



Beyond Cost-Benefit Analysis: Methodological and Theoretical Advancements in Transport Appraisal

Call for abstracts for a NECTAR Cluster 1 (Transport infrastructure impacts and evaluation) workshop

Brussels, Belgium 23-24 October 2023

The Mobilise Mobility and Logistics Research Group and the Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) is organising a workshop titled "Beyond Cost-Benefit Analysis: Methodological and Theoretical Advancements in Transport Appraisal". The workshop will be held at the Brussels campus of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel on 23-24 October 2023.

Workshop topics

Appraisal or ex-ante evaluation is widely considered as a critical step for assessing the extent to which a transport project (infrastructure or service) or policy promotes sustainability or societal wellbeing. In practice, social cost-benefit analysis (SCBA) is the dominant and even mandatory method for projects funded by institutions such as the World Bank or the European Union. Meanwhile, in academic circles, CBA has been criticised on methodological grounds, e.g., for the (im)possibility of converting social and ecological impacts into market prices, or questionable assumptions concerning the value of travel time. More fundamental criticism pertains to the widespread application of utilitarianism, an approach in which any negative ecological or societal impact can be offset by any sufficiently important positive economic impact, as a normative principle for quantifying what is 'sustainable' or 'good' for society.

Alternatives to CBA have originated mostly from the (participatory) multi-criteria analysis (MCA) family, but quantifying societal wellbeing or sustainability remains a practical and theoretical challenge. Also, there is little knowledge on their value in real-world planning practice.

Owing to the far-reaching impacts of significant transport projects and the fundamentality of defining what is 'good' for society, looking for a suitable replacement of CBA could be considered very challenging due to growing worldview pluralism and decreasing confidence in techno-rational elicitation of welfare. Innovation is more likely to be sought in developing methods appropriate for their contexts, which is a challenging but exciting avenue of research, considering the need for methodological rigour, dearth of empirical evidence, all the while navigating uncertainty, complexity, conflicting interests and conflicting moralities.

We therefore welcome contributions that address one or more of the following topics (not an exhaustive list):

- Innovative appraisal methods or improvements of CBA or MCA.

- Lessons from the application of CBA, MCA or other appraisal methods in real-world transport projects and their relation to actual decision making.
- Methods for quantifying the desirability of (transport) projects and policies based on alternative models of social, ecological and economic progress (doughnut economics, de-/post-growth, strong sustainability, gross national happiness, etc.).
- Methods for considering the social, spatial and temporal distribution of impacts.
- Best practices in sustainability assessments.
- Best practices in participatory or deliberative methods (e.g., citizen involvement in appraisal).
- Integrating appraisal into new planning and design methods (e.g., co-creation).
- From appraisal to decisions: empirical studies on how appraisal results are (not) used in decision making.
- Appraising the impact of new disruptive mobility services (e.g., shared mobility, mobility as a service, etc.).
- Appraisal of services and infrastructure for connected and autonomous vehicles.
- Methodological and empirical studies on the value of travel time.
- Using qualitative methods in transport appraisal.

We seek an open discussion about each presentation. Early-career researchers and PhD students are especially encouraged to submit an abstract.

Abstract submission

Colleagues interested in presenting a paper are invited to send a long abstract of maximum 500 words by email to: Imre Keseru (imre.keseru@vub.be), Geert te Boveldt (geert.te.boveldt@vub.be), and Kobe Boussauw (kobe.boussauw@vub.be) **by 19 June 2023**. Please, also indicate the title, author(s), affiliations, corresponding contact, and three keywords. A maximum of three bibliographic references are allowed.

Travel and Accommodation Expenses

Up to 25 NECTAR Members will be invited to present a paper. The participation of one author per paper is free and includes one night's accommodation, a dinner and coffee/lunch breaks. NECTAR membership for the year 2023 (€70 or, for those under the age of 30, €40) is required in order to attend the meeting. Non-members can find details on how to join the association on the 'Membership' page of NECTAR's website: <https://www.nectar-eu.eu/membership/>

Important dates

Abstract submission: 19 June 2023

Abstract acceptance notice: 10 July

Meeting dates: 23-24 October 2023

Venue

The workshop is hosted by **the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)** and will be held at the [U-Residence Conference Centre](#) at the VUB Etterbeek Campus in Brussels (Blvd Général Jacques 271, 1050 Brussels).

Organising committee:

Geert te Boveldt, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium)
Imre Keseru, Cluster 1 co-chair, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium)
Kobe Boussauw, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium)
Cathy Macharis, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium)
Simon Bothof, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium)
Robin Hickman, Cluster 1 co-chair, University College London (UK)
Niek Mouter, Cluster 1 co-chair, Technical University Delft (Netherlands)
Andrew R. Goetz, Cluster 1 co-chair, University of Denver (USA)

***NECTAR** is a European-based scientific association. The primary objective is to foster research collaboration and exchange of information between experts in the field of transport, communication and mobility from all European countries and the rest of the world. It is a multidisciplinary social science network. It brings together a wide variety of perspectives on transport and communication problems and their impacts on society in an international perspective. For further information see: <http://www.nectar-eu.eu>*