Underground tales, overground lives: mobile work identities through to post-retirement

Applied Mobilities

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Abstract

Although there has been recent attention given to the subject of mobile work, there has been less focus, within mobility studies, on the work of those who *enable* movement: the job of the transport worker. This article takes this incarnation of mobile workers as the basis for understanding the ways in which mobile work identities are *pulled through* into retirement. The article firstly proposes that transport workers, as movement enablers, have particular identities, and are an important and neglected topic of study within mobilities. Secondly, it suggests that the *post*-work identities of mobile workers are contingent on their experiences during their working lives and that these are particular to mobile work. The article is evidenced through data gathered during a mobile ethnographic study with two retired London Underground employees. The participants joined the researchers on a walking tour of a disused underground railway station in London, 'Hidden London', organised by the London Transport Museum and their experiences and emotional responses were recorded and analysed. Understanding post-work identities through the embodied and spatial experiences of the present, the research sought insights of the past and future; the continuity and fluidity of working identities that permeated through to post-work lives. This article argues that mobile work identities are specific identities that shape a distinct post-retirement identity.

Introduction

In the introduction to this journal's special edition 'Work on the move', Wood et al. (2016: 139) characterize mobile work as 'work that is done on the move, work that is enabled by movement and work that is movement'. They call for a rethinking of 'work sites as densities of mobility shaping and shaped by mobile work practices and mobile workers', and mobile work as 'characterised by complex interdependencies between people and practices, objects and settings, and information and ideas'. However, there appears to be a gap in this 'relational juxtaposition', which is work that *enables* movement: the work of transport workers. This is not a neglected area of social science per se – there are a range of studies on railway workers (McKenna 19809; Salaman 1974; Swerdlow 1998), for example – but there is less attention to transport workers as *mobile* workers. Similarly, there is less consideration of *post*-work identities: the subjective experiences of mobile workers when they retire. Academic literature on retirement emphasizes the need of a successful transition *away* from work life and work identity, with poor 'adjustment' regarded disparagingly as nostalgic relations to past work (Strangleman 2012) and/or as poor acceptance of older age (Manor 2016). We contend that successful retirement for some mobile workers involves less a compartmentalizing of work life and more a *pulling through* of skills, experiences and dispositions that are developed through years of mobile working.

This article has two related tasks. Firstly, it proposes that transport workers as movement enablers are an important topic of study within mobilities and that they have particular mobile work identities. Secondly, it suggests that the unique nature and features of their work identities are themselves mobile and pull through into the workers' post-work/ retired identities. We consider 'identities' not as static impositions but as dialogic, intersubjective and also in relation to structural factors (Kirk and Wall, 2010). This is the first stage of an analysis that sets out to problematize understandings of retirement and the lifecourse as a series of discrete compartmentalized events. We apply mobile methods (Fincham et al 2010; Buscher et al 2010) 'in place', in the spaces associated with past work, to evoke sensory memories of nostalgic attachments to employment roles. We do so to help rethink post-work identities as embodied and spatial experiences of continuities and relational ties between the past, present and future, by demonstrating the ways in which mobile work identities are pulled through into a stage considered to be post-work. This is significant given the emphasis in the literature on retirement on the *loss* of work on one hand, and on the other, a focus on the ways retired leisure activities/experiences/ identities are the main resource for 'good' (namely 'busy' and 'active') post-work identities (for example, Earl et al, 2015: Gewold, 2015). We question instead how skills, values and experiences of mobile workers as mobility

enablers, rather than being left behind in the 'transition' of work to post-work, give shape, direction and depth to retired lives. This article contends that the mobile work identity, as a distinct identity, shapes and resources a particular post-retirement identity.

Methodology

The research adopted a mobile methodological approach (Fincham et al. 2010; Buscher et al. 2010) to explore retirement identities through a re-engagement of mobile workers with their past place of work, in this case the London Underground (LU). Specifically, we undertook 'shared walks' (O'Neill and Hubbard 2010) in which the participants shared their experiences and feelings about their working lives and their retirement. John and Dan (pseudonyms), two LU retirees, had offered to share their experience with us having answered a call for ex-employees sent out through the trade union ASLEF (Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen).

The walking interviews were carried out during and after a guided tour of part of LU's network of disused tunnels ('Hidden London's', 'Euston: the lost tunnels' tour of disused Euston station, organized by the London Transport Museum). We used video and photography to add texture to the research data and reveal aspects of stories that interviews might not. The tour took place in May 2017, with a follow up interview in July 2017 in a hotel at Leeds Train Station. The interview transcripts and visual data were analysed using QSR NVivo.

Out of use since the 1960s, the tunnels we visited at Euston station were never the actual workplace of either of our participants. However, the method was adopted to ease out memories through multi-sensory engagements with similar spaces to the ones John and Dan worked in: to evoke the sights, sounds, smells, touch and tastes of the LU. The experience did not disappoint. The tour re-produces a version of the Underground, of nostalgia and symbolism, that Transport for London wish to be remembered. This is a political act similar to the 'de-touring' of Hercbergs (2012), whose research centred on tours of Jerusalem. Although disused, the tunnels we visited adjoined working parts of the Underground network, so as well as the musty smell and dampness of bygone times, we were sensing the current workings of the railway, particularly the sounds, the 'acoustic territories' (LaBelle 2010) of the Underground that conjure particular spatial experiences. The tour guide had to fight to be heard above the din of nearby trains hurtling through tunnels; we could feel the power of their

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wake, sense the heat from the trains and the contrasting rushes of air-conditioned air as our field-notes illustrate:

> Battling with the rising sound of the busker, a rendering of "It's my party and I'll cry if I want to".
>
> Walking, chatting, sound of trains arriving, doors and announcements, busking still audible too.
>
> Sounds of train quieter and more distant but still very present.
>
> Guide showing us a map of the tunnels and where we will be going. Rumbles of sound and busker song drifting through. Talk about historical ticket office.
>
> Rumbling of trains passing. Northern Line Charing Cross branch. Platform is just on the other side of the wall. Talk about the building of the Victoria Line. The development of automated trains and ticket barriers.
>
> Rhythmic rustle of walking. Sound of a trains pulling in, doors opening, announcements, trains pulling out. Rhythmic rustling of walking again. Occasional sound of trains pulling in and out of platforms in the distance.

The focus here was on the participant's stories using a narrative approach, which is possible with a limited number of participants (Lawler 2002). Our focus was on the emergent and rich narratives of working and post-work lives, and we are able to carry out an indepth analysis of these stories. Following on from previous work on mobility stories (Murray and Doughty 2016), the narrative analysis adopted here incorporated the creation of visual representations of participant's stories as they emerged from their accounts. We worked iteratively with an illustrator, Eva Jew, to produce comic strip stories (Figure 1) of the key aspects of John's and Dan's accounts of their working and post-retirement lives. Here, again, representation is mobile and practiced (Murray and Upstone, 2014) and so the visual images became part of the participant's tales in 'an iterative process of interpretation and re-interpretation, so that the illustrated stories became part of an ongoing process of knowledge making…The comic stories are not foreclosed narratives but are productive in themselves, part of understanding' (Ibid.: 74).

Being a mobile worker

Mobile workers in transport are workers whose role is to maintain a continuity of space, as

Wood et al. (2016: 141) suggest, enabling the 'moving [of] actions occurring in one space and pulling those spaces into another, through their actions.' They are also workers who are responsible for mending or repairing the breaks and ruptures in the system, the unforeseen incidents that grind the system to a halt. They are particular mobile workers, the 'kinetic elites' (Sheller 2016) of mobile work, charged with the negotiations of time and space that permit leaving, moving and arriving. Working on the LU warrants the negotiation of a distinctive time and space. Following their five-year ethnographic study of LU workers, Heath et al (1999) go as far as to argue that LU workers are 'practical sociologists'. Their research uncovered a unique working environment in which, they argue, workers develop sociological skills in their advanced understanding of situated social interactions. Drivers 'assemble sense of scene' and make decisions based on acquired understandings of social interactions. We will later argue that these unique social practicalities and mobility skills, are themselves 'pulled through' into retirement, but our task in this first section is to demonstrate John's and Dan's understanding and memories of themselves as mobile workers and enablers of others' mobility.

Changing technologies

John and Dan are arguably one of the last generations of LU workers who directly operated or controlled Underground trains. The jobs of mobile workers employed in the transport industry, as train drivers, conductors or signal engineers is changing rapidly. On the LU, signal engineers, like John, no longer operate lines of levers in control rooms, but advanced computer systems and communications technologies. Driverless trains are being introduced on the LU with full automation capabilities. The new fleet of 250 trains to be in operation by the mid 2020s will still have driver operated doors but there are plans for full automation (TfL 2014, 2017).

Changes were, of course, a key feature of John and Dan's working lives with a series of transformations in technologies and associated working practices that reconfigured their relationship with their workplace and colleagues. However, both John and Dan seemed to have taken these changes in their stride. In fact, both used enforced change to make positive shifts in their trajectories. John has had a fairly tumultuous working life as he describes:

> I'd rather work, do a job, I enjoy for less money... I got stuff, you know, you spend a
> quarter or a third of your life at work, probably, something like that. And if you don't

enjoy it, what's the point. It's a waste. You hear people moaning about their job and, well, change it, change your circumstances. So, I guess my attitude was a bit like that when it came up to my choice do I hang on in and hope I don't get made redundant. I've been redundant twice before, I don't want, I know what that means, if I can get out before I'm pushed, I'll do it. So, I thought, I'm adaptable, I'll change. I'll do something. So, it worked. And I got a job I really enjoyed.

The job John is talking about was as a signalling engineer with LU, a job he continued to do beyond the usual age of retirement at Transport for London (TfL).

Most people think about 65 in terms of state pension, for now anyway, but of course that's all changing. I could have gone at 65 but I had the attitude that while I'm still enjoying what I do I'm going to carry on doing it, you know. Why, what's the point in giving it up if I still enjoy work. I've always had that attitude.

Only 1.7% of TfL staff are over 65 (TfL 2016), but for John, joining the LU at a relatively late stage of his working life was connected to his interest in transport:

I was working voluntarily with the West Somerset Railway for many years. Since the 1980s. It's on steam trains. Shoveling coal. All that sort of thing. So, I had, you know, a bit of knowledge. A different sort of knowledge. But that's always been with me, all my life. So, I think if I hadn't gone into print I might have gone into the railway at an early age like you did [referring to Dan]. So, but, when 65 came round, and I thought, well, I'm not ready to retire, I'm still enjoying it. Plus, the plus side, I could top the pension up a bit more before I took it.

John still 'pulls signals' in his role as a volunteer on a steam railway, a role he finds a lot less stressful given it is 'a couple of trains an hour instead of one train every two minutes'. He misses the people at LU but says they 'ring each other up and have a bit of a chat and get together now and again'. Hence contact with the old workplace is preserved in a 'maintaining of the continuity of space' (Woods et al. 2016).

Well, basically, my father worked on London Transport and in them days when you reached 16, the emphasis was to go out and get a job. So basically, he said if you don't get a job, you're not living under my roof. (Dan)

Similarly, Dan took meandering pathway through working life. Unlike John, he joined straight from school, following in his father's footsteps. He talks with fondness of his time at the organization, firstly as a train driver and then in management:

> I started just after my 16th birthday. I don't regret it, coz, I think, working London Underground was like an extended family as I was saying earlier. And the different characters and the different people you work with just filled you into a unique setting of understanding different people and different cultures. I never treated anyone any different no matter what they are or whatever they do. And it's given me a wealth of funny stories and laughter and good times and friendships and I don't think, you know, even if I'd walked away from school with some exams I'd have still regretted not joining London Underground as it was then.

Dan's father had worked for LU before him and he had listened to his stories of how working life was tougher then:

> In my father's day in 1948 you turned up for work two minutes late without your full uniform, hat and everything, he was told don't bother, go home, you're going without pay.

Dan's father also influenced his decision to take early retirement: his father retired in his early 60s, but Dan feels that he missed out:

> All the things that they'd longed for, dreamed about, holidays, all that. He never really got an opportunity to do because he deteriorated and then he died of a heart attack.

Dan had previously had to leave his job as a train driver before finding a management role at LU:

> I'd become diabetic with insulin I lost my job as a train driver and um, coz in them days you couldn't drive a passenger vehicle with insulin, still can't. And um, my manager said, we can't carry you on, there's no other jobs for you.

The development of new communications technologies changed working practices throughout their lives. John considered this to be a generational issue:

> And that was good. But then of course technology was coming in. Apple Macs,

computers, all that and the old skills were going. I was learning the new stuff but it was, they needed less people basically and the youngsters were more on top of it than I was, to be honest, even though enjoy, I still enjoy my Apple Macs and so on, but I'm not, I'm not a whizz like some of the youngsters are. I take, my grandson takes to it and teaches me things, you know, so it's, yeah, so it was a gamble

For Heath et al. (1999), the train is a 'complex organizational environment', a mobility system (Urry 2007), but a very particular type of system in which the train driver is in a particular relationship with technology and people. For example, they found that a 'particular set of skills' and 'artful practices' associated with closing vehicle doors was integral to this practical knowledge for train drivers. The significance of this aspect of driver expertise is borne out by Dan, who explains the importance of developing this skill during driver training:

> And the way it would be phrased would be, alright driver, you're in Kings Cross station, the doors close, the guard gives you the bell, you push your handle forward and your train don't move. Tell me your actions. And literally, if you didn't do the A, B, C of finding out why that train weren't moving, the red pen would come out.

Further, the 'impoverished access to the activities of others and the events which are occurring' (Heath et al. 1999: 557), rather than reduce train drivers' social skills, was considered to hone them. Their job is isolated, but changes in technologies, it seems, have worked to increase this isolation further and have significant repercussions for the 'practical sociological knowledge' that Heath et al. (1999: 567) uncovered. Even at the time of Heath et al.'s research, LU were exploring strategies to reduce 'dwell time', the length of time trains are stopped in stations. It was thought that this this might reduce the 'discretion and practical intelligence' of drivers and lead to boredom (Ibid.: 567). As Dan recalls train driving already was a tedious job and was becoming more isolated through computerised systems and changing practices such as removing guards from trains.

> Driving a train, physically and mentally, is a very boring thing to do. You clock on and then you don't see, maybe anyone for 4, maybe 4 and a half hours and then you have a break. So, it's a rather tedious job. It's one that you've got to occupy your mind with and stay concentrated and up to be able to do the job. Driving the train is fairly simple. Anyone could by physically driving it.

…and then one person in operation obviously cut off the social existence between guard and driver, which was very important and a very big aspect of working in the early days of the railway.

John stresses that the job goes far beyond the actual train operation, to having the experience and skills to cope with situations that arise when the system does not operate smoothly: the wider role of the practical sociologist. Just as the drivers are alone in the train cab, they are also often alone in dealing with disruptions in the system.

It's the knowledge of the train, coz unlike if you're in a car when you break down now and you can call the AA out or RAC or there's help nearby, if you're on a packed tube train and it stops working, if you don't know how to get that train working, you've got serious consequences. (Dan)

TfL's 250 new trains, recently announced, are capable of full automation; designed to reduce this 'dwell time' and allow a significantly greater number of trains through stations (TfL 2017). Dan and John were both aware of the conflicting demands that were changing the working culture of the organisation. They felt less able to work using the practical sociological skills they had developed in their roles.

And of course, we went through this professionalism where they called us professional train operators… That's when the job changed. And I'm sure John will appreciate what I'm saying here is that where we were left, although our own advice is to offer a service to the general public, we were being told what to do, how to do it, by people that had never done it. (Dan)

In seeking to understand more about this changing mobile work, it is useful to dwell on an important aspect of the transport industry, its gender segregation. This was a recurring theme in Dan's and John's stories.

Gendered mobile identities

And because when I started it was male dominated basically, the railway. (Dan)

It is difficult to discuss contextual issues that might frame a working life in transport without discussing gender. We draw on deconstructionist conceptualisations of gender, which allow

us to exam how organisations, institutional practices and everyday working lives are actively coded as 'feminine' and 'masculine' (Aalton and Mills, 2002). As Dan says and as John agreed, the railway is male dominated. This is a pertinent issue in the field of transport and mobility studies as transport remains one of the most gender segregated and male-dominated industries in the UK (Hamilton 2005; Wright 2011, 2014). This male-domination, it is argued, has repercussions throughout mobility systems (Hamilton 2005; Priya Uteng and Cresswell 2008). Segregation has been attributed in part to the transport sector having some of the most inflexible working patterns and longest hours (Wright 2014). However, as Dan explains, the working cultures at the LU were also highly masculinized:

> We had Hannah Dadds who was the first female train driver and her sister. But without sounding horrible, they were like men. They were as bad as men. They were as bad as men. They swore more than we did, they smoked more than we did and they gave a lot of lip to the management, more than we did. So we never really see them as women, because they were just part of our culture… (Dan)

It is a perhaps a similar picture to other parts of the transport network, although a different perspective becomes apparent through women's own accounts of their experiences. Hannah Dadd's, who qualified in 1978, was the first female underground train driver in the UK, after the transport industry was forced to consider the barriers to particular jobs following the Equal Opportunities Act 1974 (Rotondaro 2004). Annie Winter, the first female overground train driver in the UK in 1983 tells of her early experiences as a driver's assistant in Norwood Junction in 1979:

> On arrival at Norwood Junction depot I found that certain individuals took delight in increasing their swearing in front of me or being crude. I was very offended by this. (Wojtczak 2005: 320)

Transport for London has a higher than national average percentage of female workers, representing 16% of operational staff (including customer service, station supervisors, dial-a-ride drivers and network controllers as well as train drivers) and 17% of all LU staff (TfL 2016). Dan and John discussed the introduction of female recruits onto the LU workforce:

> And when London Underground decided, and the Chair at the time, decided that women would be easier to control, they wouldn't be joining unions, they wouldn't be coming out on strike action. So, he had the idea if he brought women in it would weaken our position and they'd be easier to control. So, he advertised in all these

women's magazines, *Women's Own*, to bring in more women. But what the top directors hadn't realised because they never went operational, is that we were geared up for men only. So suddenly they made this big old announcement, there are 36 women train drivers are gonna be coming out and working. And when they came, there was no locker facilities for them, there was no separate shower units for them, there was no toilet facilities for 'em. (Dan)

We'd had women, you know, come through. Station side, but they were experienced and knew what was happening. These were cold, they were recruits, they didn't really know anything different. And no one told them that they would be standing outside a Tube station at half past one in the morning waiting for a staff taxi to take them back to their local destination. So, a lot of them just said, good pay but I'm not doing this. And so they…but yeah, that was a bit of an eye opener. (Dan)

LU, then, were not prepared for the influx of female workers, albeit relatively small and confined to particular roles. There has been some generational shift in bringing more women into LU roles, but this has been slow. As Stanley (2008: 277) reports from the Gender, Emotion, Work and Travel conference held in London in 2007, 'transport roles claimed that females are naturally clean and good at catering work, mature, attentive, steady, content with low pay, bring order and a pleasant atmosphere and are better than men at dealing with female passengers'. Thus, women are often considered more suited to caring roles, specifically for other women, and it was perhaps the lack of institutional acknowledgement of the wider activities taken on by London Underground staff, as demonstrated above, which maintained the gender segregation that endures in the transport sector. It is worth focusing on the impacts of the practical sociology of mobile workers, the caring roles that are practiced and go beyond the prescribed tasks of the train driver and signal engineer. It appears to be these mobile work characteristics that have been pulled through to retirement.

Caring identities

Smith and Hall (2016) use the notion of 'care and repair' to make sense of the mobile work of outreach workers in Cardiff. These workers are considered 'mobile' as they move around looking out for and after clients. Care is clearly fundamental to their work. However, for those engaged in transporting or affording transportation, care may not be considered as so central. However, we can witness both caring and repairing throughout Dan and John's working lives in LU and beyond. There are two particular examples of this caring and repairing identity.

Firstly, in both John and Dan's felt responsibility to LU passengers and their colleagues. This is particularly evident in what Heath et al. (1999) discuss as the 'most significant problem for drivers' – the 'one under' a train, referring to train driver's terminology for passengers falling or jumping in front of trains and tumbling onto the tracks. As Heath et al. 1999: 570 suggest: 'They fear 'one unders' and volunteer stories of their own or their colleagues, which speak of the horror of the incident and the curious moment of intimacy as passenger and driver recognize their fate.'. They cite an example in *Evening Standard* of a woman who was dragged under a train and driver did not realize until after eight stations when he was informed of the tragedy that had unfolded. This led to speculation of a 'blind spot' in vision and changes to trains.

The experience or fear of the experience, they argue, 'permeates the ways in which drivers assess passengers and operate the vehicle' (ibid.). This appears to be the case for Dan who discussed people falling under the train at great length. As he recalled:

> And you never know how you're going to react until you've had one. It doesn't matter how much training or experience you have until it actually happens. And only then do you realise whether can cope.

This is an example of going beyond the job description and the prescribed tasks of the train driver. Care is shown in Dan's attempts to prevent this happening. He talks proudly of averting three out of the four suicide attempts that he witnessed. It is clearly an emotive subject that evokes emotional memories.

> I got the mental image of what happened that day and that stayed with me for a while. But it was at the coroner's inquest, and this is something I worked on later on, the full impact come, because until then he was an unknown person. Then I got to meet his sister and his mother and before I knew it you could almost relate a name to the person and the history and that had a worse effect on me… And so I started working with management to say we need more support when a…a train operator goes to coroner's court and is interviewed as to his actions on the day.

Dan's other example of 'care and repair' was in his account of his actions during the 'London bombings' in 2005.

> During the bombings I was at Canon Street, it was almost second nature what I had to do to get the passengers off, clear the system, go up top and start assisting other passengers, while still dealing, because I was trade union, it was my colleagues who

were caught up in the bombing as well. It was a horrible day.

Pride is also evident in Dan's recollection of the care he took in securing his colleagues jobs when they were threatened with redundancy:

> So, I took the whole team out to Regents Park, to this lovely outside cafeteria and I said, well, you know, I've had to make some really tough decisions in my life but I don't think I will face a harder decision than I've faced today, I said, because basically, one of you is not going to be working after next month. And Alan and Nicola's face, coz they knew by this time Russell was going, they knew it was them two. And I said, it was tough, I've had sleepless nights, I said, but I'm not going to hold it off much longer, I'm just going to say a name and I know you're going to have a bad reaction to it, and winding it all up, and said it's just something I gotta do. So, you can imagine Nicola and Alan, just like tender hooks. I said, so, my decision is, I'm going to sack….and I left it, it was spectacular, it really was!

Both Dan and John have pulled through this caring role into their retirement. John continues his transport-focused interests in his volunteer role on the West Somerset Railway but he also in caring for an older family member:

> my wife's mother is living with us. She's 97 and got dementia so I'm pretty much engaged in supporting and looking after her, which is a discipline all of its own. It's restrictive. But I think, it's a period of adjustment really, it's not easy but…

Here we start to see the different manifestations of care as an interpersonal relationship that is shaped by wider socio-cultural factors – by they contained to the work place or larger structural policies such as austerity (Barnes et al , 2015). Dan's link to his previous workplace is not, like John, with, but his role as a union representative, which he describes as a caring role. Not only has Dan continued to be involved in local campaigns, he has retained a union role as treasurer of a section of the branch funds. This role maintains his link to his past workplace.

> I miss the work colleagues incredibly. Even through we're all connected on Facebook and go for a drink. But that banter. Every day. And of course, being the union rep, you always got an awful lot of abuse, so it was always good to receive that abuse and give it back. (Dan)

Pulling through into retired identities: 'it's part of me'

To reiterate, across the academic literature retirement is understood in terms of stages or transitions. This approach spawns two lines of enquiry: firstly, an interest into how one enters or prepares for a transition; and secondly, an understanding of what a successful transition/ retirement will look like (which increasingly is refigured to incorporate a return to some form of paid or unpaid work). It is, then, common to approach retirement in terms of how one *adjusts* to this 'stage of life' and this adjustment involves compartmentalizing work identities in order to accept the new post-work and aged identity (for example, Reitzes and Mutran 2004; Major 2016). This modelling of retirement (in terms of stages/ transitions/ adjustments) reveals much about our cultural privileging of work as a major and primary determinant of identity as well as a stubborn ageism that links older age with unproductivity. Manor (2016) explains that this has a lot to do with the time we spend in work – it is expected to take up a significant part of our adult lives – and the influence of capitalist economies upon our understanding of personal status and worth. Yet, it reveals too an academic bias, indeed a fascination, for novelty (Crow 2005) and for social accounts of rupture, discontinuity and crisis, particularly in research on employment and work identities. This comes at the expense of continuities, consistencies and the construction of coherent biographies (Strangleman, 2012).

Strangleman (2012) is more concerned with work than post-work identities, but his focus on continuities allows us to focus on what may carry through from work to retired identities. As we have seen above, what is clear from John and Dan's work lives is the combination of change with regularity: technological changes, changes to the workforce and stress were part of mobile work that was also characterized by the discipline of regularity (Strangleman, 2012): not only did John and Dan both feel a responsibility to keep the trains to time by keeping to routine, but aspects of their jobs were 'boring' and repetitive. Dan explained above how a driving a train is a relatively simple task, requiring little in skill, yet it involves a great deal of awareness to sounds (of breakdowns and malfunction) and to potentially tragic events on and around platforms (the 'one unders') and to the increasing surveillance related to terrorist attacks. For Dan in particular, these experiences fed into a post-work identity that was both spatially *present,* and one that was highly safety conscious.

We witnessed this ourselves during the walking interview: as we were walking through a

main artery of the station that is open to the public, a woman stopped Dan, to ask directions and train information. Although Dan is not identifiable as a member of staff (no uniform or lanyard), he has a presence that he and his wife, Dee, in a later seated interview, describe as an 'aura'. When we asked Dan to explain the encounter in the station, he explained that he felt he 'was made' to ensure others are 'safe' and this for Dan means being able to navigate busy and public spaces:

> Making sure she was safe, yeah. Yeah. That was what I was made for. And I'll never never…And I do that, even when I was in, waiting in a bus station in Mortlake [?] someone came up to me, where's the bus to St. Pauls? Ah right, well you want the number 4 so that's over there. And of course, [my wife] rolled up laughing that here I am still helping people get home. But it's just part of me and I don't think that will ever change or I would want to change really.

In this extract, Dan's understanding that aspects of his work identity, primarily that of responsibility for others being still 'part of me', starts to cast doubt on the easy assumption that experiences, associations, and skills of work are simply left behind as one adjusts to retired life. Dan speaks of a spatial awareness, developed through his work that means no matter where he is, he still manages to enable the mobility of others. He has an ability to not only navigate a way through space but he also to understand how spaces of transport are organized. This 'aura', combined with what he calls an 'approachedness' that comes from doing public-facing work over years, meant that he maintained this characteristic even in post-work, and in new and different contexts:

> even when we was in Malta, weren't it , we was in the bus station and then
> people started coming up 'do you know the bus to ..' 'oh yeah, that's over
> there' and before you knew it you were taking tourists around a Maltese bus
> station'

Dan not only takes pride in this ability and service but, significantly for our interest in how retired identities are resourced, Dan himself sees this 'natural' aspect of his post-work identity as growing from working with 'the travelling public' for 35 years:

> when you've been working with the people for so long, you're kind of
> looking, seeing people who are having difficulties, I still do it when I walk
> through Leeds Station…it just comes naturally to someone who has worked

for 35 years with the travelling public. I think if you've always been helpful
and nice then it comes into you so it's good

The idea that past experiences, and that a past alertness once needed for work may come
'into' the retired self, gestures to aspects of work-identity that pull through to shape
experiences of post-work. Not only can he not 'help' himself when it comes to helping
others, he enjoyed it and it became a point of familiarity with his new partner:

I still enjoy it. I still enjoy it. And my partner will tell you, if I'm standing on the
platform, people will still come up and ask me questions. (Dan)

Dan also felt that work had given him skills and experience he actively drew on in his
retirement: 'working with people means finding it easier to be with people' and to 'integrate'
into new surroundings and communities, helping his involvement in local communities and
meaning he actively seeks social opportunities

Now, the one thing I've done is organise people and organise events in various
ways[…] And so, I'm still doing a lot, but it's using my people skills, that of course you
do build up over the years, and er, my knowledge of organising events and all that and
that's what I do. And I'm enjoying it quite a bit.

Dan's ease and confidence at meeting and being with people was helped by his experiences of
working with a diverse range of people in TfL. Black and ethic minority workers have made
up over a 1/3 of the employee population of TfL (Kirk and Wall, 2011), and Dan's
experiences of working with people of diverse faiths and cultural background has, he states,
made him interested *in* people. This interest and multiculturalism gave him a confidence that
moved with Dan across different social settings: from train platforms to the Captain's Table
on a recent cruise.

Conclusion

This article considers a neglected and arguably disappearing mode of mobile work into
retirement and explores what it means to have this mobile work identity based on a working
life and a life after work conditioned by the sociological knowledge that Heath et al.
identified. In doing so, we have considered some defining aspects of this mobile work. The

contention here is that, as transport workers in the transport sector, caring and gendered identities are highly significant. This stems from both John and Dan's stories and the two contextual issues that persist in academic writing about the transport industry: the level of occupational risk and gendered segregation. The working conditions of transport workers and particularly the isolation of a large number of workers such as bus and train drivers, alongside the negative emotions that result from passengers' response to disruption on the transport network, lead to transport workers being at a high risk of abuse or threatening behaviour (Bibby 2017). But this also leads to a landscape of care in which transport workers seeks to shield others from harm as well as ensure that they get to the right place at the right time.

This article has sought to add to a literature of retired railway workers which has to date focused on the illness and mortality rates that come from this particular mobile work (for example, exposure to asbestos in the tubes and more widely in the industry exposure to diesel fumes and coal (see Howe et al, 1983 and Sun et al, 2014)). We have focused on railway workers as specific mobility workers to explore not only the features of work as mobility enablers but also to examine if aspects of mobility work may shape the identities and experiences workers take up in retirement.

In contributing to scholarship that approaches ageing critically, it is crucial to consider the intersecting identities of work and retirement-in order to unlock some of the preconceptions about retirement as a non-productive stage in the life course. Manor (2016) argues that there is a privileging of work identity as well as a privileging of work as particularly identity-forming which feeds into an imagining of post-work as a defined stage of life involving the cessation of work in line with pre-existing beliefs around the abilities of the ageing body. Such imaginings circulate common sense notions that the life course is made up of a set of demarcated stages with clear beginning and ends. Yet, critical thinking in gerontology, geography and urban studies (Andrews, Evans and Wiles 2012; Bailey 2009; Hopkins and Pain 2007), moves towards a critical acknowledgement of the relationality of age, space and time. This helps us understand that age and ageing are experienced not only *in situ*, but in relation to other places, spaces and times. In parallel, there is emerging critical thinking on situated experiences associated with the lifecourse (Bailey 2009; Hockey 2009) that calls for 'less compartmentalized' approaches to the life course. Adopting this approach, retirement can be considered in a wider context, as a part of life that is not rigidly defined by age and which is firmly connected to other parts of life. Hence, productivity does not cease in retirement (see for example Robinson and Still 2015) but may take on different forms, that are nevertheless rooted in 'work' identities. Understanding the situatedness, in places, spaces and

times, of mobile work identities helps in making sense of retirement identities.

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