

Pandemic (Im)mobilities: Introduction to the Pandemic (Im)Mobilities Special Issue

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As the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus swept around the world in 2020, outpacing public health efforts to contain it, many everyday human mobilities were brought to an abrupt halt, while others were drastically reorganized. Viral mobilities have unleashed not just a disruption of human mobilities, but also a vast intensification of existing uneven relations of (im)mobilities. Critical mobilities studies range from the microscopic scales of viral mobilities that hitch a ride on human movement (Lavau 2013; see also Jensen, this Issue), to the macroscale planetary mobilities of the Anthropocene (Szerszynski 2016). In this Special Issue on ‘Pandemic (Im)mobilities’ we have invited leading contributors in the field of mobilities studies to address the multiple issues generated by the pandemic’s relation to complex (im)mobilities at many scales, as well as deeper theoretical issues that arise when we consider the pandemic from a critical mobilities approach.

In the face of a pandemic normal social practices are disrupted, and new material assemblages and temporal patterns emerge. Many people stopped going out to work (unless deemed essential) while others were sent back to rural villages or distant countries; children were kept home from school and struggled to learn online; many businesses closed their doors while others had to reorganize their work processes; airplanes stopped flying, airports emptied, and cruise ships were turned away from ports as borders closed; factories stopped churning out inessential products, and the global shipment of goods slowed to a trickle. On the heels of this global slow down there was also a shift towards many new patterns and kinds of mobilities: essential workers getting to their jobs, streets being opened for biking and walking, evacuations and repatriations of travelers returning from abroad – some soon regretting it as they escaped straight back into a worse crisis, while others were ostracized in the process of returning such as those repatriated to Ukraine from Wuhan province. New logistical processes had to be created to re-fill grocery store shelves, increase delivery services to people’s homes, rapidly expand online learning and telemedicine, and keep informal economies afloat in sprawling global cities.

As each affected region in turn has imposed social distancing measures and lockdowns on travel, some people – those who are privileged enough to have safe and secure homes - find themselves confined to their homes in which they must re-assemble the means of work, health, reproduction, and ultimately survival. Yet for many others, the disruptions to life, the economic consequences, and the health risks that had to be taken (whether through continued mobility and social interaction or immobility and lockdown) were far more severe, calling into question the viability of social reproduction altogether. When the Government of India shut down cities during the pandemic, millions of people were forced to walk home to their villages, hundreds of miles away, possibly carrying the virus with them yet without the means of transportation. Is this great expulsion of people from informal settlements a harbinger of what might come in the future with climate change in megacities that are both attractors of vast populations in informal settlements as well as systems for managing population mobilities?

At the heart of many of these transformations are complex intersecting systems of mobilities and moorings, from everyday travel by households, to the provisioning of urban supplies, to the transnational mobilities of ships, airplanes and people across borders, to the planetary mobilities of viruses and ecological systems. Under these exigencies to de-mobilize our lives, we were forced to adopt new routines, new habits, and new ways of stilling ourselves (Bissell and Fuller 2011), our economies, and our social interactions. Millions of people have been thrown out of work, and suddenly we are all made aware of the fundamental premise on which modern societies are built: constant but unequal movement.

Within mobilities research we have especially focused on the ways in which “differential mobility empowerments” relating to who can travel, when, where, and how, “reflect structures and hierarchies of power” (Hannam, Sheller & Urry 2006: 3). Anthropologists also took up this call to study “different intersecting regimes of mobility” in which some people’s movements were “normalized” while others’ were “criminalized” (Salazar and Schiller 2013: 189; on cross-border migration, see Heller, this Issue). The field of mobility studies extends to geographers (e.g., Cresswell 2011, 2012, 2014), communication researchers (De Souza e Silva and Sheller 2014), architects and designers (Jensen et al 2015), and others who not only study human (im)mobilities, but also the mobilities of objects, places, cities, infrastructure, nature and more, as described more fully in the articles to follow. This intersection of mobile practices, spaces, and subjects (Cresswell and Merriman 2011) came to be described through a “mobile ontology”

(cf. Nail 2018), in which entities, subjects, spaces and worlds all emerge out of complex interacting mobilities at multiple scales, from the nano-level to the planetary (Sheller 2018). Indeed, Thomas Nail even proposes that we are actually living in the ‘Kinocene’ (Nail 2019), subject to a ‘new climate capitalism’ and ‘climate colonialism’ that calls for a movement-oriented political theory.

Moreover, with a mobilities perspective specifically on these complex heterogeneous systems attention is focused on their dynamics and dynamism, including how those prevailing “structures and hierarchies of power” are themselves active, not just cemented, and even changing – possibly rapidly and dramatically in some cases and places. We posit that these mobilities approaches will be crucial to future studies of the unfolding effects of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the restructuring of socio-spatial relations and mobility regimes, and the shifting and contested meanings of ‘risk’ and ‘freedom’ that will emerge after it, perhaps in relation to future global pandemics thereafter. Yet we also acknowledge that there has been a relative neglect of health mobilities within our field, outside of important work by Anthony Gattrell on *Mobilities and Health*, among the first to focus on “issues of global public health that invariably involve the movements of people, goods, viruses” and “the re-emerging infections, displaced persons, or the ‘risks’ of globalised travel” (Gattrell 2011). Other work presented in this journal addresses medical topics such as the transportation of blood for medical transfusions by drone (Sodero and Rackham 2020) or the recent special section of *Mobilities* (15:2) on reproductive mobilities, which examines “how contemporary mobilities—and immobilities—intersect with gendered, racialized, sexually expressive, nation-inscribed, fertile, infertile, young, aging, pregnant, surrogate, and/or otherwise non/reproductive bodies and persons” (Speier, Lozanski, and Frohlick 2020).

We begin, then, with some reflections on disease mobilities and stigmatized identities within the field of mobilities research, before turning in the sections that follow to coronavirus-control and climate change; then reflections on risk, security and liberty especially in relation to China; next the disruptions and reconfigurations of gendered work and familial mobilities; and finally issues of pandemic mobilities, tourism and travel. Throughout this introduction to the topic we will refer to the articles in this special issue, that open other avenues of theorizing pandemic (im)mobilities, and begin to sketch the contours of this emerging topic.

Disease, Mobilities, and Stigma

This disruption of mobilities is not a new topic for mobilities researchers (cf. Adey and Anderson 2011), nor is the question of disease mobilities. The very first publication on the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ had a chapter concerned with the disrupted mobilities involved in controlling ‘foot and mouth disease’ in the U.K. (Law 2006). And in 2014, *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities Research* included a chapter on disease mobilities, in which Roger Keil reflected on SARS, Tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS in relation to global mobilities:

Health has become an area in which we have had to learn to live with insecurity in an increasingly mobile world. Enhanced global mobility is the most immediately plausible cause of heightened insecurities around health, as boundaries are increasingly punctured by the accelerated air travel of our times. But while perforated boundaries expose localities to potentially devastating disease outbreaks, local public health systems have been decimated by neoliberalizing reforms and a more market-oriented delivery of health services. In addition, the highly differentiated populations of this era’s global cities with their diaspora communities are both agents and victims of globalized flows of pathogens as well as targets of newly emerging racializations that are attached to the re-emergence of disease (Ali and Keil 2008; Ali 2012). (Keil 2014: 390)

This is precisely what we have seen happening with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic as it travels around the world. As Keil suggests, “Diseased bodies step out of the realm of the ‘normal’ into a ‘new normal’ of uncertainty where the world they know is turned upside down. Here also lies the historical reality of the continued treatment of the diseased as ‘foreign bodies’, through an often racialized, phantasmagoric representation that treats the sick body of an individual as an intruding threat to the supposedly healthy national body” (Sarasin 2006).

The diseased body and the mobile body appear almost as one, and certainly Covid-19 has raised awareness of the dangerous proximities of mobile bodies that have only amplified entrenched suspicions and racialisations of mobile labour, asylum seekers and refugees. Moreover, the disease has marked a re-education and new awareness of our bodies as potential and highly mutable vessels for disease, highlighting a “peculiar mobility of infectious agents, which transform the bodies of humans and other animals into vectors in order to move through

space and across time” (French et al. cited in Monahan 2020: 2). For Stephanie Lavau, who puts it so cogently, we can think of mobile bodies as vehicles and viruses as passengers of sorts: as “travel companion and companion species” (2014: 423). As viruses like Covid-19 move with and through us, Lavau also tells us that it and us change too. Never immutable, a body and virus are “simultaneously transported and transporter, borne and born” (Lavau 2014: 428). The virus mutates as it moves through our bodies, awakening our own antibodies against it: both host and virus are changed as a result, genetically but also micropolitically in terms of our capacities to act, to affect and be affected, perhaps subtly or massively (Merriman 2018).

Mobile bodies are frequently marked by categories and labels, and in this special issue Tim Cresswell has decoded some of the new terms which have come in Covid-19’s wake, such as the derogatory and pernicious label of several ‘super spreaders’. In Korea, an infected man was reported by the media as having visited several gay bars in Seoul’s Itaewon district amongst a spike linked to night-life venues, leading to fears of a gay backlash and homophobic outings (Kim 2020). In part these accusatory labels are familiar to the identification of a so-called ‘patient zero’, and the wider narrative around the immorality of homosexual promiscuity, excess and mobility, in the emergence of the HIV/AIDS crisis in North America which incorrectly identified a gay flight attendant – and by implication fellow flight attendants and gay men ‘deemed guilty by association’ by their transgressions – for the spread of the outbreak (Tiemeyer 2013: 137), while also mistakenly targeting Haitian migrants as originators of the disease (Farmer 2006 [1993]). The stigmatisation of scapegoat mobilities, whether as perceived within “promiscuous” queer communities, or among “dangerous” migrants, or in the “overcrowding” of Black and Brown multigenerational households, or even in the elitist disavowal of the American rural white working-class who flout mask-wearing rules, has clearly not gone away but is only intensified in the current pandemic, and with the effect of discouraging those potentially infected from coming forward for health interventions or tracing social contacts to prevent further infections.

The right to movement is always a matter of life and death, but even more so when one group’s mobilities are perceived as threatening the bio-security of another group; indeed assertions that migrants bring “disease” have been crucial to the history of immigration control. As Sandro Mezzadro and Maurice Stierl (2020) argue, during the pandemic, “Migrants embody in the harshest way the contradictions and tensions surrounding the freedom of movement and its

denial today. It is not surprising that in the current climate, they tend to become one of the first targets of the most restrictive measures... Restrictive border measures endanger the lives of vulnerable populations for whom movement is a means of survival.” State projects of mobility management via bordering have always been an exercise in racial boundary drawing, controlling the mobilities of racialized bodies into and out of the nation-state, encouraging the migration of some groups while discouraging the cross-border movement of others. The “war on the virus”, writes Charles Heller in this issue, has been used to justify and step up the “war on migrants”, much as the war on HIV/AIDS led to the U.S. detention of Haitian migrants at Guantanamo Bay (Farmer 2006 [1993]). As Presti et al., observe in this collection, some of the cartographic representations of the pandemic served to amplify and reuse existing cartographic imaginaries common to the way contemporary migration mobilities are portrayed to threaten and challenge borders, although as they show other cartographic practices have emerged too - some which are highly solidaristic.

The closing of borders due to Covid-19 has intensified already existing processes of closure and expulsion, with especially detrimental outcomes for the most vulnerable forced migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and repatriated deportees. In the U.S. the Covid-19 crisis allowed the Trump administration to rely on a public health justification immediately to expel or push back anyone showing up at the border, even though they were being sent into these life-threatening circumstances. But the U.S. is not alone in this, and the EU has also seen blockades of the rescue of migrants at sea in the Mediterranean, blocking rescue ships, putting people onto soggy inflatable rafts and pushing them back towards Turkey, leaving many to die (Heller, this issue). Charles Heller thus argues for “de-confining borders”, arguing that the pandemic makes it even more urgent that we allow “migrants to move in safe and legal ways” in order to protect the health of both migrants themselves and the communities in which they arrive.

If a familiar response to disease mobilities is stigmatization, accompanying it is a ‘phenetic fix’ – meaning ‘to capture personal data triggered by human bodies and to use these abstractions to place people in new social classes of income, attributes, habits, preferences, or offences, in order to influence, manage, or control them’ (Lyon 2002: 3) – that locks down complex causation into a vulnerable group, and a single categorical origin, and polices mobilities by subjecting everyone to intense data surveillance in the form of the tracing of movements and contacts previously only associated with some of the most questionable forms

of surveillance. Whether the ‘plague’, the ‘China Virus’ as in Trump’s wording or, the Nepalese Prime Minister’s description of an ‘Indian Virus’, amidst a long and complex territorial border dispute between the two countries (Shakya 2020), ‘externalisation’ seems to be a key property through which Covid-19 has been felt, and has played a constitutive role in the (re)production of social stigmas (Srivastava 2020). As French and Monahan (2020) suggest, “the rejuvenation of some of epidemiology’s most stigmatizing and problematic concepts” are made possible by the pandemic, and the notion of a ‘superspreader’ seems to be the latest proxy for governmental concerns and pathologisation that would like to imagine the human body – and by association, the nation-state – in more fortress like terms. And yet, just as things move, bodies are porous: air, food, matter, ideas, information, flows in and out of us with or without our control.

We might apply Cresswell’s (2010) formulation of a constellation of mobility to make sense of a variety of sovereign controls, security, surveillance and tracing measures which have re-surfaced or combined in unexpected ways. When put in a wider geographical focus, or indeed, temporal one, there is much in the arrangements and practices of governing mobilities under COVID-19 that evoke earlier – even pre-modern – times. The kinds of public health guidance for room ventilation has communicated a forensic attitude to touch and dangerous surfaces, and an almost microscopic attunement to the aerosolization of particles of saliva and breath, perhaps recovering prior attunements to imaginations of mobile matter. Miasmas were believed to be airborne noxious fumes of decaying matter that carried disease, and driven by health practices from the Middle Ages. Techniques to govern miasmas are not all that far from the Covid-19 ones: the quarantine-like arresting of movement in lock-downs, self-isolations, to the more environmental management of something resembling 19th century sanitary science. Many of our daily lives are now the subject of a renewed influence of what Foucault had found in sanitary science the ‘specialists of space’ (in Driver 1988: 278) in the cleaning, attention to micro-architectural designs of routeways, signage, sanitation stations, cleansing, ventilation, routing and channeling bodies, and of course face coverings.

Animal mobilities also become suspect. While it may not be clear yet whether climate change has facilitated the jump of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus from wildlife to humans, certainly scientists have been predicting increasing risks of pandemics from some of the same

causes of global heating.¹ Moreover, the Danish government ordered the cull of millions of mink in case of further viral transmission leading to mass graves in the Danish countryside filled with the slaughtered animals. Fields such as mobility studies have been benefiting from increasing attention and interest in what Hodgetts et al (2020) have called ‘animal mobilities’. The alleged zoonosis behind Covid-19’s emergence helps us to understand its production as a consequence of other Anthropocene interlinked distal causes, mobile and material practices. Some authors (O’Callaghan-Gordo and Antó 2020) have called Covid-19 ‘the disease of the Anthropocene’ as it is widely believed to be the product of extractive and displacement activities, the material mobilities that have depleted natural habitats, forced animal species into smaller environments enabling the virus to spread, and intensified human contact with “wet” animal wholesale markets. COVID-19 is perhaps the perfect expression of ‘Anthropocene mobilities’ (Baldwin et al. 2019) arising from the particular ‘lock-in’ of societies and industries to automobility and aeromobility, as a means for disease-carrying materials and animals (including humans!) to be moved long distances.

Equally roads are the material infrastructure necessary for industrial scale agricultural extraction practices involving the ‘opening of roads in hard-to-reach areas, encouraging contact between humans and wildlife, and facilitating hunting and bushmeat consumption’ while creating new borders and segmentations in natural animal habitats. In this sense the road is positioned as a key conduit to ‘advancing an ‘agricultural frontier’ and growing the number of biological ‘ecotones’ - the transition zones between ecological habitats allowing increased movement between them (Rohr et al., 2019). Yet the real difference today is not just roads *into* such places (a longstanding process of accelerating destruction and extractivism) but also their connection now into *whole global systems and networks of mobility* that enable the infection to spread globally. The massively greater level of mobility in China and between China and the rest of the world in 2019/2020 vs. 2003 is, we contend, a major factor in the different spread of Covid-19 vs. SARS. So rather than stigmatise the “Chinese wet market” (as many Americans have done), we might instead put viral mobilities in the context of human aeromobilities, as well as the broader patterns of consumption and travel that are driving global climate change. On this point, Lin and Yeoh in this issue carefully delineate the strategies of managing risk during the

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/18/tip-of-the-iceberg-is-our-destruction-of-nature-responsible-for-covid-19-aoe>

pandemic in Singapore, where strict restrictions were applied in differing ways to the resident citizens versus the migrant workers, uncovering ‘the dangers of bifurcating transnational flows in discriminatory ways in a post-pandemic world.’

Coronavirus Control and Climate Change

When the governing regimes of mobilities were thrown into sudden disarray, everything from personal daily schedules to the world economy seized up. No longer, it suddenly seems, could we rely on outsourcing and open borders for trade, unquestioned travel rights even for the privileged, or the managed movement of migrant workers to serve the wealthy in their protected enclaves. Many governments closed their borders to perceived dangers coming from outside, even though the coronavirus was already widely circulating within. New disease threats are understood as one of the outcomes of a changing climate, as pathogens move in new ways (Brooks et al. 2019). For some this intensified a rejection of the extravagant burning of fossil fuel and the unfettered opening of new resource frontiers such as the Amazonia, the Arctic, and the “global interior”, in which capitalism is decimating global ecologies and making humanity ever more vulnerable to zoonotic disease outbreaks.

Crucially, during the pandemic we also began to see the impacts of a global slowdown of fossil fuel consumption, and a collapsing price for oil. As transportation and production seized up, and international travel shut down, the demand for fossil fuel plunged. For some policy makers, the dramatic emptying of city streets prefigures a world in which we have reduced the dominant system of automobility and fossil-fuel dependence, opening up space for walking, biking, and more rapid transit. For instance, across many cities and towns worldwide (Europe, the UK, Latin America, even the US), local governments have responded to the lack of car traffic (and continuing fear and avoidance of public transport) to introduce new bike lanes, whether temporary or seemingly permanent. Images of empty airports and fleets of parked airplanes haunt the news. Yet this also raises other questions: If airlines go bankrupt, if trucking is severely reduced, and consumers stop buying new cars, will this actually kickstart the transition away from fossil fuels? Or, as countries seek to recover and pull out of this mobility shock, will they seek to return to the high-mobility, high-energy, high-carbon economy of the past? How can we begin the urgently needed shift to a low-carbon economy, one premised on more resilient, regenerative, and circular forms of local exchange?

Moreover, complexities and paradoxical outcomes abound. While lockdown reduced car-based air pollution, in subsequent reopenings it is public transport that seems most hard-hit by Covid precautions and concerns, possibly even forcing more people into cars. Communities began conducting drive-in virus testing (see Jensen, this Issue), often using car parks and other partly vacated infrastructure of automobility – some of them for business that have failed because of the pandemic. Indeed, in reversal of the shift towards more sustainable travel modes, there has been an increase in used car sales as people avoid mass transportation. We thus now see a revalorization of the car as a mobile but isolated and ‘safe’ cubicle, with new ‘drive-in’ services emerging, including even political rallies in the US election. Similarly zombie ‘ghost flights’ became a curious outcome of the COVID lockdown and European air route regulations, and signals of excess and waste, as airlines flew empty planes in order to maintain valued slots at busy airport hubs (Nhamo et al 2020). Furthermore, the pandemic has also triggered massive temporary increases in the production, distribution and disposal – often irresponsibly leading to extensive waste mobilities within rivers and oceans (Arnell and Khotari 2020) – of single-use plastics known as PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)².

The question thus remains as live and uncertain as ever: could the virus be the push we needed truly to implement the low-carbon transition that scientists have warned us is necessary to stop the global climate emergency, or is it a massive and terrible distraction from, and/or complication of, that programme? The usually backgrounded “glacial time” of planetary processes, which have been accelerated by capitalist striving for “instantaneous time” (see Urry 1994; Coletta et al. 2020), are bringing us climate instability and the disruptions of roiling hurricanes, raging wild fires, and melting glaciers. Meanwhile, the standardized regularity of “clock time” has been interrupted by the “real time” impact of viral transmission, sudden illness, and the cruel endpoint of lonely death but punctuated and overlain by the rhythms of government news briefings, the constant flow of social media (and social-media fueled conspiracy theory) or the more sporadic alert from the contact tracing app on a smart phone – if one has one. The question of mobility disruptions had already been on the agenda of mobilities research with special issues on topics such as “disrupted mobilities” (Birchneil & Büscher 2011). Similarly, in a special section of *Transfers* on ‘Mobilities in a Dangerous World’ Mimi Sheller (2017) noted

² https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/how-covid-waste-is-affecting-the-planet_uk

in the afterword that “dangerous mobilities have a kind of ‘performativity’ insofar as they cause other things to happen: invasive species spread around the world, affecting entire ecosystems; man-made risks reverberate into cascading catastrophes; diseases spread across mobile vectors”.

While some might see this as the wrong time to worry about climate change -- during a health emergency that needs immediate response and an economic depression that will linger for years -- for others these two things are intimately connected. Our societal responses to Covid-19 may share crucial elements with our needed response to climate change; and our failures to contain it may foreshadow the failures of governance that climate change might also set in motion, or arguably even worse, the failure of governments – and societies – to learn from such failures (Cf Lo and Hsieh 2020 on how Taiwan did learn from SARS). Both are complex mobility problems that remind us that the world is interconnected, and we cannot wall ourselves off. Again, humans and nature are intimately interconnected. The ‘bubble’, a protective and security logic that has been so popularized as a public health measure to guide families or communities to isolate themselves from others, seems paradoxically to suggest an opportunity for collectivity: ‘so long as we are willing to expand the bubble and also live with/in busted bubbles’ (Appleton 2020).

Ironically, one of the strange manifestations of these uneven mobilities is the fact that the U.S. relies on undocumented migrants to perform 50% to 75% of agricultural labor, as well as food processing labor such as meat processing plants, the provision of which continues in the face of the pandemic. Necessary to the North American food system are more than 257,000 temporary H-2A visa workers, many from Central America and the Caribbean, who are still needed to travel from region to region following the ripening crop seasons, yet have no right to remain. These “field workers have been told to keep working despite stay-at-home directives, and given letters attesting to their “critical” role in feeding the country,” so they are designated “essential workers” even as they have little access to healthcare, no sick leave, and no access to financial relief.³ So while some potential migrants are blocked from entering the country, others are deported. The 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are also at high risk of contracting Covid-19. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that 6 million immigrants (both documented and undocumented) work in “essential” jobs as farm employees, grocery store

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/us/coronavirus-undocumented-immigrant-farmworkers-agriculture.html>

clerks, delivery truck drivers, etc., and are disproportionately at risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 as they perform essential labor.⁴

Above all, then, it is becoming clearer that the response to both the coronavirus and to climate change share common elements. Proponents of the Green New Deal in the United States, or the Green Deal in Europe, have been calling for a massive transformation of our energy infrastructure, housing, and transportation systems through public investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and low-carbon transportation, and many believe the massive economic disruption and mobility disruption of the novel coronavirus offers the opportunity to launch these plans with massive stimulus spending.⁵ These proposals, they argue, are exactly the kind of public-financed stimulus that could not only help pull our economies out of a deep recession, but also rapidly build more resilient communities with greater social solidarity and equity. While we are still in the middle of the immediate emergency response, it is worthwhile to begin to envision and plan for a robust recovery and rebuilding process. Moreover, across much of the world, post-Covid recovery is being framed in terms of an emerging orthodoxy of ‘placed-based’, ‘resilient’, ‘localised’ and ‘greening’ approaches – including the ‘15-minute neighbourhood’ championed by the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo – even in countries, such as the UK, with national governments only questionably committed to climate action.

Meanwhile, amongst those predisposed to more market-based policies, even big business and finance is showing signs of seeing “Covid as the perfect rehearsal for climate change”, as Global Managing Partner of McKinsey, Kevin Sneader, puts it.⁶ Forced to grapple with the sudden change of strategic landscape, such business actors are embracing with unexpected vigour new visions of mobility systems, global/regional trade and investment opportunities focused on an expedited shift away from fossil fuels, extractivist heavy industry, ‘Tech’-based consumer innovation and global supply chains to renewable energy, digitally-enabled services and logistics, infrastructure and relocalization.

None of this is to say, of course, what will actually happen. Nevertheless, critical mobilities theory is crucial to this planning because we have been focusing for the last twenty

⁴ <https://time.com/5823491/undocumented-immigrants-essential-coronavirus/>; AM.G. Scheyer, We Are Killing Them: The Heavy Toll COVID-19 Takes on Undocumented Immigrants, JURIST – Student Commentary, April 22, 2020, <https://www.jurist.org/commentary/2020/04/allyssa-scheyer-covid19-undocumented-immigrants/>

⁵ <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/03/18/global-green-new-deal-supporters-urge-world-leaders-learn-coronavirus-tackle-climate>

⁶ Comment at *The Economist's* Sustainability Week, October 2020.

years on the problem of low-carbon transitions, power and inequality in the governance of (im)mobilities, and understanding how everyday social practices are embedded in complex systemic change. Resilient and sustainable communities will require new kinds of mobilities, including not only the systems of transporting goods or moving people, but also the narratives of mobility and dwelling through which we organize and sustain everyday practices. Changing the ways that we “do” mobilities will be crucial to the post-Covid-19 world. And making sure we do so in a socially equitable and just way will be crucial to the future of the world.

Risk, Security, and Contested Liberty

In this issue Kesselring and Freudendal draw our attention to “the mobile risk society” and the ways in which the pandemic has forced us to re-negotiate and re-define rules and norms of mobilities that were previously taken for granted. Bringing together Ulrich Beck’s theory of risk society with John Urry’s (and our) mobilities paradigm, they ask how urban mobilities will come out of the fear and *deceleration* of pandemic confinement. We add to this discussion that alongside a more familiar dynamic of closing down vs. opening up, or isolation vs. coming together, in response to (common, globalizing) exigency, Covid-19 also seems to reveal new emergent dynamics and platforms for contestation that are interwoven with the former in complex and unpredictable ways. And these too may illuminate qualitatively new aspects of how politics (both domestic and international) may be taking shape in the age of climate emergency. In particular, as what was previously identified as global risk-society has crystalized – or metamorphosed (Beck 2015) – into what is now called the Anthropocene, issues of security and/vs. liberty loom large in the public political imagination, with intriguing and unsettling consequences for settled political spectra and power relations – and with im/mobility as central, not least through complex issues of freedom or compulsion to move or not move.

For instance, strong attunement to security certainly resonates with a nationalistic and xenophobic response. But equally – and arguably just as, or even more, strongly – those who are most sensitized to the risks of Covid (and/or climate change), and particularly their demographic asymmetries and injustices, are often also those most in favour of global cooperation (e.g. on a vaccine or an ambitious global decarbonization target, respectively). Similarly, privileging concerns of (individualized) liberty is often seen as the preserve of the political Right, which may be presumed to be louder supporters of securitized, nationalistic responses. Yet, regarding

Covid, skepticism and outright rejection of more authoritarian centralized enforcement of immobility has not been limited to elite or privileged demands for continued freedom of (global) movement, but also associated with demands for greater democratic inclusion, e.g. consultation of local governments.

In short, Covid may presage an unfamiliar reorientation of politics and the governing of risk, including climate change. This seems to be characterized by turbulent and shifting coalitions clustering around polarized interpretations of specific – and no doubt asymmetrically and unequally distributed – risks as issues primarily of ‘freedom’ and ‘opportunity’, or ‘security’ and ‘threat’; and in ways that may make only passing, unstable and instrumental use of cultural discourses of (nationalist) besieged-ness vs. (globalist) togetherness. The complexity of these issues, as alluded to above, in turn only compounds this dynamic, allowing no single and definitive interpretation of an issue – and associated political movement – to settle into stable hegemony. So too the systematic inequalities of exposure, discussed more below, at the very least problematize the establishment of unifying national political narratives and policies with broad appeal across social stratifications and intersectional identities, even as the nation-state remains the pre-eminent scale of politics and government.

Indeed, in the process, Covid starkly exposes how complex, unpredictable and poorly understood risks as central issues of contemporary government (as Kesselring and Freudendal suggest) are shaking up and reproblematising settled – and long inadequate – socio-political common-sense understandings of ‘liberty’ per se; forcing societal confrontations, in a world of complex systems and intricate interdependencies that are increasingly evident and pressing, with the enduring fiction of the independent sovereign individual. Who moves and who doesn’t; who has to move and who doesn’t; when and where; and who gets to choose when and how – all these questions of interlocking im/mobilities thus become central political issues of the age, subject to ongoing, restless, vigorous and (re)constitutive contestation – as Lin and Yeoh (this issue) also depict in the case of Singapore, Heller (this issue) explores regarding migration into the EU, and as Hannam and Zuev (this issue) explore in far more interpersonal ethnographies of the ‘disruption of everyday rhythms’ in the case of Macau.

Mobility studies includes an emphasis not only on largescale mobility (and immobility) regimes, but also more intimate and personal social practices of micro-mobilities, timing, and waiting. Regarding the former, Covid has not only dramatically problematized incumbent

systems of mobility premised upon relatively unfettered and long-distance movement of people and, just as crucially, stuff; most obviously in the early months of the pandemic in terms of (lack of) access to PPE manufactured elsewhere in the world. But it has also done so in ways that have starkly posed to a global population, thus far only dimly concerned, the growing global influence of an ascendant superpower that has a significantly different approach, as against incumbent norms, to politics and government, and hence also im/mobility: China.

Notwithstanding the clear fearmongering and racism of blaming China – or rather Chinese people – for the virus, evident in derogatory labels such as the ‘Wuhan virus’ or ‘Kung flu’, the subsequent uncontrollable global spread of the SARS-CoV-2 as viral stowaway on mobile humans has itself, in turn, been a vehicle on which has ridden unprecedented waves of ‘China anxiety’ in all its forms. This ranges from anxiety about increasing malign influence of China in one’s society through to anxiety of being left out of China’s largesse and support, e.g. regarding its new ‘Health Silk Road’; or from anxiety about China’s initial denial of the virus and subsequent draconian lockdown measures (e.g. as captured in Ai Weiwei’s moving documentary, ‘Coronation’) and what these may portend for a China-dominated world, to anxiety about China’s response proving highly successful and boosting its global prestige (especially in comparison with a US in utter disarray).

Im/mobility – and personal freedom thereof – has clearly been at the heart of this surge in China-watching, as the world (and the West in particular) has looked on with apprehension to see if such unprecedented challenges of complex systems and associated im/mobility have changed the game of government (of mobility) to such an extent that the long-presumed superiority – both administrative and representational – of liberal democratic systems is now in question, if not clearly upended. Presenting a clear and undeniable alternative to such dominant ‘governmobility’ systems (Baerenholdt 2013) – especially in its current late-neoliberal and socioeconomically polarizing form – the real significance of China regarding Covid is not so much as its site of origin but as an enduring challenge to a settled conceptual and institutional assemblage premised on highly valorized ‘free movement’ for the (entrepreneurial, elite) individual; the mobile subject at the heart of liberal ideals of freedom, and problematized as a universal, romanticized and valorized primitive within conceptions of mobility (Cresswell 2006; Kotef 2015). Witness the ongoing American political mobilizations ranging from Black Lives Matter protests to Trump ‘Make America Great Again’ rallies, from peaceful marches to violent

marches in defence of American ‘liberties’, and the explicit connections made between Covid-19 suppression and the ‘right to movement’.

‘China’ has thus stalked, always there in the shadows, and so primed the quickly – and ever-increasingly – politicized debate in the West about central government lockdown and systems of ‘track & trace’, which has considerably complicated the response in these countries to the pandemic. This debate quickly adopted the language of ‘liberty’ with freedom *of personal movement*, unfettered and unmonitored by the state, widely experienced as a line in the sand that was previously unthinkable but is now under threat... ‘as in China’. As alluded to above, then, here we are seeing curious political coalitions and odd bed-fellows brought together by the reopening of questions about what ‘liberty’ even means; including, in the UK, a newspaper that is the former home and faithful cheerleader of the incumbent Prime Minister leading the charge against his government’s response to the pandemic. But unable and/or unwilling as societies to think seriously and anew about how a pandemic demands understandings of freedom (of movement) different to those of the mythical unrestricted individual – a predicament notably marked in societies at the core of the neoliberal world order such as the US and UK, where Covid deaths have been high and government responses notably incompetent, or worse, venal (Monbiot 2020) – the result is paradoxical. In the West we see continuing Covid-related disruption and governmental incompetence regarding im/mobility, while China is all but back to normal, and hence with significant individual freedom of movement restored.

As such, Covid also raises key questions about what global mobility of *policy lessons* regarding emergency/pandemic measures is possible or not. Notably, the stand-out success story of the pandemic is the response not of the authoritarian party-state of the People’s Republic of China but democratic Taiwan, with only 500 cases in a population of 23 million and not a single death. Yet this world-leading response was still premised on various forms of track & trace and governmental contact or oversight – and, underlying both, societal learning from the 2003 SARS pandemic regarding the inter-dependence of one’s im/mobility (Lo & Hsieh 2020) – that would still seem to be anathema to strongly libertarian constituencies in the West. Similarly, in the case of Macau, with very low numbers of cases and no deaths, the government was widely praised for its border controls. Nevertheless, such lock-ins have had significant mental health effects in terms of anxiety (Zuev and Hannam, this issue). Haunted by China’s authoritarian control of citizen mobility, on the one hand, and refusing itself to engage serious debate about how one’s

freedom of movement may be *preserved*, not just encumbered, by state-directed collective constraints on mobility, on the other, it would seem that pandemic-responsive transformation of systems of mobility and circulation in the West – and hence globally, given incumbent Western-dominance – will likely have to continue to play out through a highly politicized and turbulent learning process, with lessons only ever painfully conceded. This surely also has significant implications for supposedly urgent ‘just transitions’ in global mobility systems, both long-distance and regional/urban, and their possible or likely dynamics (cf. Adey et al. forthcoming).

Gendered Work and Familial Mobilities

Such considerations become even more significant in the light of a key second macro-level dynamic regarding im/mobility and the pandemic: the accelerated ascendancy of digital mobilities and their qualitative surge in increasingly seamless meshing with physical mobilities, especially of people. Countless stories have been told over 2020 of how roll-out of online meeting systems at businesses and institutions were expedited, reducing plans of several years into weeks. The transformation of higher education into a system that has become overwhelming dependent on online learning, and of campuses as sites primarily of student accommodation rather than lectures and supervision, would also have been inconceivable just 9 months ago. And while working from home, sat at a digital device, is unquestionably a position of significant relative privilege – whether in comparison to those still out working so as to deliver to these home-workers, those simply laid off and sitting immobile and anxious at home, or those lacking safe homes at all – it is also the case that the precipitous rise of home-working raises multiple challenges and unresolved questions, and at many scales.

The future of city-centres and the urban form is now in serious question by the rise of digitally-enabled home-working and the concomitant demise of the office, 9-5 working day, commute and rush hours, and localized services (sandwich shops, barbers, restaurants and bars etc...) and infrastructures (notably of public transport) that presuppose reliable weekday surges in footfall of working people. So too is the organization of work, childcare, and eldercare in question, as families and institutions strain to keep functioning, with women bearing the brunt of the “triple shift”, or being forced to leave the paid workforce to care for families.

The gendered dimensions of mobility and Covid are of course intersectional and complex. In patriarchal societies research is showing that women’s productive roles may have

intensified by the virus and become more complex and difficult, especially given problems in travelling to work. Reproductive labour has increased in some contexts because the provision of familial or educational care for children has been withdrawn, while in other contexts the increased demands of productive and reproductive labour has forced women to make frequent journeys between workplace and school or elders or shops, and to perform other community labours (McLaren et al 2020). Thus while gendered fears and vulnerabilities to harassment and rape have seemingly decreased because of reduced travel, in other ways (Ravindran and Shah 2020) women's mobility vulnerabilities have increased through more complex and risky mobilities in order to perform escalating burdens.

The terrible rise of domestic violence has been one predicted outcome as familial relations have intensified through lockdowns. While women's travels from domestic violence to refuge has been one way that mobility is a possible option to escape violence (Bowstead 2019), the effect of lock-down and other movement restrictions has limited these possibilities. Ironically, in some regions, the provision of free public transport to remove barriers to escaping a violent partner and home, as seen in Northern Ireland⁷, can ring hollow in the face of reductions in public transport and other travel restrictions from Covid-19. Sufferers of abuse might prefer to take their chances with the disease if transport was available than stay in a violent household. The mandatory use of face-masks in some contexts has restricted the mobilities of many, and even those who have been subjected to domestic violence as charity WomensAid has argued in the UK. For survivors of domestic abuse, face masks can re-ignite past traumas through the experience of 'hot air, not being able to breathe freely, or feeling smothered'. This has meant inhibited mobility as a consequence, a possible continuation of abusive control which restricted women's freedoms.⁸

Meanwhile, and turning to the more micro level, working practices, norms and expectations of both employees and employers regarding digital home-working are emerging as new arenas of micro-political contestation. Suddenly the home has had to accommodate a regular activity for which the dwelling of many is not equipped and, perhaps, just not designed. Instead of purpose-built offices and desks, many have found themselves all but living at their

⁷ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/news/ministers-announce-free-public-transport-those-fleeing-domestic-abuse-0>

⁸ [womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-domestic-abuse-survivors-experiencing-severe-distress-when-wearing-a-mask-are-exempt/](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-domestic-abuse-survivors-experiencing-severe-distress-when-wearing-a-mask-are-exempt/)

kitchen tables, or working off their lap in their bedrooms (burning RF radiation into the lower abdomen and genitals of those of reproductive age (Mortazavi et al. 2016)). Even where there is no chance of a separate office in the home, away from the distractions of housemates or children, reliable internet connections, anonymized or non-embarrassing backdrops for online meetings (already a meme for advertising of home improvements and new kitchens), and space heating/cooling now also through daytime hours and associated bills, have all suddenly become the responsibility of those ‘lucky’ enough to have such a job.

Meanwhile, lack of informal and interpersonal interaction with colleagues and a qualitative increase in the ongoing blurring of working and non-working time is posing new challenges to wellbeing for which employer organizations have little experience or resources to support, even if they are interested in doing so. Such concerns can evidently not be taken for granted, as employers, perhaps already pressured by Covid economic slowdown, experience and welcome the multiple cost-cutting opportunities presented by vacating expensive centralized offices, responsabilizing their staff instead for office costs and increasing productivity with schedules of digital working that shave off supposedly ‘dead time’ of travelling between meetings. Where one works and when is thus also emerging as a key domain of a new politics of industrial relations, with issues of mobility justice front and centre.

Similarly, still at the micro level but beyond the accelerated changes of digital mobilities, new internal temporalities have also emerged in these strange times as hours at home stretched into days, then weeks under quarantine, then months and perhaps years of economic disruption. This has troubled the previous desire to have “your own time” or “time for yourself” for those in lonely isolation, while raising it to new, even soul-searching, heights for others trapped in small spaces with co-habitants, whether family, friends or strangers. In both regards, the seeking out of new sources of contact, distraction and/or meaning, again much of this online, has generated new connections and forms of and reasons for (digital) mobility. The broken sense of futurity, the constant anticipation of shifting circumstances, and the unwanted abandonment to oneself, have generated anxiety, depression, and in some cases over-compensation (see Zuev and Hannam, this issue). As Albert Camus wrote in *The Plague*, “the first thing that the plague brought to our fellow citizens was exile,” such that “being separated from a loved one ... [was] the greatest agony of that long period of exile” (2012: 56).

For some people this time is filled with busy activity, cleaning closets, organizing supplies, orchestrating online work and socializing; for others, it is filled with uncertainty, fear, and isolation, especially if household members are suffering from illness; and for others it opens up new modes of social-care, with new horizons of time-space for familial bonding, creativity, conversation, day-dreaming, walks in local nature (including a boom in demand for pet dogs) and sleep. Many, though, are simply waiting, in an uncomfortable state of “animated suspension” (Bissell 2007). While we might recapture time from capitalist work-schedules of neoliberal productivity, many are buffeted by the collapse of work, the absence of a paycheck, and the loss of shelter and social protection, which is predicted to bring mass evictions and homelessness. Such processes are always unevenly distributed, and the materiality of our lives is lumpy and dense, offering both moorings and barriers, opportunities and obstacles.

Pandemic Tourism (Im)mobilities

One of the first sectors of the global economy to be severely disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 was tourism. By April 2020, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported an “80 percent fall in flights worldwide while the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) calculates that up to 75 million jobs in tourism and travel are currently at risk” (Ewing-Chow 2020, n.p.). Before this year, 1.326 billion international tourists travelled in 2017 (UNWTO, 2018) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (2017) had forecast that tourism would grow 4 percent annually until 2025. Now, declines in international tourist arrivals globally for 2020 are conservatively predicted at between 20 and 30 per cent by the World Trade Organization, but some “economists and tourism officials have indicated that the decline could be as high as 60 percent particularly in light of the extension of limitations on travel through the summer period” (Ewing-Chow 2020, n.p.). Ongoing health concerns until a vaccine is widely available, the decline in many travelers’ disposable incomes, the restructuring of airlines and reductions in service frequencies, and increased industry operating costs are all expected to contribute to an ongoing decline in tourism, possibly ending the era of cheap long-haul vacations. The sudden shift from “over-tourism” to fears of “non-tourism,” argue Gössling et al., indicates an unprecedented crisis for tourism, which “holds important messages regarding the resilience of the tourism system, also in regard to other ongoing crises that are not as immediate, but potentially more devastating than COVID-19, such as climate change” (2020: 3).

As soon as governments realized the virus was traveling quickly with people on the move, one of the first steps they took was to control air travel tightly and stop cruise ship arrivals. Many countries began to close borders except for returning citizens, many of whom required emergency evacuation flights. This left tourists, and other international travelers such as students, scrambling to get home. Early outbreaks on the Diamond Princess cruise ship which was quarantined in Yokohama in February 2020, the Grand Princess cruise ship which was quarantined off the Port Oakland in March 2020, and the pair of Holland America ships, The Zaandam and the Rotterdam, which were repelled from ports in early April until Florida finally let them dock at Fort Lauderdale, sent the industry into a tailspin. The quarantine of the cruise liners might remind us of the return of medieval health security measures which were formerly used to halt plague.

The closure of international travel quickly led to the emptying of hotels, the closing of tourism sites, and a huge downturn in future bookings. The complete shutdown of Venice was especially striking, given its significance as a highly tourism-dependent destination and its recent bout of flooding. Soon the closure of major tourism destinations began to appear in eerily empty photos at sites such as the banks for the Seine in Paris, New York's Times Square, and other usually crowded destinations. Other startling stoppages of annual travel included the massive cancelation of sports events around the world, and the social distancing of religious events such as the virtual Easter Mass broadcast by the Pope from an empty Vatican.

The pandemic immobilization of travel has not only severely interrupted tourism, but may in fact be leading to a shift in the entire apparatus of tourism, meaning the practices, places, and genres of existing styles of tourism, which may be experiencing the kind of generational and historical shift that only happens when many interconnected technological, social, cultural, economic, and governmental practices are forced to change in an interlocking manner. We might also interpret the problem of tourism recovery after the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in relation to discourses of "disaster capitalism", "disaster tourism", and the wider understanding of tourism as a form of extractive economy founded upon uneven mobilities and the consumption of labor, natural resources, and produced spaces as places for some to play (Sheller and Urry 2004). We can place these pandemic-related uneven mobilities in the context of the wider field of study of tourism mobilities, which has for some time pointed toward the differential power dynamics at play within tourism. In the clarity of these emergent conflicts over (im)mobilities, we can detect

the uneven and differential capabilities for mobility that have always been there. These differences in potential for mobility (or “motility”) and accumulations of “mobility capital” are now laid bare for all to see.

This crisis in tourism – whether long- or short-distance – and, indeed of the associated world of cultural events, performance and ‘nightlife’, however, also poses particularly starkly a whole host of further complexities and complications regarding post-Covid im/mobilities and rethinking of ‘liberty’. Above we considered how collective and state-enforced constraints on mobility could preserve, rather than oppose, individual freedom of movement. Yet there is also a flipside, which these issues bring out particularly clearly, and which relate to profound questions about the value, and societal valuation, of mobility per se (Cresswell, this Issue) and where there is room for mobility that is valuable but perhaps not ‘essential’ (Salazar, this Issue). Specifically, there are clearly serious dangers that giving the state too much power to decide what *counts* as ‘essential’ mobility could establish conditions in which mobility is largely permitted only for what is deemed ‘essential’ *to the life of the collectivity and as interpreted by the state*. The obvious casualty of this is precisely leisure-related mobilities, easily dismissed as frivolous and, amidst pandemic risk (but potentially rolling systemic ‘emergencies’ in the Anthropocene), positively harmful and damnably selfish. Bauman’s discussion of the ‘gamekeeper’ vs. ‘gardening’ state, alluded to by Urry (2000) in early discussions of the mobilities paradigm, seems apposite on this point. And, of course, the rise of China as the (widely supposed) latter *par excellence* again looms large over such concerns.

Such a development, however, would be a radical challenge to much that is presently understood to be of value – even, by many, *intrinsic* value – about mobility and freedom of personal movement, and regarding issues and activities that are in turn often deemed sites of supreme importance for the ‘good’ life, whether ethical, aesthetic or epistemic (e.g. in cosmopolitan dynamics of getting to know other cultures). Tourism and leisure mobilities are obviously key sites of such concerns. Critical mobilities scholarship has rightly – and insightfully – critiqued contemporary ideologies of mobility and/as freedom, e.g. whether regarding automobility (Paterson 2007, Rajan 2006), tourism or business travel and trade. And yet, actually confronted by lockdown without-certain-end, the value of mobility, and for its own sake or for diverse other ‘inconsequential’ activities, seems to find a new-found urgency that reveals its almost paradoxical importance. As such, Covid-19 has also raised to a renewed pitch

of intensity and amongst a singularly large and diverse group (i.e. the population at large, not just concerned scholars or activists) questions of value per se, and the place of mobility and immobility in those visions.

In this regard, we again return to the renewed questions of liberty posed by the pandemic, and see further how these are indeed live, complex and unsettled issues that are genuinely challenging for everyone, not just those already committed to outdated or overly rigid ideologies. Loaded with such strongly positive normative valences, liberty, and freedom of movement in particular, bears significant expectations regarding its compatibility with what is deemed of greatest value and importance in human life. However, contending underlying value systems not only pitch various interpretations of ‘liberty’ against its supposed opposite of constraint, but also against itself, in diverse *forms* of liberty. Compounding the paradoxical complexity of restraints on movement as potentially key conditions to preserve a more general freedom of movement (discussed above), then, here we find that the liberty to move around as one wishes may well *conflict* with, not be in mutual support with, the liberty to go out with friends, enjoy uplifting and collective aesthetic experience or encounter unfamiliar places and cultures. Yet it is the latter that may well be identified, in such an instance, as the real locus of value, without which life is made irreparably poorer. Or, at least, this may be the conclusion of many individuals, even as the state is unlikely to come to similar conclusions, privileging instead ‘hard-headed’ biopolitical decisions of collective system health – and ones that *de facto* and by default most likely continue to deploy existing ‘sovereign individual’ conceptions that privilege existing mobility elites and dominant models of economy. In short, then, Covid-19 has exposed profound and insoluble tensions between the maximization of ‘liberty’ at both individual *and* systemic levels, with both likely valuing ‘liberty’ for different reasons and in different manifestations.

At its most intense, the accelerating circulation of money, people and things presupposed by global capitalism and its form of nation-state emerges as, not just different to, but incompatible with the freedom of movement that may deliver what individuals, given the choice and the chance, actually would value. Contending visions of the future of tourism and leisure mobility are currently set in the midst of this maelstrom of understanding. Here again, therefore, as an example of the government of complex system problems of the sort that are likely to recur frequently in the Anthropocene (Tyfield 2018), the pandemic is arguably humanity’s first proper encounter with a new politics essentially contesting, and so profoundly redefining, ‘liberty’; and

with questions of tourism, mobility (for its own or leisure's sake) pivotal. Furthermore, in such circumstances the right to travel – at least on some occasions and in common circumstances – *for no reason at all* emerges as a key issue of mobility justice, as relevant and important to the unprivileged as their access to, say, a safe, healthy, affordable and sustainable commute or migration.

The resulting paradoxes have manifested even in terms of such material concerns as environment and economy. While the grounding of global aviation and retreat of environmental pressure from tourism on diverse global ecosystems may be welcomed, the pandemic also instigated a collapse of tourism-based economies around the world. Exemplifying the resulting paradox, this has especially hurt small island developing states (SIDS), a United Nations category that includes many islands that are both highly dependent on tourism and highly vulnerable to climate change. “On average, the tourism sector accounts for almost 30% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the SIDS,” according to World Travel & Tourism Council data (Coke-Hamilton 2020: 1). With the fall in tourism earnings predicted to have devastating effects on tourism-dependent economies, some argue that there is an urgent need to rebuild more sustainable economies and societies “beyond tourism” (Thompson 2020), and there can be no getting “back to normal” under the circumstances (Gössling et al. 2020).

Cave and Dredge (2020, n.p.) point out that “Rising concerns about climate change, over-tourism, declining employment and labour conditions and resource degradation have all highlighted the inadequacy of the current capitalist system in addressing the failures of mass tourism. Now, under COVID-19, there are calls for tourism to move beyond ‘business as usual’ and to find a pathway to regenerative tourism.” Matilde Córdoba Azcárate shows how tourism is implicated in capitalist development projects and forms of spatial rescaling in the rebuilding of tourism around Cancun, Mexico, have been associated with extractive economies (Córdoba Azcárate 2020). These forms of extractive tourism are intensified by post-disaster and now post-Covid rebuilding processes and raise key issues around “moral encounters in tourism” (Mostafanezhad and Hannam 2016).

While the pandemic disrupted tourism mobilities, just as quickly another phenomenon of tourism mobilities emerged: reports began to appear about the second-home owners “panic fleeing” to their summer homes in sunnier climes, the super wealthy elite evacuating to their fortified bolt-holes in New Zealand and luxury yachts moored in safe harbors, or simply the

affluent suburbanites hunkering down in their comfy neighborhoods where they can continue to have service workers deliver all their needs. Articles lamented the phenomenon of “panic fleeing” of wealthy second-home owners, leaving large cities affected by Covid-19 to go to their summer homes in smaller places like the Hamptons in Long Island, Vermont, coastal Maine and so on. These arrivals placed a heavy burden on local food markets and strained healthcare facilities. These so-called panic flee-ers were described as generating “class warfare”, as the wealthy out-of-towners or “summer people” leaned on working-class “locals” for all kinds of services and made large demands on limited local resources.⁹ In the U.K. similar conflicts occurred as urban dwellers decamped to classic “wilderness” vacation spots in Wales, Scotland, and the Lake District, overrunning them with traffic and crowds.

Framed in terms of “class warfare” local populaces of these remote pandemic-retreats sometimes vilified the metropolitan wealthy for carrying the virus into their midst, while expecting local workers to service their needs.¹⁰ In response, a spate of vacation destinations asked visitors not to come. Some imposed fourteen-day quarantines for visitors from areas with high rates of Covid-19, while others sought to close their borders altogether (with attempts at closure discussed in the U.S. from North Haven island in Maine, to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, to the islands of Hawai’i). Yet from the Hamptons to Turtle Island, second home escapees also crossed the lines of indigenous sovereignty, as First Nation and Federally Registered indigenous tribes have constructed border checkpoints to prevent the spread of Covid-19 to their communities already vulnerable from underlying health conditions, poorer medical provision and prior patterns of second home tourism. As Leonard (2020) concludes, ‘settler logic constructs spaces of leisure and second-homes as entitlements for escape. However, COVID-19 has shown us that saving Indigenous lives is worth more than the right to access a second-home.’

In other places the unusual situation was grasped to bring windfall profits, when country inns and entire hotels began taking single-family “exclusive use” bookings at high room rates, up to \$38,000 per day: “These destinations include Hudson Valley and the Catskills, which are near New York; Sonoma and Napa, near San Francisco; and rural mountain spots within driving

⁹ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/20/panicked-wealthy-fleeing-the-coronavirus-drive-up-rental-prices-in-the-hamptons-and-hudson-valley.html>

¹⁰ <https://nypost.com/2020/03/19/we-should-blow-up-the-bridges-coronavirus-leads-to-class-warfare-in-hamptons/>

distance of Denver.”¹¹ Real estate markets suddenly began to pick up pace in places that had been in the doldrums at least since the 2008 recession. All these forms of tourism mobilities remake space, scale, and power, as Córdoba Azcárate argues of tourism in the Yucatan peninsula, and are thus implicated in reproducing uneven geographies.

The pandemic-related imposition of new regimes of travel surveillance intensifies and deepens these patterns of uneven freedom of mobility. The global circulation of elites today is already governed through an existing infrastructure of privatized corridors of privileged mobility including fast access “Global Entry” lanes at airports, various classes of membership and privileges for airline members’ clubs, gated and exclusive resorts, private jet travel, and even the protection of wealth in offshore tax havens that offer residency and citizenship options to investors (Birtchnell and Caletrio 2014; Urry 2014b). Exclusive means of mobility also support spatial development with gated enclaves, high-rise towers, sanitized pseudo-urban tourist zones, all-inclusive resorts with private beaches, spectacles of consumer capitalism, and eco-resorts that are off limits to locals (Birtchnell and Caletrio 2014; Sheller 2009a, 2009b). Under the conditions of pandemic mobility control these gated spaces are especially exclusive, with the capacity to protect the wealthy from the potentially infected masses, while many tourism workers are evicted from urban centers and sent back to their rural or otherwise distant homes. At the same time, political leaders have been quick to demonize urban communities, starved from green spaces, from heading to packed tourist hotspots and beaches as irresponsible in a reverse of the class-warfare when lock-downs have been repealed.

There is a management of mobilities, as William Walters writes, “not a generalized immobilization but a strategic application of immobility to specific cases coupled with the production of (certain kinds of) mobility” (Walters cited in Kotef 2015: 145). We may have entered a new era of heavily controlled movement, governed by security regimes, biogovernance, and extreme biopolitics. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought with it the prospect of greater biometric surveillance, biophysical testing regimes to pass through borders, self-registration into contact-tracing technologies and regimens, and the idea of developing some kind of ‘immunity passports’ that would potentially be registered into a global database for tracking of mobilities. Rob Kitchin has suggested 5 primary responses in surveillant technologies that involve trying to trace, fix, follow and manage the (im)mobilities of populations, ranging

¹¹ <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/wealthy-people-remote-hotels-coronavirus/index.html>

from (1) ‘quarantine enforcement/travel permission’; (2) ‘contact tracing’ (3) ‘pattern and flow modelling’; (4) ‘social distancing and movement monitoring’; and (5) ‘symptom tracking’ (Kitchin 2020: 2). Google, Palantir and other purveyors of big data services have led the way in their ‘mobility’ technologies. The body is ever more deeply implicated into these processes, not just at the scale of the fingerprint or the iris, but now the microscopic scale of microbial immunology.

Conclusion

In as much as we seem to be living through a concatenation of multiple crises (health, economy, international relations, sustainability, etc.) the new mobilities paradigm emerged precisely to address such complex systemic disruptions and emerging trajectories of change. The disciplinary fields of the 20th century are no longer capable of encompassing on their own the measure of social and environmental change that we are experiencing. The strong claim of mobilities studies is that we need to grasp the nettle of complexity, turbulence, disruption, and unruly transitions by embracing a transdisciplinary mobile ontology for academic research, policy advocacy, and critical social science that can move with the times. We invite you to delve into the topics in this issue, presented by some of the leading theorists and practitioners of critical mobilities research.

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