

## **Guest editorial for special issue “Gender and Im(mobilities)”**

The research articles in this special issue examine gendered constellations of (im)mobilities with respect to work, class, livelihoods, and place. The issue includes selected papers presented at the interdisciplinary conference “Gender and (Im)mobilities in the Context of Work” that took place in Tromsø, Norway June 15-17, 2016 (home page [https://uit.no/om/enhet/aktuelt/arrangement?p\\_document\\_id=445294](https://uit.no/om/enhet/aktuelt/arrangement?p_document_id=445294)). The conference attracted a large number of participants from European, American, Canadian, Australian and Asian academic institutions who shared their research on mobility, gender, and economy. It was an inspiring and stimulating event that included empirically rich and theoretically creative presentations.

The gendered patterns of (im)mobilities with respect to work, class, livelihoods, and place have gained a particular significance in recent decades (Hanson and Pratt 1995; Massey 2005). Mobility studies have pushed scholars to rethink the meaning of home, work, household, and movement within regions and nations and at the global scale (Sheller and Urry 2006; Uteng and Creswell 2008; Creswell 2010). Feminist scholarship in particular asks how work-related mobility or the experience of being anchored is produced by and productive of gender relations and identities (Connell 1995; Aitken 2005; Hanson 2010). The contributors address these issues in the context of Nordic and Baltic countries as well as Canada. In Europe, and later in Canada, work-related mobility has been prominent for centuries in resource extraction industries, such as fisheries and mining and more recently in the petroleum sector. At the same time, these countries and other nations in Northern Europe and the Baltic region have experienced new forms of work-related mobility manifested in complex patterns and increasing levels of commuting as well as

domestic and international migration (Faber and Pristed Nielsen 2015). These new types and scales of mobility put workers through frequent and often difficult travel and stretch households across long distances and national borders. The affected places, meanwhile, reorganize their economies and develop new mobility-related social practices and identities (Hanson 2010; McDowell 2014).

Narratives about place express the varied specters of and continuities between mobility and fixity, tradition and modernity, nation and the world while consistently inscribing masculinity and femininity into place identities. Together, these processes transform social relations and identities of class, gender, and citizenship both in places of mobile work and where households of mobile workers reside. Moreover, mobile workers become a new social force that establishes unique connections between places in such a way that both employment and housework span and connect both locations. Finally, even in economic sectors where gendered mobilities have long existed, rapid changes occur at greater intensities. Fishery and mining industries have traditionally produced places where men's mobile work has shaped the social and cultural character of a particular place. But with new forms of women's mobilities the culture of that place is now undergoing profound change.

To address different aspects of interlinking mobility, immobility, gender, and economy, the authors in this special issue of *Gender, Place and Culture* use feminist theoretical frameworks developed in various academic disciplines. Together with a range of methods, ranging from ethnography to quantitative analysis and innovative combinations of both, the contributors provide analyses of mobile labour and the impact of mobility on place. The significance of this collection is in expanding theoretical and methodological horizons of mobilities studies and feminist geography. It also contributes to greater understanding of how local economies and places

worldwide are transformed by work-related mobility, migration, and transnationalism, examined here in Northern European, Baltic and Canadian contexts. The contributors approach this problematic from the two entry points. First, they focus on gendering of places where mobile work occurs and, second, they take a closer look at changing gender relations in places that act as homes to mobile workers. With contributions from geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, and gender studies scholars, this themed section provides a uniquely interdisciplinary examination of these themes while speaking to mobility studies from feminist points of view.

The first set of papers that examine the gendering of spaces of everyday mobile work also highlight the relationship between place and gendered narratives of the economy, mobility and fixity. Growing work-related mobility redefines not only gender relations and identities; as if caught in the web of mobility, the place itself becomes even more unfixed and fast changing including coastal villages and towns that are known for their flexibility and changeability. In other words, mobility is integral to construction of and thinking about place.

Geographer Halldis Valestrand examines place-based narratives of a Northern mining town near the border between Norway and Russia in the Arctic. Although the town thrived until recently, mostly on the temporary mobile labor of male miners, future aspirations of sustaining economic viability are linked to achieving a certain degree of fixity by creating a gender-balanced permanent population ~~who~~engaged in diverse economies requiring increased long-distance commuting. Sociologist Erika Anne Hayfield, in contrast, looks inside the household to understand how women in Faroe Islands adapt to mobile employment of male partners in male-female households as the long tradition of youth out-migration continues. Women adapt to their male partners' mobile labour by pursuing their own local work-related mobility within the Islands while the Islands ;

~~which~~ struggle to maintain economic vitality by accommodating lifestyles of its small (mobile) population. Sociologist Deatra Walsh and anthropologist Siri Gerrard show that, gendered economic change may create different trajectories among the northernmost municipalities of Norway. While increasingly mobile male livelihoods in fishing struggle to support the place because of the changes in fish processing, women's employment in public services continues to support local economies even in the context of neoliberalizing governance. Finally, the interdisciplinary team of sociologists Barbara Neis, Kathy Fitzpatrick and Christine Knott, geographer Lachlan Barber, anthropologist Natasha Hanson, as well as Stephanie Premji and Elise Thorburn, researchers in labour and communication studies, respectively, use rhythm analysis to make visible the processes by which a wide variety of mobile regimes of work produce highly gendered local employment patterns and households in different parts of Canada.

In the second set of papers, the focus shifts to the households of mobile workers and/or the mobile workers themselves. Despite being separated by large distances, home and place of work remain intimately connected and fused with each other in many ways. Mobile work changes gender relations within the households while mobile workplaces are constantly affected by workers caring for family left behind and the need for care work for the mobile workforce that commonly happens in the households.

Geographer Aija Lulle sheds light on labor migration from Latvia - a relatively recent phenomenon that started after the fall of the former Soviet Union. Her study differentiates between women who went to work abroad and those who did not. In contrast, the other articles investigate the changing family roles of men who engage in mobile work and examine different challenges to fathering practices and their masculinities. Sociologist and geographer Marit Aure approaches

fathering by men employed in the Norwegian petroleum industry, paying attention to absence and presence as well as the materiality of things these men do while spending time off with their children. The men see these activities as a continuation of their fathering while away from home ~~as part of maintaining~~ through which they also maintain a working class identity. Anthropologist Keiu Telve looks at the changing fathering practices of Estonian men, ~~who represent~~ the new post-socialist labor migrants to other European countries. Helene Pristed Nielsen, a gender researcher, examines how lack of child-oriented services for mobile households makes their family lives increasingly unsustainable. Finally, sociologists Sara Dorow and Shingirai Mandizadza highlight another process that links production and social reproduction when home and work are miles apart. They show that in the Canadian oil sands industry, both paid and unpaid forms of caring labor transform mobile work, the places that house mobile workers (camps), and the gendered relations between home and work.

This themed section includes case studies that highlight connections between gender and work-related mobility drawn from a variety of national and economic contexts and spanning both historical and contemporary time periods. They all demonstrate that gender relations and identities, work-related mobility, and place mutually constitute each other in important ways. In other words, places, mobility, and fixity are gendered constructions and place always participates in the constitution of gender relations, mobilities, and identities.

As a final note, the conference “Gender and (Im)mobilities in the Context of Work” was initiated by the research project “Mobile Lifestyles: Perspectives on Work Mobilities and Gender in the High North,” funded by the Norwegian Research Council; Center for Women and Gender Research, KVINNFORSK; and with support from the research group “Place, Power and Mobility”

at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. The conference was also supported by "On The Move Partnership" that conducts research on Employment-Related Geographical Movement in the Canadian Context under the leadership of Barbara Neis, Memorial University, Newfoundland, Canada. As guest editors, we note that the peer review process was a productive challenge ~~to our multidisciplinary and international team~~ that provided our multidisciplinary and international team with invaluable experience of publishing in English language geography journals. Marianna Pavlovskaya, a geography professor from Hunter College and Graduate Center at City University of New York (CUNY), also a visiting professor II at KVINNFORSK, played an important role in organizing the special issue and turning conference contributions to publishable articles.

There are many more who deserve our gratitude. The Managing Editor of *Gender, Place and Culture*, Pamela Moss, supported from the very beginning our initiative to publish a special issue on gender and (im)mobilities and led us through the revision and publication process. Together with her editorial assistant Maral Sotoudehnia, they also provided indispensable practical help with the editorial process. We also thank Lise Nordbrønd and Torunn Berger of KVINNFORSK for their involvement and support throughout. The visiting PhD students Baiba Svane and Arta Melupe from the Department of Geography and Earth Science at the University of Latvia provided valuable assistance at the last stages. Other participants of "Mobile Lifestyles: Perspectives on Work Mobilities and Gender in the High North" project Ingrid Marie Kielland, Mai Camilla Munkejord, Paul Pedersen and Tatiana Wara have made rich contributions to the discussions resulting in this conference.

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