Geographies of disruption:
Scalar, spatial and place-based dimensions of innovation, turmoil and change

19-20 April 2018

Macquarie University
Building C5A 435
The Symposium is taking place at 12 Second Way Room 435.

The walk from Macquarie University Train Station to the venue is approximately 5 minutes.

There is parking available on campus, but it is expensive. There is limited all day parking on Talavera Road. This is usually all taken by 8am.
PROGRAM

DAY 1.

10am
Acknowledgement of Country

10.15am
Introductory remarks
by Dr Jess McLean and Dr Margaret Raven

10.30am
Paper presentations
Discussion

12.30pm
LUNCH

1.30pm
Paper presentations
Discussion

3.00
AFTERNOON TEA

3.30pm
Papers presentations
Discussion

4.30pm
END OF DAY 1.

DAY 2.

10am
Paper presentations
Discussion

12.30pm
LUNCH

1.30pm
Planning the Special Issue

3.30PM
AFTERNOON TEA
END OF DAY 2.
PAPER PRESENTATIONS

Geographies of Disruption

- The Sublime without Nature
  Siobhan Lyons

- Patent mapping and Indigenous knowledge: disrupting plant ownership
  Margaret Raven
  Daniel Robinson

- Tropicalization, Dive Tourism and Environmental Sustainability in Utila, Honduras
  Maja Zonjic

- Exhalation as Disruption
  Donna Houston, Andrew McGregor and Lauren Rickards

- Racial bias in the sharing economy
  Rachel Sharples

- Tropicalization, Dive Tourism and Environmental Sustainability in Utila, Honduras
  Maja Zonjic

- Under the Sign of Silicon Valley
  Andrew Herman

- Smooth Spaces: affect, resilience and social order
  Peter Rogers

- Geography as Exploratory Science: Applications in a Rapidly Ageing World
  Hamish Robertson

- Screen Dance: Interfacing Culture and History in the Urban Space
  Mitch Goodwin
  Jack Latimore

- Deep mapping: Harnessing Museum 'Soft Power'
  Natalia Grincheva

- Disruptive innovation through urban experimentation?
  Lars Coenen
  Sebastian Fastenrath

- Disrupting sexism online? Gender and Digital Spaces
  Jess McLean and Soph Maalsen

- Anthropology/Atmosphere/Anthropocene: Drones, Disruptive Justice, and the Disruption of the Earth
  Adam Fish

- The Sublime without Nature
  Siobhan Lyons

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Abstracts and contact details

**Exhalation as Disruption**

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This paper explores the unexpected climate disruption of methane (CH4) – a greenhouse gas that is entering the atmosphere at a faster rate than it can be broken down. Methane, until recently, has been largely invisible in climate change mitigation which has strongly focused on reducing anthropogenic carbon dioxide (CO2). Due to its relatively short life-span of 10-15 years and ability to trap heat at a rate 29 times stronger than CO2 it has become a vital molecule for climate mitigation strategies. The single largest source of anthropogenic (or bovine) methane is ‘exhaled’ into the atmosphere through enteric fermentation (ruminant, particularly cow, burps). Humans, and plants in particular, also exhale methane at unknown rates. Methane is often considered a fugitive gas because it is invariably leaky. Wetlands, marshlands, oceans, soils, pipelines, rot, gas wells, landfills, all leak methane – which finds its way from land and water into the atmosphere. The transcorporeal exhalation of methane from animal, plant, bacterial, infrastructural and water bodies makes it difficult to know. The global methane problem is intimately linked to more-than-human bodily natures and political ecologies – where new abundances and spatial-temporal distributions (for example from the intensification of cattle bodies to feed human bodies) is disrupting material and spatial imaginaries of climate change. Thinking about and with methane prompts us to think about exhalation as a condition of earthly life and as a key site of disruption co-producing altered atmospheres. This demands new spatial approaches considering volumetric and chemical geographies, as well as how climate mitigation is increasingly a site of biopolitical control over unruly bodies and uncanny breath.
As a defining element of Romantic literature, the ‘sublime’ evoked a ‘delightful Horrour, a
terrible Joy’, as John Dennis wrote in 1688. Intimately linked with the natural world, the sublime
conjured feelings of both terror and beauty. In the centuries that followed, fewer places could
arouse the same sense of terrible beauty, leaving the Polar Regions as the last bastions of the
sublime. Ironically though, these are the same regions that have bared the brunt of climactic
disruption, forcing us to rethink the parameters of a sublime sensibility. While extreme nature is
disappearing, extreme weather is flourishing, dictating the need to re-evaluate the notion of an
earthly sublime. As Sumit Paul-Choudhury argues, ‘what does the 21st version [of the sublime]
look like?’ Are we in fact living in a post-sublime era, in which the sublime has been relegated to
Romantic literature in the face of disappearing nature, or will the sublime in fact, in its emphasis
on danger, become more significant than ever in the age of climate change? Or is the potential
demise of the sublime a positive indicator of a realistic, post-Romantic treatment of the
environment? In this paper I discuss how the notion of the sublime has undergone a unique
disruption due to climate change, calling for a new aesthetic category or tradition that better
captures the eco-ethical position in which we find ourselves.
The internet has been described as a ‘tragic social commons’ in which havens are provided for race hate, ethnic separation and prejudicial treatment. It also lends itself to neoliberalism, manifest in the ‘difficulties’ of regulation, as well as the narrow-casting capabilities that support micro-groups of like-minded individuals. This paper looks at the extent to which services such as Uber and Airbnb are now involved in the distribution of scarce urban resources globally and in Australia, and how these can be unevenly allocated across racial and ethnic groups. We review the extent of this substantive inequality, looking specifically at how racial prejudice manifests across these platforms and how this may be enabled by a neo-liberal framework of competitive, unregulated marketplaces that operate with little labour protections or anti-discrimination safeguards. The paper advocates for further robust empirical research on racism in the sharing economy to press the case for new forms of peer and government regulation.
Population ageing is a global phenomenon, one which is increasingly represented as a wicked problem for governments, economies and societies. Even where ageing is not yet the dominant demographic trend, such as sub-Saharan Africa, the actual numbers of older people are on the rise. Responses to population-level ageing vary enormously and yet there is a deep history to ageing policy and societal responses to ageing. In addition, population ageing is situated within a dynamic global environment in which politics and economics are major drivers of societal responses.

One of the issues for improving our understanding of population ageing and its dynamics is that for many countries we lack good data. We lack demographic data, we lack service utilisation data and we lack fine-grained epidemiological data about age-related diseases. Even in the affluent countries, such as Australia, knowledge about the dementias below the state level remains very limited. Meta-analyses, for example, tend to aggregate upwards and improve our overall understanding but rarely our local, contextual knowledge.

My suggestion for this session is that we promote geographical understandings of scale, space and place as instruments for improved understanding in situations where the other sciences lack good quality data. I illustrate these ideas with examples from my doctoral research and current projects being undertaken with colleagues. My reasoning here is that no other discipline deals as effectively with the complexities of human-environment interactions.
Drones personify the disruption discourse—a pitch by Silicon Valley, Shenzhen, and Madison Avenue that drones transform all that they touch: industry, art, culture, and politics. This disruption drone discourse has spread far and wide. Not only for start-ups and technology investors but also for humanitarians and activists, urban planners and scientists, drones are seen as ontological game changers that will usher in a new way of seeing, being, making money, and changing the world. This chapter analyses the history of atmospheric platforms in the discipline of anthropology, a discipline yet influenced by the disruptive drone discourse, and develops a theory of real disruption—human justice that disrupts the status quo and the disruption of the Earth’s ecologies—as witnessed by drones.

It is true, seeing a subject from above provides a broader and more informative context; situating the subject within a bigger picture on Earth and in relation to other ecologies, technologies, and humanities. The application of aerial video and image making in anthropology has been rarely practiced and remains little understood. Many different technologies have been used in other epistemologies to give this “god view” of the Earth below: balloons, kites, helicopters, airplanes, satellites, and now unmanned aerial vehicles or drones. This chapter examines aerial methods in the history, present, and future of anthropology both as a method used by anthropologists and a cultural practice of research participants who use aerial systems to make politically-important maps and videos of transformed traditional or threatened landscapes. To establish the ground for this examination, four histories of ethnographic film and video will be brought together: participatory video production, activist video, image-based and participatory map-making, and the scant literature on aerial or atmospheric methods in anthropology. The use of new technologies such as drones by local communities is often encouraged by large international foundations so a critique of developmentalism in humanitarianism is necessary. These four research trajectories will be linked to a five-part typology of drones used in justice projects illustrated by case studies.
Disruptive innovation through urban experimentation? – case studies from ‘Resilient Melbourne’.

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In times of significant societal, economic and environmental transformations and turbulence, resilient cities have emerged as a key topic in academic and policy spheres. Enabling cities to be better prepared to tackle a broad range of chronic stresses and acute shocks requires new approaches and ways in which systems of provision of urban services are designed, delivered and organized in areas such as mobility, energy and housing. Traditional urban planning practice and policy seems ill-equipped to deal with the fundamental uncertainties and innovations required. Rather, there is consensus (across diverse literatures) around the need for collaborative experimentation to govern transition pathways to resilient and sustainable cities (Bulkeley et al. 2011, Frantzeskaki et al. 2017, Moore et al. 2018). Global city networks such as ‘100 Resilient Cities’ are heralded as important catalysts for urban transitions providing new forms of urban governance that support innovation projects and urban experiments through interactive learning between private, public and academic sectors. On the other hand, scholars have labelled these network initiatives as ‘philanthrocapitalism’ and criticised their approaches for the neoliberal tendencies of prioritizing private agendas and skewing of public priorities (Acuto 2018). This raises the questions: what kind of innovations does urban resilience experiments yield and whose interests do they service?

The paper critically interrogates the directionality of urban resilience experiments drawing on selected case study projects, which are ‘Actions’ of the ‘Resilient Melbourne strategy’ and part of the globally initiated 100 Resilient Cities program. The approach of collaborative experimentation, manifested in the Resilient Melbourne Actions, is supposed to destabilize and disrupt established structures and institutional logics of incumbent systems of urban service provision towards more sustainable transport, affordable housing, and urban greening. Considering the distinctive project’s evolutions of the Resilient Melbourne Actions, the paper aims to unpack the heterogeneity of private, public and academic actor interests, values and resources that configure these urban resilient experiments and seeks to better understand for whom and by whom these experiments are disruptive.
Under the Sign of Silicon Valley: Canadian Tech Ecosystems and the Silicon Valley Uncanny

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This talk reports on an ongoing research project into “cultures of innovation” in the digital media technology sector in Canada, which is the first phase of an international research project that will examine comparative cultures of digital technological production. By digital media technology sector I refer primarily to startups and SMEs that produce digital devices and their software, rather than the symbolic content of digital media. Thus, our research is not into the culture industries, broadly construed. The overall goal of the research is to empirically investigate policies, practices and cultures of tech development that depart from the dominant model of Silicon Valley (and its smaller epigones in Boston and New York), with the its valorization of venture capital led financing, neo-liberal market fundamentalism, ideology of innovation as disruption and its romantic techno-utopian imaginary of “cool capitalism”.

The project focuses specifically on entrepreneurial activities within a selection of Ontario’s regional technology “ecosystems” a term describing the network of startups, accelerators, universities, incumbent firms, and other stakeholders networked together. These ecosystems are Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo (KW), and Windsor. Broadly, this project aims to map these clusters with respect how each is characterized by ecosystems sustained by specific and identifiable "cultures of innovation" (COI).
Screen Dance: Interfacing Culture and History in the Urban Space

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Yarra Yarra, a Kulin nation meeting place pre-contact, is now the site of this metropolis called Melbourne, a grid overlaid on the landscape, a vertical convergence of glass, steel and network infrastructure. To negotiate this urban space is to conduct the rather colonial act of mapping: marking the screen, meeting on the screen and ultimately documenting via the screen.

Long a contested space of conflicting and complimentary power structures, the contemporary urban city – as noted by Malcolm McCullough (2013) and William Gibson (2000) – have become intensely mediated sites of production that blend commercial and historical traditions of place and community. This is occurring in a variety of settings via the physical mediated body and the augmentation provided by the virtual media object. While personal, civic and corporate data certainly converge in the smart city so do the power flows of geology, culture and identity. These flows are informed by the narrative contexts given to them by a city’s inhabitants both past and present.

Screen Dance, is a collaborative research project looking at the design and flow of screen based information in the Melbourne CBD and how this links back - figuratively and literally - with the area’s Indigenous and environmental heritage. By considering the rapidly approaching Augmented Reality developments in the areas of advertising, public data governance and information privacy, we question how this new virtual geography might be managed. How can we build a more ethical and representative virtual space - an aesthetic ambience built upon a meaningful experience - that is not a mere copy of the established commercialized visual systems that dominate the physical environment. The imposed grid of Melbourne and the screen based communities that thrive upon its surfaces are often unaware of - or distanced from - the waterways that travel beneath the streetscape, the shape and composition of the original geography and critically the Indigenous history that codifies the function and cultural significance of the land.
As resilience becomes more apparent in diverse spheres of governance the design and management of space for purposes of security and sustainability are increasingly overlapping. Attempts to smooth the rough edges of fortifications by rendering them invisible, couched within greener, more open and both digitally and naturally surveilled spaces are also creating emergent overlaps with a range of other fields of human activity, including but not limited to: legislative changes to the borders of acceptable conduct; splintering access to services in smarter, greener cities; and retrenchment of democratic institutions and freedoms (from public protest to freedom of association and movement). Where changes appear to target the nuisance fringes of marginal groups and their activities this narrows the potential for spontaneity and disruption that sits at the heart of open-access understandings of democratic process and public space. This paper explores these tensions looking at overlapping fields of activity as complex interdependent systems, the 'smoothing' of which could have far reaching consequences for the freedom of cities in the future.
Deep mapping: Harnessing Museum ‘Soft Power’

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In my presentation I will present my current postdoctoral project Deep Mapping: Harnessing Museum “Soft Power,” supported by the SCC Engagement Grant and Transformative Technologies Research funds at the University of Melbourne.

The goal of the project is to employ a Geographic Information System (GIS) to develop new computation research methods to explore contemporary museums and a vast geography of their influence by mapping museum “soft power,” defined as an institutional ability to mobilise global public, generate economic activity and attract international investments and collaborations. The GIS software visualises museum “soft power” potential and reach in different geographic areas; it operates as a combination of deep mapping layers, each representing a different dimension of museum power resources tied to a specific location on the globe. The Resources or Cultural Layer exposes the global diversity and scope of museums’ collections, highlighting the geographic areas of their origins and calculating the collection’s power appeal index in relation to different countries. The Outputs or Social Layer maps complex museum “ecosystems” by visualizing museum social resources and telling stories about their engagements with constituencies, partners and audiences on the local and global levels. The Impacts or Economic Layer builds on the metric of economic effects, measured through ticket sales at home and abroad as well as local and international program service revenue, demonstrating the local power of attraction measured through economic gains. The GIS software combines quantitative and qualitative traditions within cultural mapping to reveal how collections, curatorial expertise and international programming strategies generate museum “soft power.” Deep Mapping framework, developed through this research, has been particularly instrumental to identify a process of evolution of the museum powers from the time of imperial colonization to the current moment of increased cultural globalization. A focused geo-visualization approach magnifies and reveals important milestones in the constant expansion and development of museum “soft power” in relation to cultural and political geography.
Utila is the smallest of the Honduran Bay Islands, and is located along the south end of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef system. While the island is prominently featured as an affordable diver’s paradise in both national and international tourism media, the representation of the Honduran mainland largely focuses on high crime rates and violence. My research challenges the division of Utila and Honduras in both tourism media, but also existing scholarly research. By focusing on the extent to which the pressures of developing, maintaining, and promoting dive tourism in Utila, Honduras, are leading to negative environmental and social consequences, I position these issues within the larger context of government corruption, Indigenous land rights struggles, and unprecedented murders of environmental activists in Honduras, overall. As a multidisciplinary Practice-Led Research project comprising of a feature-length documentary film and a written PhD exegesis, Postcards from Utila generates alternative narratives to Utila’s tropicalized image with the goal of provoking new dialogue and action to enhance Utila’s environmental and social sustainability.
Disrupting sexism online? Gender and digital spaces

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Assertions that social movements facilitated by the digital are disrupting sexism and misogyny seem commonplace at this point in time. Simultaneously, a ‘digital turn’ is argued to be underway in geographic studies. If a digital turn is underway in geographic research, then it is worthwhile to consider the roles of gender, emotions and affect within that turn. How do movements that draw on political, emotional and affectual aspects of everyday life effectively challenge sexism and misogyny? This article considers how the digital intersects with gender and what opportunities the digital affords feminist movements. We do so by drawing on a case study of feminist activism within Destroy the Joint (DTJ), an online social media activist group, and build a qualitative analysis of a dynamic, reflexive digital space. Qualitative studies of emotion, affect and the power of digital geographies, including social media spaces populated by groups like DTJ, demonstrate how cultural and social practices are changing along with technologies. This research does not draw on a techno-deterministic approach to digital geographies but forwards a feminist perspective that critically engages with the constraints and possibilities of the complex, paradoxical and contingent within the digital.
Patent mapping and Indigenous knowledge: disrupting plant ownership

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The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol provide legal and moral imperatives to protect biological resources and the Indigenous knowledge associated with them. But the authority to protect Indigenous knowledge also derives from Indigenous customary law, codes of ethics and research protocols. While the international community seeks to create a legal regime to protect Indigenous knowledge, the intellectual property system still allows Indigenous knowledges to be privatized without their consent and without benefits accruing to the Indigenous owners of that knowledge.

This paper present the disruptive capabilities of the patent landscape analysis, and some of the examples discovered in an analysis of Australian patents over Australian plant species. ‘ Patent landscape’ analysis allows for the systematic mapping and analysis of patents to identify potential cases of biopiracy. The method provides an evidence base that can facilitate the disruption of claims to ownership. The disruptive capacity of the method derives from the ability for researchers to match pre-existing published historical knowledge about a specific plant species with the claims of the patent to see if they meet the requirements for novelty, non-obviousness and that the information has no prior disclosure.