

Research Summary: Cooperative futures for ferry travel in Vieques, Puerto Rico
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As transportation geography turns to questions of power, access, inequalities, and justice, research on urban transport systems opaquely similar efforts in rural, isolated, and underserved geographies. While research in transportation justice has exponentially grown in recent years (Karner et al., 2020; Pereira et al., 2016; Verlinghieri & Schwanen, 2020), these shared goals of ensuring just transport across cities globally have not influenced the transportation landscape of Puerto Rico. The island's current context of balancing the paradox of debt restructuring with costly post-disaster recovery efforts dims the rethinking of our current transportation system in line with broader goals of justice. With the support of the Illinois Geographical Society Research Grant, I will explore this disconnect guided by the overarching question: how do the Puerto Rican debt crisis and the post-disaster infrastructural collapse impact transportation governance?

My upcoming summer fieldwork addresses this question by shifting attention towards the production and contestation of (im)mobilities of a ferry-dependent community of Puerto Rico. Vieques is a municipal island 8 miles off the east coast of Puerto Rico that connects to the main island via ferry service and charter flights. Following the U.S. Navy's withdrawal in 2003 after their violent 60-year presence, the Puerto Rican government prepared a series of unfulfilled comprehensive plans to ensure the sustainable development of Vieques. Upon the U.S. Navy's departure, Viequesenses have experienced a worsening of their quality of life confronting delayed clean-up efforts from the federal government, elevated housing costs, and the closure of the municipal hospital in 2017.

Using a mobility justice framework, this research emphasizes the politics and power dynamics within everyday mobility infrastructures. This framing highlights how the coloniality of transportation governance produces immobilities in the decontextualized geographies of Vieques' ferry-dependency. Locating the ongoing struggles against the privatization of the passenger ferry service within Vieques' historical context of direct colonial exploitation through framing the deficient ferry service as a mobility injustice allows us to examine how the crises of neoliberal coloniality intersect and specifically land in transportation infrastructures. Furthermore, it

uncovers how the alternatives imagined by residents reject neoliberal solutions by proposing a maritime transportation cooperative that seeks a commoning of residents' mobile lives.

The research project's contribution to advancing knowledge in transportation geography rests in two aspects. In first place, the project's combination of different bodies of literature to create a unique theoretical framework fit to the study area places colonized geographies at the forefront of transportation geography by directly addressing the coloniality of transport systems and knowledges. Secondly, this project advances an agenda of empowering communities facing mobility injustices through using participatory-action research methods, contributing to a growing shift in transportation studies that seeks to place passengers at the forefront of decision-making processes. I am thankful to the Illinois Geographical Society for providing monetary support for this project and contributing to the critical turn within transportation geography.

As of writing this research summary update, I have finalized all the required documentation from my institution to conduct research with human subjects and will begin the ethnographic research in June 2022. This includes qualitative data collection methods of participant observations at the ferry terminals, interviews with residents and activists involved in the creation of the ferry cooperative, and a workshop to ascertain why a cooperative and what it represents under the framework of mobility justice. These efforts would not be possible without the support of the IGS research grant, which has allowed me to expand my research methodologies to include ample interviews and trips to my research site.