

Session title

Seafarers, ships, scientists, and civilians on the move! Interrogating how mobilities controversies manifest across blue spaces

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Session description

This session transports us to the sea and examines mobilities controversies as they span onshore to offshore spaces. Oceans and coasts are complex overlays of oceanographic, political, economic, social, and cultural processes; moreover, the movement of humans, more-than-humans, goods, and information has been at the core of blue governance for centuries. In this session we examine implications for justice, democracy, and (coastal) places within mobilities imperatives related to peripheralization, managed retreat as a climate change adaptation strategy, coastal livelihoods, and environmentally induced migration. Moving farther offshore, the session looks at international legal frameworks governing maritime mobility and transport of goods, crew, scientists, and information and data with consequences for waterborne transport innovations, power asymmetries, and collaboration. The session thus provides insights into the overall theme of mobilities controversies by bringing to the surface how place, justice, and democracy are understood in the 'blue' context.

Papers to be presented in this session include:

Tracing the assumptions of peripherality and imperatives of mobility in coastal places

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Coastal communities are often characterized as 'peripheral' through formulations overlaying physical geography; social, economic, and (geo)political structuring; and cultural imaginaries. This paper develops a typology of mobility imperatives in coastal communities based on Urry's (2007) five interdependent mobilities and how those reinforce or upend constructions of peripherality. Mobility imperatives allow us to recognize the drivers of why people, goods, and even ideas and images are called to move via policies, structures, and discourses and the controversies within those imperatives. Empirical work of the past 10 years in coastal communities in North America and Europe will evidence the typology. The paper also reflects on justice implications for those living in and visiting coastal communities and the differentiated experience and privilege among different population segments.

Navigating 'blue mobilities' in the Anthropocene: Towards justice in coastal managed retreat

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Managed retreat is often cited as a rare example of radical and transformational coastal climate change adaptation. However, the planning and implementation of coastal managed retreat is highly controversial and contested. Managed retreat processes are bound up in questions of place, power, and mobility. Who is being relocated? How are these decisions made? Do coastal communities have a voice in processes of relocation? Without careful attention to these questions of justice, managed retreat processes risk becoming dangerous examples of forced transformation that place the burden of the climate crisis on vulnerable groups. This paper aims to imagine narratives of just managed retreat in coastal communities.

Engaging with ideas around place attachment, adaptive capacity, vulnerability, and mobilities controversies, we explore potential approaches and methodologies for centering justice in the planning and implementation of coastal managed retreat processes.

Coastal livelihoods and mobility: tracing the evolution of the intersection between livelihoods and migration over 20 years in a Cambodian fishing village

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Coastal Cambodians exhibit the epitome of mobility. They live at the interface between the land and the sea, showcased by their houses built on stilts above the water and their boats with which they engage in fishing, commerce/trade, and transportation. For many, fishing is more than 'just' a livelihood and is part of their identity and way of life. However, for the past two decades, this way of life has come under increasing threat, from illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing, mangrove destruction, and sand mining. Coastal fishers have responded by diversifying their livelihoods, with mixed success. Others, however, have left the fishing village. What does this mean for those who have stayed? What does this mean for those that left? And how does this increased mobility (re)shape the sense of place? This paper traces the causes and social consequences of rural to urban mobilities vis-a-vis an analysis of livelihoods and migration through empirical research collected over two decades in the coastal fishing village of Koh Sralao. In doing so, we show how controversy manifests in differing views of migration, the fishing village as 'home', its connection to sense of place, and fishing itself as a livelihood.

International legal constraints to waterborne mobility: some controversial definitions

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Waterborne transport is subject to a variety of international rules and standards that constrain mobility all the while aiming to enable the introduction of new logistic solutions. This presentation discusses constraints posed by international and EU law on flag and coastal States, and indirectly on private shipping and port operators, namely from the angle of legal interpretation. The facilitation of technical innovation is sometimes constrained by legal definitions that favor legacy systems of waterborne mobility. Three examples are presented to defend this argument: the definition of navigable waterways, the definition of a crew and the definition of autonomy. It is submitted that good "blue governance" requires reassessing legal frameworks based on the changing technological setting in which such frameworks subsist.

Scientific mobility and equitable international ocean science collaboration

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This paper explores scientific mobility within the context of the UN's Ocean Decade initiative. The Ocean Decade promotes a paradigm shift in the generation of ocean science. The United Nations uses this global policy to mobilize state and non-state actors who have asymmetric power, resources, and knowledge to co-design and co-deliver ocean science. This process is shaped by controversies, due to inequalities in international scientific mobility and geopolitical events. The paper identifies and critically assesses scientific mobility routines that are associated with productive and equitable international ocean science collaborations.