

# Putting Mobility on the Map: Researching Journeys and the Research Journey

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*This paper, based on a fieldwork conducted with community transport projects in rural Ireland, examines the place of mobility in the lives of older people. It uses the idea of journey to explore what mobility means to older people, what the research made visible to a diverse range of project stakeholders and to reflect on the nature of ethnographic projects in industry settings. For passengers, the journeying is often as important as the destination – travelling creates visibility of countryside, community and communion with others. For project stakeholders, the research encouraged a view of mobility that transcends travel because it highlighted the world beyond the bus. For researchers, the project created challenges to the dominant view of technology for ageing-in-place within their own organization. Finally, reflections are made on industry ethnography as a journey with often unknown destinations.*

If you came this way,  
Taking the route you would be likely to take  
From the place you would be likely to come from,  
If you came this way...you would find...

Little Gidding, No. 4 of 'Four Quartets' - T.S. Eliot

## INTRODUCTION

There is a saying in Ireland, which suggests that if you are lost, it is probably because you started out in the wrong place. This paper flips this commonplace around. It suggests that, as industry ethnographers, we typically know where are starting from, or at least know where we need to begin. However, our destinations are rarely as visible at the start of our research journeys. We depart on research projects without knowing exactly where we are going. Our training, and understanding of our role, allows us to be quite comfortable with this. For those elsewhere in our organizations this idea can be more challenging. This paper reflects on this situational reality as experienced through one project. The project in question was one designed to explore the journeys of older people in rural Ireland and to assess, qualitatively, the impact of transportation and mobility services on their quality of life. So at one level the paper explores what journeying means to community dwelling older people in rural Ireland. At another, it examines what the research journey uncovered or made visible to a diverse range of stakeholders involved in the project – researchers and their colleagues within multi-disciplinary teams, the rural transport programme administrators, and the community transportation providers themselves. Finally, in thinking about such

ethnographic research as journeys it explores what might be learned about conducting open ended projects within industry settings.

Therefore, in a literal sense this paper is about journeys and argues that the role these play in the lives of older people is crucial for those concerned with enabling independent living. As such it forms a contribution to a growing body of work that links access to forms of transportation, and mobility in general, with enhanced quality of life as we age. In a more figurative sense, using the metaphor of journeying the paper argues that ethnographic research in industry settings needs to be framed less as a tool for providing an answer to an existing question but as attempts to create pathways of understanding or clearings.

If one finding of our research was that for older people it is often as much about the journey as the destination, the same is true of the ethnographic venture within a corporate setting. Trips in buses and large ethnographic research projects have impacts and justifications that extend far beyond their primary, or stated objectives. Learning how to account for the journeys we take as ethnographers is an important skill to develop. Equally, our research allowed us to give project stakeholders a different view of journeying in late life which has changed the ways they account for, and justify, what they do.

## **OUR STARTING POINT: THE RESEARCH CONTEXTS**

If, as the Irish saying suggests, it is important to know where you starting from, it is necessary to outline three key starting points for the research team. These were our own organization, Intel Corporation's Digital Health Group. Second, the Irish context and thirdly, the body of clinical, psychological and sociological literature relating to mobility, transportation and ageing.

The Intel team, members of the Product Research and Incubation division of Digital Health, is tasked with conducting path finding research which identifies opportunities for technological platforms that can support independent living for older people. Working in multi-disciplinary teams, we use ethnographically inspired understandings of late life to develop independent living solutions. The team is situated in Ireland, and is charged with bringing an European perspective to bear on the business group's activities.

By European standards, Ireland is not an especially aged society. In fact it is a young country, with 11 per cent of the population over sixty five years old (CSO). This youthfulness has also been emphasized in commentaries on the Celtic Tiger – the story of Ireland's two decades of economic growth (cf. Foster 2007). However, the population is forecast to age considerably over the coming decade. Ireland's older population tends to be more rurally situated at a time when the fabric of the countryside is changing. Older people report the countryside 'emptying out' during the day and voice concern about the lack of support they receive from the younger generation. As one woman commented on a bus in

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rural County Kilkenny: 'In my time, we looked after the sons and daughters and mothers and fathers. That's the change...The younger women are all out working.'

In tandem with these population shifts, rural infrastructures are changing. The closure of public houses and Post Offices have become, to rural dwelling older people, a negative index of social change and modernization. As these 'basic' facilities become more diluted, and healthcare is restructured around larger, 'super' hospitals, the importance of transportation and mobility is heightened. With car ownership rates in Ireland increasing faster than any other country in Europe, with the exception of Greece (National Spatial Strategy 2002), there is a sense that Ireland is a highly mobile country. However, for those older people with no car or driving license (often older female women), mobility is a highly relative concept and they feel less mobile than ever.

Given the importance of transportation to older people, the issue has surprisingly low levels of visibility in public policy debates. Further, little accurate data exist about older Irish people's travel patterns (NCAOP 2006). Census material creates a blind spot since it questions people on their mobility patterns relating to work, college or school – effectively discounting the idea that older people may have travel patterns and needs to be understood and planned for. In this context it is unsurprising that little qualitative understanding of older people's transportation needs, practices and impacts exists.

As recently as 2006, a senior Irish geriatrician argued that 'the importance of transportation to health and social inclusion has been under recognized in both the medical and the gerontological literature' (O'Neill 2006). However, the complex relationship between health, sociality, independence and mobility are key themes in literature on older people. In terms of health impacts, commentators point to the demonstrable links between access to transportation and healthcare – lack of available transport has been found to be a significant barrier to utilizing healthcare (Rittner and Kierk 2005) and these effect are exacerbated in rural areas. Beyond explicit health care location (clinics and hospitals), lack of transportation has negative impacts on health outcomes for older people since the maintenance of close relationships, and engaging in meaningful activity outside of the home, are recognized as an integral aspect of successful ageing. Mobility allows people to maintain and strengthen their social networks, and studies have shown that perceived social support to be the strongest predictor of physical and psychological wellbeing (Auslander and Litwin 1991).

Transportation and mobility plays a key role in enabling individuals to remain in the environments of their choice as they age and is integral in giving them a sense of self worth and agency. As Holland *et. al.* (2005: 49) argue:

'...[T]he capacity to make and execute choices in moving around within and outside the home is crucial, and not simply to accomplish the necessary and desirable activities of daily living. It is essential to a person's sense of who they are and how they are situated in their

material and social worlds, and, as a consequence, to their quality of life' (Emphasis mine).

Prior to beginning fieldwork we had developed a sense of where we were starting out from. However, we still did not know our exact destination. We had objectives but not a precise set of outcomes in mind. This concerned some members of our organization who questioned the link between technologically enabled independent living and minibus services in rural Ireland. Our hunch was that there would be 'something there' in the research but this was difficult to articulate. How do you describe, and harder still, justify a journey when you don't know where you going and why?

We consequently tried framing the project in three ways. In one narrative of justification, we spoke about the explicit links between healthcare access and transportation. Simply put, mobility is a functional requirement of a visit to a hospital or doctor. Our second narrative strategy linked our work to a significant body of work conducted by US colleagues at Intel<sup>1</sup> which had examined aspects of social health and ageing. In this sense we spoke to the implicit links between mobility and social health that our work might uncover, since it would focus on sociality outside of the home. Finally, perhaps appealing to a sense of artistic license as member of the social science research team, we argued simply that our research would fill a significant lacuna in understandings of ageing in the European, and specifically Irish, context.

As we made the case internally for the research, we discussed a research collaboration with the Rural Transport Programme (RTP). The government funded programme has overseen the development of 34 local projects, throughout the country, providing transport services for rural areas. The overall aim of the RTP has been 'to encourage innovative community-based initiatives to provide transport services in rural areas, with a view to addressing the issue of social exclusion in rural Ireland, which is caused by lack of access to transport'. This has led to the introduction of a range of semi-scheduled and demand-responsive services. In 2005, RTP services delivered more than 650,000 passenger journeys on 75,000 service trips, which provided transport for an estimated 25,000-35,000 users. Although all services are available to the general public, older people benefit greatly. Internal RTP figures show that 60-70% of all users are over the age of 66.

We agreed on a collaboration with the Rural Transportation Programme which gave the researchers access to five transport projects across Ireland. These projects were chosen based on their size, scale of operations and operating environment, use of technology and, of course, willingness to support the researchers. The collaboration created the challenge to explore elements of transportation that would have otherwise remained obscured. It linked us to academics and policy makers who helped shape the research design. In the process of acquiring stakeholders we took on obligations and the burden of expectation since the research design was fundamentally co-creative. Collaboration gave the researchers multiple

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<sup>1</sup> In particular Intel's Proactive Health Group, progenitor of the Digital Health Group at Intel.

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audiences: an internal one – colleagues within the division and external ones – administrators at the RTP, external advisors and the projects. The research began under the broad rubric of a qualitative examination of the impacts of transportation services on the lives of older people. Three fieldworkers set out to ride buses and to journey with older people in rural Ireland.

### **ON THE ROAD**

When we leave the bus depot just after 9am, John the driver remarks that we are running late but that he knows the route well. It is a bright morning and soon we've cleared the town and are making our way up towards the first passenger's house. As we turn off the main road, we see a signpost that says our destination is 2km. John points out how approximate this is – 'It's more than that!' His local knowledge of this narrow road turns out to be more precise. It is another ten minutes or so before we make the first pick-up of the day.



Figure 1. On the road from Navan to Kingscourt.

He knows the passengers well – the first is 'very bad on her legs' he says, 'she used to be confined to her house and she only started getting out recently...she really looks forward to it'. The passenger is waiting on a chair outside the house with her son, who lives in the cottage next door. The second passenger is not joining the run today so we head straight to the third passenger. John says we're going to be early and we turn out to be 15 minutes

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ahead of schedule. Initially, Kathleen is nowhere to be seen but when she boards the bus, she seems mortified that he had to ring on the door bell. It matters little to John, he reassures her. The first thing he asks her is how she is today: 'How's the hip?'

As the passengers join the bus, the tempo and volume of conversations starts to increase. Conversation waxes and wanes, drifting across a broad canvas of subjects: the health of fellow passengers and others known to them – 'he's home and making a good comeback'; architectural tastes and the emergence of new houses – 'they must be terrible to heat [two storey houses]'; and voices of concern and solidarity: 'it's funny that you don't have a wheelchair, Nancy'.

Anon we pick up further passengers, all female. We pass one house where we don't stop, informed by a passenger that the owner has been in hospital. The next 'no-show' occasions more dissection of motive or cause. Absence occasions, to a degree, more conversation, than presence. There are usually ten passengers on this service, but with post operative recovery, illness and unexplained absences there are only five today. When the bus arrives at the old school hall in Kingscourt, the organizer of the group comments that 'We're a small family today'. Tea and biscuits are brought out. John joins the women for tea but also checks on the smell coming out of the kitchen. He is to take out a meal for people in the local area presently, leaving his passengers to have lunch themselves, to play some bingo and talk amongst themselves.



Figure 2. On the bus

## COMING INTO VIEW

One journey from one project. Over the course of six weeks the team participated in many such journeys across Ireland. In the course of their travels they journeyed to a wide variety of destinations - day care centres, shopping centres, hospitals – and experienced for themselves the act of journeying across rural and remote landscapes with older people. For the passengers these services are, of course, about going somewhere, travelling to a place to do something. However, it was also apparent that the act of journeying was important in its own right and a significant aspect of journeying can be seen in terms of what is rendered visible.

Leaving the house creates visibility – it makes the community, composed of older and often long time residents of an area – apprehensible. Simply put, the act of stepping out of one's home to get on to a warm bus to be surrounded with familiar faces, makes apparent and reinforces the sense that one is part of a community. You see them and they see you. There is a palpable sense of expectation on the part of passengers as a bus draws up to a house, as they wait to see the person leave their house for the journey. The curious, but deeply concerned conversations that are occasioned by the absence of regular passengers, their invisibility, suggests that one aspect of being a community for these passengers is about seeing each other, face to face. Absence creates concern and intrigue. Presence, and absence, are crucial indicators to passengers of the health and wellbeing of their fellow journeyers. Co-presence for the passengers is a necessity to be 'in communion' with neighbors with whom face to face contact is often sporadic – to be part of a 'knowable community' (Williams 1975)<sup>2</sup>. The alternative is unwelcome isolation:

'It's nice to have someone to talk to - put on the radio? The radio isn't somebody to say hello to you. I like somebody who's able to say hello to me and chat to me. I'm exhausted up there. No-one to talk to, day in, day out. Only for the likes of these [active retirement] clubs I'd have gone cuckoo.'

For those present on the buses, a heightened sense of togetherness, of bonds that transcend normative social status, a form of *communitas* (Turner 1969), was apparent both in the sense of concern for others that was demonstrated but also in the quality and quantity of conversation (and sometimes song) that journeying entails. Much of that conversation, when not about fellow passengers (or non travelers) concerned the landscape passing by through the windows. Journeying make visible for passengers their local, redolent, landscape – 'places with remembered histories' (Saris 1996). The landscape gives up tangible clues or hints of change – for example, the new house that signals a marriage and provides cues for commentaries on shifts in taste in modern Ireland – and starting points for conversation that

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<sup>2</sup> This acts as a salutary reminder that communication, and its corollary, community, cannot always be mediated – that 'networked sociality' might not be the (only) only means to address isolation and independent living.

is about, and acts to create the local community. Passengers were quick to point out that such a view of their local world is not available out of their kitchen window.

Bus journeys simultaneously reveal and construct community life for passengers. Journeying makes tangible the links between the landscape, community, locality and sociality. The bus is a location where these things come into alignment. The consequent conversation and reverie reveals not only the nature of place and sociality in such specific rural contexts but the importance of understanding that transport is about more than displacement. Mobility services offer a means of escaping the home –they create joy, independence, access to healthcare and sociable lives. They enable a ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams *op cit*) which is integral to the positive experience of ageing in Ireland.

## OFF ROAD RESEARCH

Off the roads of rural Ireland, the research team journeyed into the ‘back office’ of the transport projects. Here, the management and modus operandi of the projects were made visible and it was possible to map the routes that we were experiencing against the transportation models that these modes of organizing services produced. One objective of our research was to make visible to the projects the models of service delivery in operation. This required us to objectify the improvisations that had created their way of running bus services.

The five transport projects are all operating in different circumstances with respect to their funding, the size and nature of their geographical region, their use of technology and their understanding of the needs of the local community. The services they provide are responses to these variables and continue to evolve as they respond to the contingencies and needs of those they serve. Many of the projects described their operational model as one of laying down transport onto existing community activities and networks. For example, a service is created to cater for a day care centre, active ageing group, or to facilitate a special shopping trip.

Our reports of the journeys had other outcomes. Our use of GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) tracking devices in the buses, in tandem with Google Earth, allowed us to create maps of the routes which were powerful visualizations of their operations. The maps portrayed the routes of their buses and made it possible for them to visually comprehend the scale of their operations. They became at one level stunning illustrations of the remoteness of their passengers, and at another powerful visual representations of the way these remote locations were linked to local important destinations by the buses. The lines of the maps, their bus journeys, become the stitching of community for older people. In this sense they are the ‘Songlines’ of ageing in Ireland – representations of landscape, topographic maps of journeying and a ‘socio-scape’ of a geographically bounded community (cf Chatwin).



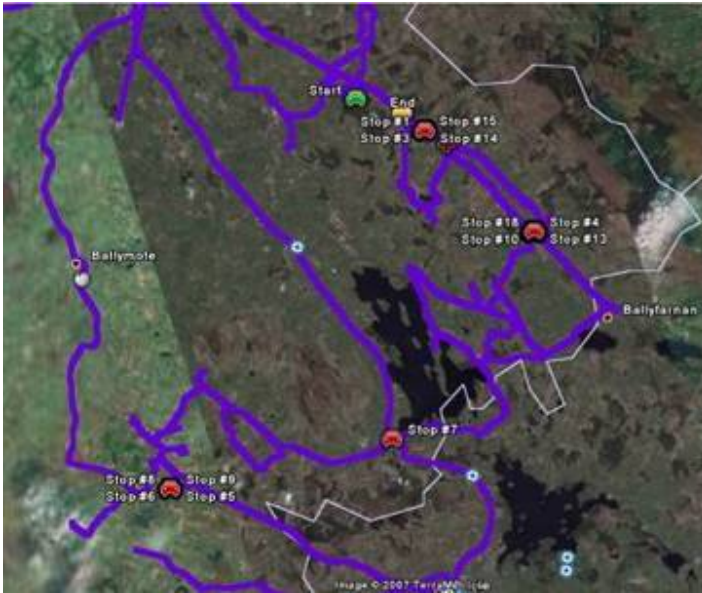


Figure 3. A GPS tracker reveals a day's journey on a bus in rural County Sligo.

The accounts of journeys, which we layered on top of these graphical representations, included stories collected from the hospital, the doctor's surgery, meals on wheels services, day care centres, post offices, shops and active retirement groups. This combination made visible to the projects their centrality at the heart of a very diverse set of providers and their role as integrators across the social, economic, cultural and care landscapes of their region.

For small rural projects, surviving on small grants and their own wit, entrepreneurialism and hard work, the idea of hosting a team of ethnographers from a large micro-processor company was undoubtedly somewhat baffling. They were quick to ask for feedback when we returned from journeys. The research journey for these projects was one in which they started to understand what 'ethnographers' do. More importantly, it revealed insights into their operations. Our interest in them, and our determination to look beyond the realities of bus scheduling, piqued their interest in what they were *really* doing and how it impacted people. Our own reframing of the research – our justification for doing it – began to evolve with their own evolving view of their activity. We both began to think less about the running of bus services and more about their role as engines of independent living.

A similar transformation, enabled by a shift in what was made visible through the research, also occurred for the Rural Transport Programme administrators<sup>3</sup>. The principle outcome for them has been an ability to use the research to transcend the strictures of the normative ‘performance assessment frameworks’ and ‘value for money’ narrative in which they work. The research has given them a new way of talking about what they do, a different sort of argument about the value of the services they oversee. They report an ability to talk in a new way about the benefits and impacts of the work of the thirty two projects they fund. They are able to cast a different sort of argument about their impacts which moves beyond plain passengers numbers to include ideas about mobility and quality of life in late life. In this way, their engagements with government administrators have benefited by allowing them to ‘compete on a different axis’ that speaks to a broader range of outcomes than the numbers of journeys made, passengers transported and miles travelled. The research, which ‘held a mirror up to ourselves’ made visible the value of journeys for older people as social events, as a means of overcoming functional dependence and as a means of masking their reliance on others to remain independent.

## THE RESEARCH JOURNEY FOR THE RESEARCHERS

For the research team the journeys on the buses enabled a new perspective on ageing and fresh challenges, from our location within a technology company, in how to translate this into independent living technologies. Within the context of the research project as a long journey whose destination slowly came into view, a series of slowly unfolding realizations forced us to reframe the work internally. As a destination became visible, so we were able to tell the story of where it was our journeying had taken us.

The act of journeying allowed us to see that these buses are as much events as they are functional ‘facilities’. They are social events and, as often as not, people are on the bus to be on the bus, not merely to travel to a given destination. This revelation confronted one of our own framings of the research which posited the importance of transportation and mobility in a functional sense, enabling access to healthcare. Whilst we found significant evidence that many bus journeys were used by passengers to travel to health related locations, we realized that whatever its importance this was not the only reason to travel. For ageing passengers travel has its own intrinsic benefits.

This runs somewhat counter to much of the literature on transportation and older people (e.g., Mollenkopf *et al.* 2004; Banister and Bowling 2004), which tends to relegates the journey to a function that enables something else, reducing it to the act of moving a person from their home to another location so that they can perform some other, higher order task. As such, the reason why people travel becomes the focus of accounts of mobility in later life. This has the dual effect of distracting attention from the journey itself and prioritizing the functional or pragmatic aspect of the trip. This rhetorical shift in our attention can have an

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<sup>3</sup> This section is based on a discussion with an RTP administrator (June 2008).

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unfortunate outcome, particularly in respect of ICTs – it suggests that if the thing that people are travelling for can be delivered ‘down the wire’ or otherwise transacted online, the need to travel can be negated. Our research, since it made the poetics of journeying so visible and brought focus to the journeys themselves, provides a strong corrective to this perspective.

At the outset, another of our narratives of justification had been the links between journeying and sociality. Given our findings, and our organization’s longstanding interest in sociality and ageing, this was not an inappropriate framing of our work. However, the degree to which the journey itself would emerge as a social event was unexpected. So too was the narrative construction by older people of home as a virtual prison. What had emerged was the notion that the home in rural Ireland as one ages might not be the centre of one’s social existence, or rather that the most valorized form of social contact is that which takes place outside the home. Furthermore, when we reflected on the destinations we had experienced – shopping or day care centres, pubs, post offices, active retirement groups and hospitals – it became clear that our journeys had made visible a seam of service providers, contexts and locations on which rural dwelling older people depend for basic necessities, healthcare *and* a social life. As our research journey progressed we made these services, and their singular importance for successful ageing place more visible in our framing of the research.

What had begun as research into transportation services for older people had morphed into a project that made visible a multiplicity of agencies and players operating simultaneously in the interests of older people’s health and welfare. Our journey had started by being focused on buses and ended being about ecosystems of support for older people. That was not a destination that had been anticipated at the outset. However, it has been a significant one for us as researchers of the ageing experience situated within a technology company. The significance lies in the fact that it forces us to imagine a much larger cast of stakeholders than previously envisaged into the frame of our design and business strategy.

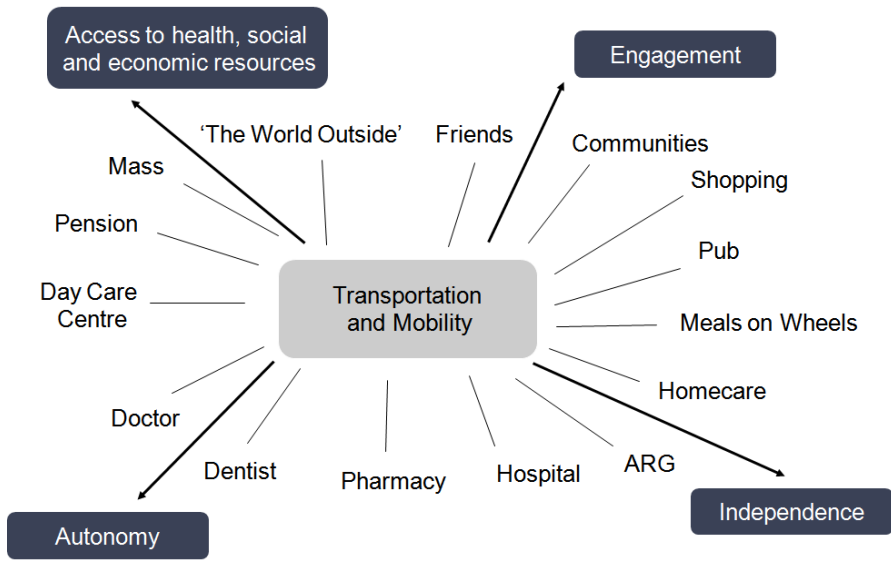


Figure 4: Transportation and mobility at the heart of independent living for older people.

Our journeying created a powerful realization. Older people want to look beyond the home. Realizing that forced us in our thinking about the ‘implications for design’ from this project to look beyond the home too. Given that a clear objective of Western policy associated with ageing, health and care systems is to enable an independence within the context of the home environment (Wiles 2005: 79) this presents productive challenges, as well as opportunities. In the context of the discourse of technologically enabled independent living, where the automated, sensed or otherwise augmented environment of the home is constructed as the fundamental enabler of such late life independence (cf. Hammel 2004) our work produced significant challenges for us as story-tellers and designers of outcomes that might fit our organization’s dominant view of our remit or scope.

Our research demonstrated the importance of life beyond the home. It was not negating the importance of homes as sources of material and ontological security nor, as objective places and subjective states (Lefebvre 1994[1974]). Nor was it ignoring the considerable evidence that homes have heightened importance in late life (Tinker 1994). However, our experience illustrated the importance for older people of transcending the home to participate in a social life beyond the home.

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The image of prison and entrapments reoccurred throughout research and the bus journeys emerged as key practical resources for enabling escape: ‘All my old neighbours are gone and the younger people have all gone to work. I don’t see many people and in the daytime I am home by myself...I’d be lost...stuck in the house...I wouldn’t get out’. The bus services come to represent instances of autonomy in a context where ‘the freedom to make – and continue to make – choices is perhaps the greatest single index of well-being (Kirkwood, cited in Kellett *et al.* 2005:291). We concluded that the bus services support independence for older people because they address necessities while making them appear as choices.

Our journeys forced us to critically reevaluate the idea, and reality, of home for older people and, as such, allowed us to articulate a different vision of independent living and our potential role in enabling that. That idea of independent living is one in which a social life, and access to services, outside of the home is the *sine qua non* of independence for older people since it frees them from dependence and creates a strong sense of autonomy. In this sense the home is no longer the sole unit of analysis when understanding ageing and it might not be useful to think of the home as focus of our innovation efforts. A well illustrated story about the importance of infrastructures and sociality beyond the home for older people produced a fresh narrative about independent living that supplemented the existing organizational narratives of technology enabled ageing-in-place.

## JOURNEY’S END

And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started

Little Gidding, No. 4 of 'Four Quartets' - T.S. Eliot

Most ethnographic research projects, like journeys, have clearly identifiable stages: identifying contexts and setting objectives, the research itself, analysis and dissemination of findings. Laid out in this manner research appears orderly and sequential. In reality the progression is more disorderly than that - the journey more twisting, emergent and contingent. Different stakeholders in the research learn different things about a research project at each stage and this alters the course of the journey. The meanings of the research process start to unfold long before the research findings become apparent. In the same way that for passengers it is the journey as much as the destination that is important, so with ethnographic research. The value that it creates is located not just in the findings – the finale of the debrief – but in that journey and what it makes visible for those travelling. Research is, to this extent, as much about the process, the journey, as it is about the destination.

The journey that this paper has narrated involved many passengers – the ethnographers and their colleagues, community transport providers, administrators and policy makers. At the heart of the journey, and this account of it, has been older people using the bus services.

For them, the journey, not just the destination, is a hugely significant component of travelling because of what it makes visible to them - their community, local environment and kinship networks. For other stakeholders the journey was a longer one which stretched from their early involvement in framing the project, and contributing to its terms of reference, to helping the ethnographers onto the bus services. A presentation, held some weeks after the field research had been completed, created some degree of finality to their journey, but many original stakeholders have heard a reprise of the findings at other gatherings and events in Ireland subsequent to this. The transport companies used our findings in their annual reports and continue to draw on them in their dealings with the RTP and other agencies.

As the journey unfolds over time so the telling of the story about it changes. One key feature of such research journeys is that they involve continuous narration, repeated re-tellings of the story which are inflected by who is listening, and where one is on the journey. Ethnographers in industry settings need to manage a tension between the freedom to explore new territory, to go to new places and to be clear about their objectives, their destinations, at the outset. As this paper has revealed, the research team was unable to immediately produce a narrative which explained what their research destination might be. But with repeated re-telling, and attention to what response their story received, they were able to explain the research in a way that made better organizational sense. They learned what to highlight, to make visible, in a way that would create support and enthusiasm for their work.

However, if this narrative imperative is met through words of justification, it is more effectively satisfied through a commitment to making the research speak for itself through what is done with it. Those around a research team can appreciate its value, in its own terms, when they see more tangible outcomes. Doing something with data can take many forms (presentations, reports, scenarios, product concepts and two dimensional prototypes) each of which allows different organizational stakeholders to appreciate different forms of research value. Many audiences of ethnographic research, as poet Birago Diop once suggested, 'listen more to things than to words that are said'.

Our research did put mobility on the map. Literally, we created maps of mobility in rural Ireland that made older people's journeys visible. Rhetorically, we created a strong case for taking mobility seriously, as an enabler of independent living as the link between people, homes, social lives and a seam of services that make ageing in place possible. But the 'end of all our exploring' was not just a story about mobility but a different view of home, sociality and independence in late life.

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