

Abstract

By means of a typology of 'attitudes towards space and time', the authors evaluate the suitability of various modes of transport in terms of the limitations of people who live with children under the age of twelve and who travel on a daily basis in Brussels. The study underlines the shortcomings of public transport, in particular regarding those for whom time management is especially important (for themselves or for the well-being of the children who accompany them). In order to meet the needs of a public who are often stressed, in a hurry and worried, the authors suggest that the transport service must be humanised in order to make life easier for users, rather than expecting them to acquire more and more technical skills to make use of the tangled networks and adapt to the offer. In this respect, improvements in the comfort, equipment and accessibility at stops and points of modal and intermodal change are particularly important and all too rare in Brussels.

More generally, the authors assess the attractiveness of public transport by considering the different stages of life of users and the many ways they organise their daily activities. They also insist on the contribution which public transport may make to the necessary synchronisation of urban temporalities.

Authors

Bertrand Montulet, doctor of sociology, is a researcher at the Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis (FUSL – Brussels). Specialised in the issues of mobilities and temporalities, he is co-responsible for the working group 'Mobilités spatiales et fluidités sociales' of the Association Internationale des Sociologues de Langue Française. He is a visiting lecturer at FUSL, Université libre de Bruxelles and Institut des arts de diffusion.

Michel Hubert, doctor of sociology, is a professor at FUSL where he directs the Centre d'études sociologiques and the Réseau interdisciplinaire de recherches sur Bruxelles. He is the director of Brussels Studies. His current work focuses on mobility practices, modes of living, healthcare processes and urban public action.

Bertrand Montulet and Michel Hubert

Travelling with children in Brussels: A sociological study of experiences of time and the use of modes of transport

Translation: Jane Corrigan

Introduction

One of the major observations of the vast study on the daily mobility of Belgians (MOBEL) [Hubert and Toint, 2002] serves as a starting point for the research presented in this article¹: among all mobility practices, travel for professional reasons no longer dominates today, both in terms of the number of trips and the kilometres covered. Travel for leisure activities, shopping and social activities with family and friends now prevail, even if work-related travel continues to provide structure to a large number of people [Mercurio, 1998; Pronovost, 1996] and is particularly visible during peak hours. This observation, in addition to the diversification of types of employment and working time (part-time work, flexible hours, teleworking, etc), is corroborated by direct and concrete observations, particularly in Brussels: lengthening of peak hours, multiplication of daytime journeys especially during lunch hours, intensive use of means of transport on Saturdays, increase of more than 60% in the number of travellers carried by the STIB since 2000, etc. This is why it seemed vital to conduct research on the many experiences of time and the use of modes of transport, with the issue of urban change [Ascher, 2000] and the synchronisation of urban temporalities [Bailly and Heurgon, 2001] as a backdrop. Financed by Brussels-Capital Region in the framework of the Prospective Research for Brussels² programme, this research focuses on mobility in Brussels, concerning inhabitants of Brussels (who account for more than 70% of travel in the Region) and non-

¹ A more thorough presentation of the results of this research, as well as other elements of analysis, may be found in Montulet B., Hubert M. and Huynen P., *Etre mobile. Vécus du temps et usages des modes de transport à Bruxelles*, Brussels, Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis Publications, 2007, 208 p.

² B. Montulet was a beneficiary of this support.

Contacts :

Michel Hubert - hubert@fusl.ac.be

Bertrand Montulet - montulet@fusl.ac.be



inhabitants of Brussels, yet the information may encompass other contexts and the methodological contributions may be transposed to other studies.

Method

The research results presented here were obtained from semi-structured interviews, which have the advantage of allowing a close examination of the structures of meaning of the people interviewed. This was especially important given that the prospective research was conducted with the aim to avoid all forms of a priori structuring on behalf of the researcher.

The number of interviews to conduct in the framework of qualitative research such as this is determined by the saturation rule. This rule presupposes that the researcher interviews people who are as different as possible in terms of observable characteristics which are relevant to the subject under study. These characteristics, identified at the start of the research, may be added to by others, according to the information gathered and the directions it takes³. The number of interviews required is dependent on the data saturation point, i.e. when additional interviews do not provide the researcher with any new information which may shed a different light on

³ At the beginning of this research, five criteria were deemed relevant in the selection of people interviewed: sex, socioeconomic differentiation, spatial differentiation, family differentiation and time-constraint differentiation. Sex and socioeconomic differentiation are among the traditional variables considered by sociologists, yet the other criteria require an explication. Spatial differentiation – identifiable according to district of residence – finds its meaning in the fact that the conditions of access to public transport are different according to the place of residence. Furthermore, proximity to and distance from the city centre allow the possibility for different meanings of 'relationship to the city' and to travel [Kaufmann, 2000] to be inferred. We therefore met people who live in Berchem-Sainte-Agathe, Brussegem, Coxyde, Etterbeek, Forest, Henuyère, Ixelles, Jette, Laeken, Schaerbeek, Sint-Pieters-Leeuw, Uccle, Watermael-Boitsfort, Wezembeek-Oppem, Woluwe-Saint-Lambert and Woluwe-Saint-Pierre. This diversity was imposed by the fact that we were interested in travel in Brussels and not only by the inhabitants of Brussels. Family differentiation is indispensable when the issue of children comes into play. The organisation of time is obviously not the same for couples, single parents, step families or single people. Time-constraint differentiation may appear more random, as these constraints may take on many forms, and may or may not be considered as such by the person involved. However, a time-dependent characterisation of the sample was essential with respect to the subject of our study. We therefore concentrated on work-related time constraints (employed or unemployed, full-time or part-time, self-employed worker or employee, doing telework part of the time or not, etc.). This may appear paradoxical with respect to our intention not to place work at the centre of our analysis. However, although work is an activity which structures wage-earners' organisation of time, it does not necessarily account for the majority of their travel.

the subject. In the case of the present research, we conducted 44 interviews⁴. The purpose of this type of method is therefore not the representativeness of the 'sample', but rather to provide an account of frequent structures of meaning (without being able to quantify the frequency at this stage, or to guarantee the exhaustiveness of this account) which are above all different from one another. The significance of this type of research is to provide keys for interpretation which may prove to be particularly enlightening. It may also lead to the formulation of innovative questions for questionnaire surveys aimed at quantifying attitudes or practices identified by qualitative research.

Attitudes towards space and time and the use of modes of transport: a special relationship

How do individuals organise their time and activities? How does this time-dependent structuring influence their travel and their use of modes of transport? These were the two key questions for our research. In other words, our aim was to understand the extent to which supply meets demand in the transport sector, seen as a complex system in which what we refer to as individuals' attitudes towards time and their relationship to space intervene, as well as the limitations and temporalities related to their activities and social relationships.

The people interviewed were mainly adults with young children. This population constitutes a particularly difficult target public for transport companies for two reasons: generally speaking, the presence of children makes the use of one (or several) car(s) more and more inescapable; and parents' attitude towards their children and their mobility practices may have a lasting influence on these children's habits when they are older. Quite logically, considering the current dominance of non-professional motives for travel, these people were interviewed first – which is not common in mobility studies – regarding their travel with their children and/or to meet friends or to do some shopping. In that way, whether or not these types of travel were linked with work-related travel could be illustrated.

The analyses which resulted from this work mainly allowed, on the one hand, six types of attitude towards time and four types of relationship to space⁵ to be identified and, on the other, the associations between what we will refer to as attitudes towards space and time and the use of modes of transport to be examined.

⁴ These interviews lasted between one and four hours, and dealt with daily mobility in a wider perspective, including, in particular, questions regarding choice of residence, organisation of daily life and relationship to the different means of transport. They were all transcribed in full, to allow an in-depth analysis of the contents. The analysis, as well as the whole research process, were discussed regularly by a research group at the Centre d'études sociologiques at Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, whose members included – in addition to the authors – Gaëlle Hubert, Philippe Huynen, Alice Lejeune, Xavier Mattelé, Jean Remy, Christine Schaut, Luc Van Campenhoudt and Alexis Van Espen. Their participation was greatly appreciated.

⁵ These are standard ideals, or – as suggested by Max Weber, one of the founders of sociology – guiding images to interpret reality, as it is agreed that specific individuals hardly ever correspond to the chosen characteristics in all respects.

Six types of attitude towards time

The following six types of attitude towards time were revealed (Figure 1): the 'routine-minded' (t1), the 'stochastic' (t2), the 'strict planner' (t3), the 'flexible planner' (t4), the 'reactive improviser' (t5) and the 'impulsive improviser' (t6).

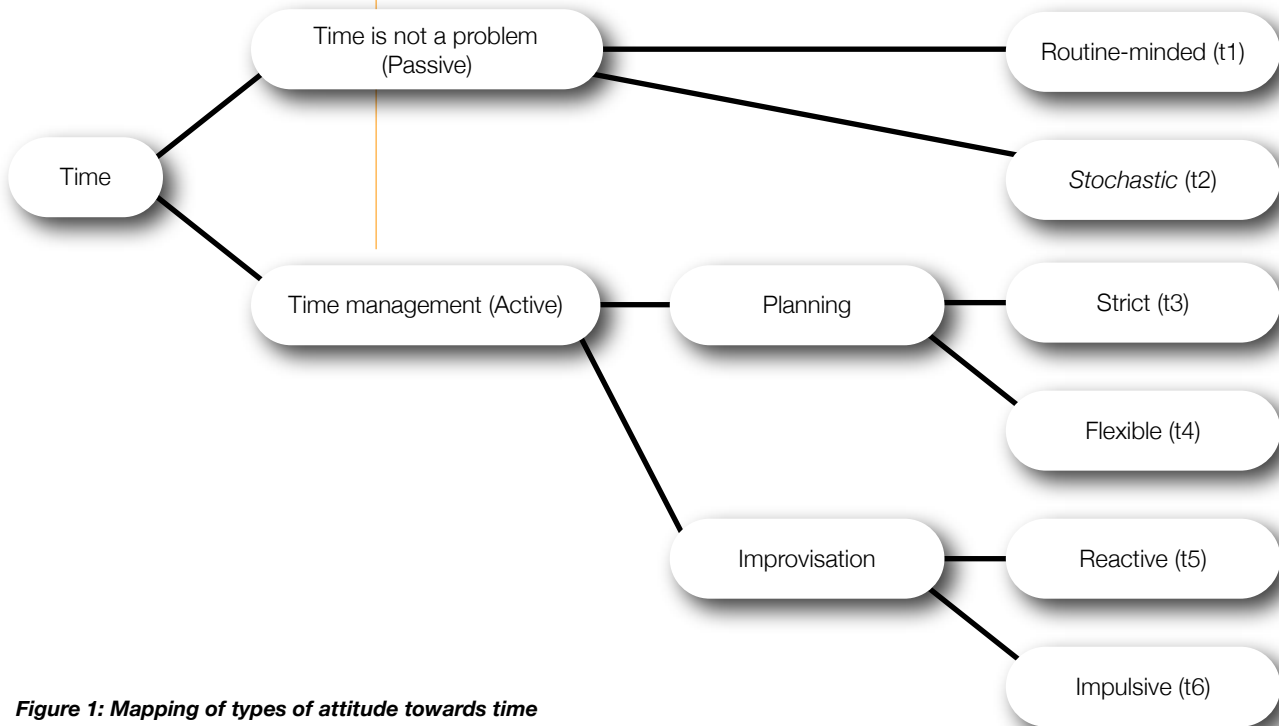


Figure 1: Mapping of types of attitude towards time

The first two are characterised by a lack of desire to control time. Time is not a problem to these people, either because their activity routine is internalised (t1)⁶, or because time is just a support for their structureless meandering (t2)⁷.

⁶ 'We got used to the opening hours of shops, to children and everything. So it's a habit we got into and everything is normal to us. Because we're used to it.' (Djamel) The excerpts of interviews have been chosen for their particularly illustrative qualities. Real names have not been used.

⁷ The 'stochastic' type is a theoretical type which we were not able to investigate in depth due to a lack of time.

Planners, however, want to control time through the strict organisation of their activities according to a timetable (t3)⁸, or by planning activities whilst leaving room for possible changes (t4)⁹.

Finally, the last two types of attitude towards time are characterised by constant improvisation of activities, either in response to external stimuli (t5)¹⁰, or to a person's own impulses (t6)¹¹.

Four types of relationship to space

The four types of relationship to space (Figure 2) are: localism (e1), space in zones (e2), multicentrality (e3) and spatial area (e4). Localism and the perception of space in zones have a territorial basis, yet multicentrality and spatial area disregard boundaries. The questions raised in the latter logics no longer concern proximity above all, but rather connectivity.

Thus, the localist (e1) perception of space involves a single territory with which the person has established a permanent and affective relationship. This territory serves as a reference for all of his or her activities¹².

The perception of space in zones (e2) is similar to an interpretation in terms of territorialisation, without an attachment to or identification with the territory. The spaces differ and are covered according to the relationship of familiarity and practicality

⁸ 'The months of September and October are difficult because everything has to get going, but once it has, things get easier. (...) I've been juggling like this forever. So it has never been a problem for me. There is just the day when activities and times change and everything needs to be reorganised, but that's all.' (Lucie)

⁹ Thus, for Albert, routine, which he dreads, is different from regularity, which he appreciates. Albert is therefore able to describe his weekly timetable, knowing that it may undergo slight changes according to the possibilities which may arise. In this perspective, Albert has chosen to work part-time. This choice allows him to have enough personal flexibility to adapt to changes in his timetable. 'Work is the adjustment variable,' he would say. He values personal flexibility, which allows him to say 'I plan my time', but values professional flexibility less, which his wife must deal with and which 'prevents her from organising things'.

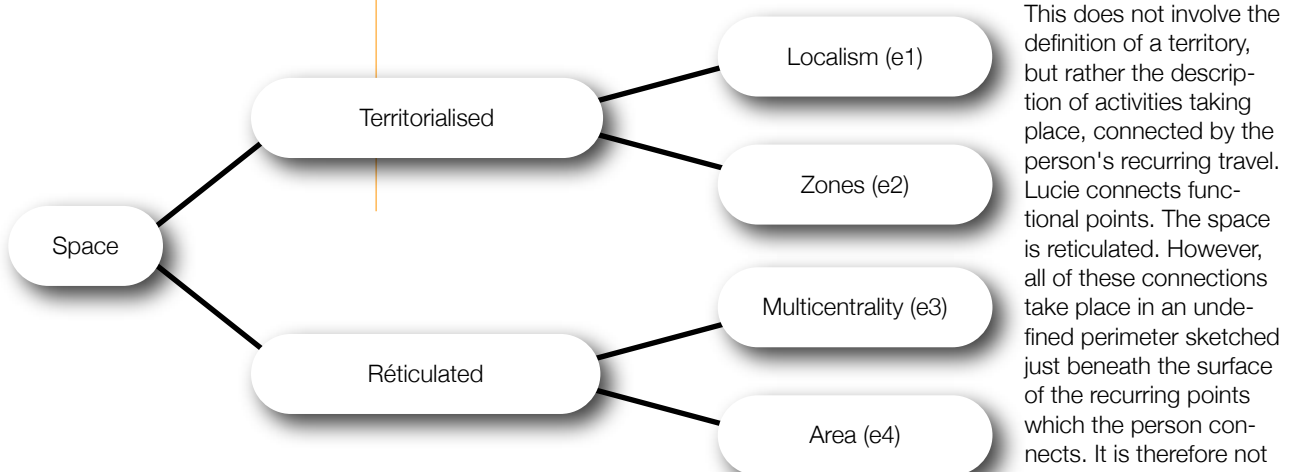
¹⁰ John explains his method of planning, which is constantly undergoing changes, but it nevertheless helps him to structure information in time. 'I use Microsoft Outlook, the only diary which is 100% accurate. (...) And I print it every week. In this case, up to the month of March. If I'm out and I've got my computer with me, at least I've got an overview of what's going on. (...) And I can say: "There are already some changes". I know I printed it yesterday and there are already some changes today. But at least it gives me an idea.' (John)

¹¹ Nicole wants to assert her autonomy with respect to time constraints, and does not want to be subjected to them. She wants to introduce elements beyond daily life, to be 'active' at all times. In this way, Nicole does not want to plan her time, nor does she want to live it in a regular mode; she wants to improvise. For her, prior organisation of her actions or recurring activities make everyday life 'deadly' ('Everyday life is deadly boring.') because they do not allow her to live her time freely and to follow her impulses.

¹² 'I never leave my neighbourhood. Everything is within close proximity. (...) We just go to see my parents, family or whatever. Or, when the weather is nice, we go to the forest... But always somewhere nearby. But it's true that we haven't been to the city centre in quite some time. Sometimes we go shopping or go have a look during the sales or whatever. But it's been a long time. It's been years – yes, and it was at the Porte de Namur.' (Marta)

which the person has established with them. Spatial composition is not necessarily defined on a small scale, nor by the proximity of territories¹³.

The perception of space in the form of multicentrality (e3) consists in making recurring connections between a precise number of functional points. The space is reticulated, even if the recurrence of connections shows a form of delimiting of space which does not provide structure to the person.



This does not involve the definition of a territory, but rather the description of activities taking place, connected by the person's recurring travel. Lucie connects functional points. The space is reticulated. However, all of these connections take place in an undefined perimeter sketched just beneath the surface of the recurring points which the person connects. It is therefore not a relationship to an open space or an undefined area. It is a space which remains delimited ac-

Figure 2: Mapping of types of relationship to space

According to a precise number of points, with the delimitation encompassing these points not providing structure to the person¹⁴.

The perception of space as an area (e4) consists in an open space in which the person connects an undefined number of points. The space is also reticulated in this case. The points first take on meaning in a disembodied functional logic subject to opportunities and changes. As a result, the spatial area and the established connections are constantly being redefined¹⁵.

¹³ 'We live in Schaerbeek. So I travel between Schaerbeek and Woluwe-Saint-Lambert where the school is located. Ixelles is a bit further, and Etterbeek. No, first there is Etterbeek, and then Ixelles. I never go there. I go to Saint-Josse because I work nearby. The districts we never go to? Etterbeek, Ixelles, Anderlecht, Berchem-Sainte-Agathe, Laeken.' (Danièle)

¹⁴ Thus, when Lucie leaves her home in Jette to go to work in Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Schaerbeek does not exist. 'I find that the house is ideally situated for people who live in Brussels, because there are many different means of transport at Bockstael. There are trams leading to all the railway stations in Brussels, and buses, and the neighbourhood is fairly quiet at weekends.' (Lucie)

¹⁵ According to John: 'Distance is not a constraint today'. Anne and Félice are of the same opinion: 'We would be ready to live on the other side of the city tomorrow, or in the middle of nowhere'.

The analysis of consistencies between attitudes towards time and spatial perceptions shows very clear convergences between the two. Localism (e1) mixes well with routine (t1), flexible planners (t4) readily perceive space in zones (e2), and strict planners (t3) are often spatially multcentred (e3). Finally, reactive (t5) and impulsive (t6) improvisers generally perceive space as an area (e4).

Use of modes of transport and attitudes towards space and time

Together, these attitudes towards time and spatial perceptions, which we may refer to as attitudes towards space and time, therefore allow us to examine the use of modes of transport, in particular public transport.

A univocal relationship between attitudes towards space and time and the use of modes of transport does not exist, but instead, there are elective affinities between the two. Therefore, for example, routine-minded localists (t1+e1) are characterised by the recurrence of their journeys. They represent a captive clientele for public transport, as long as the space in which their routines take place is not too cramped, and the scale of transport networks presents appropriate routes within the space used by these individuals.

As regards the people whose attitude is close to that of reactive improvisation and a perception of space as an area (t5+e4), the sustained rhythm of their activities influences their travel. Faced with this rhythm, public transport and the inertia related to connections and stops are not easily tolerated, and do not adapt well to an individual logic which requires both productivity and arriving 'just in time'. The attractiveness of modes of public transport increases, however, when the legibility of the network is improved and intermodality (and its own legibility) is facilitated in order to ensure wide spatial coverage, and when there is a regular frequency of service so that it is available when the client needs it, thus ensuring the required time-related flexibility.

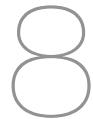
Individuals with an attitude of strict planning and a perception of space in the form of multicentricity (t3+e3) develop recurring travel habits regardless of the mode of transport used. This typically includes people who are interested in the logics developed by public transport, as long as their volume of activities is not too full. The structured timetables of these modes of transport allow them to manage their time, which corresponds to their wishes, as long as the duration of journeys competes with that of other modes.

Finally, those whose attitude towards time involves flexible planning and a perception of space in zones (t4+e2) have a multimodal knowledge of the travel possibilities in the different zones of activity. Although the spaces are not monofunctional as they are for people who have a multcentred relationship to space, the modes of travel are perceived in an essentially functional logic. The duration of the journey is therefore an important factor for modal choice.

Modes of transport in association with certain attitudes towards space and time

Conversely, a mode of transport may be more or less well suited to the various attitudes towards space and time.

The car is still perceived nowadays as being the most flexible mode of transport and therefore the most adaptable to most attitudes towards space and time. However,



this adaptability is not only due to the individual logic of a mode which meets the need to go anywhere at any time, but also to its storage and comfort capacities in adverse weather conditions, which allows the user to organise complex chains of activities whilst using only one mode of transport. Its system, or the group of conditions required for its use (the material quality of roads, driver training, the organisation of traffic regulations, etc) does not necessarily limit its spatial use, which makes it perfectly adequate for reactive or impulsive use in a perception of space as an area. It is, however, clear that the use of the car nowadays has exceeded its limits in the crowded urban space and that the comparative time-related advantages it presents are less and less clear.

The logistics of modes of public transport have been designed on an hourly basis in order to ensure the number of users necessary for profitability, as well as the coordination of several transport routes. In return (apart from the metro, which quickly began operating at regular frequencies), this design requires users to plan their travel. This type of planning is less compatible with improvisers (reactive or impulsive) than it is with the routine-minded or with planners (strict or flexible). Managers of public transport companies are therefore forced to reconcile logistics based on timetables with a use based on the 'flow system', if they want to attract a clientele who improvise their time.

The adaptation of urban public transport to new time-related and spatial requirements therefore depends on the implementation of systems allowing the greatest intermodal fluidity possible in terms of connections (their number, their practicability, the 'time-related interfaces' available, etc) as well as information.

Travelling with children, doing the shopping, seeing friends: what is the role of public transport?

As we mentioned above, the interviews conducted in the framework of this research on experiences of time and the use of modes of transport in Brussels were aimed at examining issues of mobility mainly in relation to non-professional activities and limitations. In this perspective, we have based our collection of information on three particular situations: travel with children under the age of twelve, shopping and social relationships. We shall attempt to present the specificities of these three situations here.

As regards travel with the children, the most significant element is parents' concern for the safety of their children, either in relation to the spatial autonomy which they must acquire or to the use of public transport which goes with it. We observed parents' difficulty to reconcile their adult rhythms with the slower rhythms of children. All types of travel with young children involve inertia before (anticipation of children's needs) as well as during the trip and the related activity. Parents must therefore plan the length of travel, target the places they go to more precisely, and reduce the steps in the chain of activities in order for it to correspond to the child's physical resistance.

The infrastructure of public transport is generally described as meeting these requirements poorly and as not favouring travel with young children. The difficulties to

get on certain buses and trams, the presence of stairs or escalators, the lack of guaranteed seating capacity, the lack of comfort at surface transport stops when weather conditions are poor and their lack of safety to ensure constant supervision of young children, are all elements which discourage the use of public transport, even among parents who were faithful users in the past. Many parents feel that the car is only possible means to ensure a fast enough speed of travel and to maintain relatively complex chains of activity, whilst guaranteeing comfort and maximum safety for children.

The time devoted to consumer activities – shopping – appears to take on a different value according to the meaning attributed to them. Some people feel they are merely functional: a means of stocking up. They therefore want to 'save time'. Others, on the contrary, feel that shopping is a pleasurable moment, either in itself or because it is associated with another activity (going for a walk, family or social interaction, etc). In these cases, the time-related dimension seems to vanish, or at the very least is considered of secondary importance to the client: 'time does not matter anymore'.

We have also observed that the area and complexity of travel are strongly related to the mode of transport used or required to do the shopping. Shopping for food is therefore rarely associated with public transport, due to its heavy and cumbersome nature as well as the issue of hygiene. As a result, people who do not have a car will often go to the shops in their neighbourhood.

Furthermore, public transport does not favour the inclusion of shopping in complex chains of activities involving various forms of self-presentation. Therefore, professional appearance, for example, is often incompatible with the carrying of parcels or bags, which reveal private characteristics¹⁶.

However, it is used for the purchase of specific objects or for shopping activities in the city centre. In these cases, it is a solution to the problem of using a car in busy areas (traffic jams, car parks, etc), which could give a potentially pleasurable activity a negative connotation.

The analysis of temporalities of social relationships and in particular the 'unexpected', allows a better understanding of the experience of socialities in people's time-related compositions. For the 'routine-minded' or for 'planners', for example, appointments are made 'spontaneously' based on the crossing of temporalities organised in a similar manner, whereas for 'improvisers', an appointment may only result from planning which takes place within a flow of unorganised activities. In such a context, 'improvisers' tend to multiply time constraints which overlap and compete with each other.

Social relationships also raise the issue of the organisation of travel. Our corpus of interviews, which is made up essentially of parents of children under the age of twelve, shows little social activity outside the home, yet we notice that the main wish is for all time constraints to disappear in order to 'enjoy the moment' when people are together. As a result, a mode of transport which imposes a time limit is per-

¹⁶ 'When you have a car, you can use it for storing things. When you take the tram, you can't do that. You can't show up for a professional appointment with a chicken or whatever. So the tram is not ideal for that.' (Maude).

ceived negatively because it puts a restriction on the relationship. Therefore, public transport may be used to go to a social activity, but often does not provide an adequate solution for returning home. We also observed that, even in terms of travel for social relationships, norms related to the stage of life appear to come into play. For example, certain people state that they can no longer ask someone to drive them home because people do not do that anymore at the age of thirty-five, or because the friendship must not create inconveniences for the other person in the relationship. There must therefore be autonomy in terms of travel. In these cases, the car, which allows flexibility (which in turn allows the spatial extension of one's network of friends), or the taxi, when its cost remains affordable or when alcohol is consumed, are often favoured.

For many reasons, the car is described as being the mode of transport which is the most adaptable to a child's comfort, to doing the shopping or to meeting up with friends. This is an unfortunate reality. One may question the respective conditions for the organisation of other modes of transport which make this observation so obvious for most of the people interviewed, and in particular, the ways to transform the systems of use of public transport.

The research shows that many people are worried about their time management if they use public transport. Faced with this stress, the first responsibility of public transport is to respect its timetables for the routes which do not operate at regular frequencies, to limit variations in the duration of routes and to provide constant information on unexpected delays for busy routes in order not to increase time-related tension. But more should probably be done, and better use should be made of new technologies to inform travellers in real time of waiting time and alternatives available to them.

It is also necessary to find solutions in terms of infrastructure, in particular by improving the design of bus and tram stops, by taking prams into consideration for trams, buses and metros, and by considering ways to facilitate travel for people with reduced mobility together with the concerns of parents with young children. This reflection could also be inspired by what the mode of travel by car already offers (nurseries and specific shops at service stations on motorways, for example), by setting up special services in certain interchange stations of the metro network, or even on the platforms of the biggest transit stations (South Station, North Station, Simonis, etc), in order to allow travellers to 'inhabit' these spaces and to make the time spent travelling useful rather than wasted. Efforts have already been made in this respect, which deserve to be expanded upon. Therefore, for example, it would be worthwhile to install lockers (where shopping bags could be left during an administrative errand, for example, or a break) in the main interchange stations of the network to facilitate the construction of chains of travel and to make them 'lighter' for travellers.

In our opinion, the client's experience of time, which is the concern of transport companies, is not only based on a problem of infrastructure but also on the issue of service, thus bringing the image of public transport into play. Faced with this public who are often stressed, in a hurry, worried and already focused on the activity ahead, the transport service must be humanised in order to make life easier for users, rather than expecting them to acquire more and more technical skills to make use of the tangled networks and adapt to the offer. The improvement of comfort and

accessibility at stops and points of modal and intermodal change is certainly an essential requirement for this new culture¹⁷. It would probably be possible, for example, to take the comfort of parents into consideration by increasing the safety of children during waiting times, or even by ensuring specific forms of adult supervision during recurring travel with children on public transport routes (via, for example, urban steward or professional transition programmes, which already exist in other urban policies). It would probably also be possible to enhance the quality of contact between parents and children or the festive character of travel by public transport for children.

The responsibility for developing such services should not be that of the public transport operator alone. Stakeholders such as schools and shops, for example, could also be associated, as they constitute places with concentrations of potential users. Furthermore, schools already have educational know-how. Would it not be possible, therefore, to imagine collaborations between transport companies and schools to ensure the safety of children on school-related journeys, or to offer free trips to parents using babysitting facilities organised by a shopping centre or a supermarket?

The demands concerning public transport night services are along the same lines. Faced with a public who often complain about having to 'keep up', how can a transport service ensure that 'time does not matter'? The public we met were interested in an extension of the service (until about 2am, as social activities do not go beyond this time), in combination with the use of taxis, which ensure that one can get home without having to keep an eye on the time¹⁸.

¹⁷ The new management contract between Brussels-Capital Region and STIB provides for an improvement of the situation of 'stops' (article 27) and 'interchange stations' (article 28) [STIB, 2007].

¹⁸ Our research was conducted before the implementation of the Noctis network.

Conclusion

Three cross-cutting observations were made during this research, questioning both urban policies and the organisation of transport. They involve the stage of life, differences in time management according to gender, and the necessary synchronisation of urban temporalities.

The stage in the lifecourse is, of course, related to one's age, but is not exactly limited to this. As explained by Peto et al. [1992]¹⁹, an individual may, for example, take the road leading to life as a couple several times in his or her life, or may have a non-linear professional life which takes him or her through similar stages on several occasions. Furthermore, living a particular stage in the lifecourse should not be confused with belonging to a generation with a presumed shared experience.

The stage in the lifecourse is important for the transformation of spatial perceptions as well as attitudes towards time. In more concrete terms, the interviews revealed a clear break in travel habits caused by the arrival of a child in a family or a transformation of friendships at this same stage in the lifecourse. Furthermore, the beginning of secondary school remains a time reference for a large number of parents, as it marks the spatial autonomy of the child and therefore the autonomous use of modes of public transport.

The modal transfer to the car, often imposed by the arrival of the child and the many precautions taken by parents to ensure its comfort, is rarely offset by a return to public transport on behalf of parents when the child begins to assert its spatial autonomy. How can this population be won back? By analogy, should we not presume the existence of a 'cycle of the public transport user' which would require a phase of reintroduction to the use of this type of transport? Should there not be actions to target parents when the first student passes are purchased?

The second observation concerns gender differences in time management. In almost all interviews with parents of children under the age of twelve, the woman is 'in charge of domestic time management': she usually sets the family rhythm according to the children's activities, appointments with friends or family, or simply the household chores (meals, cleaning, etc). For the man, time management is more 'spatialised', as are his activities. At work, he may have a very strict and organised time management, which is relaxed when he gets home. The weight of this female responsibility, especially among working women, is increased by the stress of travel caused by the obligation to ensure the coordination of the family's time, whereas time tends to become more individualised as children get older. It is understandable that, in this context, punctuality and frequency of public transport are key elements in order for this mode of transport to have its place in family organisation. In certain cases, women do not have the choice, as they are often forced to let their husbands use the family car (which explains the higher proportion of female users of public transport during the day). More generally, we are calling for transport companies to consider the client's experience of time and for the introduction of a service culture

¹⁹ In particular, the chapter 'Facteurs d'intelligibilité des comportements' (pp.51-68).

which takes all limitations faced by the clientele into consideration, in addition to their travel needs²⁰.

Finally, the third cross-cutting observation made during this research deals with collective constructions of time which provide structure to individuals ('social time'). Despite the increased importance of non-professional activities, the major collective rhythms related to work still exist. Social relationships, shopping, the multiple activities with children, etc, are still organised according to the traditional daily (day/evening) and weekly (week/weekend) rhythms, related to professional time constraints and biological rhythms (need for sleep).

However, within these collective frameworks, various forms of the individualisation of time exist. The 'reactive' and 'impulsive' attitudes are the most complete expressions of this: continuous response to stimuli (external or internal) involves the development of specific ways of organising time which are continuously able to adapt to situations. The 'flexible planner', who values a certain regularity, also fits this pattern with his or her desire to remain open to opportunities and changes which may arise.

The individualisation of time makes it all the more difficult to coordinate each person's timetable, in family or social situations. This leads to a greater porosity of spheres of activity and to the appearance of new ways of coordinating professional and family life, social relationships and working time, etc.

Faced with this diversity of experiences of time, we cannot escape the wider issue of the modes of synchronisation of social stakeholders. This issue is all the more important with the development of a flexible economy which values both 'reactive' attitudes towards time and economic activity twenty-four hours a day.

This problem has already caught up with the urban policies of major cities. Time-based 'houses' and 'offices' are appearing in various European cities. In Brussels, time-related tensions have been identified between the working hours of certain companies and those of public transport or nurseries, for example.

Night is a good indication of the issues regarding daytime rhythms. Traditionally, the rhythm at night has always been slower than that during the day, which probably explains preferences for meeting friends during the evening, when time does not matter. Its possible colonisation by daytime rhythms underlines the deterioration of time and slow rhythms in social dynamics. It is therefore not surprising that slower travel with children seems to be such a problem for the people we interviewed.

How can a time policy be elaborated in order to prevent forms of temporalities (in particular the 'urgency' of reactive improvisers) from being forced on all social stakeholders or to prevent too much friction between city users with different temporalities? How can a policy be developed in order to enable the different rhythms of family members, work, economic life and leisure activities to be orchestrated, whilst preserving each individual rhythm? There is no doubt that travel policy, which is at the heart of the effective synchronisation of activities, is a fundamental resource for this time policy. Others certainly include land development and a certain functional

²⁰ The STIB's slogan 'On va vous faciliter la ville' (We'll make the city easier for you) is in the same line, but unfortunately will soon be abandoned.

mix demanded by many of the people interviewed, in order to allow a better link between activities.

The results presented in this research allow a better understanding of the ways in which individuals with activities in Brussels organise their temporalities and their travel. It reinforces our belief in the necessity to obtain more in-depth and precise knowledge of time-related logics in order to understand the system of urban temporalities and thus improve its functioning.

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