

Editorial

Regardless of the fact that one of the first escalators was used as an attraction at the Coney Island Funfair in 1895, its speed today has been standardized and does not match that of a roller-coaster. Operating between 0.5 and 0.75 meters per second, escalators are frequently used in malls and department stores, with slightly faster ones operating at airports and train stations. Regardless of velocity or placement, riding an escalator is an exercise often practiced in groups. And while most participants normally don't know each other, there is an undiscussed agreement between them on how to use it together. Unlike in a team sport, though, riding an escalator is not aimed at winning or at achieving the highest possible score; on an escalator, each individual aims to reach new heights.

Running the wrong way on an escalator is often seen in action movies, but rarely in everyday life. Going backwards, too. This endeavor can be even more difficult if the moving stairways are capable of running in two different directions. In this case, the escalator is equipped with built-in sensors which recognize the desired route of the passenger, whose motion is automatically transferred into the vehicle. But mostly, escalators run in just one direction and, before boarding, one must overcome a small hurdle, a kind of comb in which shoelaces, chewing gum, and depending on the season, leaves can get caught. From these combs, also called grooves, the stairs climb up from an invisible depth to the surface, before rising or falling again in the direction of travel. Even though the first step is still level with the ground, a fast reaction is required to set the foot in the right position, since the corners are only visible through a horizontal line. One needs to have perfect timing. While the passengers are traveling together, most of them are not familiar with each other and a certain distance should be kept between bodies. Waiting too long before taking the first step could also be problematic during rush hour, as it could cause congestion. Once boarded, riders are faced with yet another decision, since the right side of the staircase allows for standing, while the left side grants the option of further motion for people in hurry. Researcher

Manoj Srinivasan calculated in his study *Fifteen observations on the structure of energy-minimizing gaits in many simple biped models* that the use of the left side gives riders just an 11 second lead per every 100 meters, and only when there is nobody in the way.

The speed, or rather the escalator, can also scare some people. It is a very specific fear, for which the term *blastoramalorkataphobie* was coined. This phobia can cause heart racing, heat flashes, shortness of breath, and/or dizziness. *Blastoramalorkataphobie* is caused by fear of being trapped with many people on the escalator, fear that something might happen due to so many people standing in such a confined space, or horror at the thought of what would happen if the mechanism were to fail in any way.

The tenth issue of Pfeil is not dedicated to escalators, but to Mainstream. Nevertheless, this volume questions the exercised motions of a majority, practiced over long or short distances and timeframes, that can become patterns, sometimes taken for granted, sometimes followed unconsciously, automatically, or even mechanically. The following pages challenge the escalator as the only way to get somewhere, while looking into the possibility of maybe taking the stairs, of going slower or backwards, of stopping, of allowing phobias, of finding shoelaces in a comb, crunching leaves in the grates, or moving forward hand in hand.