ESF Exploratory Workshop on

The Future of Business Mobilities

Lancaster University (UK), 7th-8th June 2011

Convened by:
James Faulconbridge and John Urry

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

1. Executive summary

The workshop was held at Lancaster University, UK, over two days – the 7th and 8th June 2011. Delegates from outside the UK arrived during the afternoon of the 6th of June and informal networking activities took place during the eveining of that day. All delegates also ate together and continued discussions during the eveining of the 7th of June.

In total, 20 delegates attended the workshop. Three additional delegates unfortunately had to withdraw from the event at short notice (on the 5th of June) due to illnesses and family difficulties. In total, ten different European countries were represented at the event, from Ireland in the west to Estonia in the east, Norway in the north and Italy in the south.

Thanks to the generosity of the Lancaster Environment Centre, the event could be held in purpose built training rooms which provided the ideal environment both for formal presentations but also informal interaction and groupwork. Delegates also made use of the breakout area provided by this facility, taking lunches and rereshements in this space whilst also using the space for small group planning of follow-up research.

The event benfitted greatly from the enthusiasm, excitement and collegiality of all who attended. There was a real willingness to entertain multiple theoretical and methodological perspectives, to share knowledge, and to develop future working relationships that can be used to spur follow-on activities. The event allowed existing social networks to be reenergised and reinforced but also allowed the development of new relationships between scholars who had never met before.

The scientific objectives of the workshop were five-fold:

O1. The bringing together of leading European experts and the development of ways of framing future research into business mobilities using interdisciplinary approaches.

O2. Examination of the context for research of business mobilities from multiple European perspectives in light of the differing forms and roles of business mobility.

O3. Consideration of methodlogical approaches, and the possibilities for multi-method research, to allow business mobilities to be more effectively studied.

O4. The sketching out of an ideal-type project design for a European business mobilities research project. This will act as the basis for the development of a research project proposal involving all or several of the attendees at the workshop.

O5. The development of a Euroean 'business mobilities network' that communicates virtually and meets occasionally for workshops.

All of the workshops objectives were fulfilled through a series of activities. Specifically delegates participated in:
- Formal presentation sessions led by workshop participants
- Discussions of previously published research, facilitated both by discussants and also small-groupwork activities

- Brainstorming activities that led to the identification of research priorities
- Working groups charged with developing more detailed proposals that could form the basis of future research projects.

The main conclusions of the workshop were as follows.

1. Future pan-European research activities are needed that address five research dearths: typologies of business mobiltiies; routines, cultures and functions of mobilities; ecologies of mobility in which corporeal and virtual mobility interact and coexist rather than substitute; future business mobility scenarios; data audits for mobilities research, allowing comprasison and synthesis of different European data sets.
2. The network of people formed via the workshop is now primed to quickly develop new research and all delegates felt able to now engage in comparative and collaborative European rsearch activities.
3. More activity is needed to consolidate a set of core questions for research about business mobility, and to identify ways of conceptually framing this research.
4. At present, research funding limitations may prevent any pan-European research project being initiated. Therefore is may be more fruitful to seek funding for longer-term networking activities and capacity development.

2. Scientific content of the event
Here, we expect to see a detailed picture of what went on during the meeting: i.e. a brief summary (in a couple of sentences) of each presentation and a synopsis of the subsequent discussion (agreements/disagreements/highlights). Please note that a simple listing of the paper titles with hyperlink to the papers themselves does not answer the case and is in fact redundant with section 4. i.e. the programme.
Note: Abstracts, if you wish to provide them, should not be included in the main body of the report, but as an appendix and cannot replace the contents of section 2.

The workshop was divided into a series of sessions, each with their own remit and agenda.

Session One provided the context for the event. There were four presentations:

1. An initial welcome was offered from Co-Convenor John Urry and a presentation delivered which sumamrised the economic and societal context for the event. Particular emphasis was placed in the presentation on the high carbon and oil dependent nature of current business mobilities, the continued proliferation of hyper-mobility, and the challenges this will cause in the future. The presentation provided an ideal way of highlighting why the topic of the workshop has pressing economic and societal relevance.
2. Marie Suchanova, the European Science Foundation raporteur for the event, provided and introduction of the Foundation's work and funding streams. This provided useful context that informed later discussions about future activities. In particular the uncertainly about future funding was highlighted.
3. Convenor James Faulconbridge then offered an analysis of the conceptual foundations upon which discussion at the event may be built. It was highlighted that a new way of thinking about business mobilities was needed and that thinking about the mobilities system and its complex interdependencies might allow such thinking to

emerge. Participants were encourasged to move beyond existing debates about the substitution of travel by virtual communication, or about the economic rationale for mobility. A framing that took account of the social, cultural, political, economic, and technological generators of cultures of mobility was offered as a way of achieving such forward thinking.

4. Sven Kesselring closed the session by exploring the conceptual significance of research completed in Germany on business travellers. Debates about normalisation, subjectification, rationalisation and time-space compression were highlighted and put forward as a way of thinking through the casues of business hyper-mobility. Using such debates as a way of challenging the normality and impacts of business mobility was suggested as a tool in political projects to change current mobility trends.

One hour of discussions followed the opening presentations. In these discussions delegates debated the merits of different conceptual approaches, questioned the role of social stratification in making business mobilities more or less homogeneous, and began to move towards a concensus about some of the core future research needs.

Session Two focussed on the ongoing conundrum of the relationship between virtual and corporeal mobility. There were two presentations in this session.

1. Giuseppina Pellegrino discussed the contemporary politics of proximity, defining proximity both in terms of embodied and virtual encounters. She raised the question of the extent to which individuals have control over their mobile lives and the way that technology had acted to generate particular politics of proximity.

2. Peter Arnfalk outlined ongoing attempts to better integrate virtual communications into public sector organisations. His presentation provided a detailed analysis of the multi-level transitions needed to normalise virtual meetings, with issues of technological infrastructure, user competency, workplace cultures, governmental discourses and policies flagged as important issues of consideration. Particular schemes implemented to drive such transistions were detailed.

A further hour of discussion took place after the papers. This built on discussion from the previous session and delegates debated how the conceptual ideas discussed earlier could be used to make sense of the issues outlined in the papers. In particular the challenge of getting beyond substitution debates when considering the role of technology was explored, leading to the idea that the ecology of mobility comprised of multiple corporeal and virtual forms of mobility may be a useful way forward.

Session Three considered the relevance of business mobilities research to current agendas in a range of scholarly fields not necessarily focussed on mobility. The session was led by discussants who reflected on the usefulness of three already published papers for identifiying ways of leveraging the analytical potential of business mobilities studuies. The discussants were:

1. Lucy Budd who in her discussions highlighted the importance of precise and robut definitions and research designs for enhancing future understanding of business mobilities.

2. Per Gustafson who drew attention to the importance of not developing 'catch all' concepts but carefully thinking through how the technological, social, cultural and economic issues associated with business mobility could be captured using different framings.

3. Tom Storme who returned to debates about definitions and concepts by highlighting the current lack of understanding of the frequency, representativeness, and industry-specifcities of already reported forms of business mobility.

Sesion Three was concluded with a presentation by Rein Ahas. In his presentation Rein drew attention to the new opportunities afforded by datasets about the use of mobile communications. In particular data analysed by Rein was used to highlight the important connections between mobility practices and urban infrastructures and forms, thus generating new planning questions and issues.

Discussions after the presentations began to turn to methodological issues raised by the Discussants' comments. In particular a disconnect between conceptual debates and empirical research was highlighted, leading delegates to reflect on the merits of more precise research designs tailored to answering certain specific questions, rather than all questions relating to business mobilities.

Session Four, on Day Two, involved two interrelated activities both focussed around questions of methods for future research.

1. A presentation was delivered by Christian Licoppe. In his presentation Christian highlighted the development of qualitative methods that use mobile phone technology to capture the experience of people on the move. Both insights into the interactions between people and their environment and between people and technologies were discussed, and in particular the ethical issues associated with using such data collection techniques identified.

2. The workshop broke into four smaller groups to discuss the implications of two already published papers for approaches to capturing data on mobile methods. The following questions were addressed in discussions: Datasets: which sources could be better exploited? Which (new) methods should we try to develop further? How might we/should we integrate the micro and macro (qualitative/quantitative?)? Are there any particular philosophical or conceptual perspectives which deserve more attention and which generate particular methodological challenges?

 After the presentation and small group activities delegates engaged in an extended discussion of methodological issues. The main theme of the debate was the need to recognise the potential of both macro and micro scale data collection techniques, the potential to combine the two approaches to maximise the impact of business mobilities research, and the need to have a toolkit of methods that could be deployed as appropriate depending on the very specific research question being addressed.

Session Five built on the previous sessions and asked delegates to take the conceptual and methodological discussions of the previous days and apply them to develop a research project proposal. A number of activities allowed project ideas to be developed:

1. During the previous sessions, delegates had been asked to capture ideas for research, key conceptual debates and methodological brainwaves on a series of post-it notes. These notes were displayed on the wall around the edge of the room. At the start of Session Five delegates were asked to: cluster the post-it notes that raise common issues; develop a research questions/theme to draw together the clustered post-its; add new post-its if they had new brain waves. Each cluster of post-it notes then became a potential research project. Four themes were identified: definitions/typologies of business travel; technology-corporeal mobility interactions; future scenarios for business mobility; dataset development and exploitation.

2. Delegates were asked to self select into groups that would focus on the themes identified in the post-it note activity. Each group then had one hour to develop ideas for the kinds of issues to be explored in future projects on their chosen theme.
3. A feedback session allowed groups to tell other groups what had been discussed, how ideas had been developed, and how that might be the basis for future collaboration.

Session Five ended with the formalisation of future plans for research. A number of activities were agreed which are detailed in the following section of this report.

3. Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcome
The workshop provided a valuable forum in which to identify the research priorities (detailed in the discussion above in section two) that should be addressed in future research. In light of the current lack of European funding initiatives that could support the immediate commencement of a research programme to deal with research priorities, a number of actions were agreed.

1. The 'Business Mobilities Network' has been established. This is being hosted by the already existing Cosmobilities Network. The network will provide a way of delegates at the workshop staying in touch and sharing ideas for future research, opportunities for funding spotted, new publications and other useful research discussions. The Network will also be opened up to other European researchers who express an interest in the topic.
2. Workshop delegates intend to setup webinar events over the next year. Different members of the 'Business Mobilities Network' will deliver seminars virtually, allowing discussions about conceptual ideas and methodological approaches to continue.
3. Applications are planned for two schemes to allow further networking and capacity development. An ESF Cost Action proposal is planned as well as an application for a Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme. Further investigations into the logistics of applying for these schemes are currently ongoing.

4. Final programme

Tuesday 7 June:

Session 1: Conceptual Issues

10:45 Welcome: the future of business mobilities
John Urry, Centre for Mobilities Research, Lancaster University

11:00 Introduction from ESF Rapporteur

11:15 Conceptualising business mobilities: the key challenges
James Faulconbridge, Lancaster University

11:45 New mobilities regimes. The social costs of mobile work:
Sven Kesslering, TUM Transportation Centre, Technische Universität München

12:15 Question & answer and extended discussion of issues raised in presentations

13:00 Lunch

Session 2: business mobilities and trade – chair Jon Beaverstock

14:00 '(Im)mobility and Proximity: some lenses to look at the future of Business Mobilities'.
Giuseppina Pellegrino, University of Calabria

14:30 Question & answer and extended discussion of issues raised in presentation

15:00 Virtual Meetings: from potential to action
Peter Arnfalk, Lund University

15:30 Question & answer and extended discussion of issues raised in presentation

16:00 Refreshment break

Session 3: business mobilities as community formation – chair Andrew Jones

16:30 Discussion of papers.

Three discussants will reflect on the issues raised for conceptualizations of business mobilities by three published papers. The rest of the group will then react to these reflections having read the papers before the workshop. Papers to discuss:

Haynes, P. 2010. Information and Communication Technology and International Business Travel: Mobility Allies? Mobilities 5 (4) 547 - 564. *Discussant: Lucy Budd, Loughborough University*

Kaufmann, V., Bergman, M. M. and Joye, D. 2004. Motility: mobility as capital. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 28 (4) 745-756. *Discussant: Per Gustafson, Institute for Housing and Urban Research, Uppsala University*

Miller, D. and Salt, J. (2008) 'Portfolios of mobility: the movement of expertise in transnational corporations in two sectors - aerospace and extractive industries', Global Networks 8 (1): 25-50. *Discussant: Tom Storme, Social & Economic Geography, Ghent University*

17:30 Commuting and settlement hierarchies: Mobile positioning based study in Estonia
Rein Ahas, University of Tartu

18:00 Question & answer and extended discussion of issues raised in presentation

18:30 Close & Evening Meal

Wednesday 8 June

Session 1: Methods For Studying Business Mobilities – chair James Faulconbridge

09:00 Video recording mobile uses 'on the move': some methodological and research concerns
Christian Licoppe, Ecole National Superior de Télecommuniations

09:30 Question & answer and extended discussion of issues raised in presentation

09:45 Group discussions: small groups will discuss the implications of two papers, read before the workshop, for conceptualizations of business mobilities. Papers to discuss:

- *Buscher M, Urry J (2009) Mobile Methods and the Empirical. European Journal of Social Theory 12 99 – 116*
- *Brown, B. and Laurier, E. (2005) Maps and Journeys: an Ethnomethodological Investigation, Cartographica 4(3) p.17-33*

10:15 Feedback from both groups and discussion of issues raised

10:45 Refreshment break

Session 2: Business Mobilities Research & Future Plans

11:00 Introduction to session: conceptual and methodological issues to be addressed
James Faulconbridge, Lancaster University

11:15 Small groups to develop conceptual questions to be addressed by their projects, identify empirical focus for analysis and develop methodological approach

12:30 Lunch with continued discussions about projects

13:00 Groups present projects to all workshop delegates; Feedback on project proposals and debate about issues raised

13:30 Future plans – developing the projects and the business mobilities network

15:00 Meeting closes

5. Final list of participants

Dr. James Faulconbridge, Geography, Lancaster Environment Centre

Prof. John Urry, Department of Sociology, Centre for Mobilities Research, Lancaster University

Dr. Lucy Budd, Civil and Building Engineering, Loughborough University

Prof. Jonathan Beaverstock, School of Geography, University of Nottingham

Dr Andrew Jones, Dept. of Geography, Environment & Development Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London,

Dr. Claus Lassen, Centre for Mobility and Urban Studies, Aalborg University

Dr. Antje Gimmler, Sociology, Aalborg University

Per Gustafson, Institute for Housing and Urban Research, Uppsala University

Prof. Christian Licoppe, Department of Social Science, Ecole National Superior de Télecommunications

Dr. Emilie-Pauline Gallié, Institut pour le Management de la Recherche et de l'Innovation, Dauphine Université Paris,

Prof. Frank Witlox, Social and Economic Geography, Ghent University

Tom Storme, Social and Economic Geography, Ghent University

Dr. Giuseppina Pellegrino, Political Sciences, University of Calabria

Dr. Sven Kesselring, TUM Transportation Centre, Technische Universität München

Prof. Rein Ahas, Department of Geography, University of Tartu

Dr. Jon Martin Denstadli, Institute of Transport Economics, Oslo,

Prof. Peter Arnfalk, International Institute for Industrial Economics, Lund University,

Prof. James Wickham, Trinity College Dublin

Dr. Malene Freudendal-Pedersen, Roskilde University

Prof. Barabra Lenz, Institute of Transport Research, Germany

6. Statistical information on participants

Age bracket: 4 young scientists (according to ESF definition)

Countries of origin: UK (5); Denmark (3); Sweden (2); Belgium (2); France (2); Germany (2); Italy (1); Norway (1); Estonia (1); Ireland (1)

Gender: Male = 14;
Female = 6 (2 women cancelled the day before the event creating this exaggerated gender unevenness)