points out. This lack of precision is, of course, a great problem for immigrants and refugees who face continuous demands to integrate, but no clear explication of what exactly this integration involves. For our research project, however, the ambiguity and shifting meanings of integration became an important entry point for examining varying Danish understandings of such notions as the nation-state, Danishness, the welfare society, equality and citizenship. While we had expected initially that the book would analyze how immigrants and refugees encounter and experience integration as a political project in contemporary Danish society, it became a study of how Danish notions of community (in its many permutations) and belonging are shaped and reshaped in an increasingly globalizing world. Thus, the idea of Denmark as a culturally homogeneous national community and egalitarian welfare society that is threatened by the many foreigners descending on the country has become a dominant one in many debates and policies on integration. While a concern with integration might be thought to implicate a desire to initiate a process of inclusion, it has had the opposite result in Denmark. Indeed, the Danish integration debate seems to have resulted mainly in the demarcation of a national community of good (ethnic) Danes bordered by various communities of (ethnically different) unacceptable non-Danes.

The strong Danish focus on a culturally homogeneous society grounded in a single shared national community is very different from the Canadian celebration of a multicultural society composed of a host of different ethnic and national communities. Perhaps this gives us a clue as to why "community" is so ubiquitous in Canada, whereas "integration" is all over the place in Denmark. A multicultural society depends on the existence of a multitude of different communities that can be defined in various ways depending on the purpose at hand. A culturally homogeneous society, on the other hand, requires the existence of outsiders who need to be integrated because they are different, and the terms of integration therefore are best left vague. Amit's essay, thus, not only points to the value of analyzing the ambiguity of words like *community*, it also leads to engagement with the broader semantic field of terms that are tied to words like *community* and the many notions and forms of sociation that they implicate.

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Response to "Community as 'Good to Think With'"

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Vered Amit's paper is a welcome development of arguments she began in dialogue with Nigel Rapport in *The Trouble with Community: Anthropological Reflections on Movement, Identity and Collectivity* (2002) in which Amit argues the importance of disjunction and disembedding; unsettling the centrality of social bonds and con-

nectivity in the production of community in anthropological thinking. Amit's dynamic, ambiguous sense of the world comes from the messy contradictions of her empirical research, which shows that rupture is as significant as connection and that human association is the result of specific *efforts*. In her paper in this journal, Amit takes popular engagement with community as an impetus for academic engagement and shifts anthropological debate from the meaning of community to the terms in which it can be investigated. Instead of asking what community is, she asks what is its analytic utility as part of a cluster of concepts for delineating joint commitment, affect or belonging and forms of association—the generating principles of community.

Understanding how people are socially linked in a global world is a seminal concern in anthropology (and sociology). Amit uses the term "sociation" to discuss social linkage. Putnam (2000) uses a vaguer term, "not being alone," in his treatise on the collapse and renewal of American civic and social life. Maffesoli's (1995) use of "sociality" to refer to the small, unstable, constantly forming and reforming, temporary groupings composing everyday life, is perhaps closer to the concept of sociation used by Amit. But Mafessoli's sense of sociality as empathic, a search for those who "feel and think as we do" and his emphasis on physical proximity and circumstance, makes his concept of sociality more limited than Amit's. Although all three theoreticians of social linkage are grappling with the same thing, Amit's deployment of sociation in a framework supporting a series of questions—how, when, where and why do people come together; what are the terms of their engagement; to what extent are they able to establish and perpetuate a coordinated effort?—supports a deeper analysis of how human association works.

There are a number of things I like about this paper and they provide a way of ruminating on developments in my own discipline (sociology) and research concerns. One such is the production of disjunctive globalizations in everyday circulations of people and objects. Circulations—popularly referred to as "flow" in the lexicon of current sociological framing foregrounding mobilities—also involve forms of (dis)connectivity and the stretched and intimate sociation on which Amit's paper centres, making these common concerns from different research and disciplinary angles. In this paper, I want to comment on the strengths of Amit's essay and interject some thoughts of my own on the importance of the *geographies* of connective social substance developed in critical dialogue with the fashionable sociological concept of flow.

The first reason I like Amit's paper has to do with *significance*. Are all areas of investigation equally socially significant? I think not, which is not to say that scholars should not investigate anything that interests them. But this does not mean that it is all equally relevant and important in the organization of contemporary societies. Sociologists (in the UK) have lost interest in community, once such a rich vein of enquiry, despite the fact that, as Amit points out, people think about themselves precisely in terms of these *(dis)connections*. Popular concern is only one way of thinking about social significance. Another is fundamentality, as in serving as a base underpinning things. Social linkage is fundamental in the production of social life and activity. Although philosophers from Rousseau onward and sociologists and anthropologists from the 19th century have grappled with the bases of human sociation, it is still one of the fundamental microcosms composing the social world. It lies at the heart of everyday life in all of its manifestations from Beijing to Buenos Aires.

Social significance in academies is frequently eclipsed by novelty: the quest for new ground, the need to appear at the cutting edge, the frontiers of *novel* rather than new knowledge. This, in part, explains the turn away from classic concerns like community and forms of social linkage in sociology. But another reason is to do with the development of theoretical frameworks that occlude some research agendas and highlight others. Community and the production of social linkage have been sidelined as sociological concerns, not just by the focus on mobilities (there is no contradiction between these two concerns as Amit's work shows), but by the paradigm-shifting claims with which mobilities are padded. The "social as mobility" replaced "the social as society" (Sheller and Urry 2006:196), a scheme developed in dialogue with Castells' (1996) claims about networked society. The "new mobilities *paradigm*" (Sheller and Urry 2006:208, my emphasis) overplayed and formalized a shift in framing that foregrounded social and geographical fluidity in the production and organization of everyday life and communities dropped off the sociology agenda.

This connects with the second thing I like about Amit's paper. She provides a framing of community as sociation that sidesteps the implied binaries of settlement versus unsettlement in mobility-as-new-paradigm arguments. Sheller and Urry would deny this binary but their swipe at Heidegger's "sedentarism" in his concern with dwelling suggests otherwise (2006:208). Amit's notions of sociation, on the other hand, work as part of an open matrix of mobilities, contingency and temporariness; and in no sense does she pose community as settled. On the contrary, she presents it as *unsettled* and the ways in which it *works* are investigated and questioned. Investigation of

the production and operation of sociation, such as Amit proposes in the questions she asks in her paper, *works* equally well across the syncopated rhythms of settlement and mobility, rest and restlessness, of everyday life.

Thirdly, in developing strategic ambiguities from the philosophical work of Margaret Gilbert and Kenneth Burke, Amit's paper establishes a clear loop between theoretical and empirical enquiry. While even in sociology there is a swing back to empirical work, theoretical work maintains its centrality as a form of academic labour poorly underpinned by serious research. Conversely, empirical research often neglects to revisit or even acknowledge the theoretical premises it tests. Keeping a range of associational forms open and asking questions about them achieves a productive synthesis between research and conceptualization.

Fourthly, Amit avoids paradigmatic claims around global versus national social structures in her framing. What we hold in common in a globalized world works because people are "socially linked" (Amit, this volume). Urry (2000:186), on the other hand cannot resist paradigmatic claims, suggesting "global civil society" replaces the "social as society." But Amit's framing works at any scale from the most local and tightly drawn to the most highly distributed of diasporic scatterings. The issue is not distance but the nature and terms of engagement and the manner in which they are pursued. Scales of geographical distance are undoubtedly important in the production of social linkage and the forms they take, but *local* mobilities and the linkages they form and disrupt are important too. Sociologists and anthropologists are drawn to the social forms produced in, and implications of, long-haul travel and, as a consequence, short-haul travel and forms of sociation that work around neighbourhoods are either dismissed as uninteresting or collapsed into notions of community-as-stationary existence. As Amit suggests, common knowledge and mutual expectation are part of joint commitment and in a globalized world there will not necessarily be strong links between people. Weak ties, as Amit suggests elsewhere, are ties too.

The final reason why I like this paper is that it aims to understand the *production* of social linkage through human *work and effort*: "the effort to construct communities is fundamentally an effort" (Amit and Rapport 1994:13). This refocuses intellectual enquiry around community, ethnicity and so on, from the categorical dimensions of identity to the mechanisms and conditions of their production. Amit proposes a "distributed" sense of belonging as a field of investigation. Tim Ingold's (2000) *The Perception of the Environment* develops this emphasis on production through the idea of skill. Skill provides a use-

ful set of questions for interrogating the content as well as the cultural and environmental circumstances in which work and effort are exerted. I will return to this later in unpacking and critiquing current sociological conceptions of fluidity. Investigating the skills embedded in the production of coordinated effort would add still further to Amit's searching questions and the kinds of investigation they support. This material grounded-ness also provides an important challenge to the speculations of grand theorists who are untroubled by the operating mechanisms, details and results of human effort and skill. Anderson's "imagined community" provides an example of this easy (dis)connection challenged in this volume and Amit's earlier work.

"Imagined community" works a bit like "flow" in acknowledging a set of social mechanisms and (dis)connections while simultaneously removing the imperative to take a close look at how they actually operate.

Flow is central to conceptualizations of globalization and the paradigm-shifting claims of mobile sociology. But there is another more significant connection too with Amit's paper. Amit deals with the production of local and global social linkage—which should lie at the centre of notions of flow as ways of thinking about mobilities—but in most accounts of flow, these productions of linkage are glossed over. Flow discourages detailed investigation of the very social mechanisms composing the global world it purports to understand. When I say discourages, I mean that it facilitates discussion and description without the need for detailed knowledge of operating mechanisms. Flow fills a gap by giving us an evocative term that fails to demand further investigation: it stands in the place where a deeper understanding of mobility and sociation might stand, disrupting and discouraging. Flow therefore delivers mobility and its myriad forms of human sociation—the basic micro-scenes of all social conditions—as partially abstract categories, by which I mean stripped of the conditions of their production and their specific (micro-macro) geographies.

There are two further problems with flow. Firstly, it is misleading as a description of mobilities, and, secondly, it erases important social information in the texture of the shifting, contingent (dis)connectivity that forms sociology's and anthropology's core business, making it analytically limited. It does not tell us and discourages us from enquiring into how shape-shifting, multiply interconnected substances of sociality in individual and collective life, and the dynamics between this and the inanimate substances with which human life is intertwined, actually work. The concept of flow then obscures the mechanics of its operation.

Objects do not flow. Whether they are newly produced or historically produced and already in circulation, objects are trucked and shipped through logistical chains that calculate the cost of different combinations of travel involving port waiting times and the operation of shipping hubs and the feeder posts with which they are connected. It is unnecessary to point out that all of this is mobilized through energy and effort exerted by the people who drive trucks and cranes, sail ships, shuffle paperwork and make tea. These activities, this work, and these social lives and, on a larger scale, the global social morphologies they constitute, are not flow. They involve work, activities, travel and myriad connections. They engage, and are engaged by, diverse forms of human linkage and joint action, to use Amit's framework, which can be investigated but often are not. All of this belies the effortlessness of flow.

People do not flow either. They move about the scenes of their everyday life, on foot, by car, bus and so on, making long and short journeys in syncopated rhythms of travel and rest. People stumble and backtrack; they move along one track and switch to another and they do so in the company of a shifting group of others. They do all of these things and more; but they do not flow. People have undeclared habitual movements and they have more clearly articulated plans to travel. Travel, in short, is a useful way of thinking about the long and short-haul mobilities of everyday life. People travel and have always travelled. Key questions then become *how* do they travel, *where* do they travel, *in what circumstances* do they travel and *how are their lives composed* in travel? Travel is part of dwelling and not its counterpoint, as Amit's framing also suggests. Engaging with these questions—questions which are not asked, even if they are not concealed, by the notion of flow—reveals connective substance and social texture in the ways in which the globalized world is fabricated.

Engagement with the specifics of travel gives us the concept of the *journey*. Journeys evoke specific itineraries connecting places across neighbourhoods and continents. Running errands, trips to work, pursuit of entertainment and enlightenment, holidays, migrations of different kinds, visits to families, are all journeys connecting places of different geographic and timescales: geographies and cartographies of (dis)connective substance. Journeys are a good way to think about the connections between places: connections, of course, made by people to other people as well as to places, to return to Amit's paper. The extent to which place (dis)connections are also intertwined with people (dis)connections or whether place has intrinsic significance is fertile ground for further investigation. Drawing on Ingold (2000:206)

we can think of journeys as continuous matrices of movement, the kind of carrying along a path that may be intentional or circumstantial: a journey begins in one direction and ends up going in another. We can think about lives and subjectivities as constituted in journeys, as well as in the forms of sociation Amit suggests. Journeys constitute people's lives in shaping the kinds of lives they might live and the places in which they might live them. This works whether we are investigating the restless circulations of the homeless around a city or the work–leisure intersections of the well-heeled.

I want to propose that people are the sum of their journeys just as they are, to draw on and slightly reformulate Amit's argument, the outcomes of their social (dis)connections and the work and effort they expend in producing them. Lives and the human-being-ness (subjectivities) composing them are about where we go, how we go and, of course, who we encounter on the way and how we (dis)connect with them. I am proposing that we think about people in terms of their routine journeys and the larger, maybe migratory, journeys in which routine movements are set. What journeys compose a life? Where do specific people go? Why and how do they go? These are all questions that prompt deeper investigation of the social substance and lives flow glosses.

The concept of the journey has all sorts of possibilities as a point of access to still more social texture and, with it, deeper understanding of how the world works. Journeys involve navigation. By navigation I mean the planning and execution of journeys involved in ordinary way-finding: improvised, exploratory movement (Ingold 2000:220, 289-299). This takes knowledge and skill: a well-developed sense of how the social world works and how to live in it. What skill does it take to live a particular life? What skill does it take to survive as a homeless person or as a Somali asylum seeker in London, as a wealthy expatriate migrant in Hong Kong? Unlike flow these questions all point to a deeper understanding of the globalized social world of now.

As well as providing a mechanism for thinking about lives and subjectivities and establishing commonalities on a social scale, journeys provide a mechanism for thinking about social difference.

The lives of homeless mental health patients rotating around the streets of Montreal, for example, may be thought of as composed in the routine journeys they make, the ways in which they thread together urban space, assembling the ingredients of daily survival. Their journeys and the purposes for which they travel differentiate them across a range of social factors from other users of the same city. Mapping large and small social differences

in this way accumulates to bigger differences: to social morphology; to the substance that gives shape to the larger landscapes of the cities and societies in which we live.

So journeys establish both common ground and the substance of social differentiation. They may or may not involve social linkage. The geographies, routes and skills involved in the journeys composing routine and exceptional lives give a whole other dimension to Amit's important questions about community and the nature of social bonds.

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Commentaire sur « Community as 'Good to Think With' »

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En introduisant son ouvrage *Communitas* (2000), consacré aux diverses appréhensions conceptuelles du problème de la communauté – chez Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, etc.–, Roberto Esposito (2000:13) soulignait à quel point cette question s'avérait incontournable dans la conjoncture actuelle. Marquée à la fois par la faillite des communismes et les nouveaux individualismes miséreux (ajoutons-y les effets spectaculaires des recours récurrents à l'ethnicité comme source de légitimité politique), la contemporanéité posait d'emblée le problème du *commun*, auquel nous n'avions tout simplement pas le choix de répondre.

Ce travail du philosophe italien s'inscrit d'ailleurs directement dans une lignée de travaux, tous aussi notables, consacrés également à ce concept malaisé : Jean-Luc Nancy (La communauté désoeuvrée, 1990), Maurice Blanchot (La communauté inavouable, 1983) et Giorgio Agamben (La communauté qui vient, 1990). Chacun, à leur manière et en dialogue les uns avec les autres, posait l'urgence de repenser les paramètres du commun, sans s'en remettre aux dérives réductrices bien connues : que ce soit la tentation de la totalisation essentialiste (avec variante fonctionnelle et/ou volontariste) ou l'arithmétique simpliste voulant additionner les intérêts individuels afin d'en arriver à l'équivalence d'un *ensemble* utilitaire. Il est à noter que ces auteurs, bien qu'ils consacraient une large part de leur travail à une profonde remise en question des présupposés lourds qu'entraîne l'usage du concept de communauté, ne souhaitaient tout simplement pas laisser tomber celui-ci (ou n'arrivaient pas à le faire).

En ce sens, la prolifération des usages du concept de communauté à laquelle nous réfère Vered Amit en guise d'introduction afin de soulever la prégnance de ce problème *partagé* s'avère – et ce n'est certainement pas une surprise – tout aussi omniprésente chez les académiciens[1]. Loin d'être répudié donc, ce concept s'impose depuis plusieurs années au gré de ses multiples usages dans des champs sociaux diversifiés. En ce sens, il s'avère un concept-clé – nous n'oserons pas dire un *fait social total* – pour réfléchir une contemporanéité qui, si l'on se fie aux auteurs mentionnés ci-dessus, appelle elle-même cette réflexion. L'omniprésence du concept de communauté n'amène donc pas seulement une réflexion – par ailleurs tout à fait bienvenue – sur le concept de communauté, mais devient un point de départ privilégié pour penser le rapport au contemporain dans toute son équivocité[2].

Le concept de communauté mérite d'autant plus une attention soutenue puisqu'il tend à dénoter un certain scepticisme ou même une aversion envers la contemporanéité. Il va sans dire, les usages communs et/ou académiques du concept renvoient fréquemment à un au-delà des liens marchands, bureaucratiques, juridiques, etc[3]. Que ces divers processus soient perçus comme étant imposés d'un extérieur quelconque ou simplement des modes d'être ensemble à altérer, les formes d'appel à la communalisation ou de rappel à la communauté peuvent s'avérer, dans de telles circonstances, des repères particulièrement instructifs permettant d'assurer un suivi des transfor-