Using the car in a fragile rural tourist destination: a social representations perspective

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Abstract

The visitor experience of place is inextricably linked to our ability to travel around an area at will, yet this mobility creates many problems especially in scenic rural areas of the UK. The study presented here attempts to unravel the visitors' experiences of mobility using Moscovici's social representations approach. Travel diaries were employed to explore visitors' transport choices and mobility patterns during the peak season in Purbeck, Dorset, UK. Analysis focuses on how such patterns reflect a social representation of mobility and the implications this has for visitor travel at destinations.

Keywords: transport; visitors; destinations; social representations

1. Introduction

Within the academic discipline of transport, studies that focus on leisure or tourism settings are limited (Lumsden and Page, 2004; Page, 2005) and yet leisure traffic can be significant. In the UK it accounts for 30% of all trips and 40% of all trip miles if visits to friends and relatives are included and it is dominant in the long distance market accounting for 58% of all UK trips over 50 miles (Department for Transport, 2005). This situation is not unique to the UK, for instance, German figures estimate leisure trips account for 48% of all passenger kilometres (Schlich et al., 2004). However the UK government agenda appears to focus on daily commuting and trips to school (Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1998), while leisure receives a small mention in more recent transport white papers (Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2000; Department for Transport, 2004).

National governments are keen to promote tourism and leisure for the economic benefits (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 1999) whilst at the same time there is an agenda to reduce congestion, greenhouse gas emissions and tackle other environmental problems associated with travel by car by reducing road traffic growth (Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998; Department for Transport, 2004). The apparent contradiction of policy objectives is explored by Robbins and Dickinson (2006). At a local government level there is limited effective guidance on the most appropriate ways to manage tourism traffic demand. Many places have adopted a 'must do something approach' which has only limited impact and in many cases simply fails (Dickinson and Dickinson, 2006). Most research is based on analysis of data on visitors' behaviour: where have they come from, how have they travelled and their attitudes to alternatives to the car. Such studies are useful for predicting number of car movements that may be generated by new developments but as yet there are few initiatives that have successfully made alternatives to the car attractive, particularly in a leisure context, without a high degree of intervention.

This paper sets out to re-examine the geography of mobility experiences. The starting point is the lived experience of residents and visitors. From this, the social conceptions that drive people's experience of transport at a tourism destination are explored. The study adopts a social representations perspective (Moscovici, 1981) and is interested in the underlying social knowledge which people draw on to make every day transport choices. This parallels a sociological analysis of transport behaviour such as Jensen's (1999) analysis of transport behaviour as it appears in today's society. This paper brings a social psychological perspective to the transport and tourism debate and a theoretical analysis which has been largely absent to date.

In order to illustrate these ideas a study is presented of Purbeck, a rural tourism area of Dorset, UK. The study draws on a wealth of secondary material together with primary data drawn from travel diaries kept by visitors. The paper follows from earlier work which reported the social representations of residents (Dickinson, 2004a; Dickinson, 2004b; Dickinson and Dickinson, 2006). The objective of this paper is to analyse the travel behavioural patterns and modal choices made by visitors within the area in the context of the social representations of residents. While data are presented from Purbeck the results have resonance beyond the immediate context having implications for tourism destinations more widely and for non-leisure travel.

2. Theoretical perspective

Social representations theory is a social psychology theory which holds that we construct shared perspectives that enable us to make sense of the social world we inhabit and communicate with other people. These shared perspectives form a widely accepted knowledge of the world on which individuals base their decisions. Moscovici, the French psychologist who first proposed social representations, gave the following definition (1981: 181):

"a set of concepts, statements and explanations originating in daily life in the course of inter-individual communications. They are the equivalent, in our society, of the myths and belief systems in traditional societies; they might even be said to be the contemporary version of commonsense."

As the term 'social' implies, groups create these representations through social interaction so they become shared. They become the tacit framework through which we interpret our own actions and those of others (Moscovici & Hewstone, 1983).

The theoretical perspective has been applied to tourism studies most notably by Pearce et al. (1996). Aside from an earlier contribution by one of the authors (Dickinson and Dickinson, 2006) the perspective has not been applied to transport studies, although social representations theory offers an interesting opportunity to examine how representations help structure and organise views of transport choices. Fredline and Faulkner (2000) in a tourism impacts study argue that representations can distort experiences and perceptions to conform to those which are accepted by the population while Hogg and Abrams (1988) go further to suggest they can even create a reality that fits. The theory thus enables us to explore the extent to which people's choices are constrained by the objective reality of transport alternatives or by the social reality as they expect it to be.

The theory is also well suited to addressing the social dilemmas and contradictory perspectives involved in the realms of transport planning. Moscovici presents a view of society in which conflict is present with a number of groups having their own social representation. In the transport field conflict is well documented with groups reinforcing their own consensual understandings of a particular transport issue. A typical example is the economic perspective that car restrictions will reduce visitor numbers (Holding, 2001; Coleman, 1997). However, social representations are not fixed and there are several pathways for change. Individuals can be members of more than one reference group where they encounter alternative representations which provide a pathway for the transmission of new

social representations (Pearce et al., 1996). Studies by Clark et al. (1994) and Macnaghten (1995) also show that individuals are aware of different perspectives on issues such as transport and can respond differently depending on the social context in which they are situated. Thus social representations theory offers an alternative perspective to the usual attitude and behaviour studies common in transport.

3. Data and method

The study setting was Purbeck, an attractive coastal and countryside destination located in southwest England close to the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation. It is both a seaside destination and an area of countryside recreation activities attracting an estimated 2,330,000 day and 490,000 staying visitors each year (Purbeck Heritage Committee, 2002). The local population is 44,000 residents (Buro Happold, 2003). Upwards of 60% of the Purbeck area is protected by national and European landscape and ecological designations (Buro Happold, 2004). The designation of the coastline as a World Heritage site in 2001 creates a typical conflict between tourism development policy and traffic management. Whilst it brings wider recognition to the area and ultimately more visitors, congestion is common at particular bottle-necks and at the main coastal destinations. While the alternatives to the car are not excellent, they are reasonable given the rural nature of the area, with key places served by an hourly bus service. There is a steam railway and a developing cycle network.

A social representations approach requires research that examines where social representations come from and how they are perpetuated in the community (Dickinson and Dickinson, 2006). As you are seeking the respondents' views and meaning it is important to examine their perspective rather than test out a priori ideas of the researcher. Social representations researchers are particularly interested in the ideas that circulate in society. Many studies examine the mass media as a means to sample the context and as part of a data triangulation exercise with other sources of data (see for example, Foster, 2002; Sotirakopoulou and Breakwell, 1992). In this study the context was sampled by examining

media reports, local government documents, external consultancy reports, holiday brochures and leisure and tourism transport initiatives in the area. In-depth interviewing with key informants was employed to explore residents' representations of tourism, local transport and the rural setting. It enabled the exploration of underlying arguments and proved particularly successful for revealing contradictory perspectives and underlying meaning. The aim was to gain an insider's view (emic) and develop an analytical description of residents' views that may challenge traditional perspectives on the transport problem. This stage was participant led to explore how the topic is culturally constructed. The findings of this study have been reported elsewhere (Dickinson, 2004a, Dickinson, 2004b, Dickinson and Dickinson, 2006) thus, comment here is brief.

The travel patterns of visitors within the area were explored through the use of a travel diary. The purpose of the travel diary was not to develop a picture of visitors' social representations of transport but to examine their behavioural patterns in the context of the representation presented by residents. Tourists were sampled at campsites which account for a large proportion of beds in Purbeck (Purbeck Heritage Committee, 2002) and offer a convenient point to distribute and explain travel diaries to participants. Five campsites of varying size and type were selected from Purbeck wards covering the variety of different geographical and socio-economic characteristics of the area. Given that campsite visitors mainly arrive by car they are likely to have a vehicle available during their stay and the sample largely excluded visitors without access to a car (1 participant did not have access to a car). The design of the travel diary was based on a German study (Axhausen et al., 2002) and the UK National Travel Survey (Stratford et al., 2003). Due to the time required to set up the diary only participants planning to stay 5 nights or more were recruited thus short-stay visitors were excluded and are being covered in future research. The travel diary was explained to participants in a face-to-face meeting which facilitated collection of background data on participants. Diaries were collected from visitors at the end of the week. The diary generated largely quantitative information on: travel patterns; modal choice; trip chaining; purpose of journeys; attractions

visited; and distance travelled. In addition an open section allowed participants to give a personal description of their trips and any problems encountered. This data was then analysed in relation to the social representations perspective and car trips were examined and potential alternatives that participants might have used identified.

Due to a reliance on untrained volunteers the quality of the data collected varied. It was clear some participants either systematically or occasionally omitted details. For instance, the time of the trip was commonly omitted presumably as participants completed the diary later in the day and could not remember. There was also potential for errors such as over-estimating the time taken. The most obvious problem was the under recording of walking at the end of car trips or trips by other modes where it was clear from people's descriptions a walk, sometimes up to 1km, was involved. The diary was voluntary and involved a high degree of commitment from participants which was likely to have effected who participated. Few participants with pre-school children were recruited for instance.

4. The findings

4.1. Review of leisure/tourism transport initiatives

Public transport initiatives dominated attempts to reduce car dependence in Purbeck until recently. There are currently a number of ongoing cycling initiatives which is partly in response to a group of local cycle enthusiasts and the appointment of a project officer to examine transport issues over the last 2 years. An analysis of 60 UK leisure and tourism transport initiatives (Dickinson and Dickinson, 2006) confirmed the majority of initiatives (70%) focused on public transport provision or promotion, 30% focused on traffic management and few focused on cycling or walking. The dominance of public transport initiatives suggests this is the preferred 'carrot' or alternative. In Purbeck there are areas with

serious traffic congestion problems yet traffic management initiatives are limited. Dickinson and Dickinson's (2006) analysis of why initiatives fail highlights that there is often fierce opposition to traffic management, also observed in Snowdonia by Lumsdon and Owen (2004), while public transport is supported.

4.2 Interview and document context

The interview and documentary methodology and analysis has been presented elsewhere (Dickinson, 2004a and 2004b) thus this section will present a summary of the main findings. There is a clear representation of Purbeck as unique rural area with a diverse natural and human heritage and a rural community. The area is also represented as a leisure space and as such there is a widely recognised conflict scenario which is presented in terms of the balance between positive and negative impacts of tourism and leisure: 'Tourism is vitally important to the area but has some negative impacts'. However, the picture is more complex as though many participants used the 'balance' scenario they also contradicted this perspective. This suggests that the social representation has distorted perceptions and the initial preconception remains intact despite contradictory evidence (Fredline and Faulner, 2000). For instance, tourism impact studies typically identify economic impacts as a positive benefit (see for instance, Andereck and Vogt, 2000; Gursoy et al., 2002; Jurowski et al., 1997; Vaughan et al., 2000). While this study also found this to be so, some Purbeck participants questioned this reality and raised contradictions.

> *"I pay my council tax, what do I get out of tourism? Nothing, absolutely nothing but grief..." (I. 4).* (Dickinson, 2004b)

Thus, there was a second perspective: 'Tourism brings very little to the area, the benefits are over rated and impacts severe'.

The study also reveals the dilemmas people have about social issues within the Purbeck area. For instance, while tourism is seen to cause problems and it is felt tourists should change behaviour not residents, there is recognition that residents are privileged to be able to live in

the area (Dickinson, 2004a; Dickinson, 2004b). Interviews suggest residents have developed a way of life adapted to cope with tourism. There is arguably a continuum of coping which could be described as what Ireland and Ellis (2004) term 'communities of fate' and 'communities of choice'. That is the ability to make choices rather than have them imposed and the financial provision to cope. When coping strategies were examined in depth it seemed that residents were able to cope with tourism but the wider problems faced by residents in a rural area were where the more significant transport problems lie. These revolved around changes in the community structure, economic and employment base resulting in a need to travel out of the area, however, poor public transport infrastructure often limited such opportunities. This was particularly framed in terms of problems encountered by 'others' usually from disadvantaged groups. So one can see a socially constructed consensus shaping the views of tourism. The accepted social representation shapes the issues yet these are challenged and contain contradictions. Tourism is only a part of a bigger picture. The changes to the nature of Purbeck as a rural area are more fundamental and effect views of tourism (Dickinson, 2004b).

With respect to transport and mobility the 'carrot' and 'stick' mentality dominates the social representation with 2 dimensions apparent:

- 'The car cannot be restricted'
- 'If public transport was improved people would use it more'

The view prevails that alternatives must be improved (carrot) before car use can be managed (stick). This is also evident in Dickinson and Dickinson's (2006) review of leisure and tourism transport initiatives. However, there is a further dimension in the representation which complicates this picture. Alternatives to the car are seen to be for 'other' people therefore it is not clear there would be much up take of 'carrots' were they to be improved. Another element of this dimension is that tourism is seen to cause the traffic problem therefore tourists should change their travel behaviour not residents. This further reinforces

the perspective that the problem needs to be solved by 'other' people. Lastly cycling and walking were largely represented as leisure activities rather than a means of transport.

4.3 Travel diary findings

40 useable diaries were returned (89% response) (Table 1) which generated 844 trips. The participants were 43% male with ages ranging from 17 to 70. People under 30 were under-represented compared to the national population, however, this reflects the family market staying at campsites with children of 18 or under accompanying 85% of participants. Participants came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds but included a large proportion from higher socio-economic groups again reflecting the campsite market. The car was the main mode of transport at home for the majority of participants. Only 3 visitors were on their first holiday in the area thus the majority had some knowledge of Purbeck.

[Table 1]

4.3.1 Mode of transport

Car use by visitors is high in Purbeck (Table 2). This comes as no surprise and ties in with other studies in Purbeck (Purbeck Heritage Committee, 2002; Southern Tourist Board, 1999) and rural tourism destinations elsewhere (Lake District National Park Authority, 2004; Forestry Commission, 2004). On the other hand, walking and cycling are also high relative to national levels (Department for Transport, 2005). This reflects the recreational participation in these activities in Purbeck (Scott Wilson Resource Consultants Tourism Associates, 2000) and might be an opportunity the area can build on. There are some distinctive modal patterns for each campsite which partly reflects the geographical location and options available to participants (Table 1). Alternatives to the car were particularly limited at Birchwood, while best at Whitemead and Ulwell. Birchwood visitors were very car dependent with the 4% cycling being one individual who cycled daily for pleasure. It was visitors at Tom's Field who made best use of alternatives. Tom's Field is close to cliff top walks so many people come for

this purpose hence walking is high. The high level of cycling at Tom's Field was also attributed to one enthusiastic individual.

[Table 2]

4.3.2 Purpose of trip

General leisure trips with no specific purpose other than a day out visiting various sites and shopping were the largest generator of trips. The latter comes as no surprise given that visitors were staying in self-catering accommodation (Table 3). The car was particularly prominent as a mode of transport to visit paid attractions (Table 4). There is some variability in travel purpose by campsite. However as the diaries were not all completed during the same week some of this might be explained by variability in weather conditions. For instance there are few trips to the beach from Ridge and Whitemead as the weather was cold and wet during that week and a high volume of general leisure trips as participants sought respite from the rain.

[Table 3]

[Table 4]

4.3.3 Destination of trip

The trip destination was as diverse as the participants, however several places were regularly visited. Swanage was the top destination as a large proportion of participants stayed nearby and it is the main seaside resort in the area (Table 5). There was a relationship between geographical location of campsite and destination, although there were exceptions. Car dominated trips to Weymouth and Poole, despite a train service from Wareham and Wool. Car use was also very high to Studland where there is an hourly bus service passing Ulwell campsite (Table 6).

[Table 5]

[Table 6]

4.3.4 Distance travelled

The mean trip length was 10km. Ulwell visitors tended to make the shortest trips (mean trip length 6km) which is probably a reflection of the location in Swanage. Birchwood, on the other hand, is furthest from the sea and some distance from main attractions thus travel distances were longer (mean trip length 17km). 47% of all trips and 41% by car are 5km or less indicating there is potential for people to use alternatives (Table 8). Dickinson et al. 2003 cite British Medical Association evidence that journeys of less than 5 km are within cycling distance for most people and in the context of travel to work, Glaister et al. (1998) and Newson (1997) suggest there is cycling potential where people travel up to 8 km, though this may not be applicable to a leisure context. The car was used for 40% of trips less than 1km (Table 7) which could be walked. What participants recorded as a general day out resulted in the longest trips (Table 9). Given these trips are most numerous they are of special interest. What might encourage visitors to make more local trips using alternative modes given they have no specific purpose and therefore do not need to reach a specific destination?

[table 7, 8, 9]

4.3.5 Problems encountered

Comments on problems were not as widespread as anticipated with congestion mentioned on 42 trips and a variety of comments made on parking problems (general problems mentioned 29 times, cost mentioned 13 times). Participants reported paying up to £9 which was for a days parking in Weymouth. Most participants parked in car parks (77%) as oppose to on the road. On 56% of trips there was no parking charge. Some participants disliked paying for

parking, particularly for short stays. It was common for people to spend time looking for free, on road, parking before resorting to paying a car park fee. One participant commented:

> *"Went to park in municipal car-park but at £4.00 decided to park on road*
> *instead, although car-park completely empty – road parking quite difficult to*
> *find space." [Swanage Sunday 25/7/04, 7pm]*

Congestion was encountered in a variety of places in Purbeck and outside of Purbeck in Poole and Weymouth. Several experienced delays getting into or out of Weymouth and very few visitors were aware of the park and ride scheme and paid high parking costs in the town centre as a result. A few participants attempted alternative routes to avoid congestion though this was not always successful as they were not familiar with the area.

4.4 Analysis of implications for transport in Purbeck

To explore the extent to which visitors were constrained by the objective reality the analysis now focuses on whether alternative travel options might have been feasible for the car journeys undertaken. This has been analysed in two ways.

1. **Maximum trips potentially feasible by alternatives -** trips that could be walked (5 km) or cycled (10 km) in about one hour and routes where public transport is available. Routes were not included where more than one mode of transport was required such as a long walk to catch the train or bus, or bus followed by train.

2. **Realistic proportion of trips feasible by alternatives –** this takes into account that most visitors do not have cycles, would not be prepared to take a circuitous bus journey (trips requiring a change and/or journey times in excess of twice the car journey time were excluded) and excludes trips where bulky gear was carried (67% of trips).

A relatively high proportion of car journeys could be undertaken by alternatives (Table 10) however, the realistic proportion is lower. The proportion of trips that might have been completed by alternatives at Tom's Field, Ulwell Cottage and Whitemead was high (Table 10). These sites are on public transport routes and Tom's Field and Ullwell Cottage are within walking or cycling distance of some key attractions. On the other hand the alternatives are very limited at Birchwood.

A large proportion of trips to Swanage, Wareham, Weymouth and Wool could be completed by alternatives (Table 10). Car use was high to Studland which also generated long journeys. Here the problem is a combination of location and carrying beach equipment. Studland is on a good bus route (one per hour) which passes Ulwell Cottage, but no-one used this service. This open-top bus is busy in summer but mostly caters for people making a day trip from Swanage to Bournemouth or vice-versa. Visitors at Tom's Field and Ulwell could cycle to Studland but this would be dependent on them having cycles available and being prepared to tackle a long, steep hill on the journey out and back. This would exclude many people. Thus, in practice, car use to Studland is high as the realistic proportion of trips possible by alternatives to the car is limited.

A large proportion of long car trips were associated with people making a general leisure trip with no particular purpose in mind. Only 24% of these trips could be converted to alternatives largely due to the distance travelled to far flung destinations (Table 10). These unplanned trips have the potential to be converted to shorter trips or an alternative mode of transport that offers a leisure experience (Robbins, 2003). The problem is they are unplanned and thus information needs to be available to suggest alternative, more local day trips which might also benefit the local economy. Shopping trips feature as an important generator of trips and, while one that could be made by alternatives, is tied to the car depending on the size of shopping load. Visiting the beach poses a similar problem as many people wish to take bulky beach gear. Car use was particularly high to paid attractions which reflects the out of town location

of attractions in Purbeck. While many are on bus routes, the network is not extensive and in most cases visitors would need to get more than one bus to make the journey. Thus only 57% of trips could be made by alternatives. Most attractions have more than ample car parking for obvious business sense so there is no 'stick' to make visitors consider an alternative. Walking as a leisure activity was also a generator of car trips. As all the campsites lie within good walking country walking should be encouraged in the environs of the campsite.

[Table 10]

4.4.1 The role of social representations

To recap, a number of dimensions of a social representation of mobility in Purbeck were identified from resident interviews and document analysis (Dickinson, 2004a):

- If public transport was improved people would use it more

- The car cannot be restricted

- Cycling and walking are only for leisure

- Alternatives to the car are for other people

- Tourism causes traffic problems therefore tourists should change their travel behaviour not residents

These are now considered in relation to the findings from the travel diaries.

A large proportion of the trips were possible by alternatives using the existing public transport network, either buses or the main line train. This questions the notion that 'if public transport was improved people would use it more' as it is clear that people were not using the existing provision. As all but 3 visitors had been to the area before, sometimes several times a year, it is probable that visitors were aware of at least some of the alternative services available. However, a visitors' local knowledge may not encompass public transport knowledge and even where some of the current provision is regarded as good for a rural area (i.e. hourly) it

may not be easy for visitors to tap into this knowledge. Given the difficulties of supporting rural bus services it is unlikely that a more regular service be viable and yet here there may be a significant mismatch between expectation and viability. Visitors from urban areas will regard the hourly headways as 'poor' with urban expectations projected onto rural areas. Thus the established representation that public transport should be improved **before** car use is priced or restricted becomes an imponderable barrier.

If it proved possible, perhaps with funding from charging cars, would an improved public transport frequency result in greater use? Empirical evidence is largely mixed, dated and drawn from urban areas. Fairhurst and Edwards (1996) point out that nationally large increases in bus miles operated (the best available proxy for frequency of service) in the decade from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s had little effect on overall bus demand. On the other hand there are local examples of quite dramatic increases in bus use resulting from frequency improvements, particularly where there was conversion to minibus services from traditional large vehicles. The best documented example is Exeter, which saw a 200% increase in ridership over several years from 1984 (Watts et al., 1990) (White, 1995) although this example is atypical. Bus use in Exeter was well below the national average in 1984, so the dramatic growth can be seen as a return to normal levels of bus use. Nevertheless minibus conversions seem to have stimulated additional demand in several locations, working best where initial service levels were low, every 25 – 30 minutes (White, 1995). This suggests the greatest scope for ridership gains are in areas with an initial poor frequency. Urban levels of frequency are clearly impossible on cost grounds, but if frequencies of say every 30 minutes can be offered on the busiest routes in the most congested areas, the established representation would be tested more rigorously.   .

While many participants either encountered or, given they were familiar with the area, were well aware of traffic problems and high parking costs this did little to deter car use. This suggests visitors did not find them severe which may reflect their more urban centric views

compared to residents and it must be questioned whether the existing road conditions would prove to be a significant 'stick' to effect modal shift. Those in the 'know' sometimes set off early to avoid parking problems or took routes that avoided congestion hotspots. Restrictions on car use such as car free areas have been developed in resorts elsewhere (for example, Alpine ski resorts; Polperro, Cornwall; Upper Derwent Valley, Peak District) yet this remains a hotly contested topic. Residents blame tourists for traffic problems and believe tourists should be using alternatives. Yet, the travel diaries show that they do not use the alternatives available and one clear way to get them to do so would be a 'stick' such as severely restricting parking or developing car free areas which opens up opportunities for cycling and walking.

Resident interviews indicated that cycling and walking were largely not considered to be modes of transport but leisure pursuits and activities undertaken by 'other' people (Dickinson, 2004a). Over the last few years the carriage of cycles on cars has become much easier and increased in popularity. 8 participants brought cycles with them. However, the cycling trips recorded were all due to 3 participants who made good use of their cycles. Two of these used their cycles largely for leisure orientated rides as opposed to a means of transport to reach a destination or activity. This lends support to the 'cycling is only for leisure perspective'. Walking, while overall accounting for 10% of trips, was low from most sites except Tom's Field and Whitemead. At the latter site most of the walking was dog walking. Given that all sites were situated in good walking country this is disappointing. It is also evident that people resort to the car for many short trips and often drive to the start of a walk. 40% of car trips were 1km or less, a distance that can be walked in about 10 minutes. There is clearly a reluctance to consider walking on many short trips which may be due to lack of knowledge of the distance involved.

Overall the patterns from the travel diaries would seem to fit the social representation of transport and tourism established in resident interviews and document analysis. It is important to recognise that this representation will go on perpetuating itself if it remains unchallenged.

Dickinson and Dickinson (2006) recommend focusing on local needs as much as visitor needs as residents are more able to develop the local knowledge to tap into alternatives. Furthermore given that people feel public transport should be improved any improvements are likely to be viewed positively. However, providing alternatives simply fits the acceptable representation of transport and will not translate into reduced car use. Transport planners need to tackle the view that car use cannot be restricted. There is a common fear that car restrictions will reduce visitor numbers (Holding, 2001; Coleman, 1997) and this brings economic dis-benefits, however, studies elsewhere show this is not the case (Holding, 2001). While restrictions are often seen to be counter freedom, they create other freedoms such as better opportunities for cycling and walking. Dickinson and Dickinson (2006) particularly draw attention to the divide between different groups be that residents or visitors, the advantaged or disadvantaged or the general public and government. They argue that responsibility for transport problems is seen to lie elsewhere which at a tourism destination relieves both residents and visitors of the need to take action.

4.4.2 Ways to tackle the problem

While the above analysis paints a rather gloomy outlook, a number of aspects could be tackled. Many visitors make unplanned leisure trips covering considerable distance as oppose to short local trips that might be managed on foot or other means. Thus there is scope to encourage more local trips. Over the last 2 or 3 years a Purbeck Transport Pass has been discussed which, as part of the holiday package, integrates accommodation providers, attractions and transport providers to offer discounts on public transport, cycle hire and entry to attractions should visitors travel by alternatives. So far this scheme has not progressed. A blanket approach with a unitary pass for all would probably do little to change visitors' modal choice. However, a place specific pass designed for specific accommodation centres might encourage tourists to make shorter journeys by alternative modes and address the 'responsibility lies elsewhere' scenario. The idea would be to promote attractive days out using alternatives from specific locations and has been developed to some extent in a series of

cycle leaflets launched in 2005 entitled 'Out of Car Experiences'. However, at present this is an area wide initiative and has yet to be targeted at specific locations.

It would also be important to draw people's attention to the problems they might encounter when using the car such as congestion, parking limitations and high parking charges, although whether these would prove to be a significant deterrent remains to be seen. Furthermore, as shopping was a main generator of car trips, local shops and food outlets could be promoted. The principle is similar to personalised journey planning (Department for Transport, 2002) which was tested in Australia (Rose and Ampt, 2001) and the Netherlands (Tertoolen et al., 1998) although there is evidence of psychological reactance where people re-position their attitudes resulting in limited changes in travel behaviour. This would be a more personalised approach which enables visitors to take responsibility. To illustrate this principle an example is given for one of the campsites:

Tom's Field

Problems to avoid:

- Swanage: congestion, parking charges, competition for parking spaces
- Studland: congestion, high parking charges, competition for parking spaces

'Out of car experiences':

- walk/bus to Swanage
- bus to Swanage and boat to Brownsea Island
- bus to Corfe Castle, steam train to Swanage then bus home
- walk to Corfe Castle

Shop at:

- Langton Matravers village store

This goes over and above making available bus timetables or cycle maps. The pack would need to be more personalised and would hopefully address the unplanned, long and car reliant general leisure trips by suggesting local alternatives. The idea is similar to a scheme initiated by Breakwell (2003) in the North York Moors National Park where the Moors Bus, a successful tourism transport initiative, runs. Here visitors can pick up journey planners for a specific location. There is no need for visitors to work out timetables as the options for that location are clearly set out. The focus is on local leisure options and these are made more personal for visitors. The Devon and Cornwall 'Car Free Day Out' also promotes an integrated rail and bus network around various destination areas (Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership 2006). A further development which has been suggested locally (Keen, 2005) is a dedicated person based in the tourism information service who might offer a personalised journey planning service to visitors.

5. Conclusion

The travel diaries highlight high levels of car dependence as might be expected in the Purbeck area. The car is used for many short trips that could be walked and other alternatives such as buses were rarely used when they might have replaced car journeys. This brings into question the provision of and promotion of public transport as an alternative. The representation that public transport must be improved is powerful yet this study shows where it is available it is little used. Cycling is seen as a leisure experience therefore there are opportunities to develop this further as an attraction at destination areas. Walking also needs to be encouraged for local trips. Visitors are unlikely to be aware of local facilities or the distance or time it might take to walk. Walking trips may be perceived to be too long thus awareness needs to be raised by signage and maps available at accommodation rather than destinations. People seem have lost the skills needed to access areas as a pedestrian and there is a need to re-discover this knowledge. However, while it would be positive if visitors were to change their car use

behaviour, unfamiliarity with the area will always be an obstacle to some degree. Thus the priority in the first instance lies in improving opportunities for residents.

Both residents and visitors fail to acknowledge responsibility for problems and this together with a perspective that 'others use alternatives' is problematic. The aversion to car restrictions is complex as it is politically difficult to take action at a local level. However, it is unlikely there will be much change without 'sticks' and despite their unpopularity many areas would benefit from a car free environment. 'Sticks' might be better accepted with a more personalised approach that can also counter the 'others use alternatives' perspective. To do this would need a shift that emphasises promotion of local leisure opportunities and the fun, relaxing and problem avoiding angles of using alternatives to the car. In policy terms this needs a move away from the focus on modes of transport and transport to attractions to focus on the visitor's experience of mobility from their accommodation base. There is a need for more research on people's feelings of responsibility, the tendency to locate blame with other people and the dilemmas people hold in respect to transport and tourism. Further research examining visitors' social representations of transport is currently under review. There is also a need to test out the personalised marketing of days out from accommodation providers and to study visitors who have made lifestyle changes to reduce their car use.

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Table 1
Details of campsites involved in the study

Campsite	Number of diaries completed	Dates completed	Alternatives to the car
Birchwood, nr Wareham	6	17th to 24th July	-Bus one day a week to Wareham -4km from train station -11km from steam railway station -1 participant brought a bike
Ulwell, Swanage	9	24th to 31st July	-Hourly bus to Swanage and Bournemouth -17.5km from train station -2km from steam railway station -2 participants brought a bike
Tom's Field, Langton Matravers	8	24th to 31st July	-2 hourly bus to Swanage, Corfe Castle, Wareham and 4 per day to Worth Matravers -14.5km from train station -3km from steam railway station -1 participant brought a bike
Ridge, nr Wareham	9	7th to 14th Aug	-Nearest bus route 2km -4km from train station -6km from steam railway station -3 participants brought a bike
Whitemead, Wool	8	7th to 14th Aug	-On the Weymouth to Bournemouth train line. -Buses to Monkey World, Tank Museum, Lulworth Cove, Wareham -0.4km from train station -13km from steam railway station -1 participant brought a bike

Table 2
Main mode of transport by campsite

	Total trips	Birchwood	Ridge	Tom's Field	Ulwell	Whitemead
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Walk	10	1	4	18	9	16
Cycle	4	4	9	9	0	0
Car	82	94	86	68	84	84
Bus	2	0	0	2	7	0
Steam train	1	2	2	3	1	0

Table 3
Purpose of trip by campsite (categories with 10 trips or more)

	Total trips %	Birchwood %	Ridge %	Tom's Field %	Ulwell %	Whitemead %
General day out	21	17	32	8	20	27
Shopping	19	29	21	15	12	21
Visit beach	18	10	7	30	27	12
Eat out	7	3	8	7	10	5
Walk	7	0	3	13	4	11
Visit paid attraction	6	4	5	3	6	11
Fishing	3	13	2	4	1	1
Collect relative	3	0	1	4	8	1
Cycling	2	4	2	6	0	0
Visit friends or relatives	2	1	1	1	2	4
Swanage railway	2	3	2	2	2	0
Visit Brownsea	1	2	2	1	1	0

Table 4
Main mode of transport by purpose of journey (purposes with 10 or more trips)

	Walk	Cycle	Car	Bus	Steam Train
General day out (%)	7	0	90	0	3
Shopping (%)	3	6	89	1	0
Visit beach (%)	5	4	84	7	1
Eat out (%)	15	7	78	0	2
Walk (%)	65	0	29	6	0
Visit paid attraction (%)	2	0	98	0	0
Fishing (%)	8	0	92	0	0
Collect relative (%)	0	0	100	0	0
Cycling (%)	6	82	12	0	0
Visit friends or relatives (%)	6	0	94	0	0
Swanage railway (%)	0	0	58	0	42
Visit Brownsea (%)	10	0	90	0	0

Table 5
Destination of trip by campsite (destinations with 10 or more trips)

	Birchwood %	Ridge %	Tom's Field %	Ulwell %	Whitemead %
Swanage	4	5	22	34	3
Wareham	10	16	1	2	5
Studland area	2	5	10	6	5
Poole	13	10	1	1	2
Weymouth	5	1	0	1	8
Corfe Castle	0	3	3	2	2
Wool	0	1	0	0	9
Sandbanks Poole	3	5	0	0	0
Kimmerage Bay	0	1	3	1	1

Table 6
Main mode of transport by destination of trip (destinations with 10 or more trips)

	Walk	Cycle	car	bus	Steam train
Swanage (%)	12	1	79	4	4
Wareham (%)	2	11	87	0	N/A
Studland area (%)	4	0	96	0	N/A
Poole (%)	0	0	100	0	N/A
Weymouth (%)	0	0	100	0	N/A
Corfe Castle (%)	6	11	61	0	22
Wool (%)	50	0	50	0	N/A
Sandbanks Poole (%)	15	0	85	0	N/A
Kimmerage Bay (%)	10	10	80	0	N/A

Table 7
Distance travelled by main mode of transport

Distance travelled (km)	Walk	Cycle	Car	Bus	Steam Train
1km or less (%)	53	5	40	0	3
1.5 to 3 km (%)	11	6	78	6	0
4 to 5 km (%)	15	4	81	0	0
6 to 10km (%)	5	5	82	0	8
11 to 20km (%)	0	4	95	1	0
21-30km (%)	0	0	100	0	0
31-40km (%)	0	0	100	0	0
41-50km (%)	0	0	100	0	0
over 50km (%)	0	0	100	0	0

Table 8
Mode of transport by distance travelled

Distance travelled (km)	Total %	Walk %	Cycle %	Car %	Bus %	Steam Train %
1km or less	10	50	11	5	0	17
1.5 to 3 km	28	30	39	27	87	0
4 to 5 km	9	15	8	9	0	0
6 to 10km	16	8	19	16	0	83
11 to 20km	23	0	22	26	13	0
21-30km	11	0	0	13	0	0
31-40km	2	0	0	2	0	0
41-50km	1	0	0	1	0	0
over 50km	1	0	0	2	0	0

Table 9
Mean Distance travelled by purpose of journey (top 8 categories only)

	Total	Birchwood	Ridge	Tom's Field	Ulwell	Whitemead
	(mean km)	(mean km)	(mean km)	(mean km)	(mean km)	(mean km)
General day out	16.3	28.5	15	5.9	14.5	17.7
Shopping	7.9	11.8	7.7	4.3	4.8	9.1
Visit beach	10.4	24.9	16.1	10	3.4	18.3
Eat out	6.1	15	12.6	3.5	2	6.6
Walk	4.1	0	4.3	4.1	3.4	4.1
Visit paid attraction	10.8	23	12	16.5	7.5	8.1
Fishing	9.5	14.1	14.7	3.8	2	0.5
Collect relative	6.5	0	10	15.7	2.2	9
Cycling	10.5	5.5	4.5	15.3	0	0
Visit friends or relatives	16.2	10	3	40.5	13	15.7
Swanage Railway	9.4	11.3	12	7.7	6.7	0
Visit Brownsea	13.6	19	14.5	13	7	0
Total	10.3	16.9	11.5	8	6.1	11.8

Table 10
Proportion of car trips that might be completed by alternatives

	Trips possible by alternatives (%)	Trips realistically possible by alternatives (%)
Campsite		
Ridge	34	20
Birchwood	20	15
Tom's Field	80	36
Ulwell	77	53
Whitemead	60	52
Destination		
Swanage	82	54
Wareham	90	71
Studland area	50	15
Poole	10	5
Weymouth	64	50
Corfe Castle	64	36
Wool	88	75
Sandbanks Poole	0	0
Kimmerage Bay	0	0
Purpose		
General day out	24	23
Shopping	76	57
Visit beach	78	20
Eat out	67	59
Walk	88	88
Visit paid attraction	57	43
Fishing	38	13
Collect relative	100	69
Cycling	0	0
Visit friends or relatives	56	11
Swanage railway	60	40
Visit Brownsea	20	20