

Call for Papers: Contested Mobilities in U.S. History

Annual Conference of the Historians of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS)

Akademie für Politische Bildung, Tutzing (<https://www.apb-tutzing.de/>)

In-person event: May 5-7, 2023

Organizers: Rebecca Brückmann (Ruhr-University Bochum) and Silke Hackenesch (University of Cologne)

Mobility, the movement of people, concepts, and commodities have been powerful vectors of change, and have shaped imaginative repositories and historical practices in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. Entwined narratives of spatial and social mobility, anti-stasis, and freedom have characterized both master and counter narratives in U.S. history.

These mobility narratives informed territorial expansion from the 18th to the 20th century, Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis of an Americanizing movement towards the frontier, and the geographical and sociocultural mobility and self-transformation of the (European) immigrant, rising from dishwasher to millionaire. Simultaneously, the entwinement of (im)mobility, space, and power features prominently in countercultural analyses in histories of immigration and borderlands, racialization, gender, sexuality, and (dis)ability. Racial segregation, ethnic ghettoization, gender-specific spheres, or barriered public spaces, for example, create and reinforce immobility for social groups. Mobilities continue to be contested.

First conceptualized by the German sociologist Georg Simmel (*The Metropolis and Mental Life*, 1909) in his analysis of urban spaces, tempo, and societal repercussions, the Chicago School expanded the study of sociospatial mobilities (e.g., Ezra Park, 1925). In connection to the late 1990s so-called "spatial turn," the British sociologists Mimi Sheller and John Urry (2005) introduced "The New Mobilities Paradigm," arguing that the interconnected networks of mobile subjects and objects deserve renewed attention.

For historians, the study of the development, experiences, representations, modes, and disruptions of spatial and sociocultural (im)mobility of people, ideas and information, goods, and nonhuman entities across borders and boundaries particularly connect to power relations and societal implications, understanding movements as vectors for change.

For this year's annual meeting of the GAAS's historians, we invite papers that critically assess (im)mobilities in U.S. history. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Movements of people, ideas, and commodities
- Migration, Immigration, borders and territories
- Borderlands, border surveillance, and sociospatial creolization
- Refugees, forced and voluntary mobility
- (Self-)Transformation: Finding yourself in/through movement, road tripping
- The Black Atlantic and Diasporic histories

- Travelogues, tourism, commuting, urban and rural mobility
- Clandestine movement, smuggling, subversion
- Historical modes, practices, and representations of mobility and technological advancements
- Mobility and environmental factors
- Forced or voluntary immobility, stasis, stillness
- Social (im)mobility: class boundaries, gendered and racialized restraints to mobility, White Flight, ableism
- Transnational intimacy and family creation
- Narratives of mobility: utopias, dystopias

Please send your paper abstract (250 – 500 words) and a short CV (one page) as one PDF file to the conference organizers by August 1, 2022: rebecca.brueckmann@ruhr-uni-bochum.de, and silke.hackenesch@uni-koeln.de You will be notified by October 2022.