

A summary of the first report from the Transport Visions Network

OVERVIEW

This is a summary of the first in a series of reports to be produced by the Transport Visions Network. The Network is a novel venture to project the views of young professionals into the debate concerning the future of transport and its role in society. It is comprised of individuals who are aged 35 or under from universities, consultancies and public authorities both in the UK and overseas. The series of reports will cover eight different topics and aims to build up a coherent vision for the future of transport. The Network produced this report through a managed process of discussion involving e-mail debate, a face-to-face workshop and the writing of the report with input from an editorial board. It considers the ways in which the people of the UK will live, work, and play as the 21st century progresses. It provides a context for subsequent consideration of the nature of transport systems that might best serve us in the future.

The report outlines changes that might occur which will influence our need for and use of transportation as well as the way in which transport could play a role in shaping our future society and lifestyles.

OUR APPROACH

A multitude of possible futures exist for society and lifestyles and it would be foolhardy to attempt to set out one single vision. The Network's approach was to consider driving forces that will have a large influence on our future. We examined three principal driving forces: (i) social; (ii) political and environmental; and (iii) economic and technological. Having assembled facts and figures on current trends for a wide variety of topics relating to the three driving forces above, we then brainstormed the implications of the trends considering whether they would be likely to continue or be adapted or reversed by developments in society.

This led to an exploration of the outcomes of two alternative scenarios for each driving force as shown below.

SOCIAL DRIVING FORCES	
♦ Community Oriented Society	♦ Individual Oriented Society
POLITICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DRIVING FORCES	
♦ Free Market Oriented Society	♦ Government Interventionist Society
ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DRIVING FORCES	
♦ Workplace to the Workers	♦ Workers to the Workplace

In deliberating over 'Society and Lifestyles' there is enormous scope to what can be considered. In our report we have not attempted to be comprehensive but have sought to explore what we believe are the key factors that will influence the future of transportation. The report includes an account of the Network's debate of each scenario, attempting to reflect the diversity of views and contributions of the Network members.

SOCIAL DRIVING FORCES

The Community Oriented Society scenario envisages a future where society will increase the emphasis it places on family and community relationships. There will be a trend for women to have more children, but to do so later in life resulting in a reasonably stable population level. Quality of life will become a key indicator of prosperity and a change in people's attitudes will enable Government to give sustainability a high priority. Two of the main approaches to achieving sustainability will be to concentrate housing and to concentrate production and consumption patterns.

Financial packages will be introduced that enable residents to become part owners in shared housing arrangements. Co-housing schemes will provide shared facilities (e.g. child-care facilities, gardens) to groups of homes. Homes will become more flexible than they are today with internal

layouts that are adaptable according to the needs of occupants. Employers will wish to assist their employees in reconciling their family/community interests with work. As a result homeworking will be encouraged in many circumstances. To counter the isolation that can result from homeworking, employers will pool together to establish community office facilities where those living in the same locality can make use of shared office facilities. These will act as a focal point for the renewal of the vitality of local areas.

A reversal of the trend towards more dispersed living will help support the provision of local amenities and public transport services. The increasing importance attached to the quality of living in residential environments will lead to a lowering in the priority given to the car in the design of residential areas. Car sharing clubs will become a popular way of accessing transport.

The Individual Oriented Society scenario envisages a future where society attaches great importance to individual choice and freedom. The total population is likely to decline slightly due to low birth rates. Marriage will not be the norm with different types of relationships being formed. People will be highly mobile in terms of their home and work, especially in their early adulthood. Wealthy people will be able to access the latest medical developments such as health monitoring body implants. Poorer people may have difficulty accessing basic health care.

Some people will value having their own personal space and so will seek sizeable property to adapt as they wish. However, many young adults will choose to live close to amenities and their workplace and will be happy to have small homes or to share a home with other people. People will not concentrate so heavily on their career in early adult life given the prospect of being able to work until they are at least 70. They will take out loans to pursue leisure interests. There will be a contrast between cash/time rich over 50s who do not need to work and other over 50s who need to work to survive.

The service sector will boom as it seeks to meet the demand for goods and services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Workers will become more independent of their employers with an ethic of self-employment taking over where people have personal control and responsibility for their careers. Companies will need to use the flexible workforce to be able to compete internationally. They will seek to use foreign workers where they are unable to find workers in the UK.

Generally, people will have an increased amount of personal flexibility and be less tied to specific locations. This will result in greater dependence on personal forms of transport which will be satisfied through a combination of ownership, renting and hiring.

Present and Projected Social Driving Forces	Community Oriented Society	Individual Oriented Society
Population will decrease	✘	✓
Net inwards migration will continue	?	?
Life expectancy will increase	✓	✓
Women will have children later in life	✓	✓
Legal union (e.g. marriage) will decline	✘	✓
Continued major increases in housing stock	✘	?
Average household size decreasing	✘	✓
Increasing use of childcare facilities	✘	✓
Overseas travel increasingly common	?	✓
Personal fitness increasing	✓	✓
Prolonged personal independence	✓	✓
Increasing (material) standard of living	?	✓

✓ - agree ✘ - disagree ? - uncertain

POLITICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL DRIVING FORCES

The Free Market Society scenario envisages a future where people will turn away from politicians to multi-national corporations to meet many of their needs. With the consumer exerting strong influence, the most successful businesses will be those that use technology to become flexible in adapting their products to

meet consumer needs. These businesses will cluster in areas with well developed transport links. The workforce will be as mobile as goods and services. High levels of migration will result in the proliferation of a global culture. This will increasingly draw on cultures from outside Europe and North America.

Corporations may regulate themselves in the interest of sustainability given their need to look after the long-term interest of their customers and shareholders. Alternatively, companies may seek short-term gains by exploiting scarce resources. More environmentally friendly products could become commercial successes. They would start as niche services but information on them would spread quickly and they would be brought to the mainstream. Without the Government providing a safety net to the disadvantaged, this group will either perform low paid jobs in the service of others or be left out completely. This could result in serious crime problems and a thriving industry in the provision of security services.

There will be rapid emergence of zero emission vehicles (ZEVs). Major roads will be operated by private companies who will ensure they are free flowing by charging for their use according to the level of demand. A similar situation will occur with telecommunication where a two-tier service will develop. Public transport services will thrive in cities where they will be an important means of advertising services and products. They will disappear in other areas.

The Government Interventionist Society envisages that Government will take a more active and longer term view in influencing society. Economic centres at the city-region level will see significant power devolved to them to implement new initiatives. The public will become more involved in local decision making through on-line consultation processes, while there will be a raised status for those elected as local government executives.

Devolved power could result in patchy implementation of new ideas, but it could also lead to much faster identification and adoption of effective schemes. People will increasingly define their identity in terms of region rather than nation, especially given the high mobility of people across national borders. This mobility will help to promote the rapid transfer of ideas from one place to another.

The involvement of the public in decision making will increase as they see their opportunity to exert influence improve due to increased use of proportional representation and electronic voting. There will be a general acceptance that some personal freedom will have to be sacrificed in order to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Surveillance equipment will become increasingly sophisticated with the eventual implant of personal ID chips. The combined powers of national and local government will be used to implement safer streets in urban areas through pedestrianisation, traffic calming and speed control.

Political / environmental driving forces	Free Market Oriented Society	Government Interventionist Society
Reform of political process/structures	?	✓
Increased political participation	✗	✓
Local level decision making will prevail	?	✓
Increasingly dynamic patterns of migration	✓	✓
Regions will gain increasing social, economic and political significance	✓	✓
Sustainable resource consumption	✗	?
Social segregation and economic division accelerates	✓	✗
Crime levels increasing	✓	✗
Personal freedom increases	?	?

✓ - agree ✗ - disagree ? - uncertain

ECONOMIC & TECHNOLOGICAL DRIVING FORCES

The Workplace to the Workers scenario anticipates teleworking becoming practiced widely. It will be stimulated by steps taken to make employers bear the travel costs of employees getting to work. Employers will prefer to pay for equipment and energy costs of their employees working at home. At first, employees will only telework part-time but the emergence of widespread community offices will combine the benefit of interaction

with other workers and the advantage of not having to travel to distant offices. Community offices will contain 'worker cells', offering advanced communications media to enable workers to effectively interact with colleagues at other sites. Community offices will encourage people to interact more with people from their local area and generate the development of other community amenities (after-school clubs, supermarket/retail delivery points, etc.).

The 'workplace revolution' will enable a larger proportion of the population to work, using a variety of working arrangements. The reduced importance of physical location will also enable companies to maintain required staff levels more easily. The 'paperless office' will become a reality with electronic paper and books revolutionising the way that computers are used. These will be user-friendly devices enabling the reader to sit in an arm-chair in comfort as with an ordinary book rather than enduring the discomfort of staring at a vertical computer monitor. Further into the future, lightweight headsets will display information onto the retina.

The land freed up from redundant office space will provide the opportunity to build high density urban housing as well as provide open space. Urban areas will be designed to ensure that amenities are close to where people live, increasing the use of non-motorised modes of transport. On the other hand, without the need to travel to work, many people will choose to live in rural villages where they will be dependent on cars.

Teleworking will substantially reduce work-related travel but demand for other forms of travel will increase. International travel will be stimulated by greater amounts of worldwide communication but it will also be dampened due to the decreasing sense of mystery associated with other parts of the world (as telecommunications open up much of the globe to common experience). Telecommunications and IT will be used to make the most efficient use of transport capacity. Road users might have to pay for use according to traffic levels and the extent in advance with which they booked a 'slot'. The rapid adoption of new technology will lead to some exclusion, as those who do not adapt to it will experience reduced choice. However, cheap mobile communications devices will counter this, enabling most people to participate in the new culture.

The Workers to the Workplace

scenario anticipates that the workplace will grow in importance for many people. Companies will be under pressure to be competitive, fostering a culture of working long hours. Limits on working hours will not prove to be enforceable or practical. The use of advanced technology at the workplace will require workers to be on site. Face to face communication will be important, especially in providing services to the increasing number of leisured over 50s who will expect personal contact. The use of childminders and nursery schools will increase as many parents continue to work full-time. Job

sharing will become popular as a means of maintaining an employment position, while allowing some flexibility for employees to undertake other activities.

As employees spend more time at the workplace past distinctions between work and leisure will become increasingly blurred. New facilities will be provided such as gyms, shops, creches and bedrooms. Work will become part of a lifestyle package where everything is obtainable under one roof. It will be recognised that an important part of the workplace consists of communal areas such as coffee bars where ideas and creativity can thrive. City centre environments will also adapt to this trend by providing relaxing environments for social networking to attract workers. The enduring importance of the workplace will result in well connected regions retaining and enhancing their economic prosperity leading to further clustering of resources and workers and continued migration from peripheral areas.

The importance of the workplace will place pressure on transport networks to enable access to jobs. People will choose to live closer to the workplace, stimulating the development of high density urban housing. Mass transit will be an essential part of the transport system, enabling access to central urban areas. Other businesses will tend to gravitate towards transport links on urban peripheries where car access will be dominant. Connection to airports will become ever more important as international consultancy work expands.

Coping with increasing demand for air travel will become a key issue for sustainable development. Although communication can make use of the Internet, face to face interaction will be seen to be crucial to nurture relationships.

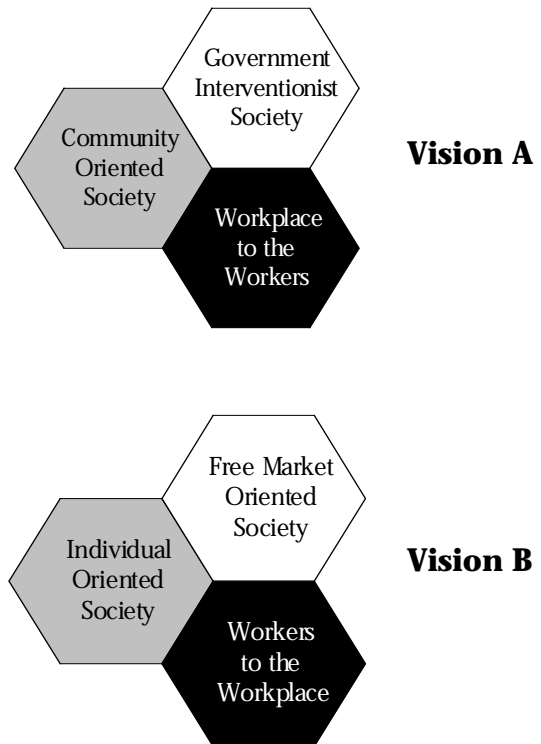
Economic and Technological driving forces	Workplace to the Workers	Workers to the Workplace
Increasing size of total UK workforce	✓	?
Decreasing unemployment rate nationally	✓	?
Decreasing retirement age	✗	✓
Proportion of women in paid employment increasing	✓	✓
Workers changing employers more frequently	?	✓
Increasing level of part-time working	✓	✓
Increasing length of the working week	✗	✓
Increasing practice of teleworking	✓	✗
Increasing service sector employment share	✓	✓
Increasing level of disposable income	✓	✓
Increasing air travel	✓	✓

✓ - agree ✗ - disagree ? - uncertain

INTERPRETING THE SCENARIOS

The scenarios have some overlapping themes and no single scenario is likely to occur as set out. However, we present the scenarios as potential boundaries within which we must think in designing our

transport systems. However, through an examination of the commonalities of the visions, what has emerged could be considered to be two alternative 'collective visions'.



It might naturally be assumed that Vision A offers a more sustainable and socially desirable future. This may be the case, although our discussions have highlighted positive and negative aspects in both cases. What is clear is that the pace of change and the extent to which our scenarios will evolve is dictated by two somewhat opposing forces. Technological advances are often termed *revolutionary* and change in this context is proving rapid. However, human behaviour is slower to respond and in contrast might be termed *evolutionary*.

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