

AusMob 2021  
Symposium



# TRANSFORMING MOBILITIES

6-7 December 2021  
via Zoom

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**AusMob**  
Australian Mobilities  
Research Network

## Programme

*We are thrilled to  
welcome you to the  
2021 AusMob  
Australian Mobilities  
Research Network  
symposium*

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed mobilities in Australasia, Southeast Asia and globally. Restrictions on movement have changed migration possibilities; where and how work takes place; where people wish to live; what kinds of holidays people take; how people relate to their neighbourhoods; how communities organise collective action; and much more. Restrictions on movement have given rise to new bodily practices, new understandings of self and other, and altered social dynamics at various scales. Restrictions have also led to the emergence of new inequalities and exacerbated longstanding inequities. Understanding how mobility transformations are reshaping people and place has arguably never been so important.

This virtual symposium showcases state-of-the-art research on the broad theme of mobility transformation. The symposium features postgraduate researchers, early career researchers and more established scholars on many aspects of mobilities research from across the social sciences and humanities. Each of the papers develops the theme of mobility transformations in diverse ways, including in terms of sense-making, bodies, practices, technologies, logistics, finance, policies, environments and artistic expressions. Mobility transformations are understood through diverse sites, including cities, rural and regional areas, workplaces, households and public space.

Excitingly, this is a truly international symposium. Our presenters hail from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, India, Vietnam, Israel, Estonia, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition to our exciting line-up of papers, we are thrilled to welcome our keynote presenters, Rashmi Sadana, Fran Martin, and Weiqiang Lin, some of the most prominent international scholars who are shaping the agenda of mobilities research.

We look forward to welcoming you to the event in December!

The AusMob Committee

*David Bissell, Thomas Birtchnell, Michelle Duffy, Farida Fozdar, Benjamin Iaquinto, David Radford and Lauren Rickards*

**Acknowledgments**

AusMob acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this symposium is taking place across Australia and beyond, and we pay respect to their Elders and families.

AusMob gratefully acknowledges financial support for this symposium from the Australian Research Council (FT170100059).

# Symposium Programme

with presenter time zones

## DAY 1

### MONDAY 6 DECEMBER 2021

	New Zealand	South East Australia	South Australia	Western Australia · Hong Kong · China · Singapore	Vietnam	India	Israel · Estonia · Finland	Austria · Belgium · Denmark · Italy · Switzerland	United Kingdom	East Coast United States	West Coast United States
	NZDT	AEDT	ACDT	AWST HKT CST SGT	ICT	IST	IST EET	CET	GMT	EST	PST
Symposium welcome	1150-1200	0950-1000	0920-0930	0650-0700	0550-0600	0420-0430	0050-0100	2350-0000	2250-2300*	1750-1800*	1450-1500*
Keynote 1: Rashmi Sadana	1200-1330	1000-1130	0930-1100	0700-0830	0600-0730	0430-0600	0100-0230	0000-0130	2300-0030*	1800-1930*	1500-1630*
Policy	1330-1515	1130-1315	1100-1245	0830-1015	0730-0915	0600-0745	0230-0415	0130-0315	0030-0215*	1930-2115*	1630-1815*
Migration 1	1530-1700	1330-1500	1300-1430	1030-1200	0930-1100	0800-0930	0430-0600	0330-0500	0230-0400	2130-2300*	1830-2000*
Migration 2	1700-1830	1500-1630	1430-1600	1200-1330	1100-1230	0930-1100	0600-0730	0500-0630	0400-0530	2300-0030	2000-2130*
Justice and Activism	1830-2000	1630-1800	1600-1730	1330-1500	1230-1400	1100-1230	0730-0900	0630-0800	0530-0700	0030-0200	2130-2300*
Mapping and messaging	2030-2200	1830-2000	1800-1930	1530-1700	1430-1600	1300-1430	0930-1100	0830-1000	0730-0900	0230-0400	2330-0100
Digital work	2200-2330	2000-2130	1930-2100	1700-1830	1600-1730	1430-1600	1100-1230	1000-1130	0900-1030	0400-0530	0100-0230
Publics	2330-0100	2130-2300	2100-2230	1830-2000	1730-1900	1600-1730	1230-1400	1130-1300	1030-1200	0530-0700	0230-0400

(sessions marked \* are on Sunday 5th December local time)

## DAY 2

### TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2021

	New Zealand	South East Australia	South Australia	Western Australia · Hong Kong · China · Singapore	Vietnam	India	Israel · Estonia · Finland	Austria · Belgium · Denmark · Italy · Switzerland	United Kingdom	East Coast United States	West Coast United States
	NZDT	AEDT	ACDT	AWST HKT CST SGT	ICT	IST	IST EET	CET	GMT	EST	PST
Keynote 2: Fran Martin	1200-1330	1000-1130	0930-1100	0700-0830	0600-0730	0430-0600	0100-0230	0000-0130	2300-0030*	1800-1930*	1500-1630*
Communiting	1330-1500	1130-1300	1100-1230	0830-1000	0730-0900	0600-0730	0230-0400	0130-0300	0030-0200*	1930-2100*	1630-1800*
Platforms	1530-1700	1330-1500	1300-1430	1030-1200	0930-1100	0800-0930	0430-0600	0330-0500	0230-0400	2130-2300*	1830-2000*
Keynote 3: Weiqiang Lin	1700-1830	1500-1630	1430-1600	1200-1330	1100-1230	0930-1100	0600-0730	0500-0630	0400-0530	2300-0030	2000-2130*
Tours	1830-2000	1630-1800	1600-1730	1330-1500	1230-1400	1100-1230	0730-0900	0630-0800	0530-0700	0030-0200	2130-2300*
Embodiment	2100-2230	1900-2030	1830-2000	1600-1730	1500-1630	1330-1500	1000-1130	0900-1030	0800-0930	0300-0430	0000-0130
Biopolitics	2230-0015	2030-2215	2000-2145	1730-1915	1630-1815	1500-1645	1130-1345	1030-1215	0930-1115	0430-0615	0130-0315

(sessions marked \* are on Monday 6th December local time)

## KEYNOTE 1 · RASHMI SADANA

MONDAY 6 DECEMBER · 1000-1130 AEDT

## THE MOVING CITY: URBAN MOBILITIES AND SPATIAL TRANSFORMATION IN DELHI

My presentation will illustrate some of the ways Delhi has been transformed by its new metro rail system by way of my street-level ethnography of Metro riders, planners, architects, officials, and others, *The Moving City: Scenes from the Delhi Metro and the Social Life of Infrastructure*. With its ten lines and 285 stations covering nearly 400 kms of urban space, the Delhi Metro has transformed the cultural geography of Delhi's National Capital Region, from its centers to its peripheries, over the last twenty years. The Metro is both landmark and urban plan. It is also a vast set of public spaces, places to be and forge new social ties, with opportunities for identity-making and social mobility alongside new forms of surveillance. What, I ask, are the mobilities enabled and foreclosed by this capital-intensive, mega-infrastructure project? The Metro represents notions of mobility at different scales – local, regional, and global – while the system has also become part of an everyday practice of commuting for millions. How and when do these mobilities intersect? What is transformed because of them? And what might the Metro landscape tell us about the future of megacities and mobilities?

**Rashmi Sadana** is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at George Mason University. She is the author of *The Moving City: Scenes from the Delhi Metro and the Social Life of Infrastructure* (2022) and *English Heart, Hindi Heartland: The Political Life of Literature in India* (2012). She is co-editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Modern Indian Culture* (2012). Sadana received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, holds an M.A. in South Asia Studies from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, and a B.A. in English from U.C. Berkeley. Her research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, American Council of Learned Societies, American Institute of Indian Studies, the Weatherhead Foundation, and School for Advanced Research. In addition to journal articles, she has written for several Indian newspapers and magazines including *The Hindustan Times*, *Caravan*, *India Today*, *DNA*, *Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, and *The Wire*.



**SESSION CHAIR: DAVID BISSELL**

**Transforming Mobility Through Suspending Fares in Public Transit During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Dori Goldberg, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

Wojciech Kębłowski, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented restrictions on movement worldwide. At the same time, in the United States, more than 60% of urban transit agencies have implemented fare-free public transport (FFPT). Through a survey of 420 transit agencies followed by 12 semi-structured interviews, we explore where, how and why fares were suspended. We reveal that while FFPT provides universal access to mobility, it functions primarily as a measure of protecting transit workers and riders, and supporting essential workers. Exploring the policy mobility of FFPT, its governance, and its potential for commoning mobility, we contribute to understanding mobility transformations as an inherently political subject. Our findings further explain the tension between improvisation, fragility, and resilience of FFPT, indicating the importance of key actors (bus operators unions and policy entrepreneurs) and factors that condition why some transit agencies quickly reverted back to fare collection, while others kept offering fare-free mobility as a long-term policy.

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**"One card to rule them all:" Towards a Critical Understanding of New Fare Collection Technology**

Joe Gallagher, University of Maryland Baltimore County, United States

Payments for public transit are changing, as agencies adapt to the near-ubiquity of smartphones as well as credit- and debit-cards in order to secure fare revenues. These developments have enabled many transit agencies in the U.S. to implement new fare collection technology (NFC). Previous forms of fare collection, which relied on paper tickets, tokens and magnetic-stripped cards, are giving way to “automated” and “smart” modes of payment via smartcards and mobile apps. In their roll-out of these technologies, transit agencies typically claim that they will operationalize “convenient” and “seamless” forms of mobility through their chosen mode of fare collection. However, these technologies serve instead as a “fix” for transit agencies, which employ light infrastructure investments that support a market for private mobility services. While NFC technology shapes public transit to serve capitalist imperatives, it also must contend with the social infrastructures which also shape urban mobility.

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**Find the Loophole: Enacting Mobility Freedoms from Policy Disconnects in Australia's Transport Infrastructure**

Thomas Birtchnell, University of Wollongong, Australia

The rapid escalation of a 'fines and signs' approach to managing people's mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia resulted in everyday loops of mobility becoming sudden transgressions. The paper draws on recent research on 'mobility mavericks' and their significance for transport planning and urban design. Extending Bissell's scholarship on mobility loops, the paper considers the loopholes that Australian citizens developed in response to the policy expansion deployed to limit people's movement during the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic in NSW, Australia. Rather than representing targets for regulators to 'clamp down' on and suppress, the loopholes that enable the avoidance of disciplinary pressures on mobility can instead be recast as informative and instructional resources for policymakers to ensure infrastructures are inclusive. An aspiration of this paper is the notion that loopholes offer a learning opportunity: mavericks who seek to transgress overly cumbersome or unsympathetic regulation pressures by policy framings can be fine-tuned to be more sympathetic to disadvantaged and suppressed citizens. The paper grounds this idea in research on assistive powered technology users to explore in detail how loopholes are a method for nurturing resilience and mitigating attrition, particularly for transport users unable to access the dominant automobilities system.

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## **Rethinking the Uses of an Electric Vehicle**

Declan Kuch, Western Sydney University, Australia

Amelia Thorpe, University of New South Wales, Australia

Sophie Adams, University of New South Wales, Australia

Proponents of private electric cars promise the technology will help make cities planned around the private car sustainable. We examine the ways auto makers and other EV proponents are seeking to translate parked electric cars into electricity assets pivotal to a clean energy grid. Reviewing recent efforts to use the batteries in cars (so-called vehicle-to-grid, home or business), we examine the material and economic constraints to fulfilling the vision of ‘5 Snowy Hydros’ worth of batteries promoted by engineers. Interview data with early adopter EV drivers, ethnographic observations of public charging and analysis of electricity system and urban planning documents suggest charging cables, ‘smart’ charging governance and related infrastructural issues are non-trivial barriers to cycling and pedestrian-friendly visions for the future city. By rethinking the idea of ‘use’, we argue that planning for electric vehicle uptake requires a broader conversation about urban futures and the users of transport.

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## **The Future of Automation in Transport Mobilities**

Emma Quilty, Monash University, Australia

In this paper we will outline the findings from a scoping study of automated-decision making and transport mobilities. Through a critical review of the available (grey) literature and interviews with stakeholders this scoping study reveals where automated-decision making in transport is located and how future applications are imagined. In this paper we will critically interrogate techno-solutionist discourses identified through our review. We will unpack how they are mobilised in narratives of innovation and transformation, their relationships to solutionist paradigms, and how they are implied in research and design practice. The excitement that emerging technologies bring can obfuscate the social inequities that will be deepened and new inequalities that could be created. This paper will draw on creative ethnographic techniques including speculative workshops and filming to critically engage with these narratives. These techniques aim to showcase a diverse range of perspectives to expose those who are left behind by these visions.

## **MIGRATION 1**

**MONDAY 6 DECEMBER • 1315-1500 AEDT**

**SESSION CHAIR: MICHELLE DUFFY**

## **Oceanic Mobilities: Transforming Christianities Across the Indian Ocean**

Irene Promodh, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, United States

Drawing on 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork, this paper examines the transnational religious practices of Kerala Christians in the Persian Gulf – a populous community of migrants in the Indian Ocean. It argues that their circular patterns of mobility between their homes in southern India and temporary places of work in the Persian Gulf allow for, even give rise to, cyclical shifts in religious affiliation between their ancestral, caste-based denominations in the home society and the new denominations they encounter overseas. The paper situates these shifts in denominational affiliation today vis-a-vis longer histories of Christianisation in southern India. Pentecostal Christians – historically, subaltern converts from the bottom of the caste hierarchy – and Syrian (Thomas) Christians – historically, a privileged land-owning dominant caste – straddle competing pressures and aspirations across the home-host divide by moving between denominations in strategic, cautious, and flexible ways. By circulating between denominations and, indeed, historically distinct “Christianities” across the Indian Ocean, Kerala Christian migrants are able to cope with their new realities overseas and craft new, often transgressive socio-religious lifeworlds of their own, albeit in ways that do not threaten to overturn their pre-existing lives back home. The impossibility of citizenship for migrants in the Persian Gulf also makes it a counterintuitively ideal host destination for an itinerant community straddling multiple religious loyalties and identities, purposefully rooted to none. This paper thus invites us to rethink transnational forms of religiosity in terms of the circular, iterative, and transformative processes of mobility that animate the Indian Ocean.

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## **Mobility transformations and its affect turn in the early stage of Covid-19 on transnational Chinese-Australian Families**

Hannah Soong, University of South Australia, Australia

This paper examines the affective entanglements that Chinese-Australian transnational families experienced at an early stage of Covid-19 outbreak. It does so by attending to Wise and Velayutham's (2017) theorization of 'transnational affect' to show the methodological possibilities especially in light of how mobility is transformed due to the profound impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Three key themes are drawn from a small corpus of online digital texts focusing on Chinese Australians living in Australia whose children or parents are stuck in China, and those who have just evacuated from Wuhan on returning to Australia. Drawn from the initial months of the Covid-19 pandemic, the paper engages with the affective dimensions of their experiences of co-presence, absence and care (Skrbiš 2008). The paper argues for further research to critically engage with methodological possibilities for conceptualizing and analysing how Covid 19 transforms the affective flows, connections, and tensions within transnational families.

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## **Role of memory making in development of personal and social bonding of immigrants in diaspora: The cases of Afghan immigrant women in Auckland**

Roja Tafaraji, The University of Auckland, New Zealand

The discussion in my paper will be based on a phenomenological approach, through which the place is studied within people's lived experience, encompassing the representation of their personal as well as collective identities (Merleau-Ponty, (1962). Also, it is acknowledged that having experience in a place is integral in identification process of individuals and communities within that place. In two sections, the discussion in this paper elucidates aspects of identification and attachment process for the participant Afghan women to different places in Auckland. In the first section, the discussion points to place identity, a construct of place attachment which deals with emotional as well as functional bonding to the place on a personal level. The paper, in the second section, analyses the participants, collective memories from different places in the city. The paper concludes by suggesting different identities of the participants as individuals and within communities, based on their different memories of their public life in Auckland. Memory making, therefore, will be discussed as inevitable and intrinsic for these immigrant women to get identified with their new living places.

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## **Artisan mobility and changing economic scenario: A case study of Ghurni, West Bengal (India)**

Sangita Das, Alliance University, India

As we all know that the COVID-19 pandemic has harmfully affected the world and especially the potter artisan community in Ghurni, India since March 2020. The only profession of this artisan community is to sell their artworks for their livelihood. A new challenge on financial crisis for this artisan community in a particular and restriction on movement of the labor who directly associate with this artwork during the lockdown. This paper aims to examine the economic status of this artisan community during the COVID-19 pandemic and to analyze the impact on the quality of artwork during the lockdown. The research was conducted through a field-based interview. This paper was finding out some solutions so that this potter artisan community copes up with this situation. The research advocates instantaneous government intervention to the development of the community.

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## **Is increasing class inequality a result of mobility transformation? Impact of Market Mobility on the Artisans of Odisha (India)**

Barsa Priyadarsinee Sahoo, Alliance University, India

One of the toughest environmental and social challenges of our time is managing the mobility of people and commodities. COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown in India have taught us the significance of the mobility and its impact on Indian economy. Currently, India stands at the cusp of the mobility revolution with multiple innovations such as Electric Vehicles (EVs), connected and autonomous vehicles, and on-demand delivery service of everything. With transforming mobility while new markets are emerging (e-commerce) some (weekly markets and local shops) are disappearing completely. Though Multi-National Companies (MNCs) and business organisations are quick in adapting to the transformation, small business owners and artisans who lack educational and technological knowledge are losing their businesses and livelihood. In this context, the present paper examines the impact of market mobility on the traditional craftsmen of Odisha. The study has used primary data to analyse the problems that the artisans are facing with the changing market economy. The study revealed that while India intends to transform its mobility on multiple spheres, it has overlooked the sustenance of small businessmen and artisans that leads to an increase in class inequality.\

**'As You Grow, You Think of the Next Step': Perceptions of Life Stage and Life Transition within Youth Mobilities to and from Australia**

Shanthi Robertson, Western Sydney University, Australia

Sociologically, notions of adulthood are increasingly understood to be culturally conditioned, contextually dependent, fragmented and non-linear. Yet, youth studies analyses remain often bound to fixed local contexts, neglecting how mobilities between cultural and geographic spaces may reshape meanings around life stage and life transition. In this paper, we draw on a survey and in-depth interviews with young people (aged 18-30) both entering and departing Australia for youth mobility experiences. We argue that cultures of mobility are intertwined with understandings of the 'in-between' life stage of young adulthood, creating specific perceptions of how mobility may enable, constrain or reconfigure 'mobile transitions' to adulthood. We explore here differing meanings around becoming adult in the lives of these young people, and how they position their mobility as both a liminal zone of spontaneity, immediacy and contingency, and a space in which they work at achieving specific social markers of security and independence.

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**The Plight of Migrant Labourers during Covid-19 in India: A Socio-Legal Analysis**

Dipendra Singh Tomar, Alliance University, India

Every city, state, and the countries have some migrant labours who migrated from their hometown in the hope to live a good and respectable life. Some of these migrant labours migrated with their full family in planning to live their remaining life in the migrated city. Some of them live in very extreme conditions during normal days also because they don't have any other option. The situation gets worse when they hear about coronavirus and when the lockdown is declared by the prime minister of Indian these are the people who face the most trouble after the lockdown was declared. As the days pass, their condition gets worse day-by-day and when the companies and factories where they work on a daily basis started cutting their salaries/ wages their condition becomes worse and because of the salary cut their whole family got affected. The plight of migrant labours started when they started moving to their home during the lockdown period without any transport facility provided by the state or central government in the initial days of the lockdown. This research paper help to understand the daily struggles of the migrant workers during the lockdown period on the streets of India and tries to analyze the impact of the lockdown on the children of the migrant workers. This research paper also details with, the role of the government in providing help (if any) to the migrant workers during this lockdown period and the detailed understanding of the labour acts and recent changes in labour acts related to migrant labours. The paper also deals with some research questions on migrant labours that how the lockdown period has affected the lives of the migrant labours and their families and how they cope up with this problem and some of them still facing employment problems.

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**Disjunctures and suffering: exploring the hidden challenges embedded in Chinese rural students' geographical and social mobility through higher education**

Jiexiu Chen, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China

In the Chinese context of a stratified higher education system and significant urban-rural inequality, rural students are generally facing with constrained possibilities for social mobility through higher education. Despite these structural constraints, some exceptional rural students, like all the participants in this research, manage to get themselves enrolled in the urban university. Drawing on participants' subjective narratives about their social mobility experiences and encounters in the urban university, I argue that the rural students in this research were confronted with two levels of habitus-field disjunctures, respectively the rural-urban disjuncture and academic disjuncture. Then through examining participants' narratives about their hysteresis effects and emotional suffering, I suggest the sense of feeling lost and inferior reveals how various types of domination in the external structure of the field of the urban university play a part in affecting rural students' inner emotional worlds.

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## **Immobility infrastructures: Taking online courses and staying put amongst Chinese international students during the COVID-19**

Bingyu Wang, Sun Yat-sen University, China

From the perspective of migration infrastructures, this paper focuses on the immobility experiences amongst Chinese international students (CIS) who planned to enroll overseas in 2020 but instead chose to take online courses in China due to the COVID-19. Specifically, the paper asks how online courses are both facilitated and constrained by a set of institutional and technological infrastructural forces. Particularly it also explores how some CIS exercise agency to mobilise their infrastructural surroundings, with the aim of overcoming certain infrastructural deficiencies they encounter and improving studying/living quality while inhabiting immobilities in a transnational context. As such, this paper brings this infrastructurally-sensitive theoretical approach into international student mobility (ISM) studies, shifting the focus from examining how infrastructures move people to how they enable people to stay, and to how they are lived and reconstructed at an everyday level. Additionally, the paper challenges the oppositional nature of mobility and immobility.

### **JUSTICE AND ACTIVISM**

**MONDAY 6 DECEMBER • 1630-1800 AEDT**

**SESSION CHAIR: DAVID RADFORD**

## **Victims' Mobility in India: A Linkage between Trafficking and Missing Women & Children**

Sumant Kumar, Alliance University, India

Mobility defines the ability to move freely or be easily moved, with this context, human trafficking, and mobility of victims (missing women & children) are closely linked with it. Maximum cases of missing women & children belong to the families who are economically and socially marginalized, whose survival is dependent on daily earnings. Poverty and unemployment resulted in weak social bonding in villages that prompted traffickers to introduce themselves to various job opportunities. India's unemployment rate hit a 45-year high in 2017-18 and the Covid-19 lockdown restriction bring them in a starvation situation. Push and pull theory is used to define poverty and unemployment as reasons for mobilities of missing persons towards urban cities with traffickers. Which resulted in a high rate of missing cases of women & children from rural areas. In every eight-minute one child goes missing in India, mostly from the rural areas. Most of these missing cases are linked with trafficking and trafficking is possible due to the victim's mobility. Propose of this study is to find out why victims made them available to move freely with traffickers even knowing about exploitation, flesh trade, slavery they will face after trafficked.

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## **Mobility transformation and HIV/AIDS activism**

Katie Maher, University of South Australia, Australia

This paper brings attention to the mobility transformations of HIV/AIDS activism in Australia. It considers how HIV/AIDS activism, arts, education and care structures led by people living with HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s mobilised for social transformation and considers what we might learn from this in terms of demanding change to address pressing social concerns in the present. The paper traces how AIDS activism drew on feminist and gay liberation, anti-racism, Indigenous rights and reproductive rights movements to mobilise care and support and to intervene in violence against affected communities. It highlights the critical role of women, First Nations transgender people and other marginalized groups in mobilizing change. While HIV is now very manageable in Australia, AIDS continues to impact marginalized populations globally. Mobilising in the face of the pandemic demands actions that address global disparities and respond to gender and sexual inequality, racism, capitalism and coloniality.

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## **Nationalism, Anti-Corruption and Mobilities: Transnational and translocal insights from Solomon Islands**

Grant Walton, Australian National University, Australia

This presentation examines the role mobilities play in shaping attitudes towards nationalism and corruption amongst stakeholders connected to anti-corruption reforms in the Pacific Island nation of Solomon Islands. It finds that highly mobile elites framed corruption and nationalism through two distinct concepts: transnationalism (conceiving the world as comprising territorially divided states) and translocalism (which focuses on local connections developed through

[im]mobilities). Transnational framings, shaped by international travel and international indices, stressed the importance of promoting civic nationalism to fight corruption. Translocal framings, reinforced by everyday experiences, were more skeptical of both anti-corruption and nation- and state-building efforts. Findings provide insights into why anti-corruption reform in post-colonial contexts are so challenging and the potential for reimagining the relationship between nationalism and anti-corruption.

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## **Let's hit the road! Environmental hazards, materialities, and mobility justice: Insights from Tajikistan's Pamirs**

Suzy Blondin, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

This article draws from the expanding field of environmental mobilities, which explores the nexus between environmental conditions and (im)mobility based on the 'mobilities paradigm'. Environmental hazards collide with transportation infrastructures, for instance through the adverse effects of floods, heat waves, and ice thawing on roads, and may for instance disrupt or hamper everyday mobility. Frequent disaster-induced mobility impairments may render individuals unable to commute between places and decrease their socioeconomic opportunities. Emphasising the material aspects of mobilities, this paper argues that an analysis of mobility systems helps to develop a deeper understanding of (im)mobility inequalities and injustices in the context of climate change. Sheller's mobility justice perspective is taken as a way to critically address mobility disruptions and to reflect on the interconnection of different (im)mobility patterns. Empirically, the paper draws on a case-study of Tajikistan's Bartang Valley, where disaster-induced mobility impairments reduce the residents' capacities to circulate and access food markets, healthcare facilities, and job opportunities. Overall, the paper is an invitation for the fields of environmental and climate mobilities to consider the impacts of environmental conditions on infrastructures, matter, and things that enable or hamper human (im)mobility.

### **MAPPING AND MESSAGING**

**MONDAY 6 DECEMBER • 1830-2000 AEDT**

**SESSION CHAIR: BEN IAQUINTO**

## **Home and Away: The Politics of Mapping the Field**

Nithila Kanagasabai, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

The summer of 2020 posed various challenges for scholars across the world continuing to do 'fieldwork' alongside national lockdowns and international travel restrictions. In response, social science scholars hosted online seminars reflecting on the peculiarities of the moment. In particular, for those in institutional locations in the Global North, but whose 'fields' were situated elsewhere, most often, in the Global South, inquiry focused on possible ways to move forward with their research projects. These talks rarely spoke to a researcher in the Global South institute whose research might have similar problems despite their 'geographic' closeness to the field. As a scholar located in the elsewhere – India in this case – studying the ways in which knowledges travel between the 'field' in the Global South and the 'metropolitan institution' in the Global North - this moment enabled a reflection on the ways in which access and identity, shape and legitimise knowledge production.

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## **Walking as a Metaphor: COVID Pandemic and the Politics of Mobility**

Avishek Ray, National Institute of Technology Silchar, India

This paper reflects on the dissenting act of mobility as articulated by migrant workers in India, who, during the nationwide lockdown amid the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, walked back home, hundreds of miles away, in lieu of public transport. Their mobility—precisely, the act of walking—has thus acquired a metaphoric status, and laid bare the ideological practices of territorializing the city-space. This paper argues that the migrant worker's mobility, from within the axiomatic of the prevalent "mobility regime," can be read as a powerful metaphor of our tensions within the global political-economic order that the pandemic has so starkly exposed. The paper provokes less literal, but more literary, understandings of mobilities in general, in order to come to grips with the manifold contradictions, paradoxes, and counteractions in the way the world moves.

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## **Map-mobilities: Viral cartographic cultures and beyond**

Tania Rossetto, University of Padua, Italy

Laura Lo Presti, University of Padua, Italy

This paper will provide a state-of-the art contribution about mobility transformations as they emerge through the prism of the cartographic humanities. In a recent work built around the critique of a set of perduring preconceptions about cartography, map historian Edney (2019: 234) affirmed that ‘nothing about mapping is fixed and stable’. Nevertheless, critical and humanist readings have often complained of the ontological fixity expressed by maps, mostly considered the quintessence of immobility. In the wake of the more recent turns in cartographic thinking and methodologies, and through a humanistic lens, we will consider cartographic navigations, circulations and animations, to provide a tentative sketch of the ways in which the mobility, mobilisation, and dynamism of maps may be articulated with reference to both past and present cartographic phenomena and cultures. In particular, we will consider how the contemporary cartosphere has pervaded Covid-19 imageries producing a plethora of (im)mobile map practices and feelings.

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## **‘Read the Pinned Message’: Role of Telegram in Covid Mobilities (case of Covid-19 mobilities of Ukrainian IDPs)**

Lidia Kuzemska, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

The number of targeted Telegram channels dedicated to the discussions about the strategies and experiences of crossing the ‘contact line’ between Ukraine and its occupied Donbas region increased significantly during the Covid pandemic. Why are people relying on online group chats and often anonymous mobility guidelines rather than on official information? I argue that Telegram plays several roles in influencing mobility decisions during quickly changing pandemic restrictions: 1) Information. Channels are a source of the most up to date ‘peer-reviewed’ information (regulations, documentation, border guards’ demands, length of travel, queues) that is constantly cross-checked with the real-life immediate experiences of travellers. 2) Cooperation. It is a place to look for travel companions, reliable transfer services, alternative routes, and useful contacts. 3) Feedback. People can exchange personal mobility experiences about targeted checkpoints/days of the week; inquire about mobility under very specific circumstances or for specific individuals – cases rarely covered in official guidelines.

## **DIGITAL WORK**

**MONDAY 6 DECEMBER • 2000-2130 AEDT**

**SESSION CHAIR: DAVID BISSELL**

## **Corona-driven mobilities: Remote work travel**

Olga Hannonen, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

The outbreak of the pandemic has drastically changed the ways of practicing mobilities. With the mandate to work from home, many office workers were turned into location independent professionals. This has facilitated domestic and international rural escapes, making rural lifestyles more attractive, affordable and safer in different parts of the world. Being remote creates fruitful grounds for lifestyle-led location independence, it has developed new travel patterns and lifestyles, such as ‘remote work travel’ or ‘workations’ and long-term relocation to different destinations both domestically and internationally. Finland, among others, has become a new attractive international destination for a quiet and healthy lifestyle, while domestic ‘remote work travel’ has been booming since the outbreak of the pandemic. The paper discusses conceptual perspectives on remote work travel in relation to lifestyle mobilities, digital nomadism and tourism at large.

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## **Nature and mobility infrastructure: digital nomad hubs in Southeast Asia**

Paul Green, University of Melbourne, Australia

Increasing numbers of scholars are examining the role that mobility or migration infrastructure plays in facilitating, conditioning and transforming mobility circuits and pathways. Such infrastructure/s are invariably viewed as socio-material or technical systems, yet there is a need to conceptualise nature as a form and participatory dimension of mobility infrastructure. Based on ethnographic fieldwork with digital nomads in Southeast Asia I illustrate how natural infrastructure is implicated in everyday realms and experiences of spatial mobility, identity formation and place-making practices. Thinking of nature as symbolic, material and visual-material actant, in turn, provides analytical opportunity to make sense of why some places become more desired, more visited, than others. By incorporating nature into a

conceptual framing of digital nomad infrastructure, in other words, we can formulate an understanding of the relevance, meaning and value of primary destinations, or digital nomad hubs, in this hypermobile lifestyle.

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## **Digital Mobilities: Emergent digital work practices in the cultural sector in Vietnam during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Emma Duester, RMIT University, Vietnam

This paper investigates the emergent digital work practices in the cultural sector in Vietnam, which have been introduced as a result to transitioning fully to online during the Covid-19 Pandemic. It focuses on how non-profit art organisations utilised Facebook for communicating with the professional art community and the general public, highlighting new ways of working, new types of content, and new (Covid-19 related) contexts that were introduced and applied to posts as all aspects of work moved online during the first lockdown in Hanoi, Vietnam. All interactions, collaborations and events now take place online, which means that we are seeing a new era of digital mobilities. In turn, this has created a more dynamic, living spaces online. The current study draws upon a digital ethnographic analysis of Facebook posts that was conducted over 3 months and 50 semi-structured interviews that were carried out with cultural professionals in Hanoi during the first lockdown and the first full closure of physical art spaces and full transition to online work between March and April 2020.

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## **From 'digital nomadism' to 'rooted digitalism': The virtual work and (im)mobilities of IT professionals in times of Covid-19**

Flavia Cangia, University of Fribourg, Switzerland

The outbreak of Covid-19 has posed new challenges to travel for many and has concomitantly stimulated an increase of virtual work for some. Professionals in the Information Technology (IT) sector have shown being pioneers in practising virtual work long before the outbreak of the pandemic. Some at times work remotely from anywhere while exploring the world and take advantage of the opportunities offered by virtual work to travel and 'freely' move. In this paper, I suggest that not only the 'freedom' of mobility but also immobility plays a significant role in the life of these workers. I draw upon research conducted with IT professionals working remotely for Swiss-based companies or from Switzerland for international companies. Geographical immobility, not only due to the pandemic but to these workers' desire, becomes a strategic choice for progressing in career and life, staying rooted in a place, and stabilizing work and legal status.

### **PUBLICS**

**MONDAY 6 DECEMBER • 2130-2300 AEDT**

**SESSION CHAIR: DAVID RADFORD**

## **(Im)mobility in Hong Kong: elderlies' right to public open space**

Jenny Po Sheung Yu, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Living in an expensive cramped space, Hong Kong's elderlies spend lots of time outdoors. Public open space—such as parks and sitting-out areas—provide them space to exercise and socialize. The expanding grey population will soon derive a greater demand for open space. However, contemporary research does not provide an in-depth understanding of senior citizens' actual usage of those spaces. Through the lens of mobilities, this research seeks to understand how elderlies experience and interact with open spaces in terms of their movements and stoppages. Employing a qualitative approach, this research will reveal whether open spaces are meeting elderly residents' needs in Hong Kong. Theoretically, this research highlights the importance of both movement and non-movement in understanding how elderlies experience urban space. Practically, this research will be useful for the government to develop quality planning of open space and welfare programmes that cater to the future societal needs of the ageing population.

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## **Locating intersections between ageing, mobility, wellbeing and transport infrastructure**

Shanthi Ameratunga, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Optimising opportunities for wellbeing through mobility is a central tenet in the Aotearoa New Zealand government's Transport Outcomes Framework. Yet considerations of how place mediates diverse opportunities for mobility and wellbeing among older or disabled people seldom identify how transport sector decision-making affects these

opportunities. In this presentation, we describe how mobility among older Māori, Pacific, NZ European and Chinese people and those living with physical impairments or chronic health conditions is quintessentially related to their life-spaces, environs and wellbeing. We ground this argument in 62 qualitative interviews incorporating go-along segments and Photovoice with older or mobility impaired people in socio-demographically diverse neighbourhoods in Auckland. The interviews explore community perceptions of wellbeing as experienced through the losses, stresses and joys of journeys and travel, navigating everyday life contexts and places. Our findings speak to the importance of locating infrastructural responsibility in transport systems as an important prerequisite for community wellbeing.

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## **Feeling and Writing in Suspension: Waiting in COVID-19 Shopping Queues**

Victoria J E Jones, Durham University, United Kingdom

The COVID-19 virus and subsequent UK national lockdown were a catalyst for new practices of waiting, influencing how people interacted within retail shopping queues. Social distancing created new forms of affective, bodily and material presences. This paper focuses on a phenomenon, a particular form of waiting observed in twenty two shopping queues during lock down in the North East of England, UK. Waiting practices formed through the COVID-19 lockdown, opened new forms of feeling, requiring new forms of articulation. As such the paper is an experiment with language and form speculatively describing feelings, sensations, materialities and temporalities, through a metaphor, liquid suspension. The paper outlines what waiting is and does. It then considers what liquid suspension can open as a writing device. Working with suspension and the work of queer and cultural theorists, the paper elucidates concepts of surface and viscosity in order to describe the morphologies of mood and sensation felt and shared whilst waiting within COVID-19 shopping queues.

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## **Recalibrating rhythm: passengers navigating Metro Manila through the Point-to-Point Bus**

Carla Cruz, University of Basel, Switzerland

Commuting on public transport in Manila is difficult and tiring, an arduous essential task for ordinary urbanites. As a megacity in Asia, Metro Manila suffers from ‘the many ills of excessive street traffic’ (Boquet 2013, 45). The metropolis ranked second in the TomTom traffic index for 2019 for the worst urban congestion worldwide (2019). According to this ranking, Manila’s standing is calculated to be at seventy-one per cent congestion, which has made commuting worse. In fact, it has been estimated that the Philippines loses 3.5 billion pesos a day due to Metro Manila traffic alone (CNN-Philippines 2018). It remains an inimitable fact that a large population of people are left commuting via public transportation or by way of privately owned vehicles. To address this crisis the government has built the point-to-point (P2P) bus system as part of the country’s public utility bus modernization program (DOTr Latest News 2016) to alleviate some of Metro Manila’s traffic and commuting issues between key areas of the megacity. I thus explore the rhythms and challenges of commuting on public transport, engaging the ways in which the P2P bus has reshaped the commuting experience. In this research I explore how the P2P bus is experienced by commuters, investigating how it recalibrates their rhythms, the time they spend commuting, their pace and conditions of travel, their emotions and their manners of moving through the city. I evaluate the various realities of commuting life, the hard work that comes with the everyday grind of the commute and the difference that the P2P bus makes in the commuter’s everyday lives by reshaping their rhythms. From Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis I draw three types of rhythms to frame the discussion in order to make sense of precisely how the P2P bus’ intervention reshapes and recalibrates the commuter’s experiences and rhythms.

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## **The impact of COVID-19 on public transport as public space**

Tauri Tuvikene, Tallinn University, Estonia

Louise Sträuli, Tallinn University, Estonia

This paper explores the impact that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic on the experiences of public transport users. The presentation builds on a two-part study conducted as part of the HERA project PUTSPACE in the four European cities of Berlin, Brussels, Stockholm and Tallinn during two different time periods after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, consisting of an online survey and qualitative interviews, we investigated how the pandemic has affected not only travel patterns but also public transport as public space manifest in experiences, interactions with other passengers and atmospheres. While issues of social and physical distance – already ubiquitous buzzwords during the pandemic – are eminent for users, questions of solidarity, consideration for others, and increased attention to the human and material environment are also redefining the experiences of transport users and reshaping the publicness of public transportation.

## KEYNOTE 2 · FRAN MARTIN

TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER · 1000-1130 AEDT

### THE ENTERPRISING SELF AND THE NOMAD: EDUCATION MOBILITY AND THE REMAKING OF CHINESE WOMEN

Drawing from five years of ethnographic fieldwork with 56 young middle-class women who moved from China to Australia to attend university, this paper explores how these women's experiences of education mobility fundamentally transformed their outlooks on the world and their place within it. Although around 60% of outgoing students from China are female, the gendered dimensions of China's educational diaspora have to date been little discussed. My study was interested in how the experience of educational mobility affects post-90s middle-class women's negotiations of the contradictory gendered life scripts and self-understandings available to them today. The paper focuses in detail on two women's stories to illustrate how their movements between small hometowns, larger Chinese cities, and international education destinations over the years before, during and after university enabled them to navigate competing understandings of gendered life script, mobility, and life values. Specifically, it analyses their negotiations of fixed, linear feminine life scripts normative in post-socialist Chinese society versus more flexible, individualized models of gendered biography; and understandings of transnational mobility that link it with upward social mobility versus experiences of mobility as enabling alternative life pathways. While education mobility reinforced one woman's identification with an ideal of upward-striving, enterprising selfhood prominent in both global and Chinese public cultures, for the other her overseas study experience facilitated identification with understandings of "bohemian" mobility that have hitherto mainly been observed among more privileged subjects. Throughout, the paper underlines how feminine gender shaped these women's experiences of geographic mobility, and vice-versa.

**Fran Martin** is Associate Professor and Reader in Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne. She has recently concluded a 5-year ARC Future Fellowship project on the social and subjective experiences of young women from China studying and living in Australia (<http://www.mobileselves.org>; the book based on this project, *Dreams of Flight: The Lives of Chinese Women Students in the West*, is forthcoming from Duke U.P. in February 2022). Fran's prior has focussed on television, film, literature and other forms of cultural production in contemporary transnational China (The People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong), with a specialization in cultures of gender and sexuality. She is the author of *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film, and Public Culture* (HK U.P., 2003); *Backward Glances: Contemporary Chinese Cultures and the Female Homoerotic Imaginary* (Duke U.P. 2010); and *Telemodernities: Television and Transforming Lives in Asia* (with Tania Lewis and Wanning Sun, Duke U.P. 2016). Her co-edited books include *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities* (with Peter Jackson, Mark McLelland and Audrey Yue, Illinois U.P. 2008); *Embodied Modernities: Corporeality, Representation, and Chinese Cultures* (with L.N. Heinrich, Hawaii U.P. 2006); and *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia* (with Chris Berry and Audrey Yue, Duke U.P. 2003).



**SESSION CHAIR: THOMAS BIRTCHNELL**

**Rethinking commuting: how coworking spaces are reshaping everyday regional mobilities**

Elisabetta Crovara, The University of Melbourne, Australia

The rise of remote digital work has altered people's commuting mobilities. Long forms of everyday commute, traditionally from the home in the suburbs to the office in central business districts, have been replaced by a combination of short and long commutes, which differs day to day. This paper explores how coworking spaces fit into this new ecology of mixed-commutes and how they change people's everyday experience of the commute. Through interviews with people commuting from their homes in regional areas to both the city of Melbourne and local coworking spaces, we discuss the challenges and the opportunities of these new forms of commute, and how they intimately affect their wellbeing, habits, and relationships. By presenting the different types of commute, we invite reflection on the multi-dimensional aspects of commuting and argue that these are crucial to better understand how remote working is reshaping everyday commutes.

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**Verticality, COVID-19, and Train Commuting in Melbourne**

Victoria Radnell, Monash University, Australia

Over the last half decade, verticality has become a powerful lens for reading city structures. Everyday experiences and narratives of verticality, however, have largely been overlooked. Using commuting as an example of everyday experiences of subterranean verticality, this research case studies Melbourne's City Loop and how being underground changes the experiences of the city and the commute. Through semi-structured interviews with commuters, this paper examines how verticality is perceived during the commute. Importantly, as COVID-19 continues to shape travel and its associated experiences, this paper aims to understand how commuters are re-engaging with the city, but also what this means for the tight, stacked confines of public transport networks.

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**Metropolitan internal migration and labour market structure in Melbourne**

Jago Dodson, RMIT University, Australia

Tiebei Li, RMIT University, Australia

This paper seeks to investigate metropolitan internal residential migration in Melbourne and to assess the spatial effects of this process on urban residential structure and spatial labour markets. Residential movements are an important category of migration flows that redistribute population within a metropolitan area. However there is only a limited body of research investigating metropolitan internal migration within large urban areas. This paper investigates residential movement dynamics through an innovative compilation and analysis of Census-based internal migration flow data. In addition to detailed migration flow analysis undertaken at a local scale, the paper contributes an improved economic data geography based on functional economic regions (FERs) that permits analysis of the intersection of worker migration flows with sub-metropolitan daily spatial labour market mobility. Our results show that metropolitan internal migration results in strong outward flow of workers in Melbourne, that appears to be driven by spatial housing markets. This process in turn contributes to the dispersion of spatial labour markets in Melbourne, complicating policy aims concerning urban productivity and limiting metropolitan spatial expansion.

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**E-commerce with e-bikes: how electric two-wheelers in e-commerce business transform Chinese urban space**

Xia Hua, Tongji University, China

The prevalence of electric two-wheelers (E2W) in China not only pushes a bottom-up transition towards sustainable transport and grants the public in transport poverty with more mobilities and confidence. The use of E2W also changes the way of perceiving and utilizing disciplined urban spaces, and such spatial transformation is further accelerated by the booming e-commerce businesses that significantly rely on E2W in daily offline practices. Through field observation and interviews based in Shanghai, this research takes the daily practice of food and parcel delivery couriers as an example to illustrate how the use of E2W in the e-commerce business weaves a new set of spatial assemblage in daily life. This work

espouses and extends the idea that E2W is more than a sustainable transport solution. It highlights the everyday spatial transformation in the increasingly fluidized urban context.

## **PLATFORMS**

**TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER • 1330-1500 AEDT**

**SESSION CHAIR: THOMAS BIRTCHNELL**

### **Non-Encounters: Zero-contact and detachment in the gig economy during Covid-19**

Libby Straughan, The University of Melbourne, Australia

David Bissell, The University of Melbourne, Australia

This paper develops the concept of the non-encounter for geography in the context of the changing experience of gig economy work during COVID-19. Supplementing political economy insights with a cultural geographic sensitivity to embodiment, we explore the fluctuating bodily capacities of food delivery drivers during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in Melbourne, Australia. We reflect on fieldwork with gig workers which drew our attention to how the practice of doorstep food delivery became 'contact-free' during the pandemic. In dialogue with cultural geographical literatures on boredom and interruptions, our paper highlights the deleterious impacts of repetition without interruption on workers' bodies. We argue that the felt absences of previously-enjoyed light-touch interactions with customers and other delivery drivers has created a strange kind of 'non-encounter' for gig workers, intensifying feelings of boredom and a sense of detachment. We speculate on what this means for the future of gig work and for cultural geographers.

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### **Perceptions of safety among taxi and rideshare service patrons**

Bianca Fileborn, The University of Melbourne, Australia

Elena Cama, The University of Melbourne, Australia

Rideshare and taxi services may commonly be perceived as safer modes of travel, particularly in comparison to public transport, and the introduction of rideshare services such as Uber has transformed urban mobilities. Yet, there is emerging anecdotal evidence to suggest that both taxi and rideshare services are sites of sexual harassment and violence. However, little is known about passengers' perceptions of safety when using taxis and rideshare services, an issue with significant implications for mobility, civic participation, and social inclusion. In this presentation, we explore findings from an online survey and one-on-one interviews with rideshare and taxi patrons to examine their perceptions of safety when using taxi and rideshare services, and the factors that facilitate or impede feelings of safety, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In closing, we consider the implications of findings for conceptualisations of safety, policy and practice, and future research.

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### **Platform Urbanism 'glitches': Minor theory for researching cities in the post-COVID world**

Luis Hernando Lozano-Paredes, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

Recent traction in urban studies has been given to 'platform urbanism' as a designator for analysing platform effects in cities worldwide. Within this discourse, 'glitches' or sudden negative effects observed in platforms social development are opportunities for re-conceptions and corrections, opening the debate for flexible, negotiable, and open futures for studying the effects of urban platforms. The glitchiness' of platform urbanism is particularly evident in the evolution of digital platforms in the urban space since the 2020 COVID 19 crisis. Thus, requiring a 'minor theory', drawing from the work of Russel, Katz and particularly Leszczynski of 'glitchy' views on platform impacts, which allow for erratum and avoiding deterministic frameworks that fail to grasp the fluid evolution of platforms in a post-COVID world. Through vignettes narrating the interface between platforms and people, I propose recognising how platform glitch theory better informs how digital actors reshape cities in real-world contexts.

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### **(Un)knowing Mobility Platform Transformations**

David Bissell, The University of Melbourne, Australia

On-demand digital platforms are shaping processes of urbanisation by transforming governance processes, worker subjectivities and consumption practices. However, claims about such transformations risk ignoring the diverse and often underspecified ways that evaluations about platform urbanism are being made. This paper grapples with our

incapacities to know platform urbanism, not as pragmatic barriers that can be overcome, but as limits to be reckoned with. Reflecting on fieldwork encounters with people speaking about on-demand platforms from diverse governance, production and consumption perspectives, the paper foregrounds experiences of unknowability, illegibility and ambivalence in platform urbanism. These concepts invite a rethink of the subjectivities involved in evaluating platform urbanism and they provoke questions about the operation of power. The paper argues that attending to these 'negatives' provides an alternative counter-political perspective that apprehends both the instability of politics and our practices of judgement. Ultimately, admitting a more aporetic understanding of platform urbanism is not about hobbling our capacities to intervene as urban theorists, but about questioning what intervention might look like and what might be possible.

## KEYNOTE 3 · WEIQIANG LIN

TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER · 1500-1630 AEDT

### INFRASTRUCTURAL TURNS IN/OFF THE ASIA PACIFIC: GEOECONOMICS, AUTOMATION AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In recent years, geographers have evinced how infrastructure constitutes the bedrock of globalisation, supply chain capitalism and urban metabolisms. In this keynote address, I will trace how infrastructures have variously been developed and fashioned in the Asia Pacific region via three signature moves. Specifically, I consider how state ambitions (geo-economics), the digital revolution (automation) and the unprecedented crisis ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic have accelerated the competitive investment in new, high-profile infrastructural projects—including mega-airports, high speed rail, advanced urban logistical systems and surveillance networks—in the region. Reflecting on these troubling developments, my talk will speculate on the emergence of less-than-salubrious infrastructural philosophies in the Asia Pacific—ones that threatens to place citizens and labour, but not profits, increasingly outside of capital's circulations.

**Weiqiang Lin** is a human geographer interested in mobilities and the infrastructures of moving. Employing cultural geographical approaches, his work examines the myriad ways in which contemporary society is mobilised. In particular, his writings seek to open up the cultural politics of mobilities production (e.g. norms, laws, STS, technologies, affects) through an infrastructural lens, charting through the creation of a variety of artefacts and regimes. His recent research includes the production of airspaces in Southeast Asia; discursive and technological framings of air logistics in Singapore and China, as well as labour and automation in four of Asia's biggest international airports.



**SESSION CHAIR: MICHELLE DUFFY**

## **TOURS**

**TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER • 1630-1800 AEDT**

**SESSION CHAIR: THOMAS BIRTCHNELL**

### **The mobility geopolitics of Chinese Arctic tourism**

Benjamin Iaquinto, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Chinese outbound tourism is extending into new frontiers, including the Arctic, where the Chinese state seeks to exert its influence by developing ‘tourism resources’. In line with recent work on mobility geopolitics examining the political implications of travel and movement, we draw on a review of policy and media documents complemented by field observations to interrogate how the Chinese state and enterprises seek to envision, regulate and extract value from three key forms of tourism resources: individuals, infrastructure and data. We show how the control of tourism resources enables the Chinese state to exert authority in a region where it does not claim territorial sovereignty. This presentation contributes to a critical geopolitics that reflects upon how governments can develop resources and exercise authority in spaces where they lack territorial sovereignty and where physical territory may be altogether absent, as in the high seas or cyberspace.

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### **Take Flight: the struggles and the strengths of Benalla's Aerodrome**

Lyn Gallacher, The University of Melbourne, Australia

It may surprise you to know that most rural aerodromes in Australia run at a loss. This situation means that many are vulnerable. In the last twenty years Victoria alone has lost, aerodromes in Geelong, Philip Island, Wallan, Welshpool, Melton, Mooraduc, Pakenham, Labertouche, and Berwick, while in places such as Sunbury and Tyabb they continue under a constant threat of extinction. To find out more, I am in the process of recording and documenting slices of life at the Benalla Aerodrome. This is a way of allowing one airport’s voice to be heard in the bigger discussion around global aeromobility, time-space compression and the role of flight during COVID-19. Tiny airports, such as the one at Benalla, do not provide public transport, so the way they facilitate mobility in these expanding and shrinking times reflects something different, something special, something about the communities to which they belong.

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### **The Role of Rhythmical Pattern Body Movement in ANZAC Commemoration and Site Connotations**

Stephanie Parker, Australian National University, Australia

This studio practice investigated the role that rhythmical pattern body movement has in communicating connotation in a commemorative environment to an attending audience. The project’s inspiration was the Australian War Memorial’s (AWM) daily Last Post Ceremony (LPC), which transmits the Cult of Anzac. There is an interactive relationship in an environment between architectural structures and people. Stephens argued that architectural structures act as focus points that transform and communicate knowledge by bodily affecting moods, feelings and emotions. Kelly theorised that performances allow for the ‘correct’ knowledge or belief to be transmitted orally, which can be mnemonically associated with specific locations in the environment to give purpose. However, the role of the performance element of rhythmical pattern body movement is unknown. For this exploration, the principle instrument was me using my Hilal Dance practice, which was recorded through performance autoethnography and video. However, Thrift’s non-representational theory (i.e., written text inadequately communicates multi-sensual practices and experiences) applies here. Through my Anzac Parade Series, Wreath-Laying Series and art exhibition, rhythmical pattern body movement communicated a commemorative meaning that modified sites’ significance. Combined with the ceremonial object—the red poppy wreath—this significance is translated through movement quality and rhythm to provide solemnity and gravitas to the remembrance of sacrifice and hope for the future. At the Reconciliation Place, the red poppy wreath lying on the mound located physically on the AWM–Parliamentary land axis meant the mound was the central point for remembrance to all those who died for their country. Through the repetitive red poppy wreath-laying performance and the LPC, the exhibition explored the idea of how not only a particular commemorative connotation is given to a space but also this performance’s frequency has religious associations. The project demonstrated how rhythmical pattern body movement communicates connotations in a performance.

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## **Questioning transportation in slow tourism**

Chiara Rabbiosi, University of Padova, Italy

Pandemic tourism promotions emphasise proximity tourism and outdoor holidays as an answer to international border closures and tourists' feelings of insecurity in enclosed or crowded spaces. One of these types of holidays is walking holidays, which are long-distance walking trips along specific routes. I will use my personal 'pandemic walking holiday' to focus on the multi-modal transportation that tourism mobilities involve. The 'transport of tourism' is often overlooked in tourism research, and accounts of it are mostly analysed in a disembodied way. I argue that walking tourists need to become attuned to the 'slowness' of the walking experience along the route to fully appreciate their trail. In proposing my argument, I will also consider how the pandemic has influenced the transport of tourism. In the conclusion, I will suggest that a phenomenological approach to transport multi-modality may prove particularly useful in understanding key issues connected with the future of tourism mobilities.

### **EMBODIMENT**

**TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER 1900-2030 AEDT**

**SESSION CHAIR: DAVID BISSELL**

## **Footfall - an autoethnographic experiment**

Elaine Stratford, University of Tasmania, Australia

The foot is an astonishing appendage. Indeed, that term does it little credit, implying somehow that the foot is an accessory, extra, or add-on. I have long been interested in the geographies of the body as part of a larger focus on the geographies of flourishing and movements and mobilities have been intrinsic to that concern. And yet the advent of COVID-19 has invited me to think more, more often, and in new ways about this five-toed, well-heeled, bone-scaffolded, vessel-bearing, muscle-sheathed, skin-covered entity. On that basis, this paper documents an autoethnographic experiment; a series of personal reflections about how my footfalls help shape and step out my being in the world and my understanding of myself as always engaged in the entwined geographies of emplacement and mobility. My hope is that the paper initiates a larger project about walking over the life-course that has salience across geography and allied disciplines and in other domains.

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## **Stilled Friendships: Towards a new conceptual analysis of time and affects**

Kinneret Lahad, Tel-Aviv University, Israel

This article brings into conversation theories of friendships, affects and stillness. Friendships comprises a significant form of sociality mostly considered to be an informal, non-hierarchical and a voluntary way of bonding between peers. However, keeping in touch can be highly irregular and may include long and short periods when there is no or hardly any time spent together. What connects friends during times when friends do not communicate? When "nothing" happens? Recent works in the area of waithood, mobility and stillness suggest that waiting is not as a dead period to be endured but is a social event constitutive of the temporality of everyday life. Inspired by this scholarship, and more specifically from Bissell's work on mobility, stillness and affective communication, this article suggests that friendship relations are as much characterized by relative stillness as they are by visible movements and flows.

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## **Departing 'fortress Australia': Colour-coded borders and the aesthetics of risky mobilities**

Kaya Barry, Aalborg University, Denmark and Griffith University, Australia

International mobility has been reorganised according to perceived risk, or acceptable levels of the coronavirus and vaccination of each nation-state. 'Traffic light' systems facilitate a spectrum from 'good' (green) to 'bad' (red) handling of the pandemic that serves to universalise risky travellers. While such colour-coding is embedded in existing border controls, travel cultures, and everyday mobilities, these visual palettes are producing new hierarchies of international mobility. They urge travellers to place themselves in surveillance categories as they reflect on travel histories and intentions, visa status, and whether they are healthy and deserving bodies. This paper explores examples of colour-coded mobilities in wayfinding signage, health messaging, and in public and border spaces. I draw on documentation of my own privileged experience of travelling out of 'fortress Australia' during the pandemic. I speculate on how such hyper-visible practices of mobility governance are shaping the future of Australia's migration mobilities.

## **Getting back on the bike? Post-collision cycling transformations**

Simon Cook, Birmingham City University, United Kingdom

Collisions are key boundary situations in the life of cycling practices. They represent a key event after which practices may maintain, change or fall apart. Very little is known about the afterlives and aftermaths of cycling collisions, with most cycling collision research analysing the attributes, characteristics and risk factors involved. However, what happens next is a key question to grapple with in producing cycling societies that sustain. This paper draws on a pilot project into post-collision cycling practices to explore the transformations people make to their practices to (attempt to) get back on the bike. This paper works through Shove et al's (2012) Dynamics of Social Practice to illustrate the material, competency and meaning changes made to cycling practices following collisions and the key barriers/facilitators to sustaining cycling practices they highlight.

### **BIOPOLITICS**

**TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2030-2215 AEDT**

**SESSION CHAIR: LAUREN RICKARDS**

## **Transforming Internment (Im)mobilities: (Carto)graphic narratives of civilian internment, migration, and musical practice in Second World War Britain**

Peter Adey, Royal Holloway University of London, United Kingdom

Michael Holden, Royal Holloway University of London, United Kingdom

Giada Peterle, Università di Padova, Italy

This paper will explore how interdisciplinary research practice can serve to transform contemporary understandings of historical (im)mobilities. Civilian internment during World War II in Britain saw hitherto-mobile refugees and migrants from continental Europe (among others) transported through multiple journeys and imprisoned without trial within and through an infrastructure reappropriated for the purpose of incarceration from touristic vehicles, spaces and practices. Despite the difficulty of the situation, many internees developed rich cultural lives within internment camps, and imaginatively-mobile creative practices played a role in their survival. In this paper we will discuss the varied approaches we have applied to researching internment and its music, along with our rationale for – and some of the insights gleaned from – incorporating cartography, graphic narratives, and performance alongside more traditional methods. We hope, too, that this paper might provoke reflections upon some contemporary resonances, such as migration and detention, emergency, and restrictions upon movement, and the ways in which we research them by re-composing differently mobile (carto)graphic narratives.

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## **From Spaces of Exception to Spaces of Rescue: A Palestinian Refugee Camp in the Pandemic**

Yafa El Masri, University of Padova, Italy

When COVID-19 emerged as a health emergency, we began to witness the "return of the state". This paper will attempt to explore the peculiarity of the pandemic in stateless communities through a case study from Palestinian refugee (PR) camps in Beirut, Lebanon. Through fieldwork conducted in 2020 and statistics produced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), we attempt to analyze how the PR community was affected by the pandemic, but also how they responded to it. This paper finds that Lebanon's legal exclusion of PRs has further increased their risk of infections and mortalities. This study also finds that PRs have founded their own community response mechanisms to reduce the severity of the crisis: They have organized volunteer efforts, resource circulation and local crowdfunding dynamics to establish a small medical center in Bourj Albarajenah refugee camp. Further significance of the center is that it has become a destination for infected, yet undocumented, residents of the city, where people with no legal status in Beirut could receive medical care without facing the risk of deportation. Viewing how the response of refugees has filled the gap created by the state, we can realize how refugee camps, normally dubbed as spaces of exception, prove to be spaces of agency and rescue at times of global emergency.

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## **Covid-19 and State of Exception: Urban Mobility under the Epidemic State in Shillong, India**

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Focusing on the biopolitics of public transport operations in a small Indian city of Shillong, this paper examines the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on shared taxi operators. The paper discusses a series of actions by government agencies to reveal the arbitrary nature of decision-making around urban transport issues. The paper further shows that these decisions are often made in exception to the provisions of the transport laws. This 'state of exception' stands neither outside nor inside the legal machinery but represents the excess that binds the legal system together and allows it to function like a well-oiled machine, rendering the lives of both transport operators and users precarious. The paper argues that this precarity stands upon an underlining political consensus that gives power and authority to the executive to order the city even if in violation of the law which is supposed to govern it.

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## **Redefining The 'Boundaries' of Prisons: Defining the 'intended' and 'unintended' Objectives**

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The concepts of "surveillance" and "seclusion" are the oldest debates in the context of crime and punishment. Structures in prison, its programmes and people all work together with the aim of enforcing discipline and there by reinforcing surveillance and seclusion through application of technologies of power. The moment a person moves into the prison, it becomes a space that define one's reality. Space in prisons become a dividing factor between different types of prisoners and determining boundaries and disciplinary practices. This space could depict different meanings for different people; say for example, for a prison official it is a place of work, for a researcher it becomes his/her field, while for a prisoner it could be his/her shelter, source of livelihood, place of recreation, work, etc. According to the way one perceives and define spaces the objective of the 'structure' could also change. This paper would explore mobility transformations of people in prisons in the context of definitions of space and how the objectives of prisons also get redefined based on these perceptions.

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## **Beyond the Abyss: Reading Un/Dead Mobility Transformations through the Feejee Mermaid and NourbeSe M. Philip's Zong!**

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Water is life-giving and mobilizing; both human and non-human life originates from and depends on it. At the same time water can also be deathly and immobilizing. As events of sea crossings like slavery or migration show, water reveals the »abyss« (Glissant 1997) of what it means to be human. By thinking together the two examples of the so-called (1) Feejee Mermaid, a taxidermied creature that was supposedly caught by Japanese fishermen near Fiji and brought to Europe in the 19th century, and (2) M. NourbeSe Philip's poetry collection *Zong!*, based on the massacre of 130 enslaved Africans on a slave ship traversing the Atlantic Ocean in 1781, this paper will illustrate how taking different oceanic histories and watery relations seriously can unsettle dry modern boundaries and make the ocean a space for transformations. With this, we want to show how (non-)human bodies were carried across the sea, in a complex interplay of mobility and immobility, life and death. Our aim is to think water as epistemic and ethical principle of new mobile and transformative forms of knowing and living together.