

AusMob Symposium 2023

CHALLENGING MOBILITIES

9am-6pm

Thursday 30 November 2023

The University of Melbourne

221 Bouverie St, Carlton

Symposium programme

AusMob

Australian Mobilities
Research Network



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

We are thrilled to welcome you to the 2023 AusMob Australian Mobilities Research Network symposium!

This year, in the wake of the pandemic, life is gradually returning to something that feels more normal. Notwithstanding our collective return to mass mobility, we are facing a series of challenges related to intensified movement, among them: economic challenges related to huge increases in cost of living, employment, and housing pressures; environmental challenges associated with intensifying climate change and biodiversity loss; and wellbeing challenges associated with compounding sources of pressure. In the context of these challenges and many others, this year's AusMob symposium showcases a diverse range of mobilities research that is exploring how people, households, communities, organisations and other critters and entities are adjusting (or trying to adjust) to the big challenges of our time—and in the process, finding more socially and environmentally progressive ways of living and thriving in the wake of the pandemic.

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

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.

Symposium Programme

09:00-09:15

Arrival and registration

09:15-09:30

Acknowledgement of Country

Welcome and Introduction

09:30-11:00

Session 1: ai • robotaxis • futures • loopholes • fish vans

Technological mobility challenges

Marcia McKenzie, University of Melbourne

The mobilities of policy failure: Friction and controversial issues in education

Emma Quilty, Monash University

Smart mobilities in everyday life: Are we designing the future for Pod Man?

Tom Hawxwell, HafenCity University Hamburg

Future-making and the shifting sociotechnical imaginaries around urban mobility in the city of Hamburg

Thomas Birtchnell, University of Wollongong

Is it OK to Speed? Policy Loopholes in Mobility Systems

Maya Costa-Pinto, University of Melbourne

Fish Markets in Flux: Transnational Trajectories and Emerging Networks in Goa, India

11:00-11:30

Break

11:30-13:00

Session 2: refuge • small towns • fault lines • ta-va • parking

Migration mobility challenges

Mireille Kayeye, The University of Melbourne

Creating Space for Women Seeking Asylum in Australia

Ash Alam and Etienne Nel, University of Melbourne and University of Otago

Regions (en)tangled: thinking through more-than-human small-town (im)mobilities

Yasmin Ortiga, Singapore Management University

Fault Lines: Fixing Migration Infrastructure for Internal Mobility

Ruth Faleolo, La Trobe University

Pasifika academics' well-being challenges post-Covid-19

Farida Fozdar, Curtin University

Challenging mobilities: the securitisation of Muslims as an immobilising force – an Indonesian case study

13:00-14:00

Lunch

14:00-15:30

Session 3: jam • mess • sand dunes • colours

More-than-human mobility challenges

Kaya Barry, Griffith University

Deep weathering: Challenging ideas of growth and decay in farming landscapes

Willow Ross, University of Melbourne

Bringing 'shadow places' into the light: Dumpster diving and sticky networks of care

Vera Daniel and Michele Lobo, Deakin University

Breathtaking motorcycle mobilities with the Indus Suture Zone, Ladakh, India

Clare McCracken, RMIT University

Wild Country: the Ovens River

Peter Adey, Royal Holloway University of London

Title TBC

15:30-16:00

Break

16:00-17:15

Session 4: drag queen • families • campuses • awkwardness

Work mobility challenges

Michelle Duffy and Kathy Mee, University of Newcastle

Shelita Buffet, Lulu the Horse and the Ghosts of Rawlinna: Mobile working on the Indian Pacific

Nancy Worth and Alkim Karaagac, University of Waterloo and Queen's University

Living in liminality: waiting, coping and planning with international student families

Lauren Rickards, Todd Denham, Lisa De Kleyn, La Trobe University

Research im/mobilities under climate change

Elizabeth Straughan, David Bissell and Andrew Gorman-Murray, University of Melbourne and Western Sydney University

Working from home: workplace culture and feelings of awkwardness

17:15-17:30

Wrap up

Abstracts

09:30-11:00

Session 1: ai • robotaxis • futures • loopholes • fish vans

Technological mobility challenges

Marcia McKenzie, University of Melbourne

The mobilities of policy failure: Friction and controversial issues in education

This presentation examines the productivities inherent in some cases of policy immobility, specifically in relation to policy on 'controversial' topics such as sustainability and AI in education. It draws on the concept of friction to highlight gaps and breakages in individual and community responses to global mobilities of policy directions: For example, how the 'feel of algorithms' differs for different people and can be a site of building more critical orientations to the proliferating uses of AI in education, or how push back to the UN 'Sustainable Development Goals' can enable locally appropriate land-based approaches to policy making in education. Informed by work on affective governance and policy mobilities, the presentation contributes to understanding the productivities that can be entailed in policy mobility failures, including how policy failure itself can become mobile across jurisdictions.

Emma Quilty, Monash University

Smart mobilities in everyday life: Are we designing the future for Pod Man?

Pod Man is the embodiment of the impossible ideals found at the heart of promises about the future of automated mobilities. Automated vehicles (AVs) or self-driving cars are one the most popular representations of this vision for the future however as we have seen in the past few years, robo-taxis and other automated vehicles are no longer merely speculative technologies. It is imperative that we critically engage with the ideals and ideologies entrenched in these visions. To this end I have identified and conceptualised the ideal future consumer of these technologies, who I have called Pod Man. In this paper I offer a critical perspective to the gendering of automated mobility futures on both a methodological and empirical level. I draw on feminist and mobilities justice theory to demonstrate how conceptual characters like Pod Man provide a generative framework for unpacking the anticipatory narratives that mobilise visions of the future.

Tom Hawxwell, HafenCity University Hamburg

Future-making and the shifting sociotechnical imaginaries around urban mobility in the city of Hamburg

This research investigates changes in the ways through which the future is imagined in a range of long-term municipal transportation planning practices in the city of Hamburg, Germany. In recent decades, there have been significant changes in the institutional arrangements that govern urban mobility as central actors have set about transforming the mobility system in a variety of ways. Using qualitative content analysis, the approach draws on semi-structured interviews and municipal documents. Particular attention is paid to the ways (e.g. techniques, practices) through which actors involved in urban mobility planning make sense of the future. Through comparing different phases of development in recent history, the research demonstrates changes in the approaches utilised to conceive of predicted, desirable, plausible, and probable futures as well as changes in the promises and aspirations associated with the mobility system of the future over time.

Thomas Birtchnell, University of Wollongong

Is it OK to Speed? Policy Loopholes in Mobility Systems

Casual speeding: Every K counts. The slogan in the latest campaign by Transport for NSW attempts to close a loophole in the road rules where motorists perceive the speed limit in kilometres on road signs is open to interpretation and negotiable to an intuitive degree that is nevertheless undefined. The well-known idiom that mobility systems should run predictably 'as if like clock-work' is at the forefront of the minds of infrastructure planners seeking to eliminate human error and uncertainties from the environment through strict regulation and rule-making. In an age where clocks run digitally, the aspiration for seamless travel has inspired overhauls of legacy systems to be data-aware to a finer resolution than ever before. Despite the best efforts of regulators, humans continue to obstruct the smooth running of mobility systems, both purposefully and inadvertently. The presentation mulls over policy loopholes in mobility systems governing road rules to understand what they are and why they persist.

Maya Costa-Pinto, University of Melbourne

Fish Markets in Flux: Transnational Trajectories and Emerging Networks in Goa, India

This paper focusses on fish markets in and around Panaji, a coastal city in Goa, India. Conversations about finding, eating and conserving fish draw Goans from diverse communities together, and fish markets – including those that are physically located on the outskirts of the city – are integral to the social and economic life of Panaji. Over the past decade, the introduction of new technologies, the launch of mobile fish vans and increased migration to Goa have transformed local fish markets. This paper explores how fish markets serve as a focal point for fluid, and sometimes volatile translocal relationships. In particular, the paper will show how flows and circulations of capital, labour and technology, and social activities that take place in the fish market, reveal new transnational trajectories and emerging local, regional and global networks.

11:30-13:00

Session 2: refuge • small towns • fault lines • ta-va • parking

Migration mobility challenges

Mireille Kayeye, The University of Melbourne

Creating Space for Women Seeking Asylum in Australia

This paper investigates the experiences of women seeking asylum in Australia. Using a photovoice project, it shows that the lives and bodies of women asylum seekers are conceived as illegal, unwanted and unneeded. However, the experiences of women who have experienced displacement are dictated by laws and policies from negligent practices from the government. This paper explores survival and resistance and how women still manage to make a life before, during and after the pandemic. The researcher who brings her own lived asylum experience also witnesses the stories through interviews and focus group discussions on experiences of empowerment. While it provides a realistic background of the violence inflicted to women seeking asylum, the reasons that causes them to become displaced and seek refuge, it emphasizes that persecution does not stop as they reach the host countries, but they still manage to survive and create a meaningful life in Australia.

Ash Alam and Etienne Nel, University of Melbourne and University of Otago

Regions (en)tangled: thinking through more-than-human small-town (im)mobilities

A growing body of academic work recognises how non-human agencies influence people's movements in terms of migrant management and bordering practice, post-disaster adaptation, migrant locational choices and wellbeing, and so on. Nonetheless, there is a paucity of consistent scholarship examining mobility experiences in remote and regional towns through human-non-human relational approaches, sometimes referred to as more-than-human. This paper addresses the gap by examining evidence from New Zealand's two southernmost regions, Otago and Southland. We show how non-human agencies have played an important role in small-town mobility politics at various spatial and temporal scales, which we capture in three thematic areas. We argue that understanding the many nuances of small-town mobilities (and immobilities) necessitates rethinking the "region" as en/tangled more-than-human processes with a shared past and continuity, which are necessary for ensuring sustainable small-town futures.

Yasmin Ortiga, Singapore Management University

Fault Lines: Fixing Migration Infrastructure for Internal Mobility

This paper examines the Philippines' struggles to restart the overseas deployment of Filipino workers, as countries began to reopen their borders after the COVID-19 pandemic. While scholars have mainly described the pandemic as an event that disrupted labor migration, I argue that it actually revealed existing weaknesses in how migration infrastructure has long been organized within source countries. Based on 186 interviews with Filipino nurses and cruise workers, I illustrate how the overconcentration of both regulatory and commercial infrastructure in Metro Manila make it difficult for aspiring migrants to fulfil state and employer requirements for their departure. COVID-19 only worsened this situation, as the task of traveling to the city became riskier and more costly. As we move beyond the pandemic, this paper calls for scholars to recognize these fault lines in migration governance and find new ways to repair migration infrastructure for both internal and international mobility.

Ruth Faleolo, La Trobe University

Pasifika academics' well-being challenges post-Covid-19

This paper considers the well-being imbalances and arising challenges observed amongst Pasifika academics, 2022-2023. The post-pandemic era has brought with it various compounding pressures, especially political and economic, and increasingly our Pasifika academics – both in the Pacific homelands and in diaspora contexts – have felt the urgency as well as stresses of being a part of much needed research and development. This discussion re-introduces concepts of Pasifika well-being from my PhD (pre-pandemic) and postdoctoral studies (during pandemic) that focused on trans-Tasman migrants and Pasifika mobilities to and through Australia. Important concepts relating to Pasifika mobilities will be discussed: ta-va (realities across time and space); collective-individual; and fakalalakaka (holistic progress), further unpacking Indigenous meaning-making processes involved in our work-related and community-related movements, as academics. Seven Pasifika academics' narratives were captured using a Pasifika method of e-talanoa and the Talanoa-Vā narrative approach.

Farida Fozdar, Curtin University

Challenging mobilities: the securitisation of Muslims as an immobilising force – an Indonesian case study

This paper explores very early results from an ARC study of the impacts of the Australian government's securitisation measures on a range of migrant Muslim communities' sense of belonging. Focusing on a case study of Indonesians in Western Australia, the paper takes a (im)mobilities lens to consider how such measures have impacted the communities targeted. Perhaps surprisingly, the Indonesian community tends not to see these measures as targeted at them. Their concerns centre around everyday settlement issues and internal community fractures. Concerns around parking, an oddly consistent theme raised by interview participants, are analysed to consider the policing of space by the wider population, and its perception by this community as a greater impost than government surveillance measures. However, there appear to be differences in how first and second-generation Muslims' experiences.

14:00-15:30

Session 3: jam • mess • sand dunes • colours

More-than-human mobility challenges

Kaya Barry, Griffith University

Deep weathering: Challenging ideas of growth and decay in farming landscapes

“Deep weathering” is a geologic process that takes millions of years of seasonal wetting and drying of certain rocks to produce high levels of iron-oxide. The result is a rich, red soil, perfect for crops like sugar cane and sweet potatoes. Evidence of deep weathering is in the fertile soils of Bundaberg, a town with a

violent colonial past, yet a key part of the nation's food production and a hub for seasonal migrant workers. The region is a hive of mobility, millennia in the making, that epitomizes contemporary debates on housing stress, migrant labour, global supply chains, and ecological destruction. I present a series of creative experiments of making jam at roadside rest areas. Using a hiking stove and third-grade fruit the farm workers bring home, locally produced sugar, and a hint of soil, the process is a creative conversation across geologic and human challenges in the region.

Willow Ross, University of Melbourne

Bringing 'shadow places' into the light: Dumpster diving and sticky networks of care

Dumpstering is a messy and mobile practice. This paper introduces dumpster places, the shadowy, diverse and foul-smelling areas where urban food is discarded—and recovered. In these places, divers encounter mess and get a sense of it with their bodies, coming away with intimate knowledge of dumpster places. But dumpster places are sticky. Traces of the dumpster follow divers and recovered food waste, leaving residues in cars, homes, pantries, community kitchens and organising meetings. I ask how dumpster places travel through the informal networks of care created by dumpster divers, and how traces of the dumpster stick to the ways divers do care. These traces defy the attempted marginalisation of Plumwood's 'shadow places' and draw our attention back to the mess of the dumpster. I argue that dumpstering can offer us a different sense of how to live with food waste as part of urban places—salvaging an idea of dumpstering as the recovery of food and the recovery of shadow places.

Vera Daniel and Michele Lobo, Deakin University

Breathtaking motorcycle mobilities with the Indus Suture Zone, Ladakh, India

This paper focuses on breathtaking motorcycle mobilities during summer in the Trans-Himalayan zone of Ladakh, a highly securitised union territory at an elevation above 10,000 feet in northern India. As an Australian woman pillion rider on a Two Wheel international expedition in August 2023 and an Australian geographer of Indian heritage, we breathe together 'in the moment' (Dixon et al 2013) with the Ladakh and Zaskar Ranges along challenging rides enabled by a powerful 500cc Royal Enfield Bullet, a Go-Pro video camera and Instagram posts. We revisit these breathtaking mobilities with the Indus River, bare rocky cliffs along the mobile Indus Suture Zone, shifting sand dunes, 'lunar and Martian' landscapes, high altitude lakes and mountain passes through diary entries, riding stories, photographs, videos and maps that advance thought on the aesthetics of adventure tourism by women riders after Covid border lockdowns.

Clare McCracken, RMIT University

Wild Country: the Ovens River

In 2020 Google revitalised the pallet of its maps. Streamlining the colours of the world from over 700, to 25 major and minor tones. There is a seductively designed oral history page on the official Google website which features interviews with the team who developed the new colour coding. Their aim, they say, was to '[r]eveal more of the earth's details' while maintaining the map's accessibility and its 'recognizable-ly Google' look. This performance paper grew out of a research project in north-eastern Victoria which proposed the use of in-depth, in-person interviews to gather perspectives on what different actors are thinking about the future of rural Victoria, with a focus on the Ovens River. Successive lockdowns, and university restrictions on fieldwork throughout 2021, saw a broadening of the research methods to include the use of digital platforms like Google maps and satellite view and the use of memories. From 1996 to 2000 I drove the Ovens Valley in north-eastern Victoria twice a day on my way to and from high school. This performance paper uses those memories of habitually moving through place, alongside Google map visions of the same location, to ask what details does Google Maps reveal and obscure in the Australian context? In doing so it asks how does one of the world's leading machine vision systems interpret Australian landscape and ecologies.

Peter Adey, Royal Holloway University of London

TBC

16:00-17:15

Session 4: drag queen • families • campuses • awkwardness

Work mobility challenges

Michelle Duffy and Kathy Mee, University of Newcastle

Shelita Buffet, Lulu the Horse and the Ghosts of Rawlinna: Mobile working on the Indian Pacific

This paper draws on our recent experience of travelling from Newcastle (Australia) to Perth (Australia) on the Indian-Pacific to attend a conference. Our choice was to embark on a slow work journey with lower environmental impacts and very different opportunities for social interactions with fellow travellers. We embraced the rhythms of the journey and savoured the opportunities of encounters with a Drag Queen in Broken Hill, Lulu the horse hoping for an apple from the chef (she got a carrot), the ghost-like places we passed through as well as interactions with our fellow travellers and the crew. In the paper we reflect on the embodied experience of travelling slowly over thousands of kilometres and how this differs from our usual modes of academic travel for conferences. The journey sparked joy for us both, and reminded us of a time when travel was less of a burden to be fitted into a too busy schedule. We consider the possibilities slow travels offers for a flourishing work life.

Nancy Worth and Alkim Karaagac, University of Waterloo and Queen's University

Living in liminality: waiting, coping and planning with international student families

Canada is accepting growing numbers of international students, with the federal government expecting to host over 900 000 international students in 2023 (CBC). This diverse group of migrants must negotiate economic and social challenges different from those of domestic students. Drawing on a series of interviews with international students and their families, this paper examines experiences of living abroad through the lens of liminality. Liminality is a well-used framework in migration and lifecourse research to capture transitional periods, centering a sense of in-betweenness and ambiguity. Liminality often involves relocation—and in our case involves personal and familial transitions related to housing, work and citizenship. This paper proposes a relational framing for this period of liminality and offers three vignettes of families' experiences during this time. Our aim is to share a less visible story about international students (those who bring their families), examining strategies of waiting, coping and planning.

Lauren Rickards, Todd Denham, Lisa De Kleyn, La Trobe University

Research im/mobilities under climate change

Multiple forces are shifting where people live and work, including climate change. In this paper, we explore Australia's shifting workscapes and the related human and more-than-human mobilities involved. Using an assemblage and practice lens and drawing on a recent inquiry into universities in regional areas, we focus on research work and the relationship between campuses, researchers, and materials across locations in the context of the accelerating and arrested circulations that climate change and responses to it are generating. We challenge some of the assumptions about regional campuses and their research evident in contemporary discussions about Australian higher education and consider how research systems need to change in a more im/mobile climate changed future.

Elizabeth Straughan, David Bissell and Andrew Gorman-Murray, University of Melbourne and Western Sydney University

Working from home: workplace culture and feelings of awkwardness

The immobility instigated by pandemic lockdowns saw the rapid movement of non-essential workers from the office to home. As lockdowns have lifted across Australia, our collective return to mass mobility has not, however, correlated with a wholesale bidirectional movement of workers from the home to office. In this paper we draw on semi-structured interviews collected with HR managers, CEOs and Executives from corporate companies, unions and not-for-profits organizations who explain the challenges currently

negotiated by workplaces grappling with the micro-politics of work from home and hybrid work practices. While these stakeholders recognize the enabling qualities of such work practices, they point to constraints around collaboration, communication, and the onboarding of new staff. We consider how these constraints coalesce in discussions of workplace culture. To think through this intangible quality of work we draw on current debates in geography around the concept of culture, and a focus on feelings of awkwardness.