Reference

*Bissell D. 2015. Understanding the impacts of commuting: Research report for stakeholders*. Project supported by: The Australian National University and The Australian Research Council, Canberra, Australia. ISBN: 978-0-9943186-0-2.

Abstract

This project is the first of its kind to explore how commuting stress emerges, plays out through home and work life, and impacts on the longer term plans of city workers and their families. There are important economic productivity and public health reasons for understanding how commutes are impacting on people’s lives. However, improving the wellbeing of city workers and their families is an important objective in itself. This project was designed to develop a richer understanding of: • how commutes are changing people • how commutes are impacting on people’s work and home lives • how commutes are impacting on people’s longer term plans • how the negative impacts of commuting are responded to by a range of diverse stakeholders. Research was conducted with commuters and stakeholders in Sydney, Australia. It aims to be useful for those involved in making cities better for their inhabitants. The findings of this project increase our understanding of how life in our cities is undergoing change. They will be used to engage key industry stakeholders, policymakers and politicians on current issues of urban transportation.

Critique

This paper explores the impact that people’s commuting habits have on their lives and will be used to further understand the domain of human navigation habits, especially how factors such as social engagement can impact one’s travel experience. Bissell (2015) explains that commuting can be a positive social experience, as sharing a space with others, be it sitting in a bus or driving together on the road can be a valuable opportunity to prevent the feeling of social isolation. This social engagement can benefit the attitude of travellers, improving their travel experience. This significantly contributed to my understanding of the domain, as I believe the opportunity for social interaction whilst commuting can be extrapolated to general travel. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind the possibility for incorporating social engagement whilst further researching this domain. However, the social aspect of travel can also be strenuous for people, as travellers increasingly use this time to be alone, often leading to feelings of isolation from people in their surroundings. Although it is often a distinct choice to distance ones self socially, it is important that people do not make this choice only because not socialising is the easier option, thus making social engagement while travelling as easy and natural as possible is crucial for reducing this solitary experience.

Bissell also states that people grow stressed when they consider the time that they spend commuting as it has potential for productivity. This can be in various forms, from getting work done to utilising the time for leisure, however it is important for people that this time is spent with purpose and is meaningful. This paper helps to inform the domain, as it explains that people wish for their travel experiences to be meaningful, and it is suggested that this could be achieved by supporting the social engagement that travellers already find so valuable in these spaces. Some potential opportunities to support greater social engagement for travellers will require further research into how social technology can be used to improve the experience of urban travel and how it can encourage social engagement between travellers.