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The man hunched over his motorcycle can focus only on the present instant of his flight; he is caught in a fragment of time cut off from both the past and the future; he is wrenched from the continuity of time; he is outside time; in other words he is in a state of ecstasy. In that state he is unaware of his age, his wife, his children, his worries, and so he has no fear, because the source of fear is in the future, and a person freed of the future has nothing to fear.

Speed is the form of ecstasy the technical revolution has bestowed on man. As opposed to a motorcyclist, the runner is always present in his body, forever required to think about his blisters, his exhaustion; when he runs he feels his weight, his age, more conscious than ever of himself and of his time of life. This all changes when man delegates the faculty of speed to a machine: from then on, his own body is outside the process, and he gives over to a speed that is non-corporeal, non-material, pure speed, speed itself, ecstasy speed.

From *Slowness* by Milan Kundera

1. Introduction

In the mid-2000s, *The Late Show with David Letterman* ran a recurring segment called 'Is This Anything?' Guests would perform an unusual stunt and then Letterman would decide whether what they had done was 'something' or 'nothing' – in other words, whether the act was a 'thing' in its own right, was worthy of its own category in performing arts ontology. Spinning hula hoops, and operating a grinder against one's metal costume to produce sparks were both considered, separately, to be 'somethings'; balancing an aluminium ladder on one's chin while riding a unicycle was considered to be 'nothing'. Note that – from these examples – neither the difficulty of the act nor its entertainment value were deciding factors, but rather internal coherence, cohesiveness and difference from other acts.

Part of what I propose to do in this thesis is analogous to Letterman's game. Instead of performing arts, the context is the ontology of social science research; in place of unusual stunts, we have the presentation of what has variously been called the 'new mobilities paradigm', the 'mobilities approach' and the 'mobilities turn', and what I will call the 'mobilities discourse'. Mobilities advocates want 'mobilities' to be accepted as a research subject field in its own right, and/or for mobilities to be considered as a routine frame of investigation in all social research fields. As this is a deliberate, conscious positing of a supposedly 'new' research object and/or method, it is appropriate to uncover the axioms which are required to find mobilities valid as a research construct, and to analyse whether these axioms are valid, and whether the discourse's declared justifications are borne out by the practices of mobilities researchers, or whether their collective project is, in fact, veering towards unannounced goals. What are the conditions necessary for mobilities to be seen as 'something', as a field in their own right? Do those conditions exist? Further, what political interests does the design of this supposed new 'something' serve?

Taking one of my cues from Benjamin K. Sovacool's critique of the discourse of globalisation, I critique mobilities – a 'spin-off' discourse from globalisation – by tracing the representations and contradictions within it, to 'help de-naturalise and re-politicise it', or rather, differently politicise it (Sovacool, 2010, p. 16). This is a story about how knowledge is produced *and shut down* within the academy, and how academics can attempt to reinforce current power structures and knowledge bases by looking as if they are doing exactly the

opposite; that is, by presenting their work as challenging, altering or even replacing epistemological frameworks with new ones contradicting previous truths. The knowledge-production side of this process is iterative, and this thesis is implicated in it: mobilities proponents say they are attempting to replace what they describe as 'sedentary' sociology with 'mobile' sociology, and in turn, I am critiquing many of the premises on which the mobilities framework has been built, and ultimately challenging the main claims and aims of the mobilities discourse itself. While Michel Foucault wrote that continuities and syntheses should not be accepted without question, I would add that what look at first to be ruptures and fragmentations should not be accepted without question either. Instead 'the tranquillity with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinised' (Foucault, 1972, p. 25).

Adrian Favell, unfavourably reviewing what could be perceived as the mobilities discourse's first major text, John Urry's *Sociology beyond Societies* (2000), as 'fast theory' notes that: 'The incentive structures of academic publishing generate an intense pressure for fads and sound bites no less than in any other media industry' (Favell, 2001, p. 390). What, then, in the face of this 'fast theory' criticism, are the justifications for movement and mobility to 'become objects of knowledge'? More fundamentally, what are the rules by which someone decides what is considered mobility and what is not, in practice as well as theory? (Frello, 2008). This is not as transparent as it may first seem, and it is important: it helps to decide whether mobilities could fundamentally change the way social science is done, or whether it is indeed, simply 'fast theory' with no intellectual grip, a surface fad, 'business as usual' with new metaphors and a change of logo. Further, who holds influence over those decisions?

Urry himself says that his own discipline, sociology, is particularly susceptible to frequent changes of intellectual vogue – he writes it has a 'rather fluid, amorphous and networked character' – but he claims this not as a weakness as others such as John Holmwood (2010) do, but as a strength given 'the relatively fluid world and horizontal mobilities of the "global age"' (Urry, 2000a, p. 17; see also Urry, 2000b, 2005). Urry attempts to use the 'global age' to justify two claims: 1. that mobilities should be at the centre of sociology, and 2. that sociology's rapidly changing focus should be perceived as a strength. These claims are contradictory: if it is a strength that sociology can change focus, then it can change focus away from mobilities, just as it can change focus towards mobilities. More significantly, and

problematically for the mobilities discourse, Urry is also conflating literal mobility with metaphorical fluidity of intangibles (of patterns of power, for example) and positing that such mobilities and fluidities are mutually supportive. This is contentious – Sovacool (2010), for instance, posits that the system of globalisation actually stabilises identity and meaning, and solidifies power relations – but Urry's conclusion is that in order for sociologists to study power, identity or meaning now, they have to keep changing their theoretical frameworks constantly, because of a high rate of literal and apparently non-routine and chaotic mobilities. Perhaps they do, perhaps Sovacool is wrong; but this needs to be investigated, particularly as conventional sociological wisdom holds that many inequalities exist in durable form over long periods of time.

Thesis Scope

For the purposes of this thesis, the phrase 'mobilities discourse' describes the deliberate, conscious attempt to create a new post-disciplinary subject field called 'mobilities' in the social sciences, particularly sociology and geography, over the past decade. I also use it as a collective term for those researchers who consciously place at least some of their work in this field, including those who have had articles published in the *Mobilities* journal since its inception in 2006. It does not include those studying mobilities in other (non-social, non-humanities) disciplines.

By 'mobilities theorists' and 'mobilities advocates' I am particularly referring to those writers whose influence can be seen in the work of other mobilities researchers, and who are contributing to or shaping the dominant mobilities discourse in broad ways, particularly John Urry, Mimi Sheller, Tim Cresswell, Peter Adey, Vincent Kaufmann, Aharon Kellerman, David Bissell, Timo Ohnmacht and Katherina Manderscheid. I've identified the following as key texts within the discourse, because of their aim to explain the mobilities discourse in breadth, or to give foundational, general mobilities theory: Urry's *Sociology beyond Societies* (2000) and *Mobilities* (2007); Kaufmann's *Rethinking Mobility* (2002); Cresswell's *On the Move* (2006a); and Adey's textbook, *Mobility* (2009). I have also examined the following books, as they treat particular aspects of the mobilities discourse in depth: *After the Car* (2009) by Kingsley Dennis and Urry, which is a particularly key text for revealing the leading mobilities advocates' pro autonomous travel agenda; Aharon Kellerman's *Personal Mobilities* (2006); and the collections *Mobilities and Inequalities* (edited by Ohnmacht, Hanja Maksim, and Manfred Max Bergman), *Mobile Technologies and the City* (edited by Sheller

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and Urry, 2006) and *Stillness in a Mobile World* (edited by Bissell and Gillian Fuller, 2010). In addition I have analysed articles on mobilities by these authors in various publications, as well as articles by a number of other researchers and theorists within the *Mobilities* journal.

The vast majority of researchers who place work in the mobilities field accept the field much as it is, thereby supporting the dominant discourse. But some others, whom I call 'critical mobilities theorists', challenge this discourse in significant ways from within it, including Birgitta Frello, Magdalena Nowicka and Tore Sager, and I examine their work, and the critique of the field which they offer. I also use a simple statistical analysis of the topics of *Mobilities* journal articles, from the journal's inaugural issue in 2006 to the first issue of 2011, to investigate the 'slippage' between mobilities theory and research: does the scope of practical mobilities research uphold or compromise the justifications for the mobilities field offered by key theorists?

Findings

My conclusion is that in its present form, the mobilities discourse is *not* a 'something' à la Letterman. This is because the justifications for what is included in, and what is excluded from, the discourse have neither internal coherence nor cohesiveness, and other fields are already covering much the same ground.

The mobilities discourse has flaws in its structural/ internal logic, including:

- Floating, contradictory stated definitions of the field's object(s) of study (Chapter 3)

- A confusion between literal and metaphorical mobility (Chapter 3)

- A confusion between potential and actual mobility (Chapter 3)

- A sedentary nature, in spite of its declared aim to create a mobilities methodology (Chapters 3 and 7)

- Broad, reductive claims of objects of study which are not matched by the field's much narrower research foci (Chapter 4)

- Inclusion of research foci which do not overlap with each other, not in content, nor approach, nor research objectives (Chapter 4)

- A treatment of 'mobility' and human displacement via mechanical technology as synonymous (Chapters 4 and 5)

The internal flaws above are the reason why the mobilities discourse, as it currently stands, should not be a separate social sciences sub-field in its own right. This is not to say that research positioned within the mobilities field is not useful or good; it is to say that it may be more usefully positioned within other fields of study, such as migration, tourism and/or transport.

Counter-intuitively, the mobilities discourse's non-coherence and internal logic flaws help rather than hinder its furthering of certain political aims. The mobilities discourse is an example of what John Law (2008, p. 641) describes here:

> domination is often not a system effect, the consequence of a coherent order. Rather it is a result of non-coherence. Of elements of structuring, ordering, that only partially hang together. Of relations of subordination that are relatively invulnerable precisely because they are not tightly connected. Invulnerable because when one is undone the others are not pulled down with it.

Thanks to its non-coherence – a feature of neo-liberalism in general (Harvey, 2005) – the political effect of the mobilities discourse is to affirm, without announcement, the current and increasing structural inequalities between wealthy and poor. This affirmation involves:

- An uncritical, underlying assumption that human displacement is normatively positive (Chapters 3 and 6)

- A fragmentation of the analysis of globalisation (discussed in Chapter 5)

- A relative lack of acknowledgement that globalisation means increasing coerced non-movement for many (Chapter 5)

- A focus on individuals, not systems, infrastructures or resources (Chapters 6, 7 and 8)

- A lack of acknowledgement of the desirability of the power *not* to move (Chapter 7)

- A lack of discussion of power and agency (Chapters 7 and 8)

- A lack of positioning mobilities within the study of consumption (Chapter 8)

- A fleeting regard for environmental effects of its objects (Chapter 8)

- A lack of consideration of potential future outcomes and alternatives (Chapter 8)

- A lack of positioning mobilities within the study of technology (Chapter 9)

I endeavour to prove in this thesis that, whether intentionally or not, the design of the mobilities discourse, including its internal logic flaws, supports a specific conservative agenda: that is, the continuation of current wealthy-country transport practices and, by extension, the continuation of political and economic systems which encourage such practices. Firstly, this continuation is presented as inevitable by Urry and his collaborators (although they present the continuation as a 'more or less complete break with the current car-system' [Urry, 2004b, p. 509]). Secondly, the discourse's foundational theories are about technologies of *space*-compression (or space-warping) – that is, transport and communication methods – and mobilities theorists either ignore or deny the associated phenomenon of *time*-compression – that is, an accelerating rate of change for social and political organisations, physical infrastructure and individual lives. Thus the ramifications of time-compression for mobilities theorists' own conclusions and aims – in fact, the impacts of any sort of time at all on the discourse – are ignored. Instead, mobilities advocates assume a time-freeze which partially manifests as an emphasis on the apparently enduring 'fixity' of physical infrastructure and of the 'car system'. Urry and his co-authors in particular assume we have come to the end of history à la Francis Fukuyama (1989), in which the 'world' lives in a continuous present; a present in which all consumers apparently desire to annihilate Euclidean space through 'seamless', 'autonomous', individual, physical journeys. As such, the mobilities discourse is an example of what Heinz Bude and Jörg Dürrschmidt (2010, p. 483) call the:

> privileging of the spatial over the temporal analysis of contemporary society... favouring a certain presentism and bracketing out …the complex rhythmicity of the social and the temporalization of the local.

Just like Kundera's motorcyclist in the epigraph to this thesis, mobilities advocates forget all others and forget their own ageing, given over to the ecstasy of speed which the body by itself could never generate. Travel is treated as an activity one does as an individual, and will be able to do forever.

While Urry and his collaborators admit the car has problems, particularly environmental unsustainability, they valorise the automobile's attractions (its capacity to deliver 'autonomous' and 'seamless' journeys), and they either dismiss or do not even consider a number of potential alternatives to the car, including the internet, public transport and proximity (see for example, Dennis and Urry, 2009; Urry, 2002b, 2004a). Firstly,

communication via the internet is referred to as a 'mobility' – making it subordinate to physical movement and a continuation of that movement rather than a potentially qualitative change in human interactions – and more baldly, Urry is insistent that use of the internet cannot cut down on the need for car travel as apparently only physical movement can provide 'co-presence', which he treats as vital for every aspect of human life. Secondly, improving public transport is dismissed out of hand by Urry as the 'flexibility' and durability of the car system mean public transport will inevitably become less and less significant (Adey and Bissell, 2010). And finally, planning for increased proximity (of home and work for example) is 'implausible', again because of the durability of the car system which urban planning has served for decades (Urry 2002b). These dismissals leave Urry and his followers with only one option: to put their faith in technologies not yet invented to create a 'post-car' so as to continue the world of seamless, autonomous, individual, physical journeys, as per a tenured rich-state academic's life circa 1998, into infinity.

The axioms described above, combined with the equating of mobility with resource-hungry, powered, technological means of movement, mean that the unannounced political effect of the mobilities discourse is to support neo-liberalism and consumerism. Rather than immediately placing power relations centre stage, as Doreen Massey does when discussing globalisation, the mobilities discourse largely upholds the current situation wherein technologies of communication and physical mobility are used to keep the currently powerful in power. The discourse fits into Massey's (1999, p. 17) description of 'imaginative geographies which ... legitimise in the name of (though of course without saying so) the powerful...'. In fact, Sheller and Urry are happy to refer to some of their own work as part of the 'system of governmentality that ensures that increasing numbers of places around the world monitor; evaluate, and develop their 'tourism potential'' (Sheller and Urry, 2004, p. 3). This is an imperialist action in a world where 'tourism does not permit an alternative to the unequal relations that prevail elsewhere in society' but rather 'is based in the continuation of these exploitative and demeaning relations' (Rojek, 2000, p. 58); where a dependence on tourism can increase the marginalisation of indigenous peoples (Sharma, n.d.); and where 'inequality... is *massively* increasing and... there's no question that neo-liberal globalisation is devastating for large proportions of the world' (Massey, 1999, p. 51, emphasis in original). Ronen Shamir (2005) proposes that there is a movement-controlling 'global mobility regime' which has technical and institutional but also epistemological aspects, and which is 'constructed to maintain high levels of inequality in a relatively normatively homogenized

world' (p. 199). He asks about the global mobility regime: 'What are the social technologies that facilitate it? What sorts of social imageries sustain it?' (p.200). Because of its limited engagement with issues of non-movement and coerced movement, I argue that the mobilities discourse, and the term 'mobilities' itself, belong to these categories of social technologies and imageries which facilitate and sustain inequalities of motility. As such, the mobilities discourse is a part of the current global mobility regime, rather than a resistance to it. Because the experiences of middle class people are treated as normative, and those of the poor and oppressed are seen as rare and unusual rather than indicative of structural problems, the mobilities discourse fails in 'the political task of the social scientist' which is 'to translate personal troubles into public issues and public issues into the terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals' (Mills, 1971, p. 187).

Thesis Plan

After describing the mobilities discourse's influences, origins and institutional history in Chapter 2, I turn to mobilities theory in Chapter 3, examining how mobilities advocates define mobilities, and how these definitions influence the approaches and focus of mobilities research. In Chapter 4, I give an overview of four claims which mobilities advocates use to justify their declaration of a new paradigm, and also briefly discuss the first two of these four claims, which relate to methodology and research topics. In Chapters 5 and 6, I discuss in greater depth the latter two claims, which are claims about the state of the world. In Chapter 7, I outline the small but significant role that the mobilities discourse gives to immobility and suggest alternative roles immobility could play in a mobilities discourse, and then in Chapter 8, I argue that, despite mobilities advocates' claims to the contrary, a reaffirmation of current unsustainable transport systems, consumerism and neo-liberal politics is at the core of the mobilities discourse. In the Conclusion, Chapter 9, I apply questions drawn from the sociology of technology to the mobilities discourse, and to its own examinations of mobile technology, and conclude that the mobilities discourse, in general, is lacking academic rigour and a commitment to social justice in many respects.

2. Historical and Geographical Overview

Prehistory

The mobilities discourse takes 'mobile' terms such as 'fluidity', 'speed' and 'acceleration' – which have mostly been used as metaphors for life and social organisation in the social sciences over the past few decades – and reapplies them, with select parts of their metaphorical baggage intact, to literal phenomena (such as tourism, migration and transport). Modernity has long been associated with mobility – 'progress' was symbolised by the literal speed and acceleration of the technologies of the steam train, the automobile and the aeroplane – and this history is acknowledged by current mobilities theorists (see Cresswell, 2006a, in particular).[1] In the 1920s, Pitirim Sorokin devised his widely influential concept of 'social mobility', a metaphor for improving the socio-economic conditions of one's life. In the late 20th century, metaphors of mobility were used by many commentators and theorists to describe contemporary life and society itself: the migrant and the nomad (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari); acceleration, speed and dromology (Paul Virilio); liquidity (Zygmunt Bauman); and flows (Manuel Castells and Arjun Appadurai). Even the seemingly non-fluid metaphor of 'space-time compression' is hydraulic (Harvey, 1989). In the 1990s, others added to what Cresswell (2006b) identifies as 'a distinct "mobility turn"' in the social sciences – although they themselves might not identify as 'mobilities' theorists as such – including anthropologist James Clifford, who introduced the roots/routes dichotomy, and Marc Auge, studying 'non-places' of 'supermodernity' such as airports and shopping malls marked by transit and motion. To these influences, mobilities theorists have added an interpretation of Actor Network Theory (ANT); in particular the ideas that society is composed of humans *and* technologies, and human/technology 'hybrids', and that humans only have agency within the circumstances allowed by their relationships with objects (Urry, 2000b). Yet such influence may not go particularly deep; Terry Austrin and John Farnsworth (2009, p. 1287) see ANT as a 'critique of such generalising sociology' as Urry's 'general theories of how networks of persons and things are mobile across societies'.

The difference and relationships between the metaphors and the study of literal movement is not always acknowledged by current mobilities theorists. For example, Urry conflates power

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[1] Others, outside of the mobilities discourse, have directly challenged the modernity = mobility equation; Netz (2004) for example, characterises 'the period of the coming of modernity' (which for him is the late 19th century to mid 20th century) as 'the age of barbed wire', and presents the constraint of movement as a major trope of modernity.

and physical movement in *Sociology beyond Societies* (2000) as mentioned in Chapter 1, and literal and metaphorical movement are also conflated within the flagship definition of mobilities itself, as described in Chapter 3 below. Virilio and Bauman are particularly concerned with *time*-compression, describing life itself as 'accelerating', something they present as problematic, yet the mobilities discourse is silent about all but the most immediate effects of *space*-compression. The mobilities discourse echoes Appadurai's (1990) flow theory rather more closely. Criticisms that have been made about Appadurai by Josiah Heyman and Howard Campbell (2009, p. 131) are criticisms that also apply to the mobilities discourse: that Appadurai 'prioritizes ephemeral and shifting flows, thereby underestimating the relative power of capital and the interactions between different kinds of flows' and that he 'assumes that static units are the opposite of flows' when an understanding of the world as processural 'helps us understand global inequalities and boundaries better'.

Influential pre-mobilities theorists cited by mobilities researchers include Walter Benjamin (particularly his work on the *flâneur*), George Simmel (on humanity's 'will to connect', the tempo of the city producing detachment, and timetabling) and Henri Lefebvre, particularly *The Production of Space* (1991) (see Urry 2007; Cresswell 2006a; Sheller and Urry 2006a). While some mobilities topics are arguably recent social science additions, such as automobility, topics such as migration and tourism have been studied for rather more than a decade (Cresswell, 2010). This is to be expected; it is the *framing* of existing topics within the 'mobilities' rubric which is new. This rubric was first proposed by a small group of people – perhaps even *one* person, as it is arguable whether the mobilities discourse would exist without sociologist John Urry.

Urry's Instigation and Development

Mobilities is not Urry's first expansion of social research topics; in 1990 he published *The Tourist Gaze* (now in its third edition), which popularised sociological research into (leisure) tourism, and so he was already studying a type of mobility before he coined the word 'mobilities'. In 2000 he published *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, in which he claimed that the nation-state society was sociology's 'central concept' and that it needed to be replaced as such, due to what he saw as its inappropriateness as a framework for investigating the impact of globalisation and the 'global marketplace' on people's lives. He proposed a new 13-point 'manifesto' for the entire discipline of sociology, starting with the directive: 'to develop through appropriate metaphors a sociology which

focuses upon movement, mobility and contingent ordering, rather than upon stasis, structure and social order' (p. 18).

Sociology beyond Societies was criticised for not tying theory to empirical research and for dismissing the continuing power of the nation-state (Favell, 2001). It did not turn an entire discipline away from focusing on nation-states to focusing on mobilities (incidentally, pitting those two foci against one another, as *Sociology beyond Society* does, reveals the 'sedentarist' assumption that nation-states are based on 'stasis'). The book is, however, the de facto founding document for the mobilities discourse which responds directly to Urry's 'directive' to focus upon movement; although significantly, the mobilities discourse, including Urry, had quietly dropped *Sociology beyond Societies*' anti-nation-state stance by 2006 (Sheller and Urry, 2006a). Institutional footholds followed the publication of *Sociology beyond Societies*: the Centre for Mobilities Research (CeMoRe) at the University of Lancaster was founded in 2003 with Urry as its director, and the CeMoRe website (accessed December 2011) states that CeMoRe 'established' mobilities as a 'new interdisciplinary field' (CeMoRe, n.d.). Urry is also a founding co-editor, with Kevin Hannam and Sheller, of the academic journal *Mobilities*, first published in 2006 and described as a 'cornerstone' for a 'burgeoning interest in mobility' (Barker et al., 2009). Given all this activity, it was somewhat disingenuous of Urry and Sheller (2006a, p. 207) to write: 'it seems that a new paradigm is being formed within the social sciences, the "new mobilities" paradigm', as if they had nothing to do with it and it was a development that unfolded by itself, quite naturally.

One of Urry's earliest engagements as a 'mobilities' expert was as guest of the Paris-based Institut pour la Ville en Mouvement (aka the City on the Move Institute), where he gave three lectures (2002a, 2002b – which was subsequently published in the journal *Sociology* – and 2002c), and for whom he served on the 'Scientific Committee' of an 'international colloquium' in 2003 (Cresswell and Nigel Thrift also spoke at the 'workshop' session Urry chaired) (IVM, 2003). This activity is significant as the Institut pour la Ville en Mouvement was created by automobile manufacturers PSA Peugeot Citroën 'for the purpose of contributing to reflection, action and innovation with the potential *to enhance urban mobility*' (IVM, 2003, emphasis added). The institute is currently funded by PSA Peugeot Citroën to the tune of €1 million per year, and tyre manufacturer Michelin plans on becoming an Institute partner because, as the Managing General Partner of the Michelin Group puts it: 'the priorities of the City on the Move Institute and Michelin are perfectly aligned' (Peugeot

website, accessed October 2011; Michelin, 2011). As of October 2011, Urry continues to distribute the Institute's newsletter to CeMoRe's email network. It is perhaps a moot point whether academics claiming to practise critical sociology should be subject to different ethical considerations to their colleagues in engineering faculties, but quite apart from the ethics of accepting invitations to speak at what has been described as a 'para-scientific institution' (Jouffe, n.d.), which is funded for public relations purposes by the automobile industry, the link points to Urry's readiness to see 'enhancing' mobility as the sole option to improving access. As ANT researcher and occasional Urry co-author Law (2008, p. 640) asks, calling for general academic accountability: 'What is the relation ... between our sociology and those ... that sponsor it?' I suggest that the mobilities discourse's early link to PSA Peugeot Citroën calls its independence into question, and as most, if not all, of its theoretical foundations already in place in 2002 have been extended and reaffirmed since then, those questions remain. As Barry Smart (2010, p. 37) puts it, although he is writing generally and not of the mobilities discourse specifically: '... the critical role of educational and teaching institutions has been compromised as they have become more and more subservient to ... commercial corporate and military-defence interests ...'.

The discourse in sociology was expanded early on into a 'post-disciplinary' discourse that embraced other social sciences, in particular anthropology and geography. Geographer Tim Cresswell represents an alternative (of sorts) to Urry's influence, although the ideas of the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Cresswell is more open than Urry to the inclusion of bodily mobility within the field, arguably pays more attention to issues of social justice, and has also developed his own overarching theories of mobilities. Theologians are also included in the discourse (see Bergmann and Sager, 2008) but political scientists and economists are conspicuous by their absence.

Mobilities' current acceptance as a field of study within the wider academy is indicated by the inclusion of 'space, mobility and place' as one of 14 streams in the 2011 British Sociological Association's annual conference (although mobilities do not feature as one of the 40 ongoing study groups listed on the BSA website [BSA, n.d.]). In the Thomson Reuters 2010 *Journal Citation Report*, the *Mobilities* journal's 'Impact Factor' was 1.238 and it entered the Geography journal rankings at 28/65 and the Transportation journal rankings at 13/23 (Drinkall, 2011). The Australian Sociological Association established a mobilities thematic group in 2007 although it folded in September 2010 (TASA, n.d.).

The Advocates' Demographics

There are very few published mobilities researchers (and perhaps no 'leading figures') in the field who come from poor or non-Western countries. Although CeMoRe boasted more than 800 email list members in over 26 countries as of December 2011 (CeMoRe, n.d), nearly all leading figures in the mobilities discourse have thus far been European, mostly from Britain, France, Germany and Scandinavia, and both Phillip Vannini (2010) and Kellerman (2006) have noted that the entire mobilities discourse is concentrated in Europe (the notable exception is Sheller – Director of the Mobilities Research and Policy Center at Drexel University, Philadelphia, USA – but she also has a continuing appointment as a senior research fellow at CeMoRe at Lancaster, and has co-authored a number of texts with Urry).

Due to the heavily European-skewed demographic make-up of the mobilities research community, there is a risk that the sociology of the European Union will be read as the sociology of the entire world within the mobilities discourse. The trap of reading one country's sociology as the sociology of the modern world (Favell, 2001) – or one's society 'as the presumed model which all other societies would gradually come to mimic' (Urry, 2005a) – is an old one.[2] Yet this is a risk which Urry does not see as a particular problem for the mobilities discourse. Instead, he writes that metaphors of 'network, flow and travel' are more persuasive than sedentarist metaphors because they

> appear to be going with the grain of much contemporary experience, with the perceived sense that global processes are producing a 'shrinking world'. This is particularly the case for many social science academics whose travelling networks flow, and periodically create, curiously intense 'small worlds'. (2000a, p. 22)

In other words, metaphors are written by travelling academics to persuade other travelling academics; the academics are their own only audience, and the rest of the population are not even considered. Nor does Urry consider here that metaphors can *produce* and shape thinking, even though in the same book he devotes a whole chapter to the power of metaphors. Yet, as I discuss in Chapter 5, the writings of many mobilities experts assume that their own experience as mobility-privileged is the norm to which counter-stories are rare anomalies. As such, they fit Bauman's description of those 'exterritorials and globetrotters'

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[2] To be precise, as this is a 'globalised' age, the EU is more than one country, and the extrapolation is for the entire world, not just the 'modern' world.

who articulate 'a caste-bound experience of the globals' and who leave other experiences silent; globetrotters who are 'far from conveying the complexity and sharp contradictions tearing that world apart' (Bauman, 1998, p. 101). Cresswell (2006b, p. 739) admits that 'some of the more speculative uses of metaphors of mobility have tended to over-generalize mobility as a condition of the modern world, perhaps mistaking the world of the travelling academic as a general global condition', while Jonathan Friedman (2008, p. 115) claims there is 'reason to suspect that the globalizing visions are based exclusively on the experience of the academics and other movers who so identify'.

Terminology: 'mobilities what?'

As mentioned above, the researchers at CeMoRe, led by Urry, call the mobilities discourse 'the new mobilities paradigm' in several publications (for example, Sheller and Urry, 2006; Hannam et al., 2006; Urry, 2007), however others deliberately eschew the phrase. Cresswell (2010, p. 18) directly criticises the word 'paradigm' as problematic, given that it 'suggests the Kuhnian notion of normal science being transformed by sudden revolutions where what went previously is unceremoniously tipped into the junkheap of academic history'. It could be argued that *Sociology beyond Borders* suggested such a radical change of discipline-wide axioms by dismissing the nation-state as a research container – but this is not the mobilities discourse's focus, either in theory or practice. Urry himself seems to have finally decided to support nation-state research within the mobilities paradigm; by 2006 he was claiming that the paradigm's 'critique of "static" social science also departs from those that concentrate on ... the end of states as containers for societies' (Sheller and Urry, 2006, p. 210). With the loss of its boldest idea, the 'New Mobilities Paradigm' lost any claim to its title.

Instead, the use of the term 'paradigm' seems to be claiming that mobilities theorists and researchers have larger ambition and influence, and far more radical, iconoclastic theory, than they presently do. Social epistemologist Steve Fuller (2001) argues that by using Kuhnian words such as 'paradigm', social scientists are trying to be perceived as 'real scientists'. CeMoRe's use of the word 'paradigm' suggests at least an overreach in an attempt to be noticed in the crowded academic media industry. In a belated explanation, nearly a decade after he first used the term 'paradigm' for mobilities, Urry (quoted in Adey and Bissell, 2010, p. 3) claims that he does not think 'like Kuhn, that you get complete incommensurability between paradigms' and that paradigm replacement is not entirely straightforward either, so 'it's more effective to think of disjunctures and rhizomes'. This retrospective redefinition of a

powerful term with a clear history of use – as if Kuhn's work was not the word's most obvious reference within an academic research context – is sophist. Why did Urry not use 'disjunctures and rhizomes' in the first place, if that more clearly reflects his position? Although, of course, given his difference of opinion with Kuhn over 'paradigm', it is difficult to know what he means by 'rhizome', and how his use of it differs from historic uses, such as Deleuze and Guattari's (2004).

Fuller (2001) argues that using Kuhn's concepts in a liberal way is increasing specialisation of disciplinary research agendas. At first glance, it seems that the mobilities discourse denies this criticism; it advertises itself as 'postdisciplinary' and brings together 'substantive areas of research [that] would have been formerly held apart by disciplinary and subdisciplinary boundaries' (Cresswell, 2010, p. 18). However, the benefits of juxtaposing articles on migration and on the automobile (for example) in the *Mobilities* journal are dubious (see Chapter 4), and mobilities could be seen as fragmenting the wider study and critique of globalisation by splitting off human transport and communications from their effect on business and social welfare, for example (Chapter 5).

Summary

So far I have noted that John Urry and his colleagues have presented the mobilities discourse since 2000 as a new yet natural direction change for the social sciences, while actively promoting and shaping it. The discourse agenda-setters are drawn mostly from Europe, and this geographical imbalance does not strike its leading proponent as a risk for mobilities research, even though the mobilities discourse has grown out of concepts of globalisation which ostensibly seek to explain the state of the entire world. While the mobilities discourse puts a number of different study fields under a new umbrella, it can also be seen as a continuation of a much older tradition which equates modernity with mobility. This tradition in the late 20th century was becoming more metaphorical; the mobilities discourse has taken its metaphors and reapplied them to the literal phenomena which produced them in the first place (leading to some confusion).

In the next chapters I will analyse definitions and justifications for the mobilities field, taking note of the slippage between theory and practice.

3. Definitions

There are many debates about approaches and emphases within the mobilities discourse, but underlying those debates there is a widely held set of assumptions. In these next few chapters I analyse these assumptions, starting in this chapter with the most prominent definitions of 'mobilities', in order to find out what exactly the stated object of investigation is. I conclude that the definitions are simultaneously too broad – in that they contain both literal and metaphorical 'mobilities' without acknowledging the mix, masking the incorporation of communications into 'mobilities' – and too narrow, in ways which are inherent but not made explicit within the definitions, that is:

1. Several definitions reveal that the mobilities discourse is anthropocentric, focussed particularly on *human* travel (more specifically, travel of *individual* humans). This is a problem as other phenomena are explicitly mentioned in the basic mobilities definition.

2. The mobilities discourse assumes that most such travel is undertaken as a matter of choice and free will, rather than compulsion. This is an assumption which is politically problematic.

The effect is reductionism (one 'mobility' is much like another) and valorisation ('mobility' is good). This vagueness allows inappropriate applications of the same ideas to different phenomena.

Definition 1: Basic

An often-cited iteration of the currently most widely accepted definition of 'mobilities' is outlined in the inaugural editorial of the journal *Mobilities*:

> The concept of mobilities encompasses both the large-scale movements of people, objects, capital and information across the world, as well as the more local processes of daily transportation, movement through public space and the travel of material things within everyday life. (Hannam et al., 2006, p. 1)

In this, and numerous variations on this theme, both different phenomena ('people, objects, capital and information') and different scales ('across the world [and] more local processes of daily transportation') are emphasised. (See for example: Urry, 2000; Cresswell, 2001, p. 14;

Nowicka, 2006; Urry, 2007; Baerenholdt and Granas, 2008, p. 6; Manderscheid, 2009, p. 27; Buscher, 2010; Allen-Robertson and Beer, 2010; Nowicka, 2006; Ureta, 2008; Frello, 2008; and Gale, 2009; CeMoRe, n.d.). The definition echoes Appadurai's (1990, p. 301) list of 'people, machinery, money, images, and ideas' which 'now follow increasingly non-isomorphic paths ' – in other words, they flow 'disjunctively' and 'chaotically'.

The Inclusion of Information

With the inclusion of 'information' and 'capital' in the definition, mobilities already involves both literal physical movement and metaphorical communicative 'movement', without differentiating between the two. Communications – 'the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium' according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* – is separate from physical movement in common English-language ontology. Collapsing this distinction, as this core mobilities definition does, has the effect of downplaying or even denying altogether the differences between communications and transport – for instance, the different resources and abilities needed, and the different experiences and potential outcomes. Justifications for the distinction collapse vary: according to Sheller and Urry (2006a, p. 221), not only are transport and communication similar, but there is 'increasing convergence' between them, while Urry (2004b, p. 509) more specifically describes this convergence, saying that he foresees a potential future which includes 'the embedding of information and communication technologies into moving objects so that *the divide of transport and communication dissolves*' (emphasis added). Kellerman (2011) dispenses with future predictions and argues that instead of seeing current surface travel, air travel and 'virtual travel' (that is, communication) as three different 'mobilities', they should already simply be seen as three different categories of 'mobility'. His supporting examples include a comparison of mobile phones and aeroplanes:

> Whether portable or strongly fixed, both media [mobile phones and 'airplanes'] require the use of terminals, and both media require heavy traffic controls, strongly based on IT. Also, both media use the air for their routes though in different ways: mobile phones do not fly and they use the air virtually. (p. 736)

So aeroplanes and mobile phones are both examples of mobility because passengers and phone signals both have points of departure and arrival, are controlled by information technology, and somehow 'use the air'. Why these similarities are more important than the

experiential differences between someone calling somewhere and going there by aeroplane is unexplained. Instead, Kellerman claims that the separation of physical travel and 'virtual travel' is only an 'academic division' which is 'somehow artificial from the perspective of the daily experiences of citizens of globalizing society' (p. 737). Because they often use communications technology at the same time as they are physically moving, he argues (without evidence) that such citizens no longer differentiate between those two activities and that 'contemporary life points to mobility [including 'virtual mobility'] as a single entity'. I would argue that on the contrary, 'citizens of globalizing society' can differentiate between phoning a hotel which is under fire and arriving there to report on a war. The difference is whether the individual human physically moves or not. Collapsing the differences between communications and human transport leads to a revival of the mind/body dichotomy, as discussed below in relation to Urry's five mobilities. Such a revival is explicitly against the stated aims of the mobilities advocates.

In addition, collapsing the distinction between communications and physical transport under the movement term 'mobility' applies all the meanings of physical movement to both communications and transport, while downplaying those features of communications which are not also features of physical movement (the assumption of a recipient for the information, for example). Urry (2003b, p. 158) claims that 'each various communications [sic] substitute in different ways for physical travel' – in other words, communications are subservient to physical travel and physical travel is always more desirable. Yet this is not always the case. One could argue that physical travel might sometimes substitute for communications – it is only if I cannot trust others' reports of what is happening in my factory overseas that I will go and see for myself. If one did wish to emphasise certain common elements, alternative metaphors for both movement and communications might include 'connectivity' (why not the 'new connectivities paradigm'?). Sheller (2009, p. 199) states that 'mobile telecommunications are being seized by low income groups [in the Caribbean] to generate connectivity as much as mobility', without explaining how connectivity and 'virtual mobility' might differ from one another. Alternative metaphors for communication alone might include 'amplification' (as the voice is amplified by microphones and telephones), propagation and repetition (as information can be relayed or 'spread' to several places at once) – metaphors which emphasise the differences between communication and individual human physical movement, as they are not as applicable to physical movement as they are to communication. Further, the mobilities discourse does not explain or discuss what 'information' is included in

the mobilities definition. Presumably it includes not just representations of the world which have pretensions to objectivity, such as encyclopaedia entries, but instead all language and images, including commands, questions and promises, as well as information which is corrupted or mutated during its delivery (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 77), and perhaps information whose recipient(s) are not human.

This is not to claim that the interaction between different kinds of transport and communication is not a valid research topic. It is to claim that there are ways of referring to both transport and communications which would describe them both more clearly than 'mobilities' does. Referring to them as phenomena or technologies of space-compression – or preferably 'space-warping', to acknowledge the 'space spread' they create for those who do not use them – is one of these alternatives. Whereas 30 years ago social and cultural theorists were discussing the 'linguistic turn' and, as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) put it, giving language 'certain imperialist pretentions' such as 'language is the interpreter of all the other systems, linguistic and nonlinguistic' (pp. 62-63), the mobilities discourse is attempting to interpret language and communications technologies as movement, in the name of a 'thingly' turn.

Definition 2: The Five 'Mobilities'

While Urry co-authored the basic definition above, he also posits that there are five 'mobilities' which 'produce social life organized across distance' (Urry 2007, p. 47), which are materially transforming the 'social as society' into the 'social as mobility' (Urry 2000b, p. 186) and 'form geographies of networks and mobilities in the contemporary world' (Larsen, Urry and Axhausen, 2006, p. 6):
   1. Corporeal (human) travel.
   2. Travel of objects.
   3. 'Imaginative' travel including seeing images of places and people in visual media.
   4. 'Virtual' travel 'often in real time thus transcending geographical and social distance'.
   5. Communicative travel 'through person-to-person messages via messages, texts, letters, telegraph, telephone, fax and mobile'.

Although these categories seem to have limited purchase in the wider mobilities field (they are mentioned in more recent texts, but usually only in passing, apart from Kellerman, 2011), Urry refers to them frequently (for example, 2002a,b; Buscher and Urry, 2009). Also, the

concept of individuals 'travelling' via communications technology is necessary to make sense of one of the self-justifying claims of the mobilities discourse; that is, that mobilities are a major factor in social stratification today (see Chapter 6). Sometimes, only three of the five mobilities are cited: physical (combining human travel and object travel), virtual (combining communicative and virtual travel) and imaginative (Vannini, 2010; Jiro'n, 2010; Szerszynski and Urry, 2006). I suggest the merging of human and object physical travel into one category is due to the anthropocentricism of the discourse as discussed below (object travel not being 'important' enough to command its own category, so it is subsumed in order to be forgotten); and the merging of communicative and virtual travel into one category arises because separating the virtual from imaginative and communicative 'travel' was anachronistic in the first place. However, this merged category should be called 'communicative' rather than 'virtual', as having both an imaginative and a virtual category assumes there are no films or television accessible on the internet. It is the 'virtual' category – and not the 'communicative' category – which is redundant.

Anthropomorphism and an Ambivalent Embodiment

Leaving label confusion aside, there are serious problems with this melange of metaphors and literal movement. *People* are the ones who travel 'virtually' and 'imaginatively' according to Urry's taxonomy, rather than *information and ideas* travelling to people. For Urry, communication and media do not 'move' information and ideas (which is another metaphor anyway, as discussed above) nor broadcast them. Instead they 'move' the people receiving and sending the information, even though their bodies are not necessarily being displaced and these 'travelling' people can be physically immobile. This is an example of the deep anthropocentrism of the mobilities discourse, in spite of the mention of other phenomena such as 'objects, information and capital' in the basic definition. This anthropocentrism is apparent from the beginning of the mobilities discourse: the mobilities of people are the subject of one of the 13 points of Urry's manifesto in *Sociology beyond Societies* (2000), whereas the mobilities of objects and information are not afforded that honour. It could be argued that people are the correct object for the social sciences; however researchers could still research the human causes of the movement of other phenomena and the effect of such movement on particular human individuals – or, at the very least, the mobilities discourse should take the non-human phenomena out of their definition of 'mobilities', to reveal their focus. In fact, however, as I will argue in Chapters 4 and 7, analysis of human mobility

without analysing its relationship with the movement, and control of movement, of other phenomena is flawed.

In addition, as with the basic definition of mobilities, this definition is so widely stretched that it loses much of its analytical usefulness. Someone who watches a lot of television but never leaves their house could be considered highly mobile – they are frequently travelling imaginatively. Someone who uses the internet to work from home is also considered to be highly mobile – and yet, significantly, the planning and transport implications of this lifestyle are very different from those of a commuter. To say that all these people are mobile (rather than saying that *some* of them are moving, while others are senders and/or recipients of moving information, as suggested by the basic definition) fits even more uncomfortably with Urry's declaration that the mobilities paradigm is part of a more embodied science, a 'post-human' turning away from the mind/body dichotomy of the Enlightenment (Urry, 2007, p. 45; Buscher and Urry, 2009). To say that 'a mobilities turn is part of the critique of ... a humanism that posits a disembodied cogito' (Buscher and Urry, 2009, p. 100) at the same time as describing humans as being able to travel imaginatively, communicatively or virtually – that is, as being able to travel *without their bodies* – is a delicate, possibly self-contradictory position to hold. If one's body does not travel, then what of one does travel? One's 'true' self? In this way, the mind/body dichotomy reveals itself as implicit in Urry's five mobilities. In Urry's eagerness to embrace technology, he has overlooked the body as anything but a sensing membrane, as discussed in Chapter 5. His theory does not upset the idea of a subject, as ANT aims to do, instead it treats technology as having replaced the human body as the mind's instrument.

Definition 3: The Inclusion of Motility

More overtly influential than Urry's five categories is the concept of motility. While not stated in the basic definition above, mobility is often treated as encompassing motility as well as movement itself (see Urry, 2007; Cresswell, 2010; Uteng and Cresswell, 2008; Adey 2009; Zeitler, 2008). Motility is the 'potential for undertaking movements' (Uteng and Cresswell, 2008, p. 2) or, more specifically, 'the capacity of an individual to overcome physical distance' (Sager, 2006, p. 466); in other words, it is the power and opportunity to move and to choose whether or not one moves. Motility introduces the concept of agency to mobilities analysis; instead of two categories of movement or non-movement, motility suggests four categories: chosen movement, chosen non-movement, compelled movement and compelled

non-movement, or, more subtly, two sliding scales at right angles to each other, one from lesser to greater movement, the other from lesser to greater compulsion (or greater to lesser 'freedom') (see Fig. 1). Yet the mobilities discourse does not often discuss the power to be still(er); that is, the power to choose non-movement – the immobile equivalent to motility – which I will call 'immotility'. (Like motility, immotility is a medical term; for a discussion of immobility, see Chapter 7).
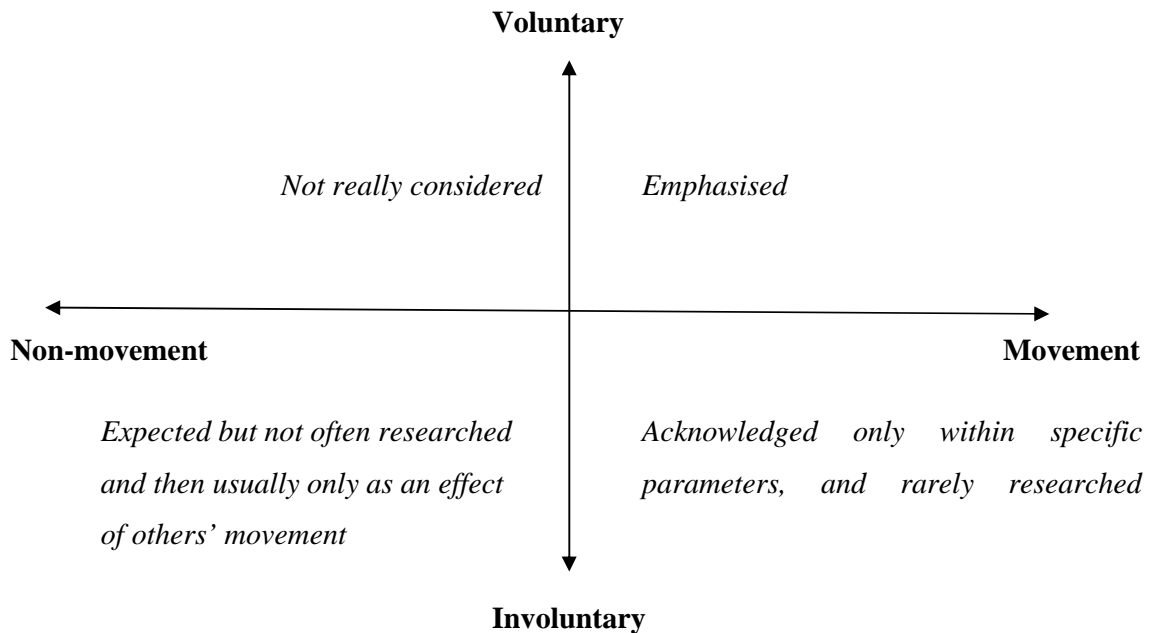
Voluntary

Not really considered   *Emphasised*

Non-movement   **Movement**

Expected but not often researched and then usually only as an effect of others' movement   *Acknowledged only within specific parameters, and rarely researched*

Involuntary

Fig. 1: The disaggregation of movement and choice, showing the mobilities discourse emphasis

Some mobilities theorists and researchers treat motility as separate from mobility, which is vital in that it disaggregates 'potential' and 'revealed' transport (see Ohnmacht et al., 2010; Kaufmann, 2002), while for Tore Sager (2006 p. 466), mobility is *only* motility ('potential transport', in his terms) and not movement ('revealed transport') at all.[3] This acknowledges –

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[3] Kaufmann (2002) discusses motility perhaps more than any other theorist, but he confuses the issue by defining motility in three different ways, as 1. 'a propensity to be mobile' (p. 39); 2. 'the capacity of a person to be mobile' (p. 37); and 3. 'more precisely, as the *way in which an individual appropriates what is possible in the domain of mobility and puts this potential to use for his or her activities*' (p. 37, emphasis in original). The third is a different definition from the second, rather than a more precise one: the third describes the appropriation of the means of mobility on offer to create one's mobility – in other words, the turning of a general, collective motility (an unarticulated concept) into individual mobility. It leads to Kaufmann describing individuals as having 'difficulty transforming their motility into mobility' (p. 45). On the generally accepted definition of motility, this is nonsense; by definition, motility can always be transformed into mobility.

although backhandedly and indirectly – that 'freedom of movement implies the right not to move' (p. 469). But most theorists treat the concepts of motility and mobility as one fitting inside the other. Because the inclusion of motility within the concept of mobility is *optional*, there is the potential for confusion – 'mobility' (incorporating motility) is seen as a desirable quality to have (see Chapter 6), and yet, asylum seekers are also often 'mobile' – if mobility only means movement. If the 'mobilities paradigm' was called the 'movement paradigm', researchers would not be so encouraged to view their study object in a positive light, as motility is less easily incorporated within the term 'movement' than within 'mobility'. 'I am mobile' has no object; 'I move' can have an object after the verb – meaning that the thing or person moved may not be moving voluntarily.

Mobility = Desired

The inclusion of motility in the definition of mobilities is politically problematic, because it means 'mobilities' contains an assumption that the mobile object(s) of study voluntarily choose to be mobile. It implies that one's objects, by virtue of being one's objects, always have the right and the means *not* to move. So, in practice in the mobilities discourse, most movement – daily commuting, for example – is assumed to be voluntary (although commuters may disagree), leading to such 'unreasonable' conclusions as 'policies should maximise transport in order to enhance freedom', as Sager (2006, p. 483) points out. The relative lack of focus on organisational systems reinforces the idea that the only possible reason for such movement is individual desire and agency. Those objects who are obviously compelled to move – refugees being the classic example, although their movement is also *restricted* once they've departed – are rarely studied, and everybody else is considered to be exercising their freedom of choice, their motility. The inclusion of motility in the definition of mobilities either results in, or justifies, the general practice in the mobilities field of emphasising and focusing on 'voluntary' movement to the detriment of focus on involuntary movement (see Fig. 1). A keyword search in the *Mobilities* journal across all articles from issue 1, 2006 to issue 1, 2011, returned two articles on 'enforced mobility', one on 'refugees' and a further one on 'asylum seekers' – a total of four out of 125 articles (not including editorials). As Bissell (2007) notes, mobility in general is treated by researchers as a 'good', always assumed to be something desirable, unless it is otherwise stated. Yet arguing 'that flows are good, and fixity is correspondingly bad ... clearly runs the risk of simply producing a mirror image of that which it criticizes' (Amin and Thrift 2002, p. 81). In an influential

example, Hannam et al. (2006, p. 12) talk of mobilities being 'enhanced' while immobilities are 'reinforced', and they say that issues include 'who is able to move and who is trapped', without mentioning the issues of who *has* to move and who *can* settle (see also Sheller and Urry, 2006).

In cases such as these, mobilities researchers are following commonly held 'Western' attitudes towards mobility and individual choice, often without questioning them. Mobility is linked to freedom, as the ability to choose one's location(s) *appears* linked to the ability to change the parameters of one's life (Sager, 2006), and concepts of individual freedom 'are powerful and appealing in their own right', as Harvey (2005) puts it when looking at the neo-liberal appropriation of those concepts. Adey (2009, p. 105) claims to be 'questioning and assessing unquestioned conceptions of mobility and freedom', but his strongest emphasis is still that a relative lack of mobility could 'constrain one's ability to find employment, reach essential services or participate in a public sphere'. In other words, mobility is even here presented as desired.

While mobility is perceived as desired, this does not mean mobility always has to be seen as positive – the mobility of *others*, such as immigrants, bikers and 'boy racers' for example, may be viewed as negative if they or their mobility are seen as a threat to those who have already arrived where they are heading or moving to (Urry, 2007). 'Bad' movers are often of a different class to those who view them as such – something overlooked by Cresswell when he, after James Scott, wonders why the state 'always seemed to be the enemy of "people who move around"'. Examples include homeless people and runaway slaves – but no jet-setting businessmen (Cresswell, 2006, p. 17).

When motility is included in the definition of mobility, there are several other consequences/corollaries:

1. As with Urry's five mobilities, the mobility which becomes the default object of study is *human* mobility as inanimate things cannot choose to move.

2. The 'potential for undertaking movements' is nearly always taken to mean that one is moving oneself, not moving things or other people. This is part of the mobilities discourse's ignoring of the issue of control of *others'* movements, which is a more productive place to start from when analysing issues of mobility inequalities, than assuming normative mobility as the mobilities discourse does (as discussed in Chapter

7). There are exceptions, however: Manderscheid (2009, p. 33) mentions that it is not only the ability to move oneself, but also to move 'other people, goods or information' which has become 'a powerful force of stratification', but elaborates no further. And David Morley (2000, p. 199) states that the ultimate issue is not who moves and who is still but 'who has control – both over their connectivity, and over their capacity to withdraw and disconnect. It matters little whether the choice is exercised in favour of staying still or in favour of movement.'

3. Motility is an *individual* capacity, and so its inclusion in the definition of mobility encourages research with a focus on the individual, rather than the community.

4. The implication is that nobody would have motility without *some* movement; everybody who has motility will use it, at least to some extent. Neither in the mobilities literature nor in common parlance are people referred to as 'mobile' who do not move. Yet it is possible to imagine someone who has a wealth of motility at the particular scale being investigated – who could cross oceans if they chose to – but who never uses it, staying in their hometown by preference.

5. Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 208) define sedentarism as treating 'stability, meaning and place' as normal, while treating 'distance, change and placelessness' as abnormal. That motility – the potential to move – is emphasised far above the potential *not* to move reveals a sedentarism in the mobilities discourse, in that humans are considered to be immobile by default, and something has to happen for them to move. In contrast, Galileo conceived of the natural state of things as movement (Cresswell, 2006, p. 14). If one has both motility *and* immotility – the power not to move – there needs to be a reason to stay still as well as to go. Some people constantly have a choice as to where to be: work from home or in the office? In a café? Such choices are not necessarily 'locked in' at the beginning of the day, week or month, but can be revised and changed *at any time* – which has implications for how people approach their entire life. Similarly, one can choose to move home at any time (although the effort needed may mean such a choice is not often made; certain types of motility involve more opportunity cost than others – not something made explicit by the mobilities discourse, which generally prefers to deal in absolutes rather than in relatives). As Sager (2006, p. 480) notes, quoting Friedland and Boden: 'the constant balancing acts between going and staying, between presence and absence, "are therefore a

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fundamental tension of modernity"'". The default setting is not necessarily stillness. Just as Jenson says, 'we are... not just passively being shuffled across town', neither are we just passively being non-shuffled when we're immobile either (see Chapter 7 for more on immobility).

Definition 4: Movement, Representation, Practice

A fourth definition, although its use is not widespread, is that of Cresswell: mobility is 'the entanglement of movement, representation [of movement] and [movement] practice' (Cresswell, 2010, p. 19; see also Cresswell, 2006, pp. 3-4).

Cresswell (2010, pp. 19-20) defines each of these three aspects as follows:

1. **'Movement'** is physical displacement, before the meaning and implications of the displacement are considered. It is the 'raw material for the production of mobility', and it is studied by modellers, migration theorists and transport planners.

2. **'Representation'** is those meanings, conceptualisations and 'ideas about mobility' that are created in film, law, medicine, photography, literature, philosophy, such as the representations of movement as freedom and movement as shiftlessness.

3. **'Practice'** is the embodied experience of movement: 'sometimes we are tired and moving is painful, sometimes we move with hope and a spring in our step'.

Cresswell's third aspect – practice – aligns his definition with the other two anthropocentric definitions (Urry's five mobilities and motility inclusion), as he talks of the experience of mobility solely from the point of view of the moving subject.

Movement without Meaning?

Cresswell's attempted separation of movement and meaning is a significant departure from an obvious influence on his schema, namely Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991). Cresswell's definition adapts Lefebvre's analytical categories of space for mobilities: 1. spatial practices, 2. representations of space and 3. representational spaces – or 'the perceived, the conceived, and the lived' (Lefebvre, 1990, p. 38). But whereas Lefebvre talks (in deliberately non-scientific ways) of society 'producing' space, Cresswell does not talk of societies or individuals producing movement. Instead, he claims they only produce this thing

he calls 'mobility' by imbuing already-present movement with meaning. Lefebvre does not acknowledge an empty 'space' before it is produced. For Lefebvre, meaning is produced at the same time as space is produced, via spatial practices. That is his whole point. But for Cresswell, apparently 'empty' movement predates meaning.

However Cresswell's own examples of those who study physical movement without 'representation' contradict this idea of movement without meaning. The examples include transport planners who are 'endlessly creating models of mechanically aided physical movement in order to make transport more efficient, or less environmentally harmful' and modellers who measure 'the time taken to get between two points and then reduce it' at airports and railway stations (2010, p. 19) and the motion 'tracked by closed circuit television and biometric systems in airports' (2006, p. 3). In spite of his denials, there is clear representation of movement here: that it needs to be made efficient; that the time it takes needs to be reduced; that it is potentially environmentally harmful, and that that harm needs to be reduced; and that movers themselves are potential security threats. In these examples, these types of movement are not viewed positively: movement here is a harmful time-waster, a necessary evil, something that needs monitoring and control, and it is certainly not without representation. So the idea that researchers can find an object of study called 'movement' without that movement already having represented meaning (or without the researchers themselves imbuing the movement with meaning) is problematic (Zeitler, 2008). The idea that they can choose data sets without some predefined concept of which particular movements to choose is also problematic. As Adey puts it, 'to abstract mobility to movement (mobility without meaning) often has distinctly political consequences' (2010, p. 35). I would put it slightly differently: *it is not possible* to separate movement from its meaning; the claim that one has done so has distinctly political consequences. It means that those represented meanings of movement which are unthinkingly imbued, assumed, expected and/or accepted as normal or everyday are not investigated because, on this definition of mobility, they *do not exist*. By denying what Lefebvre underlines – that all actions, whether 'space production' or movement, have meaning – Cresswell turns Lefebvre's political implications on their head: where Lefebvre indicates the potential for change (change action and you change meaning), Cresswell's schema lets status quo assumptions lie undisturbed by investigation.

Further, there is no acknowledgement from Cresswell that his schema means mobility research is also part of its own subject field; that mobilities theorists themselves create

representations of mobilities and they study other people's representations of mobilities, and that in this way mobilities research shapes meanings for movement, and experiences of movement (in Foucauldian terms, mobilities research is part of the mobilities technologies' socio-technical 'apparatus'). This is part of the mobilities discourse fatalism: certain things are inevitable, and nothing, particularly not mobilities research, has any effect on future outcomes for its research objects. There is no consideration that 'knowledge traditions are performative, helping to create the realities that they describe' (Law, 2008, p. 623).

Summary and Consequences

The definitions of mobilities contain intrinsic problems and also contradict one another. Intrinsic problems include:

- the metaphorical and literal confusion of the main definition, leading to an unacknowledged emphasis on physical movement over communications

- the anachronistic confusion between 'imaginative', 'virtual' and 'communicative' mobilities; and the uncritical mind/body dichotomy incorporated within Urry's five mobilities

- the inclusion of motility within the definition of mobility, valorising mobility

- the framing of movement as potentially separate from represented meaning by Cresswell's mobility schema.

The definitions contradict one another in at least two ways. First, the basic definition mentions the movement of 'inhuman' objects and information, whereas such phenomena are excluded from the three anthropomorphic definitions.[4] Second, the inclusion of motility within the definition of mobility means that all mobility is movement *desired* on behalf of the thing moving/being moved, whereas the other three definitions allow mobility to include *all* movement, whether desired or otherwise.

Patterns are emerging: theorists are mostly interested in the movement of humans, particularly such movement that they can code as chosen, and the more complex definitions narrow down the basic 'flagship' definition, *without acknowledging the difference*. What Massey (1999, p. 47) said about globalisation applies also to mobilities, from a mobilities-

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[4] In Urry's five mobilities, objects as well as humans move, but not information, as it is humans who travel 'virtually,' 'communicatively' or 'imaginatively' instead.

advocate point of view: 'when we talk about [mobilities] now, we use the word quite often to mean something quite specific, but we use it as though it's a very general, generic term'. This slippage allows for certain shifty, effective, 'non-coherent' argumentation, of the type Law (2008) describes, as mentioned in Chapter 1. An example of such loose non-coherence directly ensuing from mobilities definitions 'that only partially hang together' is found in Kellerman (2011). Kellerman posits that '[p]otentially, there are four categories of mobility over space: terrestrial, maritime, aerial, and virtual' (p. 729). But he immediately rejects maritime mobility, saying it is no longer relevant as 'a means to cross space' as it is now used for 'mostly pleasure oriented cruises'. Leaving aside whether movement for pleasure should be so quickly disregarded, it is clear that this argument only works if Kellerman has only human displacement in mind, as maritime travel is still of paramount importance for cargo and freight. Yet a page later in the same article, Kellerman includes objects in his argument again, stating '[d]isplacement is possible for three sorts of movables: people, objects and information/knowledge' (p. 730). The disjunction between his dismissal of maritime travel and his later inclusion of objects is not acknowledged, let alone explained. He is able to pick up and put down objects at will, as it were, whenever it suits his argumentation, specifically because the anthropocentricism of the mobilities discourse is not fully revealed, nor fully denied, but is instead embedded within some but not all of its definitions.

More deeply, the mismatch of scope between the basic mobilities definition and the other definitions enables a mismatch of scope between the stated *claims* for the transformative powers of the mobilities discourse and the much narrower stated (and pursued) *aims* of the mobilities discourse agenda-setters. Monika Buscher and Urry (2009) claim 'the mobilities paradigm enables a step change in critical social theory' (p. 112); that it is 'transformative of social science, authorizing an alternative theoretical and methodological landscape' (pp. 99-100; see also Vannini, 2010). Yet elsewhere, the *aims* have become incredibly specific; Sheller and Urry (2006a, p. 217) argue that 'mobilities research is concerned first with the patterning, timing, and causation of face-to-face copresence'. This is double anthropomorphism – the first concern of mobilities research is not humans moving willy-nilly for any old reason, but specifically *humans moving to meet other humans*. This pinpoint focus – a far cry from the world-encompassing basic definition – is discussed in Chapters 6 and 8.

For the moment, having seen how the scope of the mobilities discourse is defined, we will investigate the stated justifications for creating such a 'mobilities paradigm' in the first place.

4. Mobile Methodologies: Justifications I and II

It is possible to identify four main claims used to justify the existence of the 'new mobilities paradigm'. In this chapter, I give an overview of all four justifications, before briefly describing the first two, which originated as commentaries on social science methodologies. In Chapters 5 and 6, I analyse the latter two justifications – which are claims about the world in general, rather than about the social sciences – in relation to each other, to the mobilities definitions and to the practice thus far of mobilities researchers. Overall, the analysis of all four claims reveals an emphasis on individuals, a lack of acknowledgement of social trends, and an emphasis on the experience of travel rather than the reasons for travel. Mobility is not seen as a means to an end, but rather an end in itself, and questions of resources, agency and power – why journeys take place – are usually outside the scope of study. Thus there is a skewed focus on only one means (that is, human movement via powered machine) of several to get to the ends (access to people and facilities). Longer and larger historical and spatial contexts are ignored.

Justifications Overview

The first of the mobilities advocates' four stated reasons to study mobilities is:

i. Until now, the study of mobile phenomena in the social sciences has been poor (Urry, 2000a; Buscher 2010; Urry 2007; Hannam et al., 2006; Kaufmann 2002; Sheller and Urry, 2006a; Graham and Marvin 2001; Vannini, 2010).

Not all social scientists who support this claim necessarily support the other three claims below; they do not necessarily need a mobilities field, but rather might like all social science sub-disciplines to use 'mobile methodologies', where appropriate, or would like to put some of the mobilities topics within another framework (Graham and Marvin, for example, have an ambivalent relationship with the mobilities discourse and are more accurately identified as network theorists rather than mobilities advocates). So this claim by itself does not justify grouping diverse phenomena under the 'mobilities' umbrella. Indeed, the *Mobilities* editors acknowledge there are 'critics' (without identifying them) who argue that the field is too broad (Hannam et al., 2006).

In response to those critics, then, mobilities advocates also claim that:

ii. By studying different mobile modes, scales and subjects together, one sees the connections and 'fluid interdependence' between them (Urry, 2002a; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2006, p. 47; Urry, 2007, p. 54; Hannam et al., 2006; Manderscheid, 2009).

The need to study mobilities is made urgent with the claims that:

iii. The world is more mobile than ever (Bissell and Fuller, 2010), or more ambitiously: the world is more mobile than ever and mobility is ever increasing (Urry, 2007, p. 4; Gray. 2006; Bergmann and Sager, 2008, p. 1). These unprecedented levels of mobility shape our understanding of the world and its organisation (Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007; Hannam et al., 2006).

iv. Issues of mobility are 'central' to life today. In particular, the power of mobility/motility is now a significant (perhaps the most significant) factor of social stratification (Urry, 2000a, p. 195; Hannam et al., 2006; Uteng and Cresswell, 2008; Manderscheid, 2009, p. 44; Cresswell, 2010, p. 22).

All the above claims could easily be re-described as dealing not with mobilities but with the phenomena of space-warping, and I would argue, would work better as such, given the uniformly metaphorical level of 'space-warping', rather than the metaphorical/literal confusion of 'mobilities'.

Justification I: Studies of Mobile Phenomena Have Been Poor in the Social Sciences

This sequence of mobilities theory claims develops as follows:
a) Social science has ignored mobile phenomena.
b) But it is not enough to just stop ignoring mobile phenomena as objects of social science, as current social science research methods are not appropriate for investigating mobile phenomena.
c) Social science needs new tools and methodologies appropriate to research mobile phenomena.
d) Mobile phenomena themselves provide these tools and methodologies.

Urry's *Sociology beyond Borders* criticisms of the social sciences in regards to their treatment of mobile phenomena are: 1. they have ignored automobility in favour of walking, taking their cue from Benjamin's study of *flânerie*; and 2. 'sociology has regarded cars as a neutral technology, permitting social patterns of life that would have more or less occurred anyway' (2000a, pp. 58-59; see also Featherstone et al., 2005). Travel is said to have been treated as a 'black box' in the social sciences, having no effect on other social phenomena (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2003b; Vannini, 2010). In network theory, Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2001) make similar claims: they state that networked urban infrastructures and technological mobilities have been neglected by the social sciences, in part because their study has often been 'inward-looking, technical and overly specialist' (p. 17). Although this thesis will not investigate these claims, they are clearly contentious; even a mobilities discourse article discusses the idea that in France alone, everyone from Le Corbusier to Lefebvre, Auge, Jean Baudrillard, Guy Debord and Michel de Certeau has had an opinion on the car system (Inglis, 2005), while outside the mobilities discourse, John Farrington (2007) suggests that the accusation that the social sciences have ignored movement does not do justice to transport research, transport geography in particular.

Mobilities advocates argue that the research gap they identify cannot just be filled by turning the research focus onto mobilities and investigating mobilities using existing social research methods. Instead, there is a further claim that existing methods of social science research deal poorly with 'mobile' phenomena such as the fleeting (including things that return), the distributed (e.g. long distance relationships), 'the sensory, the multiple, the kinaesthetic, the chaotic, non-causal, complex ...' (Buscher, 2010). The solution to this methodology gap is also said to be found in mobilities themselves. Buscher sees mobilities as creating new methodologies to investigate these phenomena, including time-lapse video; mobile video; 'derive' (observational drifting through urban landscapes); communication and movement databases; walking with video/interviews; and virtual mobile ethnography. Other suggestions include tracking intermittent movement of various phenomena; time-space diaries; mobile voicemail-diaries; wearable automatic time-lapse cameras; and GPS and other technologies (Buscher and Urry, 2009; Sheller and Urry, 2006). Critics have suggested that not all of these methods are new – mobile ethnography, for example, has been used in anthropology for around a century as part of city fieldwork (Atkinson et al., 2008, p. 165). However, many of these methodologies do include use of recent communications technologies such as video and the internet.

As the list of methods above suggests, mobilities research is rather 'methodologically homogenous', with a focus on qualitative studies and few examples of quantitative studies (Vannini, 2010). Buscher and Urry (2009, p. 111) allow that 'many of the studies that make the mobilities paradigm are ethnographic (or are "mobile" ethnographies)'. This approach is encouraged by mobilities theory which focuses on individual travel experience rather than social organisation. It also hinders the study of diverse mobilities, an aim of the mobilities discourse (discussed below).

And even mobile methods can miss out subjects who are mobile – on another scale. What moves on one scale is treated as frozen or invisible on a larger scale, and on a smaller scale as disappeared. If I never leave my hometown, on a global scale, I never move, no matter how mobile I am within that town. If I leave it for the summer, on a city transit level, I am part of a trend of temporary disappearance. For example, in a rare quantitative study, Quigg et al. (2010) tracked 160 primary school students for two weeks, a year apart, using GPS. But because the study focussed on the use of a playground, and because participants were recruited from two schools, the attrition rate of participants was 10%, due to families moving from the area. However, others have found methods to study those whose domicile changes on a regular basis – Sumeeta Srinivasan (2008) describes a survey on daily mobility carried out in Chengdu, China, which used a spatial sampling technique rather than traditional, household list-based area samples, in order to reach rural migrants to the city – the 'floating' population.

This has been a brief overview rather than an analysis of justification I; I will not deal with it further in this thesis, but rather concentrate on the mobilities paradigm claims which lead to mobilities becoming an object of investigation in itself.

Justification II: By Studying Different Mobile Modes, Scales and Subjects Together, One Sees the Connections and 'Fluid Interdependence' between Them

This is an important justification for the creation of a separate mobilities field (incorporating the *Mobilities* journal, conferences and so on), as without it, the study of different 'mobilities' – including migration, communications, tourism, urban mobility and various transport types – could simply be promoted within already-established fields (such as migration studies, media studies and transport studies). Yet the research actually placed within the mobilities field only

partially delivers on this promise of the mobilities theorists and advocates of holism, as shown below via a statistical analysis of *Mobilities* journal articles.

For Cresswell, different mobilities are different 'forms of movement' and movements at different scales, from parts of the body to the globe.[5] By studying them together rather than keeping research about them divided into separate disciplines and sub-disciplines, he hopes researchers will have 'a more holistic understanding of mobilities' (Cresswell, 2010, p. 18). His own examples of this are few, but include the influence of a breakthrough in knowledge about blood circulation on early modern town planners, for whom free flow of urban traffic became important for the 'health' of their cities (2006, p. 7). Meanwhile, Manderscheid (2009, p. 36) hopes for illumination of phenomena which usually fall between disciplinary cracks, such as dual residences, which currently straddle residential mobility, travel and daily mobility. Jorgen Ole Baerenholdt and Brynhild Granas (2008) similarly point out that tourism, migration and commuting intersect and feed into and produce one another – for example, tourists may end up migrating permanently to their holiday destination. (But significantly, these last two examples of different mobilities are only examples of different *human* mobilities.) The implication is that by drawing these phenomena within the same discourse their impacts on one another are more likely to be studied in combination. Writing about the interaction between different kinds of physical and 'virtual' travel – that is, transport and communications – Sheller and Urry (2006a, p. 212) present this holistic, combining approach not as a 'nice-to-have' but as a necessity: 'mobilities need to be examined in their fluid interdependence and not in their separate spheres'.

Research Topic Scope

In order to see what mobilities the discourse compares, contrasts and associates, we first need to examine which mobilities the discourse examines, and which it ignores. In spite of the basic, flagship definition (discussed in the previous chapter), what is immediately clear is that almost all articles published in the first five years of the *Mobilities* journal (Issue 1, 2006, to Issue 1, 2011, excluding issue editorials) assume or consider physical human movement in one way or another –no less than 119 articles out of 125, or 95%. Although 26 articles, or 21%, touch on the travel of objects and information (Table 1), only three of these articles specifically deal with objects not carried on or with the person, and only five touch on the

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[5] Larger scales than global – such as space travel – are not considered by any mobilities theorists, as far as I am aware. Neither is other physically 'vertical' travel, such as elevator travel.

movement of information between stationary people and places, making a total of 6% of articles which consider phenomena which are not directly related to physical human movement, such as air cargo, an exhibition of religious icons, dust and tables at an airport, capital, emails and ideas.[6] As mentioned in Chapter 3, one could argue, that as a *social* science, the mobilities discourse is properly focussed on human movement; however, this ignores the vast impact that the movement of objects and propagation of information has on 'stationary' populations. The mobilities discourse also advertises itself as 'post-disciplinary' and as studying the movement of objects and information, so at the very least, it is not living up to this promise, but rather, falling behind the 'new material turn' in the social sciences which it purports to celebrate.

Table 1: Number and % of articles including some discussion of object and/or information travel published in *Mobilities* (Issue 1, 2006–Issue 1, 2011; n = 125)

	Sent and received	Carried by humans, or about human travel	Total
Objects	3	5	
Information	5	13	
Total	**8 (6.4%)**	**18 (14.4%)**	**26 (20.8%)**

Five of the other 18 articles concern objects which travel 'in conjunction with the movements of people', which are the only types of objects which Urry discusses in *Sociology beyond Societies* – objects whose 'cultural biographies' are intertwined with human travel. Such studies could be easily placed into a specific 'human mobilities' paradigm. In general, mobilities theory and research does not consider objects which travel on their own, to and from non-tourists or non-migrants, but there is no explanation as to why this is so. (One exception is Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter's [2010] article on maritime transportation and logistics.) In addition, there is little mention of the wealth of research which is not directly framed within the mobilities discourse but which investigates object mobilities, including the critique and investigation of logistics, supply lines, management of natural resources,

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[6] I do not include here as 'displaced objects' those machines which are designed to transport people and other objects, such as automobiles and bicycles. Two articles mention both physical human movement and the *unrelated* movement of other phenomena, which is why the percentages of articles considering physical human movement and those considering the movement of other phenomena add up to more than 100% - there is some overlap of topics within articles.

business travel, shipping, exports such as cash crops, and so on, all crucial to current business models (an exception is Adey [2009, p. 53], who does list some references on object travel).

Despite the collective effort of making the necessary logic leap to include communications as a mobility within the mobilities discourse, information sharing which is not to do with physical human movement is almost as little researched within the discourse as objects which travel on their own. Thirteen out of the 18 articles which touch on communications are about information moving with people (such as religious knowledge and agricultural practices), information influencing travel behaviour (such as movies promoting tourist destinations, or people using the internet to book travel) or people communicating while moving (such as playing technology-enhanced mobile games, or talking on the phone while on the train). In general in the mobilities discourse, there is little talk of communications technology employed between immobile people (or, to use Urry's terminology, people who are only 'virtually' or 'communicatively mobile'), and no discussion of how the current 'flow of capital' via the technologies of the share markets has the potential to shape the world, making and breaking the financial viability of individuals, firms and nations.

Drawing on these *Mobilities* journal statistics, and an analysis of seminal mobilities texts such as Urry (2007) and Cresswell (2006), it is clear that, in practice, empirical mobilities research perhaps most often includes:

Mode	*Topic*
Physical human movement	Tourism[7]
	Migration
	Airports
	Daily machine-aided travel, esp. automobility
Communications	Travel organisation (e.g. internet tourism bookings)
	Communication whilst being displaced physically
	Physical/'virtual' gaming

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[7] 'Tourism' includes all trips of less than a year's duration outside one's 'usual environment', including business tourism and pilgrimage, as well as leisure trips (UNWTO, n.d.).

It rarely includes:

Mode	*Topic*
Physical human movement	Displacement identified as involuntary (international and local)
	Home-moving
	Movement which does not include powered technological artefacts
	Involuntary displacement
	The relationship between global and local movement
Object movement	Cultural objects which move with humans
	Objects which are moved without accompaniment (almost never studied)
Information 'movement'	The propagation of ideas

It never includes:

- domestic inter-regional or inter-city tourism, domestic migration or domestic involuntary displacement
- the relationship between the movement of objects *on their own* and the movement (or lack of movement) of humans
- the relationship between the movement of objects and the 'movement' of information
- the connections between phenomena identified as mobile and phenomena identified as immobile or otherwise, apart from stating that the mobility of some requires the immobility of others (a problematic claim as discussed in Chapter 6).

Most significantly, human-powered displacement, such as walking, is rarely mentioned within the mobilities discourse, and so of course the interactions between it and other kinds of movement using powered technological artefacts are rarely discussed. Of the 125 articles published in the *Mobilities* journal from 2006 to Issue 1, 2011, for instance, only one deals specifically with pedestrians in relation to the automobile (Short et al., 2010), and only one other directly deals with bodies moving themselves, as political resistance (Parviainen, 2010), although another article does discuss the politics of cycling (Furness, 2007). There are three other articles which touch on walking: on children's mobility (Benwell, 2009), on the

mobility of those with cognitive functional limitations (Rosenkvist et al., 2010) and on trans-national domestic workers' mobility within Singaporean homes – perhaps the only mention of mobility *within* buildings within the *Mobilities* journal (Huang and Yeoh, 2007). Significantly all three of these latter articles examine groups who usually lack the capability or the financial means to drive. Interestingly, one geographical exception to this aversion to talking about human exertion seems to be mobilities researchers in Australasia: The Australian Sociological Association's mobilities thematic group was made up of researchers studying sport as well as tourism and travel (Hillman, 2008), while mobilities symposiums in New Zealand in 2010 and 2011 included papers on sport, impaired bodies and elderly mobility. But elsewhere, walking and running are often not even considered to be mobilities, and are instead entirely forgotten; for instance Kellerman (2011, p. 730) claims that 'spatial mobility by its very nature involves various movables and numerous mobility options, *all implying the integrative use of mobility technologies*' (emphasis added). This omission points to an ahistoricisation, an aversion to considering proximity of facilities (which would allow walking between, say, home and workplace), and a fatalism within the mobilities discourse as discussed in Chapter 8.

Still, even if the vast majority of the mobilities discourse is only investigating the physical displacement of humans by powered technological means, Cresswell's different forms and scales of movement can still be studied.

Research into Mobilities' Comparisons and Conjunctions

In all, 27 of the 125 articles (22%) published in the discourse's flagship *Mobilities* journal from the inaugural issue (Issue 1, 2006) to Issue 1, 2011, could be described as comparing, contrasting or associating different forms of mobilities. Examples include the Pakistani diaspora's visits back to the 'homeland' (migration and tourism) (Ali and Holden, 2006); the relationship between Somalia's telecommunications industry and the remittances of the Somali diaspora (migration, movement of capital and telecommunications) (Collins, 2009); and the use of mobile telecommunications on trains (telecommunications and public transport) (Berry and Hamilton, 2010).

Significantly, some mobilities are researched more in conjunction with each other than others are. Table 2 shows that, in practice, communications technology is not considered to be a mobility on its own, but rather an enhancement of physical human movement, being nearly

always considered alongside other mobilities. This is unsurprising, given the relatively few articles which touch on information technology, as discussed above.

Table 2: Top five mobility subjects in *Mobilities* (Issue, 1, 2006 – Issue 1, 2011)*

Subject	No. of articles	Percentage comparing mobilities
Migration	38	10 (26%)
Urban mobility	35	10 (29%)
Tourism	28	12 (43%)
Automobility	18	3 (17%)
Communication technology	17	16 (94%)

* Some articles fit into more than one category.

The large number of articles dealing with migration within *Mobilities* – 38 of the 125 examined, or 30% – is surprising given that mobilities *theory* doesn't focus on domestic relocation. Not one article was found to deal with both migration and automobility, which raises questions about whether research into automobile use (a movement mode) and research into migration (a reason for movement) belong in the same field at all. In contrast to the 18 articles on automobility, there are only five articles on other urban transport modes: three about trains and two about buses.

Even if one accepts that the mobilities discourse is investigating certain connections between certain mobilities, by concentrating on asking 'who and what other mobilities do our mobilities effect? [sic]' (Adey, 2009, p. 104), there is a danger of neglecting 'what *non-mobile* phenomena do our mobilities effect and affect?' Effects of powered mobility on the environment, for example, are surprisingly little studied within the field (the environmental effects of air travel seem to have *never* been studied), and while it is certainly within the parameters of the mobilities discourse for it to take a leading role in analysing the social factors in and social responses to the development of sustainable mobile technologies, there is extremely little discussion of this – none in *Mobilities* for example. (One exception is Dennis and Urry's *After the Car* [2009], but that has other problems, as discussed in Chapter 8.) Further, studying the connections between phenomena labelled 'mobilities' without also studying the connections between them and those phenomena labelled 'immobile', or the connections between general mobility and immobility, and mobility and access, is problematic. The mobilities discourse does suggest that coerced non-movement is due to others' mobilities (as per Chapter 6) but it does not consider that the *desired* stillness of

people is partially enabled through the movement of objects, ideas and information (as well as other people) towards them (see Chapter 7).

Investigation of Mobility Experience

A retrospective justification for the mobilities discourse, given the relative thinness of 'connections' investigation, is that it is also about the *experience* of movement. Cresswell (2010, p. 18) claims migration theory investigates why people leave one location and why they choose to go elsewhere, without investigating their experience in transit, so 'despite being about movement, it was really about places'. Transport studies, also, 'have too often thought of time in transit as "dead time" in which nothing happens'. These are rather remarkable claims that have an impact on the politics of the mobilities discourse – to push Cresswell's claim to its ultimate conclusion: if one studies reasons for travel, then one is not really studying movement. But if one does not study travel reasons, and just accepts any existing travel behaviour as *necessary*, one is supporting the status quo without investigation. However, Cresswell does go on to make a pertinent point: 'mobility studies have begun to take the actual fact of movement seriously', whether that is movement of migration, daily transit or otherwise. Vannini (2010, p. 114) argues similarly that mobilities research has revealed that various transport vehicles 'are meaningful places and cultural environments in and of themselves'. Indeed, there is a reasonable amount of work in the mobilities discourse that deals with the specific experience of movement (Cresswell's third aspect of mobility in his movement-representation-practice triad): of the 125 articles published in the *Mobilities* journal during the period under examination for example, 30, or 24%, could be said to focus on the experience of movement. The *Automobilities* collection (Featherstone et al., 2005) also includes a number of articles on the experience of driving. However, researching the 'actual fact of movement' apparently does not include researching the more invisible resources – system organisation and supply lines for various movement systems.

Summary

A minor proportion of mobilities research does investigate interactions between types of mobilities (22% of *Mobilities* articles in the period under examination), and a similar proportion focuses on individuals' experiences of mobility (24%). These are research approaches which the mobilities discourse can claim to have promoted with some success, although they are not employed quite as often as prominent mobilities advocates suggest.

However, the breadth and number of topics which mobilities researchers investigate do not equal the breadth and number of topics which are covered in the flagship definition; in particular, object and information 'mobilities' and human-powered mobility are rarely studied within a mobilities context. As I will argue later in the thesis, it is not accidental that those 'mobilities' which are left out are those which challenge the idea that humans are (and are necessarily) automobile-dependent. Instead, the mobilities discourse overwhelmingly concentrates on physical human displacement by powered machines, to the extent that mobility is equated with moving by machine, as discussed in the next chapter. The meaning of mobility/mobilities turns out to float alarmingly: sometimes it is a general, desirable capability; sometimes it means movement by machine. The conflation of these meanings is a risk: that the displacement of people by powered machines will be seen as desired in and of itself. What seems foolish when stated baldly becomes a plausibility when swathed in vagueness, as it is within the mobilities discourse – another example of slippery 'non-coherence', resting not directly on the mismatch between stated mobilities definitions, but on the conflation between one stated definition (mobility including motility) and an assumption (mobility means the machine), which reveals itself in the trends of the topics chosen by mobilities researchers.

I now turn away from research methodologies and topics to further investigate what the mobilities discourse is claiming about the world in general.

5. Justification III: The World is More Mobile than Ever

Having discussed the academic context for mobilities, I now explore the global context, as presented by the discourse itself, in these next two chapters. In this chapter, I explain how the mobilities discourse measures 'mobility' as physical human displacement, so that it can be presented as increasing. Yet many (non-mobilities) social theorists use a contrasting thesis: that globalisation has *decreased* physical displacement for many. This possibility is almost never discussed within the mobilities discourse, and I outline how it only considers evidence which supports its claim of overall increased mobility, and ignores phenomena which may lead to other narratives and approaches in which mobility is only one part of the story. The discourse presents mobility (movement) as globally normative. Particular statistics are used as general evidence that there is increased mobility, with little analysis of who is moving, and whose immobility is masked. The way the mobilities discourse has shaped its object so that it can broadly support the idea that we are all becoming more mobile includes a loose eurocentricism – the discourse assumes individuals are very motile and have no political trouble crossing sovereign borders – and technophilia – an emphasis on mobility by powered, technological means (discussed in Chapter 8). The mobilities discourse has chosen to engage with and present the positive, happy face of human displacement rather than more murky complexities. Unpalatable phenomena are kept hidden, and therefore opportunities to challenge them never arise.

Claim Assertion

One of the ways Urry makes the claim that 'the world is more mobile than ever' is telling:

> people do not spend more time travelling ... People also do not necessarily seem to make more journeys ... But what is crucial is that people are travelling further and faster, if not more often or spending more time actually 'on the road'. (2007, p. 4)

That it is 'crucial' that people travel 'further and faster' divulges several mobilities discourse axioms and has particular ramifications for its theory: being 'more mobile' within the mobilities discourse does not necessarily mean saving time, or getting to more places or more exciting places; it can merely mean increasing the distance one travels to get to work. The claim rests on a view of mobility as crossing Euclidean, objective space rather than subjective space – in other words, it rests on how much distance is covered rather than how many

targeted destinations are reached. Being more mobile is seen as making distance matter less, rather than making time matter less. In addition, 'travelling further and faster' involves technology consumption. The mobilities theorists seem to expect an overall increase in the consumption of mobile technologies, in spite of (or perhaps because of) their lack of interest in the resources required for this increase of consumption, and the usually private ownership of the production of the technological artefacts.

Urry furthers his above claim that mobility is currently at an all-time high, with predictions that mobility will keep increasing in the future. In particular, he quotes a prediction that 'world citizens' will increase the kilometres they travel fourfold from 23 billion each day currently to 106 billion by 2050 (2007, p. 4). Bissell and Fuller's (2010, p. 3) version of the introductory assertion is rather more guarded: they write that phenomena 'are travelling at greater distances, speeds and intensities than ever before' without predicting the future, nor describing what they mean by 'intensities'. Others simply assume we live in 'an increasingly mobile world' (Gray, 2006). Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager (2008, p. 1) claim this calls for new ways of thinking: 'The imprint of increasing mobility on a globalising world is so profound that it calls for analysis far beyond the forums of established academic disciplines.' It is implied that the mobilities discourse can offer this sort of new analysis.

Urry also extrapolates certain theoretical objects – which pertain mostly to rich states and individuals rather than poor ones – to describe the entire world, rich and poor, in support of his thesis of increasing movement. Or rather, he 'sort-of' does, in a non-coherent way so that it is possible to deny such extrapolation if one attempts to pin it down. For example, he claims that 'the consequence of such diverse mobilities [virtual travel, corporeal travel and so on] is to produce what Beck terms the growth of "inner mobility" for which coming and going, being both here and there at the same time, has become *much more globally normal*' (2000b, p. 186, emphasis added). A careful reading reveals that Urry is not saying that inner mobility itself has become more globally normal; he is saying that if the feeling of being both here and there at the same time is normal for someone, then they have an 'inner mobility'. Or rather, he is saying that if the feeling of being both here and there at the same time is *globally normal* for someone, then they have an 'inner mobility'. The meaning here is unclear. People do not usually say 'it's globally normal for me to feel like this'; they simply say 'it's normal for me to feel like this'. Beck, in the work cited by Urry (1999, p. 75), writes: 'What is coming to the fore is the *inner* mobility of an individual's own life, for which coming and

going, being both here and there across frontiers at the same time, has become the normal thing' (emphasis in original). Beck does not use the word 'globally', and certainly not to describe 'normal'. I suggest Urry adds 'globally' to his paraphrase, even though it makes the sentence a nonsense, because he would like to suggest that inner mobility itself – a theoretical positing of a state of mind of *mobility-privileged* people – is increasing in normality worldwide. In this way, being rich enough to travel is presented as normative, as the norm.

Measurement of Mobility

If 'the world' is more mobile than ever, how is mobility measured? Let us start with the assumption of the mobilities discourse that the only subject here is a human one. The inclusion of motility in the definition of mobility means one should measure *potential* movement as well as *actual* movement. But apart from Kaufmann's (2002) attempts to work out a schema for measuring motility, the mobilities discourse concentrates solely on measuring physical human displacement (whether or not it is voluntary displacement), masking rather than highlighting coerced displacement. Even within these narrower confines, the mobilities discourse has chosen two different options, one for local displacement and one for global displacement.

On a local level, to be more mobile means to travel further, faster; it is measured in distance and speed. Here, the mobilities discourse takes its cue from the strengths of powered technologies: given the right conditions they can go further and faster than humans by themselves – this is the speed which gives the feeling of invincible immortality which Kundera's motorcyclist enjoys in the epigraph to this thesis. Jensen (2009, p. 144) sums up this attitude, and shows its importance in separating past and present: although he underlines that humans have always been mobile, he also sees 'a new dynamic and intensity' to our movement now, due to '*faster mobility technologies* and changed network relations' (emphasis added). Words like 'dynamic' and 'intensity' – also used by Bissell and Fuller – are rather vague and possibly all they do is say 'further, faster' in different ways, but they evoke the glamour of a new, exciting epoch, and further justify the need for a new 'paradigm' to study it. In *Global Complexities* (2003, p. 125) Urry contrasts the 'so-far most powerful mobile machine, the aeroplane' with 'the least powerful mobile machine, human legs' – a rare mention of the possibility of movement without technological aids. This betrays at least two of Urry's assumptions. Firstly, and most importantly, that 'power' is measured in speed and acceleration; if 'power' was measured by the 'machine's' impact on my life, then the use

of my legs would arguably be the most powerful motility I have. Surely more people, if faced with the choice, would prefer to give up use of aeroplanes before giving up the use of their legs. And secondly, the contrast shows that by 'mobile machines' Urry means machines displacing humans (otherwise any number of devices – conveyor belts, remote controlled toys – would be considered less 'powerful' than human legs).

Urry shares the assumptions of transport researchers who seem to expect people to desire to cover as much geographical ground in as little time possible rather than desiring to reach their destination as quickly as possible (Levinson, Krizek & Gillen, 2005). These two things are different: for example, somebody who drives five minutes from home to the nearest grocery store is more 'mobile' than someone who walks two minutes from home to their nearest grocery store. Or someone who reaches a top speed of 60km/h during a journey can still be delayed by a traffic jam and a search for parking near their destination. Measures of movement alternative or complementary to distance and speed which are not considered within the mobilities discourse include: the number of destinations visited and the number of trips taken. If mobility is taken as movement potential or motility, the measurement could be 'the number of potential destinations able to be visited within a particular time frame'. This does not happen however; as discussed in Chapter 6, to a large extent movement is a *means* of access which the mobilities discourse discusses as if it were an *end* in itself.

On a global rather than everyday scale, mobility is overwhelmingly interpreted as international travel. Domestic travel is not often mentioned; the distance travelled is not as important as the crossing of sovereign borders. (One exception is Cass et al. [2005] who note that domestic travel in the UK is high.) This oversight is a weakness of the mobilities discourse, given the large numbers of people involved in domestic migration and tourism. In China, for example, around 200 million people are living further than 1,000 miles away from their point of origin (Bookman, 2006). Further, Nowicka (2006, p. 416) points out a theoretical problem with this practice of measuring global mobilities by international travel: the mobilities discourse in general does not acknowledge that nation-states are *social* spaces rather than geographical ones; they are 'particular political and organizational systems' rather than being compelled to be of a certain geographical size. Thus, someone could travel further within one large country than someone else does to visit several small neighbouring ones, but this is not considered important within the mobilities discourse. The measurement used by the mobilities discourse further naturalises the nation-state, without justification.

The difference of modes of measurement between the two scales of 'everyday' and 'global' is not directly identified by the mobilities discourse ('everyday' mobility is measured by distance rather than places accessed, while 'global' mobility is not measured by distances but by countries accessed). Thus, people who cross sovereign borders every day are not accounted for, neither are those who travel to the neighbouring suburb extremely rarely, nor those who move house within their own city (one exception is Metcalfe [2006], who does study the latter). In other words, the two 'scales' overlap, as one is based on physical space and the other is based on social space, without acknowledgement. Modes of transport rather than destinations feature in research on everyday mobility (meaning that access is not highlighted); destinations rather than modes of transport feature in research on global mobility (meaning that journey difficulties are not highlighted). Also, everyday global information movement – using the internet to check international newspapers, for example – has no place in a schema where the everyday is equated with local movement. Short times are still linked to short distances.

Evidence Overview

With the exception of Urry, researchers point to very little evidence for increased mobility in any of the senses above (perhaps assuming evidence for it is ubiquitous), but they do suggest:

a) globalisation in a wide sense (for example Urry, 2000; Gale, 2009; Ohnmacht et al., 2009; Blossfeld, 2009; Manderscheid, 2009).

b) more specifically, human international travel and commuting statistics (for example Urry, 2000, 2002a, 2003b, 2004a, 2007, 2008; Sheller and Urry, 2000, 2006a; Szerszynski and Urry, 2006; Kellerman, 2008; Papastergiadis, 2010). Given the mobilities discourse's anthropocentrism, it is unsurprising that the aspect of globalisation most cited by mobilities advocates is increasing human travel. For example, theorists do not present export/import statistics, stock market figures, or digital information statistics as evidence.

c) also specifically, the advent of the internet and mobile communications technology, such as mobile phones, for *human* communication (for example Urry, 2007, p. 5; Cresswell, 2006, p. 46).

d) on a more local scale, the rise of the automobile (discussed in Chapter 8)

Underlying all the forms of 'evidence' above is the continuing development and increasing usage of powered technology. As suggested by the research topics examined in the previous chapter, the mobilities discourse turns out to be a discourse of technology in loose disguise, to the extent that movement without powered technological aid is not considered a mobility within the mobilities discourse, as discussed below. There is little contextualisation of the world's increasing technology-dependent mobility in relation to the past or the future. In regards to the past, there is some discussion that hegemonic automobility has enforced high levels of movement onto populations (see Chapter 8), but this discussion does not lead to a questioning of the desirability of movement, as might be expected. In regards to the future, there is little acknowledgement that any current increasing physical movement via energy-hungry technological means is in jeopardy from peak oil crisis or that it is unsustainable. There is not much thought given to the fact that predictions of environmental catastrophe are themselves increasing at an accelerating rate (the significant exceptions to these last points are analysed in Chapter 8). Bearing these points in mind, a brief analysis of the mobilities discourse as an example of sociology of technology is offered in the conclusion to this thesis.

Evidence: Globalisation

Mobilities theorists fragment the analysis of globalisation by not often comparing or connecting movements of people to other causes/consequences of globalisation. There are other research topics that a social science inspired by globalisation could pursue simultaneously, which the mobilities approach does not: object movement (as discussed in Chapter 4) and also development, security and trade, for example, or cultural, biological, political and economic globalisations (Sovacool, 2010). In particular, the mobilities discourse disassociates what I have called 'space-warping' from 'time-warping' and does not name time-warping phenomena as research objects for the mobilities discourse. 'Space-warping' refers to the ability of real-time communications and fast transport to make certain relations between certain physically distant places possible which, without technology, are only possible between physically proximate places. 'Time-warping' on the other hand is the often sped-up rate of change in consumer fashion, technology, infrastructure, social organisation and individual lives, for example, that happens partially as a result of space-warping. Space-warping is immediately obvious; time-warping includes longer-term trends which are more difficult to detect. The more commercial and economic time-warping aspects of 'mobilities' are very rarely studied within the mobilities discourse, as if they have no effect on the 'social

relations' deliberately put at the centre of the mobilities discourse – with the effect that their political ramifications are ignored.[8]

However, by paraphrasing political idealist Richard Falk's *On Humane Governance* (1995), Urry (2000b) early on paints a positive picture of one potential time-warping consequence of globalisation. He writes of an emerging 'global civil society' as if such a society is a likelihood; a society which is developing through

> the widespread growth of trans-national citizens associations, world-wide shifts towards democratization and non-violence, huge difficulties for national states in maintaining popularity and legitimacy, and the more general growth of diverse global trends. (p. 201)

Such an 'optimistic view of modern societies' and 'sense that political borders and cultural boundaries were disappearing' was shared by many other sociologists 'working on various aspects of globalization' at the time (Turner 2010, p. 245). Urry (2000b, p. 201) seems to suggest that without the 'social transformations' he describes, there will not be any new sociology of mobilities at all, and even with them, it is not guaranteed: 'the social basis of a "global civil society" and its emancipatory interests *may* result in a "sociology of mobilities" of the sort I have outlined here, as we move chaotically into the next century' (emphasis added). Yet Falk himself (1995, pp. 1-2) prophesises a world of 'inhumane governance' for the early 21st century. He emphasises that it will take enormous effort and commitment to supersede that inhumane governance with a 'positive and transformative politics, one animated by horizons that might seem utopian from the outlook of the present, yet are part of a coherent project to bring such results into being'. By treating an unlikely, possibly utopian vision of the future as *expected*, Urry gives his readers permission to do nothing, secure in the knowledge that a happy future is on its way. Yet, according to Falk, doing nothing will result in exactly the normative inhumane governance that he wishes to avoid.

Given such blitheness about the social transformations effected by globalisation, it is not surprising that the mobilities discourse almost always accepts globalisation as a given, rather than investigating it as something that can be shaped. The mobilities discourse, like

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[8] One exception to these criticisms is Blossfeld et al. (2009), in that they talk of phenomena of time-warping. Yet significantly, their study on the effects of globalisation on the working and family lives of different cohorts in different European nations *uses no metaphors of mobilities*; their inclusion in the mobilities anthology *Mobilities and Inequality*, edited by Ohnmacht et al. seems arbitrary.

Sovacool's (2010, p. 21) characterisation of the globalisation discourse itself, 'downplays the central role that neoliberalist ideology has exerted in shaping current forms of globalization'. Massey (1999, p. 9) points out that credence is lent to a particular kind of globalisation 'not by being explicit about it but by accepting it as an inevitability' (see also Bude and Dürrschmidt, 2010). And accepting current free-market forms of globalisation as inevitable is what the mobilities discourse does. Globalisation is seen as 'inhuman', a force of nature (Urry, 2000a, p. 12), rather than being seen as a number of *human*-initiated and managed processes. Yet, crucially – and this is what Falk's theory of possible transformation is founded on – 'the way we imagine globalisation will affect the form which it takes' (Massey, 1999, p. 16). As Paul James (2005, p. 195) puts it: 'globalization is a process, not a state of being', a process which can be influenced. Mobilities advocates do not even try.

Are We Really Moving More?

The impact of globalisation on people's physical displacement is still widely debated; researchers outside the mobilities discourse do not necessarily agree that globalisation has resulted in the world becoming more mobile. Shamir (2005, p. 199) for example, emphasises that 'processes of globalization are also concerned with the prevention of movement and the blocking of access', and that the current era is one of state securitisation and 'growing restrictions on movement'. Similarly, Massey (1999) describes today's global world as '*systematically* riven' (p. 23, emphasis added) rather than *chaotically* in flow, and notes that 'capital's current globalisation is ... predicated upon holding others in place' (p. 21). Castells (2000, p. 10) also has capital in mind, when he writes that 'globalization is highly selective ... discarding anything (people, firms, territories, resources) which has no value or becomes devalued'. Martell and Turner point to differences between 'moveables', Martell (2007, p. 194) stating that, in recent years, 'capital has flowed more freely but states have been stricter in controlling immigration, that is, the movement of people', while Turner's point of comparison is objects: 'whereas goods travel relatively freely in a global market, the same cannot be said for people' (2010, p. 241). Note that the moveables which the mobilities discourse rarely considers (objects, capital) are here claimed to be more mobile than the moveables – humans – which the mobilities discourse emphasises. Turner claims there are 'important trends toward increased immobility' (including intangibles such as increasing racism in Europe) (see also Papastergiardis, 2010). As Shamir (2005, p. 201) notes, international terrorist groups operating in the 1970s 'did not trigger responses of the type we

witness today' in terms of state border closures to particular aliens. Yet it is not only the vulnerable or those perceived as undesirable whose mobility may be restricted; while 'suspect social elements' are separated from others behind walls in prisons, urban ghettos and 'hyper-ghetto' countries, more privileged people may fear to leave gated communities and guarded shopping malls and holiday resorts – even though they fly around the world (Shamir, 2005).

Thus, on these views, globalisation is not a mobility free-for-all; it is about *control* of motion, increasing motility in certain ways for some, and decreasing it for others. This is partially due to the 'centre''s industrial production of motion-control technologies (Netz, 2004). Instead of 'roaming' or being mobile, most refugees, as Shamir (2005, p. 205) notes, are exiled to poor, 'suspect' countries, which already act as 'hyper-ghettoes' for the holders of undesirable passports, and as such, refugees are 'often doubly *immobilized*, coerced into designated and stigmatized areas, and located at the very bottom of the social mobility hierarchy of an already suspect country' (emphasis added; see also Wacquant, 2009). This coerced movement/coerced non-movement of refugees points to the difficulty of only focusing on mobility and not immobility, rather than separating motility from mobility and focusing on both, as per Fig. 1 in Chapter 3. The mobilities discourse may agree there is motility inequality (see Chapter 6), but as Shamir (2005, p. 197) says, 'regardless of the attention given to the widening mobility gap in the present era, globalization is predominantly theorized in terms of social openness and social fluidity'; and this fluidity is indeed the dominant motif which the mobilities discourse supports, by researching movement rather than non-movement, and by assuming that movement is normatively voluntary.

As evidence that the world is more mobile than ever before, the mobilities discourse tends to use global aggregate statistics of international short-term trips (see, for example, Sheller and Urry, 2000, 2006a; Urry, 2004a, 2007; Kellerman, 2008). As well as measuring global mobility as nation-state hopping, thereby reaffirming the nation-state as 'natural' as described above, there are two other things to note about this habit of using international short trips as evidence:

1. Because international travel is expensive, the travel patterns of rich countries and individuals mask the patterns of poorer ones.

2. Because the statistics pertain to the number of trips rather than the number of travellers, it is impossible to ascertain whether many more people travelling

internationally, or if, instead, the proportion of travellers is increasing much more slowly than the amount of travel, as relatively few people take many more trips. In other words, is *mobility-equality* increasing or decreasing? The mobilities discourse does not trouble itself with this question on an international scale.

Mobilities Discourse on Movement Control Worldwide

To recap: the increasing lack of motility for many people is largely hidden in the mobilities discourse due to the starting premise that 'we/the world are/is more mobile than ever' and the international travel statistics used to back this up. In spite of a brief mention of the difficulties of border crossing for some in the inaugural *Mobilities* editorial (Hannam et al., 2006), the mobilities discourse hardly acknowledges those whose mobility has been restricted rather than increased by globalisation, particularly those in poorer nations. For example, Hannam et al. (2006) only mention asylum seekers twice, both times in lists. The first list presents them as 'increasingly criss-cross[ing]' the 'global order', along with 'tourists, workers, terrorists, students, migrants' and others (p. 2). There is no acknowledgement that the movement of asylum seekers, unlike that of tourists, is in fact increasingly restricted and discouraged, with disastrous consequences (Bauman, 2007). The second list on which asylum seeking appears is the following, reproduced here in full: 'money laundering, the drug trade, sewage and waste, infections, urban crime, asylum seeking, arms trading, people smuggling, slave trading and urban terrorism'. The ostensible reason for the grouping is that all these movements 'make visible the already existing chaotic juxtaposition of different spaces and networks' (Hannam et al., 2006, p. 7). However, the effect of putting asylum seeking on the same list as a number of undesirable activities is that the authors have unintentionally done what Bauman accuses 'liquid modernity' of doing: presenting/treating the vagabonds – asylum seekers – as toxic waste (Bauman, 1998). The *Mobilities* editorial does acknowledge that 'obligatory as well as voluntary forms of travel' need to be researched but its first example of such obligatory travel is travel 'necessary for social life'. Coerced travel necessary for life itself is further down the list and includes the article's only use of the word 'refugees' (pp. 10-11). Where Bauman critically evaluates and challenges the legitimacy of the system which creates the 'human waste' of displaced peoples, mobilities commentators such as Hannam et al. take

the existence of the system as a given and displaced peoples as an unfortunate but ignorable or ameliorable side effect.[9]

Is this discourse focus on individuals from rich Western countries a problem? After all, 80% of the world's international travel happens in North America and Europe (Urry, 2000a, p. 51), and this could be used as a justification for focusing on rich Western countries in a mobilities discourse, rather than as a criticism that the rest of the world is neglected by the discourse. However the limiting focus on rich Western individuals is barely acknowledged, and instead the word 'global' is at the forefront of the discourse (one exception is Cresswell, whose 2006 book *On the Move* is subtitled 'mobility in the modern Western world'), so that the mobilities discourse is misrepresenting itself yet again as having broader scope than it actually does, making privileged behaviour normative and not engaging with issues of inequality. On the other hand, one could argue that social sciences in the West have always focussed on their own societies. However, the mobilities discourse is based on notions of globalisation and has no theoretical grounds to only be speaking about rich nation individuals. As Massey (1999) puts it: 'there is more than one story going on in the world' (p. 35) and this needs not just to be acknowledged but to be at the forefront of a sociology with global pretensions. The mobilities discourse is in danger of mistaking their mobilities sociology of Europe as the mobilities sociology of the *entire* world, and reading the world as a culturally smooth space, at least as far as mobilities go. We can now see that not only is this possible because of the discourse advocates' demographics, as suggested in Chapter 2, but also because of the discourse's unacknowledged focus on the individuals from certain nation-states. The transformation of poor regions into hyper-ghettoes, recipients of most of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2010), reinforces Netz's (2004, p. 57) theory that when there is 'enormous control over space enjoyed by the people of the center', there is peace at the centre and 'war of the periphery'. In other words, 'violence has not been reduced' – as Urry would hope – instead, 'it has been more concentrated on the margins and has thus become less visible to the people of the center' (Netz, 2004, p. 237). One does not learn this from reading mobilities literature.

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[9] A special issue of *Mobilities* on coerced movement was published in October 2011 (Volume 6, Issue 3), unfortunately too late for consideration in this thesis. It is pleasing to see a research engagement with coerced movement within the discourse, however belated.

Everyday Mobility

Everyday mobility as well as 'global' (or international) mobility is also treated as having increased significantly (Urry, 2007, p. 4). This conceptualisation is arguable, as Nowicka (2006, p. 422), in a critical position within the mobilities discourse, points out:

> any claims to an increase of geographical mobility are highly controversial – most of the population stays immobile, despite the fact that the average distances covered during a trip have increased, the number of journeys per person per day has remained stable and pedestrian mobility is in constant decline ... Local mobility is losing ground to new forms of mobility, such as long-distance commuting.

Nowicka here is questioning the dominant conceptualisation in the mobilities discourse that presents a simple *increase* of movement, by instead presenting the *replacement* of local movement by long-distance commuting; that is, by conceptualising changing patterns of mobility as one type of movement losing ground to another. This passage highlights that in order to claim that all mobility is increasing, one cannot consider pedestrian mobility to be mobility at all, as it is in decline. (Albertsen and Diken, 2001, p. 13, see the slogan 'slow down; localize!' as being anti-mobile, whereas if walking is seen as mobile, the slogan would be pro- certain types of mobility.) Pooley et al. (2005, p. 224), also within the mobilities discourse, make similar statements to Nowicka: 'too much emphasis has been placed on obvious changes and too little emphasis on important elements of stability in everyday mobility'. Such important elements include: the minimal changes in distances travelled by children everyday, and the time spent on the journey to work. One point where Pooley et al. differ from Nowicka is in their emphasis that walking 'remains an important means of everyday travel around town for many people' (p. 224). The main change they identify in everyday travel is the heightened perception of risk – not a mobility enhancer but a mobility restriction.

Walking as Sedentary

While the mobilities discourse's definition of mobility ostensibly covers human-powered movement such as walking and cycling (and walking is listed as one of the types of movement 'embrac[ed]' by the mobilities paradigm in Sheller and Urry, 2006), the discourse's claim of increasing mobility de-emphasises self-powered human mobility to the point where it is no longer considered a mobility. Rather than increasing in mobility, the

average Western body is less mobile and more sedentary today than perhaps ever before (Amato, 2004). Many jobs are sedentary, and to move between work and home, people use vehicles, escalators and elevators – systems within which bodies are near-stationary – so that 'the natural thing today is to travel as if sitting in a room' (Bayley, 1987, p. 3). One does not move; one is moved. Apart from cycling or walking holidays which have a specific target market, long-distance travel is now something done *to* the body, not done *by* the body. Yet a dominant mobilities conceptualisation is that of Kellerman (2006, p. 1), who sees the 'moving of the self by the self' as typifying 'current developed society', in that people are often their own automobile drivers. Yet the movement is still at one remove: the individual operates the *machinery* which then moves the individual. More obviously, walking is a 'moving of the self by the self', but this is not even considered by Kellerman.

Because mobility is treated as synonymous with movement by powered technological means, the mobilities discourse does not see an increase in physical sedentarism as a challenge to its world view of increasing mobility. Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 221) are happy to state that a 'dependence upon machines for movement means that life is increasingly sedentary even if people are on the go', and Dennis and Urry (2009, p. 37) acknowledge that 'once in the car, there is almost no movement from the driver' (although, like Kellerman, nowhere do they acknowledge the possible presence of passengers, whose movement or lack thereof has no direct effect on the movement of the car, as discussed in Chapter 8). Bissell and Fuller (2010) discuss the 'stillness' of the aeroplane passenger at some length (see Chapter 7). By not discussing human-powered movement, the mobilities researchers (again and perhaps uncritically) follow the traditional practice of transport planning. In reference to the UK, Pooley et al. (2005, p. 229) claim that 'too often transport policies marginalise the pedestrian or assume that walking is a travel mode that does not need special provision'.

Leisure is perhaps the only realm where motion of the body has increased (Amato, 2004; Solnit, 2000). Certainly the rise of gym culture has been a significant phenomenon over the past 30 years. But even leisure, where human-powered mobility *is* increasing, is low on the mobilities discourse's research agenda (Cresswell's [2006, pp. 123-145] analysis of dance is one exception). Perhaps this is because most motion in leisure – including dance and field sports – is not about *displacement*, apart from displacement within the strict borders of the sports field or the dance studio or stage. This highlights that mobilities research, like its basic definition, emphasises displacement and relocation rather than movement more generally.

Instead of the 'new mobilies paradigm' or the 'new movement paradigm', another title suggests itself: the 'new displacement paradigm'.

Yet this avoidance of studying human-powered mobility fits uncomfortably with Urry's declaration that the mobilities paradigm is part of a more embodied science, a turning away from the mind/body dichotomy of the Enlightenment (Urry, 2007; Buscher and Urry, 2009), as discussed in Chapter 3. Even while the mobilities discourse talks about the experience and practice of mobility, it forgets that humans are matter; *that we are bodies.* This impression is enforced by the occasional omitting of bodily contact from Urry's list of reasons for the necessity or desirability of occasional 'co-presence' with one's associates, family and friends (for example, 2007, pp. 232-234). Also, Urry repeatedly describes the human body as a bundle of fragile sense receptors, rather than an agent of movement: 'physical travel involves lumpy, fragile, aged, gendered, racialized bodies. Such bodies encounter other bodies, objects and the physical world multi-sensuously' and human skin is 'fragile, soft and vulnerable' (2007, pp. 48, 128). Humans on their own only possess 'puny powers' (quoted in Adey and Bissell, 2010, p. 7); as noted above, Urry (2003, p. 125) calls human legs 'the least powerful mobile machine'. On this view, the flesh is weak, and technology has taken the place of God as saviour of the world, 'massively augment(ing)' human powers. As with Kundera's motorcyclist, technology allows Urry and his collaborators to ignore the process of ageing – if it is a story of the quick and the dead, they have become the forever quick (in both senses of the word) through technology. In contrast, Cresswell (2006, p. 22) acknowledges all too briefly that 'mobility is a capacity of all but the most severely disabled bodies'. Many of those contributing to the mobilities discourse in Australasia also have a more positive view of physical human power than Urry, as mentioned in Chapter 4.

Summary

The claim that mobility (for individual humans) is increasing and the assumption that it will continue to increase rely on: a measurement of mobility in distance and speed rather than destinations achieved; an assumption that the long-term effects of globalisation will be benign; a citing of overall global travel statistics without an analysis of those statistics to see which groups are travelling more, and which groups are travelling less; an ignoring of current debates over global movement control; a treatment of walking as if it were not mobility at all; and the axiom that middle-class European behaviour is globally normative. All this leads to an acceptance of the status quo, rather than a questioning of it. This is mobility parochialism,

viewing the mobility patterns and motility of the West as those of the entire world, and seeing only those who travel long distances or visit many countries as 'mobile'. The mobilities discourse is thus part of the global mobility regime, as described in Chapter 1 (Shamir, 2005).

Of course, the mobilities discourse does not present itself as reaffirming inequalities, nor as part of the global mobility regime. Instead, it expresses concern over social inequality, claiming that some of the major reasons for it are issues of mobility itself, and offering solutions for the mobility problems it has identified. However, there are flaws in its conceptualisation of the relationship between mobility and inequality; these are discussed in the next chapter.

6. Justification IV: Motility is Now a Significant Factor in Social Stratification

The poet Mathew Arnold wrote: 'freedom is a very good horse to ride, but to ride somewhere' (quoted in Harvey, 2005, p. 6). However, instead of presenting mobility as one means to the goal of access, the mobilities discourse presents mobility as a goal in and of itself. Universally and ahistorically, travel is said to be 'essential for social and economic life and ... not optional' (Urry, 2003b, p. 171). The effect is to deny the desirability or possibility of enabling access in other ways; instead, the mobilities discourse emphasises the desirability of getting everyone 'on the move'. Movement, rather than the choice whether or not to move, is valorised, and mobilities analysis pits individual against individual, rather than examining the effects of systems on *all* individuals, as *systems are presented as immobile and are therefore not discussed* because the mobilities discourse has defined them to be outside of its research parameters (Frello, 2008). This last point I will cover in Chapter 7. Here I will discuss the discourse's reasons for encouraging everyone to be 'mobile' – that is, encouraging everyone to use powered, technological means to get access to things, people, locations, events, and so on.

The idea of a 'mobility gap' is not an original mobilities discourse idea. Bauman (1998) highlighted mobility inequality, and many other researchers also argue at length that access to opportunities for movement 'has become a major stratifying force in the global social hierarchy' (Shamir 2005, p. 200). The mobilities discourse affirms the (potentially problematic) valorisation of movement contained within this idea but it also shifts 'mobility gap' focus towards exclusion issues raised by urban automobility in a Western context, at the expense of arguably more pressing issues of survival raised by coerced movement and non-movement in poorer regions of the world (see, for example, Shamir, 2005; Turner, 2010; Khosravi, 2010).

Mobilities theorists observe that: 'the capacity to move seems to have gained more significance as a crucial mechanism in the reproduction of the socio-spatial order' (Manderscheid, 2009, p. 44; see also Urry, 2000a, p. 195). Further, they state that motility is now 'a crucial dimension of unequal power relations' (Hannam et al., 2006, p. 3). Confusing mobility and motility, Cresswell (2010, p. 22) states that 'there seems little doubt that mobility is one of the major resources of 21st-century life and that it is the differential

distribution of this resource that produces some of the starkest differences today'. Urry (2000a, p. 195) claims that social inequalities often result 'from hugely uneven forms of access to, or the effects of, various kinds of mobility'. Thus, curtailing physical motility (in any way) also means curtailing the ability to be socially 'upwardly mobile' in the social order. From there, it's a small but significant (if invalid) step to claim that 'being spatially mobile *always* also means being socially and existentially mobile' (Kronlid, 2008, p. 33, emphasis added). Where physical travel was argued to be a necessary condition for social mobility, Kronlid argues that social mobility is an inevitable consequence of all physical travel.

Have these mobilities researchers unwittingly confused Sorokin's social mobility with actual physical movement? Nowicka (2006, p. 415) points out that 'liquid models' of society 'have been criticized for connecting the two orders of reality – the spatial and the social – that do not necessarily go together', and perhaps this is true for mobilities theorists also. However, it is not as simple as that. More sophisticated than a simple equation between improving one's socio-economic *status* and motility is the claim that not being able to move results in social *exclusion*. Mobilities advocates, and Urry especially, use two arguments at different times for this conclusion. The first argument holds that humans need to achieve 'copresence' with one another in general, particularly due to their 'weak ties' with certain colleagues and other non-significant others. The second argument is that copresence with significant family and friends is especially important for well-being. The axiom underlying both arguments in order to reach the conclusion that mobility is necessary for social inclusion is that people *need to travel by powered vehicle in order to meet*.

Copresence

Copresence simply means being in the same physical space as at least one other person; another mobilities term for it is 'meetingness'. Urry's reasoning for the significance he gives to copresence is based on sliding assumptions. To take just one article, in 'Small Worlds and the New Social Physics' (2004a) Urry starts off by observing that 'there seems to be a huge increase in very weak ties in which others are known only in one very limited respect and who may never be encountered face to face' (p. 116). In other words, face-to-face encounters are unnecessary with an *increasing* number of people one 'knows'. Yet on the next page, Urry has only remembered the increasing number of weak ties, and not the claim that encountering these weak ties face to face is optional: he writes, 'central to networks then are

"meetings" and hence travelling through time–space in order to "cement" the weak ties at least for another period' (p. 117). By the next paragraph, such meetings have gone from being central to being logically necessary: 'connections between people thus presuppose intermittent meetings' (p. 117). The type of connections is not specified; any and therefore all connections are included. In fact, in other articles, Urry makes sweeping inclusive statements: 'These moments of physical copresence and face-to-face conversation, are *crucial* to patterns of social life that occur 'at-a-distance', whether for business, leisure, family life, politics, pleasure or friendship' (2003b, p. 155, emphasis added). Elsewhere (2002a, p. 3), he states 'such proximity is felt to be obligatory, appropriate or desirable, not a matter of choice', which suggests he believes we are slaves to our desires, and never have conflicting desires, as something which is 'desirable' is presented here as 'not a matter of choice'. Thus, like 'travel', copresence is presented as an absolute; there is no sliding scale of desirability where sometimes it might be optional, or even undesirable. If there were, there would be room in the mobilities discourse to discuss potential futures where *some* meetings are substituted with communication.

Elsewhere Urry underlines this point: 'because of the important need for co-presence, corporeal travel is essential' (2002b, p. 5). The idea that relatively little corporeal travel is needed within cities to find proximity to people is not discussed; 'everyday' and 'global' scales here have been reduced to one absolute: travel. Urry does not conceptualise travel as something that can be done 'less' or 'more', it is only something that is done or not done. Thus there is no discussion of whether the same people can still meet as often as they always have by travelling a shorter distance than they used to if they start from a closer position – that is, if they live and/or work nearer to each other than before. This would still constitute 'travel' and therefore there are no gains to be had from increasing proximity.

Urry cannot even conceive of a future different to his conception of the present as dependent on the powered vehicle for 'copresence':

> The challenge is to ensure that the conditions for such meetingness are not all used up in the hypermobile present since as far as we can tell there will in the future be even more extensive weak ties and requirements of travel and co-presence. (2003b, p. 172)

Elsewhere, Urry acknowledges that it is the ability to travel itself which generates obligations or 'mobility burdens' (2007, p. 233). Yet here (2003b), he envisions a future where the

mobility obligation will increase even if the travel ability is 'all used up' (presumably he has fuel depletion in mind). Yet where do those 'extensive weak ties' come from? If it is from travel, and travel is diminishing, then weak ties will diminish also.

Family and Friends

The argument that copresence with significant family and friends is especially important for well-being seems to be based on research Urry did with Noel Cass and Elizabeth Shove. Cass et al. (2005, p. 544) quote a 2000 UK Joseph Rowentree Foundation survey which indicated that most people regard seeing family and friends (for example) to be 'normatively 'necessary' for a full socially included life' – a finding worth taking seriously. Cass et al. (p. 551) conclude that typical analyses of transport-related social exclusion view inclusion 'in terms of people being able to "get at" pre-defined "public" goods and services located within pre-determined "formal" locations/destinations', rather than being able to visit social networks. In other words, in the UK, one's family and friends may live in a variety of different places not on any direct public transport route to particular public facilities, and getting to these people can be vital for social inclusion, and yet this is not something considered by most transport-related studies.

But what is actually at stake is access, and increasing motility is only one part of a potential solution. Cass et al. found that the inability to see family and friends (the lack of 'access to both social and support networks') was usually due to some combination of three factors: 'distance, inadequate transport and limited ways of communicating' due to spread of social networks and 'increasing geographical mobility' (this use of 'mobility' simply means 'movement' and does not necessarily include motility) (p. 539). Their suggested solution is 'providing appropriate travel and communications devices' to people who need them (p. 548). They do not even consider mitigating distance (via the admittedly long-term strategies of town planning of medium to high density housing, for example).

Cass et al. focus mainly on *domestic* travel, noting that 'members of close and close knit communities are, for example, unlikely to travel as far as those whose families are scattered or whose friends live in other parts of the country or the world' (p. 544), but they speculate that if 'forms of "networked society"... are indeed generalised there is, it seems, an unavoidable "burden of mobility" for almost all' (p. 548). That generalisation – that almost all of us around the world have important families and friends living great distances from us –

would seem to be a big assumption to make without evidence, and yet, Urry blithely makes it. 'Without sufficient network capital', he writes in 2007 ('network capital' including a number of things Urry claims people need to have in order to travel), 'people will suffer social exclusion since many social networks are more far-flung' (p. 179). He does not claim all social networks are 'more far-flung' (more far-flung than what?), but neither does he qualify the 'people' he writes about with 'some' or 'many'. In eurocentric fashion and without evidence, he has generalised a desire for domestic travel in the UK identified by Cass et al., and expanded it into a need for international travel for all societies. His suggested solution for this problem is: 'if all else were equal, a "good society" would not limit travel, co-presence and resulting good conversations. Such a society would extend the capabilities of co-presence to every social group ...' (2007, p. 311). However, this means making long-distance plane trips available to all, apparently, which Urry acknowledges would cause more climate change than there already is (a rare mention of environmental unsustainability in the mobilities discourse). So he proposes that copresence contact 'should be available for all social groups' but only 'from time to time' (p. 208); that is, social groups should take it in turns to go and visit their far-flung loved ones – all for the sake, apparently, of 'good conversations'. Distance is treated as a given, and this time it's *long* distance, requiring a lot of organisation to cross.

This remarkably single-minded line of argumentation rests on three assumptions:

1. All (or nearly all) people have social connections physically far away.

2. Maintaining these particular connections is vital to those people's social inclusion.

3. Maintaining these particular connections always involves physical copresence ('face-to-faceness') intermittently (how intermittently is undisclosed, yet frequency of trips makes a big difference to the environmental and social impacts).

Yet not all connections are as important and/or need as much, if any, copresence as others. In his discussion of network capital, Urry does not even consider the main focus of Cass et al.'s research: people's capacity to see family and friends within the same local area on a regular basis. I posit that being able to see local significant others regularly is *usually* more important to well-being than being able to see family and friends at a distance intermittently (it depends on a variety of factors). This is an assumption on my part, but Urry is equally making an assumption by not even considering local family and friends in his 2007 discussion of network capital, although he was involved in research on their importance to social inclusion.

A question ignored by Urry is: why are the social networks so spread in the first place (if one assumes that they are, as he does)? If people leave their homes and loved ones for structural reasons, perhaps not even wanting to, perhaps coerced by poverty and the whim of labour markets, is it worth trying to remove those reasons? For a Filipino father working on a cruise ship for ten months at a time in order to feed his family, for example, removing the economic need in the first place is a far better use of resources than allowing occasional face-to-face contact. It means all the family can stay in the same place, should they wish to, and not be 'far-flung' in the first place. Urry is letting the poor eat cake. Decent housing, education and healthcare and employment – and yes, urban public transport – would seem to be more vital to well-being than occasionally being able to visit a friend who decided to emigrate a few years back.

Neither does Urry consider that making travel universally, if intermittently, available to all would almost certainly have an impact on where people chose to live. If they knew in Urry's 'good society' that they would be able to visit loved ones occasionally without thought to the cost, they may chose to live further away from their loved ones – a 'sprawl' possibility, an echo of the automobile's impact on urban space. Thus Urry is using the very 'predict and provide' model which he acknowledges transport planners are turning away from (Urry, 2007, p. 281; Dennis and Urry, 2009, p. 98); that is, he is predicting that current demand patterns will hold, and is suggesting policy to meet those projected demands. As Vigar (2002, pp. 1-2) points out, such policies 'ignore[] the impacts of policy interventions themselves', and the prophecies they are based on become self-fulfilling.

Mobility Rights vs Accessibility Rights

Cass et al. (2005, p. 539) go so far as to say that their results imply 'that there are ... what we might term mobility rights' because mobility is shown to be incredibly important. Yet only one of Cass et al.'s solution's aspects – the peculiarly worded 'travel ... devices' – pertains to physical motility, so it is a leap to argue immediately for 'mobility rights'. Why not 'communications rights', or 'proximity rights' (which some Lefebvre-inspired socialists prefer to 'accessibility rights' [Jouffe, n.d.])? It could be argued that 'mobility rights' does include rights to communications technologies given that some definitions of mobilities include communications. However, nowhere is this inclusion stated clearly vis-à-vis rights; nearly all examples of mobility rights in the mobilities discourse are about physical individual travel, and not about overcoming the 'digital divide'. Kaufmann (2002, p. 29) is

one mobilities exception to this, arguing that 'it is no longer geographical space that differentiates but virtual space', and 'the more telecommunications there is, the more social mobility'. But the implications of this idea are not discussed within the mobilities discourse, nor is the idea accounted for in its theorising of mobility rights.

Mobility (defined variously) is portrayed as a 'right' in a number of places in the mobilities discourse: Vannini (2010, p. 116) claims that 'the study of mobile transport cultures is far from being uncritical' as 'mobility, after all, is only tentatively a right, and more often so a privilege'. Yet this proves it *is* uncritical in one respect: mobility is seen overwhelmingly as a positive. The view that mobility is a right, and that curtailing it creates social inequality, can only be held if mobility is assumed to be a desirable phenomenon (see also Adey, 2009, p. 88). Kaufmann, who does separate mobility from motility, is careful to say that it is motility rather than mobility which is said to be 'becoming a type of capital' like education and social contacts (Kaufmann, 2002, p. 2). On the other hand, Sheller and Urry (2000, p. 743) claim that 'more and more social actors have demanded rights of personal mobility' – and the context equates 'personal mobility' with the right to drive one's own car on the road. Note that 'mobility rights' are the rights to mobility *technologies* – such as modes of transport and passport visas – mobilities advocates are not talking about the right to walk. Neither is the right to 'stay put', the right to immotility, mentioned (discussed in Chapter 7).[10]

And while physical motility is one means to the end of social inclusion, it is not an end in itself. Instead, I argue that the focus on it draws attention away from alternative social-access solutions, such as proximity and communications (see Chapter 8). Another alternative to mobilities rights which would answer these concerns is the concept of 'accessibility rights'. As Farrington (2007, p. 322) points out, the notion of accessibility rights may be more 'powerful in articulation with social inclusion and social justice' than mobility rights, 'since mobility is but one (albeit critical) way of achieving accessibility' and 'it is not necessarily lack of mobility that those who experience constrained access will experience' (for example, limited pharmacy opening hours might be a constraint). Discussion of mobilities should be within a more overarching framework of striving to improve accessibility for 'people in all their different circumstances'.

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[10] One backhand exception is the brief acknowledgement in Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 213) that physical movement can pertain to 'downward social mobility' as well as upward, and that 'where movement is coerced it can be generate [sic] deprivation and untold suffering', with no further analysis of what this might mean.

An exception to the mobility discourse's lack of engagement with access is Sebastian Ureta's very useful 2008 case study of low income people in a Chilean city. Ureta shows that while his subjects' ability to 'get ahead in life' was curtailed by their lack of motility, the need for this motility was exacerbated through their moving to new housing developments on the outskirts of town, well away from their work and amenities. Long, difficult bus trips ensued; their capacity to stay in their neighbourhood was curtailed. As Ureta (2008, p. 271) makes clear:

> What is at stake is not mobility in itself, but mobility in relation to the accessibility to certain places and people when needed. Therefore 'the question of social exclusion and integration, it can be argued, largely revolves around access' (Madanipour, 2003, p. 185), a temporal and spatial accessibility of individuals and opportunities in a dynamic urban environment.

Srinivasan, discussing low income mobility in Chennai, India, and Chengdu, China, comes to the same conclusion – that what is at stake is *access*. And yet, she found, citing Cervero, that 'most transportation planning is heavily focused on improving mobility rather than accessibility' (2008, p. 144). In transport planning, this is partially because accessibility is harder to measure than mobility, but much mobilities discourse research shares this focus of 'improving mobility' without justification (for example, Urry, 2007; Larsen and Jacobsen, 2009). Kellerman (2006) claims that 'speeding-up implies further enhanced accessibilities ...' (p. 10) without acknowledging the correlated space inflation which diminishes accessibilities for those who do not have the means to 'speed up' and ultimately also diminishes the enhancement of access for those who can 'speed up' as increased speed becomes normative.

Mobility Blinkers

What is to blame for the uneven distribution of motility? The mobilities discourse holds that it is the fault of movement itself: mobilities for some diminish the mobilities for others. Cresswell and Uteng (2008, p. 7) state that 'it is well accepted now that the production of some kinds of mobilities (that is automobility) often creates immobilities for others (that is public transport users with limited supply, frequency etc)' (see also Urry, 2006; Sager, 2006; Bissell and Fuller, 2010; and Manderscheid, 2009). Again this claim does not separate motility and mobility. To apply the separation of motility and mobility (so that mobility means movement) to Cresswell and Uteng's claim is illuminating. The phrase 'the production

of some kinds of mobilities' is indeed about mobility and not motility – it does not matter whether people *want* to drive or not, their vehicles on the road are what Cresswell and Uteng are holding responsible for others' 'immobilities'. But that very term 'immobilities' is problematic; here, the writers clearly mean *lack of motility*: the *capacity* to move (when movement is desired) is reduced, not just movement (desired or otherwise). The unpacked claim is interesting: 'the production of some kinds of movement-types (that is, automobility) often reduces the capacity to move, for others (that is public transport users with limited supply, frequency etc)'. That 'for others' now also becomes problematic; the writers have set up a conflict between automobile users and public transport users which, if the former do not necessarily want to drive cars – if they are only mobile and not *immotile*, that is, if they *have* to move as well as being able to move, and public transport is not a viable option – is a false conflict. A system of automobility decreases the capacity of *all* to take public transport, automobile drivers and non-automobile drivers alike, so it decreases the motility of all, by limiting transport options for all. It also decreases the immotility of all; because the automobile creates urban sprawl, the capacity to work and live in the same neighbourhood is reduced. The conflict is shown to be the system vs all individuals, rather than individual vs individual or the system vs some individuals only. The claim also becomes relativised: instead of some individuals' increasing mobility creating absolute immobility for others (you are either mobile or you are not), the subject is now a system which reduces motility for all, albeit at extremely varying amounts, by offering a choice between automobility or poor public transport (for those who can struggle to afford a vehicle) or no option but poor public transport (for those who cannot afford a vehicle, no matter what they sacrifice). The automobile system compels people to move, yet at the same time restricts their motility by near-compelling them to use an automobile if they can afford it and (much worse) condemning them to use poor public transport if they cannot. This one sentence is typical of the mobility discourse's approach: 1. It views individuals as its sole subject, and not any system. 2. It does not consider that individuals may perceive good public transport to be a desirable alternative to automobility (Cresswell and Uteng do not talk about automobility reducing automobile drivers' public transport motility).

Of course it is not only certain types of mobilities which can curtail people's motility, but the mobilities discourse does not focus on non-mobile causes of motility reducing, just as it does not focus on the consequences of different mobilities on non-mobile phenomena, as mentioned in Chapter 4. Instead, it generalises the already-problematic claim of 'some

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mobilities cause some immobilities' to 'mobility always needs immobility' and 'all coerced immobility is due to mobility'. Thus Urry can say:

> I'd strongly emphasise that the mobilities of some are *always* at the expense of others who are always in a sense immobile to facilitate the organising, orchestrating, servicing of the mobilities of others ... So mobilities presuppose the immobilities of other social groups because of power relations ... (quoted in Adey and Bisell, 2010, p. 7, emphasis added).

Note that this is again pitting people against people, rather than the system against everyone. The odd thing here is that Urry conflates travel organisation with disparate power relations. In reality, those 'organising, orchestrating, servicing' others' mobilities are not necessarily immobile themselves, nor are they necessarily less powerful than those who are moving. Neither does all mobility involve coercing someone else to be immobile. On the flip side, Kellerman (2011) assumes that all coerced immobility is due to mobility – other possible reasons for enforced immobility do not seem to occur to him. He identifies only two categories of immobility: voluntary sedentarism and compulsory immobility 'in order to make it possible for other people to move' when 'the social and built environment empowers some to be more mobile at the expense of others' (p. 731). This overemphasises the importance of mobility as a factor of social stratification: not only are mobility elements the only elements considered in discussions of social stratification, but the discourse presents them as the only elements available to consider.

Mobilities Discourse Attitudes to the Poor and Rich

The whole mobilities discourse attitude to the economically disadvantaged (barring a few exceptions, such as Ureta) can be summed up by comments made by Jonas Larsen and Michael Hviid Jacobsen (2009, p. 79), within *Mobilities and Inequalities*, on the work of Bauman: 'his preoccupation with the plight of those at the bottom of society remains a continuous presence in Bauman's work... As such, Bauman's work contains an unmistakeable morally biased edge ...'. The mobilities attitude is that those at the bottom of society are not a worthy object of consideration; to think of them long-term, one must be 'preoccupied' and 'biased'. These are negative terms, and they are included in a collection of articles ostensibly focussed on disadvantage. The poor are thus shown to be 'other' within the mobilities discourse, removed from the norm of middle-classness. It is therefore unsurprising that

'notions of social justice ... have been curiously absent from much of the debate within the mobility turn' (Cresswell, 2006b, p. 739). In contrast, Bauman (2011) sees the situation of the poor and the oppressed as worth investigating not only in order to work towards social justice, but also because their situation is an indicator of the health of their entire society. Similarly, Langdon Winner (1993, p. 369) notes (in a critique of social constructivism) that by 'observing which groups are consistently excluded from power, one begins to understand ... enduring social structures', and says that if social scientists fail to do this, they 'offer an account of politics and society that is implicitly conservative, an account that attends to the needs and machinations of the powerful as if they were all that mattered'. To a large extent, this criticism applies to the mobilities discourse.

The mobilities discourse writings show empathy for the middle classes, but not for the poor. For example, Urry (quoted in Adey and Bissell, 2010, p. 10) perceives the poor as something to exploit for the sake of research: 'it's generally easier to research the poor [than the rich and powerful] because they don't have so much power to prevent researchers from being at their meetings'. Urry presents being a research subject as something undesirable, but something which researchers have the power to make the poor become anyway, as the poor have less power than the researchers. Affirmations of middle-classness coincide with affirmations of consumerism in a peculiar passage penned by Adey (2009, p. 103) about Cynthia Wiggens, who was killed attempting to cross a seven-lane highway, as she did twice everyday, from a bus stop to the mall where she worked:

> In the case of Wiggens, her mobility was entirely dependent upon the mobilities of customers probably travelling by car to the shopping mall at which she worked. Customers would no doubt move to the mall with the reasonable expectation that Wiggens and her co-workers would be there to service the various retail outlets they had come to visit. At the same time, these very mobilities provided the greatest barrier to Wiggens' access to the mall.

Thus Wiggens (or rather, somehow, her mobility) was 'entirely dependent' on her customers – probably richer that her as they came by car; Adey does not say how or why this dependence comes about, presumably he means that Wiggens' ability to make a wage is dependent on her shop's customers. The consumer system is not questioned; instead customers' expectations that Wiggens and her co-workers would 'service' the shops they visited are described as 'reasonable'. Given Wiggens was 'entirely dependent' on the

mobilities of customers, these mobilities are presented as *necessary* for Wiggens, even as they prove fatal to her. Customers are not presented as dependent on Wiggens' servicing; she is dependent on them. The passage has empathy for Wiggens' customers, not for Wiggens herself.

As for the mobile rich, probably the most widespread term the mobilities discourse offers for them is the 'global elite'. It is not entirely clear exactly which demographic this refers to: just those with 'offshore' lifestyles and helicopters in Sao Paulo, the type of people who were the subject of a 2010 CeMoRe workshop called 'mobilities of the super-rich'? Or all of the 'Easyjet generation in the rich north of the world' Urry (2000a, p. 104)? Either way, the connotations of 'elite' (which is derived from the Latin for 'chosen') are positive – while the word can mean 'powerful', it has also come to mean 'the best'. And this vagueness allows what the discourse assumes to be its middle-class readers to develop a petty bourgeois self-identification with the 'global elite', and to assume that what is good for the elite is good for them. Such arguably derogatory terms as 'cosmocrats' for the mobile rich are never seen in the mobilities discourse (Nathan and Doyle, 2001). The rich are the 'global elite', they are cosmopolitan citizens, and Urry aspires to research them; the poor are dependent on the rich, and you only research them if you're 'biased' or because they're easier to get to due to their relative powerlessness.

Summary

Mobilities theorists claim that the lack of motility is a major force of social exclusion, because (as they also claim) physical travel is necessary in order to achieve 'copresence'. Yet instead of treating movement as one way of achieving this access to others (as well as access to facilities), they treat movement as an end in itself and promote what they call 'mobility rights'. Urry, in particular, extrapolates from a UK study, without evidence, in order to claim that a 'good society' anywhere would facilitate visits with far-flung loved ones on an unspecified, regular basis. This seems an extremely narrow problem (and problem-exacerbating 'predict and provide' solution) to focus on, given the range of issues which can arise from a system or individual's control over a subject's movement – including physical and economic hardship, and even loss of life – and the range of reasons for such control, including incarceration. However, it is part of a pattern of focusing on the experiences of the relatively privileged, and ignoring the experiences of the poor. The possibility that this strong

emphasis on the significance of copresence is part of a campaign presenting a system of autonomous travel as vital is discussed in Chapter 8.

Strangely, mobilities theorists also claim that mobilities for some always necessarily mean immobility for others. Their argumentation here is flawed – pitting individuals against one another rather than transport systems against people in general – and they do not explain how it is possible to give everybody 'mobility rights' as they would like, if it is the case that one person's movement will always involve another's coerced immobility.

In the next chapter, I argue that motility should not be examined on its own but should be analysed in conjunction with *immotility* – the ability to be still. I also argue that physical infrastructure and social structure are not as immobile as the mobilities discourse claims.

7. **Immobility**

As critical mobilities theorist Frello (2008, p. 32) reminds us, mobility and immobility are social constructs, and 'the distinction between "mobile" and "immobile" phenomena is not an innocent exercise'. In this chapter, I argue that the desirability and possibility of changing systems, and the occasional desirability and importance for individuals *not* to change locations, are both under-theorised and under-represented in the mobilities discourse, through the discourse's categorisation of what is and is not mobile. Relative longevity and inertia are absolutised into immobile permanence by the mobilities discourse's short-sightedness, which only considers phenomena of space-warping without considering associated and less immediately obvious time-warping – apart from the one selective instance of 'changing' the car system to the post-car system (discussed in Chapter 8). Transport infrastructure is presented as permanent, which means that the decisions about how and where infrastructure is built, and who influences and makes these decisions, are not investigated. This lack of examination of infrastructure is *anti* ANT's insistence that the study of society should include the study of technology, and it means power systems themselves – not only responsible for transport but bio-politics more generally – are in turn not investigated, but are assumed to be permanent. On the other hand, physical human stillness is demonised through particular rhetoric which confuses stillness with aimlessness, and the importance of the power to stay still – immotility – is ignored.

Let's Do the Time Warp: Infrastructure Mobility

Mobilities advocates present components of transport infrastructure as immobile, calling them 'time-space fixities or moorings' that 'enable the fluidities of liquid modernity to be realized' (Urry, 2003, p. 125). 'Exceptionally immobile platforms' are said to include 'transmitters, roads, garages, stations, aerials, airports, docks [and] factories' (Hannam et al., 2006, p. 3; see also Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2004). This approach has been influential; 'moorings' is an important piece of terminology for the mobilities discourse (see Urry, 2007; Adey, 2006; Bissell and Fuller, 2009; and Cresswell, 2010). It is used as a de facto opposite to 'mobilities', often appearing in the phrase 'mobilities and moorings'. Phenomena which could be considered immobile in the same way as roads are but which have little directly to do with transport and communications 'flows' (such as houses and commercial offices) are not considered at all. In mobilities convention, mobilities and moorings (or in Jensen's [2009]

terms, 'flow and fixity') are discrete categories which create a clear binary system, with very little blurring between the two aspects. Urry (2003, p. 126) calls 'mobility/moorings' a 'dialectic ... that produces social complexity. If all relationality were mobile or 'liquid' then there would be no complexity.' Manderscheid (2009, p. 38) claims that 'after everything has been mobilised, the notion of mobility will lose all analytical power'. Similarly, Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 214) attempt to divorce the mobilities discourse from 'nomadic' theory, representing the mobilities discourse as somehow neutral: 'the new mobilities paradigm moves beyond sedentarist and nomadic conceptualisations of place and movement'. In other words: not all is mobile. *Absolute* mobility and *absolute* immobility are foundational theoretical constructs for the mobilities discourse.

Adey, and Bissell and Fuller, provide the beginnings of a mobilities alternative to this absolutism of moorings vs mobility. The title of Adey's relatively widely cited 2006 article on immobility, 'If Mobility Is Everything, Then It Is Nothing', seems to support Urry's claim that mobility and immobility are both necessary to produce social complexity, but in fact Adey discusses the 'mooring' example of airports as slowly mobile in terms of 'repainting, litter, dust, adverts ... [and] seating ...' (p. 81). What is being described is a complexity created through *relative liquidities*, not through the relation between mobility and absolute immobility, which Urry treats as necessary. As Bissell and Fuller (2010) point out, 'apparently-still phenomena are always already in a state of ontogenic transformation'. I would add to this that *all* phenomena can be seen as relatively (im)mobile – it is a question of degrees. Very significant degrees they are too – but they are not absolute. For example, Urry (2000a, p. 20) quotes Lefebrve in *Sociology beyond Societies*:

> Lefebvre also points out that when we see the dwelling of a house, this can be approached in one of two ways. Either a house can be viewed as stable and immovable with stark, cold and rigid outlines. Or we can see any such house as 'permeated from every direction by streams of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route'.

Actually there is also a third possible approach: *the house itself is non-permanent, mobile*; the materials it is built of were once transported to its location, and one day they will be removed and the location will not have a house on it any more. As Lefebvre (2004, p. 20) himself says, for a 'rhythmanalyst', 'nothing is immobile. ... [I]f he considers a stone, a wall, a trunk, he understands their slowness, their interminable rhythm ... It is only slow in relation to our time

...'. This way of thinking emphasises that our hearts beat as we sit; weather erodes the pyramids as it does mountains; cities change configuration over decades, centuries and millennia. Immobility is an illusion. The mobilities discourse attempts to reckon with scalar differences in space but not in time.

In a rare acknowledgement that infrastructure changes, Urry still downplays the importance of this ubiquitous dynamism, and does not see it as a reason to stop treating infrastructure as absolutely immobile:

> Changes to a transportation infrastructure can take an exceptional long-time [sic] to occur. So while businesses and residents of an area may demand improvements in relationship to their perceived short-term needs, the design, consultation, planning and implementation of major infrastructural changes can take decades. (2002c, p. 3)

Decades are an 'exceptional long-time' to the mobilities discourse way of thinking (and note that the desires of businesses are considered before those of residents). An alternative framework to mobilities, which takes a longer view, was proposed by Graham and Marvin in their 2001 book *Splintering Urbanism*. Instead of focusing on the movement of 'people, objects and information', they focus on the networks, the architectures of control, that allow this movement: 'streets, transport networks, water grids, power networks, telephone infrastructures' and their interrelationships – and conclude that these networks in many places are changing to better service the rich, and provide worse services to the poor, as the orders of those with power over the infrastructure have changed (pp. 8-9). If they had decided not to look at decades-long trends, these growing inequalities between 'flows' of energy and amenities would not have been highlighted.

Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 212) themselves wonder how to apply the following to the social sciences:

> Rifkin notes that contemporary 'science' no longer sees anything 'as static, fixed and given' (2000, pages 191-193); rather, apparent hard and fast entities are always comprised of rapid movement and there is no structure separate from process.... durable 'entities' of many kinds are shifting, morphing, and mobile ...

Yet they do not reconcile this acknowledgement that structure is not separate from process, and durable entities can be dynamic, with their insistence that their 'new paradigm

emphasises how all mobilities entail specific often highly embedded and immobile infrastructures' (p. 210). This equation of infrastructure as embedded and immobile – for eternity? – is a flaw in mobilities thinking. Such infrastructure is also mobile, often at a slower tempo than the movement of other entities which it supports, but its mobility – and the reasons for it – are significant nonetheless.

Let's Do the Time Warp Again: Systemic Power and Agency

An analysis of Adey's (2006) discussion about the slow mobility of airports shows that it is not enough to consider everything as mobile; one also needs to examine the reasons for the various changes and mobilities. Adey does not do this. He says 'Tables may be replaced. Walls may be knocked down. Shops rebuilt and refurbished. Flooring replaced. A new restaurant added. Extensions completed' (p. 82). But the impermanence of the airport itself, its 'lifespan' from land designation to eventual closure, is not mentioned, and more importantly, nowhere is an *agent* in the slow mobile process mentioned; Adey uses the passive voice. The lack of acknowledgement of human agency in creating and shaping these 'moorings' means they are still treated as if they were absolute immobilities, unable to be changed, in a political 'black box'. Adey could be describing a natural process – indeed, he claims 'process rules'. The introduction of process into the discussion is welcome, but whether or not it 'rules' should be up for debate as people (try to) rule process. As Graham and Marvin (2001, p. 12) emphasise: embedded networks such as airports 'represent long-term accumulations of finance, technology, know-how and organisational and geopolitical power'. Jorgen Ole Baerenholdt and Brynhild Granas (2008, p. 2) are exceptions within the mobilities field who echo Graham and Marvin:

> ... place is not the static and fixed contrast to mobility. Also, places are not discrete and powerless enactments: rather they are involved in the wider 'power geometries' of *the processes of globalization*. The social production of places therefore entails highly contested political and economic actions involved with the fundamental question of who takes responsibility for whom.... [P]laces and mobilities are inherently political ... (emphasis added)

Indeed, to continue the airports example, politics and money are involved in every decision of an airport's 'lifetime'. Who gets to decide whether it is to be built at all? Where? By whom? With what transport connections to which parts of its corresponding city? Then, during its

lifetime, which airlines will it host? To go to where? The idea that moorings are 'fixed' or have slow *natural* processes of their own dissuades readers from thinking it is possible to change them, let alone try. Yet, as Law points out, both mobility and seeming immobility/durability, are the result of work, effort and maintenance: 'concrete walls are solid while they are maintained and patrolled' (quoted in Adey 2009, p. 17, without further analysis. See also Graham and Thrift, 2007, on the importance of repair and maintenance as 'vital parts of the relays of everyday life' [p. 20]). The same holds for the 'moorings': someone has decided where the pipes are laid, where the bus station will be and when it will be torn down. They are 'fluid' also – just over a longer time period. Motion only becomes valuable if it can be controlled – a train is useless without a station (Netz, 2004). Investigation into motion which does not investigate who is controlling that motion is affirming and naturalising current power structures. Urry (2000b, p. 193) observes that 'individuals and especially corporations ... will seek to develop their own hub airport or at least have regular flights to such airports', but he does not follow this up with any curiosity as to how it is decided which individuals and corporations will be successful in their attempts, what opposition there may be to any particular airport or airports in general, and who decides who is successful. Nor does he consider possible interaction with the State over such attempts. An analysis of the politics is missing, which means that the political status quo is affirmed by default.

The significant exception to this denial and ignoring of time-warping is Urry's suggestion that the car system could transform into the 'post-car system', as outlined in Chapter 8. However – as with his promotion of Falk's utopia as likely to happen, or Adey's idea that 'process rules' – Urry (2000b) suggests that no action on the part of his readers is required to make the post-car system a reality. Instead, in *Sociology beyond Borders* (2000a) he criticises sociology for insufficiently interrogating 'the iterative character of systems' (p. 195), dividing structure from agency, and for not considering that complex change can be due to 'tipping points' which 'may have nothing necessarily to do with agents actually seeking to change that world' (p. 207). These are potentially useful points – but they also subtly dissuade people from becoming those 'agents actually seeking to change that world' by offering them the idea that the system can change itself without any deliberate 'help'. Dennis and Urry (2009) admit that doing nothing could also lead to dystopia, but the post-car system is the only 'good' future they consider (as opposed to systems based on different urban

design or public transport). This is promoting laissez-faire society, equivalent to the neo-liberal idea of laissez-faire economy, particularly in its individualising tendencies.

We now turn from structure/system object immobility to human immobility – from time-warping to the mobilities discourse preferred subject: space-warping.

Bissell and Fuller: In Which Human Stillness Looks a Lot like Human Mobility

Bissell and Fuller have perhaps written more about human 'stillness' and 'waiting' within the mobilities discourse than anyone else (see Bissell and Fuller, 2009, 2010; Bissell, 2007). Like others in the mobilities discourse, they also equate movement with movement aided by technology, saying movement is 'morally dubious' because of its unsustainability, and that therefore '[t]he sustainability thesis of miserly thinking is attracted to still' (2010, p. 5). There are two things to note here: one is the pejorative term 'miserly' applied to sustainability and therefore also associated with the still. In this way, still is seen as lacking and ungenerous, while movement is described as 'excess' (cf. Dennis and Urry's (2009, p. 26) description of 'fighting climate change' as a 'strange politics … against oneself,' discussed in Chapter 8). The second thing to note is that bodily movement championed by sustainability advocates – walking, cycling, gardening – is yet again coded as 'still' and not 'movement'.

Yet, curiously, the 'still' object which Bissell and Fuller (2010, p. 9) discuss the most looks remarkably similar to the rest of the mobilities discourse's 'mobile' object: it is the airline passenger, '*the* axiomatic figure of contemporary mobile life', a human body 'being-carried' by technology (emphasis in original). (Surely this is not the 'still' which 'the sustainability thesis of miserly thinking' is attracted to.) As Frello (2008) suggests, theorists construct their objects to be what they want to study. Most mobilities theorists construct the passenger as 'mobile', justifying this because the passenger is being displaced; Bissell and Fuller, stillness theorists, construct the passenger as 'still' using the passenger's bodily stillness – something which as we've seen above, most mobilities theorists ignore – as justification. Whatever the stated approach, even when the approaches ostensibly are choosing oppositional objects, the object of the mobilities discourse is always the human body being moved by technology.

The other kind of stillness Bissell and Fuller (2010, pp. 6-7) concentrate on is non-purposive human stillness which they say 'becomes an abomination and an *uncommitment*' (emphasis in original). However, the problem society may have with 'a stillness that lacks direction' (p. 7) is not its stillness but its lack of direction, its aimlessness. The writers are not claiming that

all stillness is non-purposive and all mobility is purposeful, but neither do they engage in a discussion of purposeful stillness or mention aimless mobility. Yet most urban jobs are sedentary and we are still while we work, and Bissell and Fuller acknowledge that elsewhere in the 2010 collection which they introduce: 'Watkins and Noble are instructive that stillness is a precondition of intellectual activity' (p. 14). But Bissell and Fuller have no concept of a still body and a 'racing' mind; all the stillness they discuss – whether it is passengers being carried, or non-purposive stillness – is mentally blank. Like most of the rest of the mobilities discourse, they ignore the physically still yet ostensibly mobile figure of the internet user at a desk. On the other hand, deviant aimlessness is also discussed elsewhere in the mobilities discourse – the aimlessness of *mobility*. Sager (2006) writes that 'Kerouac boosts non-stop "going" for its own sake as the main joy ... This is underlined by the aimlessness of the journeys' (p. 471), and cites the example of teenagers carrying no branded shopping bags who are moved on by security guards at the mall for 'walking or standing without due cause' (p. 480). Whether they were moving aimlessly or standing aimlessly, their aimlessness is seen as counter-capitalist. The difference between passengers and non-purposive stillness is that the mobilities discourse's 'axiomatic figure[s] of contemporary mobile life' *are* supporting capitalism; they are paying to be still.

So the objects of those studying stillness within the mobilities discourse – passengers and aimlessness – we also find elsewhere in the discourse. Other forms of human stillness, whether desired or not, such as being housebound or not crossing oceans, are, to a large extent, still ignored.

Desirability of Immobility

At least Bissell and Fuller (2010, p. 5) acknowledge that 'it seems that today, for many, a desire for stillness remains' – a begrudging acknowledgement (why would a desire for stillness have left?) but a rare one within the mobilities discourse. The mobilities discourse does acknowledge restricted human mobility (particularly as a consequence of others' mobility – see Chapter 6) but not many mobilities researchers consider that many humans, in one situation or another, *want* to be less mobile, nor do they often discuss the power to be still(er), the immobile equivalent to motility: 'immotility'. Even when Hannam et al. (2006, p. 11) acknowledge that 'some people are mobile not through their own volition', the examples given are of homelessness (which, in actual fact, may not involve much mobility), not long commuting. Rare exceptions include Fortier (2006, p. 317) who cites Ahmed et al.

(2003) as pointing out that 'the question of *who can travel* has to be supplemented by the question of *who can stay at home*?' (emphasis in original), and Ohnmacht et al. (2009, p. 11) who mention briefly in passing 'the capacity to be immobile'.

This imbalance – a discussion of motility, but little discussion of 'immotility' – suggests a general presumption within the mobilities discourse that people are, by default, sedentary or still at every scale, and that they have to choose to move before they can move; that nobody is compelled to move nor wishes ever to stop, as mentioned in Chapter 3. Ironically, default sedentarism is a presumption that the mobilities advocates claim to be laying to rest (Cresswell, 2006), and Pritchard (2000, p. 59) finds it 'scandalous to continue valorizing the rhetoric of mobility when ... so many are desperately seeking safe shelter' and wanting *not* to move. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for example, not only were many poor, black people left stranded in New Orleans in the face of rising floods, but afterwards, many were unable to return to their often still viable homes, and were forced to move – the demolition of the virtually undamaged LaFitte public housing complex, for example, was the subject of much outrage (Lee, 2010).

Immotility is, in part, related to the power to move other things towards oneself – uncoincidentally, this is also something which is not studied within the mobilities turn, although it is mentioned. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 3, Manderscheid (2009, p. 33) posits – alas, only briefly – that it is not only the ability to move oneself, but also 'other people, goods or information' which has become 'a powerful force of stratification'. I have power if I can chose my meetings: whom I will meet and/or what object I will receive, and where and when these meetings will take place, and their duration. This power of choice and control is the power of motility and the power of immotility combined. Who is summoning whom? The 'elite's' power to stay still when they want to stay still – be unmoved when they don't want to be moved – becomes invisible if their power is always described in terms of mobility, as in the 'mobile elite'. In an extremely rare acknowledgement that moving objects and people are not stuck to each other, Urry once wrote:

> [W]here goods go, people may also go, as with out-of-town shopping centres. Alternatively, people and goods may travel in different patterns, if say goods are delivered to the doorstep following a telephone or internet order (2002c, p. 2)

One insinuation is that people and goods travel in similar patterns if they meet at shopping centres (their different routes and distances to get to those shopping centres are not considered). Another is that, as per Urry's five mobilities, the people ordering goods over the telephone or internet *are still considered to be travelling*, they are merely travelling in 'different patterns'. Thus the idea that the physical movement of goods to one's door enables one's physical stillness is not considered within the mobilities discourse due to the conflation of transport and communications within 'mobilities'.

Thinking about the archetypal mobile figure of the suburban to city commuter in terms of immotility helps to upset the valorisation of mobility within the mobilities discourse, and also to illustrate how important scale is. How free is the commuter to choose his or her movement? Why does the commuter chose to live and work in places with enough distance between them that organising transport rather than walking is desirable or even necessary? It will not be because most of them want to spend an hour or so a day in transit. Instead, as per Ureta's (2008) study of a Chilean city discussed in Chapter 6, for some, certain faraway suburbs are the only places they can afford to live; their *immotility* is low. Others with higher incomes, as Jim Brown and Gary Burns' docudrama *Radiant City* (2006) suggests, move to the suburbs so they can have larger houses than they could afford closer to the CBD.[11] They give up one sort of immotility on one scale – not having to move very far to go to work – in part to have more motility on another: they have room to move at home, perhaps even a garden for the kids to run around. This motility-at-home, in turn, gives them more immotility on a suburb scale: they don't have to go to a park for the kids to run around. The sheer size of their home (not necessarily the motility this affords) also gives them further immotility: they have room to entertain family and friends at home (assuming those family and friends have the motility to get there, or our subjects are happy to use their motility to get those family and friends there). They can do some things at home, within the territory they own, which used to be done in public spaces (to the detriment of a sense of community, many would argue). Yet they have also given up immotility (or should we say 'walking motility'?) in order to shop – the nearest food store is probably too far away to walk to. Someone who lives in a suburb and has high levels of motility but not high levels of immotility (a small house, for example) will work, shop and socialise elsewhere. Their neighbour who has high levels of immotility but

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[11] The concept of home does not have a high profile within the mobilities discourse, but I suggest that it is key to the understandings that the mobilities discourse seeks. On an urban/local scale, *mobilities usually means moving to and from home*. On a global scale, it means setting up home elsewhere (migration) or has a sense of return (tourism).

not high levels of motility might work at home, order groceries and other consumer items over the internet and have friends and family to stay. Someone else who has high levels of both immotility *and* motility – a car and a large house in the centre of town, and money for high priced inner-city food shops – may do both at different times, or choose between them. Someone with low levels of both will spend time and energy on retrieving basic necessities such as food that would otherwise be spent on more pleasurable things. Looking at 'rights' of both immotility and motility at the same time gives a more useful picture of how and why people are spending their time, rather than only looking at mobility rights which masks what is really happening. In other words: do people have options for how they *access* things?

Summary

The mobilities discourse contrasts permanent, immobile systems with increasingly mobile humans within those systems, so that certain types of space-warping are emphasised, while time-warping is denied. Even where systems are acknowledged to be dynamic, no questions are asked about who has power (or in what technological conditions) over those systems; they are presented as 'black box' processes, yet again, supporting the political status quo. Meanwhile, human stillness is equated with the 'miserly thinking' of sustainability; no other reasons are offered as to why someone may want to be still, or relatively immobile; that is, to use their immotility. This silence on desired immobility unbalances the mobilities discourse's discussion of motility and its power of social stratification, discussed in Chapter 6. Immotility's role in social mobility and inclusion is neglected by the mobilities discourse, with the effect of yet again valorising mobility.

When the claims that 1. the world is more mobile than ever before and 2. motility is a major force of social stratification (and travel is vital) are combined with these near-denials of the social facts that 1. system and infrastructure dynamics are an effect of political power and help reinforce that power, and 2. human immobility is often desirable, it leads to a very specific agenda. This agenda which, among other things, discourages people from researching alternatives to the car system, is discussed in Chapter 8.

8. Automobility and Autonomy

In this chapter I discuss how the theories of many mobilities advocates, and of Urry in particular, equate ultimate mobility, particularly on an 'everyday' level, with individual, autonomous, 'seamless', physical, powered travel. Such advocates treat this mobility as desirable for now and forever, in and of itself, rather than as one possible means to an end which has many possible means, namely access. They see this mobility desire as currently met by the automobile system, and while they grudgingly acknowledge that this current system is unsustainable due to its environmental impact and non-renewable power sources, they reject as implausible and/or undesirable other access system options, or a mix of such systems, such as proximity paired with walking and cycling (*non-powered* travel); mass transit (*collective* travel); and the internet ('*virtual*' travel, to use the mobilities discourse's term). This is old-fashioned; now even the UK government recognises that 'access to services is not "merely a transport issue" but also involves "for example, better land-use planning, or safer streets and stations"' (Farrington, 2007, p. 320). Instead, mobilities advocates place their faith in displacement technologies yet to be invented, in order to create a new system which they say will continue to allow for autonomous, 'seamless', individual, physical, powered travel. This is counter to a more critical mobilities position, outlined by Bergmann and Sager (2008, p. 2): 'With modernity firmly linked to rapid movement in numerous forms, it is the responsibility of social researchers to explore alternatives.'

Mobility as Individual

Not only is the focus of the mobilities discourse on human mobility, it is more specifically *individual* human mobility. On a foundational level, the focus on individual human mobility is apparent in the theorists' inclusion of motility within mobility, as motility describes a *personal* capability, different for each individual (Kaufman, 2002, on motility's similarity to Pierre Bourdieu's social and cultural capitals; Urry, 2007, on 'network capital'). This by itself would not shut out the possibility of studying group travel and yet group mobility – particularly group mobility which is *desired* with friends, colleagues and/or family – is barely acknowledged within mobilities theory. This blind spot is reinforced by the association of mobility with freedom; mobilities theory is silent on the need for those travelling together to negotiate to a consensus about destinations, modes of transport, routes taken, and times of departure and arrival, for example. Such negotiation does not fit well with the supposed

autonomy of being mobile, and in the absence of discussion about the need for consensus, the subtext of the mobilities discourse is that *to be mobile means to be alone*, to be Kundera's motorcyclist. The false dichotomy here is the old patriarchal one which pits family, consensus, grounding and home against mobility, autonomy and flight. As Ohnmacht et al. (2009, p. 1) put it: 'one can argue that mobilities are tantamount to *individualisation*, *reflexivisation and globalisation*' (emphasis added). Other people are viewed as ties and burdensome, slowing one down and rendering mobility difficult (Urry, 2007). And yet, travelling in a group can often be easier (driving, costs and responsibility for logistical organisation can be shared) and certainly usually it is seen as more pleasurable.

The mobilities discourse treatment of the car shows the subtext of 'mobility = being alone' most clearly. There is an assumption that cars are like death: there is one per customer, and that everybody can drive, although this is clearly not the case for the disabled, some elderly and for children (Imrie, 2000). For example, as discussed below, Kellerman (2006, p. ix) talks of travelling in automobiles as the 'movement of the self by the self', and assumes that such is immensely desirable. Nowhere does he mention car passengers, let alone incorporate their experience into his theorising. The car driver – or rather the 'driver-car complex', always envisioned to be centaur-like with only one human head and wheels for legs – is the mobility emblem par excellence for the mobilities discourse (Dant, 2005). It is considered to be as autonomous as possible, and therefore as mobile as possible (it is usually assumed one is a lone driver, and the roading system is the only transport system possible on the ground). (One rare, brief acknowledgement of others is in Urry (2006, p. 23), which talks about the 'back-seat driver' and 'the common dependence upon a partner for navigation and map reading', from the point of view of the driver.) On a research level, the focus on individual human mobility manifests in numerous articles and books on the car. While many of these publications raise automobility issues such as congestion, few of them discuss the potential for cars to carry passengers, and even fewer are from the point of view of such passengers. For example, automobiles are the fourth most popular topic for *Mobilities* journal articles, as shown in Table 2 in Chapter 4, and yet only two *Mobilities* articles discuss passengers directly, including one discussing passengers who are children. This is significant in itself: they are only passengers because they do not yet have the capacity to drive themselves. The lack of attention to passengers gives the message that: 'nearly everybody can drive, and if you can drive, then you do'. The focus on individual mobility is also apparent in the equally false dichotomy of pitting the use of public transport against driving one's own car (discussed

below). The idea that one could be a passenger in one's own car, or in someone else's car is not considered. The focus and value placed on individual mobility and autonomy mean that structural rather than personal reasons for travel are neglected as well as group travel. Such a focus is part of a wider neo-liberalist trend to see people as individual consumers rather than as families, social groups or communities. As Smart (2010, p. 36) writes: 'Emphasis is placed increasingly on the interest of the private consumer pursuing satisfaction and seeking to experience pleasure through participation in consumerism, generally to the detriment of the quality of public sphere provision.' Given that increasing social inequality has been 'such a persistent feature of neoliberalization as to be regarded as structural to the whole project' (Harvey, 2005, p. 16), and that neo-liberalism treats people as individual consumers just as the mobilities discourse does, the mobilities discourse is implicated in this entrenching of social inequality.

Mobility as Individual *and* Powered

As discussed in Chapter 5, the mobilities discourse can only claim that we are becoming more mobile by emphasising mobility by powered, technological means, which has increased enough for some to increase statistics overall. The emphasis on new technology is not historicised, but instead mobilities theorists sound like early modernists celebrating a from-now-on infinite technological triumph. For example, Urry (2002a, p. 6) suggests that 'the twenty first century will be the century of "inhabited machines"' for individuals or small groups of individuals, such as mobile phones, 'the individual TV', 'tele-immersion sites, helicopters and smart small aircraft and other micro-mobiles yet to emerge'. He claims that 'it is through the inhabiting of such machines that humans will come to "life"... "Persons" will occur as various nodes in multiple machines of inhabitation and mobility.' Note that to come to life, to be 'persons', humans must first be able to afford these helicopters and the like. Ironically, elsewhere Urry (2000a, p. 46) criticises those who perceive the environment as global rather than local as celebrating 'technology, intervention, expert management and the relative disempowerment of the local people' in a 'global ontology of detachment'. And yet, by privileging mobility by machine, and dismissing proximity and walking, this is exactly what the mobilities discourse is doing also.

The mobilities discourse focuses on automobiles above all other modes of transport. It is by no means entirely complimentary about such vehicles and the 'automobile system' but it does place emphasis on their importance. Urry (2000a, p. 191) claims hyperbolically that: 'not to

drive and not to have a car is to fail to participate fully in western societies' – ignoring many inhabitants of large cities who find public transport adequate for their social and civic participation. And as part of their criticism about the sedentarism of the social sciences, Sheller and Urry (2000, p. 738) claim that 'sociology's view of urban life has failed to consider the overwhelming impact of the automobile in transforming the time-space scapes of the modern urban/suburban dweller'. The main reason for the sedentary lifestyle described in Chapter 5 is, of course, the rise of the automobile, not only as an alternative to walking and cycling, but as a technology which changed the scale of urbanity itself (Amato, 2004). Urry (2006, p. 19) himself sums this up clearly and succinctly:

> The urban environment, built during the latter half of the twentieth century for the convenience of the car, has 'unbundled' territorialities of home, work, business, and leisure that had historically been closely integrated and fragmented social practices that occurred in shared public spaces (Sassen, 1996). Automobility divides workplaces from homes, so producing lengthy commutes into and across the city. It splits homes and business districts, undermining local retail outlets to which one might have walked or cycled, thereby eroding town-centres, non-car pathways, and public spaces ... Members of families are split up since they will live in distant places necessarily involving complex travel to meet up even intermittently.

In a positive feedback loop, planners from the mid 20th century onwards assumed (and often still assume) a future of universal access to automobiles, which led to such access being a costly 'necessity' for individuals (Levinson, Krizek & Gillen, 2005; Adey, 2009, p. 86). The dream of universal automobile use was a self-fulfilling prophecy, not without its drawbacks. Instead of space-time compression, from a walker's point of view, the last century has been one of social space-time *spread*: the doctors, shops and work and neighbourhood friends are often no longer within walking distance. Automobile scale has replaced human scale in our urban environments (Solnit, 2000). As Adey (2009, p. 90) acknowledges: 'Mobility [meaning 'the highway system'] failed to emancipate because it instead fostered the unequal positioning of the already marginalized.' If one could not afford (or access) a car, one could not access facilities easily.

Despite the disapproving language Urry (2006) uses to describe what automobility has done to the urban fabric, quoted above ('fragmented ... lengthy commutes ... splits ... undermining ... eroding'), he and other mobilities advocates dismiss the idea that the system can change

dramatically again. It is the already-spent transformational power of the automobile system that Urry emphasises, rather than possible future alternatives to it. He describes the automobility system as 'remarkably stable and unchanging', and claims 'it has been stabilized for a long period of time, really since the end of the century before last ... even though a massive economic, social and technological maelstrom of change surrounds it' (2008, p. 266). So, Urry is asserting that the 'car system' was in place since before 1900, even though only a few thousand automobiles existed in 1900, and urban sprawl is generally figured to have been planned from the 1950s (Levinson, Krizek & Gillen, 2005). In some mobilities texts, mobility is equated absolutely with automobility and nothing else, not even other powered technologies such as mass transit vehicles. Thus Sheller and Urry (2000, pp. 739-743) argue that

> mobility is as constitutive of modernity as is urbanity... We argue that civil society should be reconceptualized as a 'civil society of automobility', a civil society of quasi-objects, or 'car-drivers' and 'car-passengers', along with disenfranchised 'pedestrians' and others not-in-cars, those that suffer a kind of Lacanian 'lack' ... Mobility cannot simply be conceived as the enemy of *civitas*; however much we may despair of vehicular traffic and busy roads, the auto-freedom of movement is part of what can constitute democratic life.

Note that 'mobility', 'automobility' and 'the auto-freedom of movement' are used as synonyms here; on this basis, if one conceives of the car as 'the enemy of *civitas*' then one believes mobility itself is the enemy of *civitas*, and given the positive connotations of the term 'mobility' (including freedom), nobody wants to believe that. So the ability to change or reverse the car-friendly design of cities, or to replace automobility with other kinds of mobility, is presented both as undesirable through this conflation – *and* as impossible, as the very existence of other kinds of mobility is denied.

Further, Sheller and Urry present car driving, walking and car riding not as things people *do*; instead, there is an essentialism here which presents car drivers, walkers and passengers as things that people *are*. The idea that at different times, a person may drive to see a friend, and then walk to work, is masked by the suggestion that one is either a car driver *or* a pedestrian; one apparently cannot be both, at different times. If one has a car, one is expected to drive it for all trips. This essentialism is confirmed by the mention of Lacanian lack only in regard to non-users of automobiles. It would be more accurate to say that, according to Lacan, we *all*

feel the lack of a unified personal identity and desire such an identity (Campbell, 2004). Sheller and Urry's use of the term suggests that pedestrians and 'others not-in-cars' (including mass transit users) desire the use of an automobile (or rather they desire a fusion of their incomplete self with the car as a 'human-car hybrid') in order to be complete beings. Contrary to Sheller and Urry's association, Lacanian lack is different from disenfranchisement, which is the lack of political engagement and/or power to ensure your needs are high on society's list of priorities. So, contrary to Sheller and Urry's interpretation, disenfranchisement could be interpreted as wanting more rights for pedestrians rather than a desire to be 'automobilised'.

The mobilities discourse mentions problems with the car but emphasises its benefits. Even traffic jams are a bonus, according to one of Urry's lectures to Peugeot Citroen's City on the Move Institute: They 'can be used to make numerous phone-calls, preparing for subsequent meetings' (2002a, p. 7). And only end-user problems are discussed; automobility's international political effect due to the car system's supply lines (for example) is not mentioned, leaving hidden what Netz (2004, p. 237) terms 'the violence at the periphery'. For example, the steep increases in the world oil price from 2004 to 2008 also increased violence in the Niger Delta, which moved 'ever closer to a Mad Max world of roving bandits' (Peel, 2009, p. xv). Such consequences of automobility are generally ignored in the mobilities discourse.

Environmental Catastrophe as a Threat to Mobility as Powered and Individual

Winner (1993, p. 376) suggests that 'faced with a variety of social and environmental ills', the key question for social scientists examining technology is 'how to come to terms with ways in which our technology-centered world might be reconstructed' and how to 'redirect[] our technological systems and projects in ways inspired by democratic and ecological principles'. Yet powered movement's negative impact on the natural environment – not merely in terms of road building, but more generally in pollution, waste and global warming – and the likelihood that powered movement will run out of oil are not overarching themes of the mobilities discourse, although there is a suite of Urry-led publications triggered by the subject (discussed below). Startlingly, Manderscheid claims that globalisation 'challenges the aim of sustainability politics to reduce transportation of goods and people, since the significance of mobilities as a precondition of social participation appears impossible to turn back' (Manderscheid, 2009, p. 45). But actually it is 'sustainability politics' (or rather,

science) which challenges the dominant model of globalisation (rather than vice versa), as the current level of transportation (on current fuel systems) will be impossible to sustain. It seems prudent to at least try and challenge mobility reduction's supposed appearance of impossibility. For if it is both impossible *and* unavoidable, then the human race is in a tight spot.

There is one mobilities discourse book – *After the Car* by Kingsley Dennis and John Urry (2009) – that seems to tackle this issue of sustainability head on, so it is useful to present an analysis of the book here (many of its ideas were also published in Urry, 2004b, 2005b, 2007 ch. 13; 2008). *After the Car* turns out to reify one virtue of the automobile – a certain type of independence for its operator – above all else. The main thesis of the book is that the car system is unsustainable, due to its dependence on oil, which is a) a finite resource and b) implicated in climate change.[12] This is an excellent start, and the book even goes on to outline several apocalyptic nightmare scenarios that may unfold if energy dependency continues, such as 'regional warlordism'.[13] However, as Urry (2008, p. 266) puts it, using curiously mixed and illogical metaphors: 'in the history of societies there are moments of heightened openness, when the die is less cast and various futures are structurally placed upon the table' – and he implies that now is one of those times. *After the Car*'s contribution to this debate is its secondary thesis: that it is necessary to develop a post-car system that 'does not totally displace certain of the car's undoubted virtues' as any post-car system will need to 'surpass[] the car by providing flexibilized, comfortable and secure personal mobility that ... is not based on the high energy system' (p. 9). The authors go so far as to say that otherwise 'the alternative would not take over' (p. 9) and 'a post-car system will need to be at least as effective as the current car at meeting people's economic, aesthetic, emotional, sensory and sociability requirements' (p. 64).

Perhaps it is reasonable to assume – given global behaviour to date – that drivers will not abandon their cars en masse out of a sense of collective responsibility towards the environment and humanity's future. However, it does not follow from this assumption that a post-car system needs to reach the same levels of independence and comfort for drivers as the

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[12] Although they could, they do not mention that the system is insecure as well as unsustainable due to the volatility of oil supplying regions and related price fluctuations.

[13] Elsewhere, on the same topic, Urry (2008, p. 276) rather nonsensically makes the eurocentric claim that 'the twentieth century operated in a way as though the whole century was a free lunch to be enjoyed at the expense of following centuries'. Can a lunch be said to 'operate'? Are the centuries paying for the century which is a 'free' lunch also lunches themselves?

car does. Instead, a post-car system could avoid some of the car's many drawbacks for drivers, such as cost of running, cost and scarcity of parking, loss of time for other activities while driving, and so on, to a level which makes up for any loss of the car's benefits. Dennis and Urry make many of these drawbacks explicit, but do not consider that being able to get rid of them may be an incentive to change to a post-car system.

There is a (perhaps deliberately) confused passage about climate change politics:

> [F]ighting climate change – that is campaigning not for abundance but for austerity, not for high consumption but for low – is a strange politics indeed. It is a politics against others but especially against oneself and the high carbon systems that have made life in the rich north nice, comfortable and long. In the final chapter, we examine how climate change, peak oil and global population growth may well come to make life 'nasty, brutish, solitary, and short'… (p. 26)

Dennis and Urry are shooting the messengers, seemingly accusing them of causing the crisis they are trying to prevent. There are a number of points to be teased out here:

1. Dennis and Urry do not acknowledge that campaigning for low consumption has a history: Thorstein Veblen coined the disparaging term 'conspicuous consumption' in 1899; latterly 'affluenza' has been discussed. To marginalise a campaign for low consumption as 'a strange politics indeed', one must think ever-increasing capitalist consumerism will be infinite, which is to agree with conservative political theorist Fukuyama (1989) that the 'end of history' has arrived.

2. 'Abundance' is not the opposite of 'austerity' as suggested here; it is another false dichotomy. Instead, austerity is a strategy used to combat a lack of abundance. One could also ask 'abundance of what?' 'austerity in what?'

3. Dennis and Urry present 'fighting climate change' as fighting the systems that they say have made life 'nice', which suggests 'fighting climate change' is fighting to make life 'nasty'. After all, austerity isn't usually associated with 'nice' and 'comfortable', and the writers have already characterised fighting climate change as campaigning for austerity. In the final sentence, it is climate change, rather than the fight against it, which is presented as having the potential to make life nasty, but there are no contrasting connecting words between this

sentence and its predecessor such as 'but', 'yet' or 'however' which would alleviate some of the preceding criticism of the anti-climate change campaigners.

4. The writers present campaigning against high consumption as a 'politics against others and especially against oneself'. This again defines one's identity as an individual consumer, and even omits all other possible identity constructs. The assumption is: unless I consume, I am nothing. This affirms a capitalist culture where consumerism is 'a way of life that has become global, "natural", quite simply the way the world is thought to be and cannot be imagined otherwise', whereas in fact it is of course constructed for the purposes of making money and continuing a political economy of modern capitalism (Smart, 2010, p. 8).

5. Presenting environmentalism as a 'politics against others' ignores the fact that most people on the planet are *not* high consumers, and in fact, green politics are politics of collective responsibility and care for the other, including future generations.

6. Giving 'carbon systems' the credit for life (for all?) in the rich 'north' being 'nice, comfortable and long' leads to the question: why not also in the poor south? It ignores other, political reasons for the north's wealth and relative comfort, such as the exploitation of the resources and populations of other countries (Khosravi, 2010).

In sum, the overall attitude is that of neo-liberals not wanting to believe the infinitely-expanding consumerist festival could be in jeopardy, and who are therefore blaming anti-climate change campaigners for climate change itself, identifying those offering possible solutions as the problem. The ramification for the mobilities discourse of this type of thinking is that it assumes and expects that transport systems will continue pretty much as they are now – whether they involve 'cars' or 'post-cars' – and so all of its analysis is based on this continuing present moment. It risks being overtaken by – even hastening – problematic environmental events instead of helping to predict them and suggest possible responses to them. Worse, those that take the advice of the mobilities discourse will also be less prepared, less 'future proofed' than if mobilities theorists had had their eye on the ball.

So what exactly is this post-car system Dennis and Urry are suggesting? It will apparently involve seven transformations which will lead to a 'tipping point', such as new clean fuel

systems, smart-card technology, car-sharing and car clubs, and charging and regulating car use 'including the small charge of £5' (Urry, 2004b, p. 509). Urry suggests these transformations should be considered as *replacements* to improving public transport, proximity and ICT access rather than being pursued at the same time. Urry and Dennis also suggest that these transformations continue the 'flexibilized, comfortable and secure personal mobility' which they insist is so necessary. I would argue instead that these transformations do not continue the car's flexibility: coordinating different modes of transport, or having to book cars one shares or hires takes organisational time and effort, which is what Dennis and Urry are trying to avoid. Seeing £5 as a 'small charge', and as *not* impinging on flexibility of transport highlights that, again, the mobilities discourse has privileged people in mind as normative.

Alternatives: Public Transport

Because of their commitment to the idea that the post-car system needs to be as convenient for drivers as the car system, Dennis and Urry write as if they dismiss public transport wholesale. They present all its possible forms as less desirable than the car and declare on page 1 that '[i]t is unlikely that everyone in the future will be travelling on foot and by bike, and especially not [sic] by public bus and train.' And yet, their own research does not support this conclusion. In Chapter 6 of *After the Car*, 'Models', they outline several example case studies of cities and communities 'that involve varying elements of a sustainable post-car vision', all of which encourage walking, cycling and/or use of public transport as main elements (p. 117).[14] They also write that 'global slums' have 'poor levels of public transportation and *hence* high use of cars.'(p. 23, emphasis added). 'Good' levels of public transportation then, would lead to a lower use of cars: 'Such developments can ease inner-city heavy traffic as car drivers [instead] use modernized and efficient bus services' (p. 100). Again, Dennis and Urry do not explicitly consider that in some cities, public transport is already good enough for large numbers of relatively privileged people not to consider owning a car.

The rhetorical bias against public transport in *After the Car* is perhaps most blatant in the following passage:

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[14] The authors leave themselves wriggle room with the use of 'everyone', in that the term in this context technically leaves room for it to be likely that 'most' will travel in these ways, not 'all', but the implication is that these modes of transport are not a large part of the answer.

The seamlessness of the car journey makes other modes of travel seem inflexible and fragmented. So-called public transport rarely provides that seamlessness, since there are many gaps between the various means of public transport, with people experiencing delays and on occasion danger. These 'gaps' are sources of inconvenience, danger and uncertainty, especially for women, children, older people, those who may be subject to racist attacks, the less abled, those travelling at night and so on. By contrast 'security' can be achieved by owning and controlling one's own car ... (pp. 40-41)

The most glaringly obvious problem with this passage is its false dichotomy between inconvenient, dangerous and uncertain 'so-called public transport' on one hand, and owning and controlling one's own car on the other. Many on the roll call of so-called public transport's most likely victims are also those most likely to use such transport – because owning and controlling their own car is either impossible (children, some 'less abled' people, including many elderly) or financially or otherwise out of their reach (see Urry 2006, and Sheller and Urry 2000, for examples of the same reasoning). One answer to concerns, particularly for these groups, which is worth exploring then, is *improving* public transport. Dennis and Urry seem to think this is not even worth attempting. They seem to prefer the spectre of regional warlordism to exploring the possibilities of public transport, because individual driver independence is everything.

The fact that 'the typical situation in many countries has been to maximise the motorists' freedom as mobility, while providing the users of public transport with an 'acceptable' minimum standard' (Vigar, 2002, p. 72) does not suggest to Urry that there might be much to gain from drawing attention to improving public transport. Instead, it proves to him that the car, like Fukuyama's democracy, has *won*, and won globally: 'The car system ... appears able to "drive" out competitors, such as feet, bikes, busses and trains, in one society after another (and especially now in China)' (Urry, 2004b, p. 508). The reasons for the car system's success – such as its powerful, rich private and corporate backers and beneficiaries like the City on the Move Institute backer Peugeot Citroen – are not mentioned. Instead, Urry (in Adey and Bissell, 2010, p. 4) claims baldly that public and collective transport 'will be less significant' in times to come. No matter how smart their technology becomes, collective forms of transport are old fashioned because they apparently can never allow for flexible travel: 'it then becomes difficult to imagine that you could *return* to collective forms of

transport' (emphasis added) – and this in spite of books written at Urry's own institution, stating that 'despite significant inertia in the system, over time people have changed their travel behaviour' (Pooley et al., 2005, p. 230). At the same time, Urry (in Adey and Bissell, 2010, p. 4) adds that the supposed irreversibility of the car system 'isn't to say that one shouldn't be extremely enthusiastic about new forms of buses, trains, coaches, ships, and air travel' but '*obviously* this has to be undertaken in hugely innovative ways within the context of a new kind of post-privatised car system' (emphasis added). So it will be less significant (despite evidence suggesting other possibilities), but we should still be enthusiastic about it, and take for granted that a post-privatised car system is on its way (despite a lack of evidence).

Adey (2009, p.103) also shows an incomprehension of how public transport systems are maintained where he muses about 'whether taking the car would reduce pressure on an already crowded bus service – which could have [sic] provided a barrier to the mobility impaired or a mother laden down with shopping and children'. In a well-run city, the more people use buses, the more buses will be provided. Taking the bus is the best way to show solidarity with those who do not have a choice. In contrast to both Adey and Urry, Hine (2007), publishing empirical research within the mobilities discourse, states that within a Scottish transport policy context both land-use planning and public transport provision in new developments are considered to be 'extremely important'. One wonders whether Urry would attempt to change the mind of the Scottish Executive. It is a possibility, given his response to London's congestion charging, to which I now turn.

Response to London's Congestion Charging

To illustrate how persistent Urry's backing of the intractability of the car system is, I will discuss here his responses to calls to reduce car use, and in particular the London Council's congestion charging, which commenced in 2003 by placing a £5 charge on private vehicles travelling in certain central city areas. A year previously, in a lecture series at the Peugeot Citroen-financed City on the Move Institute, Urry had predicted that

> with the low level of trust enjoyed by public bodies it is going to be very hard to induce people to change their behaviour by using their car less ... While new road building is a fairly straightforward policy, it may be hard for many to understand what is good and desirable about the policy of demand reduction especially at a time when

bus transport is declining and rail transport is in chaos.... Demand reduction techniques may look like yet another unfair and discriminating imposition by relatively illegitimate public bodies. (2002c, p. 5)

Here Urry ignores a history of strong anti-road lobbying and protesting in order to say that road building is 'fairly straightforward'. Instead of suggesting that if public transport were improved at the same time as policies of demand reduction were pursued then such policies would be more likely to succeed, he simply says that the former is in decline and chaos and therefore the latter is unlikely to succeed; it is as if there is no way to change this situation (in fact, the number of buses was increased dramatically in London at the same time as congestion charging was introduced [Monaghan, 2004]). While Urry (2002c) does not go so far as to say 'demand reduction' *is* unfair and discriminating (only that it 'may look' that way), he said in another lecture in the same series that

car-driving and its resultant socialities have become central to sustaining social capital across most societies across the globe ... Hence, reducing the demand for driving is not innocent in its effects and may indeed undermine existing levels and forms of social capital (2002b, p. 6)

The implication here is that not only is demand reduction unlikely to succeed, but if it does, it will probably be guilty of bringing about social exclusion for many as car-driving is 'central' to sustaining social capital in 'most societies across the globe' (a dubious claim). Social exclusion, clearly, is an awful thing to exacerbate, and therefore, we should not reduce driving demand.

So how did Urry respond to London's congestion charging? He noted that 'one striking feature of the congestion-charging scheme is that there has been little reduction in the number of journeys made into London since its introduction' (Urry, 2004b, p. 507). He then used this apparent feature to support his thesis of necessary copresence. He was, however, silent on the fact that there was significant reduction in the number of *car* journeys into London – with about half those who left their cars at home taking public transport instead (Monaghan, 2004). Yet, as mentioned above, others within the mobilities discourse, such as Pooley et al. (2005, p. 230), note in relation to Manchester's move back towards trams as well as London's congestion charging that: 'the research has shown that, despite significant inertia in the system, over time people have changed their travel behaviour' (p. 230).

By avoiding speaking of public transport as an alternative – even when it is extremely viable, as it is in London – Urry is part of the apparatus which keeps the car system in place; he is part of the car system itself. The mobilities discourse shores up private, corporate interests of car makers and fuel suppliers, rather than those of the public, particularly those who do not have access to automobiles. This is another way – along with its ignoring of coerced movement and non-movement on a global scale – that the mobilities discourse is part of the global mobility regime, increasing rather than decreasing mobility inequality and pollution (Shamir, 2005).

Alternatives: Proximity

As outlined above, one reason for the dominance of the car is the urban sprawl the car system has effected; so one way of increasing the attractiveness of more sustainable travel options could be to increase the dwelling density of cities and regions. That way, walking would be feasible and public transport easier to manage. But in regard to urban design, in one of his 2002 lectures to the City on the Move Institute, Urry quotes Putnam's vision outlined in *Bowling Alone* (2000), in order to criticise it:

> Let us act to ensure that by 2010 Americans will spend less time traveling and more time connecting with our neighbors than we do today, that we will live in more integrated and pedestrian-friendly areas, and that the design of our communities and the availability of public space will encourage more casual socializing with friends and neighbors. (Putnam, 2000, pp. 407-408, quoted in Urry, 2002b, p. 5)

Urry adds: 'now while most observers would echo these comments *they are surely totally implausible*' (emphasis added), before outlining why he thinks they are implausible: 'the development of American cities has been dominated by commercial interests which have found it profitable' to separate housing, retailing, leisure and so on, and 'these zones necessitate extensive car-based mobility to get from one to the other'. But really, this is describing how urban sprawl came about; it is not raising reasons why it may not change again. He calls it 'implausible' to try and change what commercial interests have decided. (One could point out that Putnam's time frame was rather optimistic, but Urry does not mention the possibility of a longer-term transformation). This is part of a wider, Urry-instigated trend within the mobilities discourse of seeing infrastructure as immobile and impossible to transform (see Chapter 7). In contrast, Mills (1971) specifically suggests

several possible urban re-designs to solve the structural mobility issues of the 'wonderful monstrosity' of the city.

As noted in Chapter 6, Urry (2002b, p. 5) claims that 'because of the important need for co-presence, corporeal travel is essential'. The idea that little corporeal travel is needed within cities to achieve copresence with people is not discussed; 'everyday' and 'global' scales here have been reduced to one absolute: travel. Urry does not conceptualise travel as something that can be done 'less' or 'more', it is only something that is done or not done. Thus there is no discussion of whether the same people can still meet as often as they always have by travelling a shorter distance than they used to if they start from a closer position – that is, if they live and/or work nearer to each other than before. This would still constitute 'travel' and therefore there are no identifiable gains to be had from increasing proximity. While *distant* physical meetings require travel on someone's part, Urry is treating 'meetingness' in general as requiring travel. He does so explicitly in Adey and Bissell (2010, p. 9):

> Nobody knows how many meetings take place each year, but there are obviously many billions. And to save life on the planet involves reducing that number of billions. You'd have to do it either by not meeting, or not meeting as frequently, or you meet through various sorts of virtual simulations ...

Note the axioms here:
1. All travel is and always will be unsustainable.
2. Unsustainable travel is necessary for humans to physically meet other humans.
3. Humans meeting humans is the only (or by far and away most significant) reason for any travel (cargo, tourism, etc. are not considered).

Therefore, to reduce unsustainable travel, it is necessary and sufficient to reduce the number of times that humans physically meet humans.

Clearly, humans can meet humans without unsustainable travel – particularly if they live near each other, and work near where they live. The gross number of meetings around the planet does not need to change; we just need to change who we're meeting or where we're meeting; in other words, perhaps we need to change the spatial patterns in which we organise our lives. But Urry has already rejected such rearrangements as 'implausible', which has the effect of affirming urban design convenient to the car.

Alternatives: Communications Technology

The interaction between communications technology and human movement/non-movement is a complex one, but it is fair to note that in *some* cases communications can substitute for physical movement – for example, electronic transfer of documents, internet banking – and therefore communications could play a part in some more sustainable replacement of the car system. In order to combat the partial challenge which communications technology presents to the 'car system', Urry downplays the possibilities of communications technology and, in particular, emphasises the significance of what he calls 'copresence' (see Chapter 6). This subjugation is in line with the inclusion of communications technology as a 'mobility', an unacknowledged metaphor, as described in Chapter 3.

Urry's subjugation of communications technology to mobility includes:

- A refutation of telecommuting as 'the key to transforming urban life' because 'people like and need to be physically mobile, to see the world, to meet others and to be bodily proximate, and to engage in "locomotion"' (Urry 2006, p. 28, Sheller and Urry 2000, p. 753). Yet telecommuting does not deny the telecommuter any of these things; instead the telecommuter can decide when and where to be mobile, and who to meet, rather than having to use up mobility on getting to the office, and share proximity with colleagues. This is not to claim telecommuting will transform urban life; it is simply to claim that Urry's arguments that it will *not* do so are spurious.

- Interpreting the popularity of the mobile telephone as a suggestion that 'many people want to engage in communication simultaneously with locomotion – to walk and talk or to drive and jive', instead of seeing it as people wanting to have the choice to communicate where ever they are and whatever they are doing – whether it involves physical movement or not (Urry, 2006, p. 28; Sheller and Urry, 2000, p. 753).

- A negative characterisation of the web as 'an aristocratic network in which the rich get richer and the poor relatively poorer', due to 'dominant hubs' such as Microsoft and Google. In contrast, 'social networks' are apparently 'egalitarian' and can be 'democratic' (Urry, 2004a, p. 114). This portrayal separates the analysis of the social from technology, which Urry (2000b), following ANT, espouses as an invalid method. Also, without acknowledging it, Urry is describing the *industry* of the web – his description could hold for any number of capitalist industry environments,

including the automobile industry, upon which he is silent. Later in the same (2004a) passage he writes: 'Another example of an aristocratic model is the organization of global brands ...' (p. 115). This is incorrect as this is not *another* example; Google and Microsoft are examples themselves of this 'global brand' phenomenon.

- An implication that not much sustainability would be gained by substituting some travel with communications as virtual simulations too 'involve significant energy consumption' (Urry, in Adey and Bissell, 2010, p. 9).

Copresence Again

The amount of significance which Urry gives to 'copresence' is perplexing, unless it is seen as part of a strategy to undermine the potential transformative powers of communications technology by highlighting a desirable which IT cannot deliver. Urry (2002b, p. 7) quotes researchers who 'argue on the basis of research on research scholars that "frequent contact on the Internet is a complement to frequent face-to-face contact, not a substitute for it"', and he does not qualify this by suggesting that extrapolating from a population of research scholars to all internet users may be presumptuous. Whether frequent internet contact is a complement or substitute for 'face-to-face contact' depends to a large extent on *why* you're having frequent contact with someone, and how physically far away they are from you. Contact with people one lives with via the internet during the day could be to the effect of 'honey, can you pick up some taro on the way home?' Urry (2002a, p. 4) does not see usual 'copresence' generating some internet contact, but instead sees all internet contact as needing occasional copresence, saying, 'even electronic spaces seem to depend upon moments of face-to-face co-presence for developing trustful relationships'. This suggests he has not heard of the increasing phenomena of international online multi-player games and people selling goods over the internet to repeat customers they've never met, for example.

The phrase 'face-to-face' is telling in itself, given that now, thanks to free internet-based video calls, people can be face-to-face without physical copresence. However, Urry has not acknowledged that such calls offer many of the benefits he lists as offered by copresence, perhaps because this would reduce the advantages that physical meetings have over communication (Urry, 2007). In one lecture, (2002b), Urry does acknowledge that some tasks which have required copresence in the past no longer do so, thanks to technology, but he talks of this in a way which makes it clear that he disapproves of this replacement: 'Should we be

bothered', he asks rhetorically, 'if virtual proximity, such as banking on-line and missing out on the face-to-face conversations with bank staff, replaces such conversations?' (p. 9) On behalf of everyone who is not mobile, or has better things to do with their time within banking hours than to go to a bank, I reply with an emphatic 'No!' The fact that bank branches are now usually nearly empty suggests that most people value convenience over being asked several times a month in person whether they'd like a credit card. Urry (2002b, p. 9) also asks: 'How can we ensure that sufficient corporeal travel occurs so that the pleasures of proximity do not disappear as more people appear to live Putnam's dystopia of privatised "lives on the screen"?' This is a loaded question; Urry insists that only corporeal travel (preferably by automobile) can bring proximity, whereas in fact, the automobile works *against* proximity as cities are designed on machine scale, as discussed above. Urry's question also presents the use of communications technology as a dystopia. Powered travel is reinforced as the ultimate goal.

Summary

By presenting the car system – or rather, benefits of the car system such as 'autonomy' – as eternally desirable, and any system which replaces the car system as necessarily replicating these benefits, Urry and his co-writers reaffirm existing inequalities and power structures. Their ahistoricism, and their presentation of autonomous travel as an eternal present and the automobile system as stable and unchanging, denies the possibility of transformation into a more egalitarian system. If one has to consume technology as a private individual in order to live and be human – the implications of Urry's (2000a, p. 46) argument – this cements the power and wealth of those who produce those technologies which everyone then needs to consume. Urry reaffirms the capitalist system: his arguments keep us paying money to corporations in order to consume individual vehicles – he dissuades us even from public transport. His arguments are entirely in line with the neo-liberal project to 're-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites' (Harvey, 2005, p. 19). Urry (2008, p. 276) even cites neo-liberalist theorist Milton Friedman as an authority: 'We know from Milton Friedman there is no such thing as a free lunch.' The methods of sociologists do not 'simply describe': 'They are not neutral. They help to *enact* realities' (Law, 2008, p. 640, emphasis in original). By insisting that the effects of neo-liberal capitalism are ahistoric and unavoidable, the mobilities discourse helps to continue such effects, including ever-increasing inequalities.

9. Conclusion: Mobilities as a Sociology of Technology

One overarching theme of this thesis has been the self-misrepresentation of the mobilities discourse; it often makes bold claims about its scope, whereas in actual fact, its aims are very narrow. It mostly ignores actual bodily movement or lack thereof, mostly ignores our power to move other things, people and information, and instead equates mobility with the displacement of individual human travellers by powered, technological means. So what happens if the rhetoric is ignored, the smaller scope is acknowledged and the mobilities discourse is examined in this light – as a sociology of technology in loose disguise – as I suggested in Chapter 5? How does the mobilities discourse answer questions suggested by the sociology of technology tradition about mobile technologies?

Mobilities Discourse as a Sociology of Technology

These questions are some of those suggested by social theories of technology:

- *Creation and Production:* What type of order creation or dispute settlement is the technology (including socio-technical systems) designed, created and implemented for? Why is the technology the way it is, who exactly gets to shape and embed it? (Law and Bijker, 1992). What are the alternatives to that technology? (Winner, 1980).

- *Power and control:* What behaviour does the technology force or influence? (Latour, 1994). Who owns/controls/uses/benefits from the technology? (Matthewman, 2011). Is the technology political in itself, does it necessarily support a particular type of political arrangement? (Winner, 1980). Who controls others' use of technology? What is the role of the technology in the distribution and exercise of power in society? (Callon, 1986; Law and Bijker, 1992). How can it play such a role? What role should it have? What steps can be taken to move closer to this ideal? (Brey, 2008).

- *Sustainability:* What are its social changes across time, unintended consequences, rival technological systems and environmental effects? (Pfaffenberger, 1992).

- *Relation to the oppressed:* Who and what does the technology exclude? What is the technology's relation to the marginalised and oppressed? What is its relation to those who do not get to design intellectual technologies, those who cannot access them but are compelled to feel their effects? (Star, 1991; Winner, 1993).

The mobilities discourse largely ignores most of these questions. And significantly, all the answers it does give are with the transportation of humans in mind. It does not answer these questions in regards to mobility technologies in general, nor in regards to communications technologies, in spite of its self-promotion to the contrary, and so offers a partial picture, at best. The answers (or lack of them) that the mobilities discourse offers to these questions are described below.

The Mobilities Discourse on Technology Creation and Production

The mobilities discourse does not engage with political questions about technology design, either ignoring technology design altogether or seeing it as a history of great inventors (Cresswell, 2006). Technology – and in particular, infrastructure – is usually treated as if it appears naturally, inevitably, by itself, with no human agency, intervention or hindrance. This is problematic, not least because most technologies are mostly developed by commercial enterprises and are therefore designed to realise two major aims: 'power and profit' (Brey, 2008, p. 93). This aspect of technology's role in distributing power in society is largely ignored by the mobilities discourse. Movement and displacement is perhaps no longer a 'black box' for the social sciences, but the production of the technology that allows that movement is. As we have seen above, the mobilities discourse does not engage with questions about who is shaping the automobile system and why. As discussed in Chapter 7 on immobility, Adey (2006) ignores these questions about the airport also. Current alternatives to automobility are rejected as 'implausible'.

The Mobilities Discourse on Power and Control

There is an acknowledgement that some people benefit from and use certain types of mobile technology more than others (for example, high speed airport-city commuter links by business people [Cresswell, 2006]), but little investigation as to the demographics of the users and non-users of these technologies, more a general assumption of a monied 'global elite'. The mobilities discourse does discuss human behaviour and experience as shaped by mobility technology, but often the individual, and the individual technology, is highlighted at the expense of the system. Instead of asking what role should technology take in the distribution and exercise of power, the mobilities discourse takes the status quo it outlines for granted, just as it takes globalisation, consumerism, individualism and capitalism for granted. What role technology should have, and the role it does have, are assumed to be one and the same.

Mobility politics is seen as increasing everyone's access to the means of mobility rather than an investigation of who is controlling movement, and whether all movement is desirable. There is no thought given to the idea that certain technologies can be political in and of themselves.

The Mobilities Discourse on Sustainability

Apart from Urry, mobilities researchers rarely investigate the unintended consequences and environmental effects of the automobile, and even Urry's solutions to these concerns are partial at best, involving a to-be-invented 'post-car' system. This 'solution' is focussed on at the expense of examining the possibilities of public transport, different urban design and communications technology. The sustainability of the air transport system does not seem to be discussed at all.

The Mobilities Discourse on Exclusion

The mobilities discourse cites social exclusion as the main reason for its emphasis on mobilities, and it does implicate mobility capability (motility) in social stratification and social exclusion. However, it does not consider that this is ultimately an issue of access, and its theory focuses on the potential desire for 'far-flung' travel rather than the desire to see loved ones in the same area. Neither do mobilities advocates problematise a world where well-off people travel around the world for leisure, using unsustainable, polluting technology, and buy luxury objects made using enforced, immobile labour. It is concerned with current, rich-world middle-class preoccupations, and 'enabling' all to take up middle-class existences, as they are currently lived.

Thus, the mobilities discourse as a sociology of technology comes up short; its subject matter is technology but it ignores already existing traditions of knowledge about this topic, rather than building upon them or declaring a rejection of them.

Mobilities Discourse as a Technology

Like all intellectual endeavours, particularly those offering theoretical frameworks, the mobilities discourse is itself a technology of knowledge. If one asks the questions above about the mobilities discourse, what is revealed about the discourse? One finds that the mobilities discourse largely upholds a status quo in which technologies of communication

and physical mobility are used to keep the powerful in power. The designers of the mobilities discourse 'belong to the group that shares the dominant values and symbols of a society' and in the discourse's 'production process and artifacts', they have embedded political values to uphold the Establishment (Pfaffenberger, pp. 282-283). For example, researchers are encouraged to think of mobility as an end in itself. The mobilities discourse itself, as a technology, has adapted the work of social researchers to its own end. As the mobilities discourse upholds the socio-technological apparatus it is investigating, it becomes part of that very apparatus; it is absorbed into it and strengthens it.

Leading mobilities advocates usually display a short-sighted assumption that present conditions will continue into the distant future; or when they do consider the future, they present it as something that just happens by itself which people today cannot expect to consciously shape (Urry's presentation of Falk's utopia as likely is an example of this, as is his discussion of system 'tipping points'). As such – and in complete opposition to the green movement message – the mobilities discourse message is 'do nothing'. In this way, mobilities advocates reinforce the status quo of neo-liberal, corporation-favouring and unsustainable power structures; they try to make them more solid while talking about fluidity. Their preference for thinking in absolutes rather than subtle relativities (moorings are immobile, humans are not; one is either travelling – however long the distance – or one is not) supports this lack of vision and workable solutions to problems of social exclusion and environmental degradation. Mesmerised by machine speed which renders the body (and particularly its fragility) almost redundant, and envisioning a machine-aided immortality in a frozen present, the mobilities discourse is stuck fast.

The framework and topics this thesis proposes as alternatives to the current mobilities discourse are: accessibility (Farrington, 2007); control of movement (of self and of others and objects), incorporating motility and immotility; and networks, when combined with a social justice focus (Graham and Martin, 2001). Possibly all current mobilities research would fit into each of these frameworks – rendering the mobilities discourse redundant – and more importantly, these frameworks suggest other approaches (such as urban planning) which the mobilities discourse effectively shuts down. Even simply changing the name of the mobilities discourse to the 'communications and transport' discourse would be more intellectually honest.

Final Words

In their interview with Urry, Adey and Bissell (2010, p. 13) put to him David Harvey's complaint that the social sciences today lack a 'radical' spirit and that sociology has 'moved close to political power': 'There is little revolutionary spirit evidenced here … Most have lost sight of the simple maxim that the task of critical theory is not merely to understand the world but also to change it.' This criticism – that there is a reluctance to try and change the socially unjust status quo – is one of the criticisms that this thesis is making about the mobilities discourse directly, so Urry's (p. 14) answer is illuminating:

> Social scientists have had to get closer to political power and the corporate sector in order to undertake appropriate research. I think all of that is an extremely difficult issue especially in the midst of a neoliberal period, in which academics have only been let in to many organisations under very particular conditions. So you can take an ultraleft position, which is I suppose what Harvey is advocating, but I think it's too simplistic and his purist position is not very helpful...

Urry does not deny that most sociologists do not seek to change the world with their theory, nor does he deny that sociology has moved close to political power. Instead he defends such approaches as necessary and unavoidable, in order for 'appropriate research' to take place. One could ask: 'research appropriate to whom and for what?' In the same interview, as noted in Chapter 6, Urry said that it is easier to research the poor rather than the rich. But, as he also implies here, access to appropriate research subjects is difficult, and so the unspoken conclusion is that researching the living conditions and situations of the poor is no longer appropriate, and to think otherwise is an 'ultraleft' position.

This conservative, bourgeois thinking is not only out of step with Urry's discipline, it is out of step with the zeitgeist in general. At the time of writing, protestors against a corrupt global financial regime are occupying over 1,000 places on all continents, Europe is on the brink of economic collapse, and capitalism has lost its invisible armour of certainty – it is now being questioned publically and openly in mainstream media. In such an age, shoring up the global mobility regime is morally dubious. The mobilities discourse was set up in such a way that it works to retain the political and economic status quo *without questioning it*. The justification that there is no alternative is self-defeating.

As Papastergiardis (2010, p. 350) points out:

> [T]he North is consistently emitting contradictory signals: encouraging the illusion of freedom and mobility, promoting its own commodities and values, while also restricting human migration and devaluing other traditions ... [there's a] contradiction between the rhetoric of global connectedness and the practice of exclusionary policies on immigration.

The mobilities discourse is overtly part of that 'rhetoric of global connectedness', which denies the lived reality of so many, and thus further entrenches their restrictions. Its leading theories are smoke-screen propaganda for a global mobility regime which forces people to move, and others to stay put, and as such, helps to reproduce massive inequality. While much research situated within it is useful, the mobilities discourse is not a 'something' à la *The Late Show with David Letterman*; its embedded emphases and non-coherences make it *worse than nothing*, as far as social justice is concerned.

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