

**Two-wheeled tensions in urban Southeast Asia:
Motorbike taxis, app-based services, and the politics of mobility.**

As state officials, planners, and developers rush to ‘modernise’ Southeast Asia’s capital cities the mobilities of daily city life, including the complex movements of people, objects, and information become the object of transportation policies and Master Plans. In this session, we draw attention to the kinetic underclass (Cresswell 2012) or mobility poor (Eidse et al. 2016), focusing on informal motorbike taxi drivers in three Southeast Asian capital cities, namely Hanoi, Bangkok, and Jakarta. We explore the ways by which government policies, splintered accessibility, the newly arrived app-based competitors, and growing car cultures are shaping, impacting, and at times displacing livelihoods options for different groups of drivers. In Hanoi, we examine the mobility injustices that *xe om* (traditional motorbike taxi drivers) are facing with recent and forthcoming modernisation plans and policies for the city, as well as tensions due to increasing competition from young, app-savvy GrabBike rivals. We then focus on Hanoi’s motorbike food delivery services and the challenges drivers are facing as commercial ‘sharing’ services are expanding into this domain. In Bangkok, we investigate debates regarding formalization and informalization, and new commercial ‘sharing’ platforms such as Uber, GrabTaxi and GoBike. Analyzing the conflict of conventional versus online-based motorbike taxi services in Jakarta, we highlight the competing economic moralities invoked by drivers, operators, clients, and policy makers. By doing so, we raise questions regarding the nature of transport and mobility justice, the right to mobility, the relationships between mobility and informal urban livelihood options, and the struggles of the urban mobile workforce.

Convenors: Sarah Turner and Arve Hansen

Papers:

Sarah Turner, Department of Geography, McGill University, Canada.

Contesting Vietnam’s urban planning for modern mobilities: Informal motorbike taxi drivers’ struggles and strategies on Hanoi’s streets.

Arve Hansen, Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo, Norway

Competing forms of food delivery in Hanoi’s system of moto-mobility.

Claudio Sopranzetti, All Souls College, University of Oxford, England.

Formality, informality, and platform capitalism in Bangkok.

Mechthild von Vacano, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.

From territory to algorithm: Shifting moral grounds in Jakarta’s motorbike taxi industry.