

Mobility, the spatio-temporality of practice, and implications for low carbon transitions

Mobility practices and potentials for transition

Cosmobilities 10th Anniversary Conference, Copenhagen
Friday Nov 7th 2014

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- Disruptions project WP2:
 - Ethnographic study of everyday mobilities
 - Brighton and Lancaster Universities
 - 53 individuals in 39 households
 - 2-4 interviews each (110+ with drop-out) over 2 years and extra data collection (photo, video, scrapbook, diaries, blogs, spreadsheets)
 - Social practices, not behaviourist ABC (Shove 2010)
 - ABC = travel as individual (psychological, economic) rational choice: policy tries to change individuals' minds
 - SPA = practices as focus, draw together *elements* (Shove et al 2012), applies to both *mobility* and *activities* (Watson 2012), understands dominance of automobility as *co-evolution* of society, space and automobile-dependent practices (Urry 2004; Geels 2005): policy could address socio-spatial-temporal structure of practices
 - ∴ Potentials for intervention beyond individual and beyond transport policy?

Project, methods, approach



"If I didn't have the car [son] wouldn't go to that **school**. He'd end up going to the school...at the bottom of our road...It's not a great school... [Daughter] wouldn't have... any of her **school clubs** because I have to drop them off. [Son] wouldn't have any **clubs** because I have to drop him off...[Son] wouldn't have **after school football**...he wouldn't have **Beavers** and **Boy's Brigade**...I'd be seriously **lost** without my car." (Gill)

"I **needed** a car before that for just being able to **drop the kids off at school and get to work in time**...we couldn't do the walking train to school because **I had to be out first**, if you see what I mean, or else that could have been the solution. So that was it, **drop them off then get to work on time to walk in the office** that was how it went." (Rachel)

"Because her saxophone teacher comes here, but the cello teacher is over in Withdean so **we have to take her there** and orchestra is somewhere else again. But my mother does some of that shuttling as well on the days that we can't manage. And otherwise I very rarely use the car." (Amanda)

Automobility: bridging complex time-spaces of practice sequences



"I don't need one really with where I work and where I live. It's not actually that practical or necessary at all really"

"I want to get a...staff parking [permit] here. Not that I intend to drive into work on a regular basis but I'm sure at some point having a car will be useful"

"I'm not used to doing something like a Saturday shop or a big shop once a week....I'll go to the supermarket on the way home and buy, and just pick up what I need. So I don't know if I'll get into a routine...I don't need to buy things in such bulk...that I can't carry them home on the bike generally. And I don't mind shopping several times a week because it's fairly quick, you know, it's fairly close to where I live."

"I'll be going out ...paying back some of my friends for all the country trips that they've taken me out on ... Days out, yeah, you know, and weekends kind of going out to the country and country pub lunches and stuff...will certainly be an option now whereas it wouldn't have been in the past...everybody was really pleased when I passed...but now they all want me to visit them." (Christoph)

**Traps of automobility? Possibility-
convenience-routine-need**



“So you **plan ahead** more. You probably **don't go out as often** as you did. Not distances anyway. I go out of the house as often but **the distance you go is much less**. So times I would go and do my shopping in Skipton, whereas I wouldn't do that now” (Richard)

“before we **sold the car**, the one thing we used the car for was...**once a month** you do a **giant supermarket shop**...So I tried Asda's **online delivery**, never going back! So...we did that for a couple of months and decided...we don't need the car.” (Ruth)

“the **crucial thing** was when I no longer needed to drop them both off at school...when I **sold the car**...at some point that was THE thing that meant I had a choice, was once I no longer had to get them to **school in such a tight turnaround**” (Rachel, mother of...)

“We were **never** particularly **reliant** on the car at all. As I say, it was only when we couldn't walk. We **didn't go out of walking distance that often**. To visit family, that would be the main reason to use the car for my mum and dad, to visit family...it's **not like we live isolated in the country** and I've had to learn in order to see my friends, it's just **not so necessary** at this point in my life.” (Emmeline, her daughter)

Escaping the car – reconfiguring time and space



“both **our parents live a long way away**... but if we didn’t have these **long journeys** I think we would seriously **think about getting rid of the car**...So to be honest we could do that and use the **car club**...

I **could certainly live without a car**...it’s there because If I go to Blackpool[for work], I drive. I don’t do that” (Focus Group data, Liverpool)

“**I don’t need one really**...but I can’t, having passed I discovered I **couldn’t do City Cars for a year and I couldn’t rent a car for three years**, so to carry on driving I had no choice than actually **buying** a car...” (Christoph)

“sometimes **we didn’t use it at all** in the weekends...So it was just sitting there not getting used and...I was surprised at how much it cost to own a car...it was **our values and our choice not to use it** but then that meant it was **costing us a fortune** to have it. So we sold it.” (Ruth)

“so that was the main thing...that said ok **this is ok for us** [...] **not having a vehicle** [...] We could have the **perfect vehicle for the situation** in hand when we needed” (Pete).

Reluctant drivers, or owners?
Access for flexibility of use...



Transport policy tackles *“the symptoms (e.g., provide cycle facilities) but fail[s] to tackle the **underlying problems** (distance, complex trip characteristics)...The underlying problems of changes in the structure of society, such as life styles and approaches to parenting are not addressed.”* (Dickinson et al. 2003: 65)

*“Rather than viewing this mobility as given —as in policies of modal shift—we might intervene in the wider **system of practices** which produces the need for mobility. In other words, patterns of mobility, or private car use, might have nothing to do with transport policy at all, but be connected to how households are provisioned, where children go to school, how work and leisure are conducted, and so on.”* (Spurling et al 2013: 29-30)

Mobility policy: changing time-spaces of practices

Least radical? **Spectrum of potential systemic interventions affecting mobility practices** Most?



WORK

Parking for car-sharers - *infrastructural*

Mandate flexible hours - *temporal*

Technology for flexible work provided by employer - *material*

Reduce 'core hours' for business - *temporal*

Collectivised works transport - *infrastructural*

Late arrival accepted for low-carbon commuters - *cultural*

-Responsibility for low-carbon commute shifts to employer - *systemic*

EDUCATION

Mandate cycle proficiency - *personal competence*

Flexible start time for low carbon parents - *temporal*

Mandate local school attendance - *choice*

No car stopping or dropping near schools - *infrastructure*

Demand responsive transport - *infrastructure*

Carbon footprint of school run responsibility shifts to school - *systemic*

'Cycle to school' funds

Walking and cycling 'buses' - slowing traffic - addressing risk

HEALTH

Maintain GP locations - *spatial*

De-privatise fleets, rationalise DRT patient transport - *infrastructure*

Remove 'patient choice' of treatment site - *choice*

RECREATION AND LEISURE

Halt sales of local facilities (school fields, recreation grounds etc - *spatial*

Late night gym/class discounts - *temporal*

Employers responsible for after-school clubs - *systemic*