

Centre for Advanced Studies in Mobility & Humanities (MoHu)

[Centro di Studi Avanzati su Mobilità e Scienze Umane]
Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Geografiche e dell'Antichità (DiSSGeA)
Università di Padova

MANIFESTO DI INTENTI

October 20, 2025

Preamble: Mobility and the humanities at the University of Padua

In 2018 the Department of Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World of the University of Padua (DiSSGeA) was selected by ANVUR, the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of the Universities and Research Institutes, as Department of Excellence for the period 2018-2022. Thanks to this achievement, DiSSGeA received approximately 6,000,000 € from the Italian Ministry for Education, Universities and Research for strengthening research activities, developing excellent teaching methods, and enhancing its international profile. The related *Mobility & Humanities project of excellence* gave us the opportunity to become a **research hub for the humanistic study of mobility**, meaning the movement of people, objects, ideas and texts in past and present societies as well as in different geographical contexts.

The project funded the recruitment of new staff members, as well as the development of two research infrastructures: a **Centre for Advanced Studies in Mobility & Humanities (MoHu)**, formally established on October 19, 2021, and a **Digital Laboratory for Mobility Research (MobiLab)**. The project also included a series of initiatives fostering excellence in education, such as a new **international curriculum in Mobility Studies** within the Historical Sciences Master programme, and PhD and post-doc research grants supporting research on mobility. Furthermore, the funding has enabled the development of **public engagement activities**, sometimes held in English, to bring the most current aspects of mobility from a humanistic perspective to the attention of diverse audiences.

Since then, our **international network** has grown including several foreign universities, centres and institutions. Taking advantage of a rich and unique mix of disciplines, with a distinctive reference to the connections between past and present times (from antiquity to contemporaneity), our Department now firmly contributes to the area of mobilities study on a global scale.

Rationale for a Centre for Advanced Studies in Mobility & Humanities 2025-2029

Thematic framing and cultural relevance

During the last twenty years, the “new mobilities paradigm” has spread globally and across many fields of research, providing an inclusive framework for a wide range of topics and disciplines. Indeed, technological and societal advancement have moved toward an increased interest in mobilities and their complexities. For this reason, the topic of mobility holds significant importance **not only in scientific terms, but also from cultural and communicative perspectives**. The field extends well beyond more established forms of mobility, such as transportation, migration or tourism, to include multiple other mobilities of people, things, commodities, ideas, policies, images and texts, among others. This means also that the study of mobility is increasingly activating transdisciplinary connections and dialogues. In fact, while mobility has been the object of a major involvement by the hard and social sciences, the humanities can play an equally important role in understanding mobility in a diachronic and spatial perspective.

The DiSSGeA department is the most suitable place to activate this dialogue between humanities and social sciences, thanks to the presence of disciplines that belong to both fields. On the basis of **a multifaceted, plural and inclusive conceptualisation of mobility**, an expanding methodological creativity involving a variety of sources, and the **convergence of social and humanities research**, the MoHu Centre can thus bring together a multiplicity of movement-related phenomena to contribute to this expanding field of research.

As highlighted above, mobilities are not limited to transport or migratory challenges, but include a variety of subjects, as for example: movements of knowledge, ideas and political cultures; movements and translation of books and textual traditions; sustainable and alternative mobility practices; walking and creative methodologies; the narration and representation of movement; movements of goods and related meanings; intellectual infrastructures and the mobilisation of cultural objects.

The Centre delineates 5 key areas, or thematic clusters, called “Nodes” for the study of this complex research topic: *People, Objects, Texts, Ideas, Theories & Methods*. In such a framework, the synergy between the different disciplines within DiSSGeA allows, on one hand, to contextualise the impact of mobility phenomena in the contemporary world and, on the other, to study the profound dynamism of societies in all historical epochs. Historicising mobilities, thus, is also seen as an opportunity to critically rethink present and future mobilities.

Openness, networking and international profile

Based on previous experience, we can affirm that the MoHu Centre has provided an invaluable opportunity to **bring together researchers from a department characterised by strong multidisciplinary**, becoming a solid entity that continues to produce exchanges and interactions among its members in the fields of research and third mission, with crucial impacts on the Department's international teaching activities.

In particular, the most important tool for bringing together both permanent and non-permanent staff are the **interdisciplinary projects, funded by DiSSGeA** through its Departmental Development Project (PSD, 2023-2027), which is specifically dedicated to the theme of Mobilities. This demonstrates how this theme and the Centre are at the heart of DiSSGeA's plans for the coming years, including the Strategic Plan (PiStraD).

This aggregation is deeply connected to, and stimulated by, **extra-department relationships with other researchers, from both UniPd and foreign universities and institutes**. Starting from such a collaborative stance, the MoHu currently configures itself as a place where intellectual **exchange and hospitality** take a crucial part in the development of brand-new research directions. Key speakers in the field of the mobility humanities are regularly invited to give seminars in order to further elaborate on, and advance, MoHu's research activities. This way, the Centre stimulates collaboration around interdisciplinary research, consolidating the international standing of both DiSSGeA and UniPd and making them more attractive.

The Centre's hospitality towards external researchers is also manifested through the presence of numerous **visiting scholars and visiting PhD students, both self-sponsored and invited** through selection processes using dedicated grants provided by DiSSGeA.

This **openness** is not limited to the scientific-academic world, but also extends to the intersectoral sphere, involving **external stakeholders** especially through third mission activities related to the theme of mobility.

Organisation and funding

The governance of the MoHu involves the collaboration of a **PI** and a **Scientific Committee** of 14 researchers representing the various areas of the Department. These researchers have responsibilities in different fields related to mobility: the MobiLab, the Mobility Studies curriculum of the Master's Degree in Historical Sciences, the international Agreements with foreign partners and strategic alliances such as Arqus.

The Committee animates, solicits, collects, and communicates scientific initiatives of the Centre; organises activities (conferences, summer schools, third mission events); contributes to the evaluation committee for project calls and calls for visiting grants funded by the Department and based at the MoHu; approves requests for external patronage; proposes new international agreements.

The scientific activities are mainly carried out through **internal and external project funds that are explicitly related to the theme of mobility and based at the MoHu** or MobiLab, such as the multidisciplinary projects included in the frame of the *Mobilities: A Transdisciplinary Framework for Research, International Teaching and Public Engagement in the Humanities* Department Development Project (PSD, 2023-2027); PRIN projects; PhD and Postdoc projects funded by the Department; MSCA projects, etc.

The Centre also utilises a **dedicated small fund** derived from income related to organised activities (for example, conferences with fees; currently 15,000 euros).

Visibility and communication

Since its foundation, the MoHu Centre has placed great **emphasis on communication**, an area in which DiSSGeA invests considerable energy, also thanks to the collaboration of dedicated communication staff.

The **MoHu website**, entirely written in English, constitutes an important resource for both internal and external communication. It also functions as an **archive where all completed activities are recorded and all planned ones are advertised**. Such a tool allows the Centre's member researchers to have a virtual meeting point where they can stay updated on activities carried out by other researchers (including early career ones). Furthermore, the website is the most valuable tool for conveying the variety, depth, and continuity of the activities carried out by the Centre.

The **MoHu Newsletter** and **DiSSGeA's social media channels** allow for amplifying the Centre's visibility and reaching diverse local, national, and international audiences.

Continuous monitoring of a dedicated email address ensures **efficient communication with external stakeholders**.

List of planned activities 2025-2029

Research

1. **Complete and annually activate mobility-based multidisciplinary projects through the internal call** of the Departmental Development Project (PSD, 2023-2027). These are two-year projects that can be funded from a minimum of 2,500 to a maximum of 5,000 euros (for a total of 12,500 euros per year). They shall involve collaboration between staff from 3 different scientific-disciplinary sectors, engage non-permanent staff, PhD students and MA students, and include collaborations with international researchers or institutions.
2. **Provide collaborative, logistical and communicative infrastructure for projects covered by other funding sources** (PRIN, MSCA, etc.) that have explicitly indicated MoHu as a reference point, also in collaboration with MobiLab and its digital services.
3. **Host seminar activities** (specifically related to the topic of mobility studies) funded by the Department with teaching funds or with funds from researchers who wish to benefit from the visibility guaranteed by the Centre.
4. Organise **study days (at least 1 per year, starting from 2026) involving** already consolidated and **institutionalised partnerships of the MoHu** to ensure the full operability of Agreements signed with foreign universities and institutions. In parallel, stimulate the opening of new relationships that could lead to new formalised agreements, particularly through dedicated missions funded by the above mentioned multidisciplinary projects. These study days can be funded through the PSD multidisciplinary projects or with MoHu's dedicated fund.

Below is a list of universities and institutions with which DiSSGeA has signed **formalised Agreements (Memoranda)** mentioning the specific role of MoHu:

- Lancaster University (Centre for Mobilities Research)
- Konkuk University, South Korea (KU Academy of Mobility Humanities)
- Aberystwyth University (Centre for Transport and Mobility - CeTraM)
- University of Surrey (Mobilities in Literature and Culture Research Centre)
- Royal Holloway University of London (Centre for the GeoHumanities)
- Université Paris Nanterre (Centre de recherches pluridisciplinaires et multilingues)
- Istituto Storico Italo Germanico della Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK)

Other centres and institutions with which MoHu has joint projects and close relationships:

- University of Oxford, Faculty of History – the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities Networks
- Forum des Vies Mobiles / Mobile Lives Forum
- Atlas – Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research
- FRINGE URBAN NARRATIVES research network, based at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
- CSC Cultures of Vigilance. Transformations | Spaces | Practices, LMU - Munich
- Tokyo College
- EUI European University Institute

In this light, the Centre shall give **specific attention to institutions and areas on which UniPd is focusing** in terms of expanding relationships, for example Monash University (where one of the leading specialists in the field, Prof. Peter Adey, is based) and South Korea, a country that has recently joined Horizon (since 2020, DiSSGeA has had an agreement and intense relations with the Academy of Mobility Humanities at Konkuk University in Seoul).

5. Within the framework of the UniPd's strategic partnerships, carry forward the activities of the **Arqus Mobilities Studies Community of Practice**, founded on June 3, 2025 and **based at MoHu**, including participation in Arqus funding calls. Use this tool to connect not only with other colleagues from the alliance universities (currently Granada, Minho, Maynooth, Leipzig), but also with other **researchers from other UniPd Departments** who are seeking collaborations on the theme of mobility (currently, a colleague from FISSPA is part of the Mobility Studies Arqus community).

6. Provide **support for the 2025-2030 agreement** stipulated between DiSSGeA and **Istituto Storico Italo Germanico della Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK)**, which includes a series of co-funded activities related to the theme of Mobility Studies (seminar series, summer school, PhD scholarship, invitation of 2 visiting professors).

7. Announce calls for applications, using funds specifically allocated by the PSD project (5,000 euros per year for 2 grants), select and support the presence of **visiting scholars at the MoHu Centre**, in collaboration with the visiting scholar welcoming service of the DiSSGeA research office.

8. **Take part in landmark scientific events of the global mobility studies community**, e.g. the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility annual Conference, or the annual Global Mobility Humanities Conference held at Konkuk University in Seoul (funded by PSD projects, researchers's personal funding).

Third mission, public engagement and communication

1. Following the actions planned and funded by the *PSD 2023-2027 Mobilities*, animate, provide the foundation for, and give communicative support to **third mission events and meetings with stakeholders**, also in collaboration with other structures (DiSSGeA Geography Museum, Libraries, interdepartmental centres).
2. Continue to invest energy in the Centre's **website** as the focal point for dissemination and communication. Move the website to a university host by 2026. **Align the coordinated branding with the new university communication policies.**
3. Regularly **publish (3-4 issues per year) the MoHu Newsletter**. Announce calls for applications, using funds specifically allocated by the PSD project, select and support the presence of visiting scholars at the MoHu Centre in collaboration with the visiting scholar welcoming service of the DiSSGeA research office.

Synergy with teaching activity

1. Develop a **stronger synergy between the MoHu Centre and the Mobility Studies international Curriculum of the Master's Degree in Historical Sciences**, in order to increase co-visibility also at the communication level, so as to become both more attractive. To this end, organise seminars accessible to both researchers and students in order to translate research updates into innovative teaching, within the Curriculum and in other DiSSGeA degree courses that have teachings related to the theme of mobility. Plan annual lectures by DiSSGeA faculty at the inaugural days of each academic year of the Curriculum in Mobility Studies, in particular involving DiSSGeA colleagues that work on mobility but do not take part in the teaching staff of the Curriculum, in order to enhance the sense of a transversal mobility studies community.
2. Consolidate scientific and teaching relationships with **Lancaster University**, with which a **joint degree in Mobility Humanities** has been activated, starting with the a.a. 2025/2026.
3. Provide the thematic framework, host and contribute to **Summer Schools** funded through UniPd calls (e.g. Shaping a World Class University).
4. **Involve MA students** in scientific and public engagement activities hosted by the MoHu (e.g. students poster sessions within organised study days; public exhibitions of students project works related to mobility, etc.). Provide visibility to students self-organised activities around the theme of mobilities (e.g. student-led fanzine and mobility studies podcast series).
5. Commit to providing supervisory activities for **doctoral students who request to spend a visiting period at MoHu**, coming from foreign universities.

Composition

PI:

Tania Rossetto, DiSSGeA Department

Collegio dei Ricercatori:

DiSSGeA Department members

Scientific Committee: Marco Bertilorenzi, Lucio Biasiori, Elena Canadelli, Andrea Caracausi (past Director of the MoHu Centre), Margherita Cisani, Gianmarco De Angelis, Luca Fezzi, Laura Lo Presti, Margherita Losacco, Federico Mazzini, Paola Molino, Giada Peterle, Niccolò Pianciola, Chiara Rabbiosi. **Other members:** Giulia Albanese, Aldino Bondesan, Matteo Bortolini, Benedetta Castiglioni, Remi Dewiere, Vittoria Feola, Giovanni Florio, Maria Cristina La Rocca, Francesco Lubian, Ottavia Mazzon, Dario Nardini, Andrea Savio, Enrico Valseriati, Francesco Veronese, Maria Veronese, Giulia Zornetta.

Extra-DiSSGeA members

Other UniPd Departments: Irene Barbiera (Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche), Paolo Giardullo (Dip. di Filosofia, Sociologia, Pedagogia e Psicologia applicata), Francesca Alice Vianello (Dip. di Filosofia, Sociologia, Pedagogia e Psicologia applicata), Daniel Zilio (Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell'Informazione). **Foreign universities (past visiting):** Karl Appuhn (New York University), Erik Aschenbrand (Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development), Szilvia Gyimóthy (Copenhagen Business School), Patricia Hertel (University of Basel), Ole B. Jensen (Aalborg University), Jean Sebastian "Baz" Lecocq (Humboldt University of Berlin), Fabiola Mancinelli (Universitat de Barcelona), Antonio Paolo Russo (Universitat Rovira i Virgili), Noel B. Salazar (KU Leuven), Anna-Leena Toivanen (University of Eastern Finland).

External Advisory Board:

Peter Adey, Monash University; David Bissell, University of Melbourne; Tim Cresswell, University of Edinburgh; Felix Driver, Royal Holloway University of London; Simone Fari, Universidad de Granada; Jinhyoung Lee, Konkuk University - Seoul; Peter Merriman, Aberystwyth University; Lynne Pearce, Lancaster University; Lucia Quaquarelli, Université Paris Nanterre; Rosa Salzberg, University of Trento; Mimi Sheller, Worcester Polytechnic Institute.