SPECIAL ISSUE   Introduction

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Mobility, Infrastructure, and the Humanities

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Abstract

Mobility, suggested John Urry, is fundamental as one of "the infrastructures of social life" (13). Yet mobilities are as equally undergirded by infrastructures of systems that can both enable and disable mobilities. This special issue emerged from the 2022 Global Mobility Humanities Conference, and in this introductory article we open out several problematics which framed some of the conference and introduce further the themes explored by the special issue papers. First, we tease out the academic networks, practices and relations of a broader "infrastructuring" of the (mobility) humanities. Secondly, while theorising a mobility humanities of infrastructure, we introduce the papers by way of exploring several cross-cutting concerns. That is, we discuss how the methodological possibilities stimulated by a humanistic lens may produce nuanced accounts of infrastructures ("Methods as Infrastructures"); how mobility humanities can present the polyvocality of infrastructures, enlarging the conceptualisation of both infrastructure and infrastructuring ("Pluralising Infrastructures"); and how infrastructures can be interrogated ethically and politically in terms of a wide variety of critical issues that pertain to mobility equality, sustainability, and inclusiveness, that is, the notion of mobility justice ("[Ex]change: The [Broken] Promises of Infrastructures." Thus, we hope this special issue functions as a powerful and productive trigger to stimulate more encounters and develop generative conversations.

Keywords

Mobility, Infrastructure, The Humanities, Methods, Promise, (Ex)change

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Introduction

Mobility, suggested John Urry, is fundamental as one of "the infrastructures of social life" (13). Yet mobilities are as equally undergirded by infrastructures of systems that enable and can disable mobilities. Notably, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, mobility infrastructure came to be recognised as indispensable for human life itself (Neuman), while materialising its geographical inequality and acutely strengthening racial, sexual, and class discrimination and their intersections (Adey et al.; Lin and Yeoh; Sheller, "Advanced Introduction"). COVID-19 reminded us of infrastructural privilege—to be able to continue with the things we need, and to be economically active and secure even whilst staying put under successive lockdowns (Pawlicka-Deger), migration controls and other (im) mobilisations. As we write, of course, war puts these relations into stark relief as military practices perpetuate attacks on infrastructures as a way to inflict damage on populations, starving them of food, water, energy and vital supplies such as medicines, whether in Syria, Ukraine or the Gaza Strip. Even if it is routinely argued that this conduct is not an attack on civilians, infrastructure and mobility make it so, moving harms precisely by taking away the things life and social life require to survive.

At the same time, the study of infrastructure has perhaps become more redolent of other overlapping fields through which the mobilities infrastructure affords, and the infrastructure mobilities perform, has been a crucial if uneven focus. Disparate fields such as anthropology, urban studies, human geography, political ecology and science and technology studies have tended to situate some of the best of the work in this space. Of course, what infrastructure is depends on how we look at it: "Studies of infrastructure tend to privilege the technological even if they qualify it by defining urban spaces as hybrid systems of humans and machines bundled together through infrastructural networks" (Larkin 339). Infrastructures enable the movement and transformation (Schabacher) of people, things, ideas, and information; which makes possible not only the socialities of everyday life but the circulation of power and wealth. Logistics (Cowen, *The Deadly Life*; Hönke and Cuesta-Fernandez), roads (Mom; Valadares), railways (Aguiar; Kusters), ports (Heerten), sea routes (Anim-Addo et al.), airports (Salter; Hirsh), transportation networks, pipelines (Kinyera and Doevenspeck), vehicles (Cox and Koglin), and the like have been taken into consideration by many researchers in the mobility studies field and those inspired by it or paralleling it (Walters et al.). So too have internet servers, mail and postage systems, under-sea cables, charging points, bike docking stations, as well as churches, cafes and corner-shops, bodies and practices as "arrival" infrastructures for mobile subjects (Jung and Buhr; Meeus et al.). Many narratives of infrastructure, and indeed mobility infrastructure, suggest their invisibility. Where it is only in their breakdown that we are forced to see the usually sunk or hidden qualities of infrastructures beneath our feet. Studies of infrastructure often involve staying

with, following, and especially manoeuvres of looking beneath and (un)concealment (Hetherington). Sometimes these seek to reveal the political and power relations infrastructures perform and reproduce, and the (often mobile) lives and livelihoods that service and labour the infrastructures we depend upon. Mindful of this nexus of mobility and infrastructures, this special issue seeks to excavate the potential of "infrastructures" in mobility studies through humanities lenses.

This special issue emerged from the 2022 Global Mobility Humanities Conference, held at Konkuk University, Seoul, South Korea, which was themed on the same topic of "mobility, infrastructure and the humanities." This introduction aims to open out several problematics which framed some of the conference, while introducing some cross-cutting themes the special issue papers explore. First, we tease out some concerns and context regarding the special issue and the conference it drew from and the academic networks, practices and relations as part of a broader "infrastructuring" of the (mobility) humanities. Secondly, we spend longer introducing the papers by way of exploring several cross-cutting concerns such as methods as infrastructures, pluralising infrastructures, and the (broken) promises of Infrastructures.

Infrastructuring the Mobility Humanities?

This special issue is itself a platform to discuss mobility infrastructures in its technologies, geographies, histories, cultures, as well as its social being, ethics, justice, and affects from the mobility humanities perspective. Indeed, as the humanities are challenged not only by COVID-19, but structural changes in academia and its funding in many contexts which has seen the prioritisation of Science, Technology, and Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, what new infrastructures and (im)mobilities are possible and necessary in the Humanities? Given the emphasis on (virtual) labs, digital platforms, networks and emerging practices to share and collaborate and engage publics in new spaces (Eccles)— infrastructures which several mobilities centres (such as the Centre for Advanced Studies in Mobility and the Humanities at Padua; and the Academy of Mobility Humanities at Seoul) have developed—what might mobility infrastructures offer for a Humanities under threat?

We consider our conference and this special issue as a kind of infrastructural practice or process, a social infrastructuring. This is about not only the structures of networks or the material form of a conference or the (im)materiality of a journal special issue but the potential that those structures and practices can bring into being, such as the formation of social relations and connections, the development of "shared knowledge, joint action, common meaning" (Meyer 48) and the realisation and understanding of difference and plurality. Conferences, indeed, have been studied from a historical-geographical and a mobility studies perspective as one of the most effective means to create and develop international networks, scientific communities and academic circles in past and present

times (Legg et al.). They are essential to the "spatial" mobility of knowledge as much as are the cities and urban infrastructures in which conferences are hosted (Jöns et al.). Our conference in Seoul, South Korea, 2022 presented an opportunity for scholars to share their ideas and inquiries at the intersection of mobilities studies and humanities, transcending the sometimes conventional divide between the social sciences and humanities and the arts. The conference theme, "Mobility, Infrastructure, and the Humanities," enabled scholars to engage with the mobility humanities from different academic disciplines. And yet, those disciplines are unevenly placed with very different orientations in relation to theory, to method, while reflecting diverse knowledges, skills and academic practices in relation to global academic knowledge-system highly skewed towards North/West dominance. We encouraged studies that would contemplate geographic variation, difference and specificity of context across different global regions, national contexts, locations and places. As a coming together of centres, the conference was also co-organised and hosted by the Academy of Mobility Humanities (AMH) at Konkuk University the Centre for Advanced Studies in Mobility and the Humanities (MoHu) at the University of Padua, and the Royal Holloway Centre for the Geohumanities (CGH) at Royal Holloway University of London; the conference supported an emerging social infrastructure of research exchanges and collaborations. The conference was a key hub for our centres and their staff to meet within and without those networks as emergent configurations of connections were made, such as a large contingent of researchers from the Philippines from De La Salle University; University of Santo Tomas; and Ateneo de Manila University, who presented in the session " . . . via land, sea, and air: Transportable Bodies and Transport Infrastructures of Global Migration in Novels of Filipino Diaspora," "Infrastructural and Superstructural Figures of Mobility/immobility," and "Mobility Infrastructure from the Asian Perspective"; and a session organised by Ethan Caldwell and colleagues from the University of Hawaii at Manoa on "Transoceanic Flows: Race, Mobility and Belonging." Attendance at the conference for scholars from the UK was also supported by the UKRI funded project "Connecting Mobilities research between the UK and South Korea," which supported a range of exchanges, workshops, conferences and a Spring School on the mobility humanities between 2022-23, especially prioritising early career scholars to attend.

   And yet, we also recognise some of the tensions within this academic practice. Notwithstanding our choices to expend so much carbon from flying to attend the conference as an infrastructural cost, the event also revealed some of the precarities and inequalities of academic network building that rely on aeromobility (Higham et al.) as we move along the highly uneven and racialised infrastructures of national bordering, which meant that some researchers could not travel to South Korea because an embassy had not returned their passport in time or K-ETA had not permitted their entrance. Indeed, at a later event, another colleague's visa status in the UK and the strengthened border control in South Korea after Covid-19 meant that they were advised not to travel. As we seek to forge a more inclusive academy, and more inclusive mobility humanities, the realities of who can pass in and through our academic knowledge and community infrastructures are still highly

privileged. Though *Mobility Humanities*' open access status means the special issue avoids some of the inequalities of access much academic publishing involves (Herb and Schopfel), for some, the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and the incompatibility of different testing and COVID-19 immunisation certificates meant that they could not make the journey to Seoul. And while the emphasis within the conference was for a face-to-face meeting that had not been possible during the pandemic, we also recognise that simply moving things online is not necessarily a solution to a mobility humanities infrastructure/infrastructuring. As Pawlicka-Deger writes on issues of connectivity and disconnection within the Digital Humanities, "Poor access to electricity, Internet, and technology, as well as a lack of access to international research, insufficient training in digital practices, and a lack of funding support underlie the uneven development of [digital humanities]" (541-42).

One way to support such networks is to encourage new habits and practices within journal publishing that can better support the habits and practices of the humanities and the arts more readily, and practically. Our conference and this special issue have experimented with more flexible paper forms. Some papers in this special issue are deliberately short. At 5,000-6,000 words, we sought after papers that would not overburden colleagues, some still in the grip of COVID-19, others working amidst the creaking infrastructures of universities as finances diminish or are redirected, and staff shortages mean crumbling services. This was also an effort to take seriously a common refrain that infrastructures are often considered, though not unproblematically, as withdrawn in some way (Hetherington), which has been variously referred to as (in)visible and unthought, "deep" or "under," and even a "vanishing point" (Knox). This is not only a question of research method, but also presentational practices that seek to elicit, know, reveal, uncloak, surface, dig, spotlight, or perhaps write, draw, envision, revision, among other modalities of looking, sensing, writing and creative expression. In tune with this we sought after creative entries encouraging visual content, which has taken the form of graphic narratives or photo essays.

A Mobility Humanities of Infrastructure

What might it mean to consider infrastructures through the perspective of the mobility humanities? As Larkin suggests, defining an infrastructure "comprises a cultural analytic that highlights the epistemologies and political commitments involved in selecting what one sees as infrastructure" (330). Thus, what are the epistemologies and political commitments involved by the mobility humanities while addressing infrastructures? Since, following Larkin, infrastructuring potentially includes an infinite variety of networks, in physical as well as aesthetic forms, we see the theoretical generative force of the mobility humanities (Merriman and Pearce) as particularly apt to advance more expansive notions of infrastructures. Mobility humanities can raise questions about infrastructures in terms of their "symbolic and cultural values, their hidden social biases and exclusions, the normativity of their assumed use practice, and the ways in which infrastructural systems are 'embedded'

and 'grounded'" (Pinnix et al. 13).

   A (post-)humanistic approach implies not only that material and immaterial/metaphorical notions of infrastructures coexist, and are often intertwined, but that the "ontology of infrastructure" can be seen at work in many diverse ways beyond "pipes and cables" (itself a metaphor examined by McCormack; Latham and McComack). In some ways, this is to look beyond some of the "realising" and "revealing" work common to research on infrastructure and its politics that rely on some kind of figure-foreground (Heatherington, Infrastructure, Environment) inversion, to look beneath the pavement or within the walls to get at the hidden but every day "infra" of the structures of our lives. Humanities approaches to infrastructure can mean seeking to understand the expressive and creative potential of "moving" materialities as they are encountered and lived. Moreover, infrastructure may mean "more-than," more than the now very well-examined material underwiring that moves and transforms material-ecological things and commodities (Kaika and Swyndegouw). Such an "ontology of infrastructure," as Larkin again argues, is based on the fact that "they are things and also relation between things," "they are objects that create the grounds on which other objects operate" (329). At the same time, by not letting through infrastructures that "shape the rhythms and striations of social life" (Appel et al. 6) while producing differentiated access to themselves, mobility humanities seeks to intervene epistemologically and politically in an ontology of infrastructure for its just transformation, occasionally mobilising creativity and imagination. On the basis of the relational take on infrastructures as substrates that both underlie and allow for (ex)change, that might ferment mobile life and just as easily snuff it out, we provide below some reflections on how the special issue's contributions operate while adopting a mobility humanities lens on researching (and thinking about) infrastructures.

Methods as Infrastructures

Considering how mobility humanities research is produced, delivered, disseminated (and sometimes also consumed), as discussed above, we see our agreements, conferences, visiting programmes or social media institutional accounts as kinds of infrastructure that facilitate and are (re)organised or maintained by our academic practices, such as networking and collaborations. Within such activities, methodological exchange plays a vital role. But what are the methodological contributions of the humanities to mobilities and infrastructures research? Of course, methodologies have been deeply interrogated since the beginning of the new mobilities paradigm (Büscher et al., *Mobile Methodologies*; Fincham et al.; Büscher et al., *Handbook of Research Methods*). More recently, the emergence of the mobility humanities field has opened new questions, aspirations and possibilities from a methodological perspective. One of the distinctive contributions of the humanities to the study of mobility phenomena derives from the employment of methods (and sources) commonly used within the humanities. Writing ten years ago on the need to rethink mobile

methods, Merriman suggested caution towards more fashionable "mobile methods" that have sought—somehow—to get closer to the action of mobility often by being on the move too, potentially essentialising mobility as something that can be got at only through the right GoPro head camera, through increasingly more active movements. Merriman valued the recovery of apparently more traditional methodologies by humanistic scholars working on mobilities (including still photography or close reading of textual sources, for instance) (see also Pearce). Supporting the idea that the humanities brings into mobility research less physically active, or even research techniques that are present at the moment of the doing of mobility as well as the capacity to produce creative variations on them, he called for a more inclusive methodological ecology to explore mobility phenomena.

The papers of the "Mobility, Infrastructure and the Humanities" special issue show how the methodological possibilities stimulated by a humanistic lens may produce nuanced accounts of infrastructures. In particular, we see several different methods clustering around "following" (see Hawkins and Parsons's paper in this issue, who follow Cowen; see also Salazar; Breines et al.,). For instance, following the route-like linearity of infrastructure and the mobilities they may afford requires methods that track, trace, accompany, be-with and even sniff out (Hsu) infrastructures, where they go, and the things that they move, and where they come from. Fleischer, for example, deploys ethnographic methods to follow female domestic workers in Bogota in a combination of approaches mixing accompanying participants in their daily routines through the milieu of urban infrastructure, tracing their fractured urban and life trajectories (Jirón and Iturra), sometimes even with "follow-up" telephone interviews. Following is also a crucial technique for Cresswell's approach to routes and routing, and central to a concept of mobility: that "people and things follow, and create, routes." In Cresswell's paper, a route-taken itself becomes an infrastructure, even a tug or a pull for other routes and journeys to follow. His approach practices a manner of following the emergence of how routes come into being, where efforts to try to map and delineate the infrastructures of routes become an infrastructure or route for method. Cresswell traces, describes and analyses the representational practices of routing through tree and branch-like structures, flow charts and thick marker-drawn lines of migrant journeys. These instances are traced back into moments of urban planning amidst federal defense spending and burgeoning civil unrest under racial inequalities in post-war America; and debates and shifting paradigms in geographic knowledge and scientific practices to urban transport development that occluded colonial spatialities of the slave trade which had underpinned infrastructural development in colonial Nigeria. And, similarly cogniscant of the entanglements of infrastructure with (post)colonial force fields of power, Hawkins and Parsons centre following with "on-the-ground 'followings'" to connect the "here and there, the then and now, the intimate and the imperial" in contemporary Cambodia. Like Cresswell, Hawkins and Parsons's infrastructures become their own affordances "to be followed," but their approach is also more intimate, a following through aesthetic engagement through their own immersion and judgement via senses of smell; invisual encounters with closed and open urban infrastructures and wafting airs.

Multiple methods and techniques, then, are employed to perform, present or publish mobility humanities research. It is worth noting here that at the "Mobility, Infrastructure, and the Humanities" conference, the keynote given by Cresswell took the form of a video, which provided a multisensorial, dynamic counterpart to the speaker's theoretical statements about routes. This audiovisual, mobile infrastructuring of the verbal content is harder to find in the journal article, yet the interplay between the two formats (the video and the written article) is part of the methodological openness, interchange and creativity that the humanities provide to the study of mobilities and its dissemination (see Cresswell on this point in this journal). Saliently, the keynote by Harris was given at the conference in a standard speech-and-slides format, while the encounters made possible by the coming together of so many mobility humanities scholars produced a new collaboration (with Peterle) that turned out to be deeply transformative through the adoption of infrastructural storytelling in a hybrid verbo-visual format, employing comics as a method. Along with these hybridisations, the use of photo-textuality by Hawkins and Barry and Suliman during the conference and in the journal photo-essay format shows how multimodal methods are at work in different ways, events and configurations when mobility humanities research is shared.

As creative methodologies push for a more-than-textual take on mobilities (Barry et al.), however, we should not forget the centrality of textuality within the fabric of the humanities. Quilantang's paper relies on semiotics as a methodology to study both verbal and visual textuality to interpret the "jeepney," a means of public transport born from the remnants of the Americans after World War. This distinctive vehicle is read as a symbol of Filipino culture in which values, narratives, social habits but also political negotiations with modernisation processes are involved. Discourse and image-discourse analyses, in line with a representational approach, demonstrate how such methodologies work to complement non-representational ones to navigate the cultural meanings of mobilities in global contexts. Arriola's paper, included in this special issue, demonstrates how vital is the method of close reading to creatively grasp and interpret the mobilities inherent to literary texts, in their content and form, their intertextuality, and the ways they are read. She follows the plot, the characters, the spatial movements across the pages of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* working with literal and metaphorical conceptions of mobilities and reflecting on different time framings embedded in such mobilities, including the historical periods of medieval religious pilgrimage (Scriven; Maddrell and Terry) that the novel itself follows.

Indeed, the temporal and historical dimension is equally crucial to the humanities perspective, and in fact, historical contextualisation is a recurrent feature in the papers of the special issue. Temporal framings and the space-times of infrastructures, then, are not just a matter of function, existence and practice of infrastructures in the past, but they also emerge from ethnographic elicitations of everyday performances, when personal memories and rhythms intertwine with infrastructures as they are lived, as in the interviews of Fleischer's paper. Here the history of infrastructures at global, national or local scales leaves room to

subjective, individual and evocative temporal relationships at micro-scales. Asphyxia et al. demonstrate this. Their interviews based on the elicitation of creative artworks illuminate the nuanced experiences and atmospheres of (im)mobilities lived by disabled people. Here, as in other ethnography-based papers, interviewing functions as an infrastructure through which subjectivity is distributed, expressed and empathically grasped. A humanistic approach ensures that, through both textual and more-than-textual renderings, such subjectivities are especially considered in understanding personal (im)mobilities (Kellerman). This special issue, thus, as well as the conference from which it emerged, shows to what extent the methodological infrastructures of the mobility humanities are rich and varied, comprising and mixing (supposedly) traditional and experimental modes of writing, reading and engaging with texts, collecting stories and narratives, doing visual research, documenting, using the senses, following human and non-human entities in the field, and producing outputs.

Pluralising Infrastructures

As highlighted by Merriman and Pearce, humanistic approaches to mobilities result in an increased generation of prompts from which new theoretical possibilities emerge; the humanities can develop and contribute conceptual creativity in the field of mobility research. This statement could be paired with Bal's renowned reflections on concepts that travel across the humanities. According to Bal, interdisciplinarity in the humanities finds its heuristic and methodological basis not just in methods themselves, but especially in concepts. She endorses a concept-based methodology, where concepts are entities that move across disciplines, holding together their stability but also showing great elasticity. For Bal, the collective and intersubjective work done "around," "with," and "beneath" concepts that are hardly defined and remain suspended between ordinary and theoretical meanings constitutes the backbone of the interdisciplinary study of culture.

(Mobility) infrastructure may be certainly considered a case in point. Indeed, the contributions to this special issue present polyvocal considerations of infrastructures, and to some extent mobilities too, and somehow work to enlarge the conceptualisation of both infrastructure and infrastructuring. Working at different scales and implying mobility in various ways, these interventions present plural materialisations of infrastructures as well as immaterial evocations of infrastructuring; they shed light on the viscosity as well as the poetics of infrastructures, and they intimate what more is infrastructured—the subject of or subjected-to—by infrastructure beyond human life to multi-species agents (Morita).

While above we discussed how Peterle and Harris develop our thinking of comics as a kind of infrastructural method, a scaffolding of "graphic mobilities" Peterle develops elsewhere, they also consider infrastructure's "shapeshifting." They recognise its multiple encounters, and in the taxibot, its capacity to meld and be molded into different forms across which

different narratives and meanings are hooked and maintained. The shapeshifter is also a good metaphor for the pluralities of infrastructures across the papers. For example, in a very different way, aesthetic form, feeling and judgment undergird many of the papers and are even thought of "as infrastructures in the conveyance of meanings, experiences and even narrative." Emphasised in Arriola's examination of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, they consider the narrative construction of space and time, and mostly human mobilities, in the novel as "moving entities" through which aesthetic meanings are produced; that is, the temporal and spatial infrastructure of the novel. In a very different way for Asphyxia et al., the wheelchair is more obviously the infrastructure of concern as a form of a body-technology assemblage, amidst or within other extra-bodily spaces and spatial forms through which different bodily and creative capacities are modulated. They explore the opening of mobility capacities but also the infrastructure's germination of troubling and frustrating affective tensions, such as the commonly expressed negative or even "aversive" emotion pity (Hughes). Meanwhile, the home studio space is also a crucial infrastructure for artistic expression, such as from the bed, and in the financial sense of not having to pay rent on a leased studio space thereby affording greater economic and creative freedoms.

Perhaps then we see a duplicity or doubleness to infrastructures in their consideration through the papers, as mobility infrastructures play more than one role for multiple kinds of mobilities. Barry and Suliman's exploration of avian flyways at Meanjin-Brisbane airport is a case in point as the airport's wetland environment provides important ecological infrastructures for migratory shorebirds—what Barua might call a "medium of nonhuman inhabitation" (1469)—albeit one which is disturbed and threatened by the airport's expansion. Moreover, their examination of a far fuzzier and more complicated airport infrastructural footprint performs a careful transition through different infrastructural viewpoints, as if moving through the portrait transparent overlays that marked some of Hawkins and Parsons's visualisations. Their approach to the airport is to see its combination as an infrastructure for commercial, passenger, and goods mobilities; but at the intersection of migratory multi-species movements and habitats; alongside legally-complex expansions and contractions of facilities for migration detention within the continuum of Australia's migrant detention estate (Coddington) with varying degrees of public (in) visibility; and amidst a longer involvement of settler-state infrastructures on unceded Indigenous territories and exploited labour power. Here perhaps we return to a question of method. Where the mobility humanities may extend understandings of infrastructures across blurring senses of spatial demarcation, such as border zones, wetland boundaries and airport excision spaces, into suburbs and the inner city—thought perhaps more horizontally—they also enable the pulling through of perspectives through which different temporal horizons interfere and complicate one another. The aim of the special issue, and of the conference as a whole, may be seen in the effort to provide a denser and extended sense of infrastructure, to enact inventive movements while travelling the conceptual territories of infrastructure.

(Ex)change: The (Broken) Promises of Infrastructures

As agents of enhanced mobilities, infrastructures have often been paired with an idea or sense of promise, most often in terms of "freedom to people all over the world" (Anand et al. 3), as well as with "broken promises" that are not only of a physical system but also of a belief system (Davies 15). But in what sense does mobility humanities value the (broken) promises of infrastructures? The papers in this special issue interrogate infrastructures in non-neutral ways, covering a wide variety of critical issues that pertain to mobility equality, sustainability, and inclusiveness. Indeed, an ethical and/or political stance pervades these interventions that contribute to and further expand the notion of mobility justice (Sheller). This way, the contributions aim not only to promote an exchange in the field of mobility humanities research, but also to activate this research to endorse social change.

As Larkin puts it, "the deeply affectual relation people have to infrastructures—the sense of awe and fascination they stimulate—is an important part of their political effect" (334). We can attend particularly to the "promissory" note infrastructures tend to write or offer in the way that they value and promulgate future-orientated affects such as hope and enchantment (Lin et al.), offering anticipatory dispositions towards better or more hopeful mobile lives, and as equally, disappointment, confusion, and derision when those promises go unfulfilled. The use of sensitive methodologies and the reference to the immaterial side of infrastructures (discourses, narrations, feelings, experiences, etc.) importantly contribute to the emergence of political commitment and social engagement. In fact, such methodologies and creative considerations of infrastructures enhance the emotional dimension and potential impact of mobility research interventions.

Perhaps the clearest critique and complication of mobility infrastructure's promises come in Peterle and Harris through their creative graphic exploration of the more ambivalent, indifferent and even disaffective (Bissell) orientations to the so-called "taxibot." Not only is the taxibot's automated and sustainable promise highly contingent on how the technology has been sold and indeed "promised" in very different ways, the multiple encounters Peterle and Harris trace realise a far more diffident, tentative and fractured reality. Their narration expresses the constant if unreliable promise of taxibot pushed and towed mobilities, yet the electric and automated aspects of the infrastructural shift and are unfulfilled. The authors narrate various encounters with the taxibot and the airport personnel working with it which are tinged with past-tense promises of what the taxibot would and could do, alongside more futural gestures to that promise coming eventually to pass, yet clouded with a more affective cynicism that those promises may be empty. "So they say. So they say" is framed in the speech bubble whose trail leaves the right-hand edge of the page like a distant rumour, leaving the reader confused as to whether someone has said it in the past or will say it on the next page, assuming some linearity to the graphic narration. Furthermore, the disaffection stemming from the unlikeliness of such futures, parallels other encounters with the taxibot in a scene when passengers are notified at the possible excitement during their

witnessing and involvement of the inauguration of the system on an actual flight, but they could not care less.

For other papers in the issue, infrastructural promises are no less ambivalent but more distant and fractured even in their relationality and purported connectivity. In Fleisher's paper, care work is made possible by more traditional senses of infrastructure that domestic workers use in Colombia. And yet, the experience of those public transport mobility infrastructures finds that their design and management is expensive, fragile, and over-used and anything but caring. It is the opposite of this, it is cruel, debilitating and exhausting. As Cresswell shows, some infrastructures inevitably involve the running down and wholesale destruction of existing ones too, fracturing perhaps more informal and less technological infrastructure. Infrastructural promises that involve the production, maintenance, and transformation of power can therefore undermine others. Under colonialism, infrastructural promises can lead to unexpected mobilities and even unwanted connections, disrupting and fracturing (im)mobilities (LaDuke and Cowen) especially of Indigenous peoples; here, the promises are always-already broken. Moreover, Barry and Suliman's photo essay describes how aeromobility, perhaps symbolically promising freedom of movement, contributes to producing immobile subjects such as asylum seekers and avian species. Particularly in Pinkenba, where the Brisbane Airport's dream of a global metropolis is located, which is thus occupied by global industries of cargo, freight, aircraft maintenance, and passenger-related services, human mobility infrastructures facilitate movements along various axes of inequality and are simultaneously (re)produced by them, as well as shaping the future of biodiversity loss by encroaching on the ecosystems that serve as the infrastructures for non-human mobilities.

The aspirations to more just mobility futures, then, is again a question of methods. Defined as a collaboration between a self-identified queer, Deaf, and disabled art practitioner and two non-disabled geographers, Asphyxia et al's paper is one of the most explicit in its plea for mobility justice, equality and accessibility of public space. Importantly, when asked about the choice of mediums, the artist emphasises the role of methods that consider "socially just human-environment relations." Kin-aesthetic methods, thus, are considered not just as means of expression, but are here endowed with the force to open both material environments and spaces for social and micro-political intervention.

Hawkins and Parsons openly propose a critical engagement with infrastructures by displaying a "visual politics" of subsurfaces, with Phnom Penh as a case study. Again, methods become part and parcel of the political implications of the research process. In fact, they mobilise the visual essay form as a way to produce attentiveness towards the political force of infrastructures. This force is "followed" by considering both imperial infrastructures and their material and immaterial afterlives, just as Quintlang's exploration of the Jeepney is an example of the negotiations of a vehicular or infrastructural imperial legacy. Hawkins and Parsons, meanwhile, enact a transcalar movement from the imperial to the intimate, from the national to the subjective, from colonial history to present urban experience, by

following material objects into the micro underground landscapes of Phnom Penh's colonial present. The visual superimpositions included in their essay work with the verbal accounts to evoke and convey a political reading of the ghostly presence of colonial infrastructuring that is nurtured by spatial and temporal imaginations. Their superimposition of images confirms that transcalarity is a crucial dimension of both the creative and political exploration of infrastructures. In the Philippines we see how the Jeepney may be swept away by the modernisation of public vehicles as modernisation "promises" a more organised and efficient public transport system, yet it also raises questions about the cultural landscape of the Jeepney and the heritagisation of the Jeepney art. The Jeepney, following Quilantang and Quilantang, is not just a mere vehicle, or simply the detritus of military imperialism but a socio-political object of negotiation, "reflecting the unique aspects of a society's culture, infrastructure, government policy, economic factors, and more."

All these social and political negotiations and aspirations projected onto infrastructures suggest how infrastructures have the capacity to catalyse instances, needs, problems, inequalities but also a handful of hopes which are harboured by individuals, groups and communities. Most of the papers in the special issue, as well as many of those presented at the conference, embraced an ethical and/or political attitude to explore the (broken) promises of infrastructures in response to such hopes. If infrastructures exist to allow "exchange" of material and immaterial things, they may also be seen as entities that alternatively inhibit or facilitate social and political "change."

Conclusion

Among the scopes of the *Mobility Humanities* journal lies the aim to facilitate the exchange between scholars, research groups, centres and institutions that are now connecting together to share theoretical, methodological and empirical knowledge around mobilities phenomena seen from a humanistic perspective. This special issue, which emerged from the "Mobility, Infrastructure, and the Humanities" conference co-organised by the Academy of Mobility Humanities at Konkuk University, the Royal Holloway University of London Centre for the Geohumanities and the Centre for Advanced Studies in Mobility and the Humanities of the University of Padua, draws from such connections to contribute to the flourishing field of interest on the infrastructural.

The assemblage of papers collected in the special issue inspired us as Editors to recognise the potentialities of infrastructural thinking for mobility humanities as well as to delineate some contributions the mobility humanities can offer to the study of infrastructures. This led us to consider how the intense networking activities being carried out at a global scale in the field of mobility humanities may be considered as itself an infrastructure that allows for intellectual exchange across diverse scientific, cultural and geographical contexts. Moreover, inspired by the contributions of this special issue, we came to focus on the specific

potentialities mobility humanities hold in the understanding of infrastructure as a matrix of cultural and social interest. First, mobility humanities offer a wide range of more-than-textual, mobility-related methodological possibilities that help in revealing the multifaceted existence and experience of infrastructures. Second, mobility humanities provide a space for conceptual inventiveness, historical sensibility and subjective interrogations that can foster plural, deep, integrative notions of infrastructures. Third, mobility humanities often put such methodological and conceptual creativity at the service of a critical, socially engaged, action-based research on infrastructures that invests hope and generates political expectations for change.

It has often been observed that the "turns" that our disciplines periodically come across may be thought of as a means to define (and legitimate) communities of scholars that share fields of interest, terminologies, and professional relationships. Indeed, the emergent mobility humanities are growing as an area of study that is progressively putting together a global scientific community. Yet, the contributions to this special issue, and even more so the conference from which they derive, show that this community is extremely open to open-ended and unexpected encounters. The infrastructural has functioned as an especially powerful and productive trigger to stimulate such encounters and develop generative conversations. Our hope is that such conversations will continue "around," "with," and "beneath" this special issue.

Competing Interests

The author(s) reported that no competing interests exist

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