Social Impacts and Equity in Transport

Policy Briefing Note 4: Housing and Sustainable Communities

Key issues

- There are tensions between accessibility, strategy and environment within urban neighbourhoods and these tensions are more acute in deprived communities than in more affluent neighbourhoods. **Land use and density is a starting point** – housing developments are built around the car so to what extent is it a housing issue rather than a transport one?

- **Accessibility is a complex issue that goes beyond existence of provision.** Accessibility is about more than cost and availability. Transport accessibility is about urban form. Income inequality is mirrored in inequality in access to transport. **Distance is not the only issue.** There are other complexities around riding a bike and cycling is virtually unknown to lots of deprived communities because of issues of safety and space to store bike.

- There are functional and cultural meanings of different forms of transport, for example, car mobility culture goes against limiting cars. Transport is an aspirational good. Breaking the car culture is difficult as cars have acquired cultural symbolism. What does it mean to own a car? There is both a physical and psychological attachment to the car.

- Linking people to jobs is vital. Access to work is key and while transport connectivity and access are necessary – they are not sufficient. Low income communities rely more on local goods and services and also rely on walking and buses. We need to convince people that quality of life and standards of living don't have to be far away.

- The system should encourage those with mobility and good access to travel less e.g. fewer flights for holidays, shift from private car to public transport where possible while simultaneously increasing mobility for those who lack mobility and access to opportunities such as work and education.

- What are the cumulative effects of lots of small neighbourhood projects? We need to monitor their value and secure funding and we also need to analyse the role of soft measures versus infrastructure, for example: bike loan schemes, cycle training.

Policy Priorities Emerging from the Workshop

1. There is a clear need for local government to sustain good public transport despite spending reductions – efficiencies, fare rises, concessions.

2. We need to think creatively about carless households in poorly served areas – ideas including car sharing, taxis, quality information about bus services, low-cost high-volume services where possible.

3. It is very important to link those who think about transport with those who think about social policy. There is a need to embed some cross-pollination so that more consideration is given to transport planning to deliver on more social objectives.

4. We need to encourage those with mobility and good access to travel less e.g. less flights for holidays, shift from private car to public transport where possible while simultaneously increasing mobility for those who lack mobility and access to opportunities – work / education etc.

5. We also need a combination of smarter growth and investment in infrastructure in areas.
Housing and Sustainable Communities Workshop Summary

1. Introduction to Workshop 3

This Policy Briefing Note concerns the third workshop in a series aiming to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and capacity building; to better equip researchers, policymakers and practitioners across the different social science and transport disciplines to address the social challenges of providing transport and access, and to maximise the social benefits of the transport system within the UK context, now and in the future. This workshop is part of a series of themed events designed to explore various theoretical, policy and practical aspects of transport, social equity and social impacts of transport through a number of themed events.

The third workshop explored Transport and Housing and Sustainable Communities. It brought together non-transport professionals from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds but all with interests in housing and communities, urban regeneration and sustainability, as well as representatives from local government and relevant NGOs, alongside transport professionals. The idea was to bring together different perspectives, knowledge and experiences to generate discussion on the key issues and trends, and skills and policy needs, around this complex issue of how transport affects housing and sustainable communities.

2. Background to linking transport with housing and sustainable communities

Policy Briefing Note 1 from the Two-Day Framing Event sets out the background to the Workshop Series’ concerns with social impact and social equity. With respect to transport and housing and sustainable communities, the key points identified were:

- Linking transport studies and the social sciences;
- Understanding the social challenges and potential social benefits of the transport system;
- Integrating wider policies relating to transport with transport-thinking e.g. neighbourhood problems, unemployment, low educational attainment, etc.;
- Showing why social / urban issues matter to transport, as well as vice versa.

Physical mobility is just as critical to urban systems as buildings and that transport organisation and accessibility are the life blood of modern communities. However, motorised transport is deeply embedded in and dominates human activity and the car dominates our environment and social relations, which is to the disadvantage of the many people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods who do not own a car or cannot drive.

Many communities can be effectively ‘locked out’ of modern transport systems due to the lack of a car or non-functioning public transport in the areas which they live. This is due to both the low density development of many of the 20th Century social estates and the privatisation of bus services and impacts (outside London). Lack of cash and the imbalance between the costs of different modes can also be a problem for many low income households. The current urban transport system is

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1 A full report of this workshop as well as presentation materials and information about the rest of the seminar series can be found at [http://www.tsu.ox.ac.uk/research/uktrese/](http://www.tsu.ox.ac.uk/research/uktrese/)
further undermined by competing policy priorities, the intensity of urban traffic and badly managed traffic systems.

This has severe social consequences for many deprived neighbourhoods: children can’t play out and are not allowed to go to clubs or travel independently to secondary schools; parents won’t work far away; elderly people and families won’t go out because they fear ‘youth gangs’ on streets and young people don’t access wider opportunities because they can’t travel outside of their neighbourhoods.

These problems are spiralling and lead to lower educational attainment, less job opportunities, empty housing and run-down neighbourhoods. For these reasons, communities need efficient, affordable transport – transport is changing fast and it is crucial that its social and collective good is realised.

Families in low income areas are like the ‘canary in the mine’ and we need a mixture of low cost/low tech and high speed/high tech solutions to put this right.

3. Workshop Three: Housing and Sustainable Communities

Workshop Three was held within the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics and Political Science on Tuesday 21st June 2011. Workshop participants came from a wide range of academic disciplines and policy areas and included representatives of local government, central government departments and NGOs.

3.1 Key aims and objectives

Workshop Three took a predominantly urban focus and aimed to build on the considerable research of Professor Power and colleagues at the LSE in relation to low income communities and urban areas both in the UK and abroad. It considered the accessibility impacts and transport needs of different populations within major urban renewal project areas and how transport could be better integrated into urban planning and regeneration. It also focused on the role of space in cities and urban areas and more sustainable forms of transport including walking, cycling and public transport.

The workshop was designed to explore:

1. Inequality and the impact on disadvantaged communities of concentrated poverty

2. Urban research related to poorer communities – international perspective

3. Transport and accessibility problems as they affect:
   - Employment opportunities
   - Local environments
   - Energy and transport costs
   - Local service quality

4. Integrating lower income communities into the wider city
   - The role of public transport
   - The role of social space and traffic taming
   - The value of compact cities and density – the balance between mobility, choice and sustainability
3.2 Speakers

- Dr Ruth Lupton (Deputy Director, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE) *The impact on poor areas of poverty and social problems*
- Professor Anne Power (Professor of Social Policy, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE) *Learning from weak market cities, how poor areas develop at the margin*
- Philipp Rode (Executive Director, LSE Cities) *International perspectives on disadvantage - inequality in transport accessibility in Sao Paulo, Istanbul and Mumbai*
- Tony Travers (Director, LSE London) *Paying for public transport – local transport authorities facing funding cuts and rising energy costs*
- Ben Plowden (Director – Better Routes and Places, Transport for London) *What Transport for London is doing to improve connectivity in lower income parts of London*
- Sarah Leeming (Active Travel Coordinator, Sustrans) *Active Travel Project: Luton*
- Mark Hackett (Forum for Alternative Belfast) *Disconnected City: Belfast*
- Dr Andrea Colantonio (Research Officer, LSE Cities / Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE) *Social Sustainability and Transport: Barcelona*

3.3 Workshop Outputs

A workshop report, this policy briefing note and slides of all the workshop presentations can be downloaded from the UKTRC website: [http://www.tsu.ox.ac.uk/research/uktrcse/](http://www.tsu.ox.ac.uk/research/uktrcse/). The project will also produce a final report in December 2011 and a Special Issue of the Journal of Transport Geography in early 2012.

4. Discussion of research and policy themes

On the basis of the presentations and discussion sessions, the following key themes were identified:

4.1 Link between deprived communities and accessibility - localised issues

It is difficult to generalise issues in low-income areas and deprived communities and it is also difficult therefore to generalise the transport accessibility issues affecting them. Issues are localised and vary across different communities and neighbourhoods. Local issues need to be dealt with at a local level but is there a lack of close local analysis, for example in the form of Neighbourhood Transport Audits.

4.2 The meaning of accessibility in the context of deprived communities

As discussed throughout the UKTRC seminar series on social impacts and social equity issues accessibility goes beyond simply cost and availability. Particularly in deprived communities the provision and availability of transport helps to provide access but other factors determine whether or not people will make use of them. Again, greater knowledge of local issues will be invaluable here.

4.3 Poverty and transport

We need to understand how poverty makes people travel as well as how it prevents them from travelling in order to make neighbourhoods simultaneously more accessible and safer. Many deprived communities are served by poor quality services which may increase the need to travel in order to access schools, healthcare and shops.
4.4 Learning from experience of the built form and urban environments

There are many lessons to be learned from studies of deprived urban environments, central to which is a move away from building housing as monolithic, mono-tenure, car-dependent estates and housing developments outside of core city centres. We should focus instead on the vital infrastructure necessary for successful neighbourhoods and communities: transport, density, the reclamation and reuse of existing residential and commercial buildings, the strong principles of urban design.

4.5 The role of public transport in challenging economic circumstances

In the challenging economic circumstances we are now in there is a clear need for local government to sustain good public transport despite the wide-ranging spending reductions. Local Authorities have a role to play in working across their range of services to deliver wider objectives for example, transport, planning and environmental provision alongside more general social and civic responsibilities such as ensuring a decent environment, effective land use, clean air, tackling social disadvantage, lobbying for a skilled workforce, and transport services to link people to jobs.

4.6 Creative solutions for transport

There is also a need to think creatively about carless households in poorly served areas. People in low income / deprived areas are often more reliant on walking and public transport, there should be attention on creative solutions including car sharing, taxis, the provision of quality information about bus services, and low-cost high-volume services where possible. In order to provide these more creative solutions, we should enable the articulation of the particular needs of households to councillors and to the government.

4.7 Mobility and accessibility for those who need it

The link between rising incomes and distance travelled is well known and clear. We should encourage those with mobility and good access to travel less e.g. fewer flights for holidays, enabling the shift from private car to public transport where possible, while simultaneously increasing mobility and accessibility for those who lack mobility and access to opportunities such as education and employment.

4.8 Contrast between big, infrastructure projects and smaller scale soft measures

There was much discussion on the role of big infrastructure projects along smaller scale soft measures, particularly in the context of localism. We questioned how do the big projects get decided upon and funded? Who decides? What opportunities do the public have to influence this?

There should be greater understanding of and focus on meeting local needs – localism could offer an opportunity for local communities to think about their needs. We also need to consider how to how to make community plans / neighbourhood audits more strategic and influential.

4.9 What can be used in the UK from continental experiences?

Much evidence during the workshop came from outside the UK and there was discussion of what the UK could learn from continental experiences. For example, the role of centralized car-parking spaces in European cities, car clubs and car-sharing. The location of the car can be a potentially
powerful policy lever, by centralising parking in communities, the car can be located as close to people’s homes as the next bus stop.

4.10 How to promote the new goals for transport in the context of localism?

In order to promote the new goals for transport in the context of localism there needs to be a combination of smarter growth and investment in existing and new infrastructure.

5. Methodologies, gaps in knowledge and future priorities

5.1 Methodologies

The workshop did not include detailed discussion of particular methodologies but there was a clear identification of the value of cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary discussion of transport and related issues. We need to encourage more interaction between urban and social science researchers and transport experts, as well as urban / community / housing and transport government bodies and agencies, and to develop methods to move the research and policy agendas forwards in a more holistic manner acknowledging the integrated nature of urban and transport planning.

5.2 Gaps in knowledge

There was not specific discussion during the workshop on gaps in knowledge but discussion covered a number of gaps including:

- The need to look at cultures of living as well as mobility, cultures of housing and mobility – subtleties around different living patterns.
- More work on and discussion of visionary examples of housing and transport in the future

5.3 Future Priorities

The following five future priorities have been identified based on the presentations at the workshop and discussion throughout the day:

1. There is a clear need for local government to sustain good public transport despite spending reductions in the form of efficiencies, fare rises, concessions.

2. We need to think creatively about carless households in poorly served areas such as ideas including car sharing, taxis, provision of quality information about bus services, and low-cost high-volume services where possible.

3. It is very important to link those who think about transport with those who think about social policy. There is a need to embed some cross-pollination so that more consideration is given to transport planning to deliver on more social objectives.

4. We need to encourage those with mobility and good access to travel less e.g. less flights for holidays, shift from private car to public transport where possible while simultaneously increasing mobility for those who lack mobility and access to opportunities including education and employment.

5. We also need a combination of smarter growth and investment in infrastructure in areas.
For more information about the topics covered in this workshop please contact Laura Lane, LSE Housing and Communities ([l.lane@lse.ac.uk](mailto:l.lane@lse.ac.uk)). For details of the workshop series and wider project please contact Karen Lucas, Transport Studies Unit at the University of Oxford ([Karen.Lucas@ouce.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Karen.Lucas@ouce.ox.ac.uk)).