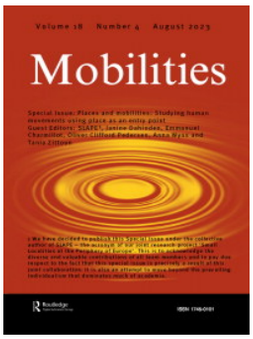

Mobilities

ISSN: 1745-0101 (Print) 1745-011X (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rmob20

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To cite this article: SLAPE, Anna Wyss, Tania Zittoun, Oliver Clifford Pedersen, Janine Dahinden & Emmanuel Charmillot (2023) Places and mobilities: studying human movements using place as an entry point, Mobilities, 18:4, 567-581, DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2023.2235904

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2023.2235904

Published online: 03 Aug 2023.

MOBILITIES
2023, VOL. 18, NO. 4, 567–581
https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2023.2235904

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

INTRODUCTION

Places and mobilities: studying human movements using place as an entry point

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ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary special issue brings mobility scholars and migration scholars together to examine how places and mobilities are entangled. It asks whether using place as an entry point for studying human movements can reveal new insights into our understanding and conceptualisation of mobility. In this introduction we demonstrate, based on the contributions gathered in this special issue, how using place as an entry point for studying mobilities enables us to address some of the serious criticisms that have been raised against migration and mobility studies. We find that such an approach allows us to overcome ethno-national epistemologies, goes beyond migranticised research designs that takes 'migrants' for granted, and has the potential to conceptually 'unbound' place. Furthermore, we identify three transversal dynamics that play a crucial role for the ways in which mobilities become (unequally) emplaced, namely regimes of mobilities, temporalities, and imaginations. We propose that using place as an entry point to study human movements offers a framework for future research to explore the dynamic categories and experiences that emerge at the intersection between places and mobilities without falling back on well-rehearsed assumptions.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 16 May 2023
Accepted 7 July 2023

KEYWORDS
Mobilities; places; reflexive migration studies; regimes; temporalities; imagination

Introduction

This special issue is the outcome of a collaborative process that started several years ago. We, the guest editors, were working on a project studying mobilities and place-making in small localities at the peripheries of Europe within the 'nccr – on the move', the Swiss National Center of Competence in Research for migration and mobility studies. One of our aims was theoretically and methodologically to overcome several criticisms addressed at migration studies. These criticisms emerged particularly in the context of the reflexive (Nieswand and Drotbohm 2014; Amelina 2022) and the postcolonial (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018; Mayblin and Turner 2021; Toomey 2022) turns within migration studies and concerned, among others, the ethno- and national-centred epistemologies, urban and sedentarist biases, and ahistorical approaches said to

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[†]We have decided to publish this introduction under the collective author of SLAPE – the acronym of our joint research project 'Small Localities at the Periphery of Europe'. This is to acknowledge the diverse and valuable contributions of all team members and to pay due respect to the fact that this special issue is precisely a result of this joint collaboration. It is also an attempt to move beyond the prevailing individualism that dominates much of academia.

haunt migration studies. We decided to use particular *places*, in combination with a *mobility perspective*, as entry points to address these criticisms and to explore issues of place-making, transnationalisation, and diversification.

We invited a group of researchers to discuss these questions more comprehensively: to think about how places and mobilities are entangled, and to examine whether using place as an entry point could reveal new insights into the study of human mobility and whether such an approach would help us overcome methodological challenges raised in both mobility and migration research. Concretely, we asked our colleagues to use a particular place as an entry point to study mobilities, and to provide empirical examples. The contributors to this special issue all presented and discussed first drafts of their articles at a workshop at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, in February 2022. As we deliberately invited researchers who work on questions related to either *mobility* or *migration*, regardless of their disciplinary orientation, this discussion turned out to be an interesting endeavour. Bringing together and bridging these perspectives provided a space for inspiring and fruitful tensions, and we hope this collaboration is reflected in the contributions to this special issue.

In this introduction, we first present the criticisms levelled at migration studies (and, to some extent, at mobility studies) and discuss why we believe using place as an entry point is productive for the study of human movements. Through this proposition, we also define the terms *place*, *migration*, and *mobility*. Second, we show the relevance of ethnographic approaches to places. Third, following these theoretical and methodological clarifications and building on the different contributions of this special issue, we introduce three transversal topics that all shape how mobilities become unequally emplaced in localities: mobility regimes, temporalities, and imaginations. The contributions to this special issue demonstrate that the approach suggested here provides new insights into these three topics.

Studying human movements while using place as an entry point: a theoretical proposition

We propose that using place as an entry point is beneficial for three reasons. First, using place as an entry point to study human movements facilitates the conceptual 'unbounding' of places that others have theorised. Second, such an approach invites researchers to analyse 'whole populations' living, arriving, departing, or passing through a place, thus avoiding research that is predicated on a priori ethnically or nationally defined categorisations. Third, it calls for unbiased identification of different types of mobilities (of which migration is only one type) that occur in a given place, as well as investigation of how they are locally categorised and what effect these categorisations have. This section elaborates on these three reasons for using place as an entry point.

First, the suggested approach facilitates a *conceptual unbounding of place*. Put differently, our approach is embedded in the manifold attempts to de-essentialise and de-naturalise the idea of place (Cresswell 2004; Massey 2005). As Doreen Massey (1995, 186) argued, places are 'articulations of social relationships some of which will be to the beyond (the global), and these global relationships as much as the internal relationships of an area will influence its character, its "identity"'. Following from this, a wide range of mobilities (of ideas, objects and people) contributes to shaping and co-constituting places when leaving traces in the environment, when requiring the construction of transport systems, when breaking or reinforcing social boundaries, or when engendering new forms of mobilities in a given place (e.g. labour migration induced by tourism). Conversely, places also co-constitute mobilities: they are routed, practised, and provided meaning by materialities and infrastructures (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012; Ellis, this issue), local discourses, and the political and socioeconomic conditions in particular places. Places provide moorings (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006; Cresswell, this issue) and therefore contribute to

the manifestations of mobilities. In this sense, as also Salazar argues in his contribution to this special issue, 'mobilities are always emplaced'.

Using place as an entry point thus also challenges the understanding of places as bounded and static entities. In this vein, we conceive of places as dynamic (Massey 2005), relational (Amin 2004), and co-constituted by diverse movements of people, ideas, and objects – as well as by diverse immobilities of people and infrastructures (Cresswell 2010). Places are not fixed entities (Salazar, this issue); rather, they are 'implicated within complex networks by which "hosts, guests, buildings, objects and machines" are contingently brought together to produce certain performances in certain places at certain times' (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006, 13). In that sense, 'mobility is not the enemy of place but rather part of what makes a place what it is' (Cresswell, this issue). Instead of focusing on a particular group of mobile persons, we thus propose to examine how past, present, and future mobilities are situated, practised, given meaning, and become entangled in particular places. This approach also emphasises the open-ended nature of places, as these appear to be 'made and remade on a daily basis' (Cresswell 2002, 20), and captures their changing scales.

Places emerge from both practices and diverse meaning-making processes, which depend on not only political dynamics but also historical legacies. For instance, geopolitical restructuring can leave cities relationally 'behind' and change where the future is imagined to be (Ringel, this issue), while the everyday comings and goings of traders, products, customers, and workers create marketplaces (Dahinden et al., this issue). Imperatives to be mobile can lead some people to resist by slowing down their movement and orienting life towards the local (Lems, this issue). Places are subjected to constant change as they grow or decline according to their changing meanings, connections with, and positioning relative to other places (Amin 2004).

As a consequence, places themselves can sometimes be mobile (Salazar, this issue). A place may be a home or refuge for some but a place of transit or dread for others (Ellis, this issue). We therefore argue that it is important to consider people's subjective (and sometimes contradictory) experiences and senses of place, and thus to examine how locally situated discourses contribute to how places are 'made', performed, transformed, and appropriated.

Second, using place as an entry point to study human movements can help researchers avoid using an ethno-national perspective and instead examine the very processes that lead to the ethnicisation or migranticisation of some groups of people (Dahinden and Anderson 2021). Globalisation and the circulation of people, goods, and ideas have changed – and continue to change – all regions of the world (Cresswell 2006) in ways that numerous mobility and migration scholars have documented. Yet in migration studies (as in other social sciences), the study of such processes is still often conducted through the prism of an ethno-national epistemology.

As many authors have argued, such an approach reproduces and normalises hegemonic power structures, forms of exclusion, and nation-state ideologies (Anderson 2019; Sharma 2020; Amelina 2021; Favell 2022). This 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) leads researchers to take 'national containers' as starting points for their inquiries, which, in turn, reproduces the idea of naturally bounded, national, and stable communities (Malkki 1992). Categorising people a priori according to their ethnicity or nationality leads to unreflective use of these supposedly 'natural' communities as units of analysis in migration and mobility studies (Brubaker 2004; Glick Schiller, Çaglar, and Guldbrandsen 2006).

Using place as an entry point is a way to respond to such criticism. In effect, focusing on places changes the unit of analysis from an *ethnic* or *national category* to *whole populations* (Dahinden 2016, 2217); that is, potentially all people living in or passing through a place. Hence, when using place as an entry point, populations are no longer defined a priori by migration-related categories.

We join scholars here who have argued that 'migration' is itself a highly political and normative category and a result of nation-state logic (re)producing differentiations among populations and manifold forms of exclusions (Römhild 2015; Dahinden 2016; De Genova 2017; Tazzioli

2020). The term 'migrant' is, in effect, politically coloured; it contains negative racialised and classed connotations (Anderson 2017; Kunz 2020), is used, for instance, by politicians to normalise and legitimise calls for stricter governance of undesirable movements, and thus obscures how nation-states render this mobility exceptional and something to be controlled – and often prevented.

Our proposition thus echoes calls to de-migranticise migration studies, including by foregrounding processes of migranticisation (among others, Tudor 2018; Anderson 2019; Amelina 2021; Scheel and Tazzioli 2022; Dahinden 2023). By migranticisation we mean all those practices, discourses and regulatory frameworks that turn people into migrants and ascribe them a migratory status in the first place. Migranticisation, then, places people in a particular hierarchy that entails unequal distribution of material, social and symbolic resources while affirming a national 'us' within a system of global inequalities (Dahinden 2023). Migranticisation thus becomes an analytical lens through which researchers can explore the processes by which some people and mobilities are migranticised, as well as the ways in which these processes are a product of existing power relations and mechanisms of exclusion.

Hence, using place as entry point invites us to analyse whether, how, when, and for whom the category 'migrant' becomes significant – empirically, theoretically, and politically – in particular places (cities, islands, classrooms, etc.). Changing the entry point thus creates a distance from ethno- and national epistemologies and concomitant categorisations. This entails studying what kind of movements are (and have been) significant in a given place, which of them are labelled 'migration' – and why, what categorisations of mobile and immobile people are salient, how these categorisations are embedded in power relations, and how such categorisations manifest in laws and migration control practices that then shape people's movements.

The contributions to this special issue reflect such an approach: For instance, Anderson shows that everyday ideas of 'integration' or 'community' shape people's lives in particular cities or neighbourhoods, such as by contributing to the racialisation of certain groups of people. Ellis, on the other hand, points out that certain places can mitigate dominant logics of exclusion, for example when inclusive measures in student resource centres result in people who are otherwise legally and socially excluded being able to participate in educational programs. And Dahinden and colleagues emphasise that even in a rather small market place, local regimes of mobilities are effective and produce differentiated mobilities with unequal resources.

The approach suggested by us involves paying attention to discourses and how they produce certain kinds of mobility in the first place, as well as to how historical developments (e.g. colonialism) have contributed to the emergence of certain mobility categories. Altogether, concrete places are well suited as entry points because they allow for the *exploration* – rather than the *assumption* – of migranticisation.

Third, using place as an entry point nudges researchers to *examine the diverse forms of mobilities* that become entangled in particular places – including those that go beyond what is commonly referred to as 'migration'. Following other scholars (e.g. Faist 2013; Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik 2020; Charmillot 2021), we propose that integrating insights from mobility studies (Cresswell 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007; Tarrius 2010) into migration research can help researchers to develop an alternative epistemological stance on societies that goes beyond spatial fixity and the exceptionalisation of mobility (Hui 2016). By focusing on different kinds of movements and stillnesses, mobility studies challenges the prevailing idea of a somewhat 'natural' (national and territorial) sedentariness and rootedness that constitute part of the problem of the 'migration paradigm' (Wyss and Dahinden 2022). This point raises the question of how mobility regimes and nation-state borders affect mobilities in different ways and thus which forms of mobility are framed as (undesirable) migration – against which, as a result, a variety of restrictive border closures are used.

To use place as an entry point thus also enables us to consider what Cresswell (2010) called the 'politics of mobility'; that is, how politics and regulations determine the way human

movements unfold in practice, and how these movements are represented. First, this approach explores which forms of mobility are facilitated (e.g. when states issue visas or residence papers), both materially (e.g. through the construction of new infrastructure) and symbolically (e.g. through tourist campaigns). Second, considering diverse forms of mobilities foregrounds that mobilities occur at different speeds, encounter various frictions (Cresswell 2010), and are always related to *im*mobilities (Adey 2006): the mobility of some might create immobilities for others (and vice versa), and neither are 'good' or 'bad' by definition. In this vein, the contributions to this special issue highlight how *local* regimes of mobilities (Dahinden et al., this issue; Ringel, this issue) contribute to how different forms of human movements become emplaced in a particular locality and simultaneously within multiscalar relationships between various actors with different degrees of power (Glick Schiller, this issue).

Hence, using place as an entry point for research reveals a diverse range of (local, regional, national, and transnational) mobilities in a particular place and sheds light on their categorisations, entanglements, interdependencies, and the ways in which they are (unevenly) governed. The mobility lens further transcends the racialised dichotomisation of migrants and non-migrants that permeates much of contemporary migration scholarship and politics (Anderson 2019).

Studying mobilities and places: a methodological proposition

Using place-based approach to studying mobilities and vice versa has methodological implications. Above all, it requires case studies. In this special issue, we consider ethnographic approaches to be particularly suitable for this place-based approach (Amit 2000) without losing global (Tsing 2000) or mobile (Marcus 1995) connections. Such an approach allows researchers to explore how various mobilities – often analysed separately and unevenly (Salazar 2021) – relate to each other (Heil et al. 2017).

As Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2018, 10) propose, ethnographic studies of single sites do not necessarily obscure the fact that places are embedded in and connected to larger systems and other places and processes (see also Dahinden et al., this issue, and Glick Schiller, this issue). Instead, 'with its attention to personal narrative and to the contextualized enactments of everyday life, ethnography offers an irreplaceable entry into the analysis of social practices and sociabilities and their shifting meanings' (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018, 10). We therefore acknowledge the need to account for connections, networks, and positionings within and between places. Places are constituted by multiple modes of mobility and the practices of people within and across them. Such an understanding also views persons engaging in mobility or immobility as place-makers (Glick Schiller, this issue) and shows how places are co-constituted by different people from different places.

While all authors chose a particular place as an entry point, they come from different disciplinary backgrounds (including anthropologists, human geographers, sociocultural psychologists, and sociologists). Importantly, we do not strive for a homogeneous approach to key concepts (such as place and mobility) but rather embrace divergent – and, at times, contradictory – uses of these concepts as a fruitful tension. What all the contributions to this special issue have in common, however, is that they address how mobilities both *become entangled in* and *co-constitute* specific places, thus studying 'sites of mobility convergence' (Bal, Sinha-Kerkhoff, and Tripathy 2017). Some authors chose to tackle this question from a conceptual point of view (Salazar, Cresswell, and Glick-Schiller, this issue), others to apply it to their study of various forms of mobilities in places such as neighbourhoods (Anderson), a post-industrial city (Ringel), a village (Lems), student resource centres (Ellis), and market places (Dahinden et al.). These different places are not necessarily distinct political or geographical entities; they tend to have a limited spatial extension and smaller populations, which facilitates an in-depth exploration of the

mobilities relevant to these places, how these mobilities interact with places over time, and how they are locally categorised and governed.

Hence, we propose that place, as entry point for the study of mobilities, is best served by case studies (institutional, regional, etc.) and ethnographical perspectives. As transpires throughout this special issue, and as we try to bring forward in this introduction, it is precisely as we reason through and across these many case studies that we may identify more general dynamics (Zittoun 2017; Marková and Novaes 2020), as we will now show.

How regimes, temporalities, and imaginations shape the emplacement of mobilities

Based on the contributions to this special issue, we identify three transversal topics that play a crucial role for how mobilities become (unequally) emplaced in particular places: *mobility regimes*, *temporalities*, and *imaginations*. This section discusses these topics and the possible new insights they proffer.

Regimes, places, and mobilities

The regime perspective has recently gained importance in both migration and mobility studies. This perspective understands the governance of migration and mobility not as a smooth, top-down process, but as a conflict-ridden field of negotiations between different actors (such as state actors, private companies, migrants, humanitarian actors), with different interests, embedded in unequal power relations (Sciortino 2004; Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Eule, Loher, and Wyss 2018). Different contributions to this issue (e.g. Glick-Schiller; Ringel; Dahinden et al.) apply the notion of 'regime' to their place-based analysis of mobilities. In doing so, we argue, they advance existing theorisations of a regime approach. They depart from a regime perspective (which is generally rooted in the nation-state framework) and instead explore *local* regimes of mobility.

The concepts of migration, border, or mobility regimes are widely used in scholarly work on human movements to describe how *cross-border mobility* is governed (Tsianos and Karakayali 2010; De Genova 2017; Rass and Wolff 2018; Eule et al. 2019). Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013, 188) coined the concept 'regimes of mobility' to 'explore the relationship between the privileged movements of some and the co-dependent but stigmatized and forbidden movement, migration and interconnection of the poor, powerless and exploited'. With this concept, they aimed to further connect the study of mobility with questions of hierarchisation and uneven access along multiple axes of differentiation (Kaufmann, Bergman, and Joye 2004; Söderström et al. 2013; Menet 2020).

Most research applying a regime perspective understands these regimes as based on *nation-state* or *supra-nation-state* formations (like the European Union). Conversely, the contributions to this special issue start the analysis from particular places, which reveals not only the effects of nationally defined mobility regimes but also how locally situated regimes of mobility are produced in and affect particular places. The relevance of considering how different – and often contradictory – laws, regulations, discourses, infrastructures, socio-economic circumstances, and interests contribute to the regulation of mobilities on a local level is evident in the different contributions.

Dahinden and colleagues (this issue) suggest 'placing' regimes of mobility and focusing on locally embedded practices and governance – not only by the state's bordering but also by locally situated forms of regulation. They include 'all the mechanisms that differentiate mobilities into categories and hierarchies' based on multiple axes of differentiation, which position actors in a particular hierarchy. Such an approach thus grounds the regime concept.

Similarly, Ringel (this issue) argues that investigating the 'local regime of im/mobility' in a post-industrial city illuminates processes that might be overlooked if we simply approached regimes of mobility at the national or supra-national level. Ringel elaborates on this 'local regime of im/mobility' by examining what he calls a 'shrinking' city in Germany, thus also 'placing' the mobility regime concept. In doing so, he draws on developments throughout the former socialist world but focuses in particular on how these processes unfolded in a unique way in Hoyerswerda, where he conducted his fieldwork.

These contributions highlight the necessity of identifying not only what kind of mobilities are meaningful for a particular place but also how these are embedded in – and constitutive of – regimes of mobilities that manifest at the local level. Regimes result in the categorisations of legitimate or problematic mobilities, thereby installing different groups of people into 'human hierarchies' (Mayblin, Wake, and Kazemi 2020). This hierarchisation becomes embedded in laws and representations when people are assigned unequal rights and statuses.

Studying the effects of locally situated mobility regimes nudges researchers to account for local power structures, which are shaped by historical circumstances, legal frameworks (at subnational, national, and supranational levels), public and political discourses, economic interests and restructurings, and imaginations. To capture how different mobilities are hierarchised – and to understand which ones are categorised as 'migration' – we must therefore consider how local discourses, policies, and regulations frame and govern mobilities.

Temporalities, places, and mobilities

A second insight from using place as an entry point that emerges throughout the contributions to this special issue concerns *temporalities*. The entanglements and manifestations of places and mobilities are situated in different temporalities (Adam 1995; Massey 1995; Bhatia and Canning 2021) – and mobilities shape the temporalities of places (Amit and Salazar 2020). Using place as an entry point thus demands sensitivity to how time is not fixed but rather experienced and negotiated. Mobilities are deeply shaped by, and shaping, spatiotemporal arrangements – which Bakhtin (1983) called 'chronotopes'. In contrast to an idea of physical and fixed time, then, we understand temporalities as sociocultural and material constructs (Adam 1995; Moroşanu and Ringel 2016) that exist in relation to each other (Ssorin-Chaikov 2017) and are co-constitutive of places (Sharma 2014). We identify four main dynamics between time, places, and mobilities at various scales.

First, accounting for place-based temporalities reveals the entanglement of places and mobilities via the concept of *rhythmicity*, as demonstrated by Cresswell (this issue). For instance, the temporality in neighbourhoods is marked by the movements of commuters (Anderson, this issue); the lives of undocumented students are influenced by their breaks in a student resource centre (Ellis, this issues); and markets have a weekly or monthly cyclicity, travel from place to place, and are characterised by the mobility of sellers, buyers, and passers-by (Dahinden et al., this issue). Hence the temporality of places emerges from the rhythms of mobilities (see Vannini 2012), and the arrival of commuters, the breaks of students and the movement of merchants and tourists all represent possible markers of time that constitute the temporality of places via mobilities.

Second, temporality can also be apprehended by distinguishing between various spatial and temporal scales. Short-term movements across smaller or larger distances (like commuting or travelling) imply different temporalities to long-term relocations (as when people migrate across borders or move within a national territory). The temporalities required by changes in governance, such as offering shelter to certain types of migrants, are very different to the temporalities experienced by young adults studying at college (see Ellis, this issue) or the person hoping to stay in their apartment in the face of demolitions (see Ringel, this issue). Conversely, Lems (this

issue) shows that people in the Austrian Nock Mountains actively resist prevailing notions of cosmopolitanism that condemn immobility or slowness and romanticise 'a hypermobile word order' (see also Bissell and Fuller 2010). Depending on the unit of analysis chosen – from islands to markets to individual experiences – different temporalities emerge at the intersection between mobility and places.

Third, temporalities are related to modes of governance embedded in specific places and regimes (Eule et al. 2019; Bhatia and Canning 2021). Deportation centres and refugee camps constitute some of the clearest and most violent manifestations (Griffiths 2013; Lindberg 2022) of how enforced immobility and idleness, as well as existential uncertainties, trap people in a limbo outside of 'normal time' (Griffiths 2014). These places control mobility and exercise a slow violence (Davies 2022; Mayblin, Wake, and Kazemi 2020; Wyss 2022) that destroys people's futures (Lindberg and Edwards 2021). Conversely, resource centres for undocumented students (Ellis, this issue) support the re-creation of a sense of time for young people and an opportunity to imagine a positive future – and thus the possibility of being 'back in time', so to speak, with the rest of society. The buildings constructed during the socialist years in Germany become static symbols of a lost past that, combined with material demolitions and outgoing mobility, can give people a sense of decline and a vanishing future (Ringel, this issue). In such instances, mobility seems like the only option to regain a future (Hage 2005; Dzenovska 2018; Pedersen 2022). Yet the mobility of artists, arriving for a short-time stay, rejuvenate these buildings and insert them and the place itself back into time (Ringel, this issue). Finally, temporalities can affect local power dynamics, as Dahinden and colleagues (this issue) show when they describe how long-term sellers in a market obtain better places than other sellers – and thus attract more clients.

Fourth (and connected to the previous points), studying places from a relational perspective can reveal dynamics of synchronisation and desynchronisation, themselves related to dynamics of power and exclusion. People caught in the slow and violent grip of the state can feel 'out-of-sync' (Cwerner 2004), as when the future is rendered uncertain (Griffiths 2013). Ringel (this issue) shows how wider processes of de-industrialisation and economic restructurings desynchronise some places, which may produce feelings of being left out of progress – and thus out of time and out of place. Conversely, living in a relatively remote place characterised by high incoming mobility can engender staying because people feel synchronised with the rest of the world (Pedersen and Zittoun 2022).

Thus, instead of assuming that places and temporalities are in stable relationships, and that temporality can be viewed as an abstract and given concept, temporalities must be understood as determined by place-specific rhythms, mobilities, and relations to other places. Considering temporalities beyond clock time appears fruitful: temporality – that is, time as socially defined and subjectively experienced – can be extended, slowed down, glued, or accelerated (Ringel 2016) through mobilities. Temporalities also affect, shape, and result from the transformation of places, buildings, and the natural environment. And local temporalities are linked to broader historicities and legacies – and thus to the broader geopolitical context.

Imagination, places, and mobilities

Studying mobilities using places as an entry point changes the perspective on not only temporalities but also what often connects them: *imagination*. Migration studies has shown that imagined futures are important for why and how people move (Pine 2014; Carling and Collins 2018; Chambers 2018). Beyond this, imagination does much more than merely engender or stop mobility; rather, it emerges from people's relation to places and temporalities (Salazar 2011; Zittoun 2020). Fundamentally, imagination is a dynamic process through which people or groups expand their present and situated experience by exploring past, alternative, or future possibilities (Vygotsky 2004; Zittoun and Gillespie 2016). Through imagination, people can explore or create

distant, absent, or possible places (Salazar, this issue; Pedersen and Zittoun 2022); but the imagination also governs mobilities and transforms temporalities and the relations between places.

Imagination plays a core role in a dynamic understanding of the relation between places and mobilities because different places afford different imaginations for different people. For example, (imagined) communities that often give meaning to places can both be strengthened or weakened by changing mobilities. In this sense, it is important to consider the term 'place' (as opposed to the more abstract term 'space') as always imbued with meaning (Salazar; this issue; see also Cresswell 2006). An important factor here is how places trigger different imaginations in different people, including who is particularly present in imaginations or who is made invisible (Nixon, 2011). Indeed, imagination depends on people's resources (e.g. books, movies, experiences, representations, socioeconomic status) for imagining their mobility capacity (Kaufmann, Bergman, and Joye 2004), and can be constrained or supported by social recognition (Zittoun and de Saint-Laurent 2015) or border regimes (Lindberg 2022). Mobility also transforms the imagination. Consequently, the relationship between imagination, mobility, and places can take different forms.

First, places afford contrasting and competing imaginations. Depending on people's perspectives and mobility practices, places can be imagined to be 'magic' (Salazar, this issue), 'groovy places' (Dahinden et al., this issue), deprived of futures (Ringel, this issue), or deeply connected to the past (Lems, this issue).

Second, places can be the cradle of new imagining related to some forms of mobility. Thus, people living on the same street, in the same neighbourhood, or in the same valley might imagine others to be members of more or less distant communities according to local specificities, such as a sense of peripherality and participation in local economies (Charmillot and Dahinden 2022). The symbolic distance towards the other sometimes define how that other is given the right or the possibility to move geographically, as we currently witness, for example, in the different reception conditions in European countries for refugees from Syria or Ukraine: different imagined attributions constrain people's local mobility (Anderson, this issue). In the case of illegalised migrant students, whose precarious situation restricts their imagination of possible futures, a student resource centre enables them to reconstruct a sense of home from which new possible future paths emerge (Ellis, this issue). Using Hage's (2005) terminology, Ellis shows how, by nourishing the imagination of possible future pathways without requiring spatial mobility, the imagination people develop in these safe places generates a form of 'existential mobility'.

Third, mobilities can transform the imagination related to specific places. As shown by Ringel (this issue), in socialist-era Eastern Germany, the New City of Hoyerswerda fed imaginations of a shining future, which stimulated an influx of mobility, which further reinforced this future. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union turned these imaginations of a bright future into memories of lost future (see also Zeitlyn 2015). To rekindle hope in future or to trigger new imaginations, which allow people to regain or maintain a sense of progression, people often face the choice of either moving, extending the present (Ringel, this issue), or transforming these places (Pedersen 2022). Slowing down mobility can also play an important role in the processes of place-making and creating a more permanent sense of belonging (Lems, this issue).

In all these cases, then, imagination can be supported by a variety of resources: the devotion and activities of a resource centre for undocumented students, a corner with coffee and snacks (Ellis, this issue), a group of entrepreneurs or municipal officials (Ringel, this issue), creating a local dumpling (Lems, this issue), or rhythms and sonic geographies (Cresswell, this issue) can feed, reshape, and transform imagination – and thereby mobilities and people's relation to places.

Structure of the special issue

The papers in this special issue draw on very different localities in terms of directions of movement, actors concerned, political and historical background, economic circumstances, and, above

all, the places selected as entry points for investigation. That being said, the first and the last two articles (Salazar, Cresswell and Glick Schiller) engage conceptually with how places and mobilities mutually constitute each other. The other five articles each shed light on the theoretical and empirical benefits of considering place as a unit of analysis to investigate different forms of mobility by way of an ethnographic approach.

In his conceptual contribution, Salazar argues that places are 'mobile', mobilities are 'emplaced', and we must attend to both of these truths simultaneously. Based on a critical reading of existing scholarship, and drawing on ethnographies of mobilities, he elaborates on conceptual as well as methodological insights into the multiple ways in which places are mobile and mobilities are emplaced. Conversely, he also brings up reflections on 'immobile' places and 'displaced' (im)mobilities.

Ringel ethnographically details the local regime of im/mobility in Hoyerswerda, a town in the east of Germany that has undergone material destruction and shrinkage as a result of post-industrial restructuring and the reunification of Germany. Once a model town with a promising future, its inhabitants future was increasingly located elsewhere; yet, as Ringel demonstrates, shifting futures produce not only mobilities 'onwards' but also many different forms of mobilities – and immobilities. Ringel reveals a complex regime of im/mobility that is, in large part, a result of negotiations about the past and the future.

Anderson's article takes a place-based approach to exploring how the popular UK Government policy terms 'integration' and 'community' play out in local neighbourhoods in the city of Bristol, England. By focusing on the 'work' that these policy terms do in particular local contexts, it becomes possible to highlight both their fuzziness and how different actors negotiate their meanings in everyday life – without resorting to a problematic use of state categories in research. Anderson argues that a place-based approach to engaging with how integration policies manifest locally calls for 'attending to the work of discursive practice' and allows us to 'connect race, migration and class to material and shared conditions of housing, infrastructure and access to amenities'.

Lems explores the importance of place and localising practices in a world increasingly on the move. Based on fieldwork conducted in the Austrian Nock Mountains, Lems shows how some inhabitants apply different anti-mobile and anti-cosmopolitan place-making practices – such as developing a 'totally local dumpling', creating a local heritage museum, and embracing 'slow food'. She highlights that these practices are, somewhat paradoxically, always embedded in and shaped by developments in other places. Moreover, against the fluidity that academics often prescribe, the people Lems met worked towards belonging in a fixed time and place. She therefore argues that researchers should take such anti-mobile sentiment seriously and not dismiss its proponents out of hand.

Dahinden, Jónsson, Menet, Schapendonk, and van Eck deploy the concept of 'regimes of mobilities' to study how mobilities are not only 'placed' but also entangled in, and shaped by, different power systems. They argue that linking the concept of regimes of mobilities to the study of places can help illuminate how the ordering and differentiation of diverse forms of mobilities play out in the everyday realities of particular places. To substantiate this argument, they study outdoor markets in three European countries: the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK.

Ellis theorises place from a sociocultural psychological perspective. Drawing on anthropological work on 'existential mobility' and phenomenological healthcare studies, her contribution takes Undocumented Student Resource Centers in Northern California as an entry point. She understands these centres as 'dynamic, psycho-social-material realities' and 'supportive places' that contribute to the wellbeing of persons in precarious legal conditions. Her contribution shows that a place-based approach to existential im/mobility helps to acknowledge the importance of undocumented migrants' experiences of wellbeing within highly restrictive mobility regimes.

Cresswell's article proposes considering rhythm, defined as 'a sequence of ordered and repeated movement and rest', as a theme that connects place to mobility. His theoretical paper starts with an examination of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* to demonstrate how rhythm not only can convey a sense of place but is also – and very quickly – connected to the politics of mobilities and othering. He then shows how, more generally, rhythm has been addressed by geography and relates to the politics of race, gender, and age. Finally, he proposes the notion of *idiorhythmy* – forms of non-dominant rhythms – to thematise a plurality of places and mobilities.

In the final contribution to this special issue, Glick Schiller emphasises questions of unequal political, economic, and social power when it comes to relating mobilities to place-making. She brings in reflections on the term *multiscalar*, which, she argues, reflects current modes of accumulating wealth and power. Her paper links changing understandings of scale and networks to the transformations that began in the post-World War II period and led to the current moment of dispossessive capital accumulation and displacement.

As a whole, this special issue addresses and articulates several levels of analysis, combining perspectives from disciplines including sociocultural psychology, human geography, sociology, and social anthropology. We thus hope it sketches a more integrated and general understanding of the co-constitution of places and mobilities in specific contexts.

Acknowledgements

We would like to warmly thank all participants of our workshop in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, on 'Places and Mobilities: Studying human movements through spatial units of analysis' that took place in February 2022. Our joint discussions formed the basis for the realisation of this special issue. We are also very grateful to Hannah Austin for her very thorough proofreading of this text. Finally, our thanks also go to the external reviewer, who's comments have been extraordinarily encouraging.

Funding

This work was supported by the National Center of Competence in Research under Grant 'nccr – on the move' funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation [Grant Number 51NF40_182897]. The paper is a result of the project 'Small localities at the periphery of Europe (SLAPE): Transnational mobilities, diversification, and multi-scalar place making', which was co-directed by Janine Dahinden and Tania Zittoun and involving PhD students Emmanuel Charmillot and Oliver Clifford Pedersen and post-doctoral researcher Anna Wyss.

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