Supported by the Cultural Significance of Place Research Group

The Politics of Mobilities Design

A Research Workshop

2 - 5pm 15th April, 2015
Exhibition Area, 4th Floor Claremont Tower
Newcastle University

Attendance is free and open to all

Please register at http://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=7655

This research workshop brings together recent research on mobilities technologies affording vertical mobilities (e.g. lifts/elevators, escalators, drones). The workshop explores the interconnectedness of specific design solutions and decisions with the underpinning rationalities of movement and identifies mundane mobilities technologies as expressions of a 'politics of design'.

The workshop addresses a series of questions:

- How are social stratifications inscribed into material design decisions and interventions as an expression of the 'politics of mobilities design'?
- How are professionals and disciplinary bodies of knowledge framing the 'politics of mobilities design'?
- What theoretical framing will most adequately afford a deeper understanding of the 'politics of mobilities design'?
- Which methods may most adequately afford a deeper understanding of the 'politics of mobilities design'?

The aim of the workshop is to bring researchers with an interest in the nexus between urban studies, power, design, architecture, planning and mobilities into a closer conversation of the emerging research field termed 'mobilities design'.

This workshop will in particular put focus on the 'political' aspects related to mobilities design. The empirical cases will focus on the hereto now less theorized dimension of vertical mobilities. The workshop will end with a plenary discussion of further research and collaboration.
Timetable

1.45 - 2pm Coffee

2 - 2.10pm **Introduction**: Professor Geoff Vigar, Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University

2.10 - 2.40pm **The escalator: Reflections on the politics of vertical mobilities design**: Professor Ole B. Jensen, Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology, Aalborg University

2.40 - 3.10pm **The good, the bad and the merely idiotic: Moral orders on the road**: Dr Eric Laurier, Geography Department, Edinburgh University and Pentti Haddington (University of Oulu)

3.10 - 3.30pm Coffee

3.30 - 4pm **Super-tall and ultra-deep: The vertical politics of the elevator**: Professor Stephen Graham, Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University

4.00 – 4.30pm **Designing privilege and privileging design: An exploration of differently mobile bodies**: Dr Jayne Jeffries, Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University

4.30 - 5.15pm Plenary discussion
ABSTRACTS

The Escalator: Reflections on the politics of vertical mobilities design

Professor Ole B. Jensen (Aalborg University)

This presentation will connect a research interest into mobile situations and the way they are ‘staged’ by design as well as by individual’s preferences to the material design and layout of such spaces. The presentation sets off in the work published in the two books ‘Staging Mobilities’ (Routledge, 2013) and ‘Designing Mobilities’ (Aalborg University Press, 2014). From this theory framing the presenter argues for an emerging research field we may term ‘mobilities design’. In this presentation we aim to illustrate how the field of mobilities design connects not only to the staging of moving bodies and the choice of materials and design decisions, but equally how this connects to political decisions of accessibility/inaccessibility and power. The specific empirical focus of today’s talk will be the escalator since this also allows for further reflections on the importance of including vertical mobilities in the analysis (inspired by the work of Graham). The presentation ends with some concluding reflections and perspectives for further research and development within the field of mobilities design.

The good, the bad and the merely idiotic: Moral orders on the road

Eric Laurier (University of Edinburgh) & Pentti Haddington (University of Oulu)

In this talk we aim to re-specify Jack Katz’s (1999) explanations of road rage as variously: dealing with identity threats, the differences between the driver’s and the passenger’s embodied experience of being “cut-off” by other cars and the work of generalising accomplished in swearing at other drivers (see Katz 1999, p. 33). We draw upon work which has used membership categorisation analysis (MCA) to consider visual organisation and mobility (Lee & Watson 1993). More explicitly, we explore the link between categorisation practices and sequential contexts of interaction (cf. Stokoe, 2012) in relation to mobile actions on the road. The analysis focuses on events during which drivers express their anger or annoyance with other road users through complaints (see e.g. Drew, 1998; Stokoe & Edwards, 2009), assessments or ‘insults’ with certain freedoms because these are “unhearables”. The data come from the Habitable Cars video corpus of natural driving situations, collected in Britain in the early 2000s. The talk will present the following findings: First, drivers’ and passengers’ angry outbursts at other road users involve two related forms of categorisation. They involve the category relevancing of mobile actions in traffic in which other drivers are, for example, ‘cutting in’, ‘speeding’, ‘running a red light’. Building from the analysis of other car’s actions, there are two membership categorisation devices that collect their category-bound activities as 1) evil and intentionally acting against the good of the traffic; and 2) ignorant and accidentally acting against the good of the traffic. Second, the driver’s categorisations of other drivers are rarely contested by passengers; instead, drivers are more likely to receive affiliative rather than disaffiliative responses. In several cases the passenger produces a choral response to the other driver’s actions. In other words, categorisation as a practice is collaborative in ways not captured by Katz. Third, the driver and passenger’s categorisation work orients toward, formulates and judges claims and entitlements to undertaking courses of mobile action, and therefore it lends support to previous claims that category work – describing, inferring and judging others – is pervasive in everyday life and embedded in a moral order (Jayyusi, 1984). Therefore, membership categorisation analysis brings with it ethnomethodology’s orientation to social order as, not only locally intelligible but also, establishing a local moral order. In this case a moral order of the road generated by its mobile members.
Super-tall and ultra-deep: The vertical politics of the elevator

Professor Stephen Graham (Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University)

Entire libraries can be filled with volumes exploring the cultures, politics and geo-graphies of the largely horizontal mobilities and transportation infrastructures that are intrinsic to urban modernity (highways, railways, subways, public transit and so on). And yet the recent ‘mobilities turn’ has almost completely neglected the cultural geographies and politics of vertical transportation within and between the buildings of vertically-structured cityscapes. Attempting to rectify this neglect, this article seeks, first, to bring elevator travel centrally into discussions about the cultural politics of urban space and, second, to connect elevator urbanism to the even more neglected worlds of elevator-based descent in ultra-deep mining. The article addresses, in turn: the historical emergence of elevator urbanism; the cultural significance of the elevator as spectacle; the global ‘race’ in elevator speed; shifts towards the ‘splintering’ of elevator experiences; experiments with new mobility systems which blend elevators and automobiles; problems of vertical abandonment; and, finally, the neglected vertical politics of elevator-based ‘ultra-deep’ mining.

Designing privilege and privileging design: An exploration of differently mobile bodies

Dr Jayne Jeffries (Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University)

In identifying the various ways that people and things move, how movement takes place and by which modes, a more detailed exploration reveals that a certain kind of able-bodied mobility dominates the mobilities literature. In this paper I argue that geographies of privilege, which emphasise the role of power relations in the (re)production of social and cultural barriers in the built environment, often deem who is ‘out of place’ (Kitchin, 1998). Firstly, I show that mobilities of privilege often overshadow the ‘other’ mobilities of disabled people through practices of designing privilege, exclusionary processes that create auto-disabling spaces (Imrie, 2012) and emphasise bi-ped privilege (Hansen, 2014). Secondly, I argue that the complexities of differently mobile bodies go unnoticed because “fragile entanglement[s] of physical movement, representations and practices” (Cresswell, 2010: 160) privilege normal modes of moving and movement. By privileging design I show that a more careful and gentle consideration of user-led collaborative approaches have the potential to break down hierarchical power relations, re-centring and re-valuing disabled people in mobilities design. As such these new geographies of privilege provide a theoretical framework that challenges disabilities as marginal subject positions and repositions the place of differently mobile bodies within the politics of mobilities design.
Biographies

**Ole B. Jensen** is Professor of Urban Theory at the Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology, Aalborg University (Denmark). He holds a BA in Political Science, an MA in Sociology and a PhD in Planning, and the Technical Doctoral degree (Dr. Techn.) in Mobilities. He is co-founder and Deputy Director at the Center for Mobilities and Urban Studies (C-MUS), Aalborg and founder of the Research Cluster for Mobility and Tracking Technology (MoTT) and the Mobilities Design Group (MDG) both at C-MUS. His main research interests are within Urban Mobilities and Urban Networked Technologies. He is the co-author of Making European Space. Mobility, Power and Territorial Identity, Routledge, 2004 (with Tim Richardson), and author of Staging Mobilities, Routledge, 2013, and Designing Mobilities, 2014, Aalborg University Press.

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**Dr Eric Laurier** is Senior Lecturer in Geography and Interaction at the University of Edinburgh. Currently he is working on how human relationships are initiated, maintained and repaired during everyday encounters. He has written extensively on mobility, public space and technology. His approach to understanding social action and practical reasoning is based in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. Across a series of projects he has collaborated with researchers in human computer interaction and design informatics.

**Stephen Graham** is a scholar and author who researches cities and urban life. He is Professor of Cities and Society at Newcastle University's School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape. Prof. Graham has an interdisciplinary background linking human geography, urbanism and the sociology of technology. He uses this to explore the political aspects of infrastructure, mobility, digital media, surveillance, security and militarism emphasising, in particular, how these work to shape contemporary cities and urban life. His books include 'Telecommunications and the City', 'Splintering Urbanism' (both with Simon Marvin), 'Cities, War and Terrorism,' 'Disrupted Cities: When Infrastructures Fail', 'Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism'. And 'Infrastructural Lives' (with Colin McFarlane). Prof Graham’s latest research focuses on the political aspects of verticality. A book on this theme -- ‘Vertical: Sewers, Skyscrapers, Satellites (and Everything in Between) (Verso) -- is currently in preparation.

**Dr Jayne Jeffries** is a Research Associate in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University, working in the Culture Lab on a three-year EPSRC-funded MyPlace, which is examining the way that mobilities, disabilities and (older) age change over time. Using participatory and feminist approaches to research, her work involves developing appropriate ethical practices and engaging with participants to understand their disabilities, health conditions and illnesses in everyday life. Jayne completed her PhD ‘Becoming Disabled’ in Human Geography in the Geography Department at Durham University (2014) using qualitative, creative and exploratory methodologies to enable disabled people as decision-makers and collaborators in the research process. Jayne is interested in developing participatory user-led collaborative methodologies and integrating accessible digital tools and technologies into universal design practices to support multiple registers of communication within the sensorium.