Watching, talking, writing diaries and counting: exploring technologies and travel

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Overview

• Two examples of research
  – Travel time use in the information age
    • www.traveltimeuse.org
  – ICTs and everyday mobility
    • www.ideasintransit.org

• Methods focusing on
  – Mobile ethnography
  – Diary-interview

• Practicalities & challenges

• Analysis issues
Travel Time Use in the Information Age

• see www.traveltimeuse.org

• Aims
  – Understand how travel time is used
  – Effect on transport appraisal, hypermobility, travel spaces

• Methods
  – Survey questions (National Rail Passenger Survey)
  – Focus groups (M/F, Bristol, London, Cumbria)
  – ‘Mobile ethnographies’
Counting

- **Key results from NRPS**
  - About 26,000 responses
  - Specific journey
  - what people do & what people carry
  - But not how or when
What’s ‘mobile ethnography’?

• Observing
  – Practices (how people do things)
  – Talk (words, turn taking, power, emotion)
  – Texture /multi-sensory (the setting/environment)
  – Technology/objects (interaction with practices)

• Overt/covert

• Transport ‘space’ or specific people
Inspirations for ‘mobile ethnography’

- **Chris Philo and Eric Laurier**
  - Research into mobile workers (see various papers by Eric Laurier)
  - Eric travelled with sales staff in their car around the UK looking at how they organised their time and space and the role played by different ‘technologies’

- **Nina Wakeford and Kat Jungnickle**
  - [www.73urbanjourneys.com](http://www.73urbanjourneys.com)
  - Ethnographic research on no 73 routemaster bus in London with associated web-blogs etc.

- **Tim Edensor**
  - Autobiographic account of driving on the M6
What did we do?

• Participant observation
  – Travelled on buses, trains and coach (with operator permission)
  – Covertly observed passengers,
    • the things they carried and used
    • the way they used space
    • interaction with staff or other passengers
  – Talked to people where appropriate
  – Noted sensory factors & travel environment
  – Took photos/video clips
What did we do?

• Shadowing
  – Interviewed ‘volunteers’ about a specific journey before and after
  – Followed volunteer on the journey and made similar observations to above
  – Took photos/video clips if volunteer agreed
We wait at the Broadmead shopping centre bus stop. People queue others loiter against the shop windows. A white young male reads a magazine, another smokes. Headphones, mobiles, couple chatting, text messaging. Everyone looking towards the direction of a potential bus.

17:15 Packed. Squeeze into last two spaces on back seat. Slow bumpy ride through the Broadmead, partly because of speed humps. Cindy and Kevin sit in front of us on the left of the bus. She is playing a game on her mobile phone.
GNER Mallard

With wireless internet

See the back of Livewire magazine for instructions
Practicalities

• Access and permission
  – Some co’s were already involved in project
  – Asked for letter giving permission to conduct research and free travel pass

• Risk assessment
  – How do we make ourselves in/visible?
  – Informing staff of our presence, where poss.
  – Personal safety, logging in and chaperones – buses different to trains?
  – The effect of terrorism (7th July 2005)

• Recording equipment
  – Notebook & pen
  – Digital camera
After data collection

- Transcribed own notes
- Created shared data bank (for team)
- Coded around themes
- Analysis
  - limited time/too much data
  - Iterative through writing
- Output – presentations & papers/book chapters
Key challenges

- Selling the idea
- Exhaustion
- Timing not good re terrorist threats
- Organisation and getting permission
- Ethics
- The boundary between participant and observer
- Capturing the non-visual
- Time to analyse/write up
- Sharing data/different styles
- Developing a writing style
- Most publications not suited to lots of photos, or video material
Key benefits

• Detailed understanding of a range of travel experiences and environments
• Capturing non-countable aspects
• Door to door - the whole journey
• New, but stakeholders could relate to findings, and visual evidence makes great presentations!
ICTs and Everyday Life

• *Doing something different with something ordinary*

• **Aim**
  – Explore how ICTs are deployed across the day
  – Identify problem spaces & opportunity for innovation/innovative practice.

• **Method** – (Latham diary-interview)
  – ‘Creative’ diary – interview
  – 31 ‘tech savy’ participants (mobile business people, mothers who work p/t, & students)
The diary pack

disposable camera

example diary (not shown)

cd

colour pens

info leaflet

bookmark

glue

all in a plastic wallet
Completed diary example 1
Interview

• Paired researcher interview & individual
• Most in own homes, some at office or UWE.
• General interview guide tailored to individual
  – Covers themes that reflect aims
• Diary is focus, extrapolate out
  – Is this a ‘normal’ day?
  – Is this a ‘normal’ response to a situation?
  – What if.....
After the interview

• Interview transcribed & coded
• Bottom up coding
  – Practices
  – Identity
  – Relationship with ICTs/transport
  – Problem spaces
  – Solutions/innovation
What worked and didn’t …

• Participant recruitment was difficult
• Participants seemed to enjoy process
  – Many made a big effort with the diary
• Diary created a lot of information
• Diary an excellent prompt
• A lot of info about how, when, and why people use ICTs
• BUT didn’t spot innovation
Conclude

• Mobile ethnography
  – Good for looking at mobile practices in situ
  – Unable to really know why people are doing things unless shadowing

• Diary-interview
  – Good for looking at travel/communications within the context of time-space
Thank you ......
Routes

Juliet’s trips
1. GNER first class Newcastle to London x 5 (June 05)
2. Oxford to London Victoria by Oxford Express coach x 5, followed by
3. No 2 London Bus Victoria to Brixton x 4 (July 05)
4. C2C train Southend to London Fenchurch Street x 10 (Sept 05)
5. First Bus route 48 Emersons Green to Bristol city centre x 10 (Sept 05)
6. Shadowed commuter couple Guildford to London, walk/train (Aug 05)
7. Shadowed commuter Bristol to Bath, Park & Ride/car (Aug 05)

Laura’s trips
1. Virgin X country Lancaster to Penzance x 3 (July 05)
2. Stagecoach bus Caton to Lancaster x 5 (Sept 05)
3. First North Western train Lancs to Windermere, followed by
4. Stagecoach bus 555 Windermere to Kendel x 5 (July/Aug 05)
5. Shadowed family car trip Lanteglos to St Ives
6. Shadowed commuter Acton to Egham walk/train
Publications