

Making mobile mothers: using a social practice approach to study the changing travel choices of new parents in London

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Structure of presentation

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2. From behaviour to social practice
3. Methods and sampling
4. Shifting meanings of mobility
5. Futures and expectations
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Defining sustainable mobility

- Meets basic access needs of individuals and societies
- Affordable and efficient
- Offers choice of transport mode
- Supports a vibrant economy
- Is safe
- Respects human health and wellbeing
- Ensures equity within and between generations.
- Limits emissions and waste within the planet's ability to absorb them
- Minimizes consumption of non-renewable resources
- Limits consumption of renewable resources to sustainable yield levels
- Reuses and recycles materials
- Minimizes the use of land and the production of noise



Achieving sustainable mobility

1. Reduce the need for travel
2. Improve public transport
3. Tax unsustainable modes
4. Behaviour change



Travel Choices: from behaviour to social practices

- Values don't always translate to behaviour
- Practices are socially embedded
- Focus on the escalation of standards
- Importance of material culture



Methods and sampling

- 20 households in London (10 in Newham, 10 in Hackney)
- Range of family types, cultural backgrounds and income quintiles



Methods and Sampling

- Random sample recruited through NHS and NCT antenatal classes in Newham and Hackney.

Household income by quintile:

<£12,000	£12,001-£20,000	£20,001-£30,000	£30,001-£45,000	>£45,000
3	2	3	5	7

Methods and sampling

Country of Birth	n
Bangladesh	2
France	2
Hungary	1
India	2
Italy	1
New Zealand	1
Nigeria	2
Portugal	1
UK	7
Sweden	1



Methods and sampling

- Fieldwork 1: April - June 2011
- Fieldwork 2: February - April 2012
- In-depth interviews, travel diaries and social network mapping



Analysis

- Shifting meanings of mobility
- Futures and expectations



Justin: Okay. But you don't have a car?

Paola: No.

Justin: Okay, is that a conscious decision, not to have a car?

Paola: I think it's expensive to have a car, the insurance and everything (laughs).

Justin: Right. So, so, if you could perhaps afford it more, would you get a car and use it more, do you think?

Paola: Yeah, I was planning like maybe in the future, now baby and everything, I was thinking to buy like, even if it's a cheap car or whatever, but it is easier, yeah.

Justin: Why, why because of the baby?



Paola: Oh, it's easier to travel...even, I can see in the bus, sometimes the driver don't stop because the buggy is open, the woman is waiting with the buggy open, and plus inside the bus is full, there's already two buggies there, so they don't stop and they start arguing and, oh, so I can see myself in a few months (laughs).

Justin: So, almost you kind of see other people's experiences and just think, "I don't want that".

Paola: Yeah. I look and say, "Oh, my gosh. It's going to be me in the future" (laughs). But it's true, it's true.

Justin: Right, yeah.

Paola: Most of them, they say, "Oh, you need to close the buggy" but the babies sleeping. How's she going to carry the baby and the buggy closed and then, no, it's hard. I think, if you have a car, it's easier to travel.

(Paola, 26/04/11).



Pierre. I think the only thing we are thinking of is maybe we are going to buy a car. Just for the baby. We don't yet. We spoke about it. We have a car park.

Justin: Oh, you actually have a space?

Pierre: Yeah, we have a space.

Esta: We have a space, yeah.

Pierre: So, er... but we don't have any car (laughs). Er... so, the er... to park the car is not a big deal for us...erm...I don't know, maybe it's more easy to take a taxi and it's less expensive.

Esta: Yeah. It depends how many times, well, we feel that, you know, er... taking the, with very small baby is not ideal because if it's dirty and it's very busy.

Justin: Okay, so, why do you feel that you'd be better off with a baby in a car as opposed to anything else?

Esta: Yeah, so, it's more, it's more, probably, you know, er... noise and crowd and the fact that it's a little bit dirty. I mean...

Pierre: Plus, I think, plus in the rush hours, the people are not very respectful, so...

Esta: Respectful, so with your pram or...



Pierre: When you're alone it's fine, I mean, you can push into a compartment.

Esta: Yeah, exactly. When it's us, we don't mind. We squeeze, right. But with a pram, right, it's not very convenient. It will take longer as well because you have to take the lift down and so on, you know, it's not the same as running down the stairs (laughs) when you're in a hurry.

Justin: Yeah, yeah.

Pierre: To er... answer the question er... let's put it this way. We had a car for two years. We never used, yeah. So, yeah, so, that's why, I mean, we don't feel we need it but, you know, maybe with the baby we'll have to make some adjustment. There are certain trips we do right now and, you know, even if its very busy in the tube, it's not a good experience but we just do it because we still feel it's more, it's faster and, you know, so, we cope with it. With a baby, I don't know if we can cope.

Pierre: Yeah, I think we're going to use a taxi.

Esta: Yeah. Get taxis, yeah.

Pierre: It's going to be a little bit more expensive but...

Esta: And if it becomes really too many trips, then we will have the car. It's going to be er...

Pierre: But I notice that some people in London are big fan of using the car and we have some friends and colleagues who are just taking their car...

(Esta and Pierre, 1st interview)



“yeah, for me it’s about erm kinda getting out of London basically and having an escape route. I really love living in London but I’m not from London so fundamentally I like being out away from people and in a bit more space you know, and I’m, if I’m honest I’m slightly sort of nervous about using public transport on a regular basis with my baby and thinking about kind of the logistics of it and how complicated it’s going to be, and you know the thought of having a car parked outside ready to go when I just want to nip back to mum’s and dad’s, or you know whatever, is really attractive. So yeah that’s been something that has been playing on my mind a little bit”

(Emma, 1st interview).



Analysis

- Shifting meanings of mobility
- Futures and expectations
- Care and comfort



Clara: ...and I made a deal, because people, it was like, everyone was kind of, you know, doing the whole pregnancy police thing on me kind of going, “Oh, you really shouldn’t be doing that. Are you sure? You know, it’s not very safe”.

J: What, were saying you shouldn’t cycle?

C: Yeah, yeah.

J: Right. Okay.

C: You know, in the same way that they say, “Well, you shouldn’t eat chocolate, you shouldn’t drink”, they were like..., everyone was being very, very over protective about this.

J: Right.

C: And it was annoying me because it was very good exercise erm... it was making me feel good, keeping my energy levels up and I can get into work in twenty minutes on the bike, twenty, twenty five minutes. (Clara, 08/06/11).



“Well she used to drive so I used to get driven there and back but I used to finish work, get the train there and get the car back with her. But now she’s not driving she’s like making sure whose ever’s in the group that we’re with that someone drops me home. No one will let me get on the train at night time. Everyone’s really like nah nah nah you have to get in the car, you have to get in the car. [...] so but at the moment that’s what everyone’s been doing to me” (Macy, 1st interview)



Analysis

- Shifting meanings of mobility
- Futures and expectations
- Care and comfort
- The 'stuff' of parenting



“Monday 3pm: Went from Dalston to Walthamstow to view a flat by train with Milla in the pram. Journey took 35 minutes, I had to carry the pram up the steps at the train station, no one offered to help.

Monday 4.30pm: Went to view another flat. Journey took ten minutes. I was feeling tired and it was cold, I wished I could get in a car.

Friday 1.30pm: Home from Walthamstow having viewed another flat. Journey took 30 minutes. Tiring, was very tired from all the viewings and was dreading the stairs at the end of the journey. I was really struggling getting the pram and everything down them and near the bottom a man helped me, was very grateful. Was relieved to get home.”

(Laura, 2nd diary)



“Saturday 12pm: Went clothes shopping to Ilford with my baby on the bus. Journey took 30 minutes. It was the first time I got on the bus with a pushchair. I didn’t like it – too squashy and packed. Nowhere to sit.

Sunday 3pm: Planned to go the city shopping by tube with my baby but changed my mind as I didn’t want to go in the train with a pushchair – was too scared!

Monday 2.30pm: Took baby by car to the clinic, Journey took ten minutes. Could have taken the bus but I didn’t like going on the bus with the buggy.”

(Tamanna, 2nd diary)



Visiting a friend in West London for lunch taking the bus to tube station, Bethnal green to Liverpool st, Liverpool st to Westbourne park – over 1 hour: “As usual I traveled with Esme in the sling as there are lots of steps at the tube stations. I was shattered by the time I got home. I traveled outside of busy times so that it would be less stressful for Esme and to guarantee a seat” (Mia, Diary 07/0312)

Travelling at 11am to Canning Town by bus and train: “Probably the best time to use the bus and train; virtually empty” (Helen, Tues Diary)

Travelling Old St to Kensington with husband: “Difficult on tube with buggy but manageable with 2 people. Has put me off trying to do it by myself” (Sara, diary 05/03/12).



Trip to central Hackney for shopping: “Took the buggy and walked as easier than taking the bus” (Mia, diary 01/03/12).

“Overground down. Nanny tried to take bus but there were 2 pushchairs on board already. I had to book a cab to take them to nursery” (Esta, diary 16/02/12).



M: Yeah, and also it's because we travel a lot by public transport. It just looks obscene, those women on the tube and on the bus looking all stressed with their, be it pushchairs and things, you know, I think, I just feel more mobile and able to travel with a sling. But Greg's mum doesn't agree.

J: Right, I see.

M: Yeah. She...we had an incident at the weekend because she came down to stay and she bought us a pram and I was really cross because I'd said to her we weren't going to use one and she said, "Oh, you'll find it very difficult".

J: Yeah, yeah.

M: And she put this pram which was about the size of a, you know, the size of a Mini Cooper or something, into the...

J: What, she'd literally gone out and bought it for you or...?



M: She'd bought it, she'd seen it in the Northern Echo for ten pounds.

J: Right.

M: And went and bought it, so, you know, I was quite cross and she was cross because, you know, "I don't know what I'm in for" kind of thing.

J: Yeah. So, is that sort of languishing at home at the moment?

M: No, I sent it back with them up north.

J: Ooh, right, you're popular (laughter).

M: Not popular, she's not speaking to me now (laughter).

J: Oh, no. Oh, no.

M: You know, I think it's probably the same with all new parents, you have your ideas, maybe they won't work but they're still your ideas and they're what you want to do.

J: Yeah, yeah.

M: And taking a massive pram on, on the tube, when we live by a tube station that doesn't have a lift or anything, taking this huge thing, she just doesn't think it through and I got cross because I got told, "Oh, you'll see", do you know what I mean? (Mary, 1st interview, 22/06/11).



“Greg received an email from his mother this morning. She has bought us another £10 pram from the Northern Echo! She didn't tell me this time (we are technically still not speaking), and I only found out because Greg left his email open and I saw an email from her with the subject line 'pram'. Greg has gone out - probably to mull over how best to break it to me. I have just spent the last ten minutes crying with laughter and I just had to tell you...”
(Mary, email 25/06/11)



Travelling to Bethnal Green Childhood Museum: “Feeling positive but running late: had to carry buggy down loads of stairs at Beth Green” (Mary, Diary 09/03/12)

Travelling to sister’s in Crouch Hill on bus and tube: “Difficult on the bus but a couple of people helped me up/down steps. Bus V crowded, competing for space with another pram. Tired” (Mary, diary, 10/03/12).



Conclusions?

- Intensive parenting: mobility, care and safety
- Mobility choices as relational
- The role of 'stuff' in shaping patterns and experiences of mobility



Thank you

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