

## **2025 American Association of Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting, Detroit, Michigan**

### **Summary Report**

In late March 2025, I had the honour of presenting my paper at the American Association of Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting in Detroit, Michigan. The five-day conference ran from the 24th to the 28th of March.

My paper, *"Assessing the Intersection of Gender and Dignity in Popular Transport"*, co-authored with my PhD supervisor, Prof. Karel Martens, was part of the session titled *"Transportation Justice 8: Gendered Perspectives."* This session brought together four researchers from the Global South, presenting work from Nairobi, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Hong Kong. It offered a wide range of insights into gendered transport experiences across diverse urban contexts and was sponsored by the AAG's Transport Justice Committee.

Our paper explores gendered experiences within Nairobi's popular transport sector through the lens of Suzanne Killmister's dignity theory, which conceptualises dignity as comprising personal, social, and status dimensions. Drawing on focus group data with key stakeholders of the transport ecosystem, our thematic analysis highlights how gendered social expectations in public and private spheres undermine the dignity of women entering this male-dominated sector. We also find that male and female transport workers experience diminished social dignity, shaped by how society perceives and engages with their role. For users, status-based dignity is unevenly distributed, with socio-economic position influencing how they are treated within the transport ecosystem.

In the past, my AAG Annual meetings had been online, and this was my first time to be physically present at the Annual Meeting. I had looked forward to attending a physical meeting for quite some time, and finally, through the generous funding of the ISTRC, I was able to do so. There were numerous interesting sessions running at the Annual Meeting and as often with big conferences, it can be an overwhelming experience. However, there are numerous resources to help one achieve their objectives of networking and learning from relevant sessions, which I share below:

- 1) The AAG offers annual membership options, with reduced rates available for certain groups, including Indigenous students and those from developing countries. Members can also join specialised communities within the AAG, where they can access tailored resources, share opportunities, and benefit from discounted conference rates. For students, becoming a member is a valuable way to stay connected, access support, and engage with a broader academic network.

- 2) I recommend downloading the AAG Annual Meeting app before you arrive. It's a helpful way to explore the full program, including paper sessions, special events, and community gatherings. The app lets you build a personalised schedule, so you don't miss sessions that

align with your interests. I found it especially useful for identifying scholars working on transport justice. Being able to reach out in advance led to some productive conversations during and after sessions.

3) Outside of the presentations, there are also other interesting activities and special events. During the Meeting, there was an exhibit by the sponsors, where I was able to learn about potential journals for my articles and other working groups and their activities outside of the AAG.

5) Detroit, with its layered transport history, was a fitting location for the 2025 AAG Annual Meeting. Known as the Motor City, its identity is closely tied to the automobile industry, something still visible in its current transport landscape. The city showcases several interesting innovations, such as the People Mover, a” 2.94-mile elevated automated people mover system in Detroit, Michigan, United States. The system operates in a one-way loop on a single track encircling downtown Detroit, using Intermediate Capacity Transit System linear induction motor technology developed by the Urban Transportation Development Corporation.<sup>1</sup>” However, being the Motor Town, the public bus transport was less reliable and oftentimes the bus did not arrive on time, thereby forcing one to order a Lyft or Uber, which is a bit ironic for a transport conference. However, these experiences gave us the opportunity to observe some of the inequalities in transport infrastructures.

Attending the 2025 AAG Annual Meeting was a unique experience and allowed me to mingle with researchers in my field of study and to form future research collaborations. I also found the methodologies used in work like mine very insightful.

I am grateful to the Israeli Smart Transportation Research Center for supporting my participation in the 2025 AAG Annual Meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> *Detroit People Mover* (2025) *Wikipedia*. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit\\_People\\_Mover](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit_People_Mover) (Accessed: 30 April 2025).