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Challenges for Latin American cities: Improving diagnosis or the need to shift the understanding urban inequality from fixed enclaves to mobile gradients

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Working Paper No. 2011/24

## **Challenges for Latin American Cities**

Improving Diagnosis or the Need to Shift the  
Understanding Urban Inequality from Fixed  
Enclaves to Mobile Gradients

**Paola Jirón\***

April 2011

### **Abstract**

Current urban interventions, particularly in cities in developing countries like Santiago de Chile, evidence major neglect in understanding the way contemporary living takes place and how it is changing under processes of globalization, global warming, technological advances, as well as specific national and local processes. Traditional ways of analysing urban living are no longer adequate to tackle urban issues, thus new questions need to be asked in order to achieve better comprehension.

Keywords: urban inequality, cities, Latin America

JEL classification: O18, O54, N96, Z19

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## **1 Introduction**

Current urban interventions (including housing, transport, infrastructure, etc), particularly in cities in developing countries like Santiago de Chile, evidence major neglect in understanding the way contemporary living takes place and how it is changing under processes of globalization, global warming, technological advances, amongst other, as well as specific national and local processes. Traditional ways of analysing urban living are no longer adequate to tackle urban issues, thus new questions need to be asked in order to achieve a better comprehension of them, which can in turn lead to better interventions for urban residents.

One of the major issues influencing urban living today relates to the inevitable and unprecedented impact mobility, in its multiple forms, has on people's lives. The 'mobility turn' in the social sciences (Cresswell 2006; Hannam, Sheller et al. 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006a, 2006b; Urry 2007) is based on the unavoidable impacts all types of mobility have on the organization of contemporary everyday life. The diverse types of mobility, including migration, tourism, residential mobility and daily mobility, constitute today a significant shift in the analysis of urban processes. The research on which this paper is based on, in the attempt to understand how urban inequality is experienced, concentrates on urban daily mobility.

While unveiling the way contemporary living takes place, the mobility turn generates questioning to traditional concepts of urban studies shifting these into new directions. One of such concepts is that of urban inequality which in Latin America is often made synonymous to urban segregation and more specifically, to residential segregation. However, current forms of urban living, including the increase in urban daily mobility, question the way this concept is understood, analysed and diagnosed. Under this turn, the view of urban inequality moves from fixed enclaves in the city to mobile gradients through the city, thus shifting the conceptualisation of the problem.

By arguing that mobility can be a cause, manifestation and a consequence of urban inequality, this paper attempts to highlight the need to broaden urban analysis, by discussing for instance, how urban inequality shifts under current urban daily mobility lens. It then provides one way of approaching urban inequality analysis by using an ethnographic account of mobility practices in Santiago de Chile. The paper claims that urban analysis can be significantly enriched by incorporating an urban daily mobility approach, which consequently can question current forms of urban and transport planning and shed light towards new ways of intervening in the city.

## **2 Contemporary urban living and mobility**

Most urban analysis is often based on structured views of the city (Sassen 2000, 2002, 2006; Castells 1996, 2000, 2005; Galetovic 2006), ignoring much of the specificity of daily experience of urban living. Although these analysis may be useful and necessary to understand broader processes, little is known of the consequences such processes have on daily life, or how people respond react, resent, resignify or simply ignore such processes or how other process to germinate. Analysing daily living experiences and linking these to broader processes in society provides a new perspective to urban issues.

This perspective unveils aspects that may be invisible to structured or aggregate approaches, including new phenomena or conflicts which also relate to power relations at stake, new and different dimensions of such conflicts, and so, new processes begin to configure. Viewing daily social practices and their relation to broader processes becomes paramount today, as, through this lens, old concepts and ideas become questioned and new possibilities emerge.

One of these practices is urban daily mobility. Mobility refers to all the ways people relate socially to change of place (Bourdieu 2003), or to the social, political, historical, cultural, economic, geographic, physical, communicative, and material dimensions of movement. This involves the sum of journeys made and distances travelled, but also the expectations, experiences, consequences and impact these journeys have on people's lives and how they affect mobility practices and daily living. For most people, social life is formed and reformed through intermittent meetings engendered through physical travel (Urry 2003a). Meaning that although life is networked, it also involves specific present encounters within certain times and places. The act of meeting and the different forms and modes of travel are central to much of social life, a life which involves particular combinations of increasing distance and intermittent co-presence (ibid.).

Mobility practices are hybrid, meaning that they involve multiple encounters, bodies, objects, forms, materialities, signs, destinations, times, and consequently different experiences. These differentiated experiences often lead to uneven access to the various activities, relations or places in the city and may generate new forms of urban inequality. Accessibility is often referred to as connectivity and transport systems are designed with this aim (Vigar 2002). However, accessibility involves more than reaching a certain point in the city; it also involves the ability to participate adequately in the social, cultural, economic, and physical spaces encountered. The way mobility relates to urban inequality cannot only be analysed in terms of connectivity, distance and time but also in terms of the quality of access, its relation to immobility and the actual experience of mobility.

Within urban research, much analysis has been conducted on social exclusion, residential segregation, location of infrastructure, services and housing, and place making and belonging. However, until recently, there has been little connection between these researches and people's daily mobility, or on the various forms of access, or the creation of sense of belonging within mobile and dynamic urban spaces<sup>1</sup>. Thus, looking at urban daily mobility, including its social, economic, cultural, or physical implications is increasingly relevant in urban research, and understanding how mobility is experienced by different people in the city and the consequences this experience has on everyday lives and on mobility practices, can shed light on new dimensions, processes and phenomena in urban research including urban inequality.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the exceptions is the work of Savage, Bagnall et al. (2005)

### 3 Old and new forms of urban inequality

The way mobility has impacted urban inequality has not yet been incorporated in most traditional urban analysis in Latin America. This is particularly relevant when it comes to urban interventions as these are based on the diagnosis and analysis from such research. An example of this can be observed in Chilean urban public interventions. In the aim of improving social integration, current governmental initiatives in Chile are using residential segregation diagnoses at various scales to inform policy interventions<sup>2</sup>. These diagnosis and analyses are essential and, for the most part, accurate, however, they are partial. Current understanding of urban social relations and their urban inequality implications require questioning the conceptualisation of inequality and broadening traditional analysis of urban segregation.

Most studies of Latin American cities usually conflate the notion of segregation with those of inequality, poverty, fragmentation, polarisation and exclusion. Socioeconomic segregation has mostly been looked at in terms of residential location of people from different income groups (Sabatini, Caceres et al. 2001a). Although this type of segregation is one of the most commonly studied in Latin America, residential segregation could also be analysed in terms of residential location of religious, ethnic<sup>3</sup>, age or gender groups. Furthermore, as a phenomenon, the analysis of residential segregation observes patterns of residence—seeing housing as a site of segregation. However, other types of segregation also exist, including public space, schooling or employment. As a process of exclusion, residential segregation could potentially reflect the level of inequality in a city. However, it could also be a manifestation of something else, and it may not be a problem at all (Musterd 2003), as is the case of ethnic groups who cluster and prefer to live close to each other, like the Greek or Portuguese in cities, or the various Chinatowns or Little Italies in many cities around the world.

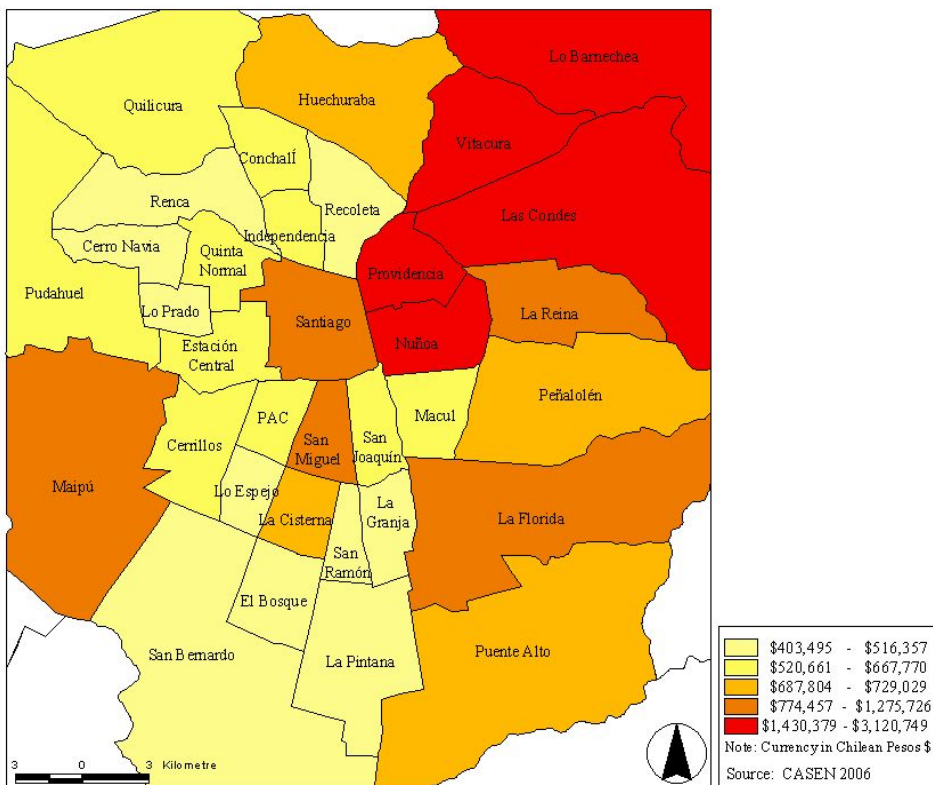
In the case of Santiago, these patterns of residential location, poor service and amenities provision have led to extremely low levels of quality of life that have substantially contributed to the social isolation and disintegration of poor neighbourhoods (Jirón and Fadda 2003). Sabatini and Salcedo (2005) distinguish between a ‘perverse’ segregation and a more ‘benign’ one, depending on the scale of analysis: the larger the scale of segregation, the more perverse it is. In this argument, segregation in Santiago is extremely perverse because almost all upper-middle or upper class neighbourhoods are concentrated in one geographical zone, the Northeast ( Maps 1 and 2). This concentration is the consequence of market forces, as well as of the semi-forceful movement of poor population outside the well-off boroughs during the military regime. But it is particularly aggravated by the implementation of housing programmes by the Chilean government (Jiron 2007) as well as the inadequate response and lack of coordination of social policies.

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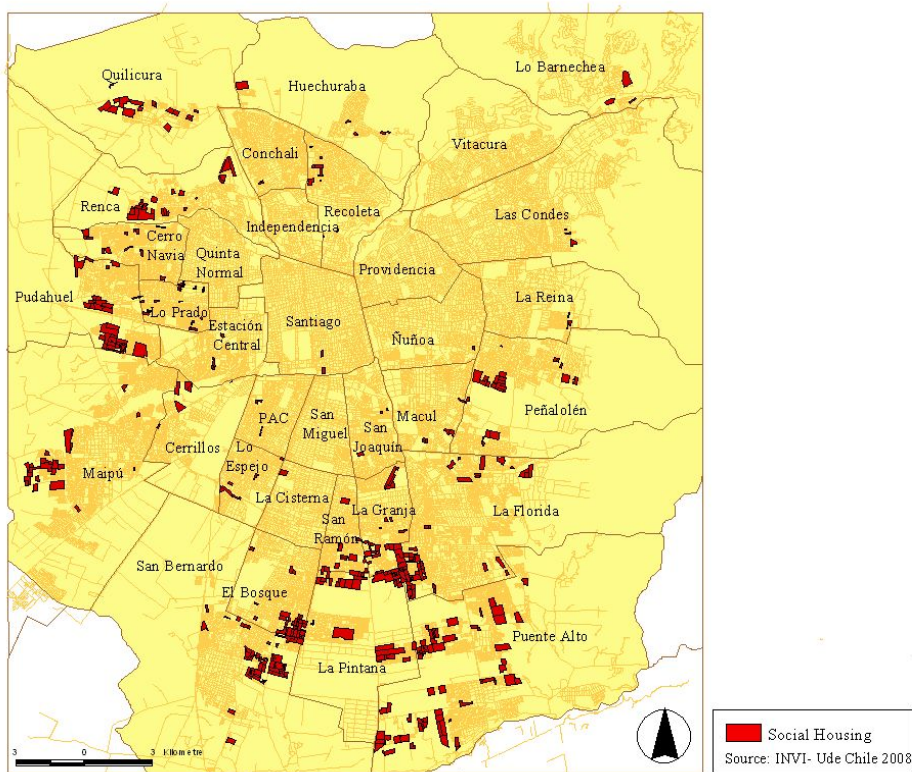
<sup>2</sup> Examples of this include: MINVU’s ‘I love My Neighbourhood’ Programme (Programa Quiero mi barrio) that aims at intervening on 200 existing low-income neighbourhood; law modification proposal to include 5 per cent low-income housing in all real estate proposals; and subsidy for location of low-income housing within urban limits.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed review of ethnic and racial segregation see Phillips (2007) and Lemanski (2006a, 2006b)

Map 1: Income distribution in Santiago



Map 2: Location of low-income housing 1990-2006



Sabatini, Cáceres et al. (2001b) claim that a closer analysis of segregation can detect, at a micro scale, lesser degrees of segregation in certain areas, that is, less homogeneity in terms of residential location of income groups. This can mainly be observed in boroughs with lower land values where, over the past few years, middle-high to high-income gated communities have been built. Over the past few years, following the international trends (Caldeira 2000; Low 2003), some areas in Santiago have experienced a modification in the traditional distribution of income in the city, where a portion of middle, middle-high and high-income groups, have chosen to live in closed urbanisations located in peripheral boroughs with a predominant low-income population living in social and self built housing (Hidalgo 2004). For Sabatini, Cáceres et al. (2001b), this proximity has led to a more benevolent or benign type of segregation, where although visibly separated by gates and walls, interaction between the different income groups, mainly in terms of employment, greatly benefits the poor.

For these authors, diminishing the scale of segregation brings economic, social, and psychological benefits, thereby calling authorities to support the spatial dispersion of middle or high-income groups in the city as a way of combating social disintegration of the poor, even if that goal is reached through investments in the form of gated communities (Salcedo 2004). In this context, suggestions for reducing residential segregation include: increasing spatial dispersion of poverty through housing; increasing spatial dispersion of higher income groups through housing; reducing social homogeneity in cities (or urban areas) through mixed zoning and land speculation control (Sabatini, Cáceres et al. 2001b). These proposals are aimed at reaching social integration. Several authors warn that the concentration of social housing in some boroughs and construction of gated communities and closed urbanisation in others creates the potential for increased physical deterioration of the city, segregation and social exclusion (Ciccolella 1999; Caldeira 2000; Low 2003; Roitman 2004).

Hidalgo (2004), explains that this situation could be eased if the new gated community projects built in low-income areas were combined with government initiatives targeted to the poor. For this author, if this occurs, there is a possibility for modifying the classic pattern of distribution of social groups in the city, which can contribute to the reduction of the physical distance between rich and poor. However, this may not necessarily lead to lesser degrees of social segregation or greater levels of social integration.

Although the logic of the previous arguments is convincing, and perhaps encouraging the location of gated communities in low-income areas may be more convenient than perpetuating perverse segregation, the benefits of such interventions require critical scrutiny. This is because desegregating, diminishing the physical distance between different groups, might not necessarily decrease inequality. The types of interventions mentioned might encourage different income groups to live in proximity. However, these might not necessarily lead to more egalitarian access to the benefits existing in the city.

A more careful analysis of existing power relations in these new forms of living in proximity would be necessary. This would involve analysing the new places, activities and people that various groups have access to as a result of such proximity. Such analysis could reveal that encouraging the location of gated communities in lower income areas could be detrimental in the medium and long term, leading to



gentrification and the eventual expulsion of lower income groups<sup>4</sup> Davidson and Lees 2005), or increased resentment, fewer possibilities of encounter and exacerbated inequalities in the long run. Such consequences could remain hidden if income heterogeneity in residential location is the only way urban inequality is observed.

This means that the use of residential segregation does not fully explain the way people experience inequality in the city, or in their daily lives, thus urban inequality requires further analysis. By taking into account everyday practices and their various spheres and spaces of exchange and interaction which go beyond fixed residential areas, a clearer view of the multiple forms of inequality present in the city can be unveiled, thus, acknowledging the experiences of the city as mobile, as opposed to fixed in a permanent location. This involves revising concepts, methodologies and disciplinary approaches, which could contribute to understanding how urban living is changing and new or broader routes to improve urban research and interventions could be devised. Going beyond residential patterns analysis is relevant essentially in relation to the solutions or interventions that complementary diagnoses could provide and inform.

#### **4 Differentiated mobility practices and their inequality implications**

Based on a mobile ethnographic study carried out in Santiago de Chile, the following differentiated mobility practices are narrated using text, photography and timespace mapping<sup>5</sup>. Timespace maps are used to signal the trajectory taken by each traveller. Specific stations along the way are numbered to correlate with photographs of the situation and further narrated in the text. The first case narrates the travelling experience of Bernardo, whose journey, though long and bumpy, is more enjoyable than the second case of Marta, who, given her gender responsibilities, can only take the bus during rush hour, thus making her experience more uncomfortable than Bernardo's.

Bernardo is 40 years old. He is married to Alicia, who is 39, and they have 3 children: a pair of 19-year-old twins and a 7-year-old boy named Mario. Bernardo works at a print shop close to downtown, where he has been working for the past 8 years. Alicia stays at home taking care of the house, Mario, and the new sewing business she is trying to set up with limited success. Once a month she goes downtown to buy material, but she mostly stays at home and around the neighbourhood.

Every morning Bernardo gets up at 6:00; leaves his house by 6:30, while his family is still sleeping, and walks to the bus terminal to catch his bus at the beginning of the route (Station 1 in Map 1 depicting Bernardo's journey, and Photo 1).

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<sup>4</sup> In Europe and the USA, a way of generating integration or desegregation, has been area-based approaches or residential mixing, often leading to processes of gentrification.

<sup>5</sup> Based on Jiron (2008).

Map 1: Bernardo's journey



Photo 1: Bernardo walks to bus terminal in the morning



Photo 2: Bernardo's friend on the bus



Being one of the first ones on the bus gives him seating choice, he accommodates by the window and begins a ride that he actually enjoys. Very quickly the bus fills up and within a few stops, his friend Mayra gets on the bus, she stands next to him while he carries her bags on his lap and they talk all the way to work, about their friends, their family, their jobs, other passengers, life (Station 2 in Map 1, and Photo 2).

Photo 3: Inside bus in the morning



Photo 4: Bernardo buys breakfast



Photo 5: Bernardo on the bus in the afternoon



Photo 6: Bernardo arrives home



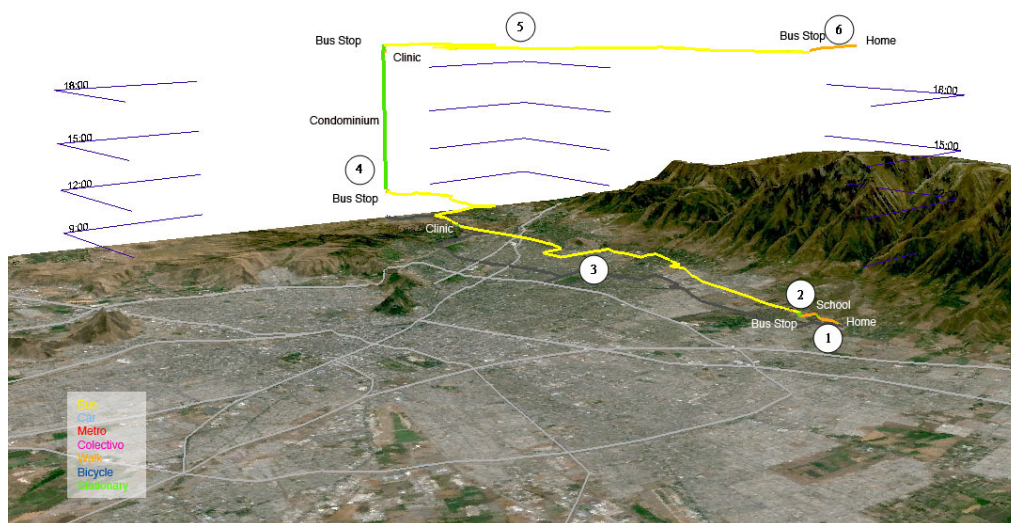
He constantly nods and waves to passengers as they get on and off the bus. The ride lasts over an hour, it is overcrowded, people look tired, and chances of pick pocketing are high, but Bernardo is not bothered by the journey, he says he only gets fed up ‘when the machines breakdown half way through the journey and we all have to get off and wait for another bus’ (Bernardo) (Station 3 in Map 1, and Photo 3). He makes it to work before 8:00, with enough time to buy, prepare and eat his breakfast (Station 4 in Map 1, and Photo 4). He stays indoors until about 18:00. He knows buses are very busy at this time, so he walks further, for about 15 minutes to catch his a little bit emptier and gets



on it from the back. The ride back home takes an hour and a half and he rides standing, but within a few minutes he manages to get a seat (Station 5 in Map 1, and Photo 5). Bernardo arrives home at 19:30 (Station 6 in Map 1, and Photo 6).

This is Bernardo's routine from Monday to Thursday; on Fridays he brings his guitar along and goes out singing and drinking with his mates. He does not get involved in many of the reproductive roles at home, Alicia sorts that part out, including cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, child minding, and he contributes with a monthly amount that she has to see through the month. Alicia is having a hard time realising that 'life is happening outside' and says she cannot do much about it for now. She knows she could get a job, her husband has no say in that, but she is afraid of leaving her 8 year-old son alone. She knows other children who have been molested by adults from the estate, and does not want to risk it with her son. She wants to be there when Mario gets home from school. Bernardo's limited involvement in household duties allows him to opt for the best time to find, within the available bus choice, a comfortable and suitable way to get to work early in the morning. He says he would not switch jobs to one closer to home; the ride is not an inconvenience for him. Those with household responsibilities, like the following case of Marta, however, have to sort household duties prior to getting on the bus, making their journey particularly difficult.

Map 2: Marta's journey



Marta is 24 years old; she's married to Ernesto, and their daughter Patricia is 7 years old. She works cleaning and childminding in a house in one of the richest and most exclusive neighbourhoods in Santiago, La Dehesa. Ernesto works as a security guard at a higher income gated community not far from their neighbourhood. His night shift starts at 20:00 until 8:00 am and continues like that for five days. Then he has three nights off and changes to day shifts from 8:00 am to 20:00. When he is at home during the day, he mostly sleeps.

Every morning Marta gets up around 6:30 and helps her daughter prepare for school. At 7:30 they walk through the park, an empty lot, a pedestrian bridge and a shantytown, to make it to school before 8:00 (Station 1 in Map 2, and Photo 7).

Photo 7: Marta and Patricia walk to school



Photo 8: Marta takes the bus



Once she drops Patricia off, Marta walks down the main road to catch the first of two buses she takes to work (Station 2 in Map 2. and Photo 8). Because of the time, the buses are already too full and the few that pass by do not stop for passengers. She walks past her stop to one further down the street to make sure the bus stops for her. Pushing and shoving, she gets on it. It is difficult to see inside, let alone outside, the bus is absolutely crammed, and as she manages to move further in, the passengers inside appear. 'It's mainly nanas on this bus' she says, going to work to the richer areas of the city, where the better paying jobs are.

The women sitting down are all sleeping; and except for the initial jokes to the driver, the ride is quiet for most of the way. She stands for most the ride and gets off before her actual stop to be able walk to catch the next bus, she explains that 'if I don't do that, the bus is so full, it wont stop for me at the next stop' (Marta) (Station 3 in Map 2, and Photo 3).

Photo 9: Marta inside the bus



Photo 10: A different Santiago: La Dehesa



She travels for another 45 minutes until she arrives at a different Santiago, a clean, green and empty one (Station 4 in Map 2, and Photo 4). In total, the journey lasts almost two hours, arriving at work way past 10:00 am. Her boss complains about her coming in so late and tells her to get up earlier: ‘she doesn’t understand that I can’t leave any earlier, I have to take my girl to school in the morning and it’s not a matter of getting up earlier’ (Marta).

She doesn’t leave the house all day and finishes around 19:00 pm. Once showered, she walks to the bus stop, waits for the bus for over 20 minutes and quickly grabs a seat when it arrives. She gets off at the end of the route, runs to take her second bus and manages a seat as well. She is very tired but cannot sleep. The curtains are shut and she doesn’t really try to look outside; she doesn’t recognise any of the streets, she doesn’t know their names or what is in them, she skips the outside. It is dark by the time she



gets to her stop. (Station 5 in Map 2, and Photo 5). She buys tomatoes, bread and butter in a corner shop on her way home and walks for about 20 minutes through the same route she took in the morning. It is very dark and although she knows her way (Station 6 in Map 2, and Photo 6), she prefers to walk quickly, as she is scared. She could take a bus that would leave her closer to home, but it would mean more waiting and paying for another fare. So she prefers to risk the dark road. When she gets home, Patricia is at home alone, watching TV. She has been alone for about an hour, has done the washing up and had her tea.

Photo 11: Bus coming back at night



Photo 12: Bridge crossing at night





Although both Bernardo and Marta have fixed work stations that require them to be physically present during specific times with limited possibilities to move during the day, their travelling experiences differ, as do the strategies they execute, regardless of using the same mode of transport. Bernardo organizes himself to be at the bus stop early in the morning, that is his strategy for having a comfortable journey, while Marta has to leave home later and endure the overcrowded bus while standing. The main difference is that Bernardo can leave earlier, although his boy is the same age as Marta's little girl, his wife Alicia prepares his child for school every morning, whereas in Marta's case, she is the one in charge of this task. His strategy for not getting involved with household duties is supporting his wife to stay at home. Marta does not have that possibility as both she and her husband work. One of the advantages of her husband's shift work is that he can sometimes take care of Patricia for a few hours, but they cannot rely on that.

The daily chore of taking children to and from school has important implications in the daily life of urban dwellers, and in the case of Marta, for the work decisions she makes. She mentions how 'I worry about her [Patricia], you see, she's starting second grade and can't read very well yet and I think it's partly because she's alone all the time ... but it's hard, you see, I get home tired, the bus takes a long time, the traffic, then walking here... by the time I get home at 9 ... it's too late, I have to feed her and it's too late to do homework, it's too late...' (Marta). Marta's concerns oscillate between her daughter and her job, she knows there is no way she can stay at home as she gets bored and the money she makes helps at home. But she says she needs to be there for her daughter, unlike her own parents, who sent her to a children's home when she was very young. She is thinking of quitting her job and finding another one closer to home to avoid travelling for 4 hours every day and spend that time with her daughter. However, even if she does manage to get a job close by, there still will not be anyone to pick Patricia up from school, and the money would not be as good as what she makes now. Marta takes care of higher income people's children yet she does not have the social networks or the money to take care of her own.

Marta's strategy to make her ride more comfortable ride is limited mainly to walking further to catch an emptier bus. In the afternoon, she tries to organize childminding for Patricia with her husband or friends but her social network is not broad enough and often ends up paying someone to do this. Marta's main concern is finding ways for Patricia not to be alone, whereas in Bernardo's case, Alicia has this responsibility. This does not mean that Bernardo neglects his children, but his wife is fully in charge of this issue. Alicia, on the other hand, has different issues to face, mainly to do with immobility.

Uneven mobility access in these cases is clearly gendered. Marta faces temporal, organizational and financial barriers, as she needs to sort out her daughter prior to setting off to work. This forces her to face rush hour in a system that does not operate adequately at such times. Her organizational barriers are based on her not having the social networks to help her ease her responsibilities and thus her journey, either to take Patricia to school or pick her up. At times Ernesto does it, when he has night shifts, other times a neighbour takes care of her, but they have to pay for it. Double earning households invariably face these difficulties of having to leave their children with others. For Marta, the time spent on the bus is wasted time; she can't sleep, read or look outside. Her husband worries: 'my wife's journey is difficult... and when she gets home she's tired, everyday something new hurts, her feet, her head, a leg, an arm, a hand...' (Ernesto). She now struggles between her job and Patricia, who does not have anyone to

pick her up after school. Although she wants to work, the possibilities available with her skills involve working far away from her home.

For lower income groups, money is also a mobility issue, as Marta explains: ‘I want to leave my job, because I spend too much time and money on transport. I spend about \$1,500<sup>6</sup> daily, it’s a lot of money, but I don’t get extra money for transport, I make 200,000<sup>7</sup> monthly, and I take the transport from there, about \$30,000<sup>8</sup> a month. But I need daily cash; if not, I can’t go out to work’ (Marta). Paying someone to take care of Patricia would cost almost half of what she makes. These difficulties impact all areas of Marta’s life, but makes it particularly difficult when travelling is involved.

Marta’s lack of ties or networks to help her organize her household life, and her limited time make her travelling burden a gendered one. This situation relates to Chant’s (2007) discussion on the ‘feminization of poverty’, where she criticises it as being a static view of poverty in terms of income, overemphasising female headed households, and neglects men and specificities of gender inequality, and suggests looking instead at the ‘feminization of responsibility and/or obligation’ (Chant 2006, 2007). This means that although the number of women working outside the home has risen, and men are more participant on household matters, the bulk of unpaid domestic and care work is still carried out by women. In the cases presented, this remains so, as women, both Marta and Bernardo’s wife, are still responsible for the household and childcare and this has an impact on the time available to carry out the activities they do, the decisions they make about employment and the way these organizational, time constraints and responsibilities affect their mobility experience in a negative manner. This makes many women in low-income households ‘cash poor’ as well as ‘time poor’.

Although it has been broadly recognised that gender differences generate different access to transport, affecting women particularly (Grieco, Pickup et al. 1989; Levy 1992; Turner and Grieco 2000), the complexity of everyday life means solutions cannot be simplistic in their assumptions. For instance, providing childcare alone will not solve Marta’s problem as someone still has to take Patricia to school and be present for moments of crisis, like illness. On the days she needs to go to the doctor, she has to take a whole day off, as she does not know how long it will take her to be seen at the Surgery. Understanding the chain of activities would provide a better idea of the differentiated difficulties faced by women and men in urban settings.

As Sheller and Urry (2003) note, most theorists agree in seeing inclusion/exclusion as spatially and materially fixed, but do not recognise how cars and information technology undo all divisions between public and private life (ibid.). Urban theorists also generally dismiss the way fragmentation occurs in everyday life. Therefore, there is a call for a more profound understanding of the situations of mobility and the experiences it gives rise to for those involved, the impacts and consequences which go beyond observing the finality of mobility. A comprehensive approach to the practices of mobility requires grasping the reality of contemporary movement as well as analysing the genealogy of these practices (Lussault 2003) that is, the socio-cultural dimensions that condition these practices.

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<sup>6</sup> Approximately £1.50.

<sup>7</sup> Approximately £200.

<sup>8</sup> Approximately £30.

This fragmentation of daily living and the social exclusion implications, which in Graham and Marvin's (2001) terms produces the 'splintered city', involves reconsidering urban interventions such as peripheral housing location or the need for expanding and connecting ever larger networks (which always bring further social exclusions and bypasses). It requires reconfiguring the couplings and decouplings through which persons, places and publics emerge. According to Sheller (2004), public spaces are no longer usefully envisioned as the open spaces or free spaces in which diverse participants could gather—the democratic spaces of the street, the square, the town hall; nor are 'virtual spaces' a kind of democratic cybretopia. Instead, Sheller (ibid.) explains that the mechanisms for publics occurring in the context of the new infrastructures of mobility need to be imagined in entirely new ways. Mobile publics can perhaps be envisioned as forms moving in and out of different social gels, including the capacity to take on an identity that is able to speak and participate in specific contexts. There are new possibilities for mobile publics within the unbundled infrastructures of urbanism, the powerful forces of privatisation, social exclusion, and enduring inequality that are taking place (ibid.). This mobile social gel limits some but it also generates new possibilities for others, and requires further exploration.

## 5 Conclusion

Analysing urban inequality through a mobility lens highlights the multiple relationships between mobility and inequality. These relations question the understanding of urban inequality based on analysis of fixed location of different groups in terms of segregation, and also idealist views of social integration, which mainly propose physically mixing social groups in space as solutions to achieve less homogeneous neighbourhoods. Daily access to activities, people and places, offers a more dynamic way of analysing the disparities in urban areas while moving.

This paper proposes a new understanding to the way inequality occurs in urban areas, and presents mobility as a *cause*, *consequences* and *manifestation* of urban inequality today. As a cause of urban inequality, transport systems are unevenly distributed among the population. For instance, the construction of high speed urban highways promoting car use privileges for certain groups, while simultaneously defining a public transport system to be used by other groups generates uneven access to the city in terms of modes, times and spaces. When such systems are associated to residential location it causes a double sort of inequality based on location in distant poor areas with limited transport means. Mobility or the lack of mobility possibilities can generate the sense of confinement in fixed places like home, which becomes exacerbated when residences are located in segregated areas. However, the situation worsens when, through citywide trajectories, places in the city are blocked.

The consequence of this uneven access is that the city becomes inaccessible tunnels – parallel, and often impenetrable between social groups. The city can then be visualised as encapsulated tunnels going to different places, at different speeds and times, avoiding each other, increasingly minimising the possibilities of encounter. The possibility of enlarging or confining mobile places depends on the mode of transportation, the destinations, the times, the comfort, but also on the way people manage to appreciate what lies outside, or enjoy what occurs inside, while on the move.

As a manifestation, the differentiated use of mobility systems –mostly according to income, but increasing according to age, disability and gender –shows that there are broader inequalities in societies that are simply reflected on mobility and such practices help to enhance them. By looking at inequality in terms of accessibility, existing inequalities are revealed, and new forms of uneven relations unveiled.

In terms of policy, an urban daily mobility approach recognises an urban reality that current transport or urban interventions often dismiss. Transport studies, by concentrating on transport systems and on urban travellers as rational decision makers, often disregard the implications of the experience of moving in the city, and how this experience affects urban living or the way urban and transport interventions impact everyday life. Similarly, urban studies often assume spaces and people's use of space as fixed and contained in specific areas, thus policy interventions informed by this perspective generally miss the practical scope and experiential value of mobility practices in the city.

Incorporating a mobility approach could lead to two approaches: improving existing tools and devises to urban and transport planners; or informing new ways of intervening in urban areas. The former could lead to improving surveys that inform transport models, providing additional checklists within the planning process, or help to explain aggregate results. It would also lead to finding better forms of representation, as in the use of aggregate time space maps. It would also lead to improving certain infrastructure design or urban usage of existing systems. The latter approach would not only involve complementary transport interventions including private and public transport, highway and road investments, but also interventions on urban policies including land use, housing, public space, services, amongst many others.

This paper introduces a way of capturing the experiences of differentiated mobility in the city. This experiential information is not currently incorporated into transport, urban and housing policy and planning, in spite of its daily consequences on people's lives. Analysis of the differentiated experiences of mobility can identify the need for better transport systems in terms of affordability, availability, accessibility, comfort, safety or reliability. It can also lead to better connected infrastructure, or improved housing interventions, but it could also evidence the need to improve access to better working conditions, educational and health services, cultural activities, use of leisure time, etc. Making urban daily experiences more visible and discussing the implications of such interventions on daily mobility practices and experiences provides a whole field of research on urban areas that is only now beginning to take place.

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