People and mobility in Turku
Futures of mobility as a subsystem of a complex city

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About us

*Future Cities and Communities* research team, University of Turku:

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Overall aim of the seven-part study

To gain insight into how mobility, as a subsystem in a complex “system of subsystems”, interacts in people’s lives as well as possible ways this interaction will change in the future.
Why did we select Turku?

We are part of the University of Turku.

Access to key actors.

Co-operation with the City of Turku.

The size of the city is ideal for the first round of the study.

Translation: “Why Paris, when we have Turku?” Picture: http://www.rcm-clothing.com/product/197/varfor-paris-vi-har-ju-abo--canvas-ba g
Why did we select *mobility* as a subsystem?

- High number of connections to other city subsystems.
- A key system by which people interact in a city.
- Mobility issues are a top concern for any city, yet a holistic view is often missing in mobility planning and design processes.

Turku city center.
(Picture: Nicolas A. Balcom Raleigh)
Research Questions

● How and why do people in Turku move now and in the future?
  ○ How will their ways of moving change?
  ○ How would changes in the mobility subsystem produce changes in other subsystems?

● How are mobility and other urban subsystems intertwined in people’s everyday life?
  ○ What are the motivations, interests, and experiences that people have with mobility?
  ○ What premises, criteria, and thought processes do they use to choose modes of movement?

● What are the main drivers affecting mobility in the future?
  ○ How is mobility governed, managed, and produced? How does it emerge?

● How can an urban mobility subsystem be changed so that it has more desirable characteristics in the future (e.g. more accessible, affordable, cooperative, environmentally friendly, holistic, human friendly, seamless, and smart)?
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The social and technological transition

(c.f. analytical model by Geels 2002, Multi-Level Perspective)
Substudy 1 - Theoretical review of mobilities

Conventional Thinking about Mobility & Transportation
From the mobilities paradigm:
“Movement of people, materials, and information.” (Sheller & Urry 2006; 2016).
2 Mapping existing mobility data sources in Turku

Trends in smart city development and open data initiatives will produce more and more mobility data.

Initial observations:

- Open vs. closed data
- Static vs. real-time data
- Cultural resistance to opening public data
- Need for trust in relationship between data producers, data users, and data.
- Data gaps

Our goal is to go beyond data, to see what data is available, what data could soon be available, and how this data (and its use) play in future society.

Föri - The old city ferry on the River Aura. (Picture: https://www.visitturku.fi/fori_fi)
3 Current and future state of mobility in Turku

Based on 20 public sector interviews with key mobility and data experts in Turku, we have these initial findings:

- **Fragmented transportation planning**: lack of cooperation inside the city, and in the regional level. Lack of communication and discussion between public and private actors.

- Since mobility issues are strongly intertwined to other systems (e.g. health, energy, city planning), **transportation planning should be better connected to those systems**.

- **Traditional way of transportation planning** based on *four-step transport model* to predict the future traffic amounts to help land-use and city planning. A need of more proactive planning attitudes and methods.
4A Mobility challenges as presented in local print media

Aim: To analyze representations of mobility in local printed media.

Questions:
What types of interaction are presented in the media in the mobility field?
What themes and categorizations are interesting from the futures perspective?

To start with: From a four month sample (winter, spring, summer, fall), all mobility related writings (N=441) were collected in a local newspaper (Turun Sanomat).

In general, the discussion of mobility issues is very problem-centered, and the next thing to do is to analyze the issues and challenges rising in that type of writing and interaction.
4B Mobility Information Streams

**Aim:** To map current mobility information streams, and analyse, *how do these digital streams affect our lives?*

In the future, the perception of the data that the mobility apps track, is becoming more and more multifaceted from the human-centered perspective.

How do these apps and the algorithms behind them tell stories and organize our lives in the future?

Linked to substudy 2.

Pictures:
http://tuup.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/phone_01-1.png
5 Mobility as a factor of city regeneration in vision making

Through Markku Wilenius, we have access to a group appointed by the Mayor to make a vision for Turku city center.

**Aim:** We are both evaluating how the process unfolds while actively engaging in its work.

**Initial observations:**

- The group sees mobility and its changing forms as a key part of the city regeneration process.
- The Turku vision group envisions an achievable and compact future city, where walkability, cycling and low-emission public transport would be preferred when, at the same time decreasing the car traffic in the center.
- One of the concrete and radical ideas of the vision group is to cut off the car traffic on the busy Cathedral bridge.

Our research perspective is continuing to evolve as the vision work continues.
6 Individuals and futures signals

Mobility Diaries
(23 ‘trusted informants’/volunteers were invited to participate and 14 completed diaries.)

Key aims:
- Gain insight into the motivations, reasons, conditions/contexts, and perception people give for their everyday mobility choices.
- Produce “evidence from the ground” of intersections among subsystems that individuals experience in mobility (e.g. mobility and education; mobility and gender)

Additionally, one of our goals was to invite people to deliberate more about their mobility.

Initial observations: Diaries are generally lively, volunteers are deliberating a lot, some long, some short, some technical and detailed while others poetical, there were many comments about bad cycling paths and construction work.
6 Individuals and futures signals

In analysis, we will code the text for:

- Reasons/motivations for choices
- Intersections among subsystems / appearances of subsystems
- Weak signals of possible future mobility behavior

Segways in Turku. (Picture: Ellinoora Leino-Richert)
7 Key variables/principles driving present and future mobility

Research Questions

● What key variables/principles will be the most significant, most probable, and most desirable ones for the mobility subsystem in Turku 2040?
● What alternative future states can these variables exhibit?
● What are the key elements of a desirable vision for Turku mobility in 2040?
● What cultural vectors contribute to prioritization of one variable over another?
● Which results are only applicable to Turku? Which can be generalized?
Conclusion

City of Turku, as a research object, has a lot of change happening and interesting dynamics between different actors.

The research is producing outcomes at multiple levels--in addition to the various results of the substudies, the research design itself is being tested.

Methodological challenges, transdisciplinary challenges, intercultural communications challenges, and balancing international and local perspective have emerged.

When we have our results from all of these substudies, we may do comparisons again on another system of Turku or another city.
References


Comments / Questions / Discussion

By the River Aura. (Picture: Ellinoora Leino-Richert)