

SESSION: Moving with/through things

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While both the moving body (e.g. in dancing, walking or doing sports) and the movement of material things (e.g. in terms of the circulation or transfers of products and technologies) have been increasingly discussed within anthropology, far less research has been carried out on the more direct interrelations of bodies and things as they move together. This latter angle, however, certainly deserves close attention, since our subjectivities, socialities, and ways of being in the world are constituted by the entanglements of moving bodies/things in manifold ways: e.g. when we move with material/technical things carried on, with or in our bodies such as clothes, bags or a cardiac pacemaker; when moving with/through things that expand our physical abilities, as do for instance bicycles, wheelchairs, or artificial joints; when moving with and through moving things such as escalators, chairlifts, airplanes or perhaps self-driving cars; or when moving through things that build up our (techno-)material environments such as infrastructures of transportation or architectures.

The aim of our workshop is to tackle these issues and to discuss the related conceptual, theoretical, and methodological challenges.

When moving with/through things,

- how are the things attached to, appropriated by, or “incorporated in” the human body?
- In which ways do they afford, enable or constrain certain possibilities for (inter-)actions?
- Which (culturally elaborated) sensations, feelings, or emotions are raised? How, in turn, do they shape social practices of moving with/through things?
- How are things designed and used to regulate and control (bodily) movements and interactions?
- How are particular ways of moving with/through things connected to particular social, political or economic orders and knowledge regimes?

We particularly welcome contributions that address questions such as the above on the basis of empirical case studies. Contributions may come from fields such as consumption, health/medicine, mobility/transport, sports, affect/emotion, urbanity or any other research field concerned. We especially encourage students and early career scholars to present their research projects and (preliminary) findings.

Paper Presentation:

The Krampus as a moving body through things?

Seiser, Gertraud (Institut für Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie, Wien, AUT)

Krampuses are (rapidly) moving bodies in intense interaction with things (masks, skins, bats, bells, etc.). They express emotions and often evoke strong emotions (fear, disgust, fascination) in those who they visit or those who meet them.

In the course of our fieldwork, we have often heard from young and older men that they “become Krampus” the moment they put on the mask. They change for a short time into another subjectivity.

The questions raised in this workshop are very exciting and I would like to pick them up and confront them with our material collected between 2011 and 2016.

The practice of wearing gemstones: entangled things and persons

Teidearu, Tenno (University of Tartu, EST)

Wearing crystal gemstones is a popular practice in contemporary New (Age) Spirituality. People wear gemstones in a form of pendant, bracelet, necklace, earring, ring, jewelry or just a gemstone in a bag or a pocket. Often people wear gemstones constantly over a long period of time, this is a practice of everyday life.

The practice can be viewed as part of material religion of new spirituality and analysed in the perspective of material culture studies. Followed by this perspective I study the mutual relationship between humans and gemstones. Also, it is a practise of everyday religion (Ammerman 2007) and vernacular religion (Primiano 1995), as it is deeply connected with everyday life. My informants buy and wear gems to deal with personal issues and difficulties in everyday life, and to support their personalities and personal qualities. This is linked to a process of objectification, in this dynamic process gemstones are used to develop and enrich a person and her/his capacities (see also Miller 1987). Wearing gemstones is a process of (re)creating personhood. Gemstones are biographical objects, that are interweaved with owner’s biography and personality, and relating to a biographical object is to be related to one’s self (see Hoskins 1998). Also, gemstones and persons are entangled and mutually dependent on the basis of emotions and practices (Hodder 2012).

In the phenomenological perspective, physical and sensory experience of wearing gems mediates closeness and intimacy with gemstones (see Olsen 2006). Many of my informants feel that gemstones are like their good friends and companions. Gemstones are seen as object-persons to relate with (see Harvey 2012). From the ontological perspective on material culture, meanings and concepts are identical to objects, and the aim is to think through things (Henare et al. 2007). Following this methodology I have adopted emic term “my stone” that refers to singular gemstones my interviewees wore and had a deep emotional and personal relationship with. For many of my informants these gems are part of themselves, or the extension of the self (Clark & Chambers 2009 [1998]). This experience is intimate, emotional and physical. People carry and are carried by gemstones in their everyday life.

Theorizing Self Tracking Practices

Heitger, Anna (Universität Wien, Wien, AUT)

The issue of this paper centers on how individuals and the materiality of their bodies become objectified within the embodied practices of self tracking apps. Taking into consideration the assumptions inbuilt in the app's structure is crucial for understanding the subjects that are made in these practices. The app envisions a sovereign subject inhabiting a body as a material shell, reflecting the Cartesian dualism of mind/body. The subject is capable of controlling and is also responsible for its body. This responsibility ascribed to the disembodied person recalls Foucauldian notions of self government, wherein the subject enacts governance on its own body, thereby materializing discourses on the body. Tracking technologies, I argue, contribute to this kind of self governance in potentially powerful ways, as they manage to visualize this practice thought of as constant self improvement. Responsibility is invoked in the subject through visualization as a way of materializing the measurement of activities.

Measurement itself relies on a logic of cybernetics and needs to be analyzed in terms of what is made measurable and how: How are states of being, movements, activities separated from the ongoing flow of being into discrete measurable unities? How does this type of measurement occur, with which techniques is it carried out? Measuring embodied activities is often referred to as a way of gaining knowledge about oneself in related discourses. The idea of self improvement relies on the notion of a discovery of a „truer self“ that can be revealed through measurement - stating the actual self as flawed, imperfect, not yet the highest version of oneself. Tracking apps serve as mediator between past and future as they communicate between the past's and the imagined future's self. It appears that, within the paradigm of self improvement, there is a shift in the notion of time: For the always improving self in its quest for optimization, the present time lies already in the past. As the app transforms information into visualized data, it affords for an individual to revise and engage with the data. This communication between past and future would be interesting to explore into detail. One important aspect in this communication is the structure provided by the app that and the constructedness of the data. The construction of data is obscured by the implication of assumptions, ideals etc. in the structure of the apps and by regarding the measured unities as natural. Tracking apps, while allowing for individual consumption, do impose limits on agency: By imposing definitions, categories and notions about personhood in powerful ways that become materialized and distributed through technologies, they form the individual's understanding of oneself while concealing the complex set of relations and power. How to capture the process in which 'facts' are incorporated and negotiated by individuals? The concept of affordance could help theorize tracking apps, drawing attention at how they make some things possible in specific ways for specific users. In this way, we could understand the new embodied practices that emerge through the availability of those apps and the bodies that are created, the ways in which individuals engage with them, how they incorporate and adapt these assumptions. Research could furthermore lead to insights on the affective dimensions of tracking practices and shed light on the role of tracking devices in affective meaning making.

(Mis-)fitting and Transporting Embodiment in Berlin's public transport infrastructure

Sisnowski, Maja (Universiteit van Amsterdam, Berlin, GER)

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork on accessibility in Berlin's public transport, I explore the making of 'subjects of motion' through attending to diverse practices of (mis-)fitting.

Demands for accessibility, as formulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), build on an understanding of dis/ability as the interactional effect of impairment and environment, and call for the removal of obstacles and barriers to create accessible built environments. Neither barriers nor bodies, however, appeared as self-evidently given in my fieldwork: Bodies figured as impaired, equipped and/or accompanied, at times with preferences, personalities and daily changes. Barriers, while obstinately present, shifted and changed, appeared and disappeared, as buses were requested to speak, ramps were laid out, trains invited back into childhood and the standards of different times turned the height differences between platforms and trains into a science on its own.

What practices of crafting access focus on thus is, in the first instance, often not yet located in either bodies or environments, but rather in the specific ways and confluxes in which they are brought together. I borrow the concept of mis-fitting from Disability Studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson to describe these as points of departure for accessibility work.

In attending to accessibility work as diverse practices of (mis-)fitting, I highlight how these intervene in infrastructural orderings, as practices which stabilize and negotiate subjects of motion in their relations to the environment through which they move.

At stake in crafting accessibility is thus what properties become attributed to a subject of motion in introducing new technologies, vehicles and services marked as accessible, necessitating a re-evaluation of the ways in which we can understand technology as prosthetic.

Yet the identification of barriers also requires techniques and practices which render the embodied experience of infrastructural environments as handy or unhandy transportable, in order to turn mis-fits into a more public concern. In planning processes, the transport of embodiment to identify barriers happens through "learning to think with others in mind" as well as standards, norms and rules. Berlin's public transport providers, however, also offer an individual, door-to-door accompaniment service. In order to accompany well, employees learn different techniques of (not) touching and attaching, negotiating dis/engagement, and perceiving and acting with and for their customers. Varying between communication 'at eye level' and prosthetic attachments, customers and employees thus learn to relate to the environment as a collective subject of motion.

#wohnstrassenleben - an anthropology of the street

Vettori, Brigitte (space and place, www.spaceandplace.at, Vienna, AUT)

This presentation focuses on the origin and meanings of the concept of so called "Wohnstraßen" – residential streets or "living streets" – in Vienna. I will discuss smaller and bigger interventions that might hinder or foster the use of such public places by different groups of people in town. I will show how we as city-dwellers generally have learned to behave on the street in a common and rather restricted way. This incorporated and socially learned behaviour of the overall accepted use of streets is our parameter how to walk through the city, even if rules are changing from one street to the other. On residential streets – as only some of us know – you are by law and without further permission allowed to walk in the middle of the street everyday, you can play games or (foot)ball, drive with your bike against the one-way direction or place objects like chairs or picnic blankets on the street. This all is possible as long as you do not hinder cars from driving to or from their parking place in walking speed and take care of other user on the residential street. Nevertheless – as my research on this topic shows: not many people in Vienna decided to use this common "living room" outside their own flat or house.

But given that there is some interest in using these public places and spaces by different peoples, generations and groups in town: How far may rules and regulations concerning the use of (residential) streets and/or rather our learned behaviour of walking through the city hinder or foster people to "live the city"? In my presentation I will try to give some answers to this question by taking the example of my own social-art-group in Vienna, space and place, who within the Project "WIEN LEBT" raised the question, what this concept of so called "Wohnstraßen" is all about. Since April 2018 we "live" the "Wohnstraße": We informed the public about the possibilities to use residential streets in Vienna in general. And we punctually placed objects and games on the street, built some street-furniture and fostered "holidays on the residential streets". And during this process we were surprised to discover our own new reactions to these interventions, objects and ideas, as well as those of other users of residential streets. We talked to neighbours, organisations, political groups and decision makers as well and street designers or city planners about our experiences and ideas: Wouldn't it be good to be able to use these approximately 32.000 Meters of "Wohnstraßen" in Vienna as a public living room for city-dwellers? As the project and research on this topic is still running I can only give you some interim results. But the discussion of these first outcomes with anthropologists from different fields, towns and experiences will permit an interesting exchange and might open up new questions to the same topic and on-going research.

Everyday cycling in Vienna. Balancing bodily movement on a bicycle and a motorised traffic environment

Martiny, Karin (Universität Wien, Wien, AUT)

For everyday cyclists in Vienna mastering their daily routes through the city often becomes a balancing act between their movement with a bicycle and a motor vehicle-oriented urban environment. They move within a conflicting field emerging from often contradictory exigencies the materiality and technology of a bicycle and motor vehicle-oriented traffic regulations pose to them.

So what does it mean to bodily move with a bicycle?

- Which underlying practical intelligibility do cyclists generate through their regular movement on their bicycles? Which tasks, abilities, emotions and beliefs come along with riding a bicycle?
- How is the environment perceived and experienced when moving as a 'bicycle-body'?
- And what does it mean to regularly move through urban traffic with a bicycle?
- Which framework of action do everyday cyclists find in Vienna because of certain discourses of mobility, attitudes towards different road users or the material environment and rules incorporated in it?
- How do they use or modify their 'bicycle-body' knowledge when interacting with infrastructures, rules or other road users?

In my presentation I will outline methods by which I tried to answer these questions and suggest some 'practices of balancing' appearing in an area of conflict as an outcome of the interplay between bicycle, body and the Viennese traffic environment.

Alpine Winter Sport as Technonature: Processes of Perception and Place-Making on the Pitztal Glacier

Gusenleitner, Theresa (Universität Wien, Wien, AUT)

Technology – gear, infrastructure and digital information and communication technologies – plays a pivotal role in alpine regions that have been broadly developed for the practice of skiing and other winter sports. Chairlifts, snow cannons, webcams and ever more complex and fast changing sports equipment form part of this alpine world that is thereby constructed as a technonature.

Here, technonature does not only refer to the 'things technological' that pervade and make up a seemingly natural world but also to socio-culturally informed spaces of imagination, sensation and everyday experience. Within these spaces, it is the usage of technology – in particular the equipment or gear and infrastructure used for alpine winter sports – and its interrelation with the imagining and aesthetics of the alpine world as a landscape and sportscape that constitute the key elements of this paper.

Reflecting on data generated through semi-structured interviews and participant observation in the skiing resort Pitztaler Gletscher within the fieldwork course of the Masters Programme of Anthropology, this paper suggests that it is through things

and how they move us, or through things and how we move them, that we perceive and shape our environment at the same time. These processes of perceiving and shaping are embedded within a relationship of discourse, materiality and practice. Through skiing – in this particular case – and thereby using different technologies, forms of knowledge and skills we are incorporated in multisensorial place-making processes shaping sportscares and landscapes that in turn shape the technologies and aesthetics we apply.

Cycling the City: Body-Machine Entanglements and Place-Making When Riding the Bicycle in Japan

Hadolt, Bernhard (Institut für Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie, Wien, AUT)

In this presentation I look at the ways of how people – in particular students, young housewives with children, and older women – use their bicycle as a means of moving themselves, their friends and children, as well as various things in and through the city of Kyoto, Japan. Based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out during the last decade, I argue that by using particular types of bicycles, styles of cycling, and urban infrastructures, people and their bicycles form dynamic body-machine entanglements that profoundly shape the ways of how public and private places are made in contemporary Japanese cities as cyclable (and non-cyclable) spaces.

The Coach. Networks of Mobility and Transient Assemblages

Hieslmair, Michael (Tracing Spaces, Wien, AUT)

For many highly mobile individuals a multi-local existence, the continuous experience of being on the road and becoming accustomed to a life in transit by now represents the normality. Bodies and artifacts get mobilized as reaction on macro political social, economic and political events and transformations, but are also triggered by (individual) micro political decisions and compulsions. In this light, especially for those who don't possess their own vehicle, minivans and transnational long distance coach services are the preferred means of transport, which also provide capacities to transport substantial amounts of goods. For the most part, however, these buses carry those service personnel whose modestly paid work facilitates the above-average quality of everyday life for Vienna's middle class in the first place—the invisible „human infrastructure“ of the city (Simone, 2004).

Basically a coach can be seen as a vessel moving along a defined route in order to transport something—mainly people—from A to B, against payment of a fee. The ‚system‘ of long distance coaches consists of an arsenal of networks and/or infrastructures (Law, 2002), which facilitates flows, but can also be considered as a space of encounter to make and unmake publics (Collier et. al., 2017). In this ‚array‘ of infrastructures bodies and artifacts of different qualities and scales stand in mutual relation to each other. According to ANT the vehicle itself as an *immutable mobiles* (Latour, 1990) can be imagined as a network. But they also pass down or through a network (the roads), held in array of secure and stable surroundings. Some of the key elements in this ‚system‘ are the: network of roads, web of transnational coach connections and its schedules, destinations, nodes such as terminals and other stopping points, the coach itself as a vessel, the driver, passengers, transported goods and transfers of e.g. money, transmitted news, as well as secondary businesses such as smuggling and bribing.

In a closed state the inside of a coach becomes an important site for human interaction intensified by the use/ exchange of objects and consolidates transient communities – a microcosm for a „moving with“. The long and often regularly drives create close ties. But a coach also carries goods, which either are locked in its' belly, or taken in the compartment by the passengers. Besides its obvious function as means of transport a coach represents a „solid state object“ (Law, 2002)—like the ship—but in addition to that a network of technological development competence, functional coherences of re-fuelling, driving and navigation skills, surveillance- and navigation tools (GPS). Furthermore each means of transport is subject to restrictions, conventions and standards. When the coach stops at a node and opens its doors, the stable array gets out of balance, people and goods spill out and start/ try to find a new order, first in new temporal network at the nodes and knots, later on their way to their next destination.

Based on this simplified concept the complex ‚real‘ nexuses can only be traced and depicted via case studies. My paper is based on a series of international coach travels, understood as immersive field trips. This is combined with a comprehensive case study on the Vienna International Busterminal looking at its history and presence and its evolving web of route connections. Hence the history of this bus station and the shifting streams of arrivals and departures reflect post World War II and post-socialist processes of transformation and transition of the geo-political area alongside the ‚Balkan route‘.

This paper is part of my PHD project and derives from the larger research project „Stop and Go. Nodes of Transformation“ (2014—2016), which is continued by an ongoing project focussing on the transformation of nodes and knots alongside the pan-European road corridors.

The Mass (A film screening)

Pavlásek, Michal (The Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, v.v.i., Brno, CZE)

"The Mass" is a distillation of human evolution, a parable about the treatment of substance, an image of the control over bodies that are hanged on the world's tissue, or else disgorged from the ocean mass onto dry land, which is interwoven with bodies and the movement of hunters, gatherers, and vagabonds. Our observation of the various forms of abstracted masses, which we

become part of at the same time, creates a platform of eternal presence – an active void if you will, which revolves in a closed circle, as though it had neither beginning nor end. What is left is just the stark presence of the traces of bared lives.

In movie/visual essay "The Mass" (duration 30min.) we followed up people on the move and social life and trajectory of life vests on so called Balkan migratory route. Through this parable of phenomenon of "migration crisis" we tried to exposed how are things (or materiality in general) included and interrelated with human bodies (with *bare life* of migrants and refugees), how they are connected with environment and how we (anthropologists, filmmakers etc.) could above-mensioned represent in audiovisual medium.

Dashing Through The Snow - Bicycling in Alaska

Meitz, Alexander (Institut für Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie, Wien, AUT)

There are stories of men who drove bicycles, instead of dog teams, across Alaska during the time of the gold rush in 1898 - 1908. Those bicycle rides where not just short commuting trips but 1200 km long distance hauls from Dawson (Yukon, Canada) to Nome (Alaska). More than one hundred years later people start to get back on their bikes during winter in that region. And based on new technologies such as *fat tired bikes*, winter-cycling gets more and more attention.

Alaska, a US-State where half of its population lives in 'urban' areas, faces far-reaching demographic changes, as thawing permafrost forces remote communities and residents from suburban areas to move to urban centers. At the same time Alaska faces considerable migratory movements from Southern regions. In my research I focus on sustainable transport and the infrastructure connected to it. Alternative transport modes to cars and other motorized, petrol powered vehicles are gaining in importance as crucial adaptive responses to infrastructural risks in the face of uncertainty. In this context, bicycling is identified as a local practice in reacting to increasing infrastructural disruptions and offers a key strategy towards resilience in the times of global warming and its associated challenges. An increasing number of Arctic urban communities affected by exacerbated weather condition respond to these new challenges according to their social capital and start to create their identities and lifestyles around the bicycle.