

The Mobility Preferences of Generation Y: Transitioning Towards a Sustainable Transport System?

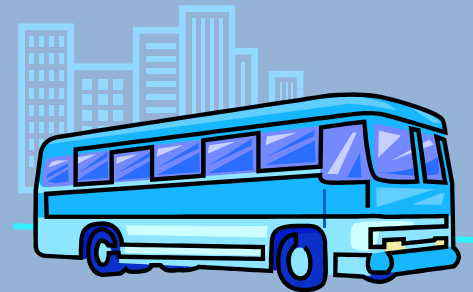
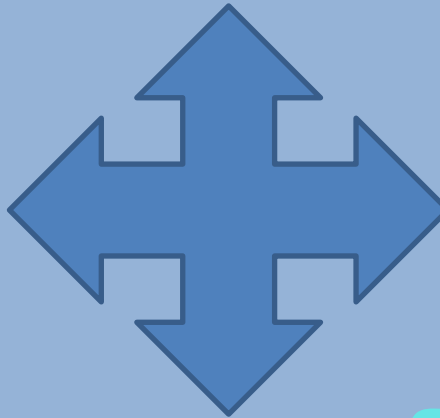
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Mobility: modal choice



The automobile

- An artefact of automobility
- A highly contested, iconic commodity
- The hegemonic class of contemporary everyday mobility



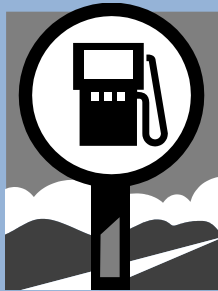
- *'Mobility-by-automobile'* as a human right

Automobility [1]



Material
artefacts

Natural
resources



Policy &
legislative
artefacts



Infrastructure



Organisations
& agents



Together
achieve
functionality

Automobility [2]

“The self-organising, self-generating, non-linear world-wide system of cars, car-drivers, roads, petroleum supplies, and many novel objects, technologies, and signs” (Urry, 2004: p.27)

A system which both *allows* the opportunity to drive, whilst also *enforcing* the need to drive

Automobility [3]

The good

- Autonomy, freedom & access

The bad

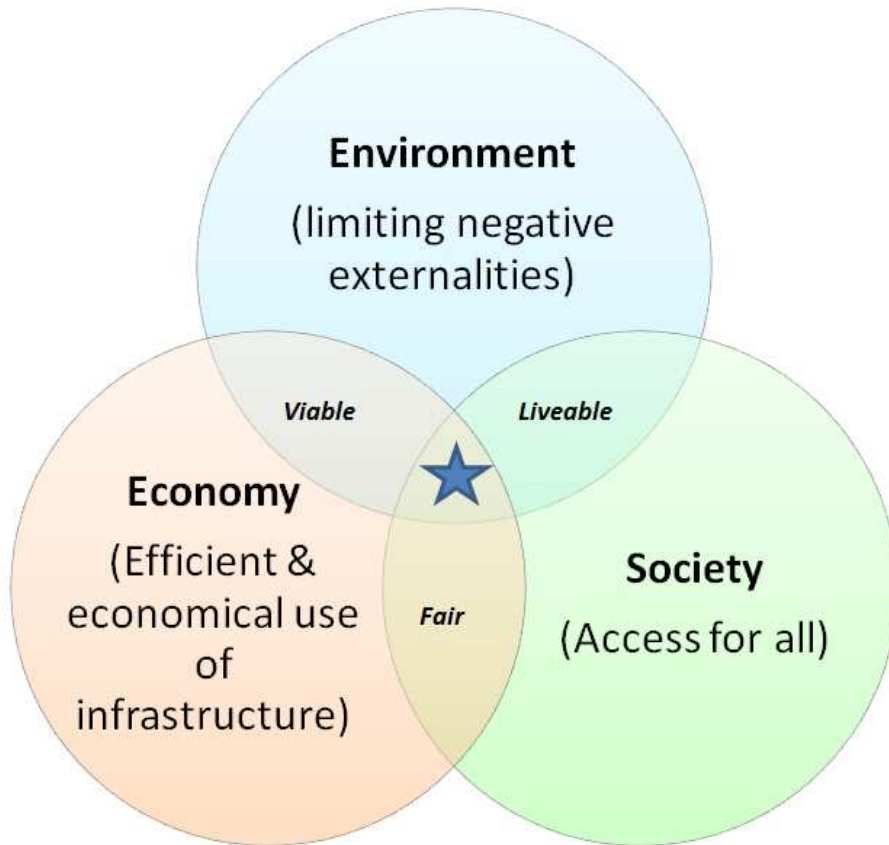
- Reliance on fossil fuels,
- System of auto-dependence,
- Social inequality & injustice,
- Health issues (air pollution, obesity)

The ugly

- Vested interests,
- Power asymmetries



Sustainable mobility



Environmentally, socially and economically sustainable mobility systems which provide equitable access to a range of mobility options.

The Sustainable Mobility Paradigm

- Reduced need to travel:
travel substitution
- Transport policy:
facilitating **modal shift**
- Land use policy: facilitating
distance reduction
- Technological innovation:
Increasing efficiency



(Banister, 2008, 2011)

Sustainability transition

Sustainability transitions are *“long-term, multi-dimensional, and fundamental transformation processes through which established socio-technical systems shift to more sustainable modes of production and consumption”*

(Markard et al., 2012: p.956)



Generation Y Mobility

GENERATION Y

Who are generation Y?

Born after 1979/1981, or between 1981 & 2000

Defining characteristics:

- 'Digital natives' (rather than 'digital immigrants')
- Growing up during a period of mass consumption and growing inequality

Why do they matter?

- Largest generation in the USA and Australia

Formative ‘youth’ mobility events:

Learning to walk, to ride a bike, to drive a car – gaining **mobility-based competencies**, *“all form part of the fabric that constructs our everyday mobility”*

(Pooley et al., 2005: p.1)

However, for generation Y:

“Leaving the family comes later nowadays, and complete integration to the economic system is postponed. At the same time, 18 year olds drive cars and act like adults in many other ways”

(Tully, 2002: p.23)

Global generation Y mobility trends



Declining rates of: **licensing** (average 0.6%/year), **vehicle kilometres travelled** (VKT) and **car ownership**

Generation Y Mobility

DRIVERS OF GENERATION Y MOBILITY PRACTICES

Factors which might reduce or replicate automobility for generation Y:

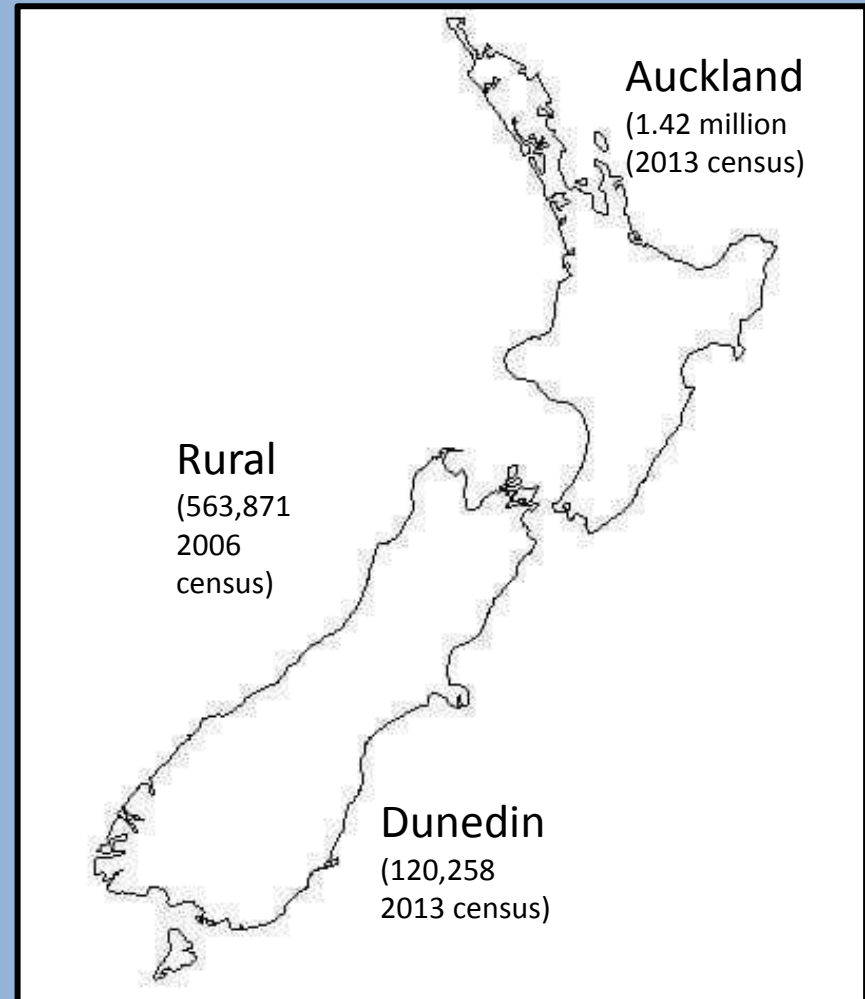
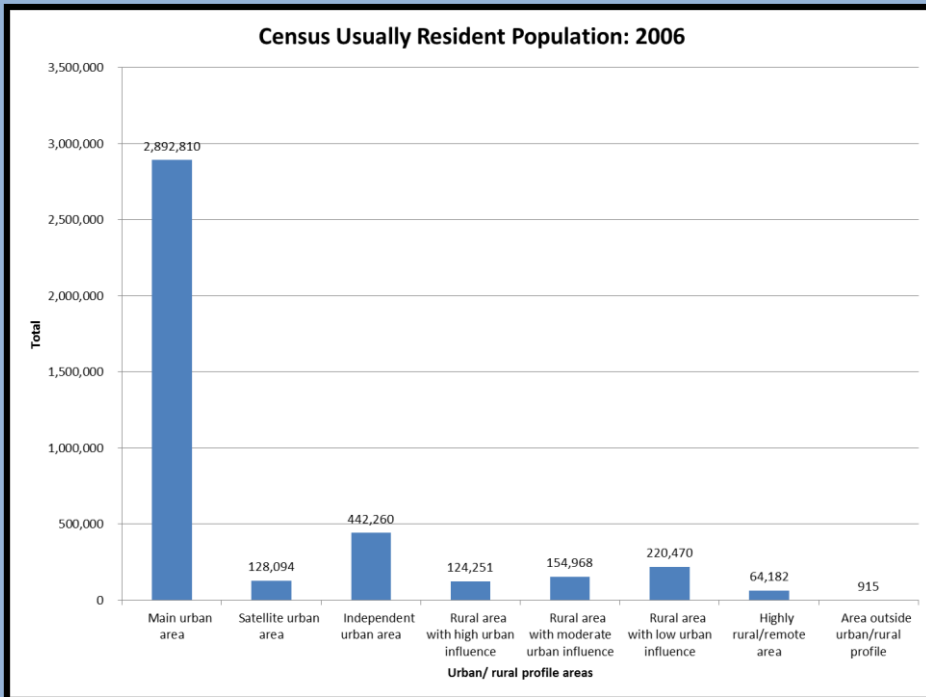
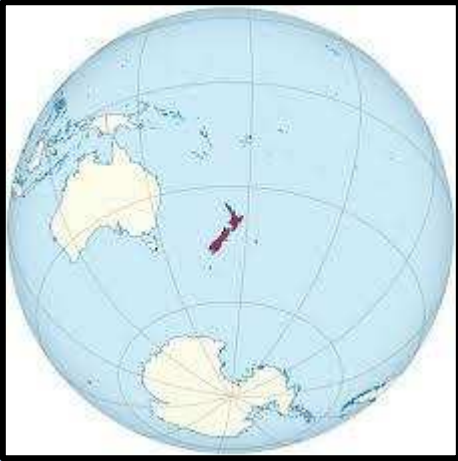
Explanatory category	Reduce	Replicate
<i>Individual</i>	Freedom, autonomy, prestige	
<i>Social</i>	Willingness to use alternative transport modes, social acceptance, social groups	Driving as a 'rite of passage', car as a status symbol, encouragement from family & friends
<i>Built environment</i>	Infrastructure for alternative mode	
<i>Natural environment</i>	Increasing concern for climate change, environmental degradation, peak oil, health concerns	
<i>Economic</i>	GFC, cost of learning to drive	
<i>Legal/ policy</i>	Graduated learner scheme	
<i>Technological</i>	ICT, social networking & virtual mobilities	

Source: Hopkins & Stephenson, 2014

Generation Y Mobility

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Interview locations



Interviews with generation Y

- N = 6
- Aged 21-32 years old
- 5 female, 1 male
- 1 additional pilot interview
- Average length – 44 minutes
- Dunedin, New Zealand



Values attached to car travel

- **Independence**

“Being able to do things by myself and **not have someone else wait around for me** or run around after me. My car was recently broken for a week... and that was horrible.” (Participant 3, female, 26 years old)

- **Freedom**

“My car is a station wagon, so I can pack it up and take a group of friends away to Central, that sort of thing...” (Participant 5, male, 25 years old)



Achieving freedom & autonomy without a vehicle

“I find the bus is fine because its, you know, it’s got a **timetable** and it’s at set times, and generally it can **take me to close enough** where I want to go. But I think its harder working around someone else because it changes every day, where they need to be, especially at home with siblings. It’s more difficult **depending** on someone else”. (Participant 2, female, learners licence, no car, 21 years old)

Without a licence... [1]

“I know I should have it... I think I should have it because I should have my own independence and not have to rely on somebody else, have my own way around. I feel like it’s limited jobs that I can get as well. They ask where do you live, and how will you get to work. So it’s definitely impacted on that.” (Participant 2, female, learners licence, no car, 21 years old)

Without a licence... [2]

“I just put it [getting restricted licence] off and put it off. I had romantic notions too, like *‘Oh I’m going to go and live in New York or something and no one needs to drive there’*. But then I **just kind of shaped it** so that I’ve lived in places in Dunedin that are close to everything, **so I don’t need to drive**”.

(Participant 6, female, learners licence, no car, 32 years old)

ICT & virtual mobilities

“When I have Skype conversations, it’s just a conversation, whereas friends I see in Dunedin, we’ll normally meet up over lunch or a coffee or doing something, we wouldn’t just talk... you’d be doing something and talking at the same time.” (Participant 4, female, 23 years old, licence & car)

Does ICT replace physical meeting? “No, I think I just have friends in more places... it’s a lot easier to maintain friendships further away... I have a friend in Australia... I probably see her about as often as I would... you can’t really replace that face to face.” (Participant 3, female, 26 years old, licence & car)

Generation Y Mobility

THEORISING A SUSTAINABLE TRANSITION

Transition theory & the multi-level perspective (MLP)

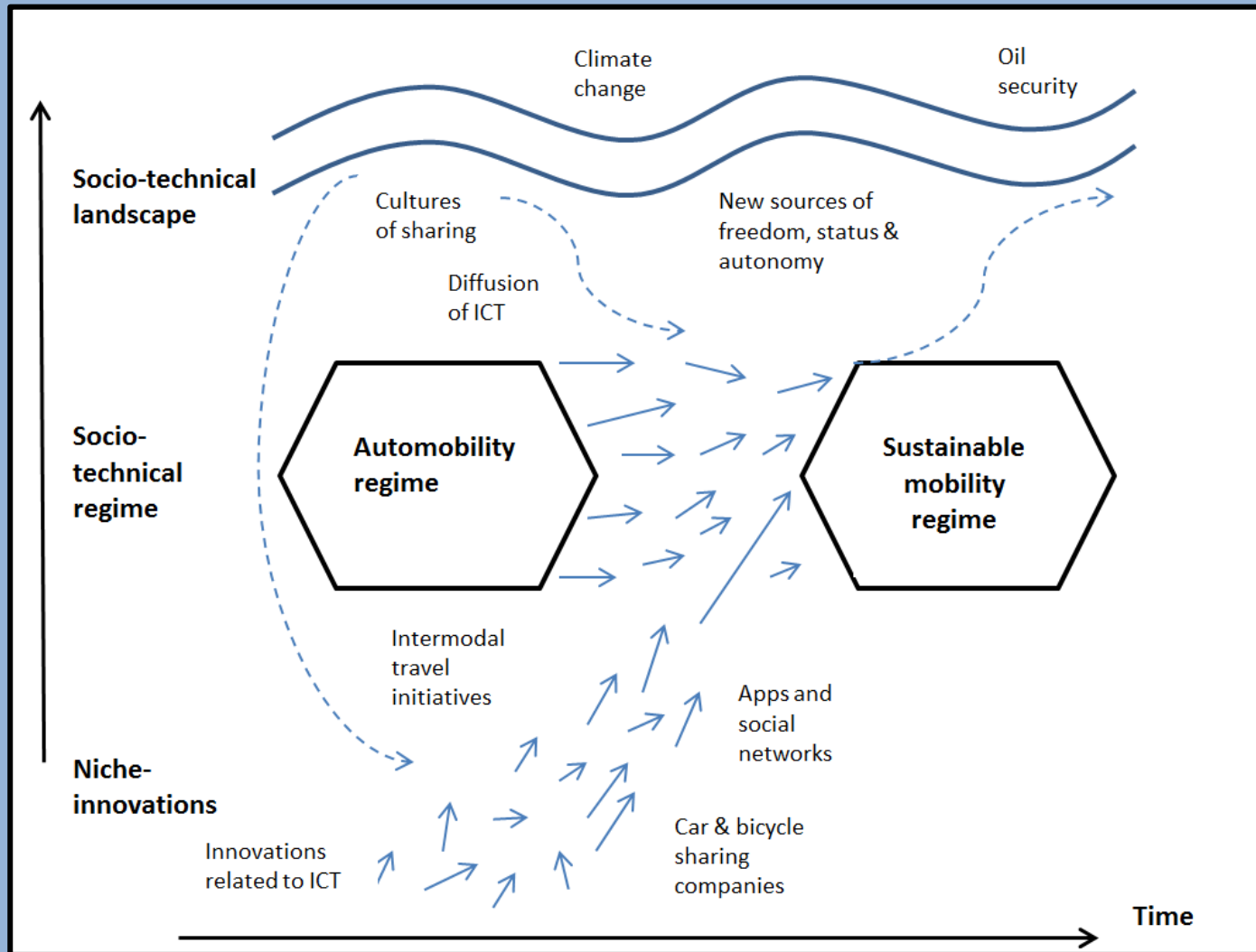
- Replacing one socio-technical regime (automobility) with another (sustainable mobility) requires a socio-technical **transition**
- A framework to explore stability & change
- Transitions are non-linear processes, requiring interplay across three analytical levels: **niches**, socio-technical **regimes** and socio-technical **landscape**

Generation Y & the MLP

Analytical level	Brief description	Actors	Pace and direction of change	Examples of relation to generation Y
Socio-technical landscape	Wider context influencing niche and regime dynamics: urban design, political ideologies, societal values, beliefs, macro-economic trends etc.	Beyond the control of individual actors	Structured, slow change	Changing social norms & values, global financial crisis
Socio-technical regimes	The “deep structural rules that coordinate and guide an actor’s perceptions and actions” (p. 473)	Actors are embedded in socio-technical regimes	Slower, stable trajectories	Automobility, multi-modality, sustainable mobility
Niches	‘protected spaces’ for innovation to occur	Niche actors work on radical innovations (differ from existing regime)	Can be rapid, random directions	Technologies (e.g. ICT developments), Car sharing businesses

Source: Hopkins (2014)

The Multi-Level Perspective (MLP)



Source: Hopkins (2014)

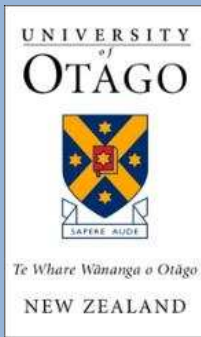
A sustainable transition?

Changes are occurring, in some but not all developed economies, however, if these changes are going to continue in the long term, and contribute to a sociotechnical transition, it will require:

- ***Support from powerful actors***
- ***Policy and infrastructure developments***
- ***Acknowledgment of alternatives to business-as-usual road building agendas.***

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