



Article

# Problematizing Mobility: A Metaphor of Stickiness, Non-Places and the Kinetic Elite

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## Abstract

A ‘mobilities turn’ has taken place in the social sciences, which is finding its way into organization studies. As research highlights how work and organization are mobile and spatially dispersed, metaphors of liquidity, flows, fluidity and nomads have become significant. This article seeks to contribute to the mobilities turn by introducing the Sartrean metaphor of stickiness. In contrast to the currently dominant movement metaphors, this metaphor brings into focus ambiguities and frictions and overcomes problematic connotations of nomadism and sedentarism. The paper draws on the metaphor of stickiness to reveal the kinetic elite’s – the group of highly mobile elite workers – experiences of ‘non-places’ (Augé, 1995), which are ephemeral, interchangeable and monotonous spaces of mobility. Qualitative data gathered at two management consultancy firms show how the stickiness of being on the move can give rise to experiences of ambiguity, disorientation and loss: the lures of glamour, escape and liberation from places can collide with non-places that involve fixed instability, feeling stuck and that stick to one even when returning to places. In so doing, the article develops how the metaphor of stickiness can constitute an important lens for understanding and conceptualizing mobilities.

## Keywords

kinetic elite, metaphor, mobility, non-place, space, stickiness

## Introduction

Following the ‘spatial turn’, we now seem to be witnessing a ‘mobile’ or ‘mobilities’ turn in the social sciences (Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2000, 2007). This turn aims to understand the implications of the various forms of (im)mobilities for contemporary social life and to use appropriate theories, concepts and metaphors that shift the focus from stasis, structure and boundaries to movement and mobilities. Of course, movement, flux and transience have long been defining features of the modern experience, as the writings of Simmel (1950) on metropolitan life or Benjamin (1999) on the Parisian flâneur remind us. The extent and intensity of today’s mobilities, such as the rise of

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information spreading through the internet, global product trading, refugee migration or travelling, have arguably amplified, bringing about new social, economic, political and ecological developments (Bauman, 2000; Cresswell & Merriman, 2011; Urry, 2007).

This turn is also significant for organization studies. As work and organizations have become 'mobilized' – examples range from spatially dispersed virtual teams, use of mobile information technology to temporary work and professional travel – we may need to rethink conceptualizations of what working and organizing means. Perhaps most importantly here, mobilities challenge the spatially bounded conception of organization that traditionally underlies studies of organization. This not only builds upon a misconception of space (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Dale & Burrell, 2008), but also neglects the sites of work and organizing outside the confines of a single *workplace* (Felstead et al., 2005; Garsten, 2008; Halford, 2005; Knox et al., 2008; Sergot et al., 2012).

In this article I aim to contribute to extant studies of mobilities by bringing in the metaphor of stickiness, as developed by Sartre (2003 [1943]). Metaphors are central for how we conceptualize and understand social and organizational life (Morgan, 1980). As research in the field of organization studies and social sciences, more generally, seeks to explore mobilities, metaphors of liquidity, fluidity, flows or nomads have become significant (e.g. Bauman, 2000; Castells, 1996; Urry, 2000). However, these metaphors do not allow mobilities to be conceived as ambiguous and full of contradictions; they largely convey a kind of frictionless movement and floating. Further, they risk carrying one-sided connotations of either nomadic – where mobility is celebrated as liberation from place – or sedentarist understandings of mobility – where it is equated with chaos, uncertainty and alienation (Cresswell, 2006; Hoskins & Maddern, 2011; Wolff, 1993). The Sartrean metaphor, in contrast, allows illuminating how mobilities can be contradictory. It provides a basis to 'get closer' (Latour, 2004, p. 244) to empirical complexity and thereby critique the currently dominant ideal of mobility.

Particularly, a second contribution of the article is to develop the metaphor of stickiness in the context of the kinetic elite – the exclusive, powerful, global group of mobile workers (Cresswell, 2006) – and show how, not even for this elite, mobility is frictionless. Qualitative data gathered at two management consultancy firms reveal experiences of ambiguity and contradictions in the kinetic elite's mobility – something that existing studies on the kinetic elite have not sufficiently addressed so far (e.g. Elliott & Urry, 2010; Felstead et al., 2005; Muhr, 2012). These experiences are analysed by exploring the ways in which discourses and practices of mobility, place and non-place, which are ephemeral, transient and interchangeable spaces, interact. Indeed, a third contribution of the article is to show how the concept of non-place, as developed by the anthropologist Marc Augé (1995), can usefully capture the experiential dynamics in spaces of mobility, such as hotels, airports and trains.

The paper is structured as follows: First, in presenting the mobilities turn, I develop the need for broadening the metaphorical repertoire beyond notions of liquidity, fluidity, flows and nomad as well as for drawing attention to frictions and ambiguities in mobility, specifically of the kinetic elite. Second, I outline sedentarist and nomadist connotations of mobility approaches and argue that the Sartrean metaphor of stickiness, which I subsequently introduce along with Augé's concept of non-place, can overcome these. Third, the study's methodological considerations and the cases of the two management consultancy firms are presented. Fourth, the empirical analysis explores how the stickiness of being on the move can entail experiences of ambiguity, disorientation and loss amongst the kinetic elite. Fifth, the concluding discussion develops the significance of the metaphor of stickiness for understanding, conceptualizing and critiquing mobility.

## 'Mobilizing' Organization Studies

In the social sciences we have recently witnessed a 'mobile' or 'mobilities turn' – a turn that is largely associated with the works of the sociologist John Urry as well as human geographer Tim Cresswell. Particularly, Urry has defined a 'mobilities paradigm' that seeks to investigate how the rise of mobility (in its different versions, i.e. corporeal, physical, imaginative, virtual and communicate movement) affects social life and develop a 'movement-driven social science':

A mobilities paradigm is not just substantively different, in that it remedies the neglect and omissions of various movements of people, ideas and so on. But it is transformative of social science, authorizing an alternative theoretical and methodological landscape. ... It enables the 'social world' to be theorized as a wide array of economic, social and political practices, infrastructures and ideologies that all involve, entail or curtail various kinds of movements of people, or ideas, or information or objects ... [T]his paradigm brings to the fore theories, methods and exemplars of research that have been mostly subterranean, out of sight. (Urry, 2007, p. 18)

The rise in mobilities is often associated with wider developments concerning globalization, flexible accumulation and information technology (Augé, 1995; Bauman, 2000; Harvey, 1989), accompanied by an ideological dominance of mobility: 'to move, to change – that is what enjoys prestige, as against stability, which is often synonymous with inaction' (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 155). Of course, caution is needed not to overstate the extent to which the social world and, particularly, work and organizations – the focus of this paper – have become more mobile. The notion of travel originally derives from the French word *travail* – work – (Elliott & Urry, 2010, p. 51), showing the inextricable connections between mobility and work; for a long time there have been occupations, such as itinerant farm workers, salesman and traders, working in mobile ways (Thompson, 1991).

Notwithstanding these caveats, recent research in the field of organization studies has shown how contemporary forms of mobility can significantly shape work and organization. Here, mobility, or more precisely mobilities, refers to a plethora of phenomena – from, say, professional travel, teleworking, home working, mobile information technology to temporary work, project-based work or virtual teams. As research draws attention to the spatially dispersed nature of work and organization, the need for moving away from a spatially fixed conception of organization is underlined (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Dale & Burrell, 2008). Studies have started to investigate the kinds of spaces, such as virtual spaces or spaces of travel, in which activities of work and organization take place outside the confines of a specific workplace (Felstead et al., 2005; Sergot et al., 2012). For instance, research has shown how working anywhere and at any time greatly relies on the workings of information technology (amongst other things, as a way to control the mobile worker) so that matters of socio-materiality gain in significance (Elliott & Urry, 2010; Halford, 2005; Knox et al., 2008).

Most importantly for this article, studies have pointed out how mobilities give rise to vagabonds – the modern poor, immigrant, illegal wanderer or temporary worker, on the one hand, and the kinetic elite – the global professional, manager, politician and academic, on the other hand (Bauman, 1998; Cresswell, 2006). Garsten's (1999, 2008) studies of temporary workers are particularly revealing of the vagabonds' mobility. She notes how they find themselves under a mobility imperative: a 'forced mobility and uprooting, a relative lack of security and an uncertain future career' (2008, p. 65). This results in various struggles, for instance, in terms of keeping up a sense of self and finding a place in a community. In contrast to the vagabond, the kinetic elite worker, who, some argue, forms a new global elite or class (Carroll, 2008; Robinson, 2004), travels freely for pleasure and

through choice, enjoys the vagabond's services and requires the immobilities of others, e.g. the secretary, ground staff. Here, mobility provides the basis to construct an identity of exclusivity, superiority and wealth as well as of being fast, flexible and unconstrained (Elliott & Urry, 2010; Felstead et al., 2005; see also McKenna & Richardson, 2007). Yet, as the empirical analysis will show, not even for the kinetic elite is mobility frictionless – this importantly underlines the need for developing mobility metaphors that capture it as an ambiguous and contradictory phenomenon.

### *Broadening the Metaphorical Repertoire*

In bringing into focus mobilities, the literature has developed a certain repertoire of metaphors. Indeed, Urry (2007) has called on researchers 'to develop through appropriate metaphors a sociology which focuses upon movement, mobility and contingent ordering, rather than upon stasis, structure and social order' (2007, p. 9). Metaphors are central to how social and organizational life is conceived of, theorized and experienced (Morgan, 1980). They affect how researchers approach phenomena and the kinds of insights, realities and meanings they generate. In mobilities studies metaphors of flow, fluidity, liquidity and the nomad have particularly gained momentum. For instance, Urry largely uses 'metaphors of network, flow and travel' (2000, p. 22), Castells refers to flows and networks and Bauman to metaphors of liquidity and the nomad – the latter is also key in Deleuze and Guattari's work.

In this article I seek to introduce the metaphor of *stickiness*, as developed by Sartre (2003 [1943]), to discussions on mobilities. I propose that research needs to move beyond the metaphors of flow, fluidity, liquidity and nomad. My argument is, first, that the currently dominant metaphors cannot fully capture and address the ambiguities and frictions involved in people's mobile working lives; they overly stress a certain lightness and easiness of floating and moving. Second, research needs to take into account more the connotations extant metaphors carry, specifically concerning 'nomadism' and 'sedentarism' (discussed in more detail shortly), which, I argue, the metaphor of stickiness can overcome. That is not to say that existing mobilities research does not discuss any tensions or take a critical stance. Instead, my point is that this is not sufficiently reflected in their metaphors. Let us now take a closer look at how some studies have drawn attention to contradictions and pointed to the need for broadening the metaphorical repertoire (however, without developing mobility metaphors capturing ambiguity and tensions, as I intend to do). Here, we can also see how frictions in the kinetic elite's mobilities – the focus of this paper's empirical analysis – have received scant attention so far.

Knox et al.'s (2008) study underlines the need to rethink extant mobilities metaphors. Specifically, they argue that Castells' notion of flows does not fully capture the workings of spaces of mobilities, namely airports. In their interrelation with digital information and communications technology, these spaces involve constant risks of rupture and disorder, thereby becoming unpredictable and uncontrollable:

All kinds of new borders and boundaries, zones of transition, and mutual interference across 'virtual' and 'real' dimensions in organization are emerging to complicate the Castellan dream of flow. ... Unlike Castells we find that this 'space of flows' [the airport] and its logic(s) of organization is challenging the spatial and social categories through which objects, subjects and organization are normally described and in ways that disrupt and disturb flow. (Knox et al., 2008, p. 884)

Similarly, Dale and Burrell (2008) point to the need for broadening the metaphorical repertoire and specifically for '*thinking about flows in a more complex way than that often proffered to us by*

*theorists of liquidity*' (2008, pp. 214–15, emphasis added). They introduce a riparian metaphor of river and banks. Whilst bringing into focus issues of social materiality, this metaphor still lacks conveying frictions, tensions and ambiguity.

Urry (2007) refers to contradictions involved in mobilities and questions the metaphor of flows (despite heavily using it). For instance, he is at pains to show mobilities' costs with respect to the environment:

[T]wentieth-century capitalism generated the most striking of contradictions. Its pervasive, mobile and promiscuous commodification involved utterly unprecedented levels of energy production and consumption, a high-carbon society whose dark legacy we are beginning to reap. (Elliott & Urry, 2010, p. 140)

When writing about Simmel's theorization of mobilities, Urry (2007) states that the flow metaphor does not sufficiently capture contradictions: 'Simmel elaborates the nature of flux not flow and this corrects a conceptualization of mobilities as simply flows. ... Flux involves tensions, struggle and conflict' (2007, p. 25).

Although I suggest that the metaphor of liquidity does not sufficiently convey frictions and tensions, this does not mean that Bauman's (2000) work does not draw attention to these. On the contrary, his work is greatly concerned with highlighting the costs of liquid modernity, especially for the vagabond (see also Clegg & Baumeler, 2010). As aforementioned, in the context of work and organization Garsten's (2008) writings on vagabonds, inspired by Bauman, reveal how temporary workers' mobile lives are overridden with ambiguities, being 'between and betwixt' (Garsten, 1999) organizations. Importantly, like Bauman, Garsten distinguishes the vagabonds' mobility from the elite's, such as management consultants:

When high-flying management consultants travel between cities and clients, mobility has a different ring to it, is seen as more prestigious and glamorous ... While consultants tend to 'travel', temps tend to 'jump around'. (2008, p. 150)

Yet in this article I wish to highlight that this does not mean that the kinetic elite's mobility is frictionless. Whilst it is constructed as exclusive and glamorous (as Garsten points out), I want to show how it can also give rise to a sense of dislocation, uncertainty and emptiness as spaces of mobility are experienced as 'non-places' (Augé, 1995). This insight that not even the kinetic elite, unquestionably in the best position to enjoy mobilities, constitutes free nomads, moving in fluid-, flow- or liquid-like ways, not only serves to question the current ideological celebrations of mobility but also further underlines the need for broadening the metaphorical repertoire.

However, there has been little empirical research on the kinetic elite, pointing out frictions in their mobilities. More generally, Elliott and Urry (2010) note that 'what is absent ... is any sustained consideration of the "experiential texture" of the lives of globals' (2010, p. 67). Whilst they explore how the global elite's identity is constructed around speed, networks and some kind of detached engagement, their analysis does not address tensions and contradictions in their mobilities. Felstead et al. (2005), on the other hand, demonstrate how kinetic elite workers are confronted with uncertainty, the unpredictable and disruptions. However, they mainly focus on what this means for practising mobility, e.g. in terms of having to plan for unexpected events. Only in passing they note a 'sense of isolation' (2005, p. 30) that can arise in transitional, bland and anonymous spaces of mobility. In relation to space and mobility, Muhr's (2012) recent study of a consultant's experience of culturally generic spaces, e.g. hotels, is particularly interesting. She shows how the kinetic elite can find some kind of comfort and familiarity in such bland and homogeneous spaces,

enabling them to regain a sense of identity when travelling through foreign countries. Whilst this study underlines the importance of non-places in the kinetic elite's work life and identity, it does not provide insights on ambiguities, tensions and, indeed, the sense of emptiness such spaces can also give rise to.

Taken together, research has so far mainly used metaphors of flow, liquidity, nomads and fluidity that do not allow conceptualizing frictions. Furthermore, there has been little research on the kinetic elite's experiences of mobility, specifically exploring tensions and ambiguities in relation to spaces of mobility. The aim of this paper is to explore these and, in so doing, develop the metaphor of stickiness for mobilities research. Before introducing the Sartrean metaphor of stickiness along with Augé's non-place, the next section outlines the nomadic and sedentarist approaches as to show how mobilities are typically defined in relation to place and to clarify my approach to mobilities.

## **Towards the Metaphor of Stickiness: Beyond Nomadism and Sedentarism**

Metaphors of mobility can signify more than simply the movement of people or objects in space, time or (social) levels; they constitute root metaphors for understanding culture and society. Here, the nomadic and sedentarist approaches to mobility have been influential.

### *Mobility as Critique – The Nomadic Approach*

The nomadic approach celebrates mobility as deviance, resistance and the displacement of fixity. It constitutes a broad metaphor for a radical critique of anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism, as mobility disturbs hegemonic structures of ordering (Cresswell, 2006; Shields, 1997; Urry, 2007). De Certeau's (1984) analysis of the practice of walking through the streets exemplifies this approach, where walking as a tactical art creatively and playfully destabilizes predetermined structures. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) celebrate mobility embodied by the 'nomad', a de-centred and desiring figure that smoothes place through nomadic movement. Cresswell (2006) summarizes what centrally defines the nomadic approach to mobility: the 'fluid, dynamic, in flux or simply mobile ... is seen to be progressive' whereby place, namely what is 'rooted, based on foundations, static, or bounded ... is seen to be reactionary' (2006, p. 25). Here, mobility is an antonym of conservative/sedentarist notions of place, identity and meaning.

The nomadic approach has been criticized for over-enthusiastically embracing mobility as a desirable and universal condition. As Wolff (1993) famously argues:

The problem with terms like 'nomad', 'maps' and 'travel' is that they are not usually located, and hence ... they suggest ungrounded and unbounded movement ... but the consequent suggestion of free and equal mobility is itself a deception, since we don't all have the same access to the road. For all these metaphors, there is a centre. We therefore have to think carefully about employing a vocabulary which, liberatory in many ways, also encourages the irresponsibility of flight and misleadingly implies a notion of universal and equal mobility. (1993, p. 235)

Whilst the nomadic approach contains 'liberatory' potential, rejecting essentialist/sedentarist notions of space (e.g. Braidotti, 1994; Massey, 1994), its metaphors can tend to seemingly unequivocally celebrate mobility without stressing its variations and, most importantly for this paper, tensions, costs and ambiguities in lived experience (for an exception see Thanem, 2012). This may



explain why studies of mobilities that arguably uphold ideals of movement yet lack a radical political agenda have been ascribed to a nomadic approach (e.g. Castells, 1996). There seems a danger that the nomadic approach, contra to its intentions, does not sufficiently manage to distance itself from a neo-liberal stance on mobility, which similarly rejects any notion of place/stability – seen as uncompetitive and bureaucratic – and celebrates fluidity and movement – seen as emblematic of opportunity, choice, innovation and creativity (see also Žižek, 2004).

### *A Critique of Mobility – The Sedentarist Approach*

In contrast, the sedentarist approach represents a critique of mobility itself, reflecting the recurrent critique of modernity as a source of anxiety, fragmentation and disintegration (e.g. Simmel, 1950). Here mobility is seen as destructive and threatening to places and, specifically, their authenticity and rootedness required for organic social relations (Crang, 2002; Hoskins & Maddern, 2011; Urry, 2007). Arguably, this approach underlies the writings of Bauman (e.g. 2001a, 2001b) and more so of Putnam (2000), where their discussions, in a slightly nostalgic tone, refer to the more stable and less fragmented past, communities and self. Sedentarism has been critiqued for its essentialist and misconceived understanding of space, identity and meaning as something fixed and stable (Cresswell, 2006). This approach unequivocally favours (an illusory) stability over mobility, movement and fluidity, thereby failing to account for how people may in fact suffer from a lack of mobility (Urry, 2002). Lurking behind the sedentarist approach is a 'dangerous' alliance with conservative apprehensions of mobility, associated with chaos and disorder that destroys the stability provided by roots, tradition, etc. Resulting from a lack of empirical grounding and complexity (Crang, 2002), the sedentarist approach often risks exaggerating (in a nostalgic tone) the extent to which things have changed, dissolved, vanished and melted. To this extent, it can actually believe too much in the depictions of mobilities put forward by the current ideology of movement.

### *The Sartrean Metaphor of Stickiness*

In this paper I seek to position the metaphor of stickiness beyond the nomadist and sedentarist approach and focus on the ways in which mobility is experienced in organizational life. In line with Latour's (2004) call, I seek to 'get closer' to the empirical complexity so as to develop a critical stance on the current mobility ideal. This is not to say that the aforementioned mobilities studies necessarily subscribe to nomadism or sedentarism (e.g. Urry, 2007, p. 163) or that every metaphor can be necessarily ascribed to one of the approaches. The point I simply try to make here is that mobilities researchers need to be more reflective of the possibly nomadic or sedentarist connotations of the metaphors they use. Transcending the pitfalls of the sedentarist/potentially conservative and nomadic/potentially neo-liberal positions requires moving away from approaching mobilities in a one-sided manner (i.e. as either a threat to the stability of or the recipe for emancipation from places). This can be achieved by developing metaphors that bring to light the various, indeed contradictory and ambiguous, ways in which mobilities are understood, practised and experienced in social and organizational life.

One such metaphor is that of stickiness as developed by Sartre (2003, pp. 620–36) towards the end of *Being and Nothingness*.<sup>1</sup> Sartre states that stickiness constitutes an inherently ambiguous substance, in-between liquidity and solidity:

At first, with the appearance of a fluid it manifests to us a being which is everywhere fleeing ... which on all sides escapes yet on which one can float, a being without danger and without memory ... on which one

leaves no mark and which could not leave a mark on us, a being which slides and on which one can slide, which can be possessed by something sliding ... and which never possesses because it rolls over us ... But immediately the sticky reveals itself as essentially ambiguous because its fluidity exists in slow motion; there is sticky thickness in its liquidity. (Sartre, 2003, pp. 627–8)

Following this ambiguous nature, the sticky provides neither a sense of stability nor a sense of freedom: 'its mode of being is neither the reassuring inertia of the solid or the dynamism like that in water which is exhausted in fleeing from me' (2003, p. 629). It rather leaves one in a state of 'fixed instability' (2003, p. 628), in that one cannot hold on to and possess it. As Sartre (2003) explains: 'I am no longer the master in arresting the process of appropriation [but by] sinking in the sticky, I feel that I am going to be lost; that is, that I may dissolve in the sticky' (2003, p. 628). Unlike water and the liquid, the sticky does not let go; it overruns, conquers and stays: 'I want to let go ... and it sticks to me, it draws me, it sucks at me' (2003, p. 628).

The Sartrean metaphor of stickiness, I propose, extends existing metaphors of mobilities by bringing into focus frictions, tensions and ambiguities.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, in the empirical analysis I develop how this metaphor serves to reveal mobilities' lures of autonomy and escape from places, yet how this can also involve an ambiguous experience of being stuck coupled with a sense of disorientation and of loss of control and oneself – an experience that can particularly arise in the context of spaces of mobilities, namely non-places.

### *Spaces of Mobility: Non-places*

The concept of non-place has been developed by the anthropologist Marc Augé – a concept that extant studies of organization and work have not engaged with in any detail either (with the exception of Muhr, 2012). Typical examples of non-places are airports, hotels and trains. These spaces are increasingly significant for mobile workers as work is organized in spatially dispersed ways. They are regarded as emblematic of our contemporary times (Buchanan, 2005) – though, of course, they existed before (e.g. Kracauer, 1995a [1963]). For Augé (1995), non-places become increasingly significant in today's supermodernity. In contrast to places, non-places do not provide meaning, a set of references or have an identity for those occupying them:<sup>3</sup>

If place can be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. (Augé, 1995, pp. 77–8)

Importantly, there is nothing inherent to a space that makes it into a place or non-place. The concept of non-place is therefore not absolute but relative, depending on the individual and his/her lived experience. Non-places are fleeting, temporary and homogeneous as they are approached in instrumental ways. They fulfil a particular function (e.g. of bringing a person from one location to another) and their time frame is one of actuality, of the here and now. As a result of their homogeneous functionality, individuals can feel that their singularity is lost in non-places. Importantly, Augé also notes that the anonymity of non-places can temporarily 'be felt as liberation' (1995, p. 101) and 'a foreigner lost ... can feel at home ... only in the anonymity of motorways, service stations, big stores or hotel chains' (1995, p. 106; see also Muhr, 2012). However, overall, Augé stresses that 'the space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude' (1995, p. 103). This underlines how spaces of mobility can entail a sense of loss of identity, emptiness and loneliness.

The following empirical analysis develops how the notion of non-place nicely complements the Sartrean metaphor of stickiness as it brings into focus ambiguous spatial experiences of mobility,



arising in relation to nomadist and/or sedentarist constructions of place. In line with my use of the metaphor of stickiness, I conceptually situate the idea of non-place at the level of lived experience. This means that I do not suggest that such spaces are a-historical and/or operate outside of culture, society and economy (Merriman, 2004; Ritzer, 2007; see also Muhr, 2012). Instead I use this notion to capture how individuals can experience spaces of mobility as providing little basis for constructing a meaningful identity, social relations and so forth. Moreover, I do not employ the concept of non-place in any kind of sedentarist way. Although Augé argues that the relation between non-place and place is relative – thus he does not regard space as expressive of a certain essence, e.g. an airport does not necessarily constitute a non-place for each and every individual – his work seems to favour places with their connotations of stability, authenticity and belongingness over non-places (Crang, 2000; Cresswell, 2006; Hoskins & Maddern, 2011; Urry, 2007). In contrast, I problematize how the very experience of non-place is expressive of constructions of place as dull and/or stable and secure in the first place.

## **Researching Mobility at Forward Consulting and Consulting Express**

This paper draws on qualitative data gathered at two large globally operating management consulting firms, referred to as Forward Consulting (FC) and Consulting Express (CE). The empirical study was conducted with the broad aim of researching culture, identity and organization. The topic of mobility did not represent an *a priori* focus (hence data are not prompted through leading questions). Data were collected through participant observations, 12 focus-group workshops and a total of 58 semi-structured interviews from analyst to director level, which on average lasted one hour. Initially, I wanted to conduct a ‘mobile ethnology’ (Czarniawska, 2007) by participating in client projects. However, such access was denied. Instead, at CE, I was part of an internal HR team. I went to the different CE London offices up to four times per week and participated in focus-group discussions. The 15 semi-structured interviews with CE consultants were not part of the HR project and the findings were not reported back to management. At FC, apart from 42 consultants, one HR manager was interviewed to gain deeper insights into the official HR discourse. Observations of the office environments and after-work socializing were conducted.

The workshops and interviews were tape-recorded and observational field notes were taken. All data were transcribed, coded and analysed with the aim of bringing to the forefront significant themes relating to culture, identity and organization. The data analysis process involved going back and forth between the empirical material and existing theory whilst being open to or, indeed, in search of, unexplored and unexpected insights. In this process, spatial work configurations and mobility emerged as important themes for understanding the consulting working life. In this article I do not explore one particular space of mobility in depth as I am not interested in investigating space as such but rather experiences of mobility, which need to be understood in the context of various spaces, such as trains, client sites, the office and home.

My interest in mobility might be informed by my research experience and being a Baumanian global academic. When entering the empirical field, I was initially overwhelmed by the long working hours and travelling to the research site, often having to take a 6.45 am train and returning to Cambridge late in the evening. Hetherington (2007) has suggested that academics’ interest in non-places simply reflects ‘themselves [having] become mobile’, spending significant amounts of time in ‘the airport lounge, Bonaventure hotels, conference centers, motorways and ... the aircraft’ (2007, pp. 178–9). There might be some truth in this, though I believe there are differences between mobilities of global academics and consultants (e.g. in terms of frequency and comfort), not to

mention that academics' mobilities vary too (Gouldner, 1957). In any case, I seek to go beyond a simple self-indulgent discussion and critically investigate consultants' conceptions of mobility, non-place and place.

This study is of an exploratory nature. Its findings are not approached as being representative of contemporary organizations, the consultancy industry at large or the organizations empirically investigated. Consulting firms can be regarded as extreme cases of spatially dispersed forms of working and organizing; it is part of the job to work on projects at the client organization and to be constantly on the move (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003; Kipping & Armbrüster, 2002). At FC and CE, the project teams are often placed away from their London offices and in locations such as Nottingham, Amsterdam, small towns in Belgium or South Africa. Consultants spend a lot of time in spaces of travel, such as taxis, cars, planes, train stations and airports, and may stay week after week in hotel rooms, which can be for months, years or only days at the same place. Both companies stand for the kinetic elite. They are frequently considered 'top players' in the consultancy industry and 'best employers', as FC and CE consultants enjoy high salaries and swift career opportunities. The firms largely recruit graduates from elite universities, e.g. Oxford and Cambridge.

## **The Sticky Allure of Mobile Work: Glamour, Escape and Liberation**

Equipped with a laptop and mobile phone, the consultants work in literally mobile and open-plan offices. They are usually 'on the road' so that, apart from partners, consultants are not assigned fixed workspaces at their 'home office' and desks are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. At both companies the absence of a designated workplace is largely understood as an exciting opportunity of spatial flexibility, discursively set against 'normal' and 'dull' nine-to-five jobs, fixed to a certain place. Perhaps this differs from previous work ideals, where especially for 'middle management ... the achievement of a private office has long been a sign of having made it' (Baldry, 1999, p. 550). Instead, at FC and CE, being in the exclusive position of flying and getting to know different exciting locations 'all over the country, all over the world' (Claudia, HR, FC) is valorized: 'FC provides a unique opportunity to combine your dream of travelling ... with invaluable ... business experience' (excerpt from recruitment campaign).

Travelling is related not only to project work but also to non-work activities of leisure and consumption; from climbing the Kilimanjaro for charity, diving in the Caribbean Sea with the company sports team to engaging in CSR projects in Africa. The valorization of being on the move seems indicative of the identity exhorted by the firms' cultural environments; displaying an exciting, adventurous, restless and fun personality is desired and looked for in recruiting, given the connotations of being innovative, entrepreneurial and creative. Consultants remark how, outside of work and before having started working for the company, they 'like to travel a lot' (Miriam, manager, FC) to exotic destinations, such as 'Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and Cambodia' (John, consultant, CE). Arguably this serves to position them as suitable candidates for the firms.

One way to understand the 'power of attraction' (Augé, 1995, p. 118) of mobility concerns how it constitutes a proxy for exclusivity and excitement. Travelling, such as flying, is the epitome of glamour, as the notion 'the jet set' underlines (despite budget airlines, the increasingly tedious security checks and so forth). Indeed, the consultants fly business (or even first) class and stay in expensive hotels. Being on the move is presented by the organizations and is largely understood by employees as glamorous and exclusive:

My major motivation was definitely to work for a global firm. ... So at that time the prospect of travelling in my job ... was my motivation for choosing a firm like CE. ... I thought I would be a *glamorous*, high-flying business woman ... carrying a Prada briefcase and Prada heels [laughing]. (Lisa, consultant, CE, emphasis added)

Underlying the elusive quest for the glamour of mobility is the drive to escape places understood as tedious, unglamorous and constraining:

Relative to other employers FC provides a good package. ... I get a bit bored, walking into the same office ... day in day out. ... Here I get to see different places. (Brigitte, consultant, FC)

It is fantastic ... [that] I can travel through the world. There are companies everywhere [that are CE clients]. .... So it provides me with more opportunity [than office jobs could]. (Bernard, consultant, CE)

The understanding of mobility as an exclusive opportunity mirrors a discontent and boredom with places such as the office or home. Therefore, mobility's sticky lure also arises out of its aura of liberation – what Sartre describes as stickiness's 'appearance of a fluid' where one can 'float' (2003, p. 627) – that overcomes the dissatisfaction with places. The Frankfurt School critical theorist Siegfried Kracauer (1995a, 1995b) already noted that travelling is associated with 'going to an exotic place' and thus 'outgrowing the regions of the Here that enslave' us (1995a, p. 71); it stands for a utopian freedom of leaving the boredom and rigidity of everyday life behind. This may elucidate why consultants attach a certain rigidity to jobs that do not offer or require spatial change and flexibility:

I didn't want a career where this is my job, nine-to-five in the same office ... day in and day out. I thought consultancy would work because it is in different industries, different offices, different places. The variety really and the opportunity to experience that. (Helen, analyst, FC)

Coupled with the sense of moving around in a fluid-like manner, of easily floating between places, countries, offices and so forth, is the sense of autonomy, namely of 'never [being] possess[ed]' (Sartre, 2003, p. 628), that comprises the sticky lure of mobility. Referring to a 'global job-swapping program', HR managers state in a workshop:

Michael, HR manager, CE: In consulting you definitely have more choices than in other jobs.

Melanie, HR manager, CE: Yes, our people can decide one day, 'right, I want to live and move to XX ...'. They just need to find someone there to swap their job with.

Being able to move is presented as part of being self-determined rather than constrained by others.

When travelling, consultants can and indeed do enjoy the 'anonymity' and temporary 'liberation' (Augé, 1995, p. 101) from their duties and others (see also Muhr, 2012). For instance, when '[they] take the train to the client, [they] can relax, as [they are] left alone' (John, consultant, CE). They are then out of sight from management and may literally disconnect and switch off; in trains, planes and most public spaces consultants are advised not to work, given the risk of confidential information leaking out (e.g. a telephone conversation being overheard by competitors or clients).

## From Everywhere to Nowhere: Sticky Non-Places of Mobility

One way in which the kinetic elite's mobile working life is sticky concerns its lures of glamour, escape and liberation from the supposedly dull and confining stability of places – an understanding of mobility that reflects the nomadic approach (given the connotations of liberation from place), but even more so the neo-liberal one (given the connotations of being innovative, flexible versus bureaucratic, dull and boring). But the stickiness of being on the move can also give rise to experiences of ambiguity – something that is neither sufficiently addressed in the previously cited studies of the kinetic elite nor captured through metaphors of fluidity, liquidity, nomads or flows. Whilst being drawn to the lures of mobility, consultants also experience mobility as alienating and unsettling as it involves sticky non-places. This makes them turn back to and search for the illusory stability of places – an understanding of mobility that parallels the sedentarist/potentially conservative approach.

That in the midst of the exciting and glamorous mobile working lives experiences of non-place arise is apparent in the consultants' use of expressions such as 'nowhere', 'away from home' and 'far removed' to refer to their spatially dispersed workplaces (e.g. from Amsterdam to a city in Belgium). Their mobile work experience is then defined by non-places, spaces of no name and no identity to them:

A bad day at work would be having to get up at the crack of dawn ... having to travel and feel that you have already done a day's work before you even get somewhere. And then ... wherever you are working, usually you have to be going a bit *far*. So your client site is *away* and you are staying at a hotel *somewhere that is far removed*. (Emma, consultant, FC, emphasis added)

I am currently working on some project away from home, in Belgium. [It is like] ... *a field in the middle of nowhere*. There is nothing. You just go there and work. That's it. (Laura, manager, FC, emphasis added)

The engagement problem we have is with ... people who are *stuck on a project in the middle of nowhere*. ... (Alice, consultant, FC, emphasis added)

The everywhere, the celebrated freedom of being on the move, thus collides with the nowhere, an impersonal, unnamed space, flattened out under notions of distance and remoteness. But why does the kinetic elite of consultants report such experiences of non-places and what makes all this sticky?

### Being Stuck: Interchangeable Non-places in Moving Cycles

One way to address this concerns how non-places are experienced as interchangeable (Augé, 1995), involving a flattened-out experience of being stuck, yet one 'without [the sense of] stability' (Sartre, 2003, p. 630). After months of travelling the consultants realize how the client offices, airports and hotels (usually chains) are just the same as everywhere else; a standardized functionality runs through them, thus they cease to be unique and plural (see also Ritzer, 1993). The ideal of mobility conveys the sense of an exclusive opportunity of staying in different places, yet the particularity of places fades away, turning them into homogeneous, unexciting and unglamorous non-places:

We are working at a huge office building [the client site in Nottingham] and it is a horrible grey hole. It is huge and it always has a cloud above it. It is grey and it is horrible, when you get a taxi up there. It is just awful from start to finish. (William, consultant, CE)

His frequent use of the word 'grey' indicates perhaps not only the actual colour of the building but also his experience of characterless and boring non-places.

The excitement of being at places away from home can wear off; a client office, a hotel and so forth feel then 'like the next', as Kracauer (1995b, p. 68) has pointed out, turning these into nothing but non-places (see also Morris, 1988). The ensuing feeling of monotony can be accompanied by that of being in a 'trap' (Sartre, 2003, p. 627):

Sometimes you don't always want to get on to the next thing. It is a constantly moving cycle and that can get very tiring. ... Sometimes you don't want to be travelling. (Laura, manager, CE)

The 'moving cycle' denotes how mobile working life is experienced as a never-ending dynamic from one non-place to another. Significantly, this expression is reminiscent of the small cog in a big wheel and the worker stuck in a repetitive ongoing treadmill – images that are commonly used to describe the despised nine-to-five bureaucratic drone and against which the ideal of mobility is set. There is a certain irony that individuals approach mobility as the antithesis to bureaucratic life in tedious and boring places, but in their mobile working lives they, similarly, find themselves in homogeneous and standardized non-places. This reveals the other side of mobility's stickiness: the sticky lure of glamour and escape turns into disillusionment and the (re-)emergence of a sense of boredom coupled with that of being stuck.

The sense of entrapment may also relate to how, despite the associations of non-work and momentary liberation from work in non-places, being on the move can entail the intensification and extensification of work: 'They [CE management] give you a place to stay at the client site ... where there is not much to do, and you just work and work' (Helen, manager, CE). When work dominates experience, the spatial interchangeability and functional equivalence of non-places can be perpetuated.

The stickiness of mobility and non-places involves the sense that in such moving cycles individuals are 'no longer the master' (Sartre, 2003, p. 628) despite mobility's initial lure of escape and liberation. Consultants report not having much of a say in the pattern of movement, their location and the duration of their stay. Being on the move is then regarded as a compulsory logic rather than a liberatory one: 'Suddenly, you are called up and told "there is a project where you are needed, fly to X tomorrow" [and] you are just literally thrown into the deep end' (John, consultant, CE). Feeling thrown into a non-place (i.e. 'X'), there is also the sense of not being able to easily leave it again, as consultants report feeling 'stuck on projects' (Kathryn, senior consultant, FC, emphasis added) away from the office location and home. Thus, not only is the mobile working life as such experienced as sticky (i.e. being entrapped in seemingly endless cycles) but so also are the non-places involved. All this results in ambiguous experiences of 'fixed instability' (Sartre, 2003, p. 628) as the stickiness of mobility combines entrapment with change, transience and ephemerality.

### *Fixed Instability in Ephemeral Non-places*

A further explanation of the experience of sticky non-places relates to their time frame of actuality, of the here and now, that does not provide much in terms of stability. As the consultants constantly 'jump location and team' (Tom, consultant, CE), their relation to a particular workspace is largely transitory; at the client sites consultants are given temporary desks and, like the planes, trains or taxis they use, have to check in and out of hotel rooms every week, again and again. This brings about a sense of instability in their mobile lives:

I have reached a stage where I'd rather have a bit more stability than constant or repeated change of things ... (Wendy, consultant, FC)

In constantly 'going from here to there', as Wendy having recently worked in Amsterdam notes, consultants find themselves in non-places of little stability and permanence. Here, the notion of being restless is revealing. Whilst some consultants use it to valorize change and movement (e.g. 'I am quite restless. ... I like getting to know new things, new people, new places' [Jason, consultant, FC]), for others, it denotes the fixed instability involved in sticky mobile lives. There seems to be a sense of 'dissolving' (Sartre, 2003, p. 630) accompanying stickiness. Following Augé, the ephemeral experience of non-places provides individuals with little basis for identity constructions and they remain in a state of 'solitary individuality' (1995, p. 78). Kracauer (1995b) also noted that spaces of mobility can create 'emptied-out' individuals (1995b, p. 177). Whilst the anonymity of non-places can be liberating, it can also give rise to a sense of loneliness, where people feel they are losing touch with others:

I find it [staying connected to others] difficult as I am far way. (Gillian, consultant, FC)

Bad ... is when I cannot connect with anyone [as I] have a long commute to the client ... and I am away all week. (Michael, consultant, FC)

When you are there [on a 'project in the middle of nowhere'] you are really not connected. (Alice, consultant, FC)

This is not to say that consultants do not establish relations with their fellow employees, clients and/or speak to people they sit next to on the train or plane when travelling. But these seem overshadowed by the awareness of their limited timeframe. They do not seem to compensate for what are considered 'organically social' (Augé, 1995, p. 95) relations in places of office or home. After spending months on 'away projects' consultants realize the need to always keep in mind that 'once the project ends [the people they work with] won't be close friends anymore', as Anna (analyst, FC) puts it. This makes her feel 'unsettled and constantly very much on the edge', bringing about the need to 'see [her own] friends and family regularly', that is, returning to the alleged stability of 'home'.

### *From Sticky Non-places to Stable Places and Back?*

Indeed, as consultants experience the stickiness of their mobile working life and the non-places involved, they long for the stability of places which, in contrast to the above, are no longer regarded as dull and boring. To this extent, these experiences mirror the sedentarist/conservative approach, where an alleged stability and authenticity of places is favoured over mobility, associated with instability, disorientation and uprooting:

I talked to someone and said that I do not want to be placed anymore ... outside of London. ... I cannot do this in the long run. I need more stability in my life. I don't know though what else to do. (Sarah, manager, FC)

Being on the move is thus experienced as unstable and disorientating, making the kinetic elite long for 'the reassuring inertia of the solid' (Sartre, 2003, p. 629). However, the hoped-for security and stability in places, the office or home, can remain unrealized, thus revealing itself as a false illusion. Consultants note how happy they initially feel when returning to their office after weeks working away, before being confronted with the realization that this place has changed too. As



aforementioned, the offices are designed in a way to facilitate movement rather than to aid settling in and there is constant coming and going of people. Resulting from this, 'it feels strange returning to the office when you have been away for a long time ... you look around and don't know people' (Matthew, consultant, FC). Similarly, the alleged stability of home can disappoint. As Maggie (director, FC) also notes, 'when returning ... to London I realized' that due to 'this slightly bizarre lifestyle' of being on the move, 'I haven't really any contact'. This unsettling realization of even home being unstable, lacking in sociality, reinforces the need for having 'more ... a sense of control over ... life'. This suggests that the sense of instability, loneliness and appropriation consultants experience in non-places is sticky, as it might spill over and overshadow their experience of places.

Overall, the findings of the empirical analysis show how the kinetic elite's mobility experience can entail an interesting cycle of hope and quest as well as disillusionment and disorientation, where feeling free, liberated and exclusive can turn into being unsettled, disoriented and lost. The ways in which mobility, in its interrelation with constructions of non-place and place, can therefore be sticky may be summarized by taking the example of the CE consultant Lisa: There is stickiness in terms of the lures of glamour, escape and liberation in being on the move. In Lisa's case, her attraction to a mobile working life particularly derives from its appeal of being 'really glamorous' (see earlier). Being on the move and thus staying in non-places turns into an ambiguous experience; stickiness refers here to how there is neither the sense of stability nor that of freely floating. After months of travelling and staying in hotels, Lisa experiences being on the move and the non-places involved as unsettling: 'getting restless ... [with respect to] travelling and staying somewhere else'. Restlessness denotes how mobility does not provide a sense of escape or liberation, but rather of instability. This relates to the ambiguity of stickiness, which combines change and ephemerality with entrapment. Non-places are experienced as both interchangeable and monotonous, producing a sense of being stuck, as well as transient and ephemeral, thus unsettling. Lisa's case demonstrates this in how she feels not only restless but also fears being stuck, i.e. unable to leave: 'I just needed to find a way to get back ... sometimes on those out of town projects ... it is difficult to ... leave'. Moreover, mobility can be sticky as individuals feel losing themselves in it. For Lisa, being in non-places of mobility makes her feel 'quite devastated' as she feels she is 'losing the freedom and control over [her] own life'.

As a result, people search for the alleged stability of places, which, however, can similarly turn into disillusionment. Perhaps this underlines further the stickiness of non-places; their experiences of loneliness, disorientation and loss can spill over to what consultants consider places. Confronted with an alienating sense of staying in transient non-places, such as hotels, Lisa turns to her own place:

At some point you want to be back so that you can be with your own friends. You just want to go back to your own flat.

Yet she also realizes that 'it is difficult to keep in touch with people' when being on the move, so that once having returned home she is 'not as close as [she] used to be' with her friends and in fact has 'lost contact' with some of them. This suggests the realization that places may not contain the stability of social relations either. Here, we might speculate that such a disillusionment of place may in fact make the kinetic elite turn back to the sticky lures of mobility as a way to overcome the realization of the emptiness of place.

## Concluding Discussion

In this paper I have engaged with the mobilities turn in the social sciences, which is 'spilling over' to organization studies. By developing the Sartrean metaphor of stickiness along with Augé's

concept of non-place in the context of the kinetic elite's experiences of mobility, I have emphasized the ways in which mobilities constitute complex, ambiguous and contradictory phenomena. These need to be understood in their interactions with constructions of place and non-place that can entail problematic connotations of nomadism and/or sedentarism. The metaphor of stickiness brings into focus how being on the move may be neither liberating nor simply unsettling, and places neither offer stability nor are they confining. Instead it serves to reveal mobilities' ambiguities and frictions: mobility, specifically of the kinetic elite, surrounds the sticky lures of glamour, escape and liberation from stable, boring and dull places. Yet this can also involve sticky non-places, which are interchangeable, offer little in terms of stability, whilst simultaneously making one feel stuck in fixed moving cycles, and may even stick to places, such as home.

In illuminating that not even the kinetic elite's mobility is frictionless and using the metaphor of stickiness here, I have contributed to efforts aiming at questioning the currently dominant ideal of mobility. One of the shortcomings of the metaphors of nomad, liquidity, flows and fluidity is that they convey a certain lightness and easiness of floating. However, this is precisely what the ideal of mobility seeks to evoke, namely the image of the 'postmodern surfer' (Grey, 2002), easily riding the waves of change and freely hopping from one place to another. In contrast, the metaphor of stickiness, focusing on ambiguities and frictions, can provide research with a better platform from which to counteract idealizations of mobility (without taking a sedentarist position).

Whilst in this article the metaphor of stickiness has only been applied to the kinetic elite, it can be significant for mobilities research more generally. Here, we may return to some of the previously cited mobilities studies. One example constitutes the Baumanian vagabond's mobility that Garsten (1999, 2008) has analysed in the context of work and organization. Interestingly, the mobility experiences of the kinetic elite I shed light on share certain similarities with those of the vagabond (though, of course, they are also different, specifically concerning the lures of glamour, escape and liberation). That the metaphor of stickiness may be revealing for vagabonds' mobility too is underlined by Garsten's descriptions of experiences of entrapment coupled with instability – the fixed instability accompanying stickiness; they feel 'tied in circuits of mobility' (Garsten, 2008, p. 99), whilst also feeling overridden with uncertainty. Moreover, Garsten shows how this can lead to temporary workers feeling that their lives and selves are taken over by the rhythms of mobility – the sense of appropriation accompanying stickiness.

In using the metaphor of stickiness in a broader sense, perhaps it may also be applied to Knox et al.'s (2008) analysis of spaces of flow as overflowing, namely where they describe flows as far from liquid, as people and things, such as bags, can get *stuck*. In relation to information systems, the metaphor of stickiness may be significant in another way. Elliott and Urry (2010) note how 'people's lives, whether they know it or not and whether they hanker for freedom or security, are being redrafted as they deposit bits of scattered information as *traces* of themselves across various mobility systems' (2010, p. 7, emphasis in original). Hence, such 'mobility systems', despite what – following Sartre – can be described as an 'appearance of a fluid' in the form of information flows 'without memory' (2003, p. 627), are sticky to the extent that our information sticks to them. Perhaps more importantly, the metaphor of stickiness seems significant for illuminating the costs and contradictions of high-carbon based mobilities that Urry and others (e.g. Böhm et al., 2006) urge us not to forget. Specifically, stickiness may draw more attention to how the carbon emissions accompanying mobilities, rather than somehow 'liquidizing' themselves, actually stick in the air, water, earth and so forth, destroying various forms of life and living.

This is not to say that the metaphor of stickiness can or should be implied to each and every aspect surrounding mobilities, entirely replacing metaphors of flow, liquidity, fluidity and nomad. The aim of this article was simply to broaden the metaphorical repertoire as to bring certain aspects

of mobilities into focus that existing metaphors cannot sufficiently conceptualize. This in turn also means that, as with any metaphor, that of stickiness fades out some aspects of mobilities, for instance relating to the speed of movement of, say, global financial transactions, whereby within seconds money is withdrawn or invested determining the fate of people, companies and even countries.

Whilst I have followed Augé's notion of non-places in the form of ambiguous spatial experiences of mobility (though without arguing that places can rectify this), further research may discuss in greater detail the liberatory potential of this ambiguity. Although pointing at it, overall Augé's work on non-places 'crushes the creative and indeed anarchic spirit' that, for instance, de Certeau with his notion of space highlights (Buchanan & Lambert, 2005, p. 4). This raises the question for future research of whether or when a non-place can constitute some kind of 'empty space' of 'freedom and undefined presence' (Kostera, 2000, p. 3; see also Muhr, 2012). Moreover, this article has mainly focused on the kinetic elite's experiences of mobility rather than discussing in any detail the relation of mobility to control and resistance. Specifically, whilst my empirical analysis has hinted at the socio-ideological forms of control, i.e. how the lures of glamour, autonomy etc. can shape identity constructions and perhaps serve to draw attention away from the rather boring yet also overly intense aspects of consulting work (see also Costas & Kärreman, 2013), I have not explored how mobility and non-places can open up spaces for resistance – something that future research may address.

In conclusion, in this paper I hope to have added to the efforts towards a mobilities turn in the social sciences, more generally, and organization studies, more specifically. As we are beginning to see how mobilities shape work, organizations and life, new territories to explore, questions to ask as well as theories, concepts and metaphors to use appear to emerge. As mobilities intersect with or cut through a plethora of phenomena, all this may require research taking an inter- or even post-disciplinary approach. However, as Oswick et al. (2011) have recently argued, for organization studies, such an approach should not simply mean 'borrowing' theories, concepts and ideas from other disciplines. Instead organization studies researchers should aim at 'blending' their insights with those of other disciplines in a two-way process. It is such a blending that I sought to achieve in this article by bringing in the metaphor of stickiness to discussions of mobilities across disciplines.

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