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To cite this article: Noel Cass & James Faulconbridge (2017) Satisfying Everyday Mobility, *Mobilities*, 12:1, 97-115, DOI: [10.1080/17450101.2015.1096083](https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2015.1096083)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2015.1096083>



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Published online: 02 Nov 2015.



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Satisfying Everyday Mobility

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(Received 28 November 2014; final version received 28 August 2015)

ABSTRACT *This paper engages with theoretical insights into understanding everyday travel (from the mobility turn and theories of social practice) in an analysis of everyday mobility using data from ethnographic research. The analysis of mobile performances draws attention to how travellers incorporate valued dispersed practices into mobility. We argue that incorporating such contingent practices into travel generates affective satisfactions consistently sought across transport mode changes through the life-course. These findings complement existing abstract analyses of modal choice and are explored to draw out the implications for the attractiveness of different modes and the potential for broader transitions to lower carbon mobility.*

KEY WORDS: Mobility, Travel, Practice, Affect, Performance, Everyday, Life-course

Introduction

The ‘mobilities turn’ and the shift of focus to mobility as a social phenomenon in its own right (Cresswell 2010; Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006) has done much to qualify assumptions in traditional transport research about everyday mobility practices. In particular, it has developed our understandings of the ‘non-rational’ factors that play a role in shaping mobility patterns and practices, including embodied tactile and sensory experiences (Jones 2012; Strengers 2014), affectivities (Löfgren 2008; Sheller 2004), identities (Adey et al. 2012) and symbolic and cultural meanings (Cresswell 2010; Jensen 2009; Vannini 2010). We now recognise that mobility is far from purely functional. Rather, the experiential qualities and meanings generated through mobile performances embed mobility into a meaningful and satisfying life. This broader sense of mobility being affectively as well as effectively important and satisfying to travellers is crucial for understanding why people travel as they do (Anable and Gatersleben 2005).

In this paper we develop the mobility turn’s stress on the central importance of the experiential and affective meanings of mobility by examining data from interviews about everyday mobility and changes in it throughout the life course of our research participants. This allows us to do two things. First, we show that in addition to the

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‘non-rational’ and affective factors highlighted in existing mobilities research, which are often associated with the social and material-aesthetic experience of being mobile, affectivities relate to the way mobility allows other valued practices to be achieved. We illustrate this through analysis of how the practices of route-planning and navigation, listening to music, monitoring, and acquiring and using ‘the right equipment for the job’, are incorporated into mobility (i.e. performed whilst mobile) and contribute to making mobility meaningful and affective for those we studied. This finding is important as it stresses the need to think about how other circulating practices are drawn into mobile performances to make them not only effective and a valuable use of time (Jain and Lyons 2008) but also affectively satisfying and emotionally meaningful.

Second, we also show that at different times in the life course, when different modes of mobility are used, people seek to consistently incorporate the same valued practices and reproduce similar experiences of affectivity. For instance, route-planning and navigation appears for some of those we studied as an important generator of the affectivity of car driving but also other modes of transport. This insight is important because it suggests that as part of widespread efforts to understand how a transition to lower carbon mobility might come about (for a summary, see Banister 2008), it is crucial to understand how some of the valued affectivities of automobile can be reproduced over the life course in lower carbon modes, this dynamic potentially being something that can be tapped into by policy initiatives.

The rest of the paper proceeds in five sections. The first reviews the insights of theories of social practice and the affective and experiential focus of writings in the ‘mobility turn’ in order to frame our theoretical approach. We then outline our methods of data collection and the line of conceptual analysis taken in the paper. The empirical analysis follows in the section ‘Affective and Satisfying Mobility: the Role of Dispersed Practice Incorporation’, with the section after drawing out the dynamic nature of satisfactions which circulate between modes and practices through the life course. The paper concludes by considering the importance of affective satisfactions both for theory and for thinking about the potential for recruitment to lower carbon mobility practices.

The Experience and Affectivity of Mobility

Writings subsumed under the ‘mobility turn’ span numerous disciplines and approaches, but all share a broader ontological reframing of research to take account of connections, flows, networks and movements (Cresswell 2011). The movements that become the focus of analysis include those of information, goods, images and imaginaries and capital (Urry 2007). Despite the grand and totalising sweep of interests represented by this ontological shift, a significant proportion of writing on mobilities still focuses on the mobility of people – on how and why people travel as they do. Such studies represent a natural complement to transport research but reveal a number of aspects of travel that have been previously obscured. In particular, and contrary to ideas of disutility in transport research which assume travel time is a cost to be minimised, travel time has been shown to be valued for a variety of reasons (on this see Lyons and Urry 2005; Jain and Lyons 2008).

Recognising that travel time is valued has led to the switching of epistemological approaches from the objectifying eye of quantitative data collection and aggregation to the qualitative exploration of subjective experiences and meanings through

broadly culturalist and interpretive research and writing (Cresswell 2011; Vannini 2010). This approach has revealed that mobility has cultural, symbolic, discursive aspects, and also that it is a personal experience – being embodied and having sensual and emotional qualities.

The focus on personal experience mirrors to some extent social psychological approaches in transport research which have, for example, linked owning and using a car to ‘psychological factors such as mastery and self-esteem ... feelings of autonomy, protection, and prestige ... feelings of power, and status’ (Gatersleben and Uzzell 2007, 417–418). Mobilities writing has developed this further and shows how experiences and wider symbolic meanings are also partly linked to the identities of drivers (often as a hybrid entity: Dant 2004; Urry 2007), passengers (Adey et al. 2012; Laurier et al. 2008), or cyclists (Aldred 2012). Others have pointed to how affective-symbolic motivations are ‘generated by collective cultural patterns and ... emotional geographies’ (Sheller 2004, 223), whilst also being linked to the visceral – the embodied dispositions (Adey 2008; Thrift 2001, 2004) and socially generated affective experiences of being mobile (Bissell 2010; Löfgren 2008; Watts 2008).

As Jensen (2009, 152) notes, mobilities research has, then, revealed that ‘urban travel is not just about getting from point A to point B. It is about producing and reproducing the city and the self in a complex relationship involving mobility cultures and different types of mobility knowledge’. Taking such insights seriously is important given not only transport research’s partial recognition of affectivity, but also because of the way it can enhance other social science perspectives on mobility. A good example of this potential for enhancement relates to the growing significance of social theories of practice as a means of understanding mobility.

Theories of Practice and Mobilities Research

Social theories of practice (Reckwitz 2002; Røpke 2009; Schatzki 2011; Watson 2012) consider that practices, what people do, should be taken as the central unit of analysis in the social sciences (Giddens 1984; Schatzki 1996). A crucial distinction for this analytical approach and for this paper is that practices can be understood as being theoretical entities and/or empirical performances (Reckwitz 2002). The first are described and analysed in the abstract, as, for example, ‘cooking practices, voting practices, industrial practices, recreational practices, and correctional practices’ (Schatzki 1996, 89), whilst the second definition describes how empirical performances of e.g. cooking or recreation fit these abstract categories whilst also displaying degrees of contingency and variation (Reckwitz 2002). It is in the empirical performance of mobility practices that the mobility turn’s focus on affectivity becomes more significant.

When operating at an entity level, practice theory analyses the ‘elements’ making up a practice. Watson (2012, 14) identify three core categories of elements:

- ‘materials – including things, technologies, tangible physical entities, and the stuff of which objects are made’
- ‘competences – which encompasses skill, know-how and technique’; and
- ‘meanings – in which we include symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations’

These broadly map onto categorisations used by other authors (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005), which have been compared and contrasted elsewhere (Crivits and Paredis 2013; Gram-Hanssen 2009). Travel using different modes of transport is understood as a mobility practice entity in existing literatures: driving, cycling, walking, ‘bussing’ and ‘training’ requiring particular materials, meanings and competences (see for example Hui 2012; Shove, Pantzar, and Watson 2012). Questions thus focus upon what leads to recruitment to these practice entities (Shove and Pantzar 2007), with the availability of, and capture by, the three elements outlined above being the focus of discussions.

Analysis at the level of practice entities is useful in so far as it allows high-level societal trends to be analysed and explained. In the context of mobility, it has contributed to explanations of the structural dominance of the car because of a particular assemblage of materials, competences and meanings which have co-evolved with the socio-technical systems and the physical organisation of space and time in late modernity, and which have led to declining use of other modes such as walking and cycling (Urry 2004; Watson 2012). However, entity-level analysis is less helpful in explaining the ‘multitude of single and often unique actions’ (Reckwitz 2002, 249–250) witnessed when empirically studying everyday mobility, and the implications of these for recruitment. Existing practice theory literature acknowledges that a focus on performances of a practice is an important part of explaining practice change. Performances are active moments ‘of doing, when the elements of a practice come together’, and are also ‘moments when such elements are potentially reconfigured (or reconfigure each other) in ways that subtly, but sometimes significantly change all subsequent formulations’ (Watson 2012, 13). This means that practices as *entities* change through shifts in *performances*, through ‘adaptation, improvisation or experimentation’ (Warde 2005, 141; see also Schatzki 2013; Kuijer 2014) with a role for ‘emotion, embodiment and desire’ (Warde 2005, 136) in this change process. Nonetheless, despite such recognition, as Kent (2014, 5–6) notes:

the individual doing the practice is subtly neglected by practice theorists ... the emotional and sensory components of practices are as yet underexplored sites of fixity, despite the possibility that these feelings sustain deeply entrenched ways of doing and being in modern life, including automobility.

The ability of practice-based approaches to identify the equal power of structure and agency in social action (Giddens 1984) thus necessitates greater attention to the agent pole of the practice dualism, and how embodied affective qualities of performances can structure and be structured by practice entities (Thrift 2001). As Kent (2014, 6) suggests, affective qualities of mobility are both individual and cultural, and as important in explanations of travel practice as more structuralist explanations of dominant socio-technical mobility systems. Watson (2012, 490), explains the variety of often unique individual performances of a practice as ‘practitioners do[ing] the active work of integrating the elements of the practice into a contingently effective configuration, in the process of doing’. Performances, then, according to Watson bring together practice elements in ways that are effective and satisfying for the performer.

Here we offer a subtly different view of the production of affectivity in performance. Important to our analysis is Schatzki’s (1996) distinction between dispersed and integrative practices. Dispersed practices are micro-activities, commonplace and

spread ‘among different sectors of social life’ (91), which may be performed without context, and whose meaning, role, function and affective charge may be transformed when incorporated into differing practices. Schatzki (1996, 99) points out that ‘questioning’ is a dispersed practice that may be transformed by context, through its incorporation in penal, legal or religious practices – to become ‘interrogation’, ‘cross examination’ or ‘call-and response’. Practice entities thus incorporate and transform any number of dispersed practices, and add what Schatzki calls ‘teleo-affective structure’ – including appropriate ‘constituent beliefs, actions, emotions and moods ... ends, purposes projects, and tasks’. This creates what Schatzki (1996, 98) calls *integrative* practices ‘found in and constitutive of particular domains of social life’, such as farming, business or courtship practices. In the analysis that follows we adopt a similar distinction in looking at mobile *performances* as ‘single and often unique actions reproducing the [integrative] practices’ (Reckwitz 2002, 250) relating to certain ends (getting to work, shopping, leisure etc.). In doing so we consider how these performances incorporate other dispersed practices (monitoring, listening to music, navigating, acquiring and using ‘the right equipment for the job’) into a contingently effective and affective configuration of elements.

To illustrate our analytical strategy, consider one example. Monitoring is a practice dispersed across many fields of activity, but when it is applied to maintaining fuel efficiency on a motorway journey or to tracing a heartbeat on a leisure run its meaning, purpose and affective charge is transformed by its incorporation in a larger, integrative practice. It is in this sense that we describe monitoring, listening to music, acquiring and using appropriate equipment, and two forms of navigation as dispersed practices incorporated into performances of the broader integrative practices of getting to work, visiting family, weekly shopping and so forth. We show how this incorporation is central to the affective satisfactions gained from mobility, and through life-history analysis reveal how satisfactions generated through incorporation can transfer between different modes of transport in a dynamic manner through the life course. This suggests the role of dispersed practices needs to be better considered in work that uses practice theory to understand mobility, and in work that considers the implications of affectivity for modal shift policies.

Methods

Our data are drawn from semi-structured interviews completed over a period of two years with individuals and households in the cities of Lancaster and Brighton, UK. The interviews were conducted with 53 individuals from ages 7 to 70 in 39 households, with each participant providing 2–4 individual or shared interviews over the study period. Extra data were collected in the form of photos, video, scrapbooks, diaries, blogs and spreadsheets. Our approach might, therefore, be seen as similar to the quantitative longitudinal methods of panel studies (in which similar questions are asked of participants over the course of the study period) and retrospective surveys of past travel (Stopher and Stecher, 2006). However the initial interview with each participant was more specifically focussed on a retrospective narrative interview (as also used by Schwanen et al. 2012), focussing on travel routines over the life course, which enabled the exploration of a ‘mobility biography’ in ways similar to Zhang et al. (2014). We were, however, more broad and inclusive than Zhang and colleagues who focused on car ownership alone, and on statistical correlation rather than qualitative interpretation. Our interest was in the changing routine use, in

different phases of life and circumstances, of different modes of transport for different activities.

The material was thematically and content coded using NVivo qualitative analysis software. Code themes derived from a theoretical framework were supplemented with themes identified inductively. The data we cite are from the interviews unless stated otherwise, and the research participants are referred to by pseudonyms throughout. We have added emphasis at times to highlight comments particularly relevant to our analysis. The specific quotations used here were identified through querying the database to identify sections coded under combinations of relevant thematic codes, for example ‘mobility emotions’ along with codes such as ‘speed’, ‘materialities’ or ‘multiple practices’.

In what follows, we begin by identifying in our data examples of dispersed practices that were incorporated into mobility and that helped produce affectively satisfying mobility performances. We use the word ‘satisfaction’ to capture how the motivation associated with mobility performances is not necessarily of a high emotional register, or associated with functional achievement, but involves a ‘teleo-affective’ (purposeful and meaningful) structuring of practice routines (Schatzki 1996) that leaves individuals fulfilled. This is different to forms of effectiveness associated with the ‘productive utility’ of travel time (Jain and Lyons 2008) in that it emerges when an individual feels they have achieved something they emotionally value as part of the performance of mobility. A ‘circuit of satisfaction’ then develops and cements mobility practices (Watson 2012, 75), although as we show, this fixity is only for certain periods of the lives of those we studied.

Full analysis of the many different practices that might be incorporated into mobility performances to achieve satisfaction (e.g. working on the train, socialising on the bus which are not covered here) is not possible in the space available in this paper – we have also focused on affect rather than merely effectively using travel time in a ‘utility’ model (Jain and Lyons 2008). We also acknowledge that the variety of other practices that can be incorporated might be variously described as being ‘bundled’ with mobility (Watson 2012, 84–86) rather than incorporated with it. In focussing on the affectivity and satisfaction generated by integrating dispersed practices into mobility, we also necessarily write out other parts of the story. The nature of the effective and contingent restrictions on the use of modes (for set activities) that are part of the story of change over the life course are not analysed here in depth. They are the subject of other research focussing on socio-spatial factors that create constraints on mobility (Rodriguez and Joo 2004; Schwanen and Mokhtarian 2005). While analytically possible, we also do not analyse the practices performed whilst mobile as entities in themselves using a practice theoretical lens, given that our concern is not with the make-up of these practices but with the way their incorporation with mobility generates affective experiences of mobility and satisfaction. Instead, using our limited examples we analyse only the hereto underexplored role of: (a) the relationship between incorporation and the generation of satisfactions; and (b) how the circulation of these satisfactions between mobility modes occurs through the life-course of individual participants. This analytical approach can be applied by others to the many other dispersed practices that are incorporated with mobility to generate satisfaction, and is an important consideration in addition to those other dimensions we do not examine, thus allowing the paper to offer a unique perspective on affective mobilities.

Affective and Satisfying Mobility: The Role of Dispersed Practice Incorporation

Monitoring

Almost any process that produces a measurable output can be monitored, and monitoring has been noted as increasingly incorporated into a range of practices, from the gym to mobility (Watson 2012) with these authors focusing on its function as a ‘circuit of reproduction’: i.e. affecting the development of both performances and practice entities over time (99–105). Monitoring in this interpretation involves benchmarking one’s own performances against others’ or one’s own earlier performances. In our data monitoring plays a similar functional role for performances, but we focus on how it conferred satisfaction and affective meaning to travel, with different metrics being used (speed, fuel efficiency), and different satisfactions resulting (thrill, self-challenge). Illustrating this, Andrew incorporated monitoring into a range of modes of his mobility in ways that explicitly provided affective satisfaction:

my fastest commute time so far – 29 min ... morning’s ride has put me into 3rd place on the leader table!!! ... My average speed was 13.9mph!! Most impressed ... I go ‘wow look I’ve knocked a minute that is really satisfying’ ... this new bike a month ago was great because straight away that was five minutes off my time ... I guess I’m just racing my physical self ... I was driving carefully, keeping the car in a high gear and was very satisfied to see the average MPG creeping up ... on a Thursday and Friday we finish round about the same time. So if I can get home before she does on a Thursday and Friday that’s really good ... She’s in a car, I’m on a bike. (blog)

These examples of Andrew’s monitoring of speed against personal bests, leader boards or performances shared through GPS applications and websites, act to encourage not just ‘better’ but also more satisfying performances. Fuel efficiency was a metric used in a similar fashion by Pete. Interviews with Pete revealed that this satisfaction of self-challenge replaced the affective thrill provided by speed (as he put it, ‘you know, as fast as I can on the motorway’) in earlier life:

And fuel economy is another aspect as well. I [...] had an eco diesel car from the car rental place and I’ve been like ‘right, how high can I get my fuel economy for this journey?’ [...] because it’s shown on the dashboard [...] I look at it as a challenge almost [...] it’s a different aspect. Driving is much more relaxing the slower you go [...] when I am driving these days I just don’t speed at all, that desire to go fast has left me at some point.

Interestingly, Pete’s satisfaction derived from monitoring did not extend to ‘competitive’ monitoring of performances in the same way as it appears to function for Andrew. Pete explicitly rejected the comparison of performances using GPS-based apps, instead relating their use to route-planning navigation (see later) and focussing on satisfaction gained from simply being able to monitor the routes taken:

we bought a GPS unit before smart phones existed, a little yellow thing and I got great pleasure out of that, tracking the routes and downloading the maps and [...] then smart phones and GPS became ubiquitous [...] I don’t know there’s an aspect, there’s a technical aspect of being able to do it which I got a

great enjoyment of and then there was the fun of sharing it, which ... 'look what I did!'. And now I think well when I see other people's map-my-rides or whatever I'm like 'I don't care how hard you've worked'. So I kind of don't share mine anymore because [...] I feel it's showing off a little maybe.

Monitoring in this sense was to do with pre-planning and self-challenge rather than competition, satisfaction being generated from what was achieved through this act of monitoring in the course of performance:

A few weeks ago on the Cumbria Way [...] we weren't using a GPS but we were keeping a track of our time and distance just to get an idea of our pace and when there'd be a particular coffee shop or something because that's the motivator. And then the satisfaction out of outstripping your predictions and getting there quicker.

Having the Right Equipment for the Job

Our data also show that the dispersed practice of researching, acquiring and deploying 'the right equipment for the job' can be incorporated into multiple life practices (e.g. commuting, leisure walking, visiting family). For instance, for Pete sourcing gear for walking and cycling for leisure is integral to ensuring satisfaction is gained when performing mobility:

I like to buy technical equipment for the activities I undertake [...] that's part of the fun of these things, is buying the gear. I like to research things [...] the enjoyment is enhanced through having the right equipment definitely.

In this case, then, satisfaction relates to how this dispersed practice precedes and is incorporated into, or expressed through, mobility performances. Similarly in the following quote Andrew was satisfied by his ability to use 'the right equipment' to handle the weather as one of the inevitable challenges of cycling:

it was only a two and a half mile bike ride I kind of reasoned well *it doesn't matter* if it's pouring with rain because it only takes me 10–15 min, it's not long enough to get thoroughly soaked so long as I've got my waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers on. (Andrew)

Relatedly, Ruth reveals that multiple slings and carriers as well as an all-terrain buggy and a guide book were carefully researched and pre-emptively bought before the birth of their child to ensure 'the right equipment for the job' was available for multiple mobile leisure activities with a child. Achieving a long walk thanks to 'having the right equipment' then became satisfying:

it was the first baby thing we bought actually [... so] I could put her on my back for the hiking and things ... you know those big kind of sit mobility scooters? A trumper is like an off road version. So [...] there's trumper trails and [...] my theory was if they're suitable for an off road wheelchair they'll be suitable for an off road pushchair [...] it meant I could get a five mile walk in

with the pushchair. Whereas a lot of pushchair friendly walks are like one or two miles. I want to go out and I want to walk five, six miles. (Ruth)

Similar thought went into buying a baby car-seat that could fit most cars (including hire-cars), and a bus-friendly pushchair. Likewise, as Pete and Ruth do not own a car, hiring ‘the right vehicle for the job’ was an integral part of being satisfied when driving, e.g. having a van for moving furniture or a comfortable cruiser for a long-distance family visit, meaning that: ‘that was the main thing in the back of my mind that said ok this is ok for us [...] not having a vehicle [...] We could have the perfect vehicle for the situation in hand when we needed it’ (Pete). In all of these examples, the affective satisfaction from the performance of mobility comes, then, from Pete, Ruth, and Andrew integrating the prior dispersed practice of preparation – involving selecting and acquiring the ‘right equipment’ – into their pursuit of larger, mobile practices (visiting family, getting to work etc.). It is clear from these examples that their acquisition and deployment is something of a dispersed practice across numerous fields, and not a competency of the mobility practice entity, in that it may also be applied, for example, to doing DIY around the house, this giving it the spread ‘among different sectors of social life’ that Schatzki (1996, 91) suggests defines dispersed practices.

Listening to Music

Listening to music is a dispersed practice that can be incorporated with multiple life practices (work, travel, relaxation, housework etc.). We found it incorporated into mobility in subtly different ways. It was incorporated with driving often not specifically as a generator of positive affect but more as a strategy to manage negative emotions of frustration linked to traffic, or to create personal space:

the frustration of not moving in a vehicle I think will definitely irritate [...] I’m hoping I’ll just put some music on or put the radio on [...] and not let it wind me up. (Christoph)

with Lancaster traffic, at least if you’re driving yourself although you’re stuck in the traffic you’ve got your own music on. (Helena)

In your car you’re not exposed to things you don’t want to be exposed to. You can have it at the temperature you want, you can close the windows, open the windows, listen to music, whatever. (Mabel)

I try hard not to let it get me too sort of fraught [...] I’m probably more pragmatic about these things now than I was when I was younger. I’ve got the radio on. (Adrienne)

The latter case of using the radio is particularly popular with older participants, especially if talk can provide a ‘background’ that is not necessarily actively listened to, or is a distraction from thought:

I nearly always listen to the Today programme on Radio 4 as I drive in [...] I say listen – sometimes it is more a case of tuning my brain in and out of the talk. (Jenny blog)

[My commute is] usually on automatic, listen to the radio and just go round. (Abigail)

I'm not quite so good in a car and solving problems on the way to work, much better when I'm walking or cycling [...] there's a few times recently I went no, no I want think time and turned the radio off [...] because I've got a new car and it's like the sound almost, it seems the radio comes on automatically all the time. (Niamh)

Of course, in these instances of the strategic use of automobile music, it seems linked to automobile meanings of choice and freedom. This can conflict with other's choice and freedom when sharing a car (as in the next quote) or on public transport.

I'm not so keen on some of the drivers. I get very hot, so I don't like sitting in somebody's car with the heater on and the radio blaring and that sort of thing. (Katherine)

I keep hearing these people with that noise coming out of their so-called personal hi-fi's, stereos then, ear muffs and so on, it is irritating, sometimes extremely irritating. But I can sometimes drown it out by taking an MP3 player with me and playing my own music [...] I often play MP3 music when I'm travelling by train. (Thomas)

In the examples above, then, satisfaction is gained more from what listening to music mitigates; i.e. without the incorporation of music mobility would be deeply unsatisfying, whilst when incorporated music ensures mobility is tolerable or even enjoyable. However, these strategic or defensive examples are counter-balanced by some participants who explicitly state that (actively) listening to music is a positively pursued practice in their wider life and deliberately incorporated into mobility. In the case of Emmeline, she defined her primary interest in life as music, and clearly linked the positive enjoyment she got from actively listening to walking and travel by train:

I'm particularly interested in music [...] I like to listen to music all the time. That's all I can say about myself probably [...] If it's possible I'll walk. It's cheap, free, and I just always have really [...] I like to walk places and listen to music while I'm doing it, and then if walking's not possible I'll [...] get the bus or train [...] on the train] I like the excuse to sit and listen to music for two hours [...] however] that one's also an older train so it's very loud. It's a bit annoying when you're trying to listen to music. (Emmeline)

Similarly Pete describes listening to (and sharing) music as an active pursuit incorporated into car-sharing commutes. We use Pete's music listening further as a case of a circulating satisfaction below:

it was time that I could listen to music [...] so it was usually an enjoyable experience [...] we would use it as a chance to share music that we'd found or we liked and the other person should like but doesn't necessarily [...] part of my recreational enjoyment of driving even on the commute was listening to music. (Pete)

Route-Planning and (Active) Navigation

The cases of listening to music, monitoring and equipment preparation/deployment show, then, how mobility becomes meaningful partly through the incorporation of dispersed practices into travel and the generation of feelings of satisfaction. Our fourth example, route-planning and active navigation is of course relevant to various mobility practices, given the frequent need to navigate whilst mobile. This relevance to multiple mobility practices leads us to suggest that it can be considered a dispersed practice rather than as a competency of, e.g. driving. However, it is also particular to mobility practices in a way that e.g. monitoring is not, and we accept that route-planning and navigation as dispersed practices have a distinctively mobility-specific flavour, this not however undermining our wider argument.

Different navigation materials (maps, GPS, smartphones and online route-planners) are represented in our data, with a story recurring of satisfaction being gained through incorporating route-planning or navigation into mobility not simply because of a functional need to navigate whilst on the move. For instance, Clara abandoned car ownership and replaced previous multi-modal commuting with a walking commute. She talked about the process through which establishing walking routes was accomplished as an exercise in dynamic navigation using maps on a smartphone:

I've relied on Google maps for 2.5 years [...] on nearly any journey I take I unfailingly whip out my phone to see the quickest route, or remind me of where to cross [...] Google's brilliance is getting me around in unfamiliar areas [...] I followed Google maps to get me to [work ...] getting there from the station is a complete doddle. But there's no harm in Google maps-ing it [...] I reckon. (blog)

I hadn't realised I did it until I went with a friend [...] I just guess that I started to [...] just sort of get a sense for [...] just through doing it a lot, [...] how to, how to [...] do it in a quicker time and [...] more efficiently [...] I just know where I'm going, I don't have to keep referring to my phone and with maps which plays a good part I know?.

Active navigation en route was preferred by Clara due to a dislike of pre-planned navigation, probably due to lack of competency ('I've got such no sense of direction [...] it didn't make sense to me [...] I couldn't like picture that in my head before I did it [...] I think if I was ever in a foreign country or something and didn't have my phone I'd be, I'd just be completely lost. I can't do that'). Hence, on one hand, the affective satisfaction sought was primarily the avoidance of getting lost and the negative affect created by not being able to follow directions. But, on the other hand, elsewhere in our data Clara also makes mention of enjoyment of the act of navigating on the go:

what I quite like about walking around Brighton now is that I'll go through a street and then come out somewhere and go like 'oh, yeah, no this makes sense that this comes out here' [...] and once you do it, [...] it's more about memory than having to look up [...] but I can't do it in directions.

The ability to gain satisfaction from (technologically mediated) active navigation was thus an important part of what allowed a transition to an active mode of commuting for Clara. Niamh provides further evidence of such transferring of navigation-related satisfactions – this time derived from map-based navigation and pre-planning. In her case, this satisfaction was achieved at different stages in the life course as part of different forms of mobility. She explained that she was confident in independent route-planning on public transport across the country from a young age:

I was about 15 [...] I was quite happy on public transport on my own [...] I think cos I liked looking at maps and like examining things [...] So once I'd been out somewhere, and even now, if it's somewhere new I'll go to the map afterwards and look.

This confidence then transferred to cycling and walking at different life stages as mobility needs and options changed:

When I used to be 16 or 18 year old, I'd go out walking and pick a new way to go [...] Completely by myself [...] in my first year [of university] I really missed not having a bike [...] when my dad brought me to university, [...] the first thing he had to do was buy me a map book cos I wasn't doing anything without a map book [...] I like studying things to work things out rather than just walk to see what happens

Although Niamh now drives for commuting, shopping and most mobility, the affective appeal of map-based navigation has re-surfaced within an interest in walking-based geo-caching for leisure,¹ linked to meanings of exploration and escape:

sometimes you feel a bit enclosed by Lancaster and we think we've got to get out [...] let's go to somewhere else [...] so we quite often go geo-caching because it's a good excuse to go for a walk [...] I saw there was a few geo-caches in the Heysham area, [...] I'd looked on the map and I saw there was a route where [...] there was a geo-cache [...] one a lot further and then one coming back.

Pete tells of similar satisfactions linked to pre-planning associated with leisure trips in his youth, first by bicycle and then replaced completely by car:

we had a big fold-out map of Milton Keynes with all the cycle ways mapped on and it would be a navigation exercise. [...] it was a case of "can I plan this route through the Red Ways? Yes I can", and committing that route to memory and executing it [...] The car would be the same and my weekend cycle excursions changed to weekend car excursions with my friends, the seaside or theme park or, the sort of things that 17 year olds do in their cars at the weekends.

Interviewer: It sounds like you were quite into that kind of map and ... Yes very much so. I enjoy navigation

This sense of achieving a self-set challenge, involving multiple skills, was crucial to Pete gaining satisfaction from the different modes, and later in his life story dynamic responses to re-routing also allowed satisfaction during long commutes and business trips by car, this being bound up with the identity of being a proficient mobile subject:

you'd spend the day [...] driving. To this day I've got good mental knowledge of the UK road network which is why I've never really used a sat-nav to get anywhere [...] I just had an AA road atlas and my wits about me [...] It was definitely an identity thing because [...] I probably enjoyed it quite a lot, the problem solving aspect of it [...] So I didn't want a sat-nav, I took pride in not needing one, definitely.

The references to pride and enjoyment show that the challenge, accomplishment or 'problem-solving aspect' of route-planning and navigation was for Pete central to the affective experience generated. In a later car-free period of life, leisure walking and to a lesser extent cycling allowed the satisfactions gained from planning and navigation to be reproduced, whereas for longer trips by public transport, Pete specifies that the affective qualities disappeared and made the mode unattractive, this being due to the lack of route-planning and navigation required:

just checking the train times and working out your journey plan [...] keeping the cost to an absolute minimum [...] I'm not dealing with maps any more. It's not a free problem that I'm able to solve in my own way, [...] that's not the same type of exercise at all. I don't enjoy trying to find the cheapest train ticket [...] rather than the dynamic route planning or the memory aspect of remembering your road numbers and intersections.

Having recently bought a family car after the birth of their child, Pete now drives again (although less often than before). However, he still associates active navigation with satisfaction, finding automobility unsatisfying when it is removed:

I enjoy navigation and, well, when I do drive now with my wife navigating it's frustrating sometimes because you always have this idea of what you would be doing in that situation and how you'd be tackling the problem, [...] this re-routing, it's just a problem solving situation.

Circulating Satisfactions

Route-planning and navigation, monitoring, listening to music, and having the right equipment for the job, when incorporated into mobility can, then, be an important source of satisfaction for the participants whose stories we tell above. This is not to suggest that everyone gains satisfaction from these aspects of mobility. Rather, this exemplifies our wider argument that incorporating dispersed practices into mobility performances is fundamental to the generation of affectivity. Other dispersed

practices that might be incorporated include working, browsing the internet or reading. Our analysis is, therefore, significant as it draws attention to an affective dimension of mobility not captured by previous studies. We show that satisfaction gained from such incorporations is a core part of what recruits people to being mobile in particular ways.

In addition, our life history interviews identified that different modes of mobility are used for travel at different stages in the life course. On its own this is not especially remarkable. However, importantly, we also see in our data attempts to consistently reproduce similar satisfactions from mobility when different modes are adopted. There are, then, ‘circulating satisfactions’ that become attached to different modes at different times. To illustrate this further, we use here the ‘mobility biography’ of Pete, constructed from our ‘life history’ interviews. Table 1 illustrates six stages in Pete’s life course, and the modes of mobility used for two key activities. The table describes how at different stages, these activities were achieved using different modes of mobility, switching variously between bus, bicycle, car and walking. As these switches occurred, satisfactions circulated between modes, as the dispersed practices we have discussed above were incorporated. For example, the satisfaction gained from dynamic navigation whilst walking in childhood is reproduced by integrating dynamic navigation into driving and cycling later in the life course. Meanwhile, the satisfaction gained from incorporating listening to music into driving to work is reproduced by incorporating listening to music into bussing and walking to work at later stages in the life course.

Pete’s ‘mobility biography’ shows, then, how satisfaction generated from dispersed practice can be incorporated into different modes of travel at different times. Illustrating this, Pete referred directly to the pleasure he got from solo and shared car-commutes and listening to (loud) music as a valued experience which temporarily disappeared when travelling with his wife by car:

Table 1. Pete’s mobility biography derived from the data, detailing two activities and the mode used at different stages in the life course and the incorporation of DISPERSED PRACTICES to gain satisfactions that circulate between modes.

Phase of life/activity practice	School run/commute	Recreation and leisure
Childhood	Walk: dynamic navigation	
Sixth form and youth	Bike: route-planning	Bike then car: route-planning, dynamic navigation
Early working adulthood	Car: route-planning, dynamic navigation, listening to music	Walking: route-planning, dynamic navigation, monitoring car: listening to music
Settling in Lancaster – abandoning car ownership	Bike: route-planning	Walking: route-planning, dynamic navigation, monitoring, right equipment for the job
Cohabiting and car-free	Bus: listening to music [when not commuting with partner]	Walking and bike: route-planning, dynamic navigation, monitoring, right equipment for the job car hire (for long trips): right equipment for the job
Cohabiting with baby; car ownership	Bus, walking: listening to music	Walking: route-planning, right equipment for the job

car time was [...] me time [...] I could listen to music that I used to listen to a lot of when I drive and don't listen to as much of at all now I don't [...] Whenever I'm driving now it's almost certainly with Ruth, [...] I think she would be put out if I listened to music loudly [...] And so the music aspect of the long drives has gone [...] from being a teenager who loved driving and loving driving when I was working, it feels like a chore now again [...] music while driving is important to me.

Given its disappearance from driving, this valued incorporation later reappeared as part of commuting by bus or on foot. Thus an element of driving that provided great affective reinforcement or attachment to the mode was reanimated in a newly 'contingently effective configuration' (Watson 2012) which led to commuting by 'alternative' modes being equally satisfying:

my commute generally involves listening to music whether I'm walking or on the bus. That's nice because [...] we talked about me not getting to listen to music last time. And so I'm enjoying that [...] It makes the walking much more pleasurable and much more likely.

This dynamic aspect of circulating satisfactions reflects changing priorities and social relations in individual lives, but also how the desire for affective mobility as part of meaningful everyday practice (Jensen 2009) plays a role in modal shift.

Our analysis illuminates and empirically grounds, then, practice theoretical discussions of both people's careers in practices, and also the changing trajectories of practices themselves (Shove and Pantzar 2007; Watson 2012, 121–122). In particular, in relation to the former it reveals how an important element of the 'contingently effective configurations' that Watson (2012, 490) discusses is the incorporation at a moment in the life course of dispersed practices that generate satisfaction. When these dispersed practices circulate and are shared across mobility modes, they help produce careers in different mobility practices because of the way they generate satisfaction that recruits an individual to a mode. For example, for Pete an instance of this is the shift between car, bus and walking commuting, this being in part supported by the satisfaction gained from the circulation of the dispersed practice of listening to music between the modes. This reflects in part the findings of Maller and Strengers (2013) who highlight the importance of 'practice memory' and the way practices and their elements circulate between generations and places, in the process being dis- and re-integrated into performances. Here we show that such 'memory' can lead to dispersed practices being incorporated into different mobility modes over the life course, yet with similar satisfactions being achieved.

Our analysis also highlights that technological innovations are important to the circulation of satisfactions and the trajectories of practices. For example, whereas driving once recruited through its link with the radio and the material affordance this provided for listening to music, now joggers, cyclists and public transport users can all incorporate listening to music thanks to the affordances of MP3 players, mobile phones etc. Much the same could be said about navigation and monitoring using GPS and its integration into sat-navs, mobile phones and other devices. This allows these dispersed practices to be incorporated into a wide array of activities. Thus, not only practice 'memory' matters in people's careers in practice; material affordances evolve and allow dispersed practices to have their own dynamic trajectories. This

enables satisfactions to circulate between different practices through the life course, as those emotional points of fixity from which a satisfying life can be hung (Kent 2014).

Conclusions

Through an in-depth life-history approach, this paper makes two contributions to understandings of mobility. First, the paper develops work which focuses on the affective experience of mobility (Adey 2008; Bissell 2010; Jones 2012; Löfgren 2008; Thrift 2001, 2004; Watts 2008). It does this by rethinking existing ideas in the literature about the value of travel time which focus on the way mobility can be effective because of time being utilised to complete other practices, such as reading, internet browsing or game-playing on smart phones etc. (Jain and Lyons 2008). It shows that the affective satisfaction gained from incorporating such dispersed practices into mobile performances can be equally significant. This is important as it reveals a means by which mobility cultures (Jensen 2009) are produced and meaningful performances of mobility emerge. We have also shown that dispersed practices that help produce satisfaction circulate through the life course. Our findings reveal attempts to reproduce valued satisfactions when modes of mobility change, indicating that satisfactions can be powerful influences on recruitment to different mobility practices over time.

Secondly, by highlighting the importance of satisfaction in mobility performances, the paper reveals that approaches to studying mobility which focus on questions of why some modes are more dominant than others, such as those developed by social practice theorists (Shove, Pantzar, and Watson 2012), need to be equally sensitive to mobility as a systemic phenomenon, as practice theory does by treating it as a practice entity, and as performance (Kent 2014). Whilst satisfaction and the different ways it emerges is apparently not essential to mobility practices when understood at the meso-scale, taking solely an 'overview' (Schatzki 2011) of how and why mobility is practised through practice entity analysis misses crucial affective dimensions and risks foregrounding aspects considered essential to e.g. driving or cycling in aggregate or in general, to the detriment of identifying those aspects considered to be vital by the empirical performers of heterogeneous mobility practices. From the perspective of practice 'carriers' (Reckwitz 2002), such aspects while not essential to using a mode of transport seem to be key to its appeal for certain activities. Our analysis shows, then, that 'contingently effective configurations' (Watson 2012, 490) of mobility performances are those which involve both the presence of the core elements of a practice entity, but also important affectivities that attract and recruit individuals in performance.

We develop such ideas here by highlighting how, in the context of agendas within practice theory (Spurling et al. 2013; Watson 2012) and mobilities more broadly (Banister 2008; Urry 2012) to prioritise questions of low-carbon travel, the affective dimensions of empirical performance are essential to anticipating how non-car modes might hope to attract and/or retain recruits. Attention to the ways in which different dispersed practices are incorporated into the modes of mobility for specific activities is important for considering, for instance, how policies might target modal shift, through 'substituting practices' (Spurling et al. 2013; Spurling 2014). For those we studied this relates to how, throughout the life course, switches from and to bus, cycle and walking mobility were aided by the ability to reproduce satisfactions in

another mode. The circulations and incorporations we highlight figure, then, as key reasons for recruitment, commitment, and reproduction as ‘self-propelling circuits of satisfaction’ (Watson 2012, 75) that are critical to understanding how and why, for example car driving persists, but also how other lower-carbon mobility might be rejuvenated in individuals’ everyday lives. Theoretically we have shown that this can be conceived of as a part of peoples’ careers in practices, and the trajectories of practices themselves; the incorporation of dispersed practices playing a significant role in these dynamics.

In sum, this paper suggests that both affective satisfactions, and the circulation of them between modes, are important in explaining why mobility is meaningful, but also how the use of modes of mobility might be changed. Such influences, therefore, warrant further attention in policy initiatives, as the capacity for flexi-mobility or ‘altermobility’ (Ravalet 2012; Vincent 2009) is seemingly in part tied to affective experiences and their reproduction across modes. However, to understand such influences more situated and ethnographic study is needed with the kinds of longitudinal scope developed in the research reported here. This would allow further analysis of circulating satisfactions, careers and trajectories of practice throughout the life course.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Research Councils UK Energy Programme, Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council [Award No EP/J00460X/1] as part of the project *Disruption: the raw material for low carbon change*. Details of the dataset upon which this article is based can be found at <http://dx.doi.org/10.17635/lancaster/researchdata/24>.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no financial interest arising from the work.

Funding

This work was supported by the Research Councils UK Energy Programme, Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council [Award No EP/J00460X/1].

Note

1. Geo-caching involves using a combination of GPS and traditional map materials to locate and ‘collect’ caches (usually a waterproof box containing a notebook and small items) to combine a treasure hunt, orienteering, GPS and traditional leisure walks.

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