

Mobilities Controversies - Place, Justice, Democracy

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the Center for Mobilities
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KEYNOTES /

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CONFERENCE THEME

To state that the world is facing challenges seems to be an understatement. Not since the Second World War has a totality of nations and continents been hit by so many challenges and crisis as now. The environmental, energy and ecological crisis has been building up over decades, but it's coinciding with the global epidemics of Covid-19, the global refugee crisis, and now the war in Ukraine almost seems like the 'perfect storm'. The facing of 'wicked problems' on an unprecedented magnitude is a wake-up call not just for policy makers, business leaders, and the civil society. The global research communities are also called upon by these troubled times. Various forms of research that addresses such challenges - from the globe to the body - is highly needed.

During this plethora of troubles, we find mobilities to be at the very heart of contestation and controversy. The sheer magnitude of moving of matter, goods, people, information, data, virus, weapons etc. should make it clear that we are facing serious global challenges. Next to this 'hypermobility' we are also facing problematic immobility or restricted mobility as for instance when humans are moving for survival but curbed on their mobilities due to 'politicized forms of friction'.



The 'Mobilities Controversies' want to chase the genealogies of these controversies. Not only in time, but also across spaces and infrastructural landscapes. Mobilities are contested in various fields of policy and planning, as well as multiple research disciplines offer different interpretation of the causes and consequences. By applying the notion of 'controversy' we partly want to pay homage to the now late Bruno Latour, an unorthodox thinker whose oeuvre has left a permanent imprint on the mobilities turn. Partly we want to acknowledge the line of enquiry coming out of 'controversy studies' that critically problematize notions of singular causality and foundational explanations in a hunt for 'matters of fact'. Exploring contemporary mobilities as 'matter of concern' in the light of controversy is thus to have an open mind to the many human and non-human systems, agencies, and infrastructures that shapes the world we now inhabit.

To reduce some of this complexity the conference wants to home in on three important dimensions of these mobilities controversies. Firstly, the conference explore how places becomes central in all this? Both in terms of the obvious fact that mobilities controversies are 'placed'. There is a complicated geography and territoriality to these issues. But also, on the more fundamental level we want to ask what place is and what it becomes in the light of these controversies. Secondly, the conference brings questions of justice and injustice to the table. Much focus is on the two dimensions of sustainability relating to the environment and the economy. Important as these are, we here, however, remind that the social exclusionary effects of multiple mobilities controversies should not be forgotten. Issues of mobility justice and mobility injustice prevails. Final and thirdly, the conference inserts this discussion in a context of democracy. Not as a solution based on the best 'system' but rather as a prism into issues of co-creation, transparency, and citizen engagement. Democracy might be troubled but nevertheless a set of practices and a way of thinking that seems to be the best way forward. Whether one perceives democracy as a system or a way of living, and whether one believes that democracy is about rational consensus or agonistic co-existence we believe it is necessary to have a platform for normative and critical deliberation.

On this rather gloomy background, the Center for Mobilities and Urban Studies (C-MUS) at Aalborg University calls to an internationally anchored, critical-concerned conversation across professions and professional disciplines. We invite papers on mobilities controversies to fit under the following thematic headlines (but not only these):

C-MUS
Centre for Mobility & Urban Studies

The Centre of Mobilities & Urban Studies (C-MUS) is a trans-disciplinary research collaboration between mobility researchers from the Humanities Faculty, Social Science Faculty and Engineering, Science and Medicine Faculty at Aalborg University. See more here: <https://www.c-mus.aau.dk/>

- › Everyday life mobilities
- › Rural / urban mobilities
- › Territorial and geo-political mobilities
- › Infrastructure, infrastructural landscapes and mobilities systems
- › Aeromobilities
- › Automobilities
- › Cycling
- › Pedestrians
- › Harbors and water-based infrastructure
- › Architecture
- › The human and multisensorial body
- › Urban design and planning
- › Digital network technologies
- › Mobilities of ageing populations
- › Mobilities of disabilities
- › Gendered mobilities
- › Racialized controversies of mobilities
- › Refugees and immigration
- › Warfare and geopolitical conflict
- › Environment and ecology
- › Mobilities and geosocial classes