7996 words

submitted to Environment and Planning D: Society & Space

Moving Methods, Travelling Times

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Abstract

In this paper we examine the relatively new topic of travel time, the 'valuation' of which is of great significance in the potential funding and construction of infrastructural projects. In the economic appraisals of such projects, which are often of massive scale and impact, it is presumed that such time is wasted, dead or empty, needs no further investigation and should be minimised. However, in this paper we show that such time is not always wasted, dead and empty but can be filled with activities, fantasies and social practices, as literature, art and the cinema have often examined. We especially show that there are multiple kinds of time and place involved in the processes of travel and not just a measured clock time that has to be minimised in getting from a Cartesian point A to point B (and hence saving the odd minute). Travel time is situated in various socio-material practices, which include other passengers, the views out of the window, the table, the objects brought in one's bag and so on. We describe and evaluate various methods of researching the somewhat inchoate notion of travel time and the related experiences of places on-the-move. We consider how to disrupt the notion deployed in transport appraisals that such time is empty and should be minimised, and hence disrupt the view that the places of travel are also non-places.

Introduction

> *"Journeys are the midwives of thought... There is almost a quaint correlation*
>
> *between what is in front of our eyes and the thoughts we are able to have in*
>
> *our head: large thoughts at times requiring large views, new thoughts new*
>
> *places."*
>
> (*The Art of Travel*, Alain de Botton, 2002).

> *"I would like to take you on a journey, a collage of the many journeys*
>
> *recorded as part of the research. A journey both on trains, buses and foot,*
>
> *but also through this thing we call 'travel time'. To reconsider what travel*
>
> *time is, and most crucially, how it is made and experienced."*
>
> (*Journeys with Ada*, an audio-visual performance by Laura Watts for the UK
>
> Department for Transport, 2006).

In 2000 the UK Government announced plans to invest £180 billion in transport infrastructure over a ten year period in order to 'increase productivity and cut business costs by making journeys quicker and more reliable' (DETR, 2000: 79; various subsequent plans have since been developed). It has been calculated that this massive expenditure, principally aimed at reducing road congestion, might result in motorists saving on average a minute per day of their travel time (Goodwin, 2001). The notion that a minute of extra work a day would measurably increase an individual's productive output is an effect of transport appraisal methods, which involve the economic modelling of travel time as wasted time and through aggregating thousands of millions of individual minutes.

However, there seems to be a disparity between travel time use as valued and experienced by transport strategists and policy-makers, and travel time use as valued and experienced by passengers on-the-move. Since 2004 we have been part of a interdisciplinary project between transport studies and social studies of mobilities (Urry, 2007; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2006; and the new journal *Mobilities*), which addresses the seeming incommensurability between these versions of travel time. In this paper we show that such time is not always wasted, dead and empty but can be filled with activities, fantasies and social practices. We also demonstrate that there are multiple kinds of time and place involved in the processes of travel, and not just a measured clock time to be minimised in getting from a Cartesian point A to point B (and hence saving the odd minute). Travel time is situated in various socio-material practices, which include other passengers, the views out of the window, the table, the objects carried in one's bag and so on. We describe and evaluate various methods of researching the somewhat inchoate notion of travel time and the experiences of moving place. We consider how to disrupt the notion deployed in transport appraisals that such time is wasted, dead and empty, and show that the places of travel are not to be viewed as simply non-places. In particular, we address travel time use in 'public' transport settings, by contrast with car travel, to understand how it is made and valued in socio-material practices, from gazing out of a steamed up bus window to writing email via a train wi-fi network.

In effect, we attempting to make an interference into the strategic account of travel time use, to suggest how knowledges of travel time use might be imagined and made differently (Haraway, 1997; Latour, 2004). To this end we explore how diverse social and cultural research methods, across transport studies, mobilities, and science studies, might contribute to understanding and translating the inchoate,

ephemeral and transitory worlds of those venturing forth into those shifting

landscapes of buses, coaches and trains.

Travelling Times

Socially and culturally travel time has long seen to have distinct value, from the

importance of pilgrimage and nomadism (Turner, 1996), to the sublime romanticism

of walking and climbing (Lewis, 2000; Michael, 2000; Urry, 2007: chap 4), to the car

as a moving office (Laurier and Philo, 2003; Laurier, 2004).

In the nineteenth century the benefits of rail travel were often articulated as

democratic. Rail passengers found themselves in the company of strangers within

the novel, enclosed spaces of train carriages, leading commentators to believe there

was something newly democratic about rail travel (Schivelbusch, 1987). These new

places developed new sociabilities such as 'civil inattention' - being in public but

minimising attention paid to others (Goffman, 1963) – and new travel time uses. For

example, Goffman highlights how books, newspapers and magazines allow us: 'to

carry around a screen that can be raised at any time to give ourselves or others an

excuse for not initiating contact' (1963: 139).

This project to investigate travel time use in the information age brings ongoing

socio-cultural research concerned with mobilities together with debates in transport

studies concerned with travel time as a matter of economic calculation (see Lyons

and Urry, 2005). Transport appraisal involves translating individual lumpy, fragile,

embodied and 'embaggaged' travellers into utility-maximising passengers, from

which calculations of cost versus benefit of new developments can be made.

Through this appraisal of the effect of potential new infrastructures and policies on

model passengers, decisions can be made based on the economic calculation of costs versus benefits. Thus a new bypass is built, a railway line is upgraded for high-speed trains, a new runway is agreed. These economic models are highly elaborate, but involve assumptions concerning how and why people travel and the nature of their travel time. In particular it is normally presumed that (see Lyons and Urry, 2005, for details):

- the amount of travel time *per person* remains stable at a little over one hour per day (Schafer, 1998: 459), although where the data is disaggregated variations in travel time between region, gender and social class become apparent (Schafer and Victor, 2000);
- time spent traveling is economically unproductive and is therefore to be regarded as wasted time;
- passengers will trade time for money so that ideally the individual traveler would forego traveling to the destination if this were at all possible;
- passengers who 'productively' contribute to the economy have higher 'revealed preferences' and hence higher value and thus their travel time savings are viewed as more significant;
- travel time saved as a result of new transport spending will be justified through allowing more time for activities involving paid employment.

'Moving' time is thus understood as valueless with nothing much happening there (and moving places are similarly seen as without value). 'Stationary' time by contrast is viewed as valuable and the site of (economically measurable) work, except for the strange and notably absent times and places of 'waiting'. Even tiny reductions in passenger travel time are highly valued, since at an aggregate level this equates to

millions or billions of pounds. The DETR states that: 'travel time savings are the single most important component in the measured transport benefits/disbenefits of most schemes and policies. Hence the methods of valuing them critically affect the measurement of the economic impacts of schemes' (DETR, 1999: 183). It is into this highly consequential model of travel time use as 'valueless' that we seek to make our intervention.

Moving Methods

The analysis of *mobilities* as a wide-ranging category of connection, distance, and motion, transforms social science and its research methods (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007). Mobilities methods need to address the many and interdependent forms of intermittent movement of people, images, information and objects (see recent studies, Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen and Urry, 2004; Cresswell, 2006). In order to address our twin concerns of the passenger experience of travel time use, and how to communicate that experience to policy-makers, we deploy various methods to capture and translate what is as inchoate and fleeting as travel time use within 'public' transportation (noting of course that in these neo-liberal times much public transport is in fact 'private').

What follows is an outline of the methods and findings of the Travel Time Use in the Information Age Project (Lyons and Urry, 2005), with some critical reflection of their role, and finally how we draw these together to create an interference within public transport strategy, to translate places of 'valueless' movement into places and times of 'activity'.

Large-Scale Survey

Large-scale surveys of passengers are common in transport strategy for gathering statistically significant data concerning passenger movement. In the UK there is a National Rail Passenger Survey (Passenger Focus, 2006) and a National Travel Survey (Department for Transport UK, 2005). Such surveys translate individual journey experiences into aggregate categories such as leisure and business travel, peak and off-peak services, outward and return journeys. Aggregation provides empirical grounds for policy making and a clarity of numbers that belies the absences made through its production. For example, transport appraisal categories of 'business' and 'leisure' travel, makes absent those journeys and passengers who travel for unpaid work, voluntary work, students, and other work that are not directly subject to 'economic calculation' even if they have important value in other ways (see Sayer, 2004, on such contested moral economies). This is particularly relevant in consideration of the gendering of transport models (see discussions in Letherby and Reynolds, 2005; Glucksmann, 2000). Numbers provide a trustworthy basis for policy decisions and public witnessing of those decisions, a trust that derives from the long heritage of scientific forms of communication (Shapin, 1994; Porter, 1995; and many papers in *Economy and Society*).[1]

In practice, we could identify little reflexivity in the large-scale surveys that play a crucial role in making transport policy.[2] Yet, as a method that reduces divergent experiences into commensurate and comparable numbers, surveys are extremely successful in developing and communicating empirical evidence, particularly between social research and transport strategy (Salomon and Mokhtarian, 1997; Mokhtarian and Salomon, 2001). Since one aim of this research was to engage directly with transport strategists' assumptions concerning the 'use' of travel time, a large-scale survey was central to our methodology.

As part of the Autumn 2004 UK Strategic Rail Authority (SRA, now disbanded) self-completion survey of rail passengers, 26,221 people completed various multi-choice questions concerning their travel time use. In particular, passengers were asked to choose categories of activities they had conducted en route, and to select particular artefacts they carried with them (for more detail see Lyons, Jain, Holley, 2007). These categories drew on both our strategic interest in mobile technologies, and a prior informal survey we conducted of passenger activities on UK trains. Overall, by far the most popular activities were (see Figure 1): reading for leisure (34%); window gazing/people watching (18%); and working/studying (13%). Moreover, more than a third of passengers are equipped with a book; over three quarters carry a newspaper; a third have paperwork; over two thirds carry a mobile phone; and business travellers are much more likely to have a laptop, PDA/hand-held computer or to have paperwork with them (see Figure 2). These significant figures support research elsewhere that suggests passengers are frequently well-equipped for travel and for making positive use of their travel time including waiting (Gasparini, 1995).

More importantly, for our intervention into travel time as a waste of time, around 70% of passengers considered that their travel time was *of some use* although the younger the person the more likely they were to consider such time as wasted. To explore this we also asked whether passengers planned for their journey. Those passengers who considered their travel time to have been wasted were more than twice as likely to have done no advance planning (70%), compared with those who considered their travel time very worthwhile (31%).

In short, many UK rail passengers regarded their travel time as of 'use', that there

were various and divergent 'uses' and that they were partially equipped to make it 'useful'. This directly contrasts with transport appraisal where travel time is un-useable and a waste of time. The objects carried by passengers and their advanced planning for the journey positively impacted upon how useful their travel time was thought to be.

These results communicate the need to re-assess calculations of travel time within transport appraisal (see also our activities in promoting these findings to the transport industry: Lyons, 2006; ATOC, 2007). However, these survey results have limitations in developing a full understanding of travel time. They do not reflect the enormous variability in quality and experience of travel time, they assume that activities are discrete, separable and comparable, and they do not capture anything of the changing places in which the travel is located and time passes. In order to move forward in understanding travel time use we explored the different experiences, temporalities and places of travel through further research methods.

Focus group interviews

First, we conducted six focus groups, three sets of male and female only groups in the South-West, North-West and London. Participants were selected on the basis that they had some experience of public transport. We focused discussions on travel time use across different travel modes and journey purposes, although participants said less concerning walking, cycling, and interchanges between different transport networks.

A key question put to all groups was that of 'teleportation'. A San Francisco Bay Area survey conducted what was called a *teleportation test*: if travel time was undesired

then passengers would prefer to teleport instantly to their destination (Mokhtarian and Salomon, 2001). This survey by contrast found that 70% of respondents agreed that *travel is desired for its own sake* over travel as *undesired* or *neutral* - they did not want to teleport. The following is illustrative of the general reaction to the notion of teleportation in our focus groups.

Amy: I'd use it. More time in bed...

Dawn:...If you're driving there [to work] it, sort of, gives you time for your brain to wake up and for your head to get into gear. I know I, sort of, start thinking about: I've got to do this, I've got to do that. So you've planning time and then, when you're coming home, it's like your de-stressing time. I know, speaking to quite a few people that I work with that commute further than what we do, ...by the time they've got home they're quite chilled out... When the journey's too short they don't get that opportunity. They're all wound up when they get home.

Mary: If it's from one thing, bang, to the next thing, you don't have time to sort things out in your head, really, before you've got to go to the next appointment.

Amy: I never thought about that. Yes, you're right.

The immediate reaction to teleportation was often positive, particularly reflecting on long haul flights or the desire for more social time with friends and family. However, as discussion developed, the notion of teleportation as a travel ideal was challenged

within the group and a different response developed; occasionally (as with Amy) a person completely reversed their initial reaction. The following extract discusses how different journeys are variably amenable to teleportation.

Jamie:...If I was on a flight to Australia that would be boring for me. But if I was in Australia and I had a three day drive across the middle of the country, which took days and days and days, and you didn't see anything different, but you're experiencing it all, and you're experiencing the vastness, then there's no way I would teleport myself. I'd want to get all of that, soak it all up.

Bert: Do you not think if you could teleport yourself instantly [to Australia] you'd lose a lot of the scale of things...?

Rich: I'd pick the teleporter because the bus service doesn't run after six o'clock. If you go out with friends or anything you've got to walk. It's five miles between each village and I live a mile out, so it takes hours just to go and visit people.

Paul: There are times when travelling is important and enjoyable in itself.

Overall, the initial eulogizing of teleportation then changed into distinguishing between particular moments and parts of journeys that were a waste of time or boring or particularly arduous, and those parts of journeys where the experience of travelling was important or desirable. Waiting time, at stations and stops, in queues and traffic, were moments that were frequently talked of as problematic and

frustrating (see Bissell, 2007). There was no other general agreement over the categories of this separation of wasted versus valuable travel; travel was intensively specific (the season, time of day and week, weather and prior expectations all altered the potential value of a journey).

For many participants travelling formed an essential part of the experience of a given place – it was integral to constituting both the journey as a moving place and the destination as a place (see De Botton, 2002). In many discussions, the surrounding landscape formed a crucial part of the journey; the positive effect of views through the window from the car, train or bus were all mentioned. Choosing a scenic route that might be slower, even for business trips, was quite common. This important role of landscape as an actant resonates with the large-scale rail passenger survey results, which reported that the second most popular activity was window-gazing upon the passing scenery; it is also in tension with other parts of the research that recorded the trend in newer train carriages towards smaller windows, and seats with out windows (where there is no 'tourist gaze' possible: Urry 2002).[3]

Also, importantly, business and commuter journeys were thought to be very valuable time and rarely was teleportation viewed as acceptable. When asked the ideal travel time to work, the average was 20-30 minutes, with the range of being between 10-60 minutes. Clearly, travel time is important with its own particular forms of timing and practice.

Gathering and 'soaking up' the scenery (both inside and outside the vehicle), 'planning', 'de-stressing', and 'sorting things out in your head', appear to be components of a *transition time* between different social relations and sets of

practices, between work life and home life especially. The transition time of travel was for many people, and particularly for many women, articulated as the only time they had to themselves during the day, the only time to contemplate and reflect, the only time that was *time for me.*

The value of travel time thus lay in its liminality, its status as a place in-between, neither here nor there, a time and place of transition between different sets of social practices located in different kinds of place (Turner, 1986). We are not suggesting a direct analogy between Turner's structural account of the liminal as a ritualised location 'betwixt and between' nor do we suggest that moving places are marginal. We suggest that travelling locations have a socio-material specificity for passengers (this may not be true for those who live and work on-the-move) that creates a sense of ambiguity and possibility.[4] The value of travel time lies in its rich possibility for experience and practice, both imagined and enacted, possibilities for use that are markedly different to other places. Travel is not valueless space, it is a landscape that includes what is inside and outside of the carriage or car, and it has a specific socio-materiality and temporality (Ingold, 2000), which creates a uniquely changing place in-between arrival and destination. Passengers are neither at home nor at work, neither acting as parent nor manager, neither in one category nor another, but transiting it seems between categories, responsibilities, and social practices.

Yet, was the value of such transition time present in the transport industry? How were journeys understood by those in the transport industry, aside from the translation of the passenger in the transport models? How might travel time use be understood by those who were negotiating between these models and the passengers themselves?

Stakeholder Discourses

Open-ended interviews were conducted with ten representatives of the public and private transport industry, many of whom became stakeholders in the research, including a train designer, rail rolling-stock manager, passenger group representative, and a bus marketing manager.

Despite many organisations employing extensive market research into the passenger experience there was frequently the assumption that travel involved 'dead time' (automobile industry marketing manager):

> 'Train journeys, certainly intercity train journeys, are boring. They are dead boring. And whether you realise it consciously or not everyone plans for the boredom. They either take work or they sleep or [buy] stuff they don't really want, because you can only look out of the window for about twenty minutes before you're bored in your head.'
> (rolling stock operator manager).

Travel time use was a superfluous antidote to the 'boring' nature of travel. Newspapers and books were 'de-stress purchases' made because 'there is nothing else they can do' (transport users group representative). Boredom was a given, an assumption that resonates with transport appraisal's perpetuation of travel time as wasted. Travel time use and the socio-material practices of passengers were separable from what was regarded as the essential and very necessary 'obvious nuts and bolts' of the passenger experience: having a seat, punctuality, cleanliness and information provision. Travel time was consistently understood as a single

temporality: the timetable clock time that measures punctuality and efficiency. As one stakeholder said:

> 'You want people to behave in ways that may oblige them to spend a bit more of their time travelling... You can sugar the pill by making the travel experience more rewarding in other ways. Difficult trick to pull off, but if you can do it, I wish you well.' (transport user group representative).

The emphasis here is on travel as a bitter pill, a matter of endurance and duration. According to our focus group discussions travel time is not a coherent movement through time but incoherent moments of stop and start, threaded with a complex and rich specificity. Travel time always includes waiting times, parking times, as much as times where one is on the move (for a discussion of waiting time see Anderson, 2004; Bissell, 2007). And it was these waiting times that were often the parts of journeys most problematic according to the focus group respondents. But these frustrating, often undesirable, waiting places were the least important sorts of places for many of the transport industry representatives. Indeed often stations and bus stops were embedded within different organisational practices compared with the services and fleet, practices with different interests and politics. Thus bus stops are often owned and run by local councils and, in the case of older Victorian train stations, include listed buildings whose alteration would require extremely lengthy planning processes (all of which were recounted as issues particular to the UK, by contrast with public transport in continental Europe and Japan). Rail stations and bus stops existed at the edge of what was discursively articulated as the 'transport industry' per se, and in many respects these bricks and mortar, lamp-posts and stop-signs, contained and circumscribed the boundary of the transport industry and made

it visible to our research. But these boundary places were seen as an opportunity by some:

> 'You could do a lot of interesting things [with stations] because suddenly the railway, rather than being a cast-off, becomes an important hub. And key to that is putting some retail into railway stations that people really want... Some of the train operators have already talked about designing stations of the future. Things like, you may not all travel on the train, some of you may just go to the station for a meeting and others come in on the train... that networking and pulling people... It's that hub.'
> (Industrial design manager for transport sector; the redesign of Leeds station shows some of this thinking)

Mobile ethnography

Movement between locations is inherent to the practice of ethnography, although it has perhaps only recently become a site for fieldwork. Clifford defined ethnographic fieldwork as: '*travel encounters*... spatial practices of moving to and from, in and out, passing through' (1997: 67). This is an approach to fieldwork as ongoing translation, a movement back and forth, shifting between locations (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; Strathern, 1999). Much ethnography in mobility studies has been located at sites of passage, transfer points, where populations and things are temporarily contained and arranged within stations, waiting rooms, baggage systems, and air-traffic control rooms (Augé, 1995; Adey, 2004; Bechmann, 2004; Merriman, 2004). By contrast a mobile ethnography, travelling with people and things in a sustained relocation of the researcher within that movement, is less common (notable exceptions include Laurier, 2004; Lee and Ingold, 2006).

'Public' transport places on-the-move are themselves transient, with people, artefacts, landscapes, and vehicles in constantly shifting social, material, and spatial relations. This is in contrast with ethnographies of cars where people and their vehicles retain a more stable relationship and together form a clear site for research. Constituting the location for our ethnographic study was thus difficult. Should it be of an operator, with a set of crew, by route, with a particular vehicle, with a particular passenger? Mindful of our engagement with national transport strategy we decided to conduct a thin ethnography of twelve timetabled train and bus journeys throughout the UK including: west and east coast mainlines, rural and urban buses, and express coach services. One of two ethnographers travelled on the same timetabled journey five times (either on sequential days or on the same day every week), creating notes, photographs, and short videos during more than 260 hours of travel time as part of a mobile ethnography. The timetable and its specified journey, including the door to door travel time, was the fieldsite. In essence, by repeating the same journey, the ethnographers were constituting their location as commuters, and experienced similar concerns to any commuter attempting to reach their destination. They were always partial-passengers, never only observers, as this extract suggests.

> The fidgety woman continues to finger her thick leather strap and look
> anxiously down the aisles... The young woman has stopped playing with
> phone and is now filing her nails (claws) with a huge purple nail file... The
> man opposite me looks up from his book at the nail file. eek eek. He winces,
> looks slightly ill as the flakes fall... she stops filing, throws it into her bag...
> Nothing. Seems to happen... the fidgety woman begins to sniffle, and sniffs
> up her catarrh... I am consumed by other people's bodily fluids... Everyone

else's time seems to be running slower than me. I want to write that
something happens. But nothing happens. A man reads a book, then reads a
newspaper. A woman fidgets and sniffs. A man sleeps. A woman stares (at
me). A man with a book looks up briefly (he does so every five minutes, and
checks the world and carriage, then goes back to his book with a yawn)...
Travelling makes individuals... people adapt differently, make their own time.
(fieldnotes taken from Lancaster to Penzance rail journey July 2005)

Travel time is situated in social and material practices of reading, writing
ethnographic notes, sleeping, filing nails, which all constitute a different temporality;
they 'make their own time'. As the train flies on down the line other passengers'
temporalities tick slow relative to that of the ethnographer. As has been well
discussed, temporality is a located effect, situated in practices, in movement through
the world and in epistemology (Adam, 1995; Serres, 1995; Massey, 2005); 'we know
as we go, from place to place' (Ingold, 2000: 229). As passengers engage with the
world, as they read and gaze through the window, they weave their temporality,
landscape and experience of train travel, their 'trainscape', so to speak. Thus it
seems that travel time is *made* in travel time *use*. There are therefore many travel
times.

The timetable remains, of course, a crucial actor in the journey (often present to the
passenger through WAP, wi-fi, text messaging, and other mobile data services, as
well as in print-outs and paper). The timetable tells passengers when to get to the
station, to know when to be met, to know how long it would take, to know how late
the train is running. In a way the timetable was *the* nineteenth century socio-

technical innovation, bringing together the railway machine, accurate clock time, mass publication and scheduling across a *national* system (Urry 2007: chap 5).

However, travel time as a passenger experience is not only organised by the clock-time of the timetable. Passenger travel time also involves a situated time that can be stretched and compressed and is in part dependent on the very practices and activities of passengers (as Bissell, 2007, shows with regard to waiting). Saving travel time is therefore not necessarily a matter of reducing the minutes between departure and arrival, but can involve attending to the social and material landscapes and practices of travel.

> [A woman boards and] places her brown leather handbag on the table, gets out a torn-out sudoku puzzle...
>
> Outside: pale turquoise wrapped hay, steam, mist trees on the skyline, gorse, puddles, trail of yellow, buddleias in fiery purple, wooden barn, Mendip hills...
>
> The train manager appears checking tickets. She asks who the two rucksacks at the end (taking up 2 seats) belong to...
> The lady... has put her handbag on the seat by the window – rummages in it for water, bottle, book... and keys – go on to table – and finally a phone, which she uses to text someone. She pulls out a wad of paper, print out of a website, and starts to make short tick marks on it as she reads.
> *(fieldnotes taken from Lancaster to Penzance rail journey July 2005)*

And it is not only lumpy, fragile and anxious bodies that move, for bodies are also 'embaggaged'. Belongings must also move (see figure 3): handbag, tickets, luggage, water, book, keys, mobile phone, paper, pens, and a body together constitute the passenger. Person and property must move together, nothing should be lost *en route*. Following ideas of distributed personhood (Gell, 1998) a person can be understood as not simply ending at the skin but includes all those prosthetic parts that are required for social interaction, including their luggage and travelling property.[5] The implication for transport strategy is that a distributed passenger requires far more space than a body sitting in a seat (as in figure 3); the unit for counting and modelling is not bodies moving but a configuration of persons plus property on the move. Moreover, these distributed passengers are spatially configured, the spatial relation between property and person is carefully managed. Handbags are unpacked onto table tops, rucksacks are stowed onto seats.

Two crucial configurations of passengers are those of the *packed* and the *unpacked*. Packed passengers are configured for waiting at sites of transit and for mobility (Gasparini, 1995), few items are ready-to-hand and so there are limited possibilities for practice. Unpacked passengers are a reconfiguration of person and property into a shape adapted for travel, that is itself relatively immobile. Artefacts for travel time use are placed to hand (novel, mobile phone, water), and the vehicle landscape becomes included in the configuration and fixes it in place (usually in a designated seat), as the passenger spreads into, onto, under tables, seats and windows.

Attending to these passenger configurations creates further insights for transport modelling. A high quality passenger experience could be thought as one that provides affordances for these reconfigurations. Unpacking takes time and space,

therefore a journey where there is not enough time or space to unpack creates a sense of being squashed, even if the person has a seat and the vehicle is clean and punctual. Passengers are forced either to remain packed whilst travelling and consequently can make little use of their time. Or, as we observed with commuting, passengers adapt to cramped and short journeys by only partially-unpacking with music players, mobile phones and novels ready-to-hand in accessible pockets. And even in first class travel the business traveller has to contend with the material objects of a cooked breakfast that intrudes upon how the space is being reconfigured as an 'office' which is still predominantly constituted through paper (see figure 4; Holley, Jain, Lyons, forthcoming; and see O'Hara, Perry, Sellen, Brown 2002).

The ethnography shows the importance of enhancing the affordance of travel spaces so as to increase the 'benefits' of travel time (see Gibson 1986, on affordances). But to make these manifest to policy-makers and designers requires a shift in the transport appraisal modelling of the passenger so as to include many divergent socio-material interactions.

As a method for engaging with national transport policy, ethnography is problematic. Its evidence is necessarily (and richly) located rather than aggregated; there are always gaps and moments where the evidence does not hold. To attend to both issues of aggregation and location within transport policy we knit together survey, group and individual interviews, ethnography, as well as other recordings and observations made during the research, from travel diaries to short videos.

Conclusion

Drawing upon this research (see Lyons, Jain, Holley, 2007; Holley, Jain, Lyons, forthcoming; Jain, Lyons, forthcoming; Watts, in prep for further findings) we conclude with some proposals relating to transport appraisal, the modelling of passengers and the desire to increase productivity.

First, we propose that it is not travel time that should be audited but travel time *use*, at least as a thought-experiment. By removing the presence of travel time per se other assumptions are also removed for which we found little evidence in this research: the direct relation between time and productivity, a singular focus on travel time savings, the interchange between time and money, the utility-maximising passenger, and travel time as wasted time. Instead, by auditing travel time *use*, the practices, places and property of passengers become visible, including the moving landscapes *and* waiting rooms. What passengers do and where there are located becomes the basis for decision-making. So what matters to policy might include the following concerns of both passengers and the transport industry more widely: providing appropriately designed moving places (trains/buses) and waiting places (stations/stops) that engender many different affordances for multiple activities and uses of time. Participants in the research suggested local libraries, art galleries, book exchanges and shopping malls.

There is a crucial addition here, that the value of travel time use is not calculated on the basis of earnings foregone as now but in terms of a non-economic estimated value to the passenger. We found no evidence of a positive association between what people deem to be a valuable or worthwhile journey and engaging in economically visible employed work (see Holley, Jain, Lyons forthcoming). Further

societally important work, with no measurement potential in economic calculation, should not be discounted in transport modelling.

Moreover, business work on-the-move is not, for most passengers, where the benefit of travel is to be found. In contrast, we found that the value of travel time was in its liminality as a transition time, a time for me. The provision of facilities for constructing an office on-the-move is important, such as wi-fi networks, power sockets, and meeting facilities, since they increase the possible uses of travel time for a wide array of passengers. However, and this is crucial, it should not be the aim of policy to transform travel time only into work time and carriages and buses only into 'offices'.

Our second suggestion extends this. If transport policy retains its focus on increasing the productivity of time, and we propose this includes travel time, then passenger productivity should be understood and modelled as spatial, social, and material. The productivity and possible uses of time for a passenger involves the configuration of the person, their property, and the landscapes of travel. Increasing travel time use requires facilitating the reconfiguration of these into unpacked passengers; increasing the space and time for reading, soaking up the scenery, planning, de-stressing, transitioning, listening, writing, and so on. Saving travel time is then no longer what is at stake, since passenger temporalities are not uniform but may be stretched and compressed in practices on the move (as shown in Watts, 2006). What matters becomes an increase in the effectiveness of travel places (both moving and stationary) as sites that aid passengers' activity and their reconfiguration into productive and unpacked passengers.

To develop these proposals we conducted a small set of passenger planning exercises on the basis of our results – creating a 'travel remedy kit'. Each kit was personalised on the basis of a structured interview conducted with the support of 30 different concepts concerning travel time use developed during this research. The personalised kit included artefacts to support travel time use (notebook, pen, magazine, drink, snacks, music player, book, earplugs, pillow, and so on) as well as detailed suggestions for how to plan activities for the journey, from refreshing walks to the train station, to landmarks to look out for *en route*. Passengers then took the kit on a familiar journey and reported back on their experience (see Lyons and Watts, in prep).

When asked whether she was bored at any point on the remedied journey one participant replied, in common with others:

> No!... to be honest once I've looked for my landmarks, read my book, drawn some pictures, made a few notes. We're there!... But it went very quickly. It was great. And I was there before I knew it... It was fun actually. It was quite fun. Other people were just sitting there, reading, or looking at their mobiles, and I've got plenty to do.

There are connections between travel time use, a worthwhile journey, and the experience of it as quick, what travel appraisal might regard as saving time. A high quality passenger experience is also one that is not boring but is filled with useful activity and practice (from sleep to prayer, as suggested by participants in the research). Planning and anticipation are crucial, which the travel remedy kit exemplified. The large-scale survey reported above found that those who had done

no advanced planning were more than twice as likely to be bored. The socio-material and spatial configuration of the passenger is not limited to the places of travel but includes all the necessary moments, practices, and imaginary acts prior to departure, from booking tickets to packing bags; it is not seamless but discontinuous. In the words of one 'performance' of the research to the UK Department of Transport:

> *'As with all journeys it begins with a thought, with an act of imagination: I would like to be Elsewhere… A journey does not begin with a bus stop, train station or mountain footprint, it begins with* Imagineering *a destination: that is, the work of imagining the moment of arrival, the work of imagining being some where else…'*
>
> (Watts, 2006).

Thus there are many opportunities to re-constitute the 'uses' of travel time in the information age. For travel time use, the modelling of travel time, and the decisions achieved on their basis, have far-reaching and long-lasting effects upon landscapes and lives. We have demonstrated an array of methods and provided a number of suggestions, not to hold the ephemera of travel time still, but to make present the rich diversity and complex fleeting experiences, while anticipating, while 'on the move', while waiting, and while recollecting.

Acknowledgements

Footnotes

[2] This statement is based on discussions during workshops with transport economists at the UK Department of Transport, as well as experience in Centre for Transport & Society (part of the team) of transport policy-making over the last decade.

[3] The research also recorded how bus windows, particularly the top-deck, provide an excellent vista; an 'imax' style experience as one ethnographer recorded.

[4] The notion of travel as a liminal place has been discussed in literatures of tourism (for a summary see Urry, 2002), and also with respect to diaspora (Cwerner, 2001).
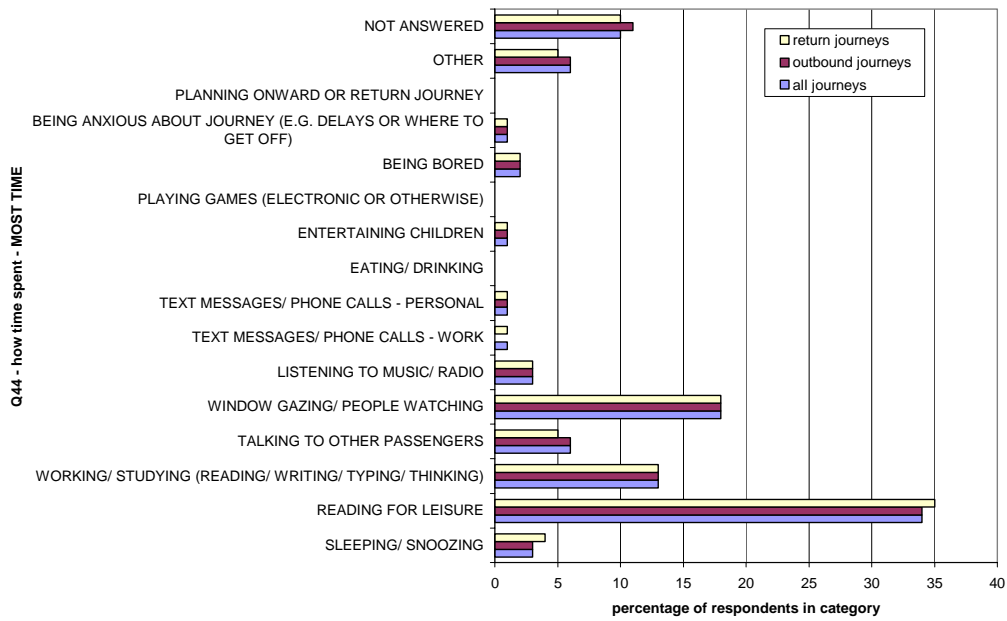
Figures

Figure 1: Categories of activities conducted while on the train, grouped by outward and return journeys (from Lyons, Jain, Holley 2005).
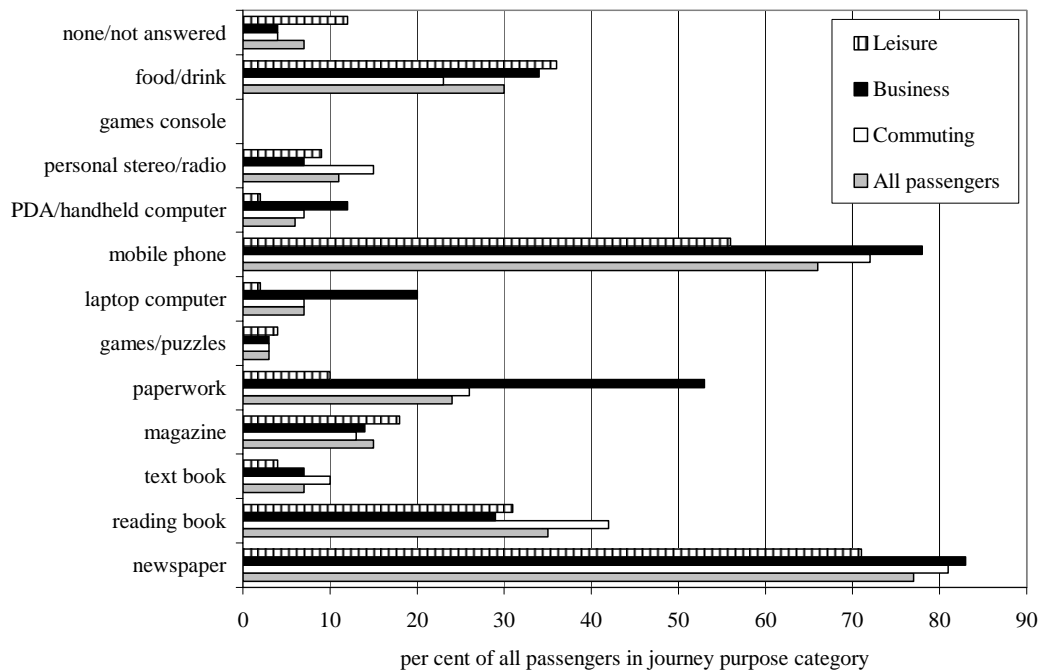

Figure 2: Items passengers have to hand when they travel by rail, grouped by the purpose of their journey (from Lyons, Jain, Holley 2005).

Figure 3: Unpacked passengers onboard trains and buses.

Figure 4: 'More elbow room' negotiates breakfast crockery; 'more luggage space'

negotiates book and bag.

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