

Call for Papers for a Forum “Shapes of Post-growth Societies”, at the Final Conference of the DFG Research Group ‘Landnahme, Acceleration, Activation’ and the 2nd Regional Conference of the German Sociological Association at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena, September 23 to 27, 2019

Shapes of socio-ecologically sustainable mobility regimes

The growth of transport and of the economy are inseparably linked. For personal transport, in present societies, the private car constitutes the hegemonic mode of movement. Yet, car-based personal transport constitutes a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Despite all socio-political attempts to reduce these emissions, the distances travelled by private car as well as the average size of car engines continuously grow and counteract technologically-induced improvement of efficiency or the increase of alternative modes of travel within cities. To tackle these problems, sustainable transport policy debates suggest environmental impacts have primarily technological solutions, such as electrification, automated driving or smart traffic control. Such ‘technical’ solutions ignore systemic issues, increasing compulsions to travel, social injustices and freedom constraints in the automobile-centred mobility system. Many contributions on this topic often unproblematically equate (auto)mobility with social inclusion or opportunity, replicating associations between moving, freedom and justice in the sense of access to social ‘goods’.

As social scientific mobilities research has outlined, it is the ‘system of automobility’ (Urry, 2004) that defines personal transport and the ordering of mobility, space and society in the modern age. This system comprises the steel-and-petroleum-car itself, its production, fuel and infrastructure industries, the policies that create automobile landscapes that separate work, residence and other activities in space, as well as the discursive and cultural association of cars with freedom and autonomy. Modern lifestyles that archetypally centre on one-family-houses in suburbia, shopping centres and leisure facilities on the edge of cities represent the ideal of the ‘good life’ under automobility. The perspective on automobility as a system (or as a regime or dispositif) underlines on the one hand its deep entanglement with the organisation of the social and everyday life, as well as its centrality in the current regime of economic accumulation and, on the other hand, its dynamics of self-perpetuation and continuous self-reinvention.

At present, the environmental crisis, ‘peak oil’, and potentially ‘peak car’ constitute sound reasons to think beyond this mobility system based on the privately-owned car. Critiques of automobility extend beyond environmentalism, touching on issues like liveable cities, social interaction, physical health, regional modes of production and consumption or wellbeing – many of which are part of post- and de-growth scenarios.

Our point of departure is thus the necessity to problematize compulsions to be mobile themselves in order to reconcile the connected environmental and justice dimensions of ‘sustainable’ mobility. Together with other scholars, we understand the current (auto)mobility system as unsustainable and unjust, curtailing freedoms. Yet, what is missing are alternative imaginaries of how an environmentally sustainable *and* socially just mobility regime could look like. We suggest calling such an alternative regime “*autono-mobility*”; intending to underline an altered understanding of (im)mobility, self-determined conduct of life and freedom. Rather than taking access to mobility or certain sites as an end (as proposed in a distributive model of mobility justice), *autono-mobility* entails both a right to move and a right not to (Cass and Manderscheid 2019).

The event intends to bring together social scientists and activists in the fields of sustainable mobility in order to think 'out-of-the-box' about radical concepts of auto-mobility futures in post-growth societies. This implies in particular focussing on movement, transport and mobility as an integral part of everyday lives, and to address the social and economic implications a sustainable transformation of travel may have. Making use of academic freedom, we want to place the emphasis on possible forms and shapes of auto-mobility regimes as such, and discuss potential problems and implications, rather than the question of their political, economic or technical feasibility.

We invite contributions discussing auto-mobility along the lines of, for example, the following issues:

- imaginaries, concepts and visions of auto-mobility systems in history, present or fiction;
- seeds of present mobility practices that prefigure possible ways ahead;
- experience in working with methods of researching mobility futures e.g. futures workshops, back-casting etc.;
- identification of major obstacles and counter-forces to socially and ecologically sustainable auto-mobility regimes;
- discussion of potential social conflicts in the transition from automobility to auto-mobility.

In order to account for the different perspectives and ways of thinking and backgrounds of potential participants, we explicitly do not want to limit contributions to the format of standard academic paper presentation.

Abstracts (500 words) of contributions are invited to be submitted by **31 of March 2019** to the organisers (Noel Cass: n.cass1@lancaster.ac.uk; Katharina Manderscheid: katharina.manderscheid@uni-hamburg.de) and should be accompanied by a brief note on the background of the author(s).

Further information on the joint conference of the research group "Postwachstumsgesellschaften Landnahme, Acceleration, Activation: The (De-)Stabilisation of Modern Growth Societies" and the German Sociological Association can be found at <https://www.great-transformation.uni-jena.de/en/>.