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Title: Intimacy on the Move: Historicising Mobilities and Sexual Encounters

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Abstract

The introduction discusses the special issue's focus on historical actors who physically crossed national borders and participated in multi-directional cross-cultural or cross-racial intimacies between 1920 and 1990. It brings research on mobilities and intimacy into dialogue and shows how scholarship on intimacy has recently begun to address the spaces and routes that enable intimate encounters. To enrich such scholarship, the special issue revolves around the ways in which intimacies and mobilities were connected in the experiences and practices of people on the move who often differed in terms of class, gender and "race". The introduction showcases how the contributors take an in-depth look at the spaces in which these individuals interacted, lived, and loved and highlights the advantages of such an actor-centred, praxeological approach: It avoids the oversimplified juxtaposition of liberal and repressive regimes or periods; instead, it traces bodies in motion, their techniques and routines; and it shifts the focus from politics and infrastructures to subjects' responses to categorisations and regulations. While demonstrating that mobility and intimacy are deeply intertwined and mutually influential, the introduction argues that paying attention to these connections can influence how we look at them and allow us to understand them better. More specifically, the focus on practices and experiences draws attention not only to the agency of historical subjects who have navigated changing political and social conditions, but also to the fundamental malleability and fluidity of sexual regimes and identities.

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Intimacy on the Move.

Historicising Mobilities and Sexual Encounters

West Berlin was a transnational meeting point for transgender women from several countries in the 1970s. It enticed, among others, trans women from Israel and Greece, in the latter case mainly sex workers. Transgender women selling sex migrated from Greece to West Berlin for two reasons: financial and cultural ones. Elisavet Vakalidou described West Berlin as a "wealthy" and "(socially) liberal" city that enabled Greek trans women selling sex to earn much money when they were broke (Vakalidou 2009, 149-50).[1] Moreover, as Vakalidou argued, Greek trans women believed that the residents of West Berlin were largely more sympathetic to trans female sex workers than people in Greece. They learned new skills for their job and did it more confidently. Vakalidou (2007, 149) also felt that her gender transitioning was complete once she was in West Berlin. As this example shows, mobility affected intimacy and intimate labour in terms of material conditions as well as sexual practices and gendered identities.

This special issue brings the interconnectedness of mobilities and intimacies to the fore: It elucidates how, in the twentieth century, cross-border mobilities impacted the intimate practices, relationships and encounters of mobile and non-mobile subjects alike. At the same time, the contributors to this issue show how intimacies shaped mobilities: They argue that emotional and sexual needs, interests, fantasies or capitals are an often overlooked, but important factor when it comes to understanding why historical actors went elsewhere or stayed mobile, for example in the context of transnational relationships. Cross-border mobilities, from tourism to labour migration, regularly resulted in encounters and relationships between persons that differed in their class, gender or 'race'. These differences very much influenced how individuals and societies made sense of sexual differences, norms and identities. Often enough, they were accompanied by a renegotiation of these differences, norm, and identities. However, which mobilities initiated which renegotiation of the "intimate" (and vice versa) is far from clear and needs to be researched in more detail.

This special issue, focuses concrete practices and experiences that subjects employed in different historical and social contexts. It shows why the still-often used dichotomy of repressive versus liberal regimes is insufficient when it comes to making sense of the history of sexualities and mobilities: For the juxtaposition of the repressive versus the empowering tends to both neglect

[1] Although this extract forms part of the story of Sorella, a Greek trans woman selling sex, it contains a claim that Vakalidou made. For a detailed analysis of Greek trans women selling sex in West Berlin see Papadogiannis (2022).

the agency of historical subjects in contexts commonly considered repressive or sexually conservative and to ignore the restrictive sides of societies and periods commonly described as liberal or liberalising. Also, adjustments and innovations in groups' or societies' ideas, practices and policies concerning sexuality were not always the result of 'liberal' ideas and customs moving from West to East or from North to South or of conservative imaginaries and practices moving into the opposite directions.

The geographical scope of this endeavour is global: It considers places in and people with links to South and East Asia, North and sub-Saharan Africa, North and South America, Western and Eastern Europe. While we use the terms 'Global North' and 'Global South', we do not approach these regions as homogeneous. Rather, the articles explore cultural and political differences within both, such as between liberal democracies and state-socialist regimes in Europe. In doing so, the contributions employ a multi-directional approach that traces inner-European (Western and non-Western) as well as non-European flows and trajectories. As we will elaborate below, the special issue thus helps to diversify the emerging body of scholarship on intimacies and mobilities, by also considering shifts in intimate patterns and practices that have been initiated in 'the East' or 'the South' and then may have shaped developments in Western Europe or North America.

The analyses assembled here furthermore focus on the as yet underexplored period between the 1920s and the 1990s. As we will discuss below, intimate dynamics have already been discussed in the context of colonial mobilities and with an eye to the contemporary era, too. But the time in-between has received less attention. Hence, this issue affords transnational vistas on the age of marriage reform in the 1920s, of sexual experimentation in the 1940s and 1950s, of the 'sexual revolution' in the 1960s and 1970s as well as of HIV and AIDS in the 1980s. By looking at these decades and by including practices that so far went largely unnoticed this issue pushes research onto uncharted terrains.

In conceptual terms, the special issue broadens the purview by not only looking at migration, but employing a multi-layered notion of mobility that also encompasses tourism and other forms of travel and that considers the various ways in which people can shift between different modes of moving between places. In a similar vein, the contributors to this issue do not only look at sexuality in a narrow sense, but at the broader field of practices and relationships that the concept of intimacy unfolds. Intimacy is often understood in terms of experience and individual perceptions, but it is less frequently thought about in terms of its spatial organisation, the places and the trajectories that enable intimate encounters. With mobility, it is exactly the other way round: It is primarily considered in (often global) spatial terms, such as 'here' and 'there', 'origin' and

'destination', and analysed as travel or migration between specific regions, while experiential aspects are less prominent in research on mobility. For this reason, we are convinced that linking both topics is a very promising endeavour and will open up fresh vistas for historians of migration and of sexuality as well as for researchers who are dwelling on other aspects of history.

This introduction proceeds in three steps: the first two sections outline the notions of intimacy and mobility and discuss them against the background of the research in these two areas. Subsequently, we discuss how we link both themes by focusing on experiences and spaces and pay particular attention to the issue of historical sources.. Finally, we discuss the temporalities, directionalities and geographies that underly previous research on transnational intimacies and elaborate how this special issue helps diversifying this field.

Intimacies

The intimate is a concept frequently used, but rarely reflected upon in works on sexuality and migration. Thanks to its lack of conceptual fixity, the notion of intimacy has a couple of advantages vis-à-vis the sexual, one of its semantic neighbours. Firstly, intimacy keeps a safe distance from the queer-or-straight-dichotomy. If you like same-sex intimacy, like hanging out with other girls, that does not necessarily make you a bisexual person. The concept of intimacy thus avoids categorical presumptions and allows researchers to account for the complex self-understandings and ambiguous positionalities across spectra of sex, gender and closeness that shape migrants' trajectories.[2] The shifting identifications in terms of gender and sexuality that the West-Berlin-based trans* sex workers mentioned earlier on formed among themselves and in interactions with others are a case in point.

Secondly and associated with the first point, intimacy is not as unilaterally physical as sexuality can be. Two people can be intimate without having sex. Intimacy ranges across the physical, the affective and the relational. Therefore, it can accommodate various aspects of the queer spectrum, including demisexuality, but also asexual (ace) and aromantic (aro) subjectivities and relationships (see e.g. Cerankowski, Milks 2024). It is thus an appropriate lens for looking at the often fuzzy nature, for example, of sex touristic encounters. What begins as a one-off transaction can morph into an attack, a fight or into a longer-term client relationship that involves intimacy on bodily, personal and other levels (Ewing 2017; Frohlick 2016a; Mitchell 2002; Puar 2002). In this vein, the

[2] For broader conceptual approaches to these questions see Sedgwick (2008, 22), Binnie (2004) and Ahmed (2000). For historical research on these issues see Shah (2011), Shield (2017) and Shepard (2017).

concept of intimacy allows researchers to remain attentive to the variability and open-endedness of every relationship.

Thirdly, the intimate closely intertwines the subjective with the social. „Intimate lives are connected with the institutions, ideologies, and desires that organize people's worlds", Lauren Berlant (1998, 282) claims. Although many people wish that there were oceans between the intimate and the world of selling, working and marketing, these realms are often not even separated by a creek (Illouz 2007; Bernstein 2008). This also transpires from research on care and domestic work, forms of labour that often involve touching other bodies in an intimate, yet not necessarily sexual manner (Arieli 2023; Hepburn 2022). The political and the intimate are also intricately intertwined (see Oswin and Olund 2010; Povinelli 2007; Herzog 2005). The legal and administrative regulation of sex work, homosexual intercourse, abortion, sexual violence and other sexual matters have been widely studied (see, among others Freeland 2022; Dolinsek and Hetherington 2019; Minto 2018; Sanders 2009; Bourke 2007; Bell 1995). Other studies have shown how globalizing dynamics as well as religiously inspired and other moralities have propelled, mitigated or counteracted the change of sexual regimes since the 1960s (Severs 2024; Bänziger et al. 2015; Binnie 2004). When it comes to the in- or exclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers on sexual grounds, such political regulations or cultural framings of intimacy are obviously linked with transnational mobilities (see for example Mai et al. 2021; Perego 2021; Wells 2019; Lewis 2013; Smith and Marmo 2011).

That intimate practices vary in different spatial settings, that they do not easily align with specific identities, lends them what we would describe as a constructive ambiguity. Similarly, Ara Wilson stresses how the notion of intimacy can be helpful precisely because of its lack of conceptual fixity: "as an unfixed but legible term", Wilson (2012, 48) argues, intimacy "works to cover an open-ended array of relations (rather than assuming the couple or family)", does not necessarily link identities to specific practices (for instance, gay identity to same-sex practices) and productively eschews a row of further categorizations. The same holds true for how intimacy, broadly understood, can challenge all too clear-cut oppositions between 'empowering' and 'restrictive' practices (see e.g. Griffiths 2021; Schmacks and Herzog 2024). Daniel Heathcote's and Christopher Ewing's contributions to this special issue also show how gay activism and 'empowerment' in the global North could in the 1970s rest on the racializing exotification and 'restriction' of people of colour as quintessentially oppressed.

Not only on the political, but also on the personal, experiential level, intimacy remains intertwined with both attraction and rejection, aggression and, at times, even brutality. Research on intimate

encounters in the context of slavery and colonialism has amply demonstrated how the occasionally thin line between consensuality and exploitation could be violently breached in certain settings (Berry and Harris 2018; Stoler 2002). The intimate comprises both coziness and violence and looking at it from a mobility-perspective makes clear how the two are actually everything but opposites: there are violent coziness and cozy violence and all other sorts of in-between phenomena. Studies have demonstrated how trans* migrant sex workers tried to forge homely spaces for themselves in inimical surroundings, how dynamics of gentrification pitted affluent LGBT households against migrant families struggling to pay their rent, or how marriages could submit women to sexual exploitation in colonial West Africa (Brett 2019; Haritaworn 2015; Aderinto 2015). Research on intimacy in general has often exposed such complexities by way of focusing on individual experiences. Historians of love and other emotions have contributed valuable insights in this respect (Maqsood 2021; Gammerl 2021; Barclay 2014). Other crucial avenues of research went through advice columns, counselling, correspondence between lovers and similar materials to analyse the intimate problems individuals were concerned with (Maftsir 2019; Greenhalgh 2017; Bauer and Hämmerle 2017; Kramm 2014; Wellmann 2011; Bänziger 2010; Ito and Okabe 2005; Heinemann in print).

Such attention to the experiential does not result in histories that know nothing but bliss and harmony. And neither does it generate accounts that are strictly confined to the local, the immediate surroundings of the actors who take centre stage. While the intimate remains linked to the personal, it shifts across various spatial scales. This is yet another reason that adds to the heuristic value of the concept. Therefore, intimacy is here not only examined from an experiential angle, but also from a history of space perspective. This latter approach is fairly new among historians of sexuality. It holds plenty of potential, especially when relying on geographical and sociological conceptualizations of space that view its production as a dynamic and open-ended process involving political, economic and infrastructural as well as cultural, imaginative and affective aspects.[3]

In this vein, one can ask how the spaces in which mobile intimacies unfolded were organised and how this spatial setting shaped the encounters under consideration. How historical actors got intimate also depended on where they did it, in a park, a ballroom or a hostel for single men, in a respectable or disreputable neighbourhood, in an urban or a rural environment (Reinecke 2022; Gammerl 2021; Wilson 2016; Ellis 2015; Föllmer 2013; Houlbrook 2006). These spatial aspects

[3] See among others Reckwitz 2012; Löw 2001; Lefebvre 1991 [1974]. For approaches that pay particular attention to questions around gender and sexuality see Podmore and Brown 2015: Oswin 2008; Browne, Lim and Brown 2007; Massey 1994.

become most apparent when considering that intimacy is inherently about proximity, about overcoming distance, about bringing two or more subjects within a touching range. This closeness has social or emotional as well as spatial or geographical dimensions. With a reference to the figure of the stranger in Georg Simmel's sociology of modern urbanity, Erik Cohen has shown in his analysis of Thai sex workers' correspondence with their foreign clients that the stranger is spatially close and emotionally distant while a far-away intimate can be physically distant and affectively close. Both relationships, Cohen (1986, 125) continues, "harbor a paradox, which is a source of ambiguity".

A similar ambivalence transpires from Sara Ahmed's description of "intimacy as an over-coming distance" (1997, 21). One can read this as indicating a disappearance of distance, suspended as it were in co-presence, as well as an invitation for distance to come over, to join the merry get-together. The latter reading is very much in line with Ahmed's contention that total closeness would render intimate relations impossible. Intimacy needs partners who are apart and different. Hence distance must not be completely dissolved. Pinpointing the at least two-fold meaning of proximity as signifying emotional as well as spatial closeness helps achieving this. And it allows the contributions to this special issue to trace the intimate across a variety of ranges, from the global through the regional and national to the local scale.

The global scale comes first to mind when thinking about geographical distance. This common understanding of the far-away is challenged here by wedding the global with the intimate, just as Ahmed's (1997) article brought international feminism into touch with an ethics of intimate dialogue (see also Pratt and Rosner 2012). Global history also acknowledged the crucial insights that may be gained from attending to the interacting and overlapping spaces of farness and closeness which are never completely determined by geography (see for example Wenzlhuemer (2015). Concurrently, an interdisciplinary body of literature, which mainly addresses global sexualities and intimacies, illuminates the ambivalence of subjects in the Global South in relating their intimate practices to specific identities, as these subjects are exposed to varying perceptions of intimacy and sexuality at the local, national and transnational levels (e.g., Aggleton, Boyce, Moore, Parker 2012; Chiang and Wong 2016). Those people find themselves between an indirect way of experiencing sexuality that is not channelled into specific identities (for instance, in smaller towns in West Bengal) and the effect of globalising health campaigns that try to align sexual practices to specific identities (Boyce 2012).

In this special issue, Christopher Ewing's article is most profoundly concerned with the global level as he addresses both, the transnational movements of and the potentially global information

provided by the Spartacus gay travel guide editor John Stamford as well as the international discussion on pedosexuality. Anna Dobrowolska refers to the way in which the transnational mobility of Polish actress and model Danuta Lato, who was moving between state-socialist Poland and West Germany, heightened her 'erotic capital' and affected her career in both countries' erotic industries. Nayan Shah and Daniel Heathcote focus on distinct localities in which transnational mobilities converge. Shah examines Alaskan canneries as well as Seattle as a hub of labour recruitment, transportation routes and a multi-racial entertainment culture. Daniel Heathcote looks at international tourism and spaces that facilitated same-sex intimacies in post-colonial Nairobi and Mombasa. Two contributions zoom in further and trace the intimate on the small-scale of interpersonal relationships. Priska Komaromi features personal closeness and professional distance in letters exchanged between Hungarian women and the 'Western' men who bought sex from them during the cold war. Nadja Klopprogge asks how intimate relationships between black US soldiers and white women from West Germany were portrayed and envisioned in photographs taken both in West Germany and the USA.

Looking at the spatial dimensions of intimacy, this issue also picks up on and twists further debates that have time and again concerned historians of gender, sexuality and other fields (Minto 2018; Podmore and Brown 2015; Oswin and Olund 2010; Bell 1995; Massey 1994). Intimacy is adjacent to, but not coinciding with, privacy. Hence, negotiating what should and, maybe more importantly, what should not remain private has been a highly public matter. As a result, the regimes that draw and blur the lines between privacy and publicity are highly volatile across time and space. This variability shaped the intimate histories told in this issue, which in turn also allow their readers to better understand what it means and meant to move between the public and the private.

The intimate furthermore revolves around the self, but it is in equal measure about familiarity and relations with others. It combines, as Lauren Berlant (1998, 281) suggests, inward and outward orientations. The self is thus interwoven with disclosure, with the media and other channels of communication. How do subjectivities and their social, emotional, and physical environments interact with one another? Asking this question allows historians to trace multi-directional dynamics because subjects did not only perceive but also re-arrange and otherwise impact the spaces within which they dwelt and moved, while these spatial formations, in turn, shaped and informed the subjects that orbited them. Christopher Ewing's article on the trials of John Stamford sheds light on this interplay. By fashioning himself as a cosmopolitan connoisseur, Stamford enhanced global communications that also ventilated critiques of the lifestyle he promoted and thus ultimately impeded his own travelling.

As it allows for tracing this and other intricate histories, intimacy is a productively vague term. However, this special issue does neither suggest to indulge in intimacy's vagueness for vagueness's sake, nor to return to clear-cut categories which generate but a clarity that fails to grasp the complexity of everyday experiences. The individual contributions show how addressing the intricacies which the notion of intimacy brings into view can help us better, more fully understand the trajectories of people on the move as well as shifting regimes of sexuality and mobility. They demonstrate what kinds of spaces and which sorts of practices are worth being looked at in more detail. And building on the particular strengths of historical research, they offer models for multi-layered narratives that do not gloss over the contradictions even a finely-grained analysis cannot resolve, but pinpoint such inconsistencies.[4]

Mobilities

In the last two decades, a growing number of scholars in the interdisciplinary fields of migration studies and mobility studies have put different mobilities into the very centre of their analysis. They have emphasised the transformations brought about by (geographical) mobilities and they have attended to the infrastructures, norms, and practices that facilitated or impeded the movement from one place to another. This new emphasis on mobilities as a "highly meaningful social practices" (Adey et al. 2017, 3) has repeatedly been labelled "mobility turn" (Sheller 2017). And while the humanities might have seen one or two 'turns' too many, geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists like Mimi Sheller, John Urry or Tim Cresswell certainly have challenged established visions of both society and mobility (Sheller 2021; Cresswell 2012; Urry 2007). They have introduced a shift of focus that is increasingly adopted in historical research as well (Liebisch-Gümüş 2022; Heerten 2021; Bradley 2016; Ebert 2015; Huber 2013). Three aspects of this shift strike us as particularly productive for the context of our issue: 1) the 'uncontainering' of societies, social groups and relations on the move, 2) the focus on the production of mobilities, 3) the emphasis on the interconnectedness and malleability of different mobilities.

With their focus on different mobilities and on the infrastructures that facilitate or impede them, mobility scholars have contributed to a reframing of migrations and mobilities by considering them a normality and necessity rather than an exception. While before, 'society' was often analysed as a somehow stable, spatially enclosed, geographically unmoving set of social relations and hierarchies, mobility scholars have begun to 'uncontainer', to reconfigure 'the social' as mobile. They point to

[4] Examples for such narratives can also be found in studies on intimacies across racial and other boundaries (Moses and Woesthoff 2021) as well as on female same-sex friendships around 1900 (Heinrich 2022).

the various ways in which social relations and hierarchies in the 19th and 20th centuries have been constantly affected by the mobilities and immobilities of historical actors within and between different regions, imperial or national settings, from the movements of slaves or the travels of colonial elites to rural-to-urban work migrations, war-induced movements, hitchhiking or mass tourism. By guiding the view to the multiple occurrences of 'the mobile', they thus help us further problematise (modernist, Western) understandings of sedentarism as normalcy. At the same time, they contribute to a "migrantization" of societies and their analysis (Dahinden 2016) and thus to a perspective that integrates migrations and mobilities into analyses of 'the social'. From this vantage point it becomes clear that shifting regimes of gender and sexuality also cannot be understood without considering entanglements like the transnational circulation of various pornographic imageries or the cultural ideas framing intimate practices that migrants bring with them when they travel between different places.

For a long time scholarship strictly kept to studying a single mobility type such as sex tourism from the global North to the Global South, involving sexual encounters between tourists and local people (Frohlick 2016b; Vidal-Ortiz 2019; on the Mediterranean context, see Bowman 1989; Tucker 2003, on queer migration, primarily into the US, see Luibhéid and Chávez 2020; Carrillo and Fontdevila 2014; Cantú 2009; Manalansan 2006). However, research on intimacies has shifted, to an extent, from a focus on a single mobility to the connections between various types of movement across space. -Researchers have also recently addressed how intimacies were impacted by ensembles of mobilities, intermingling, for example, sex tourism and migration (Jaisuekun and Sunanta 2021; Frohlick 2009; Piscitelli 2007; Hillis et al. 2020). Sex tourism could facilitate migration from the Global South to the Global North and vice versa. In both cases, the study of sex tourism in conjunction with migration sheds light on how gender and racialisation have shaped the motives and the intimate experiences of subjects involved in such mobilities.

By criticising an essentialised understanding of different forms of mobility as seemingly given, as self-evident facts, mobility scholarship guides our view to the way in which different mobilities were produced, made or unmade (Löhr and Reinecke 2020). A case in point is how attracting consumers and providers of 'intimate services' from all around the world to the 'recreational infrastructures' that French colonialism, the US Army, Vietnamese business and other forces have created in Saigon generated various mobilities that not only fuelled the local sex industry (Hoang 2015). Rather than taking the differences between, say, tourists, refugees, and labour migrants as a given (or consider them a mere product of rational decision-making), recent studies show how infrastructures and policies, norms and regulations helped bring such seemingly distinct mobilities about (Huber 2013). For even though tourists, refugees and labour migrants might seem very

different social figures that pursue different goals, recent research has pointed to the overlaps between these categories (Möhring 2014).

Border and migration regimes contributed to the production and reproduction of different categories of mobility, and the in- and exclusions they implemented resulted in mobility options for some while immobilising others. Hence, borders, as recent research has shown, were in many ways "sorting machines" (Mau 2021) that classified and hierarchised mobile people and that also implemented different mobility options (Vernon 2021; Akbari et al. 2017). Whether based on the reunification of families or on other claims, these different mobility options came with their own temporalities, as some could enter immediately, while others were detained, and as residency titles or tourists visa often had expiry dates (Stokes 2022; Walters, Heller, and Pezzani 2022; Fauser, Friedrichs, and Harders 2021; Perlmann 2018; Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Sontowski 2018; Walters 2015; Carrera and Hernanz 2015; Brubaker 2013).

This emphasis on the interconnectedness of border-making and of the ordering of mobilities ties in with recent efforts in tourism and migration studies to overcome the often-normative categorization of mobilities. Laura Agustin has for example shown how 'migrant' is a label that depends on a person's origin as much as on the circumstances of their movement (Agustín 2007, chap. 2). A French student, taking a gap year and doing a work-and-travel program in Australia, is more likely to be considered a tourist than a migrant, the Spanish ambassador in Bhutan or a retired German in Thailand more likely to be considered an expat than a migrant. In a similar way, Sarah Kunz has pointed to the racialised ways in which some groups have been labelled as 'expatriates' (with an approved diasporic identity), while others are considered 'migrants' (of whom an effort to 'integrate themselves' is expected) (Kunz 2019; see also Green 2009).

However, different mobility options, forms of mobility and mobile realities were hardly just the product of categorizations, state policies, and official mobility infrastructures. They were clearly also a result of how individual actors and groups of actors used these options, how they dealt with attempts to assign them a unique 'mobility identity', and how they appropriated, repurposed or actively overcame rigid categorizations and restrictive policies in order to be granted entry, a residency title, or asylum (Scheel 2013, 2017). Moreover, mobilities were malleable and often interlinked in specific ways, and this special issue sheds light onto such ensembles of mobilities. What started, for instance, as travel could morph into immigration. A brief business trip could turn into a constant back and forth between two countries, as in the case of some of the businessmen that Priska Komaromi refers to in her article on Hungarian sex workers and their clients. Similarly, as Dobrowolska shows, Polish 'playmate' Danuta Lato initially came to West Germany for a

private visit, in order to soon move back and forth through the Iron Curtain for business purposes. Thus, acquiring the appeal of a transnational businesswoman in Poland while at the same time acting as a model of sexoticising Eastern Europe in the West, she became both the product and the catalyst of shifting sexual cultures in West and in East Central Europe.

Rather than solely focusing on border and migration regimes and their effects, the articles in this issue thus explore the various ways in which historical actors actively dealt with them. In her contribution, Nadja Klopprogge, for example, explores how US-American black soldiers and West German women dealt with dominant discourses and regulations concerning interracial marriages. She points to the specific mobilities of military personnel and, at the same time, highlights how intimate relationships could not just be the effect of mobility, but also its cause, as they induced lovers, spouses or husbands to move elsewhere or to travel regularly as their families and personal networks were transnationalising.

By guiding the view to the experiences of being mobile, the articles in this issue help critically reflect and deconstruct the categorization of different movements and to move the focus away from the regulation and administration of mobility to the mobile subjects, to their practices, subjectivities and experiences. We thus suggest asking how mobile people experienced their mobilities and how they dealt with the mobility options at their disposal, how they navigated the very norms and policies that strove to regulate, include or exclude people on the move. Moreover, we ask how their experience might have challenged existing categorizations and restrictions – or how they might have strategically used them. Thus, making use of a broad understanding of mobilities and attending to the specific experiences and practices of historical actors, the contributions to this issue aim for a more nuanced understanding of the complex realities of mobilities and their specific circumstances. They thus indicate ways in which historians and other scholars can grow up to the challenge of accommodating these intricacies into their narratives without making them too confusing. Less nuanced understandings of how people move between places may generate more consistent, but ultimately less fascinating accounts that fail to do justice to the often contradictory trajectories that shape people's lives. More nuance is needed, not only, but especially when we want to link histories of mobility with histories of intimacy.

In order to make sense of the multiple ways in which intimacies and mobility practices were interlinked and experienced, this special issue particularly highlights the specific spatialities through which people moved: We suggest to ask how mobilities helped to connect or disconnect different (colonial and metropolitan, postcolonial, regional or national) territories, and to explore the sites and quarters that facilitated stop-overs or acted as 'arrival neighbourhoods' for mobile groups.

These spaces often came with and shaped (intimate) encounters, as did the cannery camp in Alaska, Seattle's Chinatown with its pool and dance halls as well as the afternoon teas organised by the university-based YMCA Cosmopolitan Club in Seattle that Nayan Shah explores in his article. The same holds true for the cafes, hotel toilets and other environments in post-colonial Kenya that, as Daniel Heathcote's contribution shows, enabled same-sex encounters between gay tourists and (mainly white or middle-class) locals. Studying the history of intimacies through a mobility lens thus highlights the importance of taking a variety of mobility practices into account - as well as the overlaps and interconnections between them. Moreover, it allows to complicate established periodisations in the history of migration regimes that still tend to meander between periods of liberalization and of restrictionism by pointing to constraints in seemingly liberal or to spaces for manoeuvre in restrictive regimes.

Experiencing and practices

After having discussed the special issue's approach to intimacies and mobilities, we will now analyse the ways in which the collection approaches them as interrelated. We will also address the significance of focusing on experiences and practices in illuminating the links between intimacies and mobilities.

Our engagement with the heuristic freedom offered by the study of mobilities and intimacies dovetails with the focus of this special issue on the experiences and practices of historical subjects. The contributions thus focus on individuals who navigated diverse regimes in terms of sexuality as well as mobility and, as a result, reconsidered their perceptions of intimacy and mobility in ways they had not initially anticipated. While the regime in this context can imply a narrower Foucauldian reading of the term, we use it pragmatically in a more encompassing way, meaning a set of interlinked policies, infrastructures and normative frameworks.[5] Far less researched than these regimes, however, are the experiences of historical subjects made in the realms of sexuality and mobility. Very promising research integrating the aspects of both structural constraints and the experiences of historical subjects has appeared recently in the study of sex work migration (see, for instance, the literature cited in Groes, Fernandez 2018, 14-15; see also Camiscioli 2024). This move from identities, categorizations and regulations to experiences, practices and performances also shifts attention from structural frameworks to how historical subjects responded to them,

[5] In migration studies the notion of regime has been used to highlight the importance of administrative habits and the ensuing path-dependencies (Sciortino 2004, 32f; see also Rass and Wolff 2018). In gender studies the concept is employed to pinpoint the simultaneous existence of a variety of gender regimes (Walby 2020).

how they navigated processes of categorization and managed regulatory frameworks. This shift brings into view the bodies in motion, their techniques, routines and sensations.

Focusing on individual practices and experiences does not, however, make the cultural, political and administrative frameworks within which they occur irrelevant. These contexts shaped cross-cultural intimate relations, which in turn influenced the development of sexual and migratory regimes. Sexual and moving subjects act always, in our view, within and in relation to complex and overlapping social patterns and regulations. Hence, we do not set practices against discourse. Turning to practices does not side-line normative frameworks. The relation between practice and discourse is not equivalent to the relation between acting and thinking. After all, practices are part of the discursive field and are involved in constituting the dispositive, in Foucauldian parlance. Speaking itself is a practice (Füssel and Neu 2010).

While, therefore, we focus on practices, we also posit that norms, prejudices and conceptions remain essential as they shape practices and experiences and limit and enable the agency of historical subjects. Susan Frohlick (2016a), for example, shows how strongly normative frameworks and projections shape experiences in her analysis of the confusion, dissatisfaction and sexual frustration that sexual encounters can engender in the tourist context between European or North American women and men from Costa Rica. The (sexual) experiences of subjects and bodies on the move can at times differ vastly from their expectations and fantasies. Frohlick (2016a, 7f) also illustrates how the experience of a sexual practice such as cunnilingus depends on the normative frames both partners bring to the encounter.

Thus, the contributions to this issue show that the experiences and practices of historical actors could shore up but also challenge discourses and norms. Priska Komaromi demonstrates how sex workers' clients' masculinities were linked to their power as Western consumers with hard currency and informed by ethno-sexual stereotypes of Hungarian women as both more 'feminine' and more inherently sexual than Western women. Anna Dobrowolska shows how Lato performed her sexuality publicly and how her media presence, in turn, shaped Polish girls' perception of their own bodies in late socialist Poland. Moreover, John Stamford's personal trajectory could not be possibly understood, as Christopher Ewing shows, without considering the legal frameworks concerning pedosexuality and the gay community's discussions on child prostitution.

Asking how historical actors navigated different sexual and migratory regimes also sheds light on how they performed different sexual identities as a resource, gaining them access to mobility options. Research on queer asylum seekers shows how the performance of a globalised queer identity can become a resource in the migratory process (Manalansan 2006; Perego 2021). The

contributions assembled here also show how mobility opened (or pushed people into) arenas for trying out various gender and sexual options. Nayan Shah's contribution traces the trajectories of Victor Edades and Victorio Velasco, two Filipino men who moved to the US West Coast in the early twentieth century. Beyond traditional family structures and religious control, they explored and co-shaped the vibrant spaces that emerged around Filipino migration to the USA. Drawing on US American as well as on Filipino patterns and practices, migrants (and their romantic partners) experimented with different kinds of intimate expression, interracial encounters, and transgressive gender performances.

To explore how the experiences and practices of historical actors related to norms that aimed to regulate their mobilities and intimacies, the contributions to this collection of articles use primary sources that transcend the public and private divide and look at intimate spatial practices without falling into the trap of assuming a clear-cut separation between the personal and the governmental. Norms and regulations can be traced in state archives, whereas novels, travelogues, the press and medical texts allow for exploring opinions, concepts and projections prevalent within certain milieus or regions. But the actions, sensations and thoughts of moving individuals are more difficult to trace and one often encounters gaps in the archives. Take the example we cited at the beginning, queer magazines in West Germany said next to nothing about trans women selling sex who migrated from Greece to West Berlin. The newspapers of the Greek Communities in West Germany were also conspicuously silent about them. Their voices appear only in their autobiographies (Papadogiannis 2022). Accordingly, whenever reading official or published sources against the grain does not suffice to examine what subjects did, felt and experienced, the analyses assembled in this issue turn to first-person accounts or private images.

Priska Komaromi, for example, works with letters Western clients wrote to Hungarian sex workers they had spent time with. This enables her to delve deeply into the imaginations, fears and self-images of these men. Visual representations also provide a possible entry point, as Nadja Klopprogge shows. She uses photos of Afro-German couples to trace how depictions of cross-racial intimacy were deeply embedded in shifting historical constellations, while the photos simultaneously record individual responses to those dynamics. While she does not focus on queer subjects, as Jennifer Evans does in her recent book (2023), there is common ground between the two works: Klopprogge's analysis speaks to Evans' approach to photographs as a means of illuminating a non-linear unfolding of intimate encounters in West Germany. Nayan Shah also explores vernacular photography as a way to bypass textual archives, which are often structured by the persistence of the heterosexual couple, exploring how Filipino men playfully recast gender roles to deal with loneliness and alienation and allow comfort and intimate encounters.

Another promising avenue for considering individual practices and experiences is the detailed analysis of the small-scale spatial structures, like dance halls or hotel lobbies, that either facilitated, hindered or shaped intimate encounters in specific ways or enabled, impeded or twisted touristic and migratory trajectories in a particular fashion. Historians can most productively analyse them when they simultaneously consider the built environment and how individuals felt, perceived and navigated it. Spaces always mingle infrastructural and subjective dimensions. Individual actors shape the settings within which they move, while those settings inform their self-understandings (Gammerl 2012; Reckwitz 2012). Hence, researching the intimate practices and experiences of people on the move dovetails with a comprehensive understanding of the spaces within which they dwelt and through which they passed.

Multidirectional links around the globe in the twentieth century

Concerning the geographical focus of research on intimacy and migration, this collection of articles aims to help revise an earlier focus of relevant scholarship on a nation-state framework (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). An emphasis on developments within the boundaries of nation-states is still influential in the analysis of tourism, border regimes and migration policies, as well as in studies of sexual regimes and homosexual and other emancipatory movements. Initially, otherwise magisterial research on the 'sexual revolution' focused on specific countries, sometimes in a comparative perspective, but largely neglected all kinds of transfers among them (Eder, Hall and Hekma 1999; Herzog 2005; Szreter and Fisher 2010). Studies on social and political reactions to HIV and AIDS have also often confined themselves to a national level (Berridge 2002; Beljan 2014).

The analyses assembled here also engage with a critique of models that privilege 'the West' or 'the North' as origins of intimate innovations that first appeared there and subsequently spilt over into the 'rest' of the world. Diffusionist historiographical approaches have argued that novel sexual patterns spread from North America and Northwestern Europe to Central Eastern Europe and the Global South. Such diffusion purportedly occurred also through mobilities like migration and tourism, can come in world historical guise (Stearns 2009). Simultaneously, a growing body of literature is investigating the flow of ideas from HIV/AIDS campaigners in Europe and, more broadly, the West to the Global South. Such scholarship often sometimes takes a 'problem-solving' approach: it purports to illuminate what "deficits" exist in the Global South as compared to the West, and how queer and HIV/AIDS campaigns, mainly from the West, can contribute to HIV/AIDS collective action in the Global South (for instance: Hildebrandt 2012).

Recent research on patterns and representations of intimacy has nuanced a diffusionist approach to novel intimate practices purportedly spreading from the 'West' to other regions by stressing their selective reception and the agency of subjects in the Global South and elsewhere. Such works include research on trends in intimate behaviours emerging from the US from whence they were appropriated in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Japan (Fehrenbach et al. 1999; Maase 2001; Kroes 2006; Poiger 2000). Research in history and anthropology on global sexualities, including but not limited to queer ones, has shown how colonialism and/or globalisation has exposed people in the Global South, like in India and South Africa, to categories of intimacy prominent in the Global North, and the agency of actors in the Global South in engaging with these categories (for example: Boyce 2012; Epprecht 2012; Thomas 2016). In this vein, questions have been raised with an eye to how trajectories in the Global South did not simply follow – with a time lag, as it were – the 'Northern' lead. Subversions of sexual norms and inventions of intimate practices followed their own specific logic in African countries and elsewhere (Wieringa and Sivori 2013). A similar focus on the selective reception of intimate patterns informs works on the transfer of people and ideas from the global North to the Global South in the context of sex touristic mobilities (Frohlick 2016b; Vidal-Ortiz 2019; Lämmert 2021; Tucker 2003; Bowman 1989). Moreover, sexoticisation, the ascription of a sexualised exotic appeal to certain groups, has so far mainly been studied in a north-south-direction, with relevant scholarship, however, also considering the receiving end (Schaper et al. 2020). Studies on sex work have employed similar approaches (Hetherington and Laite 2021; see also Augustín 2007) and explored mobilities beyond the South-North routes (Piscitelli 2018; Aderinto 2015).[6] Other scholars have shown that the sexual changes occurring in Western Europe since the 1960s cannot be properly understood as long as the contributions made by migrants from the Global South are not considered (Shepard 2017; Shield 2017).

A significant part of this nuanced scholarship explores the transnational dimensions of queer practices and identities, and/or of the activist coalitions in which queer people were also involved, like in the case of HIV/AIDS activism. Such work discusses the impact of cross-border transfers of people and ideas on the transformation of intimate patterns and practices. Studies zooming in on queer practices in particular cities like London or Athens are often attentive to transnational arrivals and influences that shaped urban spaces (Yannakopoulos 2016; Papanikolaou 2015; Houlbrook 2006; Evans and Cook 2015). Other researchers shed light on the role of trans-Atlantic transfers between queer activists (Tremblay 2021; Griffiths 2021), flows of queer people and queer and or HIV/AIDS activist ideas within the European and Mediterranean region (Cetin and

[6] See also the ongoing research project of Maud Bracke entitled "Inventing 'Reproductive Rights': Sex, Bodies and Population, 1945-1995", https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FV008420%2F1 (last accessed 30 July 2022).

Bänziger 2019; Bayramoğlu and Lünenborg 2018) and crossings within the 'global North' in the context of queer and/or HIV/AIDS activism (Broqua 2025; Tremblay 2021).[7] Similarly, research in anthropology has shown the hierarchies in the interaction between HIV/AIDS activism in the Global North and South, like in South Asia and between North and Latin America (for instance, Qureshi 2018, Chávez 2021). Furthermore, there are works that address the decidedly global frameworks within which sexual knowledge circulated and early LGBT movements formed since the late 19th century (Fuechtner, Haynes and Jones 2018; Bayramoğlu and Lünenborg 2018; Symons and Altman 2016; Buffington 2014; Zuelow 2011; Altman 2001; Rupp 2001). Since the 2010s, trans* historians have as well explored the impact of cross-border mobilities on gender identities and trans* intimacies (Stryker and Aizura 2013; Bakker et al. 2020). In this vein, the Transgender Studies 2.0 paradigm explicitly advocates the analysis of the various ways of transing in different parts of the globe, also beyond the Global North. The same paradigm also investigates the different extent to which transgender people from various countries and social backgrounds have the opportunity to travel and migrate (Stryker and Aizura 2013).

Research on queer intimacies across the globe has particularly been driven by developments in the study of queer and trans migration. It shows the opportunities and challenges that queer migrants from the Global South experienced when relocating to the Global North due to parameters, like border regimes and homonationalism (for instance, Cantú and Luibheid 2005; Chavez 2021; Manalansan 2003; Mole 2021; Tamagawa 2020). Such research has shown that queer identities and practices vary in different geographical contexts and that queer migrants from the Global South moving to the Global North often vacillate between categorisations of intimacy employed in the sending and the receiving societies (on this point, see also Chiang and Wong 2016). Moreover, queer migration studies have recently expanded to examine not only the movement of people from the Global South to the Global North, but also within the Global South, like between Chinese-speaking countries and regions (Ting-Fai Yu 2020).

Meanwhile, a growing body of research considers sexual dynamics in Eastern Europe and asks how they differed from and may have shaped developments in 'the West' (for instance, Kulpa and Mizielinska 2016; Ghodsee 2018; McLellan 2011; Huneke 2022; Rottmann 2023; Freeland 2022; Hearne 2025). This body of work explores heterosexual and queer practices and shows that transformations in intimate practices in Central Eastern Europe were not always identical with relevant developments in the West nor necessarily resulted from the import of ideas from North

[7] On intra-European flows in the context of AIDS activism see also the EUROPACH project: http://europach.phils.uj.edu.pl (last accessed on 1 August 2022).

America and Northwestern Europe. This body of work also indicates the heterogeneity of Central Eastern Europe in terms of intimate norms and practices (Kulpa and Mizielinska 2016).

The special issue complicates those nuanced approaches to transnational and global intimacies and/or mobilities by illuminating transfers of people in the Global North and South whose impact on intimacies has been understudied. It does so in two ways. First, it takes a multidirectional approach that helps re-appraise the position of Central Eastern Europe in the global flows of people and intimate norms and practices. While emerging research mentioned above has shown that shifting intimate practices in Central Eastern Europe were not a carbon copy of relevant changes in the West during the 'sexual revolution', the articles of Komaromi and Dobrowolska take a step further to show that sexual transformations in Central Eastern Europe under state socialism also had an imprint on intimate practices in the West. Similarly, in showing the journeys of Lato and the reverberations of her images in the West and Central Eastern Europe, Dobrowolska's article challenges the traditional historiography of migration that analyses the movement of people from Central Eastern Europe to the West by demonstrating that mobility in late Cold War Europe was a two-way process. Komaromi investigates intra-European sex tourism across the Iron Curtain, showing how Western men performed a range of masculinities in their intimate transactional sex encounters with Hungarian women, often influenced by the intimate practices of the latter.

Second, the special issue combines a multidirectional approach with one appreciating the lack of fixity of the notion of intimacy, as mentioned above, in complicating the trajectories of gender systems across the Pacific. The abovementioned research on queer migrants moving from the Global South to the Global North has been constructively ambiguous in showing how those migrants vacillated between categories and identities existing in the sending and receiving societies. Shah's article helps recalibrate this body of work by demonstrating how queer migrants could also serve as a driving force for shaping queer practices in the Global North. Crucially, Shah shows how European migrant and/or Black men sex workers living in Alaska employed the Filipino gender system and the relevant category of the *bakla*, a gendered category that does not fit the male-female dichotomy, in developing intimate relationships with Filipino migrants.

In addition, the special issue engages with and helps diversify research on intimacy and mobility within the West or from the West to the Global South that critically reflects on the freedom vs oppression dichotomy in three ways: First, it broadens the range of spaces that research on intimacy and mobility considers: Relevant scholarship on shifting intimate practices in the West, particularly during the 'sexual revolution', has focused on medical developments, shifting

consumer cultures (including leisure venues) and activist patterns and encounters (see, for instance, the relevant observation made in Herzog 2011, 133-34). By contrast, Shah's article for this special issue demonstrates the ambivalent nature of the intimate encounters of Filipino students in a YMCA club in Seattle: while those students had to conform with strict rules regarding their comportment there, frequenting this venue enabled them to develop intimate connections that unfolded in ways that could also deviate from those rules. Thus, their YMCA club encounters could both subvert and shore up the dominant intimate norms in Seattle. Second, this collection of articles also complicates analyses of the impact of transatlantic flows on intimate practices in North America and Europe. In particular, while scholarship on the reception of US American cultural patterns in Western Europe (e.g., Fehrenbach and Poiger 1999; Poiger 2000; Maase 2001) has shown how those flows have helped challenge dominant intimate norms across the West, Klopprogge's article shows that the transfer of ideas between Black people in the USA and African American soldiers stationed in the Federal Republic of Germany was also crucial to challenging but also shoring up dominant heteronormativity in those communities.

Third, the special issue contributes to historical research on intersectionality and assemblage (Crenshaw 1989; McCall 2005). Focusing on groups struggling with and against marginalization, such as migrants and sex workers, the contributions to this issue consider how people are affected by interlocked systems of power with regard to parameters, like social class, gender, race, and age. It complements the works reviewed by Julia Moses and Julia Woesthoff (2021) on intimate practices and relationships across boundaries showing that 'notions about ethnicity, religion, gender and social class often overlap and intersect *in various ways* [our emphasis] when it comes to relationships'. In this vein, the special issue articles show how interracial intimacies, queer and heterosexual, could both reinforce and challenge racial prejudice. Klopprogge studies a "liminal moment" after the Second World War, when the intimate contact between Black American men and white German women was marked by "mutual attraction" and "playful exuberance". By contrast, Ewing shows how the language used in the 1970s and 1980s by John Stamford, "created opportunities for white, western European men [seeking sex with underage boys] to pursue sexually exploitative and harmful practices that were inextricable from wider networks of gay travel". Similarly, Heathcote analyses the racial exoticisation of African people in Kenya by white American gay men tourists in 1970-1978, but also the agency that African men displayed in their intimate encounters with those American tourists. In this vein, Heathcote shows how African men sex workers negotiated some control during sex with white American tourists, and how the former tried to accumulate wealth from those intimate interactions.

To show that rather than following a trajectory of liberalisation, intersectional encounters unfolded in a non-linear manner, the special issue has a broad temporal focus from the 1920s to the 1990s to show the contingency and complexity of shifting intimate practices and relevant mobilities. The First International Congress for Sexual Reform on the Basis of Sexual Science took place in 1921. In the same year, the USA introduced The National Origins Formula of 1921 which restricted the influx of migrants and engendered a shift in global mobility regimes. Between the 1920s and 1990s, the collection encompasses liminal moments, like the aforementioned one of the late 1940s. Moreover, it considers continuities and changes in intimate practices, queer and heterosexual, in the context of the AIDS epidemic. Around the 1990s, when demands to restrict migration once more gained currency in Western societies, the perception of sexual diversity also changed in decisive ways, not only, but also due to HIV and AIDS. In Europe, one can observe a move away from the intensified vilification of gay men that had characterised the early years of the HIV pandemic and a gradual process of normalisation. Social acceptance grew, bisexual stories circulated more easily and "simplistic assumptions about the differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals" were challenged (Herzog 2011, 180-183). In the Global South, HIV and AIDS evolved into a 'double sword' instead that brought mounting homophobia as well as intensified gay and queer activism (Broqua 2015). While taking a broad temporal focus, the collection mostly addresses the post-Second World War period, to help extend historiographical discussions around intersectionality from colonial to post-colonial contexts.

In conclusion, the contributions to this special issue outline a globally entangled history of intimacies on the move characterised by multidirectional transfers and changes. They revolve around the ways in which intimacies and mobilities have been closely linked in the experiences and practices of subjects whose backgrounds differed above all in terms of social class, gender and 'race'. Bringing these diverse positionalities into view, allows to avoid the over-simplified opposition between liberal and repressive sexual regimes or mobility regimes. This special issue thus outlines histories, that cannot be easily mapped onto political geographies that juxtapose East and West, (global) North and South or are narrated with recourse to the historical master-narratives of liberalization or modernization. Instead, much messier, ambivalent histories emerge. In fact, it is one of the merits of the actor-centred focus on intimacies and mobilities put forward here, that it guides the view not only to the experiences and agencies of historical subjects that constantly navigated changing political and social conditions, but also to the fundamental malleability and fluidity of sexual regimes and identities.

To return to the trans woman selling sex in West Berlin, which we mentioned in the beginning: She travelled, after a few years and after overcoming initial hesitations, to Casablanca where she

underwent gender-affirming surgery (Vakalidou 2007, 256). This journey was not a unique one: several people from various countries, including Israel, Greece, France and the UK have had such surgery in the Moroccan city on the Atlantic coast (e.g., Meyer et al. 2018). The impact of this experience on their subsequent intimate lives, the ways in which they may have sexoticised the people they met in Casablanca and vice versa, and the mobilities in which they engaged after the surgery, are issues that have just begun to be studied.

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