



## Professional travellers and tourist practices



Wilbert den Hoed<sup>a</sup>, Antonio Paolo Russo<sup>b,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Geography, Politics & Sociology, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom

<sup>b</sup> University Rovira i Virgili, Department of Geography, Spain

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 30 June 2016

Revised 9 November 2016

Accepted 23 December 2016

#### Keywords:

Professional travel

Working life

Mobility

Transport

ICTs

Barcelona

### ABSTRACT

This study analyses to what extent conventional tourism is part of the experience of professional visitors. Following the literature on mobilities, this paper assumes that leisure and work increasingly intermingle in time and space. Empirical work based on a survey of conference attendants in Barcelona confirms this stance, and invites to reframe professional life 'in mobility' as performed as part of a wider package of everyday activities. Public transport and mobile communication are analysed as facilitators of such convergence, highlighting how professional travel is situated in flexible spaces and flows. These findings provide insights for urban (tourism) policy, insofar as they demonstrate that planning for specialised spaces is not sufficient to reduce visitor pressure on the main tourist 'sights'.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### Introduction

This paper discusses the relationship between professional life on the move and the urban space, using empirical evidence from a celebrated tourist city like Barcelona. Our analysis departs from the assumption, fleshed out in the recent literature on the mobilities turn in social science, of increasing de-differentiation between professional and leisurely practices in 'mobile lives'. This can be seen as depending on the unprecedented pulsion to – and affordability of – mobility, which shifts the notion of tourism as a well-demarcated life domain, associated to leisure-out-of-home (Cohen, 1984; Graburn, 1989); and on the increasing use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), believed to have further promoted the ubiquitous character of connection (to social, work, leisure networks) in mobility (Hannam, Butler, & Paris, 2014; Kwan, 2007; Wang, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2012).

Professional life and leisure have been traditionally analysed as framed by different and incompatible space and time frames. They could also be understood as different life domains, which, as suggested by Jokinen (2009), the knowledge economy as contributed to reunite into a 'borderless surface' (Veijola, 2010) in which intimate virtuosity and personality, proper of leisure life at home, is deployed in professional life – or rather manipulated by advanced knowledge capitalism into corporeal (and highly gendered) dimensions of displaced work and relational skills.

*Mobile lives* is thus the broader frame in which we analyse the blurring of boundaries between leisure and work, which have both become associated to travel to an increasing extent over the past decades. The mobilities literature thus suggests that social behaviour does not change substantially while 'in mobility', or rather configures a framework of 'mobilities as lifestyle' (Cohen, Duncan, & Thulemark, 2015) in which the contrast between professional and leisure practices is much more

\* Corresponding author at: University Rovira i Virgili, Department of Geography, C. J. Martorell 15, 43480 Vila-seca, Spain.

E-mail addresses: [a.w.den-hoed1@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:a.w.den-hoed1@ncl.ac.uk) (W. den Hoed), [antonio.russo@urv.cat](mailto:antonio.russo@urv.cat) (A.P. Russo).

tenuous than is suggested by traditional assumptions on time spent 'home' or 'away', hinting at very different degrees of familiarity with the spaces in which such life spheres are organised.

As the relational structure of the global economy has expanded, so has the dimension of travel for professional reasons, which involves a high level of synchrony between different mobilities (face-to-face encounters, attendance to business meetings, conventions and conferences, visiting production facilities or getting in touch with customer markets). It is also commonly observed that the availability of digital and web technologies, rather than inhibiting physical mobility, has greatly facilitated the efficient organisation of the professional life on the move and the coordination of the multiple mobilities and life domains involved (Green, 2002).

Such intrinsic engagement of professional travel with new mobilities and technologies also highlights its relevance for destinations (of professional travel) in studies of place. In this sense our paper wants to contribute new evidence that serves to demonstrate how a specific collective of mobile urban users moves around and engages in practices of visitation which add up to the way in which tourism shapes city spaces. Specifically it provides new knowledge regarding the intersection of professional life on the move and the leiscapescape in which it moors, namely that of a global tourist destination like Barcelona. Indeed, however far-stretched the advances in scientific thinking on mobile lives and blurred or liquid life domains (Bauman, 2000), the literature arguably falls short to address their practical implications for place management. More in general, while the mobilities literature offers a wider framework to Massey's (1993) notion of place as constructed and signified through the intervention and negotiation of a multiplicity of agents, and urban space in particular is seen to represent a mooring which enables and orders such myriad of mobilities (Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006), urban management and planning practice hardly seem to incorporate such powerful concepts in new, more resilient models of place-making which can cope with the increasing instability of space.

This study's main ambition is thus to suggest, beyond the complexities of theoretical reflection, that the material and symbolic construction of a 'tourist city' and its management has to incorporate an explicit concern for the increasing predisposition (and ease) of professional travellers to engage with everyday spaces and practices – just like any other 'mobile population', including tourists and sectors of the local society. In this sense we seek to make our research useful to urban policymakers and planners, who are striving to embrace a holistic view of the urban space as constructed through the seamless engagement and negotiation of heterogeneous mobilities. In particular we claim that an explicit consideration of the motivations and spatial practices of special categories of visitors, like congress attendants (but this could easily be extended to event audiences, cruise tourists, foreign students, etc.) could provide a better basis to design a 'city for all' and to engineer more sustainable models of service provision and public space management (Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Maitland & Smith, 2009).

To this end, the next section addresses the concepts of professional travel and tourism and spots out relations with the mobilities literature. The section "Case study presentation and methods" introduces the research context and outlines the statistical and spatial analysis of professional travellers' tourist activities. Subsequently, the section "Empirical results" elaborates on the results of this research disclosing patterns in the way in which professional practices and leisure activities match out. Finally, the "Conclusions and discussion" discusses implications for research and policy and, given this paper's exploratory nature, addresses further research avenues.

### **Underlying concepts: professional travel and tourism as converging mobilities**

Since the late 1990s, a large number of works focused on the centrality of movement in human life (e.g. Castells, 2000; Cresswell, 2006; Duyvendak, 2011; Kaufmann, 2002; Knowles, Shaw, & Docherty, 2008; Urry, 2002), seeing mobility as the dynamic equivalent of place, undermining more sedentary (or a-mobile) traditions of social science, and with them, much of the dualism on which social studies of tourism used to build (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Instead of the conventional notion of places and regions as stable entities, it is movement that defines the essential relational space of daily life, and configures a "new order of spatiotemporal continuity for forms of economic, political and cultural life" (Lury, Parisi, & Terranova, 2012, p. 4) which has the power to reconfigure epistemological and ontological frameworks, shifting the attention to the power and meaning of mobility. The mobility paradigm emphasises that "(...) all places are connected by networks of movements and flows", and that "(...) activities occur while on the move and being on the move can involve sets of occasioned activities" (Kwan, 2007, p. 435). This notion is, for example, applied in geography, where Couclelis (2009) attempted to extend traditional time geography by removing the constraints of physical accessibility, travel time and distance.

Many domains of everyday life are engaged relationally through mobility, for instance work, consumption, socialisation, leisure and recreation, health, and education. These very different domains may therefore converge in time and space, being no longer segregated into specific locations and periods (Aguilera, 2008; Davidson & Cope, 2003; Schwanen & Kwan, 2008; Sheller & Urry, 2006); travel and mobility bring them together as parts of displaced experiences, and the widespread availability of digital technologies of connection allows performing many of such activities while travelling, and in (almost) constant contact with our social and professional networks. Virtual ubiquity and increasing mobility thus seem to progressively blur the boundaries between proximity and distance, nearness and farness, and the physical and non-physical within our everyday activities (Knowles et al., 2008; Kwan, Dijst, & Schwanen, 2007; Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2007; Lyons & Urry, 2005; Urry, 2007). As a result, "(...) social life involves continual processes of shifting between being present with others (at work, home, leisure and so on) and being distant from others" (Urry, 2007, p. 47).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5107913>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5107913>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)