

13 ART WORKS, 12 EXPERIMENTS IN MOBILE UTOPIAS

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Art as a Strategy for Living with Utopias in Ruins

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“To appreciate the patchy unpredictability associated with our current condition, we need to reopen our imaginations”. (Tsing, 2015: 5)

The term ‘utopia’ is problematic. Originating in the Greek for ‘no place’ or ‘good place’ it suggests an ideal that can only be imagined. To imagine utopias could be seen as an unrealistic orientation to a future in which the local impacts of global change will be severe. However, utopian thinking also includes the pursuit of a transformative, it is about how we might strive towards a better future and find strategies for living with dystopic situations. Anthropologist Anna Tsing suggests that we need imagination to grasp the precariousness and unpredictability of contemporary life. She does this through both a metaphorical use of the Matsuke mushroom to imagine the possibility of life in a ruined landscape, and through detailed observations of the lives of mushroom pickers surviving economically in the ruins of capitalism. This parallel practice of imagination and observation also characterise the works in the Mobile Utopia exhibition. Through the works we see utopian plans and ideas come up against the frictions of physical place; where ideas are not only imagined, but attempted, enacted and grappled. Although all the art works are distinctly mobile, they are grounded by the frictions that the artists unearth, enact and perform through investigations of situated and spatial practices. We suggest that the processes and journeys that produced the art works can be thought of as strategies for living and making meaning in the ruins of capitalism.

We have grouped the works into three themes: an exploration of infrastructures that enable particular kinds of mobilities; the negotiation of identity on the move and in relation to changing geographies; and the questioning of veracity of or within distributed, networked and mediated mobilities. The themes often overlap within the works as the artists navigate between material geographies, mobile lives and distributed networks. The works are not propositions for the future, they are all explicitly grounded in the way that past, present and future are entangled in a complex relation to each other and to the frictions of location. While reminding us of past ideas of utopian planning they also offer new ways to make critical observations.

Vision in Motion as a method

The artists all engage in forms of mobile art practice; by making on the move, by recording and gathering materials on the move, or through performative travels. These journeys and their representation in the exhibition bring together two different ways of thinking about the contribution of art to mobilities: art as visual representation, and art as experience building on the work of philosopher John Dewey (1980). The artists journey has a long history, from Duchamp’s *Boite-en-Valise* (1935-41) as a response to forced migration, Robert Smithson’s *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey* (1967) as a reflective and critical observation, to walking as explored in the exhibition *Walk On: From Richard Long to Janet Cardiff – 40 Years of Art Walking* (2014), or Kai Syng Tan’s *RUN!RUN!RUN!*. The artist as mobile maker travels the terrain that they research, physically inhabiting the spaces and times of

mobility, and invites others to share the experience in a variety of forms. The materials brought back from these journeys and seen within the Mobile Utopia exhibition challenge the viewer to experience the world differently and reflect on the utopian impulse through critical mobile practices.

The artists in the exhibition find and investigate particular local instances of mobility that invite audiences to consider wider global themes. Committing to the transformation of these travels into an aesthetic work necessitates an in depth understanding of relational, auditory, visual and material forms of mobility in order to produce the final works. This commitment can be seen in the practice of artists in the exhibition, for example: Baxter's work originates from years of inhabitation of second life and an intimate understanding of the social relationships, creative collaborations and negotiation of the platform through which the works are made; Hieslmair and Zinganel's extensive travel and use of drawing as a method to generate conversations results in new experiential understandings of Europe's border zones; Thulin's encounter with a pile of mis-placed audio samples is a result of his ongoing investigation of mobile audio interfaces and their relationship with site and situation; Merrington and Mitchell's persistent driving of every route in the four-stack road junction, and the more personal quest of McCracken's road trip around large sculptural forms in Australian towns both use driving as a creative method. The possibilities afforded by these journeys that inhabit different forms and contexts of mobility, provide new sites for artistic intervention and new areas for critique and political engagement.

Art as Insight

By finding and inhabiting mobile situations artists become engaged with the problems they investigate, and draw our attention to the specific situations in which global mobilities are enacted. In this context artists are engaged in independent forms of gaining insight, sometimes outside conventional socio-scientific approaches (Witzgall, 2013). Art can explore that which lies beyond, or is excluded by conventional scientific approaches; however it is not only as an outsider that enables art to gain new insights (Witzgall, 2013), many of the artists in the exhibition also have developed hybrid practices that combine disciplinary approaches.

Insights resulting from artistic research are increasingly the subject for critical examination by scholars in disciplines beyond art. The re-evaluation of artistic research as a means of gaining insight continues to gather credibility and influence as authors such as Witzgall put art research on an equal footing with insights generated by natural and technological sciences. As scientific approaches are increasingly seen as defined and culturally produced by external forces, be they historical, social, economic, discursive or political, scepticism grows concerning their role as processes by which to discover truth (Witzgall, 2013; Rheinberger, 1997). The work of cultural historian Martin Jay (1993) re-evaluates the visual in relation to the centrality of language systems as means of interpretation. His exploration of the denigration of vision in twentieth century French thought contributes to reaffirming the visual as a tool for understanding. Research into the work of seeing, vision, perception and culture, developed through the concept of visuality within visual culture, underpin the recent discursive field (Heywood & Sandywell, 2012). As Heywood suggests, contemporary understandings of viewing and visualisation are comprehensively problematised. We suggest it is the inherent practice of problematizing and reflectivity, inherent in art research, that gives it a central role in the field of mobilities.

Let us turn to artworks as forms of expression and insight. As significant modalities for configuring and conveying ideas, it is important to explore the role of the aesthetic as a means of gaining insight. Aesthetic knowledge might take sensual forms, as colour, composition, juxtaposition, sound, line, movement, tone, or take a more relational perspective, where artworks emerge from the dynamics of inter-subjectivity. Relational aesthetics reflect on interrelations between people and their acts of communication, their movement and spatiality, as collective expressions and constructions of meanings. Whether relational or sensual, artistic approaches here are exploratory, and involve activities of investigative enquiry able to give rise to many possibilities and interpretations.

Practices of mobile spatiality actively explore the phenomena of mobility in connection with utopian imaginaries. However, visions of utopia and utopian hopes have dystopian counterparts, explored as limitations or disjunctures. The exhibition, in different ways, asks viewers to re-consider infrastructures of mobility, utopianism of imagined flows, and frictions of material presence. There is a focus on temporalities, from moment, flow, cessation, future, present and past. Through exploration of infrastructure as spatial control system, and enactments of complex planning, artworks examine global infrastructures producing friction in local enactments. Utopian visions and dystopian presentiments characterise mobilities art research through subjects such as tourism and tourist destinations, migration, cartography, identity, GPS mapping, walking and cycling, pan-European road corridors and their hubs, air traffic control, road traffic interchanges, virtual and actual worlds, and panoramic vistas.

We propose that the works in the exhibition each contain strategies for living with aspects of utopias in ruins and for finding meaning in those situations. The key question for viewers of the exhibition concerns the extent to which these artistic interventions provide insights into the field of mobilities. In Sheller's terms, do they contribute towards a reconfiguration of spaces for experimentation, critique, and political communication, or reinforce existing systems? Viewers are asked to consider whether artworks intervene in configurations of mediated space and interrelations of people to cut across existing power relations, control, commercial recruitment, and surveillance practices, potentially to empower new kinds of subversive subjects (Sheller, 2013).

Infrastructure

The aerial view provides a recurring aesthetic, problematised by a number of artists in this exhibition. In critiquing infrastructures of mobility the utopian viewpoint is challenged. Utopia stands for the idealism of a plan, the perfect geometry of a view from above, the individual dream of the open road, or hassle-free flight -perhaps modernist imaginaries. Artworks standing firmly on the ground or mounted on a wall, prompt a viewer to look up into the sky with critical eyes, or down into the ground to consider historical layers of infrastructures. By changing the visual perspective they prompt a viewer to make conceptual shifts in understanding, and in their imaginaries.

Peter Merrington and Ilana Mitchell's work *The English Four Stack*, is a film that has been made by travelling every possible route through a four-stack motorway junction. The main purpose of the junction is to enable unhindered travel through a complex motorway interchange. Merrington and Mitchell

make the junction the focus of their work encountering the interchange through movement and documentation. Geographer Peter Merriman contrasts quantitative studies of roads as lines and flows of traffic, conceived as non-places of passing through, with modes of inhabiting the road, as a social and commercial network. This is an inhabited landscape 'underpinned by a series of dynamic embodied practices that lead to a reconfiguration of aesthetics and modes of landscape appreciation' (Merriman, 2014:201). The structure is described as sculptural or graceful on paper as an aerial view. While the utopian aim of the four-stack is to enable flows, its position within local spaces prevents ease of movement. This inversion of its original aim is suggested by an inversion of the camera, and what is seen in the film as a view upwards to the sky. Instead of an aerial view of planned lines and sweeps of road, the view looking up draws us to consider the rhythms, materials and fleeting moments of embodied travel enabled by this concrete infrastructure. As Merriman suggests '...roads are often presented as firmly located features which can easily be mapped, but I want to argue that roads are not simply engineered objects which are located in a physical landscape. Roads are also a key technology that mediates people's experiences of and engagements with landscapes' (Merriman, 2014, P.202). The infrastructure of roads afforded by the construction of pan-European road corridors between Vienna, Tallin, and the Turkish-Bulgarian border provide the subject of investigation for Hieslmair and Zinganel in their work *Mapping What if? Speculative Predictions on Everyday Practices*. The work grows out of research undertaken whilst driving the infrastructure, its mobility streams, hubs and nodes. Interviews and live mapping exercises develop a networked cartography of routes, routines, and individual experiences within a mediated spatiality. The work highlights the limitations of geographical mapping, using conventions of contour, sign and symbol, to account for complexities of lived experience, and diversity of mobile participants. As Cresswell and Merriman suggest, the mobile worlds labeled dead by transport geographers and others come alive when they become the focus of attention (2011). Self-consciously ethnographic in method the artists put individual experience of mobility at the centre of investigation and seek to engage the widest possible spectrum of participants, and mobility processes, differentiating between their many different forms of interrelationship and interdependency (Hieslmair & Zinganel, 2017). The work suggests roads are key technologies in mediating people's experiences and engagements with landscape.

Christina Vasilopoulou's work *McAdam Shoes* literally stops us in our tracks. The shoes constructed out of the strata of road-building materials can be stepped into, but can't go anywhere because they are too heavy. We could think of this work in relation to *Stoat* by artist Marcus Coates (1999), in which a pair of shoes is made to shift the weight of the wearer to match the gait of a stoat, provoking stoat-like movements. *McAdam Shoes* similarly causes a non-human change in gait, but also a change in perspective. There is a shift in thinking of the road as a smooth surface that encourages flow, to one that is physically encountered, an embodied perspective of the road, a specific place in a moment of time. In placing two feet on the road, Vasilopoulou freezes the flow, suggesting the wearer look beneath the feet, instead of the road ahead. Time stretches not to the horizon, but down, beyond the strata of road-building materials, through layers of sediment and organic detritus, to rock beneath. In looking at the materiality of the road we start to view mobility through the infrastructure that supports it. In this way the road can be inhabited in a different way to technologies of flow, by stopping rather than moving.

Vicki Kerr's *Tower* provides a panorama from within an air-traffic control tower, focusing on the work of coordination going on inside the tower that foregrounds the distant view of landscape, sky, and imagined destinations. Air traffic controllers take responsibility for coordinating the complex trajectories of multiple aircraft arriving and leaving. Usually operating out of sight and behind the scenes, this infrastructure of control enables an expanded perspective on the utopian imaginary of freedom to travel. The panorama itself as a visual form suggests a god-like view from above, one that

might allow us to see over, or oversee everything. Air traffic control is produced between a team of people, technologies and systems (Bentley et al., 1992) in 'centers of coordination' (Suchman, 1997). The mechanics behind the illusion of easy movement are revealed in detailed work producing flow and failure (Kerr 2015), and socio-technical systems requiring repair to avert accidents. Just as Merrington and Mitchell's work takes the utopian aerial plan of the motorway to invert the view with an upward pointing camera, Kerr inverts the traveller's perspective. Instead of seeing the air-traffic control tower and assuming its steady function, we see it from inside, looking back to the horizon, a process that highlights detailed internal mechanisms enabling a panorama of global connections.

Samuel Thulin's work *Nowhere in the Desert: A Utopian Soundscape*, moves into digital infrastructures, and their relation to global space. The infrastructure of a sound mapping software cannot include a sound without giving it global co-ordinates. A mistake in the system means seventy sound-files accumulated in the Libyan Desert. In an infrastructure designed to locate the origins of particular sound recordings on a map, this error dislocates recordings from the place they were recorded. Their assemblage in the desert creates what Thulin describes as a virtual 'nowhere' echoing the original meaning of utopia. Where Merrington and Mitchell reveal the physical frictions of utopian planning, and Kerr emphasizes the work involved in enabling free flight, Thulin questions the possibility of virtual nowhere. Turning his focus to the actual location indicated within the software as a location of sounds, he reveals further strata of utopian imaginary; desire for a better future for those living in the desert landscape beneath the virtual heap of sound recordings. This situation is reminiscent of a farm in Kansas that received a series of complaints and accusations of identity theft, spamming, and fraud. This is the result of a mapping decision by US company MaxMind to locate all location-less IP addresses (and therefore anyone who has put in place measures to remain anonymous) in the centre of the USA, accidentally pinpointing the Kansas farm (Solon, 2016). The will to be free of identification within the mapping system results in shifting the blame to whoever happens to be in what is seen abstractly as a non-place, or a stand-in for any place on a map. In the sound work we listen to layered placeful-placeless recordings composed by Thulin, and sited in the anonymity of a conference hotel room.

Identity on the Move

A film by Valentina Bonizzi, *Cartographers*, explores discoveries regarding the strategies necessary to find the self within the intersecting and overlapping territories of nations, ethnicities, linguistic communities, and geography. The film demonstrates that tools typically used to survey physical landscapes are inaccurate instruments for the task of locating the individual. Geographical knowledge often assumes a stable point of view, a physical place with boundaries, territories, rooted in time and bounded in space (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011). In questioning the adequacy of such knowledge to account for the identity of individuals who move across national boundaries, the film re-centres mobilities in geography, suggesting it start with the fact of moving and retain that as a focus (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011). The subject position of the migrant is complex, involving both physical movement and unsynchronised or dislocated shifts in identity. In articulating diverse histories, geographies, and asynchronous identities of migration, the film overcomes homogenous representation and caricature of migrants, so often presented by the media. In exploring their differences, their no-place or place-lessness of belonging, the film is suggestive of the diverse array and complex identities of people with this experience. The tourist and the migrant are defined through their mobilities, both are mobile and modern despite their different practices and experiences (Bauman, 1993 cited by Cresswell & Merriman,

2011). However, both are prone to construction in narrowly circumscribed ways overlooking differences in gender, class, ethnicity, wealth, age, sexuality, or nationality, and expected to occupy particular mobile 'subject positions' (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011).

Two artworks in the exhibition explore diversity and collectivity in terms of mobilities and transit experiences as they are imagined, co-created and re-presented as panoramic vistas. The artwork *Panoramic Utopias* by Kaya Barry, invites participants to contribute photographs of their travel to or from the conference site. These are uploaded to an online interactive artwork. Images assembled digitally create a moving, projected panoramic, also available online. The work engages with representations of utopian travel in tourist photography and their circulation, or mobilisation, through social media. In capturing diverse experiences of travel, the work highlights global mobility systems that enable and restrict, provide flow and friction, within utopian visions of tourism and idealised tourist representations. Similarly *Viewfinders* by Schleser, Cammaer and Rubery, explores travel films and possibilities afforded by mobile and smartphone filmmaking. Selected filmmakers and peer-participants submit one minute travelling shots assembled via image recognition software into a playlist of viewer-generated clips. *Viewfinders* present diverse stories of global mobility, creating a collective experience from live and evoked scenes. The artwork suggests a mobile, utopian imaginary, of egalitarian production and freedom to travel. On the other side, both panoramas prompt consideration of participants' shared economic advantages, self-determining status, the ethics of global travel, and dystopian environmental themes.

Continuing the theme of tourism and travel, *Snowman Killer* by Clare McCracken, explores the introduction of big sculptures in small townships. These were built across America and Australia in response to the construction of road networks that bypassed such places, or simply drove through them. The big sculptures were designed to attract tourists to the township, their huge size and inappropriateness within the setting supposedly creating a spectacle worth seeing, prompting tourists to stop or detour to the township. *Snowman Killer* was the name given to the artist by her school peers when her father contested the building of a big snowman in their small township. McCracken connects performance, sculpture, photography, film and storytelling archive material from the original controversy with photographs of a 750 km road trip undertaken to visit 'big things' across Australia. The work examines issues of identity and anxiety felt by inhabitants of spaces transformed by the arrival of modern mobilities networks. In this work being put on the map through inappropriate means has negative, dystopian consequences for individual and collective identities, identities connected by an infrastructure of roads.

Putting something on the map for Louise Ann Wilson, in this case often something invisible, provides a journey of personal enrichment, affirming the identity of participants. *Warnscale: Emplacing, Re-imaging and Transforming 'Missing' Life-Events* is a book recording the experience of self-guided walking-performances by women who are biologically childless by circumstance, their life-journeys felt to have departed from utopian precedents. Through acts of mobilising the 'missing' life experience within the landscape participants emplace, re-image and transform their experience, performing and mapping their journey. The approach connects with the concept of emotional cartography developed by Nolde (2009), the process whereby individuals seek to establish and document emotions as a reflexive and participatory methodology. For Nolde, exercises locating geographical position with 'subjective story' offer a new kind of psychogeography, potentially a transformative therapeutic experience of space. The women create an emotion map as an embodied memory-trigger for experiencing events, or marking missing events, that are personally significant, transforming space through their mobility. The works in this section invite the viewer to consider relationships between identity, landscape and mobility. They reorient the visual traditions of

landscape representation to focus on mobility and movement. Bonizzi critiques the seductiveness of aerial footage by suggesting that an ethnographic approach uncovers more about location than mapping technologies. Barry troubles the panoramic view by asking participants to contribute their own images, juxtaposing the difference and distance of personal experiences rather than one of a 'god's eye view'. By producing mobile film-making tools Schlessler, Cammaer and Rubery engage the viewer in the rhythms of movement. Wilson's use of walking allows women to generate new narratives and reflections in relation to landscape, while McCracken takes a poetic approach to the road trip, using a personal story to generate insights about tourism. It is clear from each of these works, that engaging with lived and mobile experiences offers a far greater insight than the traditional fixed point perspective of traditional landscape practices. As Merriman et al suggest 'Approaches to landscape and mobility which demonstrate a sensitivity to and engagement with practical action are clearly key to overcoming both the ahistoricism associated with some studies of mobility and the static pictorialism others associate with landscape' (2008). As strategies for living in utopia in ruins, these works ask us to engage deeply with human experience rather than received national identity or social norm, to co-create rather than rely on a god's eye view of mapping, and to reflect critically on histories of place.

Mobile Mediality

Social media, networking sites and mobile devices using WiFi, mobile 4G and location data enable new ways of interacting whilst on the move, and new spatial practices. Mobile communications, according to Sheller (2013) generate 'mediated spatiality', a connection between people, spaces, and pervasive environmental technological infrastructures; geo-locational data, satellites, surveillance systems, radio signals and mobile phones. Mediated spaces provide the technological infrastructure that enrolls people into connectivity with each other and the space they inhabit. They originated in connection with development of the press, as a space where private life became public. Recently, 'mediatization' defines a process by which social fields adapt to institutionalized rules of media systems, forming 'media logics', be these political, religious or cultural (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Asp, 1990). In the context of this exhibition, the idea of media logic applies to exploring media spaces to transform socio-cultural experiences, examine notions of reality, and reflect on histories of media technology. Technology once promised the potential to advance utopian existence, but successive critique spawned technological dystopias grounded in the human condition. Fiction authors Huxley, Orwell, and Atwood explored the paradox of techno-deterministic ideals where life's problems are solved through technological and media interventions in every day life, cautioning that techno utopias would lead to their opposite; limits to freedom of expression, privacy, self determination, and progression into totalitarian dictatorships (Gruenwald, 2013).

In *Truth or Dare* Fernanda Duarte asks the audience to explore the idea of mediated truths. Duarte explores the tensions of technological utopia, and the concept of mediatization, where media logic begins to realize the impact of unregulated spaces. A utopian aim of Internet developers, to enable knowledge to be available and free to all creates a dystopian paradox. In terms of mediatization Duarte comes closest to the tensions of technological utopias where media logic comes closest to realizing the full impact of unregulated spaces, and historic goal of internet developers where all knowledge is available and free to all. The utopian/dystopian paradox of the internet is a shared logic that all ideas are made available and that all opinions are valid and have a right to exist in this space. However this gives equal weighting to the numerous fake truths, fake news that is a current theme of the media knowledge sphere. In other words, fake spaces are created that become inhabited by dictatorial individuals, attacking those who contradict their right to tell alternate versions of the truth.

There is No Cure for Curiosity by Tess Baxter is filmed within the virtual world of Second Life, in a region that was built as a capitalist Utopia, but that has dwindled and faces deletion. Her work explores schisms between worlds, where one form of technological existence evolves as utopian space, and another as dystopian place reflecting the rise of mediated social spaces. For Rymarczuk and Derkson (2014), social media do not grow in popularity because they enable vast social networks, but because they offer access to 'places' in terms of space, landscape and localities. Their rationale for describing social networks as place is based on the impact, as a space, Facebook has on users. Baxter's work echoes Lefebvre's (1991) exploration into how space, real or imagined, is shaped by spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space, where space becomes a process of production. Within media systems, time and space undergo different types of compression; spatiality, newly defined by new technologies, compress geographic boundaries. Jansson argues that mediatization can be examined through Lefebvre's triad of spatial production. He argues that mediated and mediatized mobility blur 'the distinctions between texts and contexts; between symbolic and material spaces, and makes the settings of media use (production and consumption) increasingly fluid' (Jansson, 2013) in this way technologies seem to shape spatial conditions in a deterministic way. However, pre-existing values relating to space, place and mobility create feedback. As Baxter's work suggests, instead of technology or media shaping mobilities and movement, it enhances spatial experiences.

Nikki Pugh's work, *Orrery for Landscape, Sinew and Serendipity*, examines alternative forms of visualisation of live cycling data. Moving away from the paucity of 'dot watching', Pugh's sculptural animation of data invites audiences to interact differently with data from a distance, and to provoke new conversations and connections. Here the space that is imagined while looking at a map is transformed into a real spatial experience of a sculpture, where embodied experience is more present. This difference between virtual experiences and physical visualizations allows viewers to extend their relationship to mediated interactions. In a sense all mediated experiences are an effort to make more real the virtual aspects of daily lives. Anxiety and connectivity are explored via networked data, identifying what becomes real, and where individuals rely on information such as GPS data to extend their relationships to others. However, there is tension in a dependence on media to provide a steady stream of information in order to feel constant connection. If the stream dies or falters people feel abandoned, empty, scared, and lacking information.

Global technical systems such as social media, virtual spaces and GPS systems are encountered on a daily basis within our personal and social lives. Duarte, Baxter and Pugh use different strategies to engage with mediated space, all however invite an audience to reflect more slowly and carefully with experiences that are increasingly taken for granted. They suggest that we need to be aware of the complex interconnections between social, political, technical and physical environments. As a strategy for living with a techno-utopia in ruins these art works encourage us to devise ways to subvert, intervene and reinvent our digital interactions.

With the approaches adopted by these artists, participants and spectators are encouraged to take a fresh look at other people's experiences of mobility, their connection to each other and with space. To consider ways in which these artistic interventions contribute to the reconfiguration of spaces for experimentation, critique, and political communication, creating new organisational forms, and potentially the reformation of mobility regimes.

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The Mobile Utopia Experiment

Monika Büscher

If society is now the laboratory, then everyone is an experimental guinea-pig, but also a potential experimental designer and practitioner. (Felt et al 2007)

Writing in 1989, Krohn and Weyer observed how society and the larger environment had become the laboratory. Just as it is impossible to separate the economy or politics from society, the knowledge society has eroded the separation between science and its implementation. Genetic and geo-engineering, information technology, medical research, and many other forms of science can only be practiced if they can be implemented in 'the real world' before, or even without ever, reaching certainty about their effects. In the process, everyone becomes a subject of and in experimentation. This not only demands new scientific subjectivities and respons-abilities (Haraway 2010), it also entangles everyday life in 'experiment earth' (Stilgoe 2015).

Most people 'are unaware of the systemness of their daily practices' (Urry, 2016, p.73) in this experiment. But 'the science is in', showing that what the 7.5 billion people on the planet do every day, especially those in the global North, aggregates to reduce the earth's capacity to support human flourishing (Urry, 2016, p.38). The 'anthropocene' is shaped by this systemness. Its environmental dynamics are perhaps the most obvious troubles (with biodiversity loss, soil erosion, climate change and millions of people currently affected by the record-breaking 2017 series of hurricanes), but they are by no means the only troubles we are facing. 244 million people are on the move across borders worldwide, 65.6 million of them displaced by conflict and persecution. By 2050, the UNHCR warns, there could be 200 million people displaced by climate change. Together with the movement of cheap arms and weapons this puts many societies in permanent conflict with each other or on the edge of war and violence. Intra-societal inequalities are rising, too, splintering the social from within. Gripped by compulsive pursuit of growth and a culture of fear, many high-tech societies turn to digital technologies and surveillant assemblages to control people's 'behaviour'. This 'partial return to an older, observational ... political power of the visualization and mapping of administratively derived data about whole populations' (Ruppert et al 2013) brings with it a crisis of democracy that undermines a sense of experimental respons-able subjectivity in relation to the economic, political, scientific, technological and environmental dimensions of society.

Too much dystopia for utopia? We think not. As Jen Southern outlines in the introduction to this catalogue, utopia is more than a dream of a better future. It is lived critique and creative resistance. Alternative forms of life are growing in the cracks and ruins of modernity, capitalism, and environmental degradation that foster different ideas of moral responsibility towards other species and future generations, and capacities to respond or 'respons-abilities' to the problems of 'wicked' futures (Tutton 2017). As it is harder and harder to ignore that 'precarity is the condition of our time', people are asking 'what if the time was ripe for sensing precarity?' (Tsing 2015:20). The use of utopia as a method for the imaginative reconstitution of society (Levitas 2013) is a powerful tool in this process. Anna Tsing's anthropological travels with matsutake mushroom pickers in landscapes 'ruined' by industrial forestry document a hopeful capacity for 'collaborative survival'. People are living lives in the ruins of capitalism and modernity that are 'good'.

Levitas utopia as method (2013) can be 'mobilised' to support these prefigurative practices (Nettle 2014). In its archaeological mode, utopia as method 'unearths' ideas and assumptions of social institutions embedded in visions of the future, it assembles a synthesis of the society envisaged from fragments and critiques the intended and unintended consequences for its members. Utopia as ontology digs deeper, questioning what it does and what it should mean to be human in present and futures societies, building on utopian archaeology. In its third move, utopia as architectural method pursues the imaginative reconstitution of society in light of the archaeological and ontological critique. Levitas observes or envisages this as an iterative process, 'eternally' accompanying societal change. The intention is categorically not to generate a perfect utopian blueprint of an ideal society, but to generate a methodology that allows societies to better understand how one person's utopia may be another's dystopia and to think societal change holistically, embracing the inseparability of economics, politics, science, technology and environment and society.

The artworks in this catalogue document strong-minded acts of imagination to sidestep collapse in the Anthropocene, capitalocene (Tsing 2015) or 'chthulucene' (Haraway 2016). Artistic aesthetic practices have the power to mobilise utopia as method and 'extricate the sensible from its ordinary connections and [show its] ... heterogeneous power, the power of a form of thought that has become foreign to itself' (Ranciere 2004:23). But this creative entry into alternatives needs to be in dialogue with experimentation in everyday life, social innovation and play to spread beyond the artworld. Reflective, playful, critical, experimental practice in the realm of the everyday can catalyse a politics of aesthetics for science in society and enable more respons-able participation in the knowledge society laboratory where 'we' all are – wittingly and unwittingly - guinea pigs, and experimental designers and practitioners.

The Mobile Utopia Experiment picks up creative energy of play, experimentation and innovation in everyday life and braids it with sociological theories and methodologies of 'collective experimentation' (Felt and Wynne 2007), 'public experiment' (Marres 2009), experimentality (Szerszynski et al 2008), shared, slow, and responsible science (Stilgoe 2015), design research (Baerenehold et al 2010), research co-creation (Chapman and Sawchuk 2012), affirmative critique (Braidotti 2016), and Dewey's 'experimental method in politics' (1927). There are eleven individual experiments, coming together as *The Mobile Utopia Experiment* through 'Synthopia', which is an experiment in its own right, but also an integrative methodology for this respons-ability¹ of experiments. *The Mobile Utopia Experiment* asks 'what if the time was ripe for sensing precarity?' in three different ways.

The first (archaeological and ontological) vein of questioning focuses on the sensory dimension. *Dance your Vehicle: Become Sensicle*, for example, is an invitation to probe the interaction order of traffic and the way in which it is negotiated in and through social and material practices and embodied conduct. Working with dance and movement as a mode of inquiry, the participants slow down and (re-)discover embodied knowledge and the delicate complexity of their interactions. Dancers reflect on their own skills, their technological augmentations, but also the (in)capabilities of automated vehicles, satellites, drones, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (APNR) and other technological interventions in traffic. They probe theories of the human body as a sensory vehicle (or 'sensicle') of the mind or as a thinking-feeling-sensing component in a socio-technically augmented sensory assemblage, combining human and machine perceptual techniques. *DataDrift* extends this exploration of the malleable phenomenology of the more-than-human

¹ I could not find a collective noun for experiments. Calling a group of experiments a 'respons-ability' is intended to highlight the desired effect of clustering experiments.

sensorium into the landscape, observing the narrowing of our wayfinding senses in the appropriation of digital navigation tools. Nose to screen, eyes on blue dots, mind set on arrival, many of us miss much of the spaces and places we move through. We've lost our capacity to get lost. *Datadrift* makes participants experiment with wayfinding and location data by putting the wrong map in our hands, guiding us with stories, and inviting us to actively generate meaningful data and meaningful journeys. *NowHere: Futures of Collaboration* experiments with co-presence and the ways in which we make trust, intimacy, sociability happen in interaction. It takes us into the home, the workplace, conferences, or events, where we meet remote others, engage and collaborate with them through the use of telepresence tools (from Skype to Facetime and (simulated) telepresence robots). How do digital extensions and transpositions of human communication and senses such as comobility (Southern 2012), addressability, awhereness, and remembering forward (Thrift 2008), transform these social interactions?

The second vein of sensing precarity focuses on actively making sense of new or complex phenomena through experimental methods. The *Marshrutka Video Quest* introduces a mode of private public transport unfamiliar to many travellers in the West. Marshrutka are passenger vans that are privately owned. They are flexible in their routes and stops, and the fares they charge. The social interactions involved are intricate, which can make catching a Marshrutka a difficult task. The video quest allows travellers to experiment with various strategies and to discover a potentially prefigurative analogue version of 'on demand' public transport. *Autopoeisioning: The ETA Game* is based on a dialogue between an ethnographer and a software developer, both interested in how people and machines calculate 'estimated time of arrival' or ETA. By inviting people to walk predefined routes, to calculate, and re-calculate their ETA, as they encounter disruptions such as traffic jams, a scenic landscape, or a row with their partner, the experiment probes ways of, and frictions between, calculated and lived times, duration, movement, and space in human and machinic ways. *Parking in Utopia* uncovers the shocking amount of space societies give to immobile vehicles. Through mapping experiments, participants are encouraged to dig down into archaeological treasures covered by parking lots, historical land use examples, and imaginative alternative uses of all that space. The experiment questions the unintended consequences of immobility. *Drone-topia?* takes off to play around in the vertical dimension, focusing on the potential of using drones for a very serious life-sustaining form of 'vital mobility': transporting blood transfusions during times of transport infrastructure disruption or to leapfrog infrastructural bottlenecks. Making sense of what is involved through experimental imaginative construction of a drone blood transport service in the Lancaster area, the experiment reveals unexpected opportunities, as well as frictions. Turning inwards into the human body, *The Most Secret Nano-chemistry Experiment* posits the existence of potent nanochemical medicines that can produce controllable physical and psychosomatic effects, ranging from precisely located pain relief to stimulation of particular areas of the brain. The experiment seeks to develop a business case for a particular nano-chemical technology. By making the futuristic potential of nano-technology concrete, personal, and practical, the experiment invites participants to consider unintended consequences.

From the perspective of art it follows that the systems must be changed. (Beuys 1978, in Zumdieck 2013)

The third form of sensing precarity through mobilising utopias as an experimental method seeks to give new sense to it. If ignorance, surprise, uncertainty, performativity, and unintended consequences are the defining condition of our lives (see also Gross 2010), how else could we know and design the worlds we shape with every move we make? The *Designing Mobile Futures* experiment approaches this question from a designerly perspective. Building on a workshop with practitioners and policymakers involved in blood transfusion and transplant supply chains, the participants seek dialogue

with publics interested or invested in these vital mobilities. *is/Tethical?* playfully probes another, more immaterial form of vital mobilities: personal data in disaster response and risk management, observing how the exceptional circumstances of security threats and disasters may make data sharing seem a necessary and positive possibility. The game embeds these desires for more information sharing into ethical, legal and social considerations of human rights and freedoms, and challenges players to design data and data sharing infrastructures with more careful attention to civil liberties. *The Drift Economy* demonstrates the capacity of a mobilities perspective to allow analysis and experiment to range across the multiple scales of social futures. By experimenting with ways in which 'drift' could become a transformative practice and concept for the transport of people and goods, as well as urban planning and social practices of work, home-making, alternative economies, societies and social futures become momentarily inhabitable.

These eleven experiments come together as *The Mobile Utopia Experiment* - a creative pre-enactment of a mobile utopia made concrete and personal in Lancaster, a medium-size university town. The aim is to create and critically inhabit these pockets of utopia through practicing utopia as method, unearthing assumptions about social institutions and values, contesting what it means to be human and non-human in these experimental worlds, and to create and contest 'better' futures. The individual experiments envisage how people, objects, ideas, resources will travel in a near-ish future of 2051, and realise pockets of alternative, utopian/dystopian(?) futures through collective experimentation and public engagement. Eleven individual experiments (described as MU01-MU11 below) explore different dimensions of everyday life in 2051, observing and amplifying existing social innovation that prefigure futures, exploring how one person's utopia may be another's dystopia, and how those futures are now, shaped in the present, as well as our pasts.

Syntophia, the twelfth experiment facilitates this archaeological, ontological, architectural synthesis by inviting participants to connect the different pockets of futures made inhabitable by the eleven other experiments. Participants will be encouraged to question contradictions, conflicts, as well as resonances and synergies between the different visions and practices.

In conclusion, *The Mobile Utopia Experiment* is about changing the systemic dynamics that create precarity as the condition of our times, finding new ways of sensing this precarity and working with it to create 'good life', and contesting what 'good life' might be possible and mean and for whom. This requires transdisciplinary science, but it is not a matter for science alone. John Urry's *What is the Future?* sets out to 'mainstream the future', to engage diverse interests, knowledges, forms of expertise, creativity, and practice to envisage and contest what 'good' or 'better' futures might be, and to put into them now the things that might make them happen. *The Mobile Utopia Experiment* 'mobilises' these ideas and 'utopia as method' in collaboration with 'ordinary' members of the public, students, academics, designers and anyone interested.

Mobility 'broadens the mind', not least because it immerses people in new situations and provides multiple perspectives and multi-sensory impressions. Experimentation in and through mobility 'goes along with' complexity and emergence. It fosters open-ness to uncertainty, situatedness, feedback effects and reflexivity. Researchers on the move naturally learn to appreciate that analysis 'is not [meant] to set up a relation of external contact or correspondence between subjective states of mind and objectively given conditions of the material world, but to make one's way through a world-in-formation' with eyes open to the processes and practices of formation (Ingold and Vergunst 2008).

Mobility and its non-representational implications for analysis set our approach apart from earlier calls for experimental sociology (Greenwood 1944). The kind of experimental transdisciplinary science in society we seek is closer to Dewey's 'experimental method in politics' (1927), gearing analysis into the dynamic relational complexities and situated actions of world-making, providing important insight into the interactions between everyday creativity, science and socio-technical innovation. The potential for emergence at this juncture is caught well by the ethnomethodological concept of 'another next first time', which describes the ordered, yet improvisational, contingent and reflexive character of social life (Garfinkel 2002). Studying the indigenous practices or 'ethnomethods' of how people creatively, reflexively make social life orderly, such 'alternate' understandings of the social have been influential for a range of theoretical orientations. Their insights resonate with feminist concepts of 'performativity' and troubles (Haraway 2016), Foucauldian notions of 'governmentality', and – extending analytical attention to the role of material and technological agencies in world-formation – actor network theory and agential realism (Barad 2007), as well as philosophical and political forms of affirmative critique (Braidotti 2016) and utopia as method. Most importantly, the notions of mobile utopia experiment embedded in the context of the everyday creativity of 'another next first time' highlights the simultaneous orderliness and transformability of everyday-life-in-the-making, locating important opportunities for innovation in everyday practice, the engine-room of utopia.

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13 ART WORKS



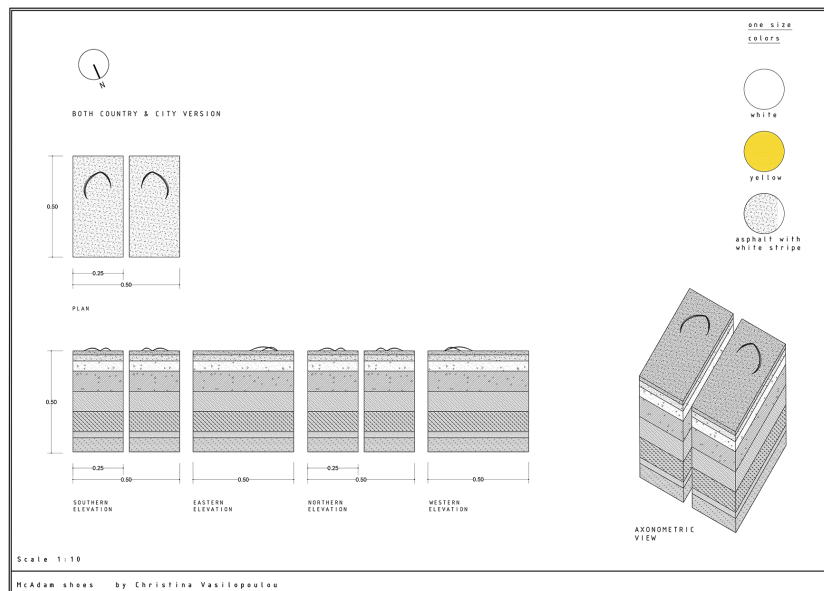
McAdam shoes

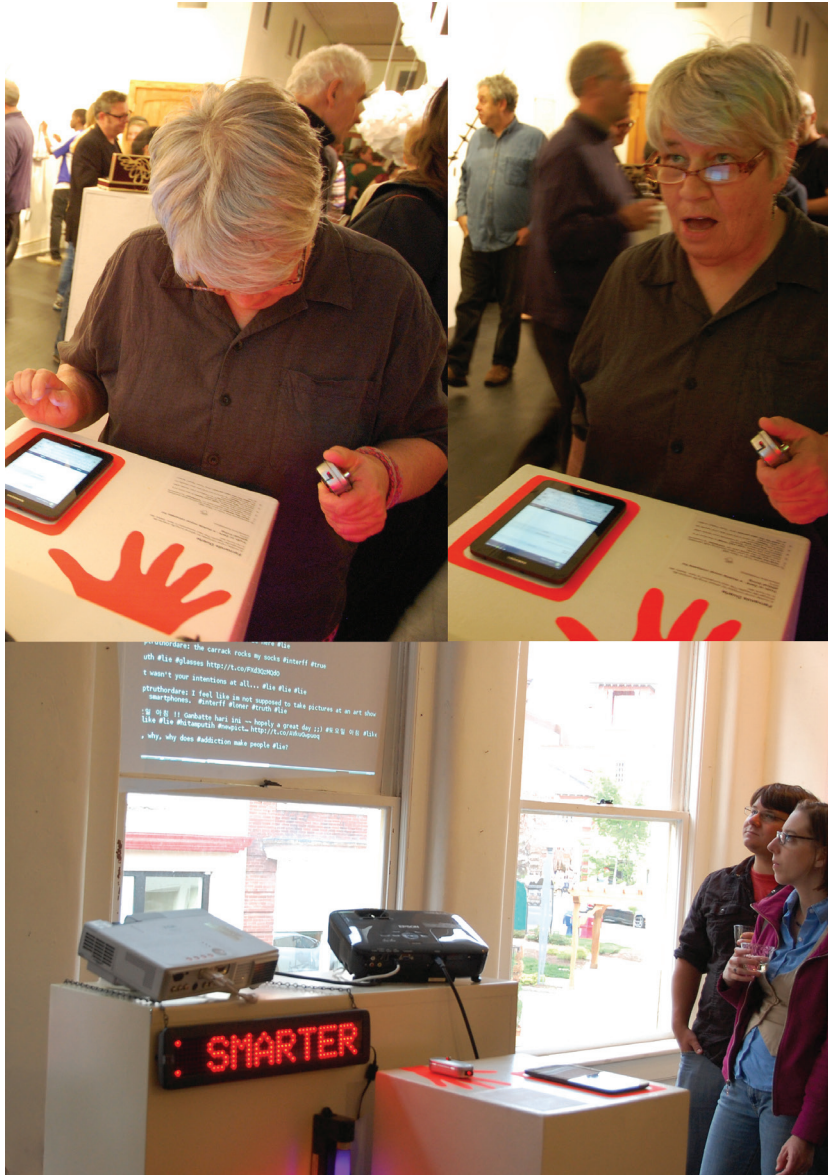
CHRISTINA VASILOPOULOU
2017

McAdam shoes are an artistic product of the creator's doctoral research on asphalt road network and its metaphorical connotations regarding time. It is made of caoutchouc, asphalt, concrete, gravel and soil using natural dimensioning of highways construction. Presented in natural environment and accessible to be worn by the public it is lying between land art installation and performance set.

Like engineers, historians and artists, who extract core samplings of selected (or random) parts of the commonplace and use them as raw material to construct new forms of understanding reality, the artist proposes the isolation of the snapshot when somebody (anybody) steps into the asphalt paving. She uses a common symbol of freedom inverted marking the dysfunction of the present outside the context of the future and the past – the linearity of time – while forming a unit of time (dt) with the characteristics of non-places.

As a fragment of technical infrastructure and contemporary document out of context the object is a landscape concept and at the same time, as a designed object to support body movement, it is an extension of a human condition. Finally, a pair of McAdam shoes could be experienced as a mobile trace, a sarcastic tool to perform a landscape.





Truth or Dare

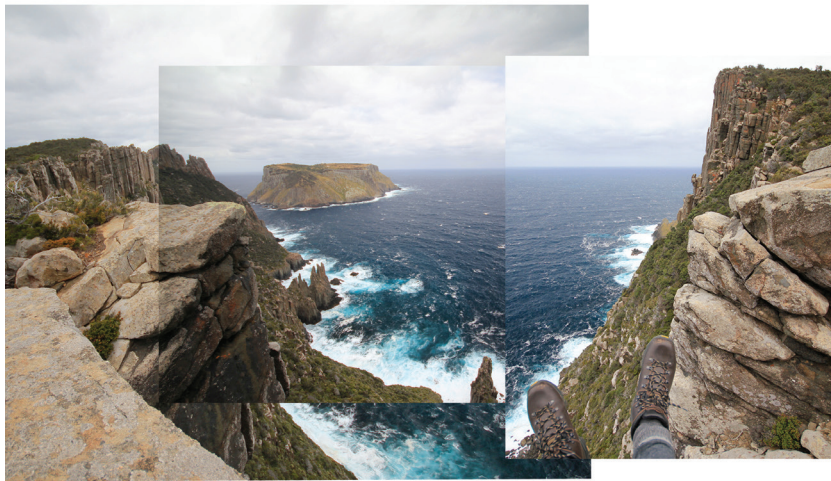
FERNANDA DUARTE

2013-2014

Truth or Dare is an interactive installation and application for Twitter that measures whether a statement is true or false through biofeedback readings. Galvanic skin response sensors execute readings of skin conductivity and use the variations of values to account for situations of emotional distress.

The variations are explained by physiological behaviour: in situations of stress our nervous system activates the sweat glands. The humidity of sweat lowers the skin's resistance to electric current. The variation of conductivity is measured by the sensor and interpreted as emotional distress. Based on predefined calculations of baseline values of the current user, the app determines whether a statement is true or false - under the premise that lying disrupts the user's emotional state. The app relays the information to Twitter and automatically labels the tweet with a hashtag #true or #lie based on the values that were read by the sensor.

The application of galvanic skin response by Truth or Dare demonstrates how biofeedback can be used as a mapping tool for the body's performance. The forces of social-biotechnological assemblages emerge in the iterations, controversies and conflicts when there is a mismatch between emotional response and discursive performance of the tweets.



Panoramic Utopias

KAYA BARRY

2017

Panoramic Utopias is an online participatory artwork that accumulates panoramic images from people and places around the world. Photographs of mobile experiences are uploaded to a website, and stitched together to create a moving panoramic sequence.

Mobile media saturate the way we navigate through places, as tourists and in everyday life, offering alternative mechanisms for knowing and sensing the environments we move through.

Substantial literature on tourist photography, destination and transport marketing, and the circulation of images through social media alerts us to how utopian versions of travel are mobilised. These utopian images also capture our interactions with an array of materials, infrastructures and global mobilities systems that enable, restrict, and mediate travel paths.

With the ever increasing demand and desire for international travel, it is important to consider how we value and imagine our transit as part of larger material-technological systems.



Warnscale: A Land Mark Walk Reflecting on In/Fertility and Childlessness

LOUISE ANN WILSON
2017

Warnscale is an artist's book and many layered guide book that is specific to, and created in, Warnscale, an area of fells to the south of Buttermere Lake, Cumbria, UK.

Society offers no rituals or rites of passage through which women who have 'missed' the life-event of biological motherhood can be acknowledged and can come to terms with that absence. Warnscale offers imaginative and creative ways through which women can engage with landscape to reflect upon and even transform their experience of this circumstance.

The research involved a series of group and one to one mapping-walks with women who are childless-by-circumstance; residencies at fertility clinics; an in-depth study of the landscape and conversations with local people.

The book shows maps of the landscape and dwelling places selected for their physical and metaphorical resonance. It combines original drawings and photographs, the words of Dorothy Wordsworth, written and visual reflections on infertility, and invitations to immerse oneself in the landscape.





Viewfinder

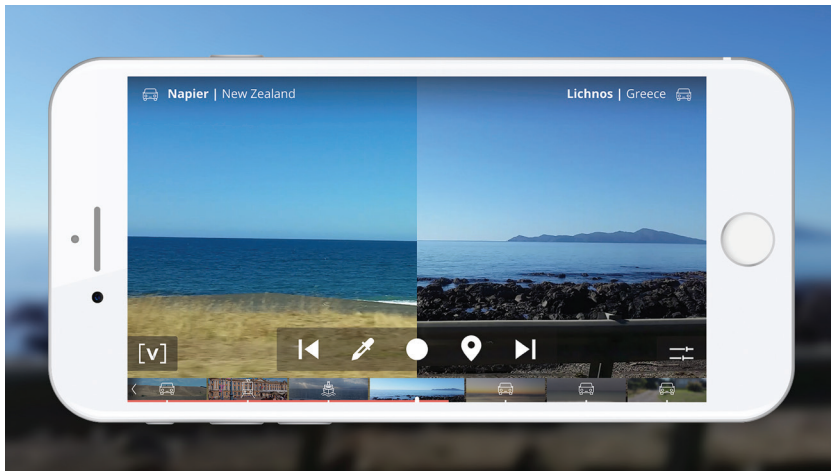
MAX SCHLESER, GERDA CAMMAER AND PHILLIP RUBERY
2015-2016

Viewfinders is an expanded documentary exploring the theme of travel films in the era of mobile and smartphone filmmaking. In an attempt to “map” travel experiences, filmmakers and participants are asked to submit one minute travelling shots.

These travelling moments are edited with YouTube creator studio into a short videos and displayed via an augmented reality application and on the project website. The viewers themselves contribute, view, organize and experience the various travelling shots submitted by their peers.

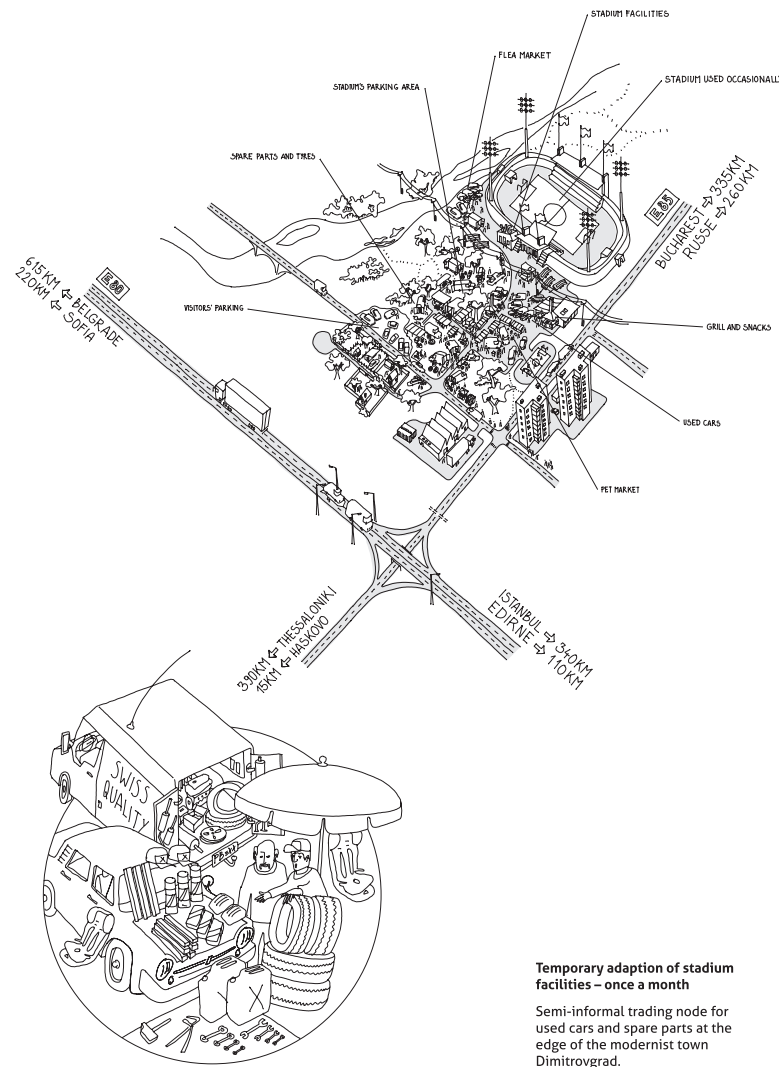
Viewfinders is a utopia, as it thrives on the egalitarian principles of a utopian society – there is no hierarchy between viewers submitting their travelling shots and the people behind the project. Viewfinders makes the filmmaking process part of the viewing experience and merges this into a mobile live cinema. By means of taking film out of the traditional – passive – cinema space, the live environment creates an augmented and new experience.

Viewfinders fuses live cinema with image recognition software to produce a tailored playlist of viewer-generated clips, creating a collective experience with traits combined from both the live and evoked scenes travelled. The sensation created by the project references ideal (if not utopian) travel experiences, the freedom to travel, of being “on the move” and a fascination with mobility and mobile cinema.



Mapping What If? Speculative Predictions on Everyday Practices

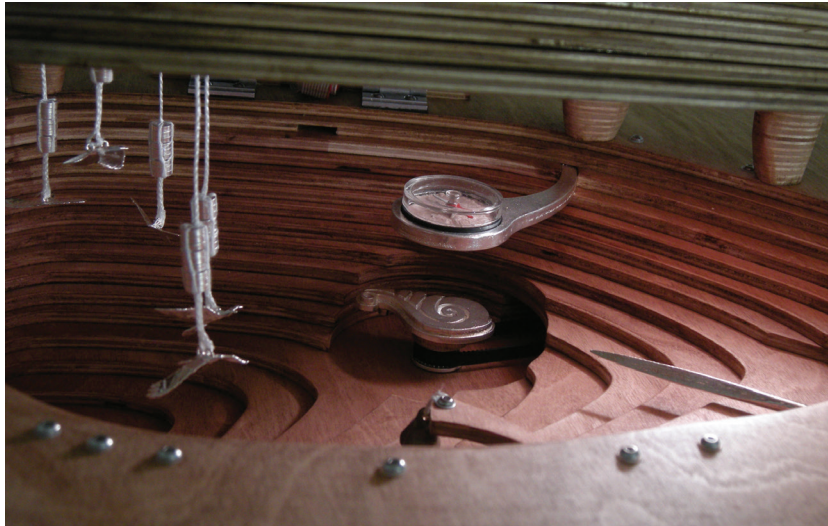
MICHAEL HIESLMAIR AND MICHAEL ZINGANEL
2017



Mapping What If? follows our research project Stop and Go: Nodes of Transformation and Transition (2014–16), which had focussed on space at hubs and nodes alongside the major PAN-European road corridors in a triangle between Vienna, Tallinn, and the Turkish Bulgarian border. These hubs represent new forms of dynamic urbanity where both individual mobility experiences, political transitions and urban transformations can be explored.

Excerpts of the findings of our project are artistically transformed into fictional scenarios of fictional persons projected into the near future. These are translated into the format of three fanfold-mappings representing road maps, augmented with comic style drawings and speech bubbles. While the background also displays a map of Europe representing the routes of three persons, each of the fanfolds is supplemented by small MP3-players with headphones displaying atmospheric sound from our tours and memories of our fictional characters.

These road maps depict future-oriented meta-networks of mobility flows, to which fictional events, protagonists and locations are added to imbue the polyrhythmic ensembles of the network intersections.



Orrery for Landscape, Sinew and Serendipity

NIKKI PUGH
(2016-)

Orrery for Landscape, Sinew and Serendipity is an ongoing project that asks questions about the physical and emotional experiences of cycling, the physical and emotional experiences of being the person left at home, and the frictions of data visualisation.

Various live tracking services exist that enable you to 'dot-watch' cyclists as they make their journeys. Usually this involves a web page showing a map, a marker icon representing the person pedalling and maybe a line showing the route they are taking. The map is devoid of weather and presents a tidy world where there is not even the passing of day or night. Technical glitches can provoke fear if the dot stops moving.

The Orrery, a physical object with elements that are raised, rotated, rattled and illuminated, is driven by the same GPS data as the map-based tracking websites, but rather than showing us where the rider is, how far they have gone and how fast they are moving, it instead conveys something of the moment-to-moment experience of being on the bike. Is the rider struggling up a hill, experiencing an exhilarating descent, battling a headwind or awestruck by the arriving dawn?

Funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and through the artist in residence programme at Wolverhampton School of Art.



The English Four Stack

PETER MERRINGTON AND ILANA MITCHELL

2017

The English Four Stack investigates the four-level stack motorway interchange as a utopian and dystopian construction. The work seeks to understand these complex concrete constructions. There are three examples in England one in Gloucestershire and two in Surrey.

Using creative practices including film, photography and historical research, the artists are building an archive of material from encounters with these interchanges, this has included driving all the navigable routes of the English four-stacks and attempting to walk around them.

Four-stack interchanges create differential mobilities, on the one hand enabling the smooth movement of car drivers, on the other, constructing barriers in cities, cutting through communities, or creating hard edges. On paper and from the sky the stack is a graceful swirling form, a perfect switch, sculptural, neatly and smoothly offering new paths in all directions.

The project aims to rethink the four-level stack as a concept and mode of mobility by exploring questions of personal and political agency through this infrastructure.



Nowhere in the Desert: A Utopian Soundscape

SAM THULIN
2017

This audio work is created from an accidental collection of 70 audio files that appear at a remote point in the Libyan desert on the Freesound audio-sharing platform. The sounds include: synthesizer drones, seaside recordings, coffee pot sounds and spoken word radio excerpts – none of which connect to the location.

This collection of audio files intersect with ideas of utopia in multiple, sometimes troubling, ways. It is a byproduct of the hyper-mobility of sound recording and sound sharing envisioned in utopian fictions such as Bellamy (1888) and Bacon (1627). It constitutes a sonic nowhere or impossible place that is nonetheless an amalgam of places accidentally tagged.

How does this accidental convergence of audio files sit alongside social and material conditions of place, and mobilities involving desires for a better future – migration routes, oil drilling, the “Great Manmade River Project”?

The audio files are recomposed through a processes of fragmentation and redistribution based on metadata, research on the Libyan desert, and responses to questions posed to the contributors of the files revealing that the sounds were actually produced in diverse locations.

The work creates a desert soundscape that explores dissonance between multiple manifestations of mobility and meanings of utopia.

This work is supported by Canada Council for the Arts.



There is No Cure for Curiosity

TESS BAXTER

2016

This work is based around a machinima (a video made within a games world). It explores our relationship with the digital, and the digital's relationship with the physical. Virtual worlds allow us to create new spaces, logging in across a screen and then teleporting our avatars around. We inhabit them, not just as re-embodied avatars, but with our imaginations and through language.

We never leave the real world: the virtual and the real are not in binary opposition. We bring physical things into the virtual, and our experiences in the virtual are real ones. As Timothy J Welsh argues in *Mixed Realism* (2016), they are the two sides of a Mobius strip, constantly folding in on each other. And the virtual is interesting not for being a perfectly immersive 'other world', but for the gaps that reveal insights on the other side of the strip.

There is No Cure for Curiosity was filmed in Insilico, a long-standing region within Second Life. Insilico's backstory is that it was built as a utopia (though one of corporate capitalism) but is now dwindling into dystopia.

A narrative is heard in each ear; the left channel is Insilico's story and background from their website, running relentlessly throughout, the right channel, narrated in different voices, are quotes from the controversial creator of Insilico, Skills Hak.



Cartographers

VALENTINA BONIZZI

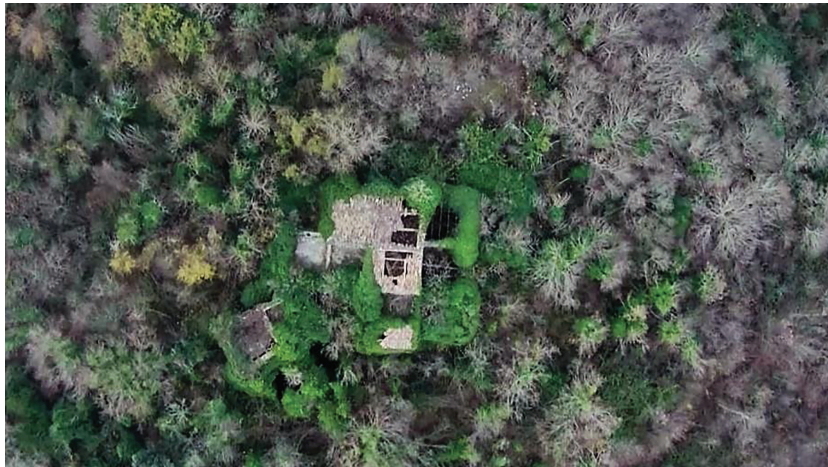
2015

The practice of cartography, or map making, has to do with developing a stable, dependable account of a landscape in terms of both its physical aspects, such as the topography and flora, and the abstract, such as political borders. When the tools typically employed to survey physical landscapes are used to pinpoint the individual, they prove problematic instruments for the task.

At the outbreak of the second world war people from Paris, Edinburgh, Glasgow living in Molise in the south of Italy had more complex identities than Italian born nationals.

The film explores through the voices of those involved the experience of mobilization for those who are displaced. The silent aerial perspective suggests a collective inhabited landscape as a form of utopia that doesn't reflect individual identity.

Funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Arts and Business Scotland, Cultural Documents. Sponsored by IFS World Wide.





Tower

VICKI KERR

2017

Video and sound explore the architectural logic of the air traffic control tower - part of a hugely complicated infrastructural system supporting air transport.

Control towers are highly charged mythic spaces made even more so by being inaccessible to the public. To rest easy we need to believe that somewhere in the system there is a room full of people who know what they're doing. Call it the myth of competence – a fundamental part of the psychology of the modern age.

The viewer steps into a 360 virtual tour of Heathrow Tower, using a moving panoramic format that seamlessly integrates the sky, the airfield and its borders with the control room. Appearing like a stage set, the tower's interior composed of grey walls, curved banks of desks, high-backed office chairs, consoles and screens become part of the muted décor of the airport surveillance, monitoring and regulatory systems.

Set against the constant 'hum' of the airport machine, the view moves skywards dissolving the boundary between a local existence and a global all-embracing vision. As an image that must be cognitively reassembled into an imagined whole, the panorama provides a vehicle for thinking about the relationship between a totalising vision and the cognitive and perceptual fragmentation, opacities and blind spots, generated by political and economic transformations.





Snowman Killer

CLAIRE McCracken

2017

In the early 1980s Clare McCracken's father took the Alpine Shire and the small township of Myrtleford (Victoria, Australia) to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, contesting the proposed construction of a 17 metre concrete snowman. The big snowman reflects the anxiety of identity experienced by rural Australian towns after the construction of the post Second World War road networks in Australia. As they lost their train-lines and were bypassed or driven through, many Australian towns felt like they were slipping off the map of Australia and fading into economic ruin.

Ultimately, McCracken's father was successful and the giant snowman was never built; however, an estimated 300 'big things' were installed from the 1960s on, and many still line Australian rural roadsides.

The fight over the giant snowman was lengthy and vicious: a conflict that gave McCracken her first nickname – "Snowman Killer" – which plagued her early years of school. Snowman Killer combines performance, sculpture, photography, film and storytelling to present the archive from the original snowman controversy, McCracken's memories of the ordeal and a 7500 km road trip the artist took with a big carrot – a to-scale representation of the nose of the never constructed snowman – across Australia visiting 'big things'.

12 EXPERIMENTS



Image Credit: Andrei Kuznetsov

The Marshrutka Video Quest

ANDREI KUZNETSOV AND MONIKA BÜSCHER
MU01

For the uninitiated, marshrutka travel is full of uncertainties. Passengers must interact to request stops, ask about routes, and pass fares to the driver. Interaction is complex, with the driver complaining ‘I’m not an octopus!’ as he joins the traffic and twists to return change.

This experiment takes the form of a video quest, where players use the marshrutka system and encounter moments of uncertainty. They must make choices to continue their journey. As they experiment, their task is to help football fans from Lancaster at the 2018 World Cup in Volgograd city planners’ utopia of a modern transport system.

MSNanoX – The Most Secret Nano Experiment

DUNCAN CAMPBELL, JIM GERKEN AND MONIKA BÜSCHER
MU02

The Most Secret Nano Experiment will use a blend of creative methodologies which includes Human Centred Design and Design Fiction. Participants will be asked to work together to explore the possibilities, benefits and potential drawbacks that medical nano-technology could bring to humanity, as well as to come up with potential business plans for how this could be introduced to the world as a whole. The structure of the workshop will incorporate user ethnography and rapid iterative ideation. All of the knowledge generated during this experiment will be synthesised to inform a Design Fiction artefact.



Image Credit: COD Newsroom Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0)



Image Credit: Monika Büscher

isTethical? >Play

MONIKA BÜSCHER AND MALÉ LUJÁN ESCALANTE
MU03

isTethical? invites you to play with ethical values of information sharing.

Information sharing for (big) data analysis is growing across many domains. From disaster risk management to medical diagnosis, from transport to supermarket logistics, from politics to advertising, data about people, environments and things can be highly valuable when shared. However, mobilizing data in this way also raises many ethical, legal, and social issues. An erosion of privacy, digital exclusion and social sorting can undermine fundamental civil liberties. Using a board game we have developed with emergency responders and technology developers, players explore the complexities of sharing data.



Image Credit: <https://lancasterdynamo.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/image.jpeg>

Dance your Vehicle: Becoming Sensicle

DOERTE WEIG AND MONIKA BÜSCHER
MU04

Taking inspiration from Lancaster's experience of a gentler traffic order during the floods in December 2015, this experiment invites you to play with how we relate to each other and move in everyday transport situations.

We can actually walk, dance or otherwise move together quite easily without colliding. In contrast, our traffic situations are heavily regulated. So, what would happen to everyday transport, if we extend our human sensing capacities and do away with some of the rules? What if we had more unsegregated traffic spaces? And how do sensory interactions change when automated vehicles are introduced into the mix? How do we as humans 'read' the 'sensory' and 'social' awareness of driverless vehicles and vice versa?



Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons (lightly edited)

The Drift Economy

BRONISLAW SZERSZYNSKI, SASHA ENGELMANN AND ADAM FISH
MU05

Modern, energy-intensive transport systems are pushing the ecological systems of the planet out of their 'safe operating space', and also profoundly shape the way we organise society. Can we imagine a different social future – or an alternative present – based on different kinds of motion? In this experiment we will involve local residents in devising a mobility system for Lancaster and surroundings based on 'drift' – motion powered only by slopes, wind, water and other environmental flows, in which the exact destination cannot always be known in advance. Participants will be invited to share their experiences of drift, to experiment with drifting objects, and to contribute their own ideas and visions for a drift-based mobility system.

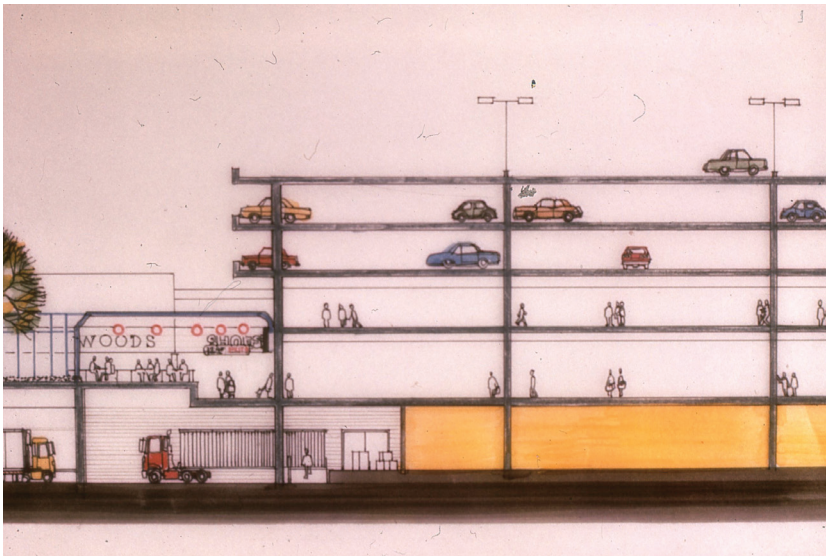


Image Credit: J R James Archive <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jrjamesarchive/>
(CC BY-NC 2.0)

Parking in Utopia

NICOLA SPURLING AND LOUISE MULLAGH
MU06

This experiment explores the future of transportation and wayfinding data in terms of the decreasing potential to 'get lost' or to have a meaningful journey, rather than focussing only on the 'route'. Google maps aim to make our 'journeys' the most efficient they can be, often meaning we follow the dots on our screens unquestioningly, rather than looking up and being in the place. This also ties in with the future transportation. The game plays with wayfinding and our faith in the map and data, by offering conflicting wayfinding techniques and opportunities to both donate and take away data.

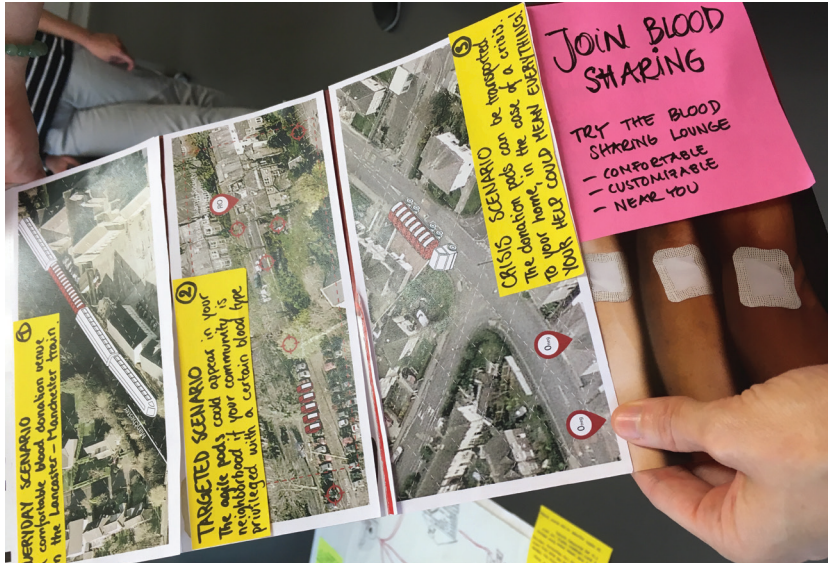


Image Credit: Monika Büscher

Designing Mobile Futures

OLE B JENSEN, DITTE BENDIX LANNG AND STEPHANIE SODERO
MU09

We play with ways of ‘designing’ mobile futures. The aim is to give input to open agendas for societal and urban development, in which mobilities and infrastructure are key.

The activities question future mobilities as social futures, that is, futures made through social and material everyday practices. We ask how such futures can and should be designed, by engaging concretely with opportunities and challenges arising in Lancaster.

In a workshop with practitioners interested in the ‘vital mobilities’ of blood, we developed ideas for more agile movement of such vital resources. We will try these ideas on people through dialogue.



Image Credit: Monika Büscher

NowHere

MONIKA BÜSCHER, ANDREW GLOVER, TANIA LEWIS, ROGER WHITHAM, YOLANDE STRENGERS, JAMES FAULCONBRIDGE AND DEE HENNESSY
MU10

NowHere: Futures of Collaboration experiments with co-presence and the ways in which we make trust, intimacy, sociability in interaction. It takes us into telepresence breakfast/dinners, connection people’s homes, streets and public spaces, workplaces, facilitating no-fly conferences, or events, and allow us to meet remote others, engage and collaborate with them through the use of telepresence tools (from Skype to Facetime and (simulated) telepresence robots). How do digital extensions and transpositions of human practices of communication and senses such as ‘comobility’, addressability, awhereness, and remembering forward, transform these social interactions?



Image Credit: Mark Robinson Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Autopoiesioning: The ETA game

PAULA BIALSKI, PEDRO CAMPOS AND MONIKA BÜSCHER
MU11

NowHere: Futures of Collaboration experiments with co-presence and the ways in which we make trust, intimacy, sociability in interaction. It takes us into telepresence breakfast/dinners, connection people's homes, streets and public spaces, workplaces, facilitating no-fly conferences, or events, and allow us to meet remote others, engage and collaborate with them through the use of telepresence tools (from Skype to Facetime and (simulated) telepresence robots). How do digital extensions and transpositions of human practices of communication and senses such as 'comobility', addressability, awhereness, and remembering forward, transform these social interactions?

Synthopia

SERENA POLLASTRI, ADRIAN GRADINAR AND MONIKA BÜSCHER
MU12

Could different utopias coexist in the same world? And if so, what would the synergies and conflicts be between them?

Synthopia is a physical and digital space that brings together the eleven Mobile Utopia experiments in a conversation. Each experiment will be given a time capsule, that participants will fill with samples and objects, as well as comments, notes, and messages to be sent to utopia. During the conference, the time capsules will be placed in a room, and participants will be invited to ask questions, trace connections, identify conflicts or tensions between utopias. These conversations between utopias will be recorded digitally and visualised in real time.

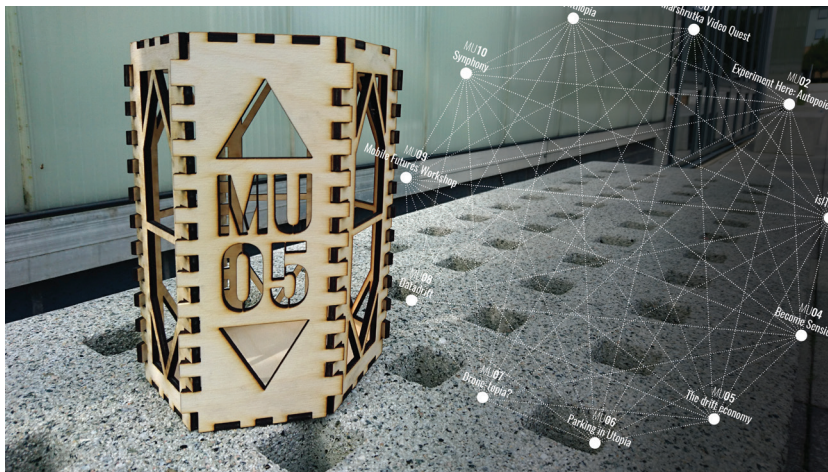


Image Credit: Serena Pollastri

BIOGRAPHIES

Jen Southern is an artist and lecturer in Fine Art at Lancaster University. As director of the mobilities lab at the Centre for Mobilities Research she is involved in developing and supporting experimental mobile and creative research methods. Her art practice and research explore collaborative uses of GPS technology, both producing and making visible a sense of 'comobility', of being mobile with others at a distance.

www.theportable.tv

Emma Rose is Professor of Contemporary Arts at Lancaster University. Her research connects fine art practices to concepts in geographies of health and psychogeography, to explore the role of place for those who have experienced forced displacement. Through socially engaged interventions and participatory arts, she focuses on issues of identity for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and those who move across national boundaries, many of whom are traumatised by their experiences.

Dr Linda O Keeffe is an artist, and lecturer in sonic arts and social research methods at the Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University. She is founder of the Women in Sound Women on Sound organisation.

www.lindaokeeffe.com | www.wiswos.com

Monika Büscher is Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University and Director of the Centre for Mobilities Research. Her research explores the digital dimension of contemporary 'mobile lives' with a focus on IT ethics and risk governance.

Christina Vasilopoulou studied Architecture in Athens NTUA (2008) where she also gained the Post-graduate Degree on "Space – Design – Culture" and since 2016 is a PhD Candidate (History & Theory of Architecture).

www.mcadamshoes.wordpress.com

Fernanda Duarte is an Associate Professor at the Department of Communication at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, in Brazil, and is part of the Intermedia Connections Research Group. She holds a PhD in Communication, Rhetoric and Digital Media from North Carolina State University and is a former Fulbright-CAPES Scholar.

www.fernandaduarte.net

Kaya Barry is an Associate Lecturer in Communications at the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science, and is an Adjunct Research Fellow for the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research at Griffith University, Australia. Recent publications include the monograph "Everyday Practices of Tourism Mobilities" (2017, Routledge).

Louise Ann Wilson creates socially engaged, site-specific walks and performances in rural landscapes that seek to emplace, re-image and transform 'missing' life-events. Recent works include Mulliontide (2016); The Gathering (2014), Ghost Bird (2012), and other projects.

www.louiseannwilson.com/projects

Dr. Gerda Cammaer is Associate Professor in the School of Image Arts at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada.

Phillip Rubery is a recent graduate of New Zealand's Massey University; the Viewfinders project is the practical research component of his Master's degree.

Dr. Max Schleser is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Film and Animation at Swinburne University in Melbourne, Australia.

www.schleser.nz

Michael Hieslmair studied architecture in Graz and Delft and Michael Zinganel studied architecture in Graz, art in Maastricht, and contemporary history in Vienna. They live and work as artists, curators, cultural scientists, and architecture theorists in Vienna.

www.mhmz.at | www.tracingspaces.net | www.stopandgo-transition.net

Nikki Pugh's recent projects include Playable City Tokyo with Watershed and British Council, By Duddon's Side with Lancaster University and the Wordsworth Trust, and investigating play and prototyping with Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. She was an inaugural fellow with Birmingham Open Media and an Associate Artist with Fermynwoods Contemporary Art.

www.npugh.co.uk

Peter Merrington is Postdoctoral Research Associate in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology at Newcastle University. Ilana Mitchell is an artist and Artistic Director of Wunderbar, a producer and creator of “playfully disruptive and seriously curious projects since 2009.

www.petermerrington.org

Samuel Thulin holds a PhD in Communication Studies from Concordia University and recently completed a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Centre for Mobilities Research at Lancaster University.

www.soundcloud.com/samueltulin

Tess Baxter working under the pseudonym of Tizzy Canucci has produced over 30 machinima, with works selected for the Supernova Digital Animation Festival in Denver in 2017 and 2016. Tess is currently studying for a PhD at Lancaster University.

www.tizzycanucci.com

Valentina Bonizzi work highlights issues of social justice while it uncovers the potentialities of democratization that lay in the artistic re-definition of cartographic practices. Bonizzi completed a funded PhD at the VRC (University of Dundee, DJCAD) for which she was nominated for the AHRC Best Research in Film Award.

Vicki Kerr explores technological change, human-nature relationships, simulation and subterfuge, history and memory, risk and catastrophe. Recent work explores the tension that exists in airspace, between the scientific, infrastructural systems that we rely on intuitively.

www.vickikerr.co.uk

Andrei Kuznetsov is Senior Research Fellow at REC PAST Centre, Tomsk State National Research University, and Associate Professor at Department of Sociology of Volgograd State University. His research interests include actor-network theory, science and technology studies, mobilities research, french pragmatic sociology, urban studies.

Duncan Campbell is a Design Researcher with a background in fine art and professional creative methodologies. He is interested in remote digital collaboration and in the blending of Design Thinking and Design Fiction practices.

Jim Gerken is a roleplay author with a background in Finance and Business. He is interested in the creation of new worlds and futuristic concepts.

Malé Luján Escalante is International Lecturer in Design at Imagination Lancaster. Her work focuses on ethics through design, creative exchange, digital public space, philosophy of technology, feminist techno-science, mobilities.

Doerte Weig is an anthropologist and artist researching the different facets of mobilities. As a specialist on the nexus of body and movement, Doerte believes we cannot think the future of cities successfully, without taking into account the physicality and sensoriality of our moving bodies.

Bronislaw Szerszynski is Reader in Sociology and Associate Director of the Institute of Social Futures at Lancaster University. His research situates the changing relationship between humans, environment and technology in the longer perspective of human and planetary history.

Sasha Engelmann is Lecturer in GeoHumanities at Royal Holloway University, London. Her work explores the poetics and politics of air through extended collaborations with artists and other practitioners.

Adam Fish is a cultural anthropologist, video producer, and senior lecturer in the Sociology Department at Lancaster University. He employs ethnographic and creative methods to investigate how information infrastructures, atmospheric technologies and political power intersect.

Nicola Spurling is a Lecturer in the Lancaster Institute for Social Futures. She researches everyday life in the past, present and future and its implications for travel demand.

Louise Mullagh is a PhD student in Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts. Her research explores geographical and social inclusivity in the realm of ‘big’ environmental data, in particular that there is a tendency to overlook people and place.

Stephanie Sodero is a Postdoctoral Fellow researching crisis mobilities at Lancaster University's Centre for Mobilities Research. She traces the mobilities of vital materials, such as blood, required during crises and how such supply chains are impacted by climate change.

Ole B Jensen is Professor of Urban Theory/Urban Design at the Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology, Aalborg University, Denmark. His main research interests are mobilities theories, urban design, networked technologies, and urban theory.

Ditte Bendix Lanng is Assistant Professor at The Technical Faculty of IT and Design, Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology, Centre for Mobility and Urban Studies.

Andrew Glover is a Research Fellow in RMIT's Digital Ethnography Research Centre, and the Beyond Behaviour Change research program.

Tania Lewis is Deputy Dean of Research in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT.

Roger Whitham is a designer and a researcher with a range of commercial and academic experience centred on the design of interaction; physical, digital, human-to-computer and human-to-human.

Yolande Strengers is a Vice Chancellor's Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Urban Research, where she co-leads the Beyond Behaviour Change research program.

James Faulconbridge is Professor of Transnational Management at Lancaster University Management School and an International Research Fellow at Professional Service Firms.

Dee Hennessy is a creative facilitator who works with public sector agencies, companies, organisations and partnerships to develop people, ideas and innovative solutions.

Paula Bialski is an ethnographer of digital media and a Junior Professor at the Institute of Culture and Aesthetics of Digital Media, Leuphana University Lüneburg. Her current research project focuses on an organizational ethnography of a large software organization, which she started in August 2016. There she specifically focuses on the way in which large scale complex software systems are built – both on the social and technical level.

Pedro Campos is a data scientist and senior software engineer at HERE Technologies (which builds, among other things, in-car navigation systems). In his research and development team, he has been working on the quality of route choice, travel times and other sub-products of HERE Routing. He has studied physics and completed a MSc. in Electrical Engineering at the Instituto Superior Técnico, Lisbon.

Serena Pollastri is a lecturer in design at Lancaster University. Her practice-based research focuses on the role of information visualisation processes and artefacts in exploring and articulating multiple perspectives about contested pasts and presents, and possible futures.

Adrian Gradinar is a researcher at Lancaster University. His main area of interest focuses on the intersection of the digital world we are constantly surrounded by and the physical one we actually reside in; especially how design thinking and doing are central to creating better experiences for everyone living in and experiencing this hybrid space. He stretches his very little spare time to take on board projects that involve mobile development and overall design experience.

Clare McCracken is a Melbourne-based, socially engaged artist and PhD candidate at RMIT University, researching methodologies of participatory art in the age of hyper mobility. She is the recipient of the prestigious Vice-Chancellor's PhD Scholarship.

www.mccracken.com.au

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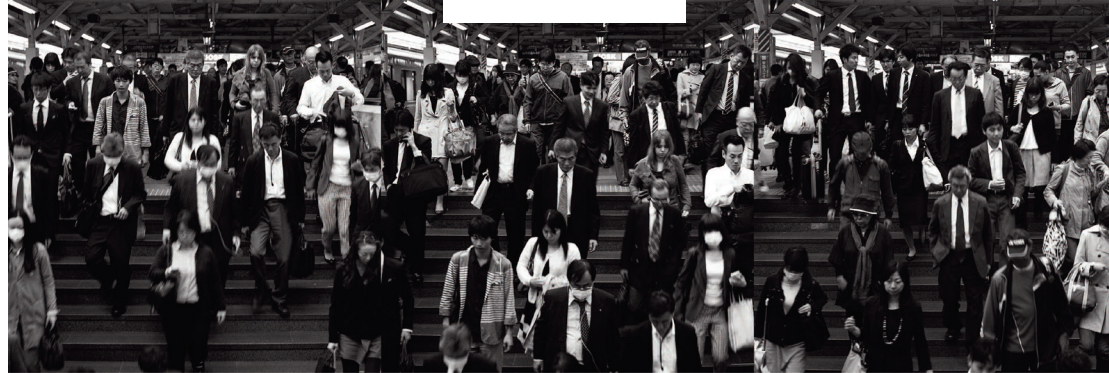


Photo © Sylvie Bonnot / Forum Vies Mobiles, from «Riptides» on artisticlab.forumviesmobiles.org

MOBILE LIVES FORUM INVITE ARTISTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH!

The Mobile Lives Forum is a mobility think tank. It brings together researchers, practitioners and artists in order to imagine mobile lifestyles that correspond to people's aspirations, while reducing our collective impact on the environment. The Forum endeavors to bring the result of this work to the attention of civil society and the private and public sectors so that they may take the steps towards creating a more desirable future. To do so, art is at the core of the Forum's program. We believe that art in all its forms – from comic books to films, to visual and performing arts – can help formulate and spread this message, in a non-academic language. For this reason, the Forum builds mixed teams that include both artists and researchers, and entrusts projects to artist-researchers or artists.

In the context of the Mobile Utopias Exhibition, we are pleased to have awarded bursaries to support the artworks of Kaya Barry, Valentina Bonizzi and Michael Zinganel & Michael Heislmaier.

CALL FOR PROJECTS

The Forum funds projects in the mobility field that are not strictly academic but that we feel are of significant interest for society as a whole to prepare the future of our mobile lives. We are looking for new projects to launch in 2018 with artists-researchers or mixed teams that include both artists and researchers.

You can send us proposals to be discussed soon:
christophe.gay@forumviesmobiles.org

And to stay up to date, on what's happening in international mobility news and the Forum's research projects, events, and publications, subscribe to our bi-monthly newsletter, *The Journal*.

forumviesmobiles.org