Irish Mobilities

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James Wickham
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Introduction

Like many people in the world today, Irish people spend a lot of time *moving* from place to place. The different sites where people live their lives are increasingly separated by physical distance and linked by means of transport. For most people home and work are joined by the daily commute, but for an increasing number the home is joined to a second holiday home by cheap air travel. 'Ireland' itself becomes less obviously the unit of people's lives, when many people who are employed on the island consider their home to be Poland and travel frequently between the two.

Such phenomena fuel the 'mobility turn' in sociology which is outlined in the first part of the chapter. Sociological theorising is now coming to terms with the importance of physical mobility. I suggest that the discussion of 'fluidity' opens up new empirical questions: how mobilities are created and also constrained and what usages actors make of their new opportunities. I then exemplify some of these issues through four aspects of contemporary Irish mobilities: car usage in Dublin, migration to and from Ireland in particular by professional workers; the expansion of business air travel; the growth of Irish-owned domestic property abroad.

The mobility turn

Until very recently sociology studied migration, but paid little attention to other forms of physical travel. Although social commentary and social history have long studied tourism, it only entered sociology with Urry's discussion of 'the tourist gaze' (Urry 1990). The sociology of transport as a specific theme hardly existed. For example, a study of the decline of urban transit in the USA and Europe (Yago 1984) remained almost the only work in the field for nearly twenty years.

Sociology's increasing awareness of all forms of physical movement has followed its awareness of the importance of electronic communication or of what could be called virtual travel. This has led to the 'mobility turn' in sociology. The most explicit representative is John Urry who has argued that sociology can no longer be the study of societies (2000). Whereas this appeared to call for a radical reformulation of the entire discipline, his more recent call for a new 'mobility paradigm' (Sheller and Urry 2006) seems to set out a new area of research *within sociology.*

Even within Urry's own writings, the mobility turn thus comes in a 'strong' and a 'weak' version. The weak version suggests that *mobility* is a valid general topic of research for sociology, just like gender, ethnicity, deviance or whatever. The study of mobility involves not just the study of physical movement, but also the study of location: how particular activities are located in particular physical places to which or from which people then have to *move*. This leads us to consider barriers to mobility (e.g. national boundaries) and also the technologies that enable people to move – the technologies of transport. From this perspective the commuter's daily journey to work and the movement of migrants from one country to another both form part of the study of mobility. This 'weak' version of the mobility turn highlights how mobility is an important, and hitherto largely neglected, aspect of social life.

Alternatively, a strong version claims that that the very nature of social life has changed. Society is seen as involving 'flows' and has become 'liquid' (e.g. Bauman, 2005). Thus the strong version challenges the assumption – embedded in the title of this collection - that sociology studies 'societies', whereby a 'society' is a delimited social structure within a territorial space bounded by the borders of a specific nation

state. The equivalence of 'society' with the nation state was a defining characteristic of 20th century sociology – as in all those undergraduate courses in 'Irish society'. Intriguingly, there is some evidence that across Europe as a whole sociologists are more 'national' than some other social scientists: an ongoing study of the careers of Socrates students (Teichler 2006) notes that sociology graduates are *particularly unlikely* to use their experience of foreign study to develop careers outside their country of origin. One probable reason is that empirical sociology has long been interwoven with social policy and hence with the specific institutions of each nation state. 'Practical' sociologists have needed to develop a national knowledge in a way that is now less true for those working in either conventional business or in the new culture industries.

Social historians and political philosophers have long argued that nation states are *constructed*, that whereas national ideologies always appeal to pre-existing nations, actually it was the national ideology and the institutions of the state that created – or at least constituted – the nation. The literature here is extensive and the titles suggestive: from *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Weber 1979) to *Britons* (Colley 1992); as early as the late 19th century Renan remarked that nations are not eternal and that the creation of the nation is a lesson in forgetting (Schnapper 2003). Furthermore, such studies also suggest that new forms of mobility were part of the *creation* of nation states. In Europe from the 19th century people became national citizens who could freely move around within a delimited national territory. Such citizens crossed national boundaries with national passports: the creation of freedom of movement for

national citizens *within* the national territory at the same time involved control by the state of the *boundaries* of the same national territory (Noiriel 2001).

Given this long intellectual tradition, it is not particularly novel to problematise the nation state analytically. The importance of the mobility theorists is rather their claim that the nation state no longer provides the main institutional framework for people's lives. The empirical sections of the chapter will show how many people are moving *through* the nation state of Ireland rather than simply living *in* Ireland, how people who work in Ireland spend time working outside of Ireland, and how many people whose home is in Ireland also have homes outside of Ireland. At the same time however, the policies that shape mobility are partly (though only partly) decided at national level. The nation state has not disappeared, and so nor have national societies.

Studying mobility necessarily involves grappling with transport technologies. For 19th century social commentators it was self-evident that theirs was a society based on speed and the railway, epitomised by JMW Turner's famous painting 'Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway' (1844). Equally, in the late 20th century information technology became seen as constituting contemporary 'information societies' and sociologists such as Castells (1996) contributed to this view. By contrast, sociology has never really developed any extensive analysis of car transport technologies. Even more striking, while political journalists have noticed how cheap air travel is changing Europeans' self-understandings (Reid 2004), the sociology of air transport technology remains a complete blank. Here the mobility turn is drawing our attention to issues to which sociology has long been blind.

A focus on transport technology also brings into focus the material consequences of flows of mobility. Transport technologies, in particular the private car and the airplane, have major environmental impacts. Understanding the form of mobility thus contributes to our understanding of how social actions impact on the environment.

The sociology of mobility has to deal with social structures. Just because people *move* they do not enter a world without constraints. On the one hand different people have different resources, while on the other hand the available transportation technologies facilitate some forms of movement and hamper others. As the empirical sections of this chapter will show, there are significant variations in the extent to which people are now 'mobile'. While individuals' mobility depends on the choices they make, based on their personal values and ideologies, their opportunities for mobility are also shaped by political structures and public policies – not least transport policies themselves.

The concept of mobility highlights certain aspects of contemporary life that are often not discussed within sociology; it also puts some issues in a new light. The purpose of the rest of this chapter is not to construct a grandiloquent over-arching theory of 'mobility'. Indeed, as Kaufman (2002) points out, one of the striking features of sociological theories of mobility is that they seem to have no relationship to empirical research. Instead, this chapter works the other way round. It selects four aspects of mobility in contemporary Ireland. Each is seen as interesting in its own right, but also used to evaluate *some* of the more general arguments found in the mobility literature.

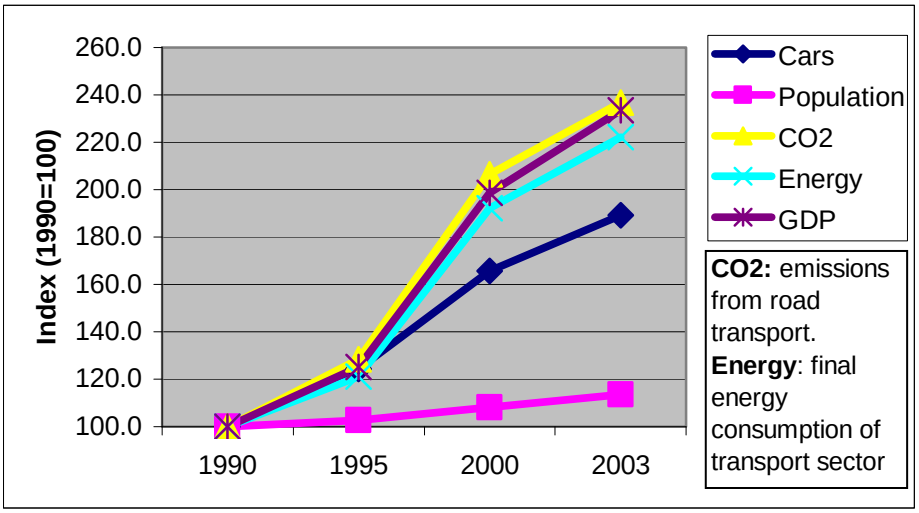
Auto-mobility: the car system in Dublin

For most people in Ireland, the continued expansion of travel by car is the defining feature of mobility over the last decades. Meanwhile the transport crisis in the capital city is now a major topic of public debate. This section of the chapter documents how the growing *car dependency* of Dublin is in part the result of socio-political choices. Dublin's traffic jams thus are a long way away from the 'liquid society' of the mobility gurus. However, recent changes in mobility within Dublin do lend *some* support to the notion that greater physical mobility is part of a growing individualisation of contemporary society.

The expanding car system

In Ireland as a whole car ownership has been rising faster than population, even though Irish car ownership figures are still below the average for the EU15. Car usage has also been increasing. In 1981 45 per cent of all those at work reached travelled to work by private car; by 2002 this had reached 59 per cent. Equally, whereas in 1981 20 per cent of children travelled to school by private car, by 2002 this had reached fully 50 per cent (Wickham 2006: 67). All this has immediate physical consequences: more space dedicated to cars, the growing physical impact on the environment through CO2 emissions (Chart 1). The expansion of car-based mobility in Ireland is thus a major component of the increasingly negative impact of Irish 'society' on the environment (EPA 2006).

Chart 1 Growth, Green House Gases and Energy Usage: Transport in Ireland 1990-2003



Source: *CSO, Environment – Principal Statistics; ;CSO, National Income & Expenditure, 2004.*

One response to this is that expanding car usage is somehow a 'natural' consequence of economic growth. However, even accepting conventional economic measures of economic growth, some societies are more successful than others at 'uncoupling' economic growth and (for example) energy usage or CO2 emissions. For example, Americans not only drive more than other people, they use more energy than anybody else for every kilometre travelled (Olsthoorn 2003). In these terms Ireland really is closer to Boston (or Los Angeles) than Berlin: the country's recent economic growth has been remarkable for the extent to which energy usage and CO2 emissions have simply risen in parallel with GDP..

If rising car usage was the inevitable result of economic growth, it would be difficult to explain why cities of similar wealth vary in the extent to which people use private cars (Newman *et al* 1995). At its simplest, where population density is higher, people are less likely to buy a car *and* less likely to use one when they have one. A

further issue is land-use planning. Some European cities such as Copenhagen or Helsinki have as low a population density as Dublin, but most development is clustered around public transport nodes. Consequently, people can move relatively easily across much of the urban space by public transport. Such cities also invested continually in public transport in the second half of the 20th century, so ensuring that they have relatively integrated public transport systems. By contrast, suburbanised Dublin has ineffective land-use planning and notoriously poor public transport. Thus in 1990, before the 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom, Dublin already had one of the highest levels of travel to work by private car in Europe, but still had a low level of car ownership. Indeed, 1990 data from 15 European cities suggests that sometimes the extent of driving to work and the extent of car ownership are negatively related. Thus in cities such as Helsinki or (especially) Bologna, car *ownership* was far higher than in Dublin, but people were significantly less likely to drive to work (Wickham 2006: 21).

Whereas public discussion often sees Dublin's traffic problems as an unpleasant by-product of recent economic success, the evidence shows that they are far more deep-rooted. From the 1950s onwards public transport in the city was destroyed, ensuring that compared to many other European cities there was only a limited *legacy system* of tram and rail that could later be recycled and renovated. Equally unlike some other European cities there was little attempt in the 1970s to restrain car usage in the city centre and, apart from the railway electrification programme that produced the DART in the 1980s, little investment in public transport. Accordingly, Dublin's transport history is close to that of American cities whose motorisation was described

by Yago (1984). And just as even a simple comparison between sprawling American cities and the less dispersed Canadian ones challenges some abstract geographical determinism (Goldberg and Mercer 1992), comparisons within Europe show that Dublin's precocious car usage highlights the role of socio-political choice.

Car usage and individualisation

Part of the attraction of the car as a form of mobility as long been its promise of freedom. The car-driver can travel where he or she wants to go, at a time of his or her choice. More analytically, the expansion of car usage can be seen as a technology of greater individualisation, the process whereby individuals are more and more 'freed' from the constraints of specific institutions

The move from a situation where the car is owned by a household or family to one where the car is owned by the individual would parallel changes in other domestic technologies, such as the shift from the family's house phone to the individual's mobile phone or even the move from the family to the individual television set.. The car can be used to connect spaces and activities. In a society in which activities have become increasingly fragmented, occurring in different places and with their own distinct timetables, individuals can use the car, like the mobile phone, as a connecting technology with which to manage and *integrate* disparate parts of their lives (Shove 1998)

A more political economy approach might refer to a shift from 'fordist' mobility to post-fordist mobility, from mass consumption based on the domestic family unit to more individualised consumption. Thus previously car journeys were made (usually by the male 'head of household') between the home and the workplace for regular

work ('nine to five'); work occurred in the city centre and home was located in the suburbs; recreation (which might also involve the car) was carried out by the family. By contrast, post-fordist journeys are made by individuals across an urban space in which home and work are randomly located; both women and men work but their working hours vary so that travel times have become much more diverse.

We can assess the extent to which such changes have actually occurred by studying mobility within the Dublin city-region. The Greater Dublin Area (GDA) comprises seven local authorities: Dublin City Council, here referred to as the city centre; South Dublin, Fingal, and Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, the 'inner suburbs'; Kildare, Meath and Wicklow, the 'outer suburbs'. Mobility patterns within the GDA can be explored using the micro-data from the 2002 census, which for the first time collected information from individuals about their place of residence, their place of work and their travel to work[1].

Census data clearly shows the rise of *individual* car ownership and *individual* car usage. According to the 2002 census, within the GDA 53 per cent of all households have access to at least two cars; within 'couple' households (with or without children) the proportion rises to 62 per cent. Here as in so many other areas, liberal society undermines gender differences, so that gendered access to private transport has become an issue only for the poorer income groups and for older people. Research in a low income suburb (Jobstown in Tallaght) showed that women were significantly less likely to be able to drive than men; where there was a motor vehicle owned by the household it was usually used by men (Wickham 2006: 120). However, such gender differences are disappearing in the general population. Within the GDA older men (55

to 59) are more likely to drive to work than women of the same age, but in some of the younger age groups women are *more* likely to drive to work than men (Table 1).

Table 1 Driving to work by gender: selected age groups (GDA)
Percentage in each category driving to work

Age group	Men	Women	All
25-29	46.6	48.3	47.5
35-39	60.5	65.2	62.4
45-49	63.9	60.4	62.4
55-59	64.8	53.2	60.6
All age groups	54.6	52.5	53.7

Source: Place of Work Sample of Anonymised Records (POWSAR)

The travel to work data can also be used to see if car-drivers have a more 'individualistic' or at least more post-fordist mobility pattern. Not surprisingly, the further away from the city centre people live, the less likely they are to work there. Thus of those who live in Dublin City 75 per cent also work there, as opposed to 40 per cent of those who live in South Dublin (as an example of the inner suburbs) and only 23 per cent of those who live in Kildare (as an example of the 'outer suburbs'). In the suburbs, those who do not work in the city centre tend to work within their own county.

However, comparing those who travel to work by car with all those who travel by other means shows how car-drivers are distinctive (Table 2). Of all those who live in the GDA, car-drivers are much less likely to work in Dublin City than non-car drivers (60 per cent as opposed to 41 per cent). Car-drivers are also less likely to work in their own area than those who do not travel by car. Thus 63 per cent of those who live in Dublin City and who travel to work by car actually have workplaces in the city centre, as opposed to 83 per cent of non-car drivers. More than a third of these Dublin City car drivers therefore commute *outwards* to the counties around the city, and traffic

counts on the M50 around the city show a small peak of outward bound journeys in the morning as well as the much larger peak in the early evening (DTO 2005:15). Equally in the inner and outer suburbs car drivers are more likely to travel to other suburbs than those who do not travel by car. In other words, whereas non-car-drivers work locally *or* in the city centre, car-drivers' workplaces are more dispersed across the entire city region.

Table 2 Place of residence and place of work, car-drivers and non-car-drivers, Greater Dublin Area 2002

	Dublin City		South Dublin		Kildare		All GDA	
Workplace	car (%)	non-car (%)	car (%)	non-car (%)	car (%)	non-car (%)	car (%)	non-car (%)
Dublin City	63.1	83.3	42.3	48.1	19.5	28.8	40.8	59.9
South Dublin	11.5	5.0	38.4	42.9	17.8	8.1	15.1	9.9
Other inner suburbs	14.4	10.5	13.3	6.6	7.6	3.2	24.0	17.0
Kildare	1.3	.3	4.0	1.3	48.0	55.7	8.1	5.1
Other outer suburbs	1.2	.4	1.3	.5	3.1	2.1	9.6	7.2
Outside GDA	.7	.4	.7.8	.4	3.9	2.1	2.5	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Place of Work Sample of Anonymised Records (POWSAR)

These changes mean *some* movement away from 'modern' forms of mobility. Travelling from the suburb to the city centre in the morning and back in the evening remains the most common journey to work. However, this is decreasingly the case as work places (and also working times) become more varied. And journeys to work probably amount to a declining proportion of all travel time within Ireland, in particular where the car is concerned. The result is that traffic problems and above all traffic jams can occur anytime and in almost any place: the post-modern traffic jam has arrived.

Such forms of mobility appear unstructured compared to the regular journeys to limited destinations of the previous period.. Yet this argument ignores both the variety of individual values *and* the variety of social contexts, both of which challenge a simple one-to-one relationship between individualisation and universal car ownership. At the individual level it is quite clear that some people actively choose forms of life and mobility which reduce their use of the private car. Thus a study of Bologna reported that older people preferred to use public transport because they found it more sociable (Wickham 2006: 144). Equally, a study of mobility usage in Swiss and French cities identified minorities, mostly of young men and women, who preferred to use public transport 'out of respect for the environment' (Kaufmann 2002: 71). The process of individualisation is not necessarily incompatible with an 'individual' choice not to use a car.

However, for individuals to effectively not to use the private car, alternatives to the car have to exist through which people can satisfy their mobility needs. In Kaufmann's study for example, the groups who actively chose public transport were larger in those cities with more effective public transport. In Dublin such minorities are probably very small. For most people, the interlocking policy failures of low density suburbanisation and poor public transport provision ensure there is no realistic alternative to the car.

At the same time, the relationship between the car and individual freedom is itself deceptive. The new mobility produces its own constraints on mobility. More roads encourage more cars, and the result is more congestion and even gridlock. The expansion of the car system is an example of the 'network effect' (Dupuy 1999)

whereby people have to use a specific technology if they are to participate in the society. As the city becomes built around the car, the expansion of the car system drives out other forms of mobility, from walking and cycling to public transport. Such 'car dependency' is hardly a new age of freedom.

Migration and mobility: the temporary Irish workforce?

Car-based mobility in Ireland and particularly in Dublin, is, so we have seen, shaped by public policy. Another aspect of the increased mobility of contemporary Ireland is the extent to which people move into Ireland from outside the country. Both the expansion of car-based mobility and the increase in immigration are sometimes presented as natural or inevitable consequences of economic growth and even of 'globalisation', but in the case of immigration the overall importance of public policy is more obvious. At its very simplest, government policy determines or at least influences who is allowed to enter the country and on what basis[2]. However, it is useful to consider immigration as a form of migration and hence as another form of mobility (Salt 2001: 95). In particular understanding migration as mobility avoids the common-sense assumption that 'integration' (or even 'assimilation') is the key issue both for policy and for research; as this section will show, it facilitates questions about the extent of this mobility and the motivations of the mobile.

In Ireland today over 10 per cent of the population were born abroad, but it is also well known that, particularly during the 1990s, many 'immigrants' had themselves been born in Ireland and were therefore returning *emigrants*. Rather than categorising the population into 'natives' and 'immigrants', it can be conceptualised as comprising more or less mobile elements: at one extreme those born in Ireland and living here all their life, and at the other extreme those arriving here recently for the first time.

Between these extremes lie different forms of mobility, from those born in Ireland but who have lived abroad for some time, to those born abroad who have lived here for some time.

Table 3 presents one such possible classification, again using the 2002 census micro-data[3]. The bottom row shows the share of the groups in the overall population. The mobile can be defined as all those who have lived outside Ireland: those born in Ireland and lived abroad, those born abroad and long-term resident in Ireland, those born abroad and recently arrived. In 2002 the mobile as a whole comprised just over a fifth of the total population. Comparing the top row ('Professional workers') with the bottom row shows the extent to which professional workers are more mobile than other groups: nearly a third of all professionals were in some sense 'mobile'. At the other extreme the 'non-manual' group were least mobile: here 83 per cent had never lived abroad.

Table 3 Mobility and social class

	Born and lived in Ireland	Born in Ireland lived abroad	Born abroad long-term resident	Born abroad arrived 1996-2002	Total
Professional workers (%)	69.1	14.1	6.7	10.1	100.0
Managerial and technical (%)	77.2	11.5	3.9	7.4	100.0
Non-manual (%)	83.8	7.8	2.5	5.8	100.0
Skilled manual (%)	81.4	8.7	3.0	6.9	100.0
Semi-skilled (%)	81.6	8.1	3.0	7.3	100.0
Unskilled (%)	82.3	9.7	2.2	5.9	100.0
All others gainfully occupied and unknown (%)	77.3	7.7	3.9	11.0	100.0
All (%)	79.3	9.4	3.5	7.8	100.0

Source: Census of Population Sample of Anonymised Records (COPSAR).

Mobility experience is also related to education. Table 4 shows that the higher the level of education, the more likely people are to have lived outside of Ireland. Thus

of those who only had achieved primary education, 84 per cent had lived in Ireland all their lives. At the other extreme, of those with at least a third level degree only 57 per cent were 'immobile' and had never lived outside of Ireland. In Ireland today, to be educated is to be mobile.

Within the mobile category however there is an interesting difference in the use of educational qualifications. On the one hand returning emigrants who have third level qualifications do better occupationally than those than those graduates who have stayed in Ireland. Further analysis of the data shows that of those who had a degree and who were working full time, 79 per cent of the 'immobile' held a managerial or professional job, but this rose to 82 per cent of all those who were born in Ireland but had lived abroad. This demonstrates again the 'emigration premium' for Irish-born graduates (Gash and O'Connell 2000). By contrast, amongst graduates who were born abroad, 71 per cent of long-term residents and 72 per cent of the recent arrivals had reached managerial or professional jobs. At the same time it is important to keep this in proportion. Most of those born abroad are in a job which is broadly consistent with their educational qualification and many are able to use their qualifications more effectively than they would have been able to at 'home'.

Table 4 Mobility and educational level

	Born and lived in Ireland	Born in Ireland lived abroad	Born abroad long-term resident	Born abroad arrived 1996-2002	Total
Primary (including no formal education) (per cent)	83.6	11.7	.7	4.0	100.0
Lower secondary (per cent)	82.3	8.1	2.2	7.5	100.0
Upper secondary (per cent)	78.1	10.1	3.2	8.6	100.0
Third level - non-degree (%)	71.1	15.3	4.4	9.1	100.0
Third level – degree or higher (%)	56.6	19.7	8.8	14.9	100.0
All (%)	79.3	9.4	3.5	7.8	100.0

Source: Census of Population Sample of Anonymised Records (COPSAR)

The focus on 'mobility' rather than 'immigration' therefore alerts us to the extent to which the population *of* Ireland is actually flowing *through* or *across* Ireland Furthermore, this focus on the different mobility experiences within the population alerts us to the importance of mobility over the life cycle. Rather than just considering those people currently in Ireland, we need to focus on mobile *careers.* Although immigrants' current intentions are a notoriously bad guide to their future actions, it is clear that many of those currently resident in Ireland do not intend to stay here. For example, according to the Polish Labour Force Survey, most of those who have left Poland recently define themselves as 'temporary' emigrants (Kaczmarczyk 2006).

According to some theorists, much professional work now occurs within increasingly trans-national labour markets: for 'symbolic analysts' (Reich 1993) or members of the 'creative class' (Florida 2004) traditional ties of place have little meaning. An ongoing study (Bruff and Wickham 2005) of migration within the Irish software sector shows both the reality and the limits of such arguments. For many across the globe with some experience and/or qualifications in software, Ireland is now just one of several 'hot spots' where they could work:

> I was just looking at the Net, and I found some articles which said that after the US Ireland is the second biggest exporter of software. I hadn't thought about it until then…I found these Irish job sites. *Just for the heck of it I sent off my CVs* (Javed, 32, Indian, has worked in the Irish software industry for a few years; emphasis added).

From this perspective, the initial decision to end up in Ireland has an almost arbitrary quality. At the same time, for some the decision to stay in Ireland rather than move to the USA, allegedly the ultimate destination for many professionals, is sometimes based on a conscious rejection of US values:

> I was the in the States eight, nine years ago…I didn't like the lifestyle there: it's so different. Ireland was different, but in a positive way…We have a lot of conference calls with the Americans, and they start at seven or earlier [in the morning], and sometimes they are still [working] when I arrive back at the office in the morning, and they have much fewer holidays [as well]. (Tibor, 34, Hungarian, has worked in the Irish software industry for several years).

This interviewee's deliberate rejection of possible mobility exemplifies the argument that it is important to distinguish between mobility potential ('motility') and the actual use of that potential (Kaufman 2002). Equally the decision to stay in Ireland is shaped by family considerations and position in the life-cycle: marriage and children make mobility more problematic:

> My plan was to stay here for only two years and then go…wherever the opportunities were going to be. Unfortunately, or fortunately…I met my [Irish] wife, so I didn't continue with the plan that I had. (Richard, 30, Venezuelan, has worked in Ireland for various software firms over several years)

Sometimes however children are a spur to returning to the real 'home':

> We are planning to move back even if the economy is doing well. I really would like our daughter to start her schooling in India, because after that it would be difficult to move back…So we are hoping that we can go back in two years (Murali, 36, Indian, has worked in the Irish software industry for several years).

Software workers such as these interviewees face a new international labour market for their specialised qualifications. However, their ability – and their desire – to take advantage of it is shaped by their personal ideologies, their values and, often

omitted in the literature, their stage in the life cycle. In these terms at least, the new mobility opportunities have not removed some rather traditional constraints.

Business travel: working on the move

Travelling to work and travelling from one country to another are in one sense 'traditional' mobilities: the journey itself is a means to an end (to reach work, to move home). Business travel often involves working *while travelling*, so that travel time is no longer 'time out', but another form of working time (Felstead *et al* 2005). On such journeys the physical location of the traveller becomes in one sense irrelevant, in that s/he remains in contact with colleagues, customers and clients. As one interviewee in an ongoing study of business travel in the Irish software industry (Wickham and Vecchi 2006b) remarks:

> I travel with my laptop and often it doesn't matter if I'm in the office, working from home, or away on business, but there are many reasons why I need to be with a customer or an analyst or a manager" CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of a company producing software for the telecommunications sector.

Chart 2 shows the travel pattern of a senior marketing communications manager for a Dublin software company. For her, travel is clearly part of the job. Such mobility across national borders means that at any one time many Irish professionals are away on business, even if, as we have already seen, they also remain connected to their organisation. Our research suggests that the software industry is in fact particularly travel-intensive, with managers and professionals continually on the move. At first sight this is paradoxical, since precisely in this industry competence with ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) is most extensive and so managers should be able to replace physical travel with electronic communication. In fact, most research shows that, just as the telegraph and the steam railway were

complementary in the 19th century, so at the end of the 20th century are electronic communication and air travel.

Chart 2 EK's Business Travel Pattern

January	Two periods in the UK
February	Major trade show in France (1 week)
March	Press talks in the US (2 weeks)
April	No travel
May	Two trade shows: one in Europe, one in Sri Lanka
June	Two weeks in Singapore
July	Little travel
August	One foreign trip
September	Three foreign trips (2 in the UK, 1 in the US)
October	Some foreign travel
November	Little travel
December	Little travel

Such mobility is necessary to create temporary *physical proximity*. Business interaction requires 'handshakes' to build up trust and exchange complex information in ways that cannot be achieved purely by phone calls, e-mail or other forms of electronic communication (Leamer and Storper 2001). However, as we shall now see, such mobility is clearly patterned (Wickham and Vecchi 2006a). Consider for example the case of a small Irish software company producing videogames. Here the CEO, the CTO (Chief Technical Officer) and the sales director travel frequently, not least to the USA which is its main market. The CTO goes to Los Angeles every 5-6 weeks and he stays there for ten days. The sales director travels extensively all around the US to meet up with potential publishers and he on average gives a presentation every three weeks. The entire team goes to two main tradeshows: one, the Game Developers Conference in March, which is very technical, therefore the entire team needs to attend

'to keep everyone in the loop'; the other one is held in May in Los Angeles and is open to the public.

Indeed, keeping up with technical developments thus requires frequent electronic communication *and intermittent physical proximity*. The case also highlights another paradox. Precisely in this 'weightless' industry, certain physical locations become clusters of activity. Dublin itself is now a software cluster, just as Los Angeles is for the videogame industry. Such clusters around the globe are linked by 'pipelines' (Bathelt *et al* 2004) transferring news and ideas, and here physical travel is as unavoidable as electronic communication. The two trade fairs which are so important for the company are temporary clusters – here industry members from around the globe meet in physical proximity for a few days, and although the actual location of the trade show may be incidental to its purpose, it is essential that it occurs in *some* physical location. Finally, the rather different travel pattern of the sales director with its wider range of destinations is produced by the need to liaise with actual and potential customers, and once again, there is no substitute for temporary physical proximity – and hence for extensive short-term mobility.

Foreign property: travelling to the second home

Another development creating more physical mobility is that many Irish people now own assets outside the country. Ireland has one of the highest levels of home-ownership within the EU (Fahey 2003), yet today Irish residents seem more likely than almost all other Europeans to own second homes - and to be private landlords – outside the country.

There are no reliable figures for the numbers of Irish residents who own second homes abroad, partly because the boundary between a second home and an investment

property is hard to draw. In 2004 'around 60,000 Irish residents' were reported to have bought properties in Europe during the previous five years (Irish Independent 17 June 2004); Irish 'investors' are now reported to own 100,000 properties in Spain (Irish Times 10 July 2006). Individual Irish investors are particularly adventurous in Central and Eastern markets, buying property in Berlin (Financial Times 10-11 June 2006), and Croatia; newspaper property pages advertise apartments in Dubai and even exhibitions of Bulgarian property. *Irish Property Buyer* magazine has two pages in Polish about buying property in Ireland – and nearly thirty editorial pages on property abroad (Irish Property Buyer 2006).

In Europe in absolute terms the British own more second homes abroad than residents of any other country. Over a quarter of a million UK households were estimated to own residential property outside the UK in 2003/04 (Aspden 2005); the growing numbers of British retiring to their second homes probably explains the 60 per cent leap in British immigration to France between 1999 and 2004 (Borrel 2006; Financial Times 24 August 2006). However, in relative terms Irish households would now appear to be at least twice as likely to own property abroad than households in the UK. By contrast, it is now Continental Europeans who are home-bound: a recent survey in the leading Milan newspaper carefully listed second home prices per square metre in a range of Italian resorts, but did not even mention opportunities outside Italy (Corriere della Sera, 15 May 2006).

Affluent Irish families can now partly live outside Ireland because of cheap air travel, especially to smaller regional airports. For example Ryanair's flights to Carcassonne in South-West France have led to the emergence of an Irish colony

which is beginning to rival the British 'Dordogneshire' further North. Further afield, direct flights to Cape Town and more recently Dubai are making even these destinations possible second homes.

This precocious level of second home ownership has little to do with the features of 'liquid society' in general and a lot to do with the specific *national* political economy. Two issues are important here. Firstly, the Irish-based carrier Ryanair has been central to the European low fares revolution (Creaton 2005). Ryanair is a political lobbyist, skilled at creating new coalitions of interest (e.g. with small regional airports) which in turn promote further deregulation. Secondly, along with the UK, Ireland now has one of the highest levels of personal debt in Europe. The two countries have extensive *retail* financial services which, compared to most other European countries, enable consumers to have easy access to retail credit and in particular mortgage finance (RICS Research 2006; Donnelly *et al* 2005). In the context of economic boom this ensured that many people in Ireland have been able to turn housing from an immobile and illiquid asset into a financial asset which can be leveraged to access *further* property. In turn, rising house prices in Ireland create financial opportunities for arbitrage between Irish and foreign property prices. Such foreign property ownership generates a novel form of mobility and weakens the boundaries between *home* and *abroad.* The mobility occurs as *some* individuals seize the opportunities provided by a very specific *national* financial system combined with changes in the organisation of air travel..

Conclusion

The study of mobilities in Ireland is just beginning. This chapter has indicated how increased mobility is changing Irish life, but understanding this mobility has involved

rather conventional sociological concerns. The 'strong' version of the mobility turn thus appears an exaggeration of little relevance to empirical sociology.

By contrast, the 'weak' version of the mobility turn suggests many new areas of research. One issue suggested by the different case studies is the regulation or *governance* of mobility. Although mobility is partly about the crossing of national boundaries, the national state remains surprisingly important. While this is obvious in the case of the most local of our four mobilities, Dublin's precocious car-based mobility, the equally precocious extent of Irish foreign home ownership is also largely shaped by national level financial structures and policies. Mobility is at very least shaped by the broader political context. How the politics and social processes of mobility interact is thus one important area for future study.

Footnotes

1 I acknowledge permission for the use of the POWSAR data set from the Central Statistics Office – Census Place of Work Microdata File © Government of Ireland.

2 Control over immigration is in fact an example of multi-level governance, since decisions involve the European Union and to a limited extent other inter-governmental and even non-governmental actors.

3 I acknowledge permission for the use of the COPSAR data set from the Central Statistics Office – Census of Population Sample of Anonymised Records © Government of Ireland.

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