

An agenda for creative practice in the new mobilities paradigm

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Abstract: Creative practices have made a standing contribution to mobilities research. We write this article as a collective of 25 scholars and practitioners to make a provocation: to further position creative mobilities research as a fundamental contribution and component in this field. The article explores how creative forms of research—whether in the form of artworks, exhibitions, performances, collaborations, and more—has been a foundational part of shaping the new mobilities paradigm, and continues to influence its methodological, epistemological, and ontological concerns. We tour through the interwoven history of art and mobilities research, outlining five central contributions that creativity brings. Through short vignettes of each author’s creative practice, we discuss how creativity has been key to the evolution and emergence of how mobilities research has expanded to global audiences of scholars, practitioners, and communities. The article concludes by highlighting the potency of the arts for lively and transdisciplinary pathways for future mobilities research in the uncertainties that lay ahead.

Keywords: creativity, art, methodology, practice-led research, immobility

Introduction

We write this article as a collective of 25 researchers and practitioners to highlight the contribution that creative practice has made to mobilities research. We speak about creativity quite broadly to encompass the artistic, collaborative, generative, and practice-based approaches that are interwoven through our research. Creative forms of research may take the form of creative outputs (e.g. artworks, exhibitions, performances), or as methodological approaches and techniques used in the design and collection of empirical material. We suggest that creative practices have made a standing contribution that has shaped mobilities research, exemplified in the numerous books (e.g. Barry and Keane 2020; Kjaerulff et al. 2018; Murray and Upstone 2014; Witzgall, Vogl and

Kesselring 2013), exhibitions, conference sessions, events, and more, since the emergence of the new mobilities paradigm. While we are not all doing research exclusively in mobilities, and we each come from different disciplinary and technical backgrounds and proficiencies, it is important to note that each of us has a range of engagement with creative practices (the doing, making, co-creating, and more) that allow our work to interrogate mobilities. We write this collectively to make a provocation to future mobilities research:

In order to address the im/mobilities that are happening now, and that lay ahead in uncertain, turbulent futures, then we need to further position creative mobilities research as a fundamental contribution to this field.

Throughout this agenda piece we draw on a range of terms to describe what exactly *creative mobilities research* is or might be. This choice of words moves between and across practices that include: artistic research, practice-led methods, creative forms of engagement with notions of mobility, and, as researchers who are interested in creativity. To be clear, this is not merely a slippage between terms, but rather a deliberate attempt to show the breadth and diversity that we purposely gather under the umbrella of our agenda to foster increased recognition of *creative practice based research* in mobilities scholarship. Our provocation unfolds across three sections. First, we take a tour through the interwoven history of art and mobilities research, showcasing the many international events and contributions through which creative approaches have flourished. Second, we outline the crux of our agenda: the five central contributions that creativity brings to mobilities research and practice. These five contributing areas are used to structure the third section, in which we each contribute our own examples of creative mobilities research from the virtual exhibition *Im/mobile Lives* curated by Kaya Barry and Jen Southern for the conference *Im|mobile lives in Turbulent Times* (2021, Newcastle). Finally, we conclude by discussing how our collective contributions offer a lively and transdisciplinary path for future mobilities research to tackle uncertainties that lay ahead.

A tour through art and mobilities

It is possible to identify the themes outlined in Sheller and Urry's 2006 article 'The New Mobilities Paradigm' through the work of hundreds of artists both historical and contemporary. Tracing one

such theme, bodily movement, would lead us through works from José Guadalupe Posada's satirical lithographies of the 1890's bicycle craze, and early modernist representational art works like Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912) in which the sequential movements of the human body process across the canvas, to Blondell Cummings choreography using remembered everyday gestures of her grandmother (e.g. *Chicken Soup*, 1981), to Carsten Holler's giant slides in *Test Site* (2006-present) that physically disperse participants through gallery spaces, and Ai Weiwei's provocative renditions of the discarded life rafts in *Law of the Journey* (2017) that enabled thousands of precarious human migrations. The flavours of the mobilities paradigm are also increasingly observable in the arts and creative institutions, as well as more broadly in wider society and designs, aesthetics, technologies, materialities that we encounter in our daily lives. An in-depth study of the connections between artistic influences and the study of mobilities is beyond the scope of this article. However, we highlight these select examples in order to demonstrate that creative researchers are part of a much wider context of mobilities in contemporary art, and build from and engage with broader art histories.

Mobilities research has always been a fertile ground for interdisciplinary practice, and artists have made contributions to a wide range of research events, activities, workshops, and conferences. Countless major international mobilities conferences over the last decade have included exhibitions and artists performances and we list them here as reference for future researchers. These include the Panamerican Mobilities Network conferences: *Mobilities in Motion* (2011, Drexel University), *Local and Mobile: linking mobilities, mobile communication and locative media* (2012, Raleigh) where artists and art works were presented as part of the conference, and *Differential Mobilities* (2013, Mobile Media Studio, Concordia University) in which art practices, performances and exhibitions played a central role, with a particular focus on art and disability, including extensive panels, exhibitions and performances. Conference exhibitions hosted by the Centre for Mobilities Research, Lancaster University, include: *Global Mobility Futures* (2013), *Mobilities, Literature Culture* (2017), *Mobile Utopia* (2017), and conferences of the European Cosmobilities Network include: *Networked Urban Mobilities* (2014, Copenhagen) and *Material Mobilities* (2016, Aalborg). Performance Studies International curated a major public exhibition program titled *Performing Mobilities* (2015, Melbourne). Since 2016, the international seminar *Living (in) Mobility* has been organised in Portugal, allying social sciences to art. The Aotearoa–New Zealand and AusMob networks held a combined symposium on *Mobilities, Stories,*

Movement and Art (2018, Hamilton). The *MINA, Mobile Innovation Network and Association, Symposium and 8th International Mobile Innovation Screening* featured presentations of mobile films and music projects (2018 Melbourne). The list is long, and there are countless more conferences and symposia, too numerous to mention here. All of these exhibitions were integrated into conference proceedings, with panel discussions and papers by artists as well as an ambitious peer-review selection process for the exhibited works.

Events such as the *Art & Mobilities Network Symposium* (2018) subsequently led to the launch of the *Artmobs* JISC mailing list by Kaya Barry and Jen Southern (lead authors) in 2019, a network which currently has over 150 subscribers. Further, creative mobilities research has featured prominently in journals such as *Transfers* in which the regular art and mobilities reviews are published, *Wi journal of mobile media* published by the Mobile Media Studio in Montreal, and many articles in both the well-established international journals *Mobilities* and *Applied Mobilities*.

At the same time, research-based exhibitions of art and mobilities have flourished, including *Tracing Mobility: Cartography and Migration in Networked Space* (HKW, 2011), *LA Re.Play: An Exhibition of Mobile Media Art* (DESMA Grad Art Gallery, Broad Arts Center at UCLA, 2012), *The Mobility Project* curated by Elly Clarke (Clark Gallery 2012), *Walk On: From Richard Long to Janet Cardiff, 40 years of art walking* (2013) curated by Mike Collier and Cynthia Morrison-Bell, *Mobile/Immobile* (Mobile Lives Forum, 2019), and related projects on mobile practices across the humanities and social sciences such as the UK based *Walking Artists Network*, the *Arts Territory Exchange*, the *Running Artfully Network*, and more.

While mobilities researchers have written about artists and creative examples in their research (e.g. Edensor and Sumartojo 2018; Peters 2017), these engagements are often as illustrative or discussion points, rather than a direct engagement with creative practices and epistemologies. To be clear, ‘creative’ practices include an array of artistic forms and imaginative techniques, including, but not limited to: visual arts, performance, sonic arts, site-specific, co-creation, and more. Much has been written about the methodological value of creative practices in doing social research (e.g. Kara 2015; Leavy 2015; Pase et al. 2021; Witzgall et al. 2013; Costa et al. 2020), and of the value of arts practice as a form of research (Barrett and Bolt 2007, Sullivan 2010)

The innovative and critical potential of practice-based research lies in its capacity

to generate personally situated knowledge and new ways of modelling and externalising such knowledge while at the same time revealing philosophical, social and cultural contexts for critical intervention and application of knowledge outcomes. (Barrett, 2007:2)

Creativity and imagination here refer not to a departure from reality, but rather a complex engagement with it, encompassing diverse ways of moving through and engaging with changing landscapes, critically analyzing the past, and thinking unconventionally about the possibilities of cultivating more just and equitable futures. Further, the synergies of creative research in mobilities can be traced across a diversity of fields and disciplines, including similar moves in visual anthropology, visual sociology, the humanities and human geography, that answer calls for new kinds of research method:

Imagine a fluid and decentered social science, with fluid and decentered modes for knowing the world allegorically, indirectly, perhaps pictorially, sensuously, poetically, a social science of partial connections. (Law and Urry 2004, 400)

One of the problems of studying mobilities is in working with what is ‘fleeting, distributed, multiple, non-causal, sensory, emotional and kinaesthetic’, without holding it still in order to study it and thus destroying its mobile qualities (Büscher et al., 2011, 1). Creative practices do ‘this through attention to the processual engagements that develop along the way’ (Barry 2020, 317). Mobile methods (Büscher et al. 2011), live methods (Back and Puwar 2012) and inventive methods (Lury and Wakeford 2012) foreground the ways that method enacts new social realities (Hawkins 2019; Simone and Pieterse 2018) and intervenes in the worlds that are studied, motivated by co-creating positive change. Inventive research begins by identifying the ‘inherent creativity of social life’ (Marres et al 2018,18), and ‘involves an active search for alternative ways of combining representation of, and intervention in, social life’ (Ibid). This conversation between arts and social sciences about creative methods has a rich history, and huge potential for expansion with the specific concerns of mobilities research.

Setting an agenda for creative mobilities research

The momentum of all this activity drives us, a collection of researchers and practitioners who are currently working with mobilities, to make a bold, agenda setting statement. If we want mobilities

research to address ongoing precarious im/mobilities that are so crucial to contemporary research, society, environment, and politics, then we need to take creativity in mobilities research seriously. Creativity—including the arts, but as an inherently epistemological concern in research—is a vital and important contribution to the field and to the future directions of mobilities inquiry. Therefore, we feel that creative mobilities research makes a contribution to the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ in five key areas:

- 1) methods for researching the sensory;
- 2) experience in co-production and participation;
- 3) approaches to visualising and making things public;
- 4) longstanding engagement with the environment and landscape;
- 5) a deep practical understanding of materiality.

Through examples from the 2021 exhibition, titled *Im|mobile lives in turbulent times* [1] we will demonstrate how creative researchers and practitioners are making important contributions in each of these areas and, more broadly, are producing change-based research that can engage with problems that operate on multiple scales.

Proposition 1: Sensory Methods

Mobilities research has embraced sensory methods as an integral way of investigating how movement and mobility is felt and perceived, which has been at the forefront of methodological innovation in the field (Witzgall et al. 2013; Büscher et al. 2016; Kjaerulff et al. 2018). Sensory methods help to identify subtle, transient, and invisible experiences, of what it “feels” like—including various sensory, emotional, visual, auditory, tactile and intellectual experiences—to move through and dwell in certain spaces, places, and events from the insider’s perspective (Sheller 2014; Sunderland et al. 2012). As Creswell and Merriman elucidate, ‘Mobile, embodied practices are central to how we experience the world [...]. Our mobilities create spaces and stories—spatial stories’ (2011, 5). While sensation has been widely conceptualised through empirical and ethnographic accounts (e.g. Hughes and Mee 2018; Edensor 2010; Ingold and Vergunst 2008; Lorimer 2011), arguably, the arts are well positioned to offer techniques for accessing, visualising, expressing, capturing, and sharing instances of sensuous mobilities.



Figure 1: Close up of *Perambulator*, by Clare Qualmann (left); *Immobile Measures*, by Kaya Barry and Jondi Keane (middle); *Self-portraits in ISO #1*, by Pia Johnson (right).

Lived experiences of im/mobilities are inherently sensory, responding to stimuli and relations that are evolving with each breath, footstep, wheel turn, and season. Clare Qualmann's ongoing artwork *Perambulator* brings attention to the sensations of walking with another, of shared movements distributing through walking technologies (the pram), and the responses to environmental stimuli, and gendered spaces.

CLARE QUALMANN – *Perambulator*

Perambulator has evolved with each of my children, reflecting shifting relationships with my im/mobility. The first pram walks/performances simply invited others to encounter together the awkwardness of city streets. By moving as a group our usually invisible struggles became a spectacle.

In 2014, I spent a month living and walking in a small Scottish town, Huntly, with two small children. I documented the edges of the town for a pram: the places past which I could not push. In 2018 I made a counterpoint series in New York City, searching for the 'edges' of accessibility in an urban environment. These walks were characterised by the details of textures and materials of the streets: cobbles, ruts, and potholes to jam wheels, jar wrists and jolt over.

In 2021 I walked the pandemic-empty City of London with my 3-year-old. We enacted and re-enacted moments of parental performance, exploring conjunctions

between our bodies, our mobility tools and the finance-dominated topography. In 2012 the pram felt like an encumbrance, a hindrance that limited my mobility. When only local walking was permitted, and the pram meant that we could roam further than our immediate surrounds, it became a brilliant mobility assistant, rather than an impediment.

Building on preoccupations with walking, motion, and kinaesthetics in mobilities (e.g. Bhattacharya and Barry 2021; Clement and Waitt 2018; Heddon and Myers 2017; Trandberg Jensen 2018), Clare Qualmann's *Perambulator* series paves a way for engaging with pedestrian encounters in public space, in a similar manner to Kaya Barry and Jondi Keane's collective works titled *Immobile Measures*. Responding to the changed social and spatial measures implemented in the pandemic, Barry and Keane's creative dialogue highlights the constrained sensations of wayfinding and isolation directives.

KAYA BARRY and JONDI KEANE – *Immobile measures*

In this series of image-extracts we explore measures of the coronavirus pandemic that we experienced during the first year while at home, in lockdown, in two cities in Australia. Physical distancing mandated new measures of how people orient their body amongst other bodies in public space. Performing such measures is a complex, contextual, and emotional task. However, the notions of measure – how one feels, moves, acts, and thinks – have been long imbued in the governance of collective ideas, goals, practices, and action. These artworks build on our ongoing exploration of creative forms of measure (Barry and Keane 2020). The images are drawn from a series of diagrammatic, performative, and video-based experiments by the two artists during lockdown. In Kaya Barry's images, the externalised directives of how and where bodies should be positioned when out in public space; in Jondi Keane's images and video, an internalised and enforced self-reflection as one is contained inside. Together, our creative responses manifest these interior—exterior, internalised—externalised experiences that are at once mobilising in their conceptual engagement, but immobilising in the corporeal responses to the pandemic restrictions.

Barry and Keane's performative and diagrammatic images open contemplations on the simultaneously individual and collective sensations that pandemic restrictions produced. At once mobilising and immobilising, the pandemic forced us all to attend to sensations of movement, across vastly different scales (Barry and Keane 2021; Jensen 2021). In a similar vein, Pia Johnson's *Self-portraits in ISO* speak to an all-too-familiar experience of conflicting sensations of mundanity and uncertainty that many experienced.

PIA JOHNSON – *Self-portraits in ISO*

Self-portraits in ISO (2020) is a series of photographs that respond to the pandemic landscape, with particular focus on how the extended lockdown and restriction of movement, shifted one's identity within the home space. The self-portraits become evidence of the immobilities experienced, and reference the trauma and privilege of being 'safe in place'. Utilising Schewel's definition of immobility as, 'spatial continuity in an individual's centre of gravity over a period of time' (2019, para 3), this photographic series reveals the consequence of shifting orientations within the lockdown space.

The portrayal of the body within the home space mapped the shifting emotions, and heightened awareness of space and identity. The body becomes performative and with its different shapes and orientations, feelings of liminality, grief and endurance are present within the surrounds of the everyday. The photographs reveal the patterns of micro-mobility that appeared, while 'normal' mobilities outside of the home were restricted. The self-portrait photography language interrogates the normal subject/photographer gaze, and within the lockdown environment, the performative gaze of myself looking into my life, rather than situating my body within an external environment was a critical shift. *Self-portraits in ISO* presents a subjective-artistic experience where immobility enabled new spatial reconfigurations of the home space along with one's sense of identity.

Pia Johnson's series of photographs speak to the politics of everyday immobilities and how one's identity becomes reconfigured when the restrictions of movement, and reconfiguring of 'home' spaces becomes acute. Across all of these artworks that focus on exploring *sensory methods*, these

contributions open researchers, participants, and audiences within and beyond the scholarly bounds, ways to consider and experiment with sensory aspects of mobilities.

Proposition 2: Participation and co-production

Participatory art practices are rooted in a desire to narrow the distance between artist and audience, bringing art and life closer together (Groys 2008). This development in the visual arts is well documented, from Futurist and Dada movements in the early 20th Century (Frieling 2008) to the Fluxus movement and ‘happenings’ in New York, and Situationist events in 1960’s Paris (Bishop 2006). Art historian Claire Bishop identifies three central themes in these developments: a desire for empowerment of the audience; a sharing of authorship; and a concern for community and collective responsibility (ibid, 12). Those participatory practices have also developed in ‘new genre public art’ (Lacy 1995, 19), relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 2002, 14-19) and dialogical art (Kester 2004, 9-10), in which audiences become active participants in the making of meaning. The relationships between artist, audience and communities are the subject and material of the work, as the audience becomes participant, collaborator, contributor or even co-author. Artists working in this tradition are skilful in the dialogical co-production of practice-based research with participants that enables insights into ongoing mobile situations. The works in this section approach participation in a number of ways, and we start with Janet Bowstead’s participatory photography that enables a diverse group of women to generate their own metaphorical connections to their journeys to escape abuse.



Figure 2: Close up of *Transport Yourself to a Better Place*, by Janet Bowstead (top left); *Quarantine notebook*, by Catarina Sales Oliveira (top right); screenshot of *Nordwestpassage*, by Michael Hieslmair and Michael Zinganel (lower).

JANET BOWSTEAD - *Transport Yourself to a Better Place*

The images come from research [2] on women's domestic violence journeys in the UK, exploring the emotional, policy and practical issues of being forced to escape intimate partner violence. Women and their children experience forced internal displacement and often multiple stages of temporary accommodation and delayed resettlement. Participatory photography was carried out with groups of women in three areas of London: two groups in women's refuges where women would soon

be on the move again, and one at a women's centre with women who were beginning to resettle. Over weekly sessions, participants used their photography and captions to communicate their experiences of mobility, producing images, maps and collages for themselves, for the group, for display in women's services, and for wider presentation through the research. The sessions built confidence in both creativity and in sharing their insights, with the concern to make safely visible their isolated and hidden journeys. Women explored their experiences of displacement and resettlement, and brought their individual images together into collages to show their collaboration. Whilst recognising what they had lost, women also focused on what they could take with them, and on sharing messages of strength and hope to reach other women they imagined making similar forced journeys.

Michael Hieslmair and Michael Zinganel have worked for many years exploring the social and logistic mobilities of transport infrastructures, through drawing, installation and performances that animate the points where freight, people, rail and cars intersect. In *Nordwestpassage* a mobile performance unearths and articulates poetic moments of mobility in the liminal stages of transition of an inner-city multimodal cargo hub.

MICHAEL HIESLMAIR and MICHAEL ZINGANEL -
Nordwestpassage

A mobile station theatre at Vienna's Nordwestbahnhof, the city's last large logistics centre close to the city centre, which – although its death has been repeatedly announced – simply does not want to disappear.

In the extensive area of the Nordwestbahnhof with its apparently desolate halls and ramps and the railway and industrial wastelands which are already subject to naturalisation, goods are still being handled today. The decline in turnover and the withdrawal of some companies opened up possibilities for new interesting “interim uses”. Based on the CITY ON THE MOVE project, a collection of objects and stories left behind by companies operating here and extraordinary people, which was compiled on site by Tracing Spaces, we embark on an adventure journey

through the logistics area, in which the visitors are moved through the station like cargo on trucks, forklifts and freight trains and reloaded again and again. Accompanied by actors from the Theater im Bahnhof and mobilized artefacts from the above-mentioned collection, former and current employees of the area as well as residents from the surrounding area will performatively recall life and activity on this unknown, inconspicuous but highly exciting area.

In the final work in this section we see how Catarina Sales Oliveira was able to pivot a project from the personal connections of performance work to a distanced sharing of intimate spaces of lockdown, forms of co-produced visual conversation that both enable communication, and have an impact in participants lives.

CATARINA SALES OLIVEIRA - *Quarantine Notebook*

This project with The VELEDA Collective ran from May 2019–July 2021 and aimed to empower solo mothers through collaborative theatre in the Portuguese inner country. The groups reflected on gender issues related to single parenting, labor rights and social participation. The embodiment of movement on stage was a central feature in the labs. In March 2020 the lockdown confinement was a turning point in the lives of these women. They suddenly found themselves confined at home with their children and with new problems to solve. VELEDA became an online support network through regular phone calls, due to the strong bonds and empathy (Stansfield, 2018) that one year of laboratories was able to create.

The sharing of sketches of their (new) daily routines in the group's WhatsApp gave life to a quarantine notebook. Discussing the output with the group, the notebook materializes the sharing of immobility experiences but also the warmth of home, everyday spaces, moments and feelings they wanted to share with each other. Life cuts of different women mixed up and giving continuity to the collective creation started before the forced immobilization of bodies and lives. A collective construction of intimacy and also an open window for the future to come.

In each of these projects, and many others in the exhibition, creative practice is a research method through which both artwork and new social insights are co-produced (see also Southern 2012).

Through expertly staged events visual and theatrical methods enable connections to be made, and discussion to flow around emerging and often invisible or unspoken im/mobilities.

Proposition 3: Visualising and Making Things Public

Visual research methods have made an important contribution to the social sciences over the past 20 years, for Harper:

... the world that is seen, photographed, drawn or otherwise represented visually is different than the world that is represented through words and numbers. As a result, visual sociology leads to new understandings and insights because it connects to different realities than do conventional empirical research methods (Harper 2012, 4)

However, as Rose suggests, there is a tension between visual research methods that make the social visible, and those that focus on visual materials and cultures (Rose 2014, 32). Within mobilities research 'vision in motion' (Buscher 2006) becomes important, for instance through explorative journeys and mobile painting studios, (Merriam and Webster 2009), or for live drawing and mapping to engage people on-the-move while negotiating infrastructural complexities of transnational mobility and migration (Hieslmair and Zinganel 2018), and for envisioning the difficult to grasp, such as futures or networks (Kjaerulff et al 2018).

In Clare Booker's work the airport is conceived of and represented through the fractured juxtapositions made possible through collage, in part as an allegory for the way that airports bring together normally distant entities that coalesce momentarily in passing. The airport as collage is a new analytical perspective that enables visual, spatial, media communications and travel to be drawn together in new and critical arrangements.



Figure 3: Close up of *Blood Journey*, by Stephanie Sodero (top left); *Para-Site-Seeing* by Rod Dillon and Southern (bottom left); *Pandemic Airport*, by Clare Booker (right).

CLARE BOOKER - *Pandemic Airport*

Pandemic Airport is a practice-based project, which explores the visual impact of coronavirus on airports, through creative methods. This series of drawings and collages has been generated through appropriating and collaging images from media sources documenting the pandemic in 2020 / 2021. The focus of the work is to investigate how the airport now looks and feels for both the people who work there and for the passengers who occupy the space. The work aims to prompt questions about what airports and air travel may look like post pandemic. How will our spatial experience and movement in the space be affected? There are visual clues to how the impact of social distancing is changing the appearance and layout of the airport terminal, through new and increased signage. In the images produced,

the airport workers have become the most prominent figures in the space, occupying the vast and relatively empty terminals, wearing personal protective equipment. Once travellers begin slowly returning to the airport as restrictions ease, the spaces will become increasingly occupied and dense with activity. However, post pandemic the airport will undoubtedly look and feel very different. Through further visual investigations I intend to continue observing and recording this transformed space.

Developing this idea that collage can be a metaphor for the assembled nature of airport life, visualisation also enables new encounters with complex networks of movement. Rod Dillon and Jen Southern research micro-mobilities by taking on the perspective of their research subject, using a fictional parasite's eye view to make new connections between scientific, historical and social research about a disease that has impact across vast changes of spatial and temporal scale. Through this creative mobilities practice they engage scientific researchers in telling stories about the intertwined mobilities of their subjects and practices, and make them visible and approachable for a wider audience:

ROD DILLON and JEN SOUTHERN – *Para-Site-Seeing: Departure Lounge*

This art-science collaboration explores the deadly mobilities of the *Leishmania* parasite that has travelled for millions of years between humans, dogs and other animals using sand flies as their mode of transport and exploiting conflict to move between continents. By focusing on movement we see the parasite at multiple scales and entangled with bodies, histories and travel. Movement on scales from the microscopic in human cells, to global invasions of war and colonialism, and on temporal scales from the pre-historic to the present day. Meanwhile in the lab strains of the parasite have been isolated and bred for research, living in colonies 'out of body' in flasks and cryogenic suspension.

Para-site-seeing endeavours to tell these complex stories through travel metaphors, taking on a 'para-site-eye view' to tell an accessible and coherent narrative. This shift in perspective encourages the viewer to engage with the lifecycle of the

parasite in new ways, and by identifying with this ‘voice’ to explore the lifespans of the *Leishmania*, the sand fly and their life in the lab. As a disease leishmaniasis is usually depicted with images of suffering and disfigured bodies, by refusing this often ‘othering’ and neo-colonial narrative, we strive to generate new ways of engaging a wider audience with life-saving research.

Visual storytelling from the perspective of the mobile research subject also enables Stephanie Sodero to follow the perspective of a drop of blood. Here the visualisation follows a complex network of movement, to produce a different understanding of the multiple interdependent factors in blood donation, that can be difficult to describe in a concise and accessible way.

STEPHANIE SODERO – Blood Journey

How does blood move from the point of donation to the point of care? This is the focus of a scroll illustration that artist Jack Brougham and I co-created. The story follows the complex journey of a drop of donated blood, depicting the mobilities of medical supply chains, and the impacts of climate change on vital mobilities. This ‘follow the thing’ research goes beyond a human-centred perspective to trace the complex journey of donated blood. The method surfaces overlooked connections, complexities, and vulnerabilities between people, infrastructures, and environments. Based on my fieldwork – interviews, facility tours, document analysis – I developed fictionalised vignettes that emphasise the role of mobility in blood donation. There are countless routes blood can take, but I wanted to tell a specific story. The narrative arc involves testing and processing of a blood donation, flying red blood cells by air ambulance to the site of a car crash, and a patient receiving a blood transfusion. Follow the thing permits researchers, stakeholders, and the public to understand processes that are unapparent, as well as to explore and emphasise novel themes. In this case, the unique perspective draws connections between broader societal issues of medical supply chains and climate change.

These forms of creative practice-based research often include long periods of visual ethnographic research, observation and analysis. The conclusions of this analysis are produced in a primarily

Visualisation can also bring together multiple aspects of a problem in one powerful narrative image that articulates a central dilemma, in this case about identity, and invites the audience into the problem.

CHARLIE RUMSBY - *I Am Cambodian, birth certificates*

A person who is ‘effectively stateless’ (Bhabha 2011) is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law. In Cambodia, statelessness is said to be endemic among communities of Vietnamese descent who have lived in Cambodia for generations but have lost documentation during periods of civil war, the Khmer Rouge period and periodic confiscation of existing documents by authorities. Often living in poverty, excluded from essential services, and unable to prove identity, they are characterised as ‘illegal’ migrants.

My research found that Cambodian women who lost identity documents during periods of war and genocide, and are married to Vietnamese men, had their husband’s ethnic identity conferred onto them, and their children, by the State. Without identity documents getting Cambodian citizenship is difficult. Thus, the cycle of statelessness continues.

I collaborated with illustrator Ben Thomas to capture the emotional labour and power dynamics of interactions with the state. The inclusion of a desk, character’s facial expressions, and text, invite the viewer into processes of boundary making and exclusion. The viewer is invited to see the power dynamics between the administrators and those at the mercy of their judgement, to feel this discrimination, and participate in theoretical discussions regarding power, justice and exclusion.

Proposition 4: Engagements with environment and landscape

Artists have been entwined in the histories of travel, exploration, and landscape for centuries. The mobilities turn highlighted how previous assumptions of how humans experience movement, in particular the obvious examples of travel and tourism, are based on deep, Westernised stereotypes

of being in ‘nature’ and gazing at the Other. What Urry’s landmark writings on the tourist gaze (Urry and Larsen 2011) brought to the fore was a new vocabulary of how to think beyond the individual traveller, to embrace the multiple actors (human and nonhuman) that are enrolled into all forms of mobility and scales. Early creative explorations on the intersection of travel and mobilities focused on infrastructural sites that stage mobilities, such as the airport (e.g. Fuller and Harvey 2004), but evolving through mobilities research has been the performative and embodied experiences of being mobile in nature, and how landscapes move us as humans (e.g. Myers 2011). To add layers to these understandings, we can also draw from creative methods related to critical, vernacular and counter-cartographies (e.g. Gerlach 2013; Ramsey 2008) to explore the potentials of mapping and art as counter narratives. Although maps have operated as key materials in the production of the territorial model of the nation state and in the current assemblage of border infrastructure, artistic and counter-cartographic methods can be used to produce alternative and collaborative narratives (e.g. Mekdjian 2015). There are too many studies to name, but in what follows, the creative researchers tease out the long standing fascination with and contestation of geographical power relations and the role of the environment, whether urban, industrial, regional, or ‘wild’.

Nick Ferguson’s series of walks around Heathrow Airport at the start of the pandemic illustrates through photographic and video documentation the momentous pause and disruption to the assumed dominant systems of global participation and exchange, which the desolate airport landscape so boldly manifests. In a similar contemplation to Clare Booker’s mediations of the ‘new normal’ rhythms of these hybrid, industrialised, and commercial spaces, Nick Ferguson’s works take us on a tour of new framings, gazings, and contemplations of these assumed ‘connective’ spaces of a mobility landscape.

NICK FERGUSON - *Penumbra. Six Pandemic Walks in and around Heathrow Airport*

How is the pandemic remaking the Heathrow landscape? During the lockdowns of 2020, I would regularly leave home for exercise, walking around neighbourhoods made strange by the times. As an artist who explores transport infrastructure, and whose professional trajectory is bound up with my own mobility, I wanted to witness the confrontation between the vectors of global mobility and those of its coronavirus

counterpoint, and to find early signs of how my status as an artist was being reconfigured.

Airports have long been objects of critical investigation by artists. In the cultural imaginary, from at least the mid twentieth century until the new millennium, they provided shared metaphors for emergent time, ways of collectively picturing the continual creation of new meanings, values, practices, and relationships. Their temporal advantage was a function of the experience of speed and connectivity, of things quite literally arriving sooner.

While no longer quite figures for the future, values and practices which airports have nurtured nevertheless live on in systems of international cultural exchange: museum loans, artist residency programmes, art fairs and biennials. If artists, such as I, continue to explore airports, it is to pick through the debris of these entanglements, and rescue what is still serviceable.



Figure 5: Screenshot of *Penumbra*, by Nick Ferguson (left); close up of *Collages from confinement*, by Aryana Soliz (right).

Drawing on the new landscapes of immobility that the pandemic lockdowns produced, Aryana

Soliz's collages that were created by mother and a one-year old child, are a visual mapping of isolation and immobility. Similar to Catarina Sales Oliveira's collaborative work, Soliz's shared spaces of the interior and domestic attempt to look out from within, to prompt questions of how to imagine environmental futures in cityscapes of the future.

ARYANA SOLIZ - *Collages from confinement*

These collages were sparked at a time of disquiet, fragmentation and confined creativity. They began by gathering the only materials we could find around the house during pandemic-induced lockdowns—public-health flyers, crayons, food wrappers, old magazines, calendars—and embrace the imperfections and messiness of this media. They are about (not) making do under challenging circumstances, lamenting lost family members, solitude, grief, confusion, care, love, reuse and tiny sparks of imagination. Assembled from the rubble of domestic confinement, these images encourage engagement with repurposed everyday objects and the intimate lifeworlds of sorrow and hope.

Staying home is undeniably an immense privilege—one that is differentially afforded and experienced according to a variety of socio-spatial inequalities. The politics and practice of confinement can thus become a liminal space of reflection on issues ranging from devalued labours and vaccine inequity, to the foreclosure and sanitization of play.

These images invite reflections that extend beyond pandemic parenting to also consider issues of environmental justice and children's rights to the city as an integral part of new mobility discussions. How can we better acknowledge the pandemic's ongoing power asymmetries and work towards meaningful forms of repair as we attempt to reimagine healthier and more liveable futures?

A different aesthetic approach to landscape is shaped in Suzy Blondin's video work *The Bartang Roads*. Taking the viewer on an ethnographic journey, the video teases out the treacherous mobilities that span pedestrian, auto, and watery river flows in this mountainous landscape.

SUZY BLONDIN - *The Bartang roads*

Full of potholes, often flooded, sometimes blocked by snow. The rocks fall, the sand flows down. The legs hurt, the vehicles break down. The sun is strong, the path is steep, oxygen becomes scarce.

The Bartang roads promise a challenging trip, regardless of the form of transportation you choose. The only car road necessitates constant maintenance, made with local means and local forces, prompting residents to engage with matters and elements in an intimate way, and making them take risks, too. Some have lost a sister, a mother or a son in the turbulent waters of the Bartang River, which overflows and violently embraces the road.

The Bartangis have become dependent on automobility, yet the motorization is so low, fares are high, and they may have to wait for days or weeks before finding a seat in a shared car.

Bartang maraw, ki roh-i Bartang khatar ast, “Don’t go to Bartang, because the road to Bartang is dangerous” is a well-known saying throughout Tajikistan’s Pamir Mountains. Such warning suggests the many difficulties posed by the trip, but it also limits flows and allows to preserve the tranquility of the Valley, which many residents call *panohgoh*, a refuge.



Figure 6: Screenshot of *On the Bartang roads*, by Suzy Blondin (top); *Earth*, by Max Schleser and Martin K Koszolko (bottom).

The visible motion captured in Suzy Blondin's footage shakes and jars the viewers travelling along with the participants. In a similar exploration of visual mobilities, Max Schleser and Martin K Koszolko use remixing and streamlining of the visuals to bring different scales of movement into focus in their video work, titled *Earth*.

MAX SCHLESER and MARTIN K KOSZOLKO - *Earth*

The two authors of this experimental micro-movie are creative practitioners who engage with the environment and landscape with the use of mobile technologies. Max Schleser is a smartphone filmmaker and Martin K Koszolko is a composer using mobile music apps and portable recorders. *Earth* aims to contribute to a better understanding of environmental issues from a micro and personal perspective.

The video juxtaposes the city's night with its artificial energy and the natural calmness of the sunrise. The experimental smartphone film concludes with a focus on the minuscule that we often overlook and seem to have devalued.

Mobile music making technologies afford the creation of musical pieces in conversation with the landscape and environment. The use of handheld mobile equipment with an array of recording and sound manipulation options, allows for sampling of natural soundscapes and rapid music and video creation in natural settings.

A smartphone might not be the most sustainable technology, but it is the most accessible camera, audio manipulation and storytelling device. If we can reconnect to nature through creativity, mobile storytelling can contribute to the development of environmental literacy. Mobile film and music making demonstrate that screen stories, sound and artworks can be produced with limited resources.

Environmental concerns, apocalyptic visions, and time-bending imagery in *Earth* urges us to consider the multi-scalar ways that we conceptualise and re-present human relationships with the Earth. Themes of environmental care, attention, and action, are of course not unique or exclusive to creative mobilities research, but rather are borrowing from and feeding into practice-based work in the arts and humanities more broadly. However, it is the multiple scales that a mobilities lens brings into sharp relief, where the environment is never enfolded into binaries between nature and culture, human and nonhuman, and so on. Aleksandra Ianchenko's work *Invisible Tramline* highlights the creation of an urban landscape through transportation infrastructures and grand narratives of progress and development, which were unrealised.



Figure 7: Close up of *Invisible Tramline*, by Aleksandra Ianchenko (left); *Lockdown in Lancaster and Morecambe*, by Louise Ann Wilson (right).

ALEKSANDRA IANCHENKO - *Invisible Tramline*

The atmosphere of such missing urban mobilities can be sensed along the Laagna road, the main transportation channel in the Soviet bloc-building' district of Lasnamäe in Tallinn, Estonia. The road was cut through the limestone crust, and due to the massive stone walls on each side of it, the road is unofficially called "Laagna canal". Two of those bridges which cross 'the canal' have stairs which lead to the broad space in the middle of the road. They lead to the unbuilt platform of the tramline which was planned for the Laagna road but never realized. However, the idea of the tramline persists in people's memory, and the Laagna road is punctuated by the invisible tramline.

Fascinated by the story of the non-existing yet remembered tramline, artist Aleksandra Ianchenko together with Tauri Tuvikene, Andrei Kedrin, and Jegor Sevastjanov [3] went exploring the space which was dedicated for tram tracks. They wanted to activate this space by their bodily movement, to sense and re-enact the missing tramline. In order to do so, they chose a particular walking mode – skiing. By sliding on the snow surface of the road, they left traces by their skies like engineers who once drew a tramline on transport plans for Lasnamäe.

LOUISE ANN WILSON - *Lockdown in Lancaster and Morecambe: Walk, Run, Pedal, Push, Map*

The project began during the lockdown of Spring-Summer 2020, when during her one hour of permitted daily exercise, Louise found and followed new paths that took her to parts of her hometown of Lancaster, UK that she previously had not known were there or explored. Over time, she became more aware of how the city connected and where tracks, waterways and roads met and crossed. The pull of fresh air, warm sunshine or the whip of the wind was as irresistible as the need to stretch her legs and body, clear her mind and have some physical, spiritual, and mental breathing space was necessary. Realising she was not alone in discovering her immediate surroundings she invited others to join her in recording their lockdown routes and create a collective map.

By the end of July 2020 over forty participants captured their runs/walks/rides via mapping platforms and in analogue by drawing maps. Working via Zoom with her brother,[4] the maps were combined into one moving-image that builds week-by-week to show how routes accumulated and grew over the four and a half months of lockdown. As well as making a collective map the project connected friends and strangers alike in a shared endeavour and created a temporary community linked through shared paths and breathing spaces.

From Aleksandra Ianchenko's re-tracing of unfinished transport mobilities, Louise Ann Wilson's collaborative work *Lockdown in Lancaster and Morecambe* sought to chart and trace individual mobilities in a way that would be familiar to many scholars who are not necessarily working creatively. Like many studies in which mobile methods embrace wearable technologies, GPS, and other forms of digital charting of space (Farman 2012; MacDonald 2014; Hjorth et al. 2020), Wilson's work brings together a collective and unifying record of slower, personal mobilities. In a period when isolation and distance were magnified, this work is different in its tracing of paths that were made alone, rather than in a world teaming with other activity.

Proposition 5: Materiality

Sheller and Urry (2006) identify situations of mobility and immobility in the movement of *people*,

materials, vehicles, virtual and media mobilities, and it is the materiality of each of these kinds of mobility that we return to here. Artists train themselves to manipulate materials in both physical and digital ways. It is in that material knowledge, or through that ‘hands on’ knowing by doing that artists are able to do research that engages with the academic (conceptual) materialities, and the practical making process.

In the 1960’s the artist Allan Kaprow, following American philosopher John Dewey’s *Art as Experience*, used the idea that ‘doing is knowing’ to describe his participatory art ‘happenings’ (Kelley 1993, xxiv). To understand something through making and doing has subsequently been referred to as a ‘designerly way of knowing’ (Cross 2010); articulations of prototypes as examples of design-in-use (Suchman et al. 2002); descriptions of making the future palpable in design practice (Büscher et al. 2007); and through practices of collective experimentation (Felt and Wynne 2007). It is this sense of knowing about materiality through the experience of making that we apply to the mobilities paradigm here. Through distance and communication as a creative material in the collaboration of Gudrun Filipiska and Carly Butler that are shaped and manipulated to enable textured forms of communication that go way beyond the screen.



Figure 8: Screenshot of *S Project*, by Gudrun Filipaska and Carly Butler (left); *out of isolation came forth light*, by Tess Baxter (top right); *Oracle*, by Heidi Wood (lower right).

GUDRUN FILIPSKA and CARLY BUTLER - *S Project*

The first transatlantic wireless signal sent from Cornwall to Newfoundland in 1901 was simply the morse code signal for the letter 'S'. Tracked by pedometers, our steps around our domestic locations are translated to a digital map where our 'avatar markers' walk carefully designed routes between the Fens UK and Ucluelet Canada.

We have mapped a variety of half-way points between our homes using celestial, nautical and gnomonic mapping techniques. Walking long distances without leaving home is a physical expression of our current limitations as artists/parents and works with an ambivalence towards assumed identities generated around motherhood and caring responsibility.

We have also exchanged letters, artworks and objects exploring the political signification of local matter and the micro-mobilities of soil, seawater and microbes which travel in our stead. Gudrun Filipaska sent black soil from her home in the Fens. Carly Butler living in Ucluelet on the traditional territory of the Yuułuꞑilꞑath First Nation, felt it inappropriate to send land-bound matter, instead sending seawater, which felt 'neutral'. Seawater was passed back and forth. The return of the water to its original territories has become part of the project's performative mobile methodology as well as a gesture of reparation, offering the salt and cyanotype prints to the First Nations communities along the coastlines.

Relationships between digital and physical space have predominantly been studied in relation to the mobilities of locative media, mobile storytelling and mobile media (Farman 2012, Southern 2015, Hjorth et al 2020, Aceti et al. 2016). The material manipulation and engagement of virtual and imaginative mobilities of Tess Baxter's videos approaches this intersection from a very different perspective, as a creative participant immersed in the virtual worlds of Second Life, embodied digital mobilities are rehearsed and performed collaboratively between bodies at a distance brought together in virtual mobilities.

TESS BAXTER - *out of isolation came forth light*

Out of Isolation and into Supernova 2020 is a video of my video art showing in Denver as part of the Supernova Digital Animation Festival, and reflects the changed form of mobility through that time – immobile and mobile and connected. The avatars on screen, are recordings of virtual bodies moving in the virtual world of Second Life, but they represent actual bodies, breathing human beings, chatting, using text and controlling virtual movements with their hands.

Indeed *out of isolation came forth light* was ‘filmed’ at an event in virtual space, held at the art exhibition *isolation* (2020). Here isolation was inverted – the outside world isolated in towers navigable with one’s virtual body, while one’s actual body was isolated. In Denver, CapCat’s virtualised form dances, while being present in the actual world as Catarina Carneiro de Sousa (2021), a Portuguese artist and researcher. She is not immobile, having created the work in one space, shared and transferred it to another, where I picked it up and reworked it, which was then reproduced in yet another: a cycling between virtual and actual that reconfigures our sense of im|mobility.

The mobilisation of digital imagery not only provides a rich performative virtual landscape, but is also found in the dance of media representations that Heidi Wood focussed on during the pandemic. The playful and interactive juxtaposition of media images in relation to the intimate and global mobilities of COVID-19 involves the audience in an active deciphering and analysis of the contradictory, challenging, or downright absurd media representations, through a seemingly never ending series of combinations.

HEIDI WOOD - *Oracle*

My artwork is a bilingual (French/English) interactive electronic card game called *Oracle* created during the first lockdown in France. In its imagery and structure, *Oracle* renders the atmosphere of this initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. It reflects the temptation to cling to bogus answers when reality fails to provide certainty. The game works with a set of 400 cards, mostly using imagery pulled off the Internet (a testimony to an immobile period when the computer screen was our

only means of accessing the world). Randomly generated hands of three cards are paired with fortune cookie-type prophecies. These are sometimes absurd, sometimes topical. Viral animations spring out of nowhere. The game can be watched in Oracle-TV mode, with successive hands automatically following on from each other. It is also possible to intervene, following obscure and changing rules that mirror the pandemic itself, to try and influence what the *Oracle* says. While the cards are the same for both versions, the French and English texts are often different, due to varying media representations of the pandemic in French-speaking and English-speaking worlds.

Conclusion

In order to address the im/mobilities that are happening now, and that lay ahead in uncertain, turbulent futures, creative practice must be recognised as playing an important part. Climate change has brought into dialogue species and situations that were previously unknown and hard to fathom, across multiple scales and situations from the microbial to the geologic, and the new mobilities paradigm has exemplified how multi- and transdisciplinary approaches are urgently needed in responsive and progressive inquiry, thought, and practice. It is well established that the role of creative, emergent, speculative, and collaborative approaches are urgently needed to chime in and extend on the scientific endeavours of what ‘we’ should do next (Latour 2018; Serota 2018). As Davis and Turpin describe, ‘finding new approaches to posing problems is the work of both making art and making theory’ (2015, 7). Creative research not only contributes to the development of mobile methods and communication of research, but as a performative, practical and material mode of research also provides a new mobile onto-epistemology (Verran 1998, Barad 2003), in which the practical creative engagement with mobility is where knowledge is generated.

What becomes clear through the creative works described in this article is that they are all firmly placed in specific situations that each bring a range of disciplinary and processual engagements with knowledge of mobility. We have categorised these contributions in five key areas: 1) the use of *sensory methods*, 2) the importance of *co-production and participation*, 3) approaches for *making things public*, 4) engaging with *landscape and environmental* concerns, and 5) the *practical understandings of materiality* in mobilities research. The contributions here go beyond methodological advancement, although indeed, some are rooted deeply in well-worn methods of

mobilities that have borrowed from the social sciences and humanities (Kjaerulff et al. 2018; Witzgall 2013). It is this situated engagement with mobility that runs through all aspects of the creative research: the techniques, philosophies, practices, and the ontological foci on mobilities.

For some of the works discussed here, this research goes beyond representation, to engage with the sensory, visible, participatory, environmental and material of mobilities. For others, it is fascination with the expertise of making and collaboration, as well as observation, analysis, and theorisation. They do this on very different scales: from global travel to intimate micro-mobilities; from changing daily personal routines to large infrastructural hubs. In fact, they observe, analyse, theorise and make this public *through creative practice* and that practical engagement of doing this through media beyond the textual (Barry 2020; Pase et al. 2021; Rumsby 2020) continues to provide alternative modes of capturing, representing, documenting, interpreting, and feeling the energy of mobilities research.

As we have demonstrated, the new mobilities paradigm has evolved in close company with creatives. The plethora of exhibitions, events, books, articles, and more, highlight the immense interest and longstanding involvement of creative practitioners as an integral way of thinking, doing, and understanding mobilities research. Despite this impressive array and engagement with the field of mobilities research, creativity is often an afterthought, a methods or communicative concern, or a subject-matter to be engaged with in and after traditional scholarship. It is rare to find reference to the contribution of the arts and creative practice in mobilities *theory*, or in prominent and well-cited scholarship. These are surely contentious claims we are putting forth. But this is precisely what we would like to open up through our five provocations of how creative research in mobilities has, and will, contribute to the evolving, transdisciplinary field.

Finally, in light of the global events over the past two years, where mobility—and immobility—has been so dramatically positioned as central to life, community, and indeed scholarship, this article has highlighted how many current and recent mobilities projects have directly engaged with this uncertainty in timely, ethical, and collaborative manners. In rapidly changing times it is important that these works are live, responsive and creative processes that grapple with instability that invades personal, private, social and academic professional lives. These practices are uniquely placed to research situations as they unfold, to do analysis in action, and to respond publically in ways that are engaging and affective. To continue to innovate in mobilities research, and be

relevant to face the immobilities and uncertainties that lay ahead, then creative mobilities researchers and practitioners need to be taken seriously, as they are already doing this, bringing a wealth of training, experience and knowledge to ontic-epistemic unfolding and uncertain mobilities.

Notes

[1] The virtual exhibition is available here: <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/art-mobilities/> It was a peer-reviewed selection of recent artworks produced by the authors of this article, curated by lead authors Kaya Barry and Jen Southern. It was launched at the 2021 virtual conference hosted by Northumbria University.

[2] Available at: <https://www.womensjourneyscapes.net/> Funded by the British Academy. Image copyright © Janet Bowstead/Amy/Cordelia/Daisy/Marilyn/Solace Women's Aid.

[3] The work was done within the project “Public transport as public space in European cities: Narrating, experiencing, contesting (PUTSPACE)”.

[4] Technical Mapping by Douglas Andrew Wilson.

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