

# “CONTESTED (IM)MOBILITIES: GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF 'STAYING LOCAL'”

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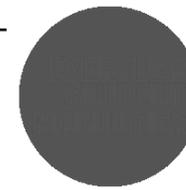
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# Everyday Student Mobilities

“students are constantly on the move: between lecture halls; from place of residence (which may be halls of residence, privately rented accommodation, or parental home) to campus; as well as from ‘home’ to university. Yet very little attention has been given to these different mobility practices; rather, it is the semi-permanent move associated with leaving home and migrations over distance rather than mobility and everyday-life, that is most closely associated with student life.”

Holdsworth, C. (2009) "Going away to uni": Mobility, modernity, and independence of English higher education students', *Environment and Planning A*, 41 p. 1849–1864

# Flexible mobilities and the HE White Paper

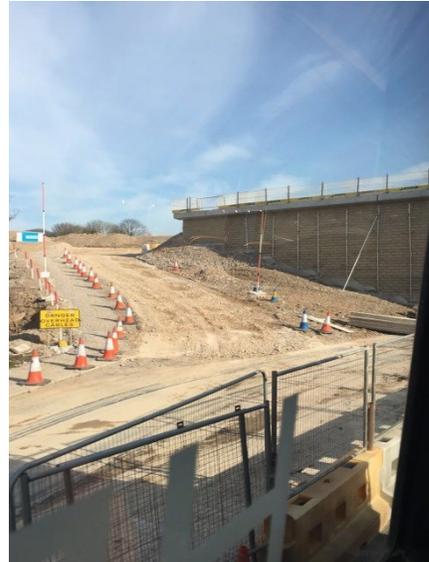
- Themes of flexibility and 'empowering student choice' at the heart of the White Paper

**"As well as informing where and what students choose to study, better information will help them make choices about how they choose to study. For some this will be a traditional three- or four-year full time undergraduate degree. For others, it will be through flexible options: a two year accelerated degree; studying part time; in modules; from a distance; or in a Degree Apprenticeship, embedded with an employer." (p.13)**

- Direct challenge to 'boarding school' model embedded in elite participation
- A study of mobility practices is important because travel and transport are closely associated with social exclusion (SEU 2003)
- If student-commuter model is adopted mainly by non-traditional students (see Reay et al. 2001, 2005; Christie 2007) seeking to manage rising costs it is essential to consider whether and how (in)adequate access to transport shapes experiences and achievement in higher education and, thus, the successful implementation of social policy (Kenyon 2011).
- John Denham (2014), has argued that for higher education to be sustainable in the UK, we need to challenge the 'lazy assumption' that students must leave home to go to university and give them a 'real choice' to stay at home (cf. Hillman 2015).
- New project investigates what such a choice entails, what it feels like for students in practice, and how this impacts upon the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the expansion of higher education.

# Everyday Student Mobilities: Exploring the relationship between wellbeing, inclusion and sustainability

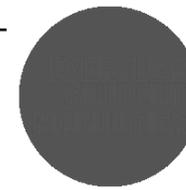
- SRHE Main award (February 2016-February 2017)
- Lancaster University case study
- 20 interviews to date (of which 8 'go along')
- UG (13); PG (7)
- Young (9); mature (11)
- Men (5); women (15)
- White British (13)
- First generation entrants (13)
- Living with parents (7); living alone (3); living w/ partner/family (9); w/friends (1)
- Between 3 and 55 miles away from university campus



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- mobile methods (Buscher, Urry and Witchger 2011)
- principles of visual and sensory ethnography (Sunderland et al. 2012)
- 'go along' encounters = embodied and emotional practices as they are experienced and performed by those involved (Anderson and Jones 2009).
- Images and rich place narratives will combine to produce layered accounts of everyday experiences.



## Faheema

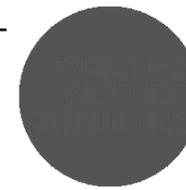
"I don't have an issue with gam lectures I really don't. I think **if someone is committed to getting an education then they will make those lectures**. However, many years I have been in education I am used to getting up and being there for 9. My body is used to it and it's a matter of dedication."

(19, British Pakistani, FGE, UG Year 1, lives at home with parents and siblings miles 45 miles from campus)

## Ella

"if the University of Cumbria was the only university round here, then I'd feel a bit like, oh I have to move, go away. But see **I have the option to attend a really good university and live at home**. It's not like I've just gone for the uni on my doorstep, like I am at a very highly ranked university. And I'm moving [into a shared house] next year anyway so it's like, the best of both worlds."

(19, White British, FGE, UG Year 1, lives at home with parents 8 miles from campus)



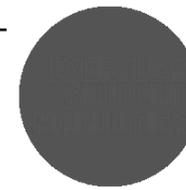
# Hazel

“Because I’m inside the house so much and I haven’t got any energy to do anything when I’m there, I’m generally in or on my bed. So it can get claustrophobic. So this, **university, is about getting away from home** and about the brain cells rubbing together and still **being able to apply yourself in an intellectual way, even though your body feels like its falling apart...** its difficult in one way because I’m 51 and the people I’m interacting with are 19... But I love growing people, and helping people to see what they’re good at. It’s nice to be able to contribute and help again.”

(mature, White British, PT UG Year 2, lives at home with partner 32 miles from campus)

**RESISTING COMMUTER  
STUDENT  
SUBJECTIVITIES**

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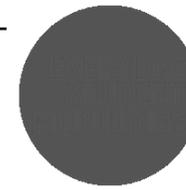


# Annabel

“Before you came to university did you imagine like going to university would be like , “bye everyone”. But, I don’t know, [university] just doesn’t seem to be what I expected it to be. After the first couple of weeks, that’s it like, you don’t go out as much as you thought you would or... I do a lot of sport which obviously gets me into the student life but I go home every weekend because **during the week it’s fine, it is student life but I find on campus at the weekends, it’s derelict.** I come out and I get up really early in the morning, I’m up at eight o’clock moving and then campus is empty. There’s a few [other students] that’ll stay but they’re the ones that live 5, 6, hours away and **basically sloth around until three o’clock in the afternoon; they literally just sleep and watch TV. That’s not me.** I’m not like that all. **I’m active and outgoing.** I’ve tried to stay at the weekends, cos I like baking, so I went to the baking society, but I’ve literally done it a couple of times and that’s it, cos I’ve come out and **all the shops are shut on campus.**”

(20, White British, FGE, Year 1, living in halls, but moving in with partner for year two in Preston )

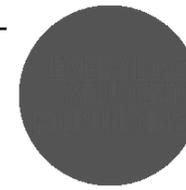
# Aiden



“I think [campus life] is putting people in a **false sense of what the world** is like and the fact that people can just be immediately put into a job straight after university, I just find it, it’s the same as when I was in sixth form and they put you straight into a university. **I find people are constantly, completely satisfied with being put into a place every chapter of their life.** There’s no form of searching for themselves, there’s no independence and this is how it seems to be for me and I find it really strange **and if I found that my life was ending up like that I’d be terrified. It’s just a bubble here.** Yeh, people think, people see what the general consensus is and they’ll stand behind that, so they’ll look around and think, is that all right to say, no everyone looks a bit stunned, I’ll stay on this side. It was exactly the same at sixth form, everyone was too afraid, but I find that once you get to uni, people are even more afraid to say what they think. That’s why I’m not well liked.”

(24, mature, FGE Year 1, lives alone in rented accommodation 12 miles from campus)

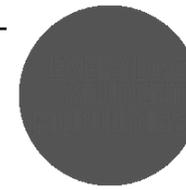
# John



“I’ve got um, there’s a woman in my team that I work with that has just recently taken up cycling **cos I’ve been going on about the opportunities**, I’m not a sort of vigilante or a cycling evangelist [LAUGHS] but **she’s been looking to get fit so I said well why don’t you cycle a couple of times a week**, and she’s started it and she’s not fit at all. She won’t mind me saying, she’s slightly overweight, she’s, you know, she’s not cycled for years but she’s actually just cycling in from [student area of Lancaster] every day... she’s probably doing three or four miles a day, if that. But um, and she comes in to uni [sic] red faced and enjoying it, not every day. But **she’s getting a lot out** of it so I don’t think you have to be fit necessarily to do my route but I know from what she’s saying, this particular person is **really enjoying it and it’s very, it helps her, in the kind of ways it helps me**. Your exercise is done for the day, your, my kind of work life balance, my productivity, with doing a Masters as well.”

(30s, mature, White British, FGE, PG – masters, lives alone, cycles 12 miles to campus)

# Darius

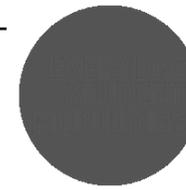


"[...] There's not enough going on [in Lancaster]. For both [him and girlfriend]. **It's too white a city, for me. I like Manchester. I have a lot of black and mixed race friends. Last night I went to a Korean restaurant.** Those are things I like to do and I couldn't give them up for the sake of being a bit handier, day to day, getting to uni I mean. **Those things about city living are very important for me.** It just doesn't feel right [in Lancaster] as nice a place as it is, and it is nice. For like half a day. But **you can't live somewhere like Lancaster.** Not when you have travelled and stuff [...]."

"I don't like feel the liberty of coming up north into the countryside. I prefer getting back to the city. **The size of the city. Feeling minuscule.** It's a really good thing for me. I like that feeling when the train rolls in to the city; **it just feels gritty and anonymous.** More me I guess."

(mature, PG, Year 1, White British, lives with partner 33 miles away from campus)

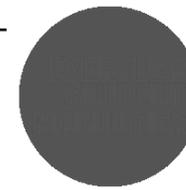
# Fleur



"I like travelling. I have always commuted. Because I've got kids and I've got a lot going on, I find that **my time on the train is my switch off time**. ...I finish my lesson, I stroll into the square. I get my bus and chill out on the bus; you learn to just have your quiet time. Once I'm on the train I get my laptop out, I might revisit seminar notes or make a list of things I need to go back to later. By the time I get home it's **like I've closed the chapter on uni for the day**. I've wound it down. **By the time I get through the door** [at home] I can think straight and I'm in mum mode."

"Everybody has a struggle meeting up to do the social things **I wouldn't say it's just me**. Working on the **Innocence project** – it's a bunch of Law students working on real cases, looking at miscarriages of justice, that sort of thing, we go through cases looking for grounds for appeal – well it's helped me feel more a part of things. It's a mix of first and third years; really good for me to **meet likeminded people and feel like I'm doing something from here [points to her heart]** rather just the other stuff [...] I have developed a really good network of friends [through the project], so I have people that I am always sat with, that I know and that I walk into a seminar room with, and a broader group of friends. I have groups on Whatsapp and we pass information and questions and I really value that. **We will whatsapp every single day** even if we have been in lectures together all day. We message about all sorts. It could be something really stupid it could be about cake. Or it could be something to do with our studies or meeting up and going through stuff. It's quite broad but **it's always there** see."

(29, mature, UG, FGE Year 1, White British, lives with husband and two daughters 55 miles away from campus)



# Concluding comments



- Everyday mobilities have within them the potential for creativity, subversion and resistance (Lefebvre 1991; de Certeau 1984)
- Enmeshed within the ordinary routines of everyday life, mobility practices can powerfully reconfigure notions of self and home (Jensen, 2009, p. 149)
- Thus - interrogating 'immobility' of local students helps to uncover the complex politics of mobility that underpin WP discourses and initiatives, & rhetoric of choice and flexibility HE White paper
- The everyday mobilities of 'home' students are almost always seen as an obstacle to be overcome and are framed in terms of the social and educational disadvantages they present to students (Christie 2007).
- Mature women students with childcare obligations are presented mostly as time poor and lacking time to care for the self (Reay 2003).
- But, travel and mobility can also generate positive emotions or at least provide ways to 'manage feelings of pressure and letting go, or turning 'off'' and create a 'personal space for contemplation, planning, and work' (Jensen, Sheller and Wind 2014)



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