

**Connectivities, Ecologies, Engagements: recrafting mobilities in the 2020s - Draft
schedule**

Venue: Jessop Building SR-116
University of Sheffield
34 Leavygreave Rd, Broomhall, Sheffield S3 7RD

Accommodation: The Rutland Hotel (for presenters)
452 Glossop Rd, Sheffield S10 2PY

Food! (arrivals on the 13th, Butcher and Catch, and drinks and the fox and duck)
(14th Cutlery Works)
(15th TBC)

Thursday 14th September

12:00- Welcome with lunch

1:00-14:30- Methodologies of/and Engagements:

‘Being-with’ Mobile pastoralists (Natasha and Rhea)

Lurking as im/mobile engagement. A research protocol for observing mobile people’s online groups (Fabiola)

Being a Foreigner During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Researcher Positionality During Online Interviews (Aimi)

15:00- 16:30- Engaging (im)mobility

Choosing to Stay: Unpacking Immobility Amidst Adversity in Migration Studies (Ezenwa Olumba)

State-driven mobility: international academic mobility from the “Global South” (Leonardo)

Moving Publics and Private Spheres at the Margins: Homelessness in Times of Mobile Media (Vera)

Event - Handbook discussion/Manga launch/cultural event

Dinner at Cutlery Works

Friday 15th of September

10:00-10:30- Coffee Welcome

10:30 -12:00- ‘Connecting-with’ Mobilities

Navigating im/mobility: the challenges of conducting anthropological research in public transport environments (Chris and Sonja)

Women and mobility: understanding how gender shapes people-place interaction in the city of Delhi (Shivani)

Re-mobilising gharelu jivan of a Himalayan village: Through connectivities of grihastha dharma. (Abhishek Bhutoria and Xiang Ren)

12:00-13:00- Lunch

13:00- 15:00- Mobilizing Ecologies- affects, animals and beyond

Exploring the Performative Assertions of Identity Among the Sylhetis: An Ethnographic Study of Migration History, Social Media Expressions, and Folklore (Antara)

Connecting, Co-Coping and Co-Hoping in the transnational space; Social Media and

Social Cohesion among Ethiopian Transnational Migrant Workers in the UAE. (Saleh Sadem)

Mobilizing Grief: Shipibo-Konibos Grieving Practices on Facebook (Jennifer Sierra)

15:00-18:00

[Afternoon workshops - thinking mobile in different observational modes](#)

[18:30- onwards Dinner and Drinks \(TBC\)](#)

Thursday 14th September

12:00- Welcome with lunch

1:00-14:30- Methodologies of/and Engagements:

‘Being-with’ Mobile pastoralists (Natasha and Rhea)

Often excluded from the remit of mobilities studies, contemporary mobile pastoralism offers a fertile field to understand human and more-than-human relations in a context of interlinked socio-economic, technological and ecological change. Drawing on an embodied ‘being with’ mobile pastoralists in western India, collaborators Rhea Shah and Natasha Maru use drawing and experimental cartography to research, analyse and represent the connectivities, ecologies, and engagements of the pastoral human-animal-environment. Presented through an immersive campus walk using overlain and collage maps and multisensory prompts, they will harness the participants’ movements, and its affects and temporalities, to foster an experiential understanding of pastoral mobility. Using a decolonial, feminist approach through arts-based research, such a methodology offers new ways of researching mobility, expanding the terrain for inquiry and action. Walking is a significant ‘technique of the body’, one that immediately places the walker in their immediate context. Walking ignites the embodied way of knowing scale and landscape and is an essential medium of pastoralist culture and knowledge. Through the act of walking, the presenters hope to regenerate the experience of field for the audience. By superimposing maps of walks the authors have taken with the camel herders of Kathiawar, onto the immediate landscape of the university and its surroundings - the presentation simultaneously initiates a careful engagement with the immediate landscape while allowing the participants to affectively through scale experience a walk in the shoes of the pastoralists. As the participants walk through the landscape prompts from pastoral landscape will allow for a transposition, a layering of experiences and landscapes.

Lurking as im/mobile engagement. A research protocol for observing mobile people's online groups (Fabiola)

Online groups provide researchers with easily accessible grounds to connect with highly mobile people dispersed around the world. From their participants' point of view, such communities grant virtual gathering spaces where individuals with similar mobile lives can find each other and exchange advice and knowledge. At the same time, these groups create social ties between online and offline environments. Although the application of ethnographic methods to the observation of such spaces is a well-established practice, it engages researchers in significantly different ways than in-presence participant observation. For instance, doing ethnography online mostly consists in reading texts produced by disembodied subjects, who can be anonymous or play with different avatars. The researcher, too, is a disembodied subject, constantly adjusting between different degrees of interaction and unobtrusiveness, especially necessary when the research process is sustained over a long period with different peaks of intensity. How do we manage this passive form of participation ethically? What are its advantages and limitations? This presentation addresses the use of lurking as a form of im/mobile engagement, discussing its limits and possibilities as a research technique for online environments. It aims to review the different theories on its ethics and purpose and attempt to draft a research protocol based on the author's longitudinal research experience.

Being a Foreigner During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Researcher Positionality During Online Interviews (Aimi)

A qualitative research on the navigation of Vietnamese IT professionals in the Japanese labour market is conducted, and this paper investigates the shift in researcher's positionality in the online interview process during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the literature of migration studies, scholars have discussed the intricated and shifting nature of the positionality of a researcher. Moreover, studies on research methods have examined the advantages and disadvantages associated with conducting online interviews. At the outbreak of the pandemic, the rhythm of both researchers' and migrants' (im)mobilities has shifted and the flexibility of these mobilities became more constrained. However, it still misses the analysis of the changes in positionality that have occurred in online interviews during the pandemic. The current paper examines how the positionality of a researcher in relation to his or her interviewees shifted in online interviews while performing fieldwork amidst COVID-19. The findings of this study are two-fold. First, the researcher and the interviewees had mutual access to each other's professional and background information, allowing them to review each other's background information before the interviews. Second, the interviewees and the interviewer were able to seek commonality as foreigners living through the COVID-19 pandemic. I argue that the positionality of a researcher is co-created with his or her interviewees by sharing biographical moments online and being in similar moments as foreigners whose transnational lives were affected by the pandemic.

15:00- 16:30- Engaging (im)mobility

Choosing to Stay: Unpacking Immobility Amidst Adversity in Migration Studies (Ezenwa Olumba)

In migration studies, mobility is prioritised over immobility, and this situation is worsened by the fact that there are no adequate analytical frameworks for analysing the immobility processes among those who have chosen to stay put despite the adversities within their environment. As a result of this problem, many scholars have advocated for the development of such a framework, which will be used to analyse immobility decisions and experiences in locations exposed to adversities like conflict and environmental degradation. Thus, unlike most extant theories and frameworks (except the aspiration-capability framework), this paper offers a framework that combines structure and agency to explain migratory patterns. The new framework complements the aspiration-capability framework's unsuitability for adequately examining the migratory experiences of communities in conflict-affected areas, specifically, the factors that sustain their immobility. This paper presents a framework derived from a qualitative study conducted in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. The study involved interviews with 54 participants across seven diverse conflict-affected communities; a combined deductive-inductive approach was adopted, and data were analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis method. The new frameworks offer analytical tools for examining the migratory processes of community members who stay put in adverse situations or those who may flee despite their preference for immobility. It further offers an inclusive immobility categories for specific individuals or communities that the extant immobility categories fail to account for. This paper contributes a seminal framework to enhance our understanding of migratory processes in conflict locations.

State-driven mobility: international academic mobility from the “Global South” (Leonardo)

Leonardo Francisco de Azevedo - National Museum, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
This work presents part of the results of my Ph.D. research in Social Sciences, which analyzed the experience of Brazilian researchers who, financed with a grant by the main public research promotion agency in Brazil, carried out their complete doctorate abroad. These researchers, who started and completed their studies at a foreign institution between 1999 and 2014 (research frame), experienced international academic mobility in a very specific way - when being financed by a state agency, one of the requirements is to return to Brazil to stay for at least the same period spent abroad. This rule brings a series of challenges: how to resettle life in your country of origin after four years in a foreign country? The Brazilian State, by establishing such rules, seeks to make these researchers “repay” the investment made in their careers; the researchers, on the other hand, encounter difficulties in the process of professional insertion, after spending so much time abroad. Based on interviews with a group of researchers who were scholarship holders during the period, I intend to explore the various dimensions of this specific type of mobility. For this, I will articulate these subjects' mobility experiences with discussions about the State's management of such displacements. If the “brain drain” is always a threat to countries in the global south, contemporary discussions about the scientific diaspora have helped to think of other ways to guarantee connectivity and engagement of highly qualified Brazilians abroad, without necessarily having the return as the only alternative.

Moving Publics and Private Spheres at the Margins: Homelessness in Times of Mobile Media (Vera)

My project addresses the under-researched topic of mobile media use by homeless people in Berlin. It presents video-ethnographic research material produced as part of the project "Moving Publics and Private Spheres at the Margins: Homelessness in Times of Mobile Media," funded by the German Research Foundation and based at the Berlin University of the Arts from 2019 to 2023. My material consists of video-reenactments in which homeless people explain the steps they need to take to be digitally connected. While cities are potentially places of connectivity, homeless people in particular are often unable to participate in it, or can only do so under difficult conditions. Being homeless often means being mobile. Emma Jackson has described this in terms of being "fixed in mobility" (Jackson 2015). This is not only because homeless people are without a fixed place to live and often have to move to find a place to sleep or work, but also because advancing digitalization forces them to move around more and more. Being homeless therefore also means being constantly on the move to find power outlets and wifi or - in case of losing a smartphone - to look for a new one. My participant observations and audiovisual explorations took place in the mode of following in order to research these barriers that homeless people have to overcome in order to be digitally connected. The presentation reflects on the applied ethnographic and audiovisual methods and asks about the strategies and challenges of field research "on the go".

Event - Handbook discussion/Manga launch/cultural event

[Dinner at Cutlery Works](#)

Friday 15th of September

10:00-10:30- Coffee Welcome

10:30 -12:00- 'Connecting-with' Mobilities

Navigating im/mobility: the challenges of conducting anthropological research in public transport environments (Chris and Sonja)

Navigating public transport environments as anthropological researchers can be distinctly challenging. On the one hand, doing ethnography in moving public transport vehicles entails a unique set of methodological hurdles. Not only is the site itself in constant motion, but the population and dynamics inside of it are perpetually shifting, making it difficult to establish rapport with passengers and pin down the phenomena we seek to study. Moreover, social and cultural norms in some contexts make approaching or engaging in conversation with strangers inappropriate, leading many researchers to adopt autoethnographic methods. On the other hand, public transport providers are also frequently challenging to access because

of their bureaucratic structures and once inside, it can be difficult to penetrate official discourses. In contrast to transport vehicles, these environments can feel too inflexible, making it hard for the researcher to find room to maneuver. Given these obstacles, public transport environments can feel like hostile ecologies for anthropologists, which contributes to a dearth of anthropological research both in and on them. However, public transport environments are also valuable sources of rich ethnographic data, and we argue that there is an urgent need for anthropologists to engage with them as an essential feature of contemporary urban life. In this paper, we explore the challenges of conducting research in public transport environments and discuss strategies for navigating them, drawing from our own research experiences in Japan, the United States, and Luxembourg.

Women and mobility: understanding how gender shapes people-place interaction in the city of Delhi (Shivani)

Everyday mobility experiences are embedded in the processes of sociality that are dependent on how one engages with urban life, and thus it is significant to understand the way mobility is seen as a phenomenon, as a concept, and a process. But mobilities are often shaped by the intersectional identities of gender, caste, class, religion and economic independence, and characterised by the lived experiences. This mini project looks at the mobility experiences of women and what it means for them to move in a city. Based in Delhi, the paper attempts to collect mind maps of women's journeys, locate the elements such as spaces of safety, fears, comfort, etc. as they perceive while they are moving or not moving, study how they make sense of the place and manoeuvre through it. The paper aims at understanding the multiplicities such as, emotions, engagements, connectedness and social relationships and their encounters with the city spaces. The paper summarises a socio-cultural understanding of how gender shapes people-place interactions in Delhi.

Re-mobilising gharelu jivan of a Himalayan village: Through connectivities of grihastha dharma. (Abhishek Bhutoria and Xiang Ren)

The discourse of mobility is getting more complex every day and to meet its complexity, it requires a creative lens with an interdisciplinary approach. Hence, from an architectural anthropology lens, this research using a creative visual expression through sequential art in the form of comic study will present the underlying. In the contemporary world, the source of fragility and resilience is difficult to comprehend, especially when a rupture is experienced. This rupture simultaneously instigates and bars the mobility of resources, knowledge, actions, agenda and making. In such situations, either one or multiple anchors address the after-effect of rupture and re-mobilise living. Such is the case of Barpak village of Nepal (the epicentre of the 2015 Gorkha earthquake), which collapsed to the death of more than 1400

homes and 72 lives. This led to a halt of their practised gharelu jivan (domestic life) for a minimum of 2-3 years as rebuilding of these Himalayan villages was an extremely complex process due. However, over a period of time through multiple anchors, they began to re-mobilise their living, but it was the anchor of grihastha dharma (householder's duty) and its power of connectivity with the residents of the village that re-mobilised their gharelu jivan. This research through the creative engagement of writing and drawing with the residents of Barpak will present the case of grihastha dharma as the source of fragility and resilience and how it enabled re-mobilising of gharelu jivan for the residents of Barpak after many years of the earthquake.

12:00-13:00- Lunch

13:00- 15:00- Mobilizing Ecologies- affects, animals and beyond

Exploring the Performative Assertions of Identity Among the Sylhetis: An Ethnographic Study of Migration History, Social Media Expressions, and Folklore (Antara)

Premised on the background of an emotional and ethnolinguistic solidarity among the Sylhetis across Assam and Bangladesh there is a problematic cartographic and ethnic history dwelling on self and other vis-à-vis Sylheti and Bengali. A part of Sylhet remained back in India and the rest shifted to East Pakistan, currently Bangladesh. The Sylhetis of the Barak valley, Assam are grappling with their nativity that is at stake as they are often subject to being called 'refugees' or 'outsiders' in their own lands. Often, clashes can be seen from the Assamese population, ostracising the Sylhetis as outsiders. In this backdrop of perceived betrayal, the proposed research seeks to collect empirical and ethnographic account to decipher performative assertions of identity, through the migration history and expressions on social media spaces, especially during the pandemic of 2020. Notably, Sylheti population get together locally, regionally, nationally as well as globally to participate in diasporic expression of celebrating the rich cultural heritage of Sylhetis which is claimed as being very different from other Bengali cultures. These performances symbolize and encapsulate the loss of a distant home. These performances were expressed in several form on social media forums under the banner "World Sylheti family" and more such. The ethnographic research hence, envisages to put together the components of this collective memory through visible efforts of staged performances, expressions in social media and most importantly, an emotional mimesis of actions collating to a homogenous identity making. Women sharing forgotten food recipes, children dancing to Sylheti Dhamail folk songs, men bringing out traditional folklores through podcasts and more. The relevance of folklore in the era of individualism, anonymity and hyper-reality. The verbal art that gets performed in front of the folk-teller's audience, involves an imagined visual which in the 21st century is materialised through social media. The conventional idea of field as a distant and exotic space with the ethnographer at the centre is dismantled to unleash new possibilities of exploration across

more generalised contexts of social and cultural connectedness. (Gupta and Ferguson 1977) At this point, we can also refer to the concept of 'mobility turn' to capture the performances off the physical field sites of the Barak valley. The mobility turn leads sociological inquiry to wider horizons and deeper levels of a phenomena. Considering the digital space of performance such as Youtube, Facebook, WhatsApp forums as a non place, the 'mobility turn' will enable to derive knowledge out of the transitory interactions and the reflexive interplay between observation, cognition and sensations in motion. (Salvaggio and Gottschalk 2015)

Connecting, Co-Coping and Co-Hoping in the transnational space; Social Media and Social Cohesion among Ethiopian Transnational Migrant Workers in the UAE. (Saleh Sadem)

Social media has been the focus of numerous social science studies, examining its role as both a research tool and a subject of investigation. It has become an essential medium for communication, information sharing, and experience exchange among new generations of transnational migrant workers. While the term "social media" encompasses various online activities, such as social networking sites (SNSs), blogs, wikis, and microblogs, this study specifically focuses on social networking sites, namely migrants' WhatsApp group channels and Facebook pages. The objective of this study was to explore the significance of social networking sites (SNSs) in fostering social cohesiveness and integration among Ethiopian migrant workers, with a specific emphasis on two WhatsApp groups and the official Facebook page of the Ethiopian Consulate in Dubai. Through facilitating connections, providing coping mechanisms, and fostering hope, SNSs play a crucial role in enhancing social cohesion among migrants within the transnational space. This study shed light on the interactive features of transnational social media and investigated how migrant workers utilized these features for networking, cultivating a sense of digital togetherness, and fostering collective action. Furthermore, it emphasized the often overlooked role of social media in promoting migrant social cohesion within the discourse surrounding transnational migration management policies and practices. The findings of this study laid the groundwork for future research on the use of transnational social media among migrant populations. The study employed netnography as the primary research method for conducting ethnographic research in virtual space.

Mobilizing Grief: Shipibo-Konibos Grieving Practices on Facebook (Jennifer Sierra)

This paper grapples with the ongoing grieving practices that Shipibo-Konibos, an Indigenous society in the Peruvian Amazon, perform on Facebook. This empirical work is informed by my 18-month ethnographic fieldwork with Shipibo-Konibos in the Peruvian Amazon. Throughout my fieldwork, I constantly observed images of ill, injured, and dead Shipibo community members shared on Facebook from the accounts of Shipibo leaders, family members, and news pages. Conversely, the sharing of these images was a controversial topic for Shipibos during face-to-face conversations when reflecting on Shipibo social media

practices. Some were critical of sharing these “graphic” images in a “public” space such as Facebook and others defended the practice as an effective way to inform those relatives in other Shipibo settlements, who otherwise wouldn’t have timely access to these news. Nonetheless, most everyone who participated in my research at various points engaged in the sharing of these images through social media platforms, if not on Facebook, then through WhatsApp communications. This examination aims to understand how digital media becomes (de)legitimized as meaningful social spaces by mobilizing practices that used to belong to face-to-face encounters. This mobilization of action and kinds of action (e.g. grief) generates moral discussions that seek to regiment digital spaces. In proposing this work in progress, I hope for the workshop participants to guide me to relevant academic literature and open thinking-paths for future iterations of this work.

15:00-18:00

Afternoon workshops - thinking mobile in different observational modes (with Noel B. Salazar)

18:30- onwards Dinner and Drinks (TBC)