

# SPECIAL ISSUE: CANADIAN MOBILITIES/ CONTENTIOUS MOBILITIES

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*Abstract.* This special issue of *Canadian Journal of Sociology* on ‘Contentious Mobilities’ showcases Canadian scholarship that investigates mobilities in the context of unequal power relations. Mobilities become contentious when they confront the systematic exclusion of others, advance unconventional mobile practices and defy or destabilize existing power relations. Increasingly, mobilities are contentious in relation to rapidly changing economies, societies and environments. This special issue stages an overdue encounter between the mobilities paradigm and research on sociopolitical contention. Simultaneously, this special issue addresses an empirical gap, featuring Canada as a prolific and influential site for leading-edge research. Five key themes emerge amongst the diverse papers in this issue: life and death, employment-related mobility, intersectionality/in(visibility), governance, and automobility. Further, we identify five potential topics for Canadian mobilities, including climate change, disaster, technology and travel, the good city and methods.

**Keywords:** Automobility, Canada, climate change, contentious, employment-related geographical mobility, environment, disaster, futures, governance intersectionality, (in)visibility, methods, mobilities, safety, technology

## DEDICATION

This special issue is dedicated to John Urry (1946-2016) whose presence will be missed.

“If climate change is the new normal, then we might say that the new mobilities paradigm should be the new normal science.”

Sheller and Urry (2016a)

## INTRODUCTION

This special issue of *Canadian Journal of Sociology* showcases Canadian scholarship on mobilities in the context of controversy, injustice, and unequal power relations. The articles featured here emerge against the backdrop of the game changing “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry 2006), and, on a sombre note, the recent passing of one of the paradigm’s central architects, eminent sociologist John Urry (Sheller 2016a). Ten years ago, Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry (2006) heralded this new paradigm in a seminal editorial inaugurating the journal *Mobilities*. The editorial proposed a metamorphosis in the conduct and direction of social research in order to stop treating mobility as residual to other social processes and start engaging its transformative effects (Faulconbridge and Hui 2016). Since 2006, the new mobilities paradigm blossomed and transformed social science, bringing dispersed theoretical work on complexity, socio-technical transitions and social practice together through diverse interventions and models applicable to “urbanism, post-petroleum transitions, low-carbon social practice, issues of mobility justice and ethics, border governance and re-thinking logistics” (Sheller and Urry 2016: 17) among many other topics (for comprehensive anniversary reviews see Faulconbridge and Hui 2016; Cresswell 2014; Kwan and Schwanen 2016). Before addressing why we chose contention as a theme for this special issue on mobilities, we briefly and with some provocation pose the question: why has Canadian sociology been slow to adopt and engage with the new mobilities paradigm?

Enter ‘mobilities’ as a search term in either the *Canadian Journal of Sociology* or the *Canadian Review of Sociology*, and the results indicate that mobility refers to social and occupational mobility rather than the dynamic set of ideas and methods laid out by Sheller and Urry – with the notable exception of work by Arlene Tigar McLaren and Sylvia Parusel (2011) on automobility, risk and parenting. While the new mobilities paradigm has impacted Canadian social science, it has often been under the aegis of communications and other disciplines, in contrast to Europe, for example, where sociology has driven the vanguard of mobilities research (e.g. Cosmobilities Network 2016). There are several possible reasons for this. Sheller (2016a: n.p.) suggests the “anti-positivist edge”

of mobilities research may help “explain the continuing reluctance of the American Sociological Association and many mainstream U.S. sociology departments to engage with the new mobilities paradigm, to the extent that it has taken off elsewhere.” It might be tempting to generalize this suggestion to Canadian sociology, which contains its own traditional and positivist corners (Mišina 2015: 543; Puddephatt and McLaughlin 2015). However, we contend rigid disciplinary boundaries (Carroll 2013), national policy priorities and the sprawling, car-centric country itself offer more convincing explanations.

Mobilities scholarship has thrived in interdisciplinary settings committed to urban scholarship, the spatial turn and cross-pollination between planning, sociology and design (Sheller and Urry 2016). Canadian sociology often lacks these intersections. Urbanity, space and place have not featured prominently at annual Canadian Sociology Association meetings in the past last decade, and sociologists have not had the luxury of easily collaborating with geographers, planners and designers like they do, for example, at Lancaster University’s Centre for Mobility Research (United Kingdom), Aalborg University’s Centre for Mobility and Urban Studies (Denmark) and Roskilde University’s Department of Environmental, Social and Spatial Change (Denmark). At the same time, in stark contrast to many European countries, Canadian sociologists lack public transit, city cycling and urban sustainability policies and agencies at the national level to ply for resources and institutional support. Finally, the country of Canada itself, with its excessive suburban sprawl and car dependence – four out of five commuting Canadians (Statistics Canada 2013) – may also create a blockage. To be sure, everyday travel is only one strand in a broad mobilities turn that also features migration, tourism, mobile communications and many other non-transport issues. Nevertheless, challenging hegemonic, fossil fuel-driven automobility by ‘committing sociology,’ and just as importantly by performing everyday life, has clearly been a formative struggle and entry point for many prominent mobilities scholars, including the paradigm’s architects (Sheller and Urry 2006) and early Canadian adopters Jim Conley and Arlene Tigar McLaren (2009). If the personal is political, this includes your car keys.

Whatever factors have kept Canadian sociology in the margins of mobilities scholarship, they are weakening. A wave of Canadian content promises to reshape the trajectory of the mobilities turn. Alongside McLaren and Conley, Phillip Vannini and Kim Sawchuk, mainly from the vantage of geography and communications, have been instrumental in incorporating mobilities into Canadian social research. Vannini’s ethnographic research on ferry mobilities (2012), off-grid dwelling

(2014), alternative mobility cultures (2009) and technologies of mobilities (2012) are obligatory points of passage. Sawchuk, co-director of Montreal's prolific *Mobile Media Lab*, works on an array of mobilities-related problems through the lens of mobile media (Sawchuk et al. 2012; Sawchuk and Crow 2012; Sawchuk and Thulin 2012). Vannini and Sawchuk, moreover, co-organized key international conferences as part of the Pan-American Mobilities Research Network in Canada: "Cultures of Movement: Mobile Subjects, Communities, and Technologies in the Americas" (Victoria, 2010) and "Differential Mobilities: Movement and Mediation in Networked Societies" (Montréal, 2013). These events sowed seeds for future mobilities research and collaboration. From these beginnings the mobilities paradigm continues to impact adjacent fields in Canada (see Temenos and McCann 2013; Ilcan 2013; Walks 2015). Our special issue capitalizes on these gains, and creates a sociological forum for contentious Canadian mobilities.

But why organize a new forum around the concept of *contentious* mobilities? Through 'contentious' we make three distinct moves. First, the word 'contentious' connects mobilities to the work of Canadian sociologists on social and environmental movements (Hroch and Stoddart 2015; Ramos and Rodgers 2015; Stoddart 2012), a field that already applies elements of the new mobilities paradigm. This move may create a natural bridge, where the mobilities paradigm transforms sociology in Canada, perhaps fittingly, through progressive incremental change rather than an idealized revolutionary paradigmatic shift (Sheller and Urry 2016). Second, 'contentious' makes a move towards "critical mobilities" (Soderstrom et al. 2013), meaning controversial mobilities "that appear problematic in the discourses of governments and the media" (Cresswell 2014: 713). We prefer 'contentious' over 'critical' to distance mobilities from any 'critical sociology' that makes *a priori* assumptions about what variables or materials are most significant instead of being heuristic and first scrutinizing the site in question (Latour 2007). Third, and most contentiously, we chart a move to the edges of sociology. Sheller and Urry did not intend to reduce the mobilities turn to yet another totalizing description of the world. Rather, they wanted to create "a space where studies of diverse mobilities might be investigated without the constraints imposed by pre-existing disciplinary frameworks" (Faulconbridge and Hui 2016: 4). In this transdisciplinary spirit, we hope mobilities scholarship develops through (and unsettles) Canadian sociology on an open-ended trajectory, while at the same time contributing to the "strategic diversity" that gives mobilities a vital edge, especially its practice-based ontology and growing suite of innovative mobile methods (Faulconbridge and Hui 2016).

This special issue on contentious Canadian mobilities gathers together diverse threads of research, identifies key themes and charts future topics. We outline these themes and topics respectively in the next two sections. They cover a range of provinces (from west to east: British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick), and urban and rural settings, with linkages scaling up to the international. Moreover, the articles in this issue explore multifarious mobility modes, including car driving, hitchhiking, trucking, mining and long-distance commuting. Most of the authors are women and range from doctoral students to senior faculty. Five key themes emerge amongst the diverse papers in this issue: life and death, employment-related mobility, intersectionality/in(visibility), governance and automobility. Further, we identify five potential topics for Canadian mobilities: disaster, environment, technology, the ‘good city’ and methods. Ultimately, this special issue addresses a large empirical gap in the mobilities paradigm created by a lack of Canadian content, and positions Canada as a prolific and influential site for leading-edge research on mobilities by broadly investigating contentious mobilities.

“ — many of the people of the BC coast have learned to look at the ferries as more than a means of transport. The ferries are for them a symbol of their relationship with one another, a mark of their distinction from the rest of the continent, and a tool that has allowed them to carve alternative lifestyles and distinct places. Their common mobilities, their shared and at times contested practices, politics, and power dynamics remind us how “mobility is never singular but always plural —”

Phillip Vannini (2012: 73)

## KEY THEMES: SPECIAL ISSUE PAPERS

### *Life and death*

The physical stakes of many forms of mobility are high, including the potential for injury and even death. This is starkly apparent in Katherine Morton’s discussion of hitchhiking on British Columbia’s Highway of Tears. Morton contests the notion that hitchhiking is inherently a ‘bad’ mobility, highlighting the lack of service and mobility options in rural regions. For women in these communities, “their social capital both limits and necessitates their mobility meaning that contentious mobilities, such as hitchhiking are often used.” Amie McLean’s ethnographic research on the long-haul trucking industry in the same province also confronts the

reader with the potentially fatal risks presented by mobility. McLean explores the dissonance between ‘Hour of Service’ regulations, which aim to prevent driver fatigue and by extension collisions, with the experience of truck drivers who aim to operate under regulations that do not reflect the realities of the road and can ironically heighten safety risks. For example, if a driver is required to stop driving for a set period of time and there is no roadside facility available, such as a truck stop, they may be tempted to push through to the next available facility. Further, truck drivers are exposed to and intervene in what McLean viscerally terms road ‘carnage’ -- the chronic and tolerated fact of vehicle accidents on Canadian roads. In contrast to accidental violence on the road, Max Chewinski references intentional “violence and corruption” in his analysis of Canadian mining firms and the mobility of citizenship regimes. He addresses the murder of a Mexican anti-mining activist, Mariano Abarca. All three suspects in the case are connected with Blackfire, a Canadian firm.

On the other side of the country Christine Knott explores issues of worker health and safety in a different workplace – temporary foreign workers employed in New Brunswick fish processing plants. Against the backdrop of an increasingly stratified economic migrant system, Knott’s analysis shows how the seafood processing industry in New Brunswick creates precarious working conditions “via racialized and classed processes that are mediated by the mobility as well as the immobility of workers.” In yet another domain in which the physical costs of mobility run high, Jim Conley and Ole B. Jensen investigate the potential loss of nature and familiar ways of life inflicted by the construction of a new road through green space in a small Ontario city. Risk in this case pertains to the health of a community and a local park. The stakes are no less consequential, as opponents to constructing the road “would lie down in front of the bulldozers” to protest “an obvious desecration of the park.” Conley and Jensen show how intimate attachments to place and nature depend on slow mobilities, and, along with the other contributors to this special issue, illustrate how mobilities become contentious through lived experience.

### *Employment-related mobility*

Half of the issue is dedicated to papers on employment-related geographical mobility, also referred to as long-distance commuting. While people have always travelled for work, the particularities of this mobility are increasingly the subject of study -- reflective of the larger mobilities turn in the social sciences. While previously the work site may have

been the subject of focus, now the journey to work and the stresses and opportunities such mobility presents for the worker and his/her family is a valuable area of research. The On the Move Partnership, a multi-year research project examining employment-related geographical mobility in Canada, exemplifies this work (On the Move 2016). Knott, an On the Move trainee, explores the economic precarity of Filipino fish processors labouring in New Brunswick. Her analysis follows employer practices that contribute to labour shortages used to justify the Temporary Foreign Workers Program, and the *de facto* creation of second tier workers with fewer rights and protections. Susan Cake's research on how long-distance commuting is reflected in Albertan collective bargaining agreements points to some of the strains associated with this precarious economic status, including preference given to local workers for upcoming contracts and how non-local housing isolates workers from engaging with the local community.

McLean's research on truckers in British Columbia highlights a group of workers for whom mobility is their labour. She addresses the tension between the public's desire for safety (e.g. well-rested truck drivers) and their simultaneous desire for inexpensive goods and economic growth. Hours of Service regulations contribute to invisibility by artificially lowering the cost of trucking, as the regulations do not capture the full scope of work performed on- and off-truck. McLean shares the contentious experience of one truck driver:

[Sam] went on to recount a story in which his neighbour regularly complained about dangerous driving by truckers. Sam pointed out that because his neighbour's company consistently hired the cheapest possible freight carriers, they were directly contributing to the problem. Despite his efforts, Sam's neighbour remained unable or unwilling to see how his participation in the undervaluing of truckers' labour contributed to the problem of industry and road safety.

Permeating Canadian employment mobility is a consistent downward push to minimize labour costs.

#### *Intersectionality/ (in)visibility*

The intersectionality of gender, race and class is a theme that links to employment-related mobility. McLean addresses the role of female truckers and temporary foreign workers in an industry dominated by white males. She identifies tactics women use for self-protection, and profiles the racism expressed by white drivers. Further, their precarious employment status makes temporary foreign workers particularly vulnerable to the consequences of violating Hours of Service regulations. Cake analyzes

gender in her work on mobility clauses in collective bargaining agreements. She finds that the governance of mobile workers further entrenches traditional gendered experiences of mobility and work: “For the most part, men have been the ones to take on the long-distance commutes. Women who do become long-distance commuters are far more likely to be employed servicing the trade workers in the camps.” In a similar vein, Morton situates hitchhiking as a gendered, racialized and classed response to hegemonic automobility.

Related to intersectionality is the work done by varying levels of (in) visibility. What is made visible and invisible is revealing. The case of hitchhikers in British Columbia illustrates two related invisibilities: the numerous cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and even more invisible, perpetrators of this violence. Billboards target women, communicating the risks of hitchhiking. However, messaging regarding the need to halt gender-based violence are absent.

Truckers are ubiquitous on Canadian roads and are largely taken for granted as part of the scenery. Likewise, trucks transport the vast majority of Canadian goods. And yet, because the distribution process is so diffuse, the scale tends to be underappreciated (Cresswell 2014). McLean profiles the attitudes and frictions between truckers and regulators, as well as between different groups of truckers. At a different scale, Chewinski shines a light on international practices of Canadian mining firms as “vehicular idea[s] that facilitate the flow of travelling technocrats, minerals and capital by reshaping the policies and practices of host nations.” As these practices occur in rural Mexico they are out of sight and out of mind for the broader Canadian public with negative implications for human rights, the environment and Canada’s reputation.

### *Governance*

The governance of mobilities through both formal and informal means is an additional theme. Internationally, Chewinski examines the work done by voluntary corporate governance agreements in the mining sector. He finds that the “primary object of governance is not the corporate citizen involved in these nation-building activities, but the groups that pose a threat to the mobility and accumulation of capital and minerals.” Flows of minerals and capital from the South to the North are managed under voluntary, rather than regulatory, corporate social responsibility agreements. This contrasts with the strict regulation of Canadian truckers (McLean, this issue). Following the colonization theme identified by Chewinski, Morton speaks to the colonization of mobilities permitted by the *Indian Act* (1876), which was intended to inhibit the perceived

‘dangerous’ or ‘bad’ mobilities of First Nations community members. Today the well-intentioned but passive and likely ineffective medium of billboards is used in an effort to influence the movement of Indigenous women.

The governance of employment-related geographical mobility also emerges as a theme. Cake notes that while live-in work camp infrastructure in Alberta is designed to relieve strain on community infrastructure it also further isolates workers from the community so that they can be “sent home when they are no longer needed.” While Cake focuses on intraprovincial worker mobility, Knott examines the intersection of evolving labour regulation with the international mobility of temporary foreign workers from the Philippines working in rural New Brunswick. Another dynamic of governance emerges in Conley and Jensen’s analysis, wherein the object of regulation and planning is not the corporation, workers or indigenous women but rather everyday urban travel and traffic. Following the “culture stories” used by City of Peterborough officials and engineers to justify new road construction, Conley and Jensen show how the power and credibility of the government’s story in the process of environmental assessment rests on the “institutionalized resource of industry standards” and “rigorously formatted information” to which opponents of the new road lack access.

### *Automobility*

Finally, automobility emerges as a key theme in this special issue. Morton describes the lack of transportation infrastructure (e.g. public transit) and community services in rural British Columbia. Women without cars hitchhike as a means to access the privileged sphere of automobility. Until the systemic issues of access to mobility and services (not to mention predatory gender-based violence) are eased, women will continue to assume risk. Morton’s work creates a compelling juxtaposition with McLean’s work on the heavy-duty automobility of trucking. Both papers focus on invisible mobilities in British Columbia, Morton focusing on women excluded from automobility and McLean focussing on (mostly) men who are employed in the ubiquitous trucking industry.

In a different context, Conley and Jensen explore contestations of automobility in Ontario. An overabundance of automobility when combined with continued marginalization of non-car users tends to result in infrastructure disparity. As we noted earlier, automobility served as a crucible for the new mobilities paradigm, and these articles advance what has grown into a robust automobilities literature by exploring the frequently overlooked dimensions of morality and justice (Sheller forth-

coming), as made evident in collective constructions of ‘bad’ mobility. Conley and Jensen explore these dimensions by unpacking how opponents of a road building project frame the expansion of automobility as a societal injustice by appealing to different visions of the common good based on environmental value, civic equality, solidarity and planning efficient infrastructure for the future.

— While interdisciplinarity is crucial for understanding automobility, it is challenging. The theoretical and methodological conventions of one discipline can be bewildering and unsatisfactory to another. Yet the complexity of automobility, we suggest, requires nothing less than the multifaceted lens of various disciplines. The traditional separation of technical and social studies, for example, does not suffice for adequate theoretical explanations and strategies for change. Working across disciplines allows for greater insight into how automobility is entangled with material and social life globally and in specific cultural contexts. —

Jim Conley and Arlene Tigar McLaren (2009: 2)

#### CANADIAN MOBILITY FUTURES: LINES OF INQUIRY

The overall picture that emerges from the above themes -- life and death, employment-related mobility, intersectionality/in(visibility), governance, and automobility -- portrays a contentious and dynamic Canadian mobilities landscape. Moving forward, complexity will grow as these established issues intertwine with new challenges. We identify five potential lines of inquiry for Canadian mobilities: climate change, disaster, technology and travel, the ‘good city,’ and methods.

##### *Climate change*

Climate change mitigation and adaptation are pressing environmental issues in the transport sector. As “transport is inherently sensitive to climate,” changing climate dynamics directly impact transport (Andrey, Kertland and Warren 2014: 244). Across the country, increased severe weather events are a new reality. There are specific regional impacts: melting permafrost in the North compromises ice roads, water levels in the Great Lakes are projected to decrease with direct impacts on shipping volumes, and coastal infrastructure is susceptible to rising sea levels and storm surges (Andrey, Kertland and Warren 2014). Current responses to the changing transport mobility landscape tend to be infrastructure-oriented, focusing on structures (e.g. relocating facilities, updating construction guidelines, building in redundancies) and management (e.g.

investing in maintenance, monitoring and experimenting) (Andrey, Kertland and Warren 2014). Canada's infrastructure is in need of considerable repair and upgrade. While a focus on infrastructure integrity is necessary, such conversations largely disregard the politics of mobility, including the experience and representation of movement (Cresswell 2010). Moving forward, research into disrupted mobilities and related areas of resilience and vulnerability is a theoretically rich and pragmatically relevant area.

Related to climate change adaptation and mitigation are transport futures. Writing at the intersection of oil, climate change and mobility, Urry conceptualizes possible futures (Urry 2013, 2008; see also Bridge and Le Billon 2013). The 'digital panopticon' questions the role of mobility in society, asking how much the demand for mobility can be supplanted by virtual interactions. 'Regional warlordism' describes post-apocalyptic territories operating under extreme resource stress. Transitioning to a 'low-carbon-society' includes reducing emissions associated with current transport modes and recalibrating to a more local focus. What will decarbonizing Canada look like? What contentions will arise? Currently there is discussion of simultaneously electrifying Canada's vehicles and greening electricity production (CBC 2016). Likewise, carbon pricing is being explored. Such potentially significant infrastructural and economic shifts will bring to light new power disparities.

### *Disaster*

A discussion of climate change naturally leads to a consideration of disaster. The intersection of mobility and disaster is reflected in an emerging literature (see Adey 2016 on emergency mobilities). Slow and fast onset disasters promise to be a greater part of the mobility landscape. Disasters include a broad typology: natural/anthropogenic, industrial and intentional. The most severe disruptions experienced by Canadians during emergencies are directly related to mobility: home evacuation (29 per cent) and road or transportation failures (28 per cent) (Statistics Canada 2016). The mass evacuation of 80,000 Fort McMurray residents in May 2016 due to wildfire is a memorable example.

Natural disasters include events such as the Western wildfires (2015, 2016), the Calgary floods (2013) and Hurricane Igor (Newfoundland and Labrador 2010). Such events have physical and social 'islanding effects' with direct implications for mobility justice (Sheller 2013, 2016b, forthcoming). These events are no longer solely natural -- the anthropogenic influence on the planet via climate change intensifies their frequency and severity. In addition to these sudden onset acute events, there are slow

onset chronic events such as the effect drought played in exacerbating the Syrian conflict. In some cases, immobility is the recommended course of action (i.e. stay at home, off the roads). In other cases evacuation, at scales ranging from buildings to a region, is necessitated. With Hurricane Katrina the world saw just how catastrophic a failed car-based evacuation can be, while the relatively successful Fort McMurray evacuation illustrated the scale and pervasiveness of automobility -- though the reliance on one main evacuation route was unnerving (Cresswell 2008; Haney et al. 2010). What planning is taking place in Canadian communities to increase community resilience? What is the status of evacuation planning in communities across the country? What are the implications for the resilience of lean supply chains upon which Canadians rely for goods and services? Further, secondary mobility systems emerge in response to disruptions to dominant mobility systems, as was seen after the loss of significant portions of Newfoundland's road infrastructure post-Hurricane Igor and the grounding of the global aviation industry due to the Icelandic ash cloud event (Birtchnell and Buscher 2011; Sodero 2016). Where are the vulnerabilities and flexibilities within Canada's mobility network?

Such questions are applicable to all disaster types. For example, mobilities of fossil fuels are a significant source of contention in Canada. The Lac-Mégantic rail disaster (2013) resulted in 47 deaths when a train carrying fuel through a town caught fire and exploded. Proposals to transport fossil fuels via pipelines are just as contentious, with Enbridge Northern Gateway, Energy East and Kinder-Morgan Trans-Mountain all sparking vociferous protest.

### *Technology and travel*

Another salient topic for Canadian mobilities research entails untangling the effects of new technologies and increasingly complex assemblages of mobility (Dennis and Urry 2009). For example, while the car and the suburbs currently dominate Canada's politics of mobility (Walks 2007), a range of new technologies -- including post-combustion fuel systems, driverless vehicles and ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft that link drivers and passengers via their smartphones -- have the potential to tip the current system of automobility and shift Canadian mobility onto a new path. Key to understanding this shift will be understanding its complexity, because the new automobility, like its oil and steel predecessor, might set in motion an irreversible, path-dependent series of transformations from relatively small beginnings (Dennis and Urry 2009). This complexity is visible, for instance, in the blending of new car technolo-

gies, such as Lyft's ambitious plan to use autonomous and electric Chevy Bolts by 2017 (Hanley 2016). As complicated as tipping points are obdurate models of development that exacerbate growing inequalities and ecological degradation. While much is made of self-driving cars in the city and driverless tractor-trailers on Canadian highways, autonomous vehicles will also transform the largest trucks in the world, namely the behemoth (400 tonne), GPS-guided earth-moving haulers undertaking tar sands operations year round in northern Alberta (Morgan 2015). Against the backdrop of a charred Fort McMurray suffering the worst forest fire evacuation in Canadian history, and the spectre of laying off thousands of operators made redundant by autonomous vehicles, these emerging technologies point to ambivalent new worlds of mobility.

A pressing challenge for research on technologies of mobility will be to think outside the oil and steel box of automobility. Can we imagine mobility futures, not simply after the car as we know it, or anti-car and therefore defined by it, but *beyond* the car and *off* the grid of automobility? Such questions prod us to imagine "utopias of mobility" (Freudendal-Pedersen and Jensen 2012) and healthful, just and ecologically good ways of living together. Hints of utopian thinking lurk behind efforts to 'Copenhagenize' Canada's capital by expanding city cycling (Scott, forthcoming), blaze new directions for transit funding in Calgary, and implement road pricing in Vancouver as a means to render motorists accountable for their outsized and inefficient use of public space and state resources. Like responses to climate change, Canadian transport policy emphasizes infrastructural solutions. However, by highlighting the reassembling of mobility technologies, mobilities researchers can challenge narrow technical fixes and confront political puzzles such as: why is Canadian inter-city rail better at moving petroleum products than people? What factors conspire to shut out high-speed rail in the country's most densely populated corridor from Windsor to Québec City? Why is it easier in Canada to expand a superhighway at enormous public cost than stitch together a bike lane with some green paint and flower planters? Contesting the car, with its seemingly compulsory nature (Soron 2009), will require re-examining everyday travel and challenging unequal power relations, including constitutional power relations that disadvantage Canadian cities.

### *The good city*

To imagine utopian futures and life beyond the car is to ask, what makes the city, or any community, good? Another line of inquiry we believe can invigorate Canadian mobilities research, building on Conley and Jen-

sen (this issue), highlights morality, the ‘good life,’ and mobility justice (Sheller forthcoming). It is ominous that Vancouver, Canada’s ‘green beacon’ of post-car, sustainable mobilities – where over 50 per cent of trips are already made by walking, cycling and transit (Chan 2015) – is fast becoming an exclusive playground for wealthy property owners and real estate investors. Shining near the top of international urban liveability indices, Vancouver’s growing exclusivity begs the question: who has access to good (read: healthy, environmentally friendly) mobilities? How can the multimodal city, where most people now live, support the common good? Alongside access, a key puzzle for mobility justice concerns how particular ways of moving become construed as morally good or bad and for whom, as Morton (this issue) interrogates in the case of Aboriginal women. How can the mobilities of those marginalized by automobility -- children, senior citizens, people with physical or intellectual challenges, New Canadians who may be learning English or French -- be best accommodated? While theories of social justice and democratic equality are central to this analysis, mobilities can nourish (or deprive) the good life in multiple ways. For example, the expansion of urban cycling, while playing a role in gentrification and racialized productions of space (Hoffman 2016), figures into a plurality of good cities based on competing principles of the common good (Scott forthcoming). As Vancouver tries to become a global model of good mobilities, issues of morality and justice will only become more salient and call out for intersectional mobilities analysis.

— What does it mean not only to walk through the city with a mobile phone in hand, but with a mobile in hand as an elderly person walking, driving, scooting, taking Wheel-Trans or the bus? How does the cellular telephone fit into what we understand as a mobile assemblage, and the agenda of active aging that many of those we interviewed adhere to implicitly and explicitly? —

Barbara Crow and Kim Sawchuk (2015: 192)

### *Methods*

To advance our understanding of the good life, new technologies, disasters, climate change and other topics, a Canadian mobilities turn must embrace the methodological dynamism at the heart of the mobilities paradigm. As Faulconbridge and Hui (2016: 2) observe, “the vitality of mobilities research is tied to not only the processes it studies, but also the practices of mobilities researchers.” These practices include a growing suite of ‘mobile methods’ (Büscher, Urry, and Witchger 2011; Fincham,

McGuinness, and Murray 2010) and efforts to capture fluid, fleeting and ephemeral processes (e.g. walking, cycling, tourism) by deploying the very mobile devices by which these processes are increasingly mediated, namely GPS, mobile phones and lightweight video cameras (Spinney 2011; Laurier 2013; Christensen 2011). One part of the methodological innovation behind mobile methods entails finding new ways to present and communicate research, such as creative ethnographies featuring rich audiovisual content (Vannini and Taggart 2014; Vannini 2012), interactive mobile soundscape compositions (Sawchuk and Thulin 2012) and comic book grammar with graphic transcripts (Laurier 2014). Another source of innovation is scope, for example, Jensen, Bendix Laang and Wind (2016) argue for a focus on mobilities design that addresses material consequences of mobility, in addition to practical consequences. A third innovative force involves assembling methods for exploring mobility futures such as “back-casting, scenario making, modelling, planning, visioning, future fictions, design, biography, inter-generational research, archive work and oral histories” (Everyday Futures Workshop 2016). We believe Canadian sociology, with a long tradition of methodological diversity (Puddephatt and McLaughlin 2015), can play a key role in advancing mobile methods, in part by addressing a quantitative gap in this area (Manderscheid 2016) and cultivating mobilities research that bridges the qualitative and quantitative divide.

## CONCLUSION

What will Canadian sociology look like in ten years, that is, twenty years after the inception of the new mobilities paradigm? Will ‘mobilities’ remain synonymous with occupational and social mobility? Or will mobilities also conjure up cities, disaster, smartphones, migration, policy, futures, design, practice, methods, justice, climate change, the good, the bad and everyday life? With this special issue on *Contentious Mobilities*, we formally recognize the arrival of the mobilities turn in Canadian sociology, and blow air on a kindling flame. The papers in this issue cover diverse locales, modes and themes, yet are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the exciting and valuable mobilities work coalescing in Canada.

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