UNEQUAL MOBILITY AND ITS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

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Socio-spatial Inequalities, Transport and Mobilities

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The early years …
A social policy approach

• What is the problem?
• How did/does it happen?
• Why does it matter?
• Who/where is affected?
• How can it be addressed?
• Did it work?
• Who benefits and who loses out?
Travel is now an essential part of everyday life …

‘Travel is part of the way we live our lives and this must be taken into account as we look ahead to consider the options open to us for how we live within and as part of our environment’

(County Surveyors Service Transport Futures Group, 2008: 4)
So everyone needs to travel more

- Towns and cities are increasingly designed around car ownership and use
- Key amenities and services are no longer ‘local’
- Home and work locations are no longer co-located
- People’s lives and working patterns are more complex and fragmented
- Not everyone has a car or can drive
- Public transport is expensive and poorly connected with the activities people want to undertake
Mobility by income

Source: National Travel Survey 2008

Thanks to Gordon Walker for the NTS analysis!
Effects of car ownership

People with cars travel roughly twice the distance of those without across all income groups
Unequal mobility

• People on low incomes more are likely to be non drivers and in a household without a car (48% of h/hs)

• They are also more likely to be:
  – Single parent families (mostly female hoh) (57%)
  – Separated (30%) or widowed (32%)
  – Children below 19 years
  – People aged over 70 (70% are women over 70 years)
  – Non white people (33% compared with 17% of whites)
BUT DOES UNEQUAL MOBILITY REALLY MATTER?
Factors influencing people’s travel outcomes
Dynamics of social exclusion

Adapted from Burchardt, Le Grand and Piachaud (2002)
Researching unequal mobility and its social consequences

• 1999-2000 – Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) study
• 2002 – 2003 – Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) study
• 2003 -2005 5 – G7 nations study
• 2003- 2004 – UK/US study
• 2005 – 2007 – More UK case studies for JRF
• 2007 – 2008 – South African study
• 2008 – 2010 – Australian study
• 2009 -2011 – Brazilian study
• 2011 – 2013 – Chilean study
Key research questions

• What is the role of transport and mobility in people’s everyday lives?
• Does transport matter? If so, when and why?
• What happens when transport isn’t there?
• What are the social consequences of low mobility?
• What happens when people’s travel options are improved?
Methodological issues

• Engagement/recruitment
  – ‘Hard to reach’ populations
  – Scrutiny shy and untrusting of authority
  – Difficult sub-groups (e.g. teenagers, Muslim women)

• Retention and commitment
  – Low literacy and communication skills and low boredom thresholds
  – Relevance of transport compared with other issues
  – Managing participant expectations
  – Researcher burden and ethical responsibilities
Methodological approach

• Focus on low income areas (IMD and other indices)
• Involvement of local frontline agencies
• Recognisance trips and local foot surveys
• Focus groups and qualitative interviews with residents and service users
• Focus on personal circumstances and activities (not transport)
• Gaming tools, maps, role-play
• Multi-staged action research
SOME UK STUDY FINDINGS
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Key concerns:
• Lack of both local amenities and public transport
• Timing and frequency of services
• Poor vehicular access and supporting infrastructure
• Cost of fares
• Unwillingness to travel outside local area
• Personal safety issues
• Lack of information
'If you’ve got to go and sign on you have to make sure you’ve got the money and the petrol to get there...
‘You got to have a car, man, if you want a job - one that pays. There ain’t no decent work round here. I’m going to get me a car and then I’m off to London to look for a proper job’
‘The buses go all round the world and takes too long when you’re waiting and on most of the bus stops it doesn’t tell you what time the bus is going to come so you are waiting for ages.’
‘I used to nick cars because there’s nothing else to do. You’re just walking around at two in the morning and there’s a car and why not? It’s better than just walking around’
SEU findings

• 40% of jobseekers say transport is a problem getting to jobs
• 1/2 of 16-18 year olds in education find their transport costs hard to meet
• 1.4 million people either miss or turn down hospital appointments because of problems with transport
• People without cars find it more difficult to access healthy affordable food
• Child are 5 times more likely to be in traffic accidents in low income households
• Individual isolation for older people
• Community severance
Social consequences of unequal mobility in the UK

- Many (but not all) people living on low incomes in the UK also experience significant degrees of transport disadvantage.
- There is evidence of a link between their lack of transport and other aspects of their social disadvantage.
- Transport is a key cited reason given for unemployed not taking up job offers and training opportunities.
- Lack of mobility and low travel horizons can be associated with reduced social learning in early years and social isolation in later life.
- People are less likely to seek medical attention if they live in areas of poor transport and low accessibility.
- ‘Enclave’ communities are more likely to experience crime and anti-social behaviour.
SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY
Social context

• 72% of people live in households that are income and/or materially deprived.
• 37.8% of the relevant working age population are unemployed or unable to work due to sickness/disability.
• 27.4% of the adult population aged 18–65 are educationally deprived (have had no secondary schooling).
• 67.2% of the population experience environmental deprivation.
• Levels of deprivation vary greatly by province but that levels of deprivation also vary greatly within provinces.
Transport context

- 26% of low income h/hs have access to a car
- 75% have no access to a train station
- 40% of low income workers walk to work
- 76% of learners walk to their place of education
- 80% households undertake their food shopping trips on foot and 40% access health care this way
- 65% h/hs in lowest quintile and 63% in 2\textsuperscript{nd} lowest did not use any form of motorised transport in 7 day diary period

Source National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) 2003
Study area Tshwane region (Pretoria)

Thanks to Andre Neves for the maps!
Study outline

• Similar qualitative approach to JRF study using:
  – 4 case study areas in Pretoria region
  – 11 focus groups with key identified disadvantaged groups

• Similar methodological issues but problems intensified plus languages

• FGs held in study areas using specially trained facilitators

• Cultural and political barriers to full and frank discussions
Transport is expensive ...

“It’s cheaper to live in the township [on the outskirts of the city centre]. The problem is transport. You have to use taxis to come to town on a daily basis and we cannot afford that money. If we are here, at least we can walk or use a train and therefore we spend less on transport”
Journeys are long and difficult ...

“I walk to the taxi for 10 minutes and I wait for the taxi to get full and it takes the taxi 35 minutes to get to the taxi rank and then I get another taxi, but I don’t wait for the taxi because it gets full fast. Then it drops me near to the clinic. Then I walk to the clinic for 35 minutes.”
Taxis are often the only way ...

“If you want to take your child to the clinic, there is no other way ... you will have to use a taxi and it is expensive ... there are many taxis available but the buses are only available to transport people who are going to work and students”
But they are unsafe and expensive ...

“The taxis speed a lot and they don’t care about our lives”

“It costs me R12 for a one way trip”
New perspectives on transport and social exclusion?

• Transport did matter and was an important part of people’s lives even for those on lowest incomes

• Motorised transport was characterised as a basic need alongside food, shelter and clothing

• Travel is very expensive relative to incomes largely due to over-dependence on minibus taxis

• Lack of transport led to similar social consequences as in the UK but with more severe outcomes

• Journeys are longer, more arduous and less safe – numerous reported rapes, killings and thefts

• Government seems unwilling or is incapable to act
BRAZILIAN STUDY
Social context

1. Rapidly urbanising cities and new employment opportunities
   • > 80% of the population living in urban areas
   • Complex and fragmented urban structures
   • High density + suburbanization
   • Poor physical infrastructure

2. Demographic changes in the structure of population, household composition and lifestyle
   • Population getting older and probably travelling more (1996: 4,0 people/hh 2006: 3,3 people/hh)

3. Expanding economy but growth in GDP has not been evenly distributed or led to social development for many
Transport context

• Travel patterns
  • Increase in car ownership and use
  • Priority given to car and roads
  • Few concerns about climate change
• Approx. 40% of households own a car (but no national travel survey since 1993)
• Almost no information on transport or travel behaviours in the favelas
Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil
Study areas – 2 communities

Coque - inner city Recife

Santa Terezinha (hillside altos)
Focus groups – 4 in each area

1 x student males
- Coque

2 x women carers
2 x employed women
2 x unemployed men
  in each area

1 x student females – Alto Santa Terezhina

Plus 5 x semi-structured interviews with older people in each area
Coque - a ‘no go’ area

‘The taxi does not come here, it just doesn’t. It’s scared. And in the matter of work here if you are looking for work do not put your name not here, otherwise you won’t get it.’ (Employed woman’s group, Coque)

‘Access is bad here, you can see the bias, the ambulance does not enter here, no one comes here ...’ (Unemployed males group, Coque)
The Altos – getting back up is the problem

‘The Samurai (bus) takes too long to arrive, the buses are always crowded and slow, but there is an additional van that serves the community well.’

(Unemployed male, AST)

Traders have invaded the sidewalks and we have to walk down the [middle of] the street, but near where I live has no trade and have to walk far.

(Female carer AST)
Some concluding remarks

• Unequal mobility is not a problem in itself
• The broader social and spatial context is needed to understand and articulate it’s unequal *social consequences*
• Transport-related social disadvantage is universal problem which is universally overlooked by indices of social wellbeing and thus social policy-makers
• It is experienced to different degrees and with differential consequences in different geographical contexts and by different social groups
• **Research needs to move beyond qualitative evidence to quantify and compare its incidence and intensity**
• It is high time that social factors featured as equally important in the transport decision-making process!!!
Books

*Running on Empty* - Policy Press  
*Social Sustainability In Urban Areas* – Earthscan  
*Automotives* – Emerald

Special Issue

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*Social Impacts and Equity Issues in Transport*

Research website

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