

## 1. Events

### Event Details

# 2024 Global Mobility Humanities Conference: Mobilities, Aspirations and Affective Futures

### Conférence

**Start date : 24 October 2024 09:00**  
**Date de fin : 26 October 2024 17:00**

**Where : Seoul**

**Hosted by : Academy of Mobility Humanities & Internatinoal Institute for Asian Studies**

### Information sources :

<https://www.mobilityhumanities.net/>

Aspiration has recently entered the lexicon of various branches of mobilities studies. At the individual scale, scholars have examined the ways in which the term has become an important subjective frame for (especially young) migrants to understand their personal mobility projects (Robertson et al., 2018; Paul, 2019). At a broad societal level, others have been concerned with the way aspiration has been deployed by capital, urban managers and state actors to undergird various political and economic agendas, such as in diasporic formations, infrastructures, technologies, and (urban) future imagineering. Writing about creative labour, Jian Lin (2019), for example, argues that the identification of a 'new' transnational Chinese workforce engaged in the arts and cultural industries is umbilically tied to state aspiration to use creativity as the next growth engine for the economy (see also Ho, 2011). Elsewhere, the building of flagship airports and the parade of gleaming aircraft at airshows have long been considered a tactic to conflate infrastructures and technologies with symbols of aspirational modernity (Bok, 2015; Fritzsche, 1992; Koch, 2010).

Aspiration is, in this sense, a productive currency that can radically shape mobilities. More than that, it does so on an exceptionally broad, if sometimes indeterminable, time horizon and loop, invoking different temporalities that necessarily span the present (hope), past (contrast) and future (expectation). As Lin et al. (2023) argue, aspiration seeks to project that which is enchanting and magical forward in time, and promises a (hegemonic) future of what is good and desirable (see also Knox and Harvey, 2012). It carves out a problem space to be (re)solved and mended, making mobilities of the now and then in (urgent) need of remedial actions narrowly defined through certain prescriptions, instruments and courses of action. From moral concerns like the climate crisis, to the elevation of technology and automation, to the introduction of certain debt and financing mechanisms (like in the Belt and Road Initiative), mobilities are moulded by forces that are typically

already imbued with highly contentious meaning and politics that deserve further unpacking.

Concomitantly, aspiration is also a highly affective idea and concept. It entrains a series of evocative values revolving around dreams, desires, longing, yearning, breakthroughs, redemption and emancipation. In this context, it is no surprise that the language of development – especially with regards to infrastructure building – is often laced with expressive tropes of triumphant arrivals, new identities and ‘mythologies of the future’ (Datta, 2019). In colonial times, examples in this regard can be found in the way various transport technologies were affectively mobilised to rally people. Foster’s (2005) work on the Cape-to-Rand railway in South Africa, for instance, exactly depicts a dramaturgic sense of (White) aspiration and destiny inscribed onto the bodies of, and narratives surrounding, the train. Indeed, as Appel et al. (2018: 26) aver, mobility ‘[i]nfrastructures excite affects and sentiment’. How and whether these affects do eventually emerge, amid fleeting urges of hope, expectation and disappointment, is potentially another realm of (micro)politics for further interrogation (see Bissell, 2016; Bosworth, 2023).

This conference invites proposals from different disciplines within mobility studies, including, but not limited to: literary and cultural studies, philosophy, history, art and design studies, anthropology, geography, media and communication, architecture, urban planning, technology, tourism, transportation, education, Black and Indigenous studies, gender and sexuality studies, and others. It will present an opportunity for scholars to share their ideas and inquiries at the intersection of mobilities studies and humanities, transcending the conventional divide between the social sciences and humanities and the arts.

## **Practical informations :**

Co-Organised by

The Internatioal Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a global humanities and social sciences research institute and knowledge exchange platform that supports programmes which engage Asian and other international partners. IIAS aims to contribute to a better and more integrated understanding of present-day Asian realities as well as to rethink ‘Asian Studies’ in a changing global context. IIAS works to encourage dialogue and link expertise, involving scholars and other experts from all around the world in its activities. IIAS is located in Leiden, the Netherlands. Originally established (1993) by the Dutch Ministry of Education as an inter-university institute, IIAS today is based at Leiden University, where it works as a globally oriented interdisciplinary institute with strong connections throughout the Netherlands, Europe, Asia and beyond.

The Academy of Mobility Humanities (AMH) of Konkuk University intends to create innovative research platforms to deal with the development of mobility technology, the daily movement of things, and their connected issues. The AMH is the leading research institute for Humanities Korea Plus (HK+), supported by the National Research Foundation since 2018. The AMH hosts the annual GMHC. The AMH attempts to help to cultivate a better society for humanities-based thinking. In doing so, we aim to become one of the main representative institutes of mobility research internationally, which also fosters new researchers. The AMH continues to evolve as a center from where mobility-focused research engages practical as well as scholarly questions that are planetary in scope.

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) at National University of Singapore has a rich history going back from the year 1929 to present day, complementing its diverse subjects offered to its students. Initially having only four subjects (English, History, Geography and Economics); the Faculty has now grown to accommodate 16 departments with a variety of subject combinations to suit an individual's interest and expertise. Its mission is to contribute to society through the advancement of knowledge and learning in the humanities and social sciences. The FASS mission comprises three parts. It emphasises a) advancement of knowledge through research, b) advancement of learning through education, and c) service to society.

## **Mobility**

For the Mobile Lives Forum, mobility is understood as the process of how individuals travel across distances in order to deploy through time and space the activities that make up their lifestyles. These travel practices are embedded in socio-technical systems, produced by transport and communication industries and techniques, and by normative discourses on these practices, with considerable social, environmental and spatial impacts.

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## **Movement**

Movement is the crossing of space by people, objects, capital, ideas and other information. It is either oriented, and therefore occurs between an origin and one or more destinations, or it is more akin to the idea of simply wandering, with no real origin or destination.

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