea of linear modernization becomes obsolete and looses its touch of practicability and its explanative power. The notions of "meta-change" and the "meta-play of power" (Beck 2002) symbolize that social theory cannot identify the mighty actor who transforms society (e.g. the economy as the key actor in Marxist theories or the dialectics of culture and economy in Simmel's works). And on the other hand the term meta-change indicates that all actors are faced with the problem of identifying their own direction in a world of opaque flows.

In this sense the main hypothesis of this paper is: along with the emergence of second modernity there are structural changes in mobility. Mobility as a social concept (and not as its reduction to spatial movement, traffic and travel) transforms itself from *directionality* to *non-directionality*. In other words: the social concept of first modern mobility is *directional*, it emphasizes the necessity and the possibility to develop effective straightness and aimfulness – in a spatial as well as in a social way. Modern mobility is conceived as movement with origin, direction and destination. The paradigmatic metaphor is the lightning career as a "meteoric rise" from the bottom to the top. To be mobile means in a modern concept to move upward. In contrast the reflexive concept of mobility is non-directional; it goes along with the experience that straightness is a fiction and the failure of directionality is likely. The striking example is the failure of the "Dream of Traffic Flow" (Schmucki 2001). Be it long distance travelling, be it career mobility, or be it internet surfing the

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[3] In Richard Sennett's book The Corrosion of Character (1998) this idea is pointed out from a subject perspective but as Urry (2000, 2003) shows the problem also exists from a systemic perspective on global flows.

[4] See the famous phrase from the Communist Manifesto "All that is solid melts into air…", where after the downgrading and the destruction of traditional structures the new just and stable order waits for its fulfilment.

experience of moving from one spot to another is often non-directional and actors are faced with disappointing situations of delay, waiting and breakdown. Experiencing reflexive mobility is full of detours and misty, incomprehensible tracks.

In this sense the social concept of modern mobility refers to its paradigmatic idea of unambiguous and clear transport or class mobility and means to move from one place to another in a direct line. Reflexive mobility as non-directional mobility refers to the paradigmatic idea of reticular or network mobility. There is not a clear and unambiguous direction for the move but there are many ways – although nobody knows if this leads to the intended effect or if there are unintended side effects which influence the direction.

2. Mobility Pioneers

The idea of researching mobility pioneers comes from the 1995 book "Vom Risiko" (On Risk) by Wolfgang Bonss. New patterns of social innovation don't spread from the centres of societies but from the edges or even from outside. In his book Bonss develops the hypothesis that a new conception of risks can firstly be identified in the 13th century among Italian traders. They played a role of trendsetters for new social perceptions and practices. The modern risk conception is intensively connected to the idea of personal responsibility. The Italian traders started to calculate their own risks and chances. In the case of failure they accepted that it would be their own business and their own responsibility if they went bankrupt.

In this sense we understand mobility as a specific way of individual risk management under the conditions of liquidity and instability. We are looking for new mobility patterns as modes of dealing with the structural liquidity and ambivalence of radicalised modernity. Sennett (1998: 99 ff.) describes how the structural openness of disorganised (flexible) capitalism leads to the necessity of risk management for individuals as well as organizations and institutions. The new social types of drifters and surfers he describes are nothing more than mobility types (see Bonss & Kesselring 1999). They represent specific modes of dealing with the mobile structures where classes and layers loose their stability and are getting substituted by structurations of networks of resources and power. The consequence is that individuals and groups do not move through time and space in an directional mode and with the idea of progress.

In this way we can provisionally formulate: a mobility pioneer is a person who is able to deal with non-directionality and to move without clear destination.

But what is a pioneer in general? Two short looks into the German Brockhaus encyclopaedia and the Encyclopaedia Britannica are instructive and offer the trace that Pioneers explore new (land)scapes (see the first settlers in the New World) and need to find solutions for new problems. In other words: they decide to move and they need to regulate the consequences of their own actions. For the Encyclopaedia Britannica pioneers are as different items as the Russian PIONERY which is the former Soviet organization for youth; the first series of unmanned U.S. deep-space probes designed chiefly for interplanetary study; Frederick W. Taylor and Henry Ford as pioneers of mass production; the band OASIS as Pioneers of Britpop; Soldiers and tanks and many more.

In other words, pioneers can be very different things. Be it a person, an artefact, an organization or a group pioneers always move into new mental or physical areas.

They either deal with formerly unknown situations or (like the Russian Pionery) promote and propagate new ideas. They are trendsetters and in summary it may be said that the notion of pioneer represents new concepts and practices.

Against this background it might be possible to concretise what a mobility pioneer might be and how is it possible to identify him or her?

We will approach a conceptual definition of mobility pioneers from two sides: first, theoretically and second, methodologically:

(1) Above we conceptually described the difference between directional and non-directional mobility. Our considerations went along with Bonss' theoretical assumptions on risks (Bonss 1995, Bonss, Hohl & Jakob 2001). Under the conditions of reflexive modernization with its indicators like radicalized insecurity, uncertainty and ambivalence people are woven into situations where they are forced to decide where they want to move to. Mobility in general means that actors want to influence the direction of their movements and transformations. It is a reflexive and paradox figure that under the conditions of disorganized capitalism nobody really knows where the flows run to. But everybody has to act as an individual and autonomous subject – although the limits of liberty are obvious. The motto of reflexive mobility means: "be on the move, although you do not know where the road ends!"[5] In the era of calculated risks – what means first modernity – people identified the chances of openness which derive from the fact that social structures became more flexible, more open and pervious. Outsiders like the Italian traders became trendsetters for a new social conception like "No risk, no progress". Mobility pioneers listen to the motto "Be mobile because standstill could be death but don't expect success!".

(2) As an *ex ante sampling* we choose people under <u>high mobility pressure.</u> Members of our sample must fit in two of the following criteria:

- They must work in *responsible positions*, endowed with power and „locked in" in systems of *division of labour* (companies, public institutions, consultants etc.);

- Or they must be so called „*entrepreneurs of the own working force*"[6] in contexts of self-employment (on a high as well as on a low income level);

- And they all must be confronted with *mobility constraints* like social & spatial flexibility, corporeal and/or virtual travelling.

As an *ex post specification* we name those as Mobility Pioneers who create and practice specific *arrangements of time and space* to cope with the compulsion of mobility and to realize individual goals.

2.1. The sample

The mobility pioneers project focuses mainly on so called trendsetter branches and particularly on the IT and media branch. Officers of the German Armed Forces are integrated into the sample as a "traditional" comparison group. The female house cleaners from Poland are also a group of comparison because they reveal specific

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[5] See Kerouac: "'You boys going to get somewhere?` We didn't understand his question, and it was a damned good question" (Jack Kerouac in On the Road, 1957: 22).

[6] See Voß & Pongratz (1998).

mobility patterns from the underclass whereas the media and IT sample imply a strong middle class bias. But nevertheless we expected the strongest pioneer patterns beneath media and IT workers.

Branch/ economic sector	Professions	male/female	Number of interviews
IT Branch	Key account managers, consultants, programmers	9 m 5 f	14
Media Branch	Journalists, musicians, web designers; mostly self-employed	13 m 11 f	24
Services	House cleaners (transmigrants from Poland working in Germany)	8 f	8
Army	Officers of the German armed forces	20 m	20
Altogether		42 m 24 f	66

2.2. On Method

The socio-material network analysis approach we practice is influenced by Manuell Castells (1996, 1997, 2000), the work of Barry Wellman on social and virtual networks (Wellman & Haythornthwaite 2002, Wellman & Gulia 1999) and by some conceptual ideas from actor network theory (Latour 1996, Law & Mol 2001).[7] In our understanding networks consist of social relations, material (infra)structures and virtual relations. We pay attention to transport systems, artefacts like cars, bikes, trains, planes etc. and "virtual" structures because these elements are part of the mobility potential for individuals and collective actors. But we do not concentrate on networks and scapes as such but as representations of mobility potentials around actors. We conceive them as mobility resources in the sense of Giddens' structuration theory (1995). In the structure and action duality actors need to decide and to act as individuals although they are intensely structured by institutions, organizations, and by power and dominance.

Our approach derives from subject oriented sociology as it is practised in the context of theory of reflexive modernization and its protagonists. But we realize that subjects like mobility pioneers are just knots or gates within wide spread socio-material networks and we do not analyse them just as individuals but as components or elements of networks. Consequently we do not only reconstruct individual logics, politics or patterns but logics, politics and patterns of mobility as parts of network logics etc.

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[7] We learned a lot from our colleagues in the B2 project at the Reflexive Modernization Research Centre and especially from Florian Straus' comprehensive introduction to network analysis (2002) and from Hollstein (1999).

In concrete we use five tools for the reconstruction of subject oriented networks:

1. A small questionnaire for some statistical data.
2. Extensive in-depth interviews as the main data source (1.5 hours at minimum).
3. Two charts for social and material/geographical relations (social networks and important places, technologies etc.) as an additional interview stimulus for narratives.
4. Two time lines for partnerships and the professional (life) course as additional interview stimulus and as an control instrument during and after the interview.
5. Participating research (e.g. working with journalists, visiting workshop etc.).

All these tools we usually integrate by group discussions on single cases. Based on these discussions we developed a typology of mobility patterns.[8] This typology illustrates patterns which spread above all the sample with its different groups.

2.3. Mobility strategies

But this paper does not introduce the typology. It focuses on some conceptual thoughts in the background and illustrates their relevance for mobility research while using empirical materials. We want to introduce into the conceptual approach of the Mobility Pioneers project. One of the crucial project aims is to investigate how mobile people orientate under the conditions of reflexive modernization and how they navigate in relations to social, material and virtual worlds. To identify different types of mobility pioneers we reconstruct the actors' specific mobility strategies. Mobility strategies refer to the *inner logic of mobility practice*. The analytic reconstruction of these logics is based on empirical data and especially on in-depth interviews. Interpretative methods (like computer based analysis and group discussions) enable us to condense mobility strategies as ideal types of concepts and practices. By using interpretative methods it is possible to reveal mobility strategies which are usually hidden and unconscious to the subject. But they are reconstructable for the researcher. To describe these strategies in the following we use the term *management*, because we emphasize the subject oriented shares of acting. Although we are aware of the fact that mobility practice is structured by contextual situations, structural conditions and power relations in general we underline the individual shares in mobility, because we want to illuminate the actors' abilities to influence their movements through time and space. This is one step of the project to describe mobility in its contextual restrictions. Mobility is often conceived as the emergence of liberty. But in fact mobility results from the dichotomy of autonomy and heteronomy, of production and adaptation. This is the reason why we conceptualize mobility in relation to flexibility as the competence of actors to adapt to the direction of flows (Vogl 2003).

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[8] The typology consists of four characteristic action types and mobility patterns: hypermobiles, mobile immobiles, immobile mobiles and immobiles (see Bonss, Kesselring & Weiß forthcoming). It is work in progress and will be elaborated through the next project phase.

2.4. Theory based analytical tools

Mobility – directional as well as non-directional – is not a consistent phenomenon. It is a general principle of modernity (Bonss, Kesselring & Weiß 2004) and as such there is a set of discourses, institutions and practices which brings it into materiality and social reality. We suppose that it is neither possible to identify social mobility as an isolated dimension nor is it possible to identify spatial or geographical mobility as such. Instead, is makes sense to talk about "mobilities" (Urry 2000) or, as we propose, about different constitutive elements of mobility.

Mobility we define as an actor's competence to realize specific projects and plans while being "on the move". We stress the modern notion of mobility with its concentration on physical movement as a vehicle of creativity and self-fulfilment. But our hypothesis is that there is a conceptual change from the dominance of physical to virtual movement. This transformation in the modern understanding of mobility we try to locate in actor's narrations by using Simmel's concept of modernity as the strained relationship (*Spannungsverhältnis* or *Wechselwirkung*) between *Bewegung* and *Beweglichkeit*. This means that mobility is an ambivalent concept with the two dimensions *movement* and *mobility potential* (motility). We presume that this fundamental dichotomy of movement and motility is constitutive for the mobility of individual and collective actors. Therefore we developed a three dimensional concept for the empirical work on mobility pioneers. The central thread through our empirical work is the following: if we want to understand how and why people are on the move we need to observe two dimensions. To reconstruct mobility we need to relate together empirical data on *movement* and on *motility*. Only if we know enough about the physical, social and virtual movements which shape a certain case and if we can judge and estimate the actors' mobility potentials we can talk legitimately about mobility. In other words: what we need to identify is the *mobility performance* (e.g. expressive and convincing data about it) and the *mobility potential*. Our starting point is the subject with its performances and embodied potentials. But in fact we can say a lot of things about networks, scapes and flows which get through the individual case. We can talk about mobility (in our understanding) when there is a match between movement and motility which allows people to realize specific projects and plans.

Movements - socially, physically or in virtual reality can be measured as effective data. In fact the literature on mobility is dominated by descriptions of movements of persons, groups, peoples, institutions and artefacts from one point A to another point B in physical and/or social spaces. Academic libraries are full of reports about *moving masses* of people, goods and information. And much of the time scientists talk about mobility they imagine flows of people and things. Of course, they do this with good reason because modern society is shaped by mighty flows which become more and more global and which produce tremendous complexities (Urry 2003).

Individuals are part of many flows, they live in structures, participate in networks and use scapes for the realization of plans and projects. Therefore we ask people about their typical mobility performance. We collect data how people travel, how and how often they change jobs, how dynamic their social networks are, how they use the internet, they communicate and which technologies they use (e-mail, mobile and other phones, etc.). Of course, we cannot make a comprehensive survey of travel behaviour, social positioning and virtual communication. But what we grasp with our qualitative approach is a specific part of mobility practice. We do not really know

how they move, we do not know their effective performance. But we clearly identify its characteristic nature and we spotlight on the inner logic of mobility performance.[9] We collect data on the "compulsion of proximity" (Urry 2002) and on other modes of dealing with mobility pressures.

Movements and flows depict the visible parts of mobility. But in fact we do not know if actors travel by their own will or if they are forced to be on the move. That's why we make a distinction between mobility and flexibility. We need to reconstruct this from material and that is the reason why we are searching for inconsistencies in mobility narrations. Interviewees produce themselves as "makers of their own mobility". But intense work with empirical materials reveal the limits of autonomy and show that mobility is something very scarce and that mobility performance is full of constraints. This is the reason why we intensively ask our interviewees why they socially, physically and virtually travel.

In the next step we concentrate on what enables people to do this? We try to identify sets of competence and skills which characterize their relationship to mobility.

We use the term **motility** for the actors' *mobility potential*, and we mean the competence to move and a specific set of capabilities and skills which enables actors to realize specific plans and projects. For Kaufmann (2002, 1)

> "motility regews to the system of mobility potential. At the individual level, it can be defined as the way in which an actor appropriates the field of possible action in the area of mobility, and uses it to develop individual projects" (Kaufmann 2002, 1).

Motility as a set of capabilities and skills is the key to describe the "optional spaces of mobility" (Canzler & Knie 1998) of individual and collective actors.

The concept of motility is also used by Paul Virilio (1992, 1998) to describe the decoupling of mobility potentials and movement and to point out the "raging standstill" of modern societies. But it is obvious that our interest is quite different to Virilio's concept of motility. Instead, we want to identify what enables people to be mobile and to understand themselves as mobile actors. We know that it is not the autonomous subject who moves but complex networks and configurations of material elements, capitals, power and dominance etc. which "produce" or restrict mobility. But we use individuals, e.g. single persons as hatches into complex networks. We start with the body and the embodied competence and skills we can identify. But through the body we recognize a mess of socio-, techno- and ethnoscapes that we need to sort, to re-arrange and to systematize in a sensible and sociologically fruitful way. These scapes are part of the motility because we reconstruct how people relate to systemic orders like the transport system or the organizational structure of their companies or the market for freelancers etc.

This means, in our work we talk a lot about movement and motility. But we are very careful when we use the term mobility. When movement and motility come together, go hand in hand and melt together into a social conception it makes sense to talk about **mobility**. Therefore mobility occurs when social, physical and/or virtual movement is an actor's instrument to fulfil specific plans and projects. Consequently

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[9] In our approach we do not need to know in detail and comprehensively the mobility performance of people. What we need is selective data and information about typical and characteristic movements. Based on this data we develop a typology of mobility patterns (see Bonss & Kesselring 2004).

this means that in the light of our subject oriented approach the reconstruction of mobility is based on the hermeneutic process of data interpretation. We want to describe if people imagine themselves as creators of their own lives, if they imagine themselves as those who influence the direction of the own moves or if they experience their moves as reactions to pressure and constraints. In other words: do these people in our sample *drive* or are they *driven*? *To drive or to be driven?* – that's the point of our research.

3. Centred, de-centred and virtual mobility management

Western modernization goes hand in hand with the development of a complex and powerful transport system (Zorn 1977). Insofar it makes sense that spatial mobility (physical movement) is one of the key indicators for modernity (Zapf 1993, 1998). Complex arrangements with statistical data on mobility, transport and tourism give information on modernization levels of nation-states and regions (ibid.). But we assume that this conceptual reduction of mobility to physical movement (of bodies and things) is inadequate for a description of mobility under the conditions of reflexive modernization. In first modernity it might have been helpful to reduce the complexity to this indicator because the welfare of nations was inextricably connected to transport and travel. In second modernity the dominance of spatial mobility does not vanish. But the realization of plans and projects is no more absolutely tied with spatial mobility. A more differentiated view on mobility is coming up and the sociological analysis of mobility needs instruments and tools to de-construct the ambivalent character of reflexive mobility. The simple identification of physical movement and social change (e.g. professional success) seems to be loosing its explanative strength. The idea of a directional relationship between physical movement and social change comes into question. On the large scale level it is to see as an attempt to find new categories and concepts for the meta-change of modern societies (Urry 2003, Beck 1997, 2002). It is the question of directional and non-directional social change and how to identify the relevant actors in a global play of power. It is the attempt to operate with new terms like the triangle of networks, scapes and flows to re-formulate social structuration as a process in motion and as the permanent re-configuring of different stable and mobile elements. Urry (2000, 2003) demonstrates how tremendously complicated "mobile theorizing" and the understanding of liquidity are. The imagination that these fundamental transformations find their representation on the subject level is quite naïve. Subjects do not react on liquidity. They produce stability and routine to cope with meta-change. And the problem is that we need to "dive" very deep into the material to identify inconsistencies beyond the surface of control and decision making what one's own movement amounts to.

As an indicator for the hypothesis of directional versus non-directional mobility we conceive the fact that the equation "go abroad and you'll return successfully !" as a rule for the way to the top is loosing its convincing power. People are uncertain if they should move or not and if they want to pay the financial and social costs of a "career by mobility" (Sennett 1998, Paulu 2001, Schneider et al. 2002). They do not trust that physical movement will realize their motility or if it is better to stay and to develop local and regional networks and resources.

In the following we will illustrate how people gradually de-couple themselves from the pressure to physical mobility. We use three characteristic cases of mobility

pioneers to show the empirical fundament of the hypothesis that reflexive modernization is linked with the emergence of a non-directional mobility. We do not maintain that the whole "Alternative Mobility Future" will be non-directional and reflexive. But we say that there are "Alternative Mobility FutureS", that there is more than one future and they are directional as well as non-directional. To use one of our catchwords it is to say that there are different ways of mobility management which enables people to cope with the mobility pressure of disorganized capitalism. We talk about the *Centred*, the *De-centred* and the *Reticular Mobility Management*. For the presentation we use three cases from a sample of German freelancer journalists. It was a crucial finding of the first project phase from 1999 to 2001 that the more disorganized the contexts are in which the people interviewed use to work the more probable it was that new patterns of mobility emerge in the empirical material. This is not a hard correlation but it is evident in our material and in this way a sensible hypothesis for further research is possible.

3.1. Centred mobility management

Achim is at the age of 35, he is married and has three children with his wife from Israel. He is a trained social scientist. As a freelancer journalist he is autodidactic and made a career as an author for nation wide newspapers and a number of federal broadcasting companies. From time to time he also produces for TV stations. As a member of a cooperation of journalists and translators he is self-employed, and together with his family he lives in his own house in his small hometown. His office is one hour away from one of the most important German concentrations of media industry. He is a commuter, because he maintains many strong and weak ties to his home town and people living there. Most members of his family live there, he is a member of a local political revue and he deals in private as well as in professional sphere with local history (especially with local National Socialism).

Achim estimates a medium mobility performance per year: for his daily travels to his office and for many of his professional appointments and meetings he uses public transport; all in all over the year 15.000 km. 8.000 km he travels by his own car (incl. family travels as well) and 8.000 km by plane (incl. travels to Israel, the mother country of his wife). Although he works as a busy journalist his favourite mode of travelling is public transport. This is amazing insofar as most of his travellings are not long distance journeys but regional ones. This reveals one of his most striking competences; the ability to manage complex activity chains by public transport. He is well equipped with timetables and he is able to exploit waiting and travelling times as creative phases of professional activity. Most of the time a first draft for an article is finished before coming home from a meeting, press conference or interview. Even when he travels over longer distances he tries to come home at night. As such all his movements circulate around a clearly defined centre of life: his family, house, friends and local belonging. His social networks are extremely dense, interactive, and multiplex. They are as well dynamic and actively structured. Many of them are local and regional networks but none of them are given or traditional. After being away for years for his studies he returned to his hometown and chose his contacts and forms of social integration.

His relation to virtual networks is very professional and selective. He uses the internet as an additional information source but he avoids chat rooms and he does not practice extensive e-mail communication.

In this case we observe a socially deep rooted and strong potential for the shaping of mobilities. Achim Reichwald possesses a mobility potential which enables him on the one hand to cope with the enormous mobility pressure of his job. On the other hand he has the potential to manage very complex and complicated situations and demands from family, job and private activities he is engaged in. His career as a journalist he developed over the last fifteen years and currently he is a valued author of the most important German newspapers, magazins and radio stations. He is an active (networking) member of different professional and private networks. As such he was the co-founder of an international federation of journalists, he is an active voluntary adviser for a big German trade union and he is intensively engaged in a German-Israeli Exchange programme. The strong compulsions of proximity in his job and the necessities to be on the spot do not hinder his concentration on the place and on local social networks. He combines world wide networking with local integration as a political citizen.

He is an expert in public transport and he is eager to figure out the best connections. Riding by bus or train is a way of recreation and concentration on current and future professional and private projects (it is time for work and time for himself).

This case study of Achim Reichwald exposes a specific concept of mobility which we call *centered mobility*. What we mean is that cases like this represent a specific constellation of mobility and immobility. There is a lot movement and transition in this case. Reichwald actively shapes his professional and social networks and he uses them as a resource. His individual plans and projects rest on the active management of social and material networks, which function as mobility resources.*Centered Mobility Management* requires a high level of competence, discipline, organization and maintenance.

3.2. De-centred mobility management

Before Wolfgang Sonnenberger became a freelancer journalist he was a successful editor and department manager in the economic section of a federal radio and TV station. His themes were "How to become a striking entrepreneur?" and other trendy stuff. He presented a well known TV magazine for young founders, people in start up companies etc. He was an internet specialist with nation-wide reputation. After his father's death there was a rupture in his life and professional self-concept. He quitted his job and he was looking for alternatives. He was searching for a perfect logistic centre for his new life as freelancer and trainer of his former colleagues in internet research and data management. At the end he settled down on one of the Balearic Islands but he retained his small flat in Germany as a "base camp". Today it is his starting point for his expeditions into his new life as a self-employed person.

Sonnenberger puts up his life between the Balearic Islands, Germany, Italy and more and more the US and Russia. In the sun there is his home and favourite working place; from a German middle size city he manages his seminars and makes journalistic investigations; an Italian enclave is his favourite location for recreation and buddhist exercises. And during the last years he learned to know many places and people in the US and Russia. Through Sonnenberger's narrations we recognize a multiplex network of places, people, ideas and cultures. At first glance Sonnenberger is what we call hypermobile, a person, who is socially and physically in permanent motion. He is a frequent flyer and does not possess a car. He maintains a wide spread social network and all his professional activities are connected with private visits and

contacts. There are many compulsions to proximity which he wants to regulate and he continuously gives priorities to those he wants to see or not. Through data analysis his life as a single person becomes visible as extremely dynamic. He is not married and has no children. In contrast to the first case there is no clear centre and direction in mobility practice. But Sonnenberger produces himself as the navigator of his life.

Sonnenberger is not a "drifter" (Sennett 1998), who runs where the flow goes to. He wants to drive. His experience of life makes sense to him and he formulates aims and goals. For example, he has a clear definition of success: to be on the top means to make enough money in two weeks for a pleasant life in another two months. This is completely different to the tips and hints he gave to his "striking entrepreneurs" a few years ago.

Sonnenberger is socially well integrated. On his favourite island he lives in a residential community without a partner and practices many contacts with locals. He is well integrated in a world wide network of communication with his family in Germany, old and new friends, colleagues and other like-minded people all over the world.

He says about himself:

> "I'm going to virtualize my life step by step. E-mail becomes my favourite mode of communication. I just use the phone if I really have to. Everybody can reach me per E-mail and over my homepage wherever I am. I do not write letters or postcards. It happens more and more in my working life that I don't see my customers. They know my work, they know my price and so they do not need a physical contact. I'm astonished myself, but there is a lot of trust in the medium internet."

Wolfgang Sonnenberger's case illustrates *de-centred mobility management*. He lives the network, and he gives life to it. Switching between national territories and continents he resigns his former goal to marry and to start a family. Love, sex and friendship follow the idea of networking. He has a lot of contacts with women, but he distinguishes between different purposes: talk, intensity, sex, love, social, psychological and technical support etc. He maintains a social network on a high level of multiplexity.[10]

What we discover is a hybrid concept of mobility and practice. On the one hand there is a lot of movement, travelling and transnational commuting. He produces himself as the navigator of his own life course. But we also identify a tremendous pressure to be on the spot and to make enough money for his life. We do not emphasize these aspects in this paper but it is our current work to intensify the contextual analysis of mobility pioneers. It is necessary to describe the contextual settings of mobility practice in the media branch (see Vogl 2003) and to elaborate the influences of economic transformations and processes of dis-organization (Lash & Urry 1987) on the mobility and flexibility of actors.

In the Sonnenberger case we recognize mobility management on a high level of income, comfort and competence. But behind the small talk on the "logistics of mobile lives" (citation from the interview) there is a must not a desire. The individual decision to leave the security of a stable job and to choose the freedom of self-

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[10]   See Pelizäus-Hoffmeister (2001) for the discussion of mobility and the multiplexity of social networks; see also Hollstein (1999).

employment produces unintended consequences. To live a life beyond local fixations and to develop an individual culture and practice of "uprooting and re-grounding" (Ahmed et al. forthcoming) demands a lot of discipline, concentration and mental strength. And the question is how it is possible to re-integrate all theses different networks which support Sonnenberger's mobility concept.

Our interpretation is that it is the hybridity or plurality in his life what enables him for this. Since he subliminally follows the idea of refusing movement. Corporeal travelling is his instrument to realize an independent life without the restrictions of a stable job. But in fact he conceives himself as *cyber creature*. His favourite mode of travelling is *virtual mobility*. Virtual networks enable him to spend much of his time on his Balearic island. These networks function as resource for his world wide presence without being corporeally tangible. Technologies like internet, e-mail and mobile telephones permit him to be away while being accessible. What he aims at is a maximum of connectivity and a minimum of co-presence. He temporarily de-couples himself from the "compulsion of proximity" (Boden & Molotch 1994, Urry 2002). While being on his island and on the move he is accessible for those who are directly in contact with him. For all the others he is just "virtually" accessible what means by communication.

Prerequisite for this complex juggling with different places, social belongings, identities and social, material, and virtual networks is a set of competence and skills. The decisive factors seem to be his technological competence and his ability to keep in touch with friends, colleagues and clients. These two elements melt together in his competence to keep contacts and to realize social integration via internet. All the different levels of professional, private and cultural activities come together in different identities which he exposes on different homepages. He produces himself as a private person interested in people, nature and ecology, beauty in general, music, food, cultural events etc. And beyond his quasi hedonistic performance he produces himself as a successful, effective and reliable person. Over the time we observed the emergence of some of these identities. And the integration – and in consequence the decisive instrument for his de-centred mobility management – is a public time schedule on his homepages where everybody can see where he is and where he will be at a certain moment. Clients realize his bookings and free dates, friends can inform themselves if they can meet etc. He is part of a wide spread network of contacts and places and he "functions" as node because other do arrange themselves by using his homepage as information source for their own plannings.

In summary, the inner logic of mobility management we observe in this case is reticular. The subject produces himself an individual but at the same time it realizes its restrictions and constraints.

3.3. Virtual mobility management

Johanna Rheingold is a well known freelancer journalist in Germany. And she is a high level specialist in internet and data security and information rights. She is married, has a little daughter of five and lives near a middle-sized city. She makes more than 5.000 € per month. This is a top income for freelancer journalists. She reports about secret services and German and European Law on data security. And in a certain sense she seems to be immobile. She does not travel. Her daughter's care is her job and her husband does not participate. This is one of the most important restrictions in her life and it forms the boundary of her professional life. In fact she

has just five hours per day for her extremely busy and responsible job. It is a great challenge for her, because the participation in professional life is of great value to her. To be active as a political citizen and journalist is an important goal in her life. Consequently she has a problem: when physical movement is the absolute prerequisite for an actor's mobility and in her understanding for public presence, importance and impact she must fail. Or there are other forms of mobility which function as a vehicle and enable people to realize own projects and plans.

During the interview some years ago we asked Johanna about important "places" in her life. The result was quite surprising and at first glance amazing. Her distinct preferences were her e-mail program, computer, telephone, her desk and her house. There was no home town, and the place where she spent her childhood didn't emerge. Only two cities where she lived for a few years came up and Turkey, the country where her husband stems from. On the same level as the two cities she mentioned three homepages and she called them "important locations". In the morning when she starts to work it is the first action to visit these homepages for new information. All the things she does as a journalist and as a political citizen, who fights for the liberty of information flows and for the defence of private sphere, are documented on these homepages. There is no better platform for the public and expert discourse on data security and information rights than those. And she as an expert and a public voice is located in the middle of discourse. And as such this homepage is an important mobility resource for her. It supports her by the realization of her plans and projects. It is one of the main reasons why she is one of the best paid authors all over Germany and why she is continuously asked for new articles and books. Beyond this virtual forum there is no better place to be present. From time to time she travels to a conference or a lecture. But she minimizes her travelling to about ten trips a year.

In her "former" life, however, she enjoyed touring around. Before she had had her daughter she kept travelling. Today, corporeal travel doesn't matter. Nevertheless she is a very motile person, she has a large mobility potential and she maintains a multiplex social network.

Johanna Rheingold created her own individual *scape*, based on a specific constellation of hybrid technological, social and virtual components. We do not say that she built her own streets, co-axial cables etc. That's nonsense. What we mean is she created her own configuration of scape elements and by this way her own optional space or mobility potential. There are many prioritizations to be seen: for her private life direct interaction and all the artefacts of direct interaction (bike, car, public transport etc.) are mostly relevant. But in her professional life virtual interaction and the technologies of virtuality (the scapes) are much more important than all the other "modes of transport". There are professional networks with their specific restrictions, options, risks and chances, with many nodes and relations where she plays an important role. And she arranges them together with social networks which are localized and virtualized as well.
Of course, Johanna works in a niche. And in this way she is definitively a mobility pioneer because we cannot generalize these observations and findings. Her journalistic issues permit this extreme form of immobile mobility. During her professional work she moves through the cyberspace but she doesn't need to contact physical world. The world comes to her - channelled through her computer. Her field of journalistic research is based on the internet and e-mail with PGP – pretty good privacy -, a small program to code and decode information and hide them from misuse by others. Her communication with informants can be secret by this way.

This works because members of a secret service do not want to be seen with an investigative journalist. In that way she works in a niche, where technology opens new ways of interaction. In other words: the compulsion of proximity is low for her. This was one of the main reasons why she explored the field of data security, secret services, global information rights etc. In a certain sense she drifted into this area of journalistic activity.

But in fact, she is not a drifter. But her mobility is non-directional. Non-directionality does not mean that she has no criteria where the flow should run to. But it means that the concept of mobility does not follow the idea of meteoric rise or steep ascent. We cannot say if Johanna is on top of social structuration or if she is downgrading at the moment. We assume her concept of virtual mobility management as a temporary solution for the problem of unintended immobility. But like the retrogressive pattern of social mobility which Sennett (1998) describes she configures and re-configures her individual scapes for the certain situation in her life. At the moment she lives a virtual existence. But we don not know and we cannot predict her movements with her daughter being 16 or 18. We suppose that mobility configurations with all these elements like car use, public transport, internet practice, contacts with friends, colleagues etc. are just temporarily and in permanent transformation. In this understanding of mobile methodology we need to conceive mobility patterns as configurations beyond individuals and subjects.

3.4. Directional and non-directional mobility

The story line though all the three cases goes from directional to non-directional mobility. In the first case dominates the "will to order" and the concept of regulating and navigating one's own mobility. The second case shows how the modern mobility concept as a directional move from one point to another and from one stage of development to a higher level of perfection comes into doubt and question. Wolfgang is a sceptic. He presents himself as a mobile person, self-confident, strong, impulsive and creative, endowed with all the characteristics of an individualized reflexive subject. He is the maker of his own way. But this is just one side of the medal. On the other there is a desire for recreation and contemplation and he wants to realize this wish by using new technological scapes for being present. But this produces unintended consequences, because his internet presence provokes reactions and inquiries for new jobs. He wants to be absent and the effect is a continuous presence. This is a paradox and it leads to a form of mobility which we call non-directional. Wolfgang creates a gigantic individual scape or configuration of people, things, places, technologies and social ties to make his own way. But in fact the network around himself is getting tighter and tighter. And the consequence is a new way of social positioning. At first glance Wolfgang seems to be a successful runaway from his former conditions of life into a pleasant milieu or environment (the Balearic island). But in order to realize the life in the sun he positions himself between different places, continents, living and working places. And gradually and step by step he glides and slides into another configuration with other constraints and compulsions. It is to say: there is no way out of structuration! But the difference is that Wolfgang is now in a configuration of openness and fine tuning. Small changes of local and social positioning can provoke large consequences. Changing from the Balearic to the Canaric Islands is not necessarily a change of life style, travel

behaviour, social networking etc. But it is possible that the network of clients and job offers could change because travelling time increases and the logistics there could be better or worse than on the Balearic Islands.

Centred Mobility Management (cmm)	De-centred Mobility Management (dmm)	Virtual Mobility Management (vmm)
Physical movement as a vehicle to realize localized projects.	Physical movement as a vehicle to realize transnational projects and to maintain cosmopolitan social networks.	The importance of physical movement for the realization of individual projects is getting weaker .
Strong coupling of physical movement and motility, mobility based on physical movement.	Loose coupling of physical movement and motility.	Uncoupling of motility from physical movement.
Directional	Non-directional	Non-directional

Mobility strategies

The paradox in Wolfgang's case is that he is the one in our sample who fights the most for autonomy. But in fact he is the one with the most dependencies and with the most risks. His mobility management across transnational connections is utmost fragile and vulnerable. It is a one man show of a high complexity . If transport systems fail, if he falls ill, if contacts over distance become unreliable etc. he will be in trouble. And trouble shooting over long distance is very complicated and sometime expensive, too. In this sense we assume that Wolfgang cannot decide and regulate where his own mobility goes to. He is entangled in a global network of relations and connections and thus depends on those networks. He is on the move but non-directionally, logged in in many networks and relations. This is conveyed by the fact that Wolfgang wants to be a cyber creature with much scope for development. But his career and existence is intensively coupled with physical movement. In this sense they are reflexive elements in the case, elements of ambivalence and of new modes of social positioning and belonging (e.g. new modes of risk management). But there are also many elements from first modernity like the will to order and the rational concepts of logistics and management.

In contrast Johanna's case undermines the modern compulsion of mobility. She is a non-mover, she limits her spatial mobility to the minimum. She reduces spatial activities and she stretches the virtual space to an optional space of professional and political commitment. Virtual networks function as mobility resources. For her professional advancement she does not need to be "in the world". The world comes to her, she watches those parts of the world important for her purposes through the screen.

Of course, Johanna's world is risky, too. She maintains quite a small but effective social network for her daily life. If something problematic like divorce, illness etc. took place she could rely only on the support of a limited number of friends. But on the other hand the configurations in her virtual networks are enormously dynamic and changeable. There are some strong relations over years which help her to resolve most of her problems. Many of them she has not ever seen before and she never will. They are just net contacts but nevertheless stable and efficient. And we could

observe something like solidarity, friendship and cohesion between members of virtual networks also in other cases. The difference is it is solidarity by connectivity and not by origin or by shared values.

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