Transforming commuting mobilities: the memory of practice

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Transforming commuting mobilities: the memory of practice

Abstract

This paper examines how non-representational theories of practice can expand our understanding of the ways in which mobility transformations take place. It argues that we need to attend more sensitively to the different ways in which mobility practices self-transform through their ongoing, repeated enactment. Its central claim is that commuting practices are always evolving, adapting and elaborating. This is because of the different ways that the past coexists with and complicates action in the present. The first part of the paper shows how mobility transformations are most frequently evaluated according to linear, chronological understandings of temporality. In response, it shows how an attunement to duration, using conceptualisations of the virtual, provides a way of understanding the complex temporal folds through which the past inheres in the present, transforming its course. Pivoting around three interview encounters with commuters in Sydney, Australia, the second part of the paper shows how the virtuality of the past inheres in and becomes actualised in the present through movements, events, and milieus—flagging the significance of habit memory, recollection memory, and tertiary memory, respectively. These virtual potentials underscore not only the complexity and excessiveness of the present, but also the openness and the indeterminacy of the future. The paper questions what constitutes a mobility transformation; it expands our comprehension of the agencies of transformation affecting life in this sphere; and it challenges us to rethink the ontological unit upon which macropolitical interventions are usually focused.

Keywords

practice, mobilities, affect, memory, commuting, nonrepresentational theory, virtuality

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Introduction

It has become something of a common refrain in academic and policy debates on transport that mobility practices in cities must be transformed. Commuting is one of the most significant mobility practices that takes place in cities both in terms of its everyday nature, and the number of people that it involves. As a practice requiring transformation, commuting has arguably generated the most sustained attention. The rationales for championing commuting transformations are multiple and varied. Dominant amongst these are the environmental concerns for reducing carbon emissions (Watson, 2012; Hensher, 2008); population health concerns for reducing the detrimental effects of being sedentary (Merom et al., 2006; Sallis et al., 2004); and wellbeing concerns for reducing social exclusion and isolation (Stanley and Lucas, 2008; Preston and Rajé, 2007). Within these debates, and reflecting this diversity of rationales, the concept of transformation encompasses a variety of different changes at play. First, modal transformation, the modes of transport people use, raises concerns about the need to shift the balance from individual, private car travel to public transport, collective travel, such as car sharing and car-pooling, cycling and walking (Kent and Dowling, 2013; Conley and McLaren, 2009). Second, workplace transformation raises concerns about *how often* people are moving, and is underpinned by calls to increase the proportion of people working remotely from home (Cairns et al, 2008). Third, temporal transformation raises concerns about *when* people are moving, and is underpinned by calls to spread the two current peak commuting times more evenly through the morning and afternoon (Lyons and Haddad, 2008). Acknowledging this diversity of rationales, it is increasingly recognised that transforming commuting practices is not a simple task of providing adequate infrastructural investment, or transforming commuters' attitudes (Shove, 2010). Rather, it requires new ways of understanding how practices emerge, persist and transform that respect the complexity of forces that animate commuting practices and shape mobile lives.

The aim of this paper is to examine how non-representational theories of practice can expand our understanding of the ways in which mobility transformations take place. The paper explores transformations that are immanent to practices themselves, rather than transformations that might happen because of external interventions. I argue that we need to attend more sensitively to the different ways in which mobility practices self-transform through their ongoing, repeated enactment. The central claim that the paper makes is that commuting practices are always evolving, adapting and elaborating because of the different ways that the past coexists with and complicates action in the present. The first part of the paper provides the theoretical context for this claim by distinguishing two ways that temporality can be conceptualised. It argues that the dominant way of evaluating mobility transformations is according to linear, chronological understandings of temporality. In response, it shows how an attunement to duration, using conceptualisations of the virtual, provides a way of understanding the complex temporal folds through which the past inheres in the present, transforming its course. The second part of the paper illustrates this claim by exploring three ways that the virtuality of the past inheres in the present. Pivoting around three interview encounters with commuters in Sydney, Australia, it shows how the virtuality of the past inheres in and becomes actualised in the present through movements, events, and milieus—flagging the significance of habit memory, recollection memory, and tertiary memory, respectively. The paper concludes by spotlighting some of the ways that these virtualities are appealed to in transport governance in Sydney.

The significance of attending to the virtuality of practice is threefold. First, it questions our commonplace understanding of what, exactly, constitutes a mobility transformation. Second, it expands our comprehension of the agencies of transformation that are affecting life in this sphere. Third, it challenges us to rethink the ontological unit upon which macropolitical interventions in the domain of urban transport are usually focused. Rather than apprehending transformation as something that happens through the political machinations of macropolitical institutions, the paper shows how commuting practices draw out the virtual potentials of the past in different ways to effect transformations. Our understanding of commuting practices must therefore also account for the agencies that are enacting, recomposing and thus always-already transforming the tensile field that is the present. By opening the horizon of the present to the richness and

complexity of duration, the paper shows how commuting practices are replete with the welling up of past happenings that project into the future. In doing so, it shows how even the most seemingly intractable practices are open to reconfiguration in complex and subtle ways.

1 Evaluating practice transformations: from chronological time to the virtuality of duration

Within urban transport policy commuting transformations are typically evaluated through statistical modes of accountancy, such as changes in the mode of travel over time, or changes to the average duration of journeys (see, for example, NSW, 2012). This mode of accountancy is also characteristic of certain academic engagements with practices where quantitative methods have been used to spotlight general trends in practice transformations at different temporal resolutions (compare Pooley and Turnbull, 2000 with Shove, 2009). Such metrics are often used in academic and policy spheres to spotlight the intransigence of practices that continue to dominate—namely, the prevalence of car travel as the most likely mode of transport—in spite of initiatives to transform the way commuting happens (Urry, 2004, 2007).

The way that mobility transformations are most often evaluated in terms of quantitative trends and patterns indicates the dominance of a linear, chronological understanding of temporality. There are a number of critical antecedents that help to account for why this is the case. One important strand of research has shown how chronological time emerged as a powerful technique of industrial and domestic management. The instigation of ‘railway time’ and associated technologies such as the timetable in the mid-nineteenth century (Urry, 2007) in particular were pivotal precursors that laid the foundations for the dominance of chronological time as a key technique through which domestic and workplace practices could be more effectively organised. Through the organisational capacities of chronological time (Zerubavel, 1976), practices could be monitored, compared, and managed in order to standardize and achieve efficiencies through the identification and excision of superfluous movements (Cresswell, 2006). A second and related strand of research has accounted for how the dominance of chronological time has inhibited other temporalities. Lefebvre’s Marxist critique of the development of post-war capitalism is exemplary here, demonstrating how chronological time became a key instrument of capitalist production that suppressed other temporal rhythms. Writing with Régulier, Lefebvre described how “clock time became the time of the everyday, subordinating other aspects of daily life to the spatial organization of work: times for sleep and waking, times for meals and private life, relationships between adults and children, entertainment and leisure, relationships in the home” (2003, page 190).¹ Through chronological time, the time of the everyday effectively becomes timeless time, concerned only with the productivist concerns of *métro-boulot-dodo*.²

However, practices of commuting implicate many other temporalities beyond chronological time, as more recent writings on the phenomena have sought to demonstrate. Building on Lefebvre’s concern for becoming sensitised to the multiplicity of different rhythms that constitute everyday life, Edensor (2011), for example, draws our attention to the myriad cross-cutting rhythms of commuting that can come to be registered as uplift or frustration. Significant here are the variations in the experience of commuting that would otherwise be masked if evaluated according to the standards of chronological time. In this paper I develop this sensitivity to temporal complexity along a conceptual trajectory that has not yet received sufficient attention by mobilities researchers. Attending to the complex temporalities of practice that non-representational theories spotlight offers an alternative way of considering mobility transformations that are unaccounted for by the chronological modes of evaluation that currently dominate analysis.

Henri Bergson’s writings on temporality which were so influential for Deleuze (1988) form a vital reference point for non-representational theories of practice (see for example Greenhough, 2010; Sharpe, 2014; Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000). Whilst writing in a very different era, concerned with the dominant ‘mechanistic’

¹ Reflecting on shifts in the organisation of everyday life during the 1950s and 60s in France, particularly the effects of suburbanisation and associated rise in long commutes to work, Lefebvre described the proliferation of “constrained time” (1984, page 53), of which he saw the travel time of the commute as exemplary, where we are held at the mercy of capitalism. In a similar vein, Guy Debord echoed architect Le Corbusier’s disdain of satellite town suburbia since “commuting time... is a surplus labor which correspondingly reduces the amount of ‘free’ time” (1959, paragraph 2).

² This is a French idiom which, translated as ‘commute-work-sleep’, captures the relentless nature of living to work.

understandings of matter in the physical sciences of the time, Bergson recognised that in everyday life we need the kinds of regularities and reference points that clock-time provides to get by.³ Bergson was concerned, however, that the way that we tend to think about such practices overly prioritises the fixed points of their happening.⁴ He emphasised that our perception of regularities and repetition is oriented to certain habits, particularly the tendency to see sameness and similarity. For example, through an observation of commuting practices, the extensive arc of someone driving to work might appear to be the same, day in, day out. But, for Bergson, this would be an example of our tendency to categorise by drawing out an extensive, or “spatialised” (1944, page 102), understanding of movement in terms of ‘extensive’ positions, locations and orders that reduces differences to similarities. Bergson’s concern was that the analytical habit of understanding phenomena in terms of isolated and observable elements, rather than as emergent processes, misunderstands the nature of duration, obscuring the vital forces of life that give rise to ‘intensive’ differences.⁵

At the heart of Bergson and Deleuze’s theorisation of duration is the concept of the virtual. Whilst the virtual is a concept that has diverse interpretations (see Kinsley, 2014), in the most general sense, virtualities are the intangible “‘things’ that have a real existence, even if they can’t be seen or touched” (Shields, 2006, 284). Bergson develops an ontological argument for the virtual as a way to understand how transformations happen that are not just different arrangements of what exists here and now, even though this is often the way that our intellect perceives them, but are properly indeterminate and novel. Critical of our tendency to imagine things as already fully given, and thus futurity in terms of causal logics of what exists now, Bergson argued that we need a concept of the virtual to account for the difference that duration makes. Bergson clarified that the virtual is not the same as a field of different possibilities. The real and the possible are conceptually identical, because realisation would just be the narrowing down of pre-given possibilities without modification. Instead, as Deleuze (1988) shows, Bergson’s argument is that the virtual is fully real, even though it is not actual (1946, pages 91-106). Grosz’s summarisation is particularly helpful. She explains that “the actual in no way resembles the virtual. Rather, the actual is produced through a mode of differentiation from the virtual, a mode of divergence from it which is productive” (1998, 51). Thus where “the movement of realisation seems like the concretisation of a pre-existent plan or program; by contrast, the movement of actualisation is the opening up of the virtual to what befalls it” (1998, 52).

Chronological understandings of time, or ‘abstract time’ in Bergson’s words, effectively spatialise time, to see it as discrete measurable moments in linear order. For example, our tendency to imagine that something that happened last week is more ‘proximate’ than something else that happened last month that is receding into the distance. However, for Bergson and Deleuze’s rereading of Bergson, this ordering conceals a more complex understanding of temporality where “the past is formed at the same time as the present, in a virtual co-existence of the two” (Ansell-Pearson, 2006, 1124). In Deleuze’s rereading of Bergson,⁶ duration needs to be considered in terms of how it works ‘intensively’, such that the present is not an ‘extensive’ accumulation of discrete moments, but is rather a specific actualisation of virtual potentiality. Through the concept of the virtual, both Bergson and Deleuze are concerned with the continued virtual presence of the

³ The significance of these reference points could be interpreted in a similar way to how relatively immobile ‘moorings’ are vital for mobilities to take place (Urry, 2007).

⁴ Evaluating practices such as commuting in this way, “the understanding breaks it up into successive and distinct states, supposed to be invariable” (Bergson, 1946, page 15).

⁵ Whilst this point will be elaborated on more extensively later in the paper, it is important to point out that Bergson’s analytical separation of time from space has drawn stringent critiques from some concerned by his tendency to equate time with becoming, and space with representation, and thus stasis, thereby denying space of any life or dynamism (see in particular Massey, 2005, 21-24; Grosz, 1998, 44). His contention that material objects are separate from the vital forces of duration, denying them their own indeterminacy and openness is equally refutable, particularly in today’s rather different scientific context where there is an increasing realisation of the self-replicating capacities of organisms and inorganic life (Grosz, 1998).

⁶ The virtual is discussed differently in different contexts for Deleuze, but for the purposes of this paper, it is the virtual in terms of duration that is the focus, where the actual exists as “states of affairs, bodies, bodily mixtures and individuals” (Boundas, 2010, 300).

past as a realm of potential in the present. Admitting that this runs counter to our commonplace understandings of the past, Deleuze notes that “we have great difficulty in understanding a survival of the past in itself because we believe that the past is no longer, that it has ceased to be” (1988, 55). But this is an error because whilst the past “has ceased to act or be useful ... it has not ceased to be” (Deleuze, 1988, 55). Whilst the virtual reality of our past presses into the present, it must be remembered that this movement of becoming “is not a linear process from one actual to another; rather it is the movement from an actualised state of affairs, through a dynamic field of virtual/real tendencies, to the actualisation of this field in a new state of affairs” (Boundas, 2010, 300-301).

This argument might sound somewhat removed from the concerns of transformations to commuting practices. But nothing could be further from the truth. In terms of helping to understand how practices such as commuting transform, what Bergson and Deleuze’s writing on the virtual help us to understand is that it is the real presence of the past, its virtuality, that transforms the present.⁷ It is this incipient potentiality of the past in the present that means that the future is “not simply mechanical repetition, the causal ripple of objects on others, but the indeterminate, the unfolding and the emergence of the new” (Grosz, 1998, 53). Thus following Thrift’s definition of practices as “material bodies of work or styles that have gained enough stability over time... to reproduce themselves” (2008, 8), it is what this reproduction does, understood in terms of duration, that warrants our attention. How we affect and are affected is changed through duration, through the power of the virtual. The experience of tomorrow’s commute will be different to today’s, not just because other things might be encountered, but because each experience in time alters the constitution of bodies and milieus. This challenges us to grapple with how the past continues to live on through the present and into the future through commuting practices, changing them in the process. Virtual pasts are vital not only to the experience of commuting, but its emergent transformation.⁸

This way of thinking about the bearing of the virtuality of the past in the present has a number of key implications for how we evaluate mobility practices and their transformation. Three are pertinent in the context of this discussion. First, mobility practices become radically contingent and irreducibly specific. Movement, sense and significance emerge through the ongoingness of practices themselves, rather than being determined or guided by an extrinsic source of power such as an ideology or symbolic logic. As such, we must consider the specificity of commuting practices as they play out in particular locales at particular times for particular bodies. Second, mobility practices become enacted by sensing, visceral and fleshy bodies that transform through practice. These bodies are the effect of experiences that individuate them, rather than being fully-formed prior to practices. As such, we must take seriously how practices change commuters’ capacities to affect and be affected. Third, mobility practices bring both bodies and milieus into being reciprocally. Rather than imagining the bodies implicated in commuting as being enclosed by their fleshy limits, and milieu as the passive backdrop across which bodies move, bodies and milieus are simultaneously brought into being through the actualisation of virtual potentials. In summary, the force of the virtual foregrounds the difference that experience makes, where, through practice, the affective relations that constitute bodies and the milieus that they move through transform.

2 Transforming commuting mobilities in Sydney

⁷ Therefore the observable regularities that practices take is only ever a “partial and local manifestation of life” (1944, page xxii) which overlooks the mutability of practices in time. As Bergson states “repetition is ... only possible in the abstract: what is repeated is some aspect that our senses, and especially our intellect have singled out from reality, just because our action, upon which all the effort of our intellect is directed, can move only among repetitions. Thus, concentrated on that which repeats, solely preoccupied in welding the same to the same, intellect turns away from the vision of time. It dislikes what is fluid, and solidifies everything it touches” (1944, page 52-3)

⁸ Dawney articulates the transformative potential of the virtual in terms of the looping that memory and embodied histories give to experience. She says that “as the body experiences its own modifications as affective vectors, as affects register in bodies, are processed by those bodies and, in the course of that processing, loop forward and backwards through memory and embodied histories [this leads] to the production of the ongoing movement of experience” (2011, page 601).

This section of this paper proceeds to illustrate these claims in the context of commuting practices in Sydney, Australia. The significance of Sydney as an empirical frame to consider questions of transformation stems from the discordance between the growth of the city and infrastructure investment which has had significant effects in recent years. A recent report declared Sydney as the fourth worst major city in the world for “transport and infrastructure experience” (PWC, 2012). Successive state governments have made tackling Sydney’s transport problems one of their key commitments. The most recent Transport Masterplan for the city (NSW, 2012) signals the importance of modal transformation from car commuting to public transport, walking and cycling for solving the city’s transport problems. Yet infrastructure investment in both roads and public transport continues to be piecemeal (Thomas, 2014). Sydney thus provides an opportune empirical frame through which to examine forms of mobility transformation that are occurring in the city, but which fly under the radar of more quantitative modes of accounting for transformation. This task is vital in expanding our understanding of the forces of mobility transformation beyond the institutional agencies that dominate the interventionist logics of macropolitical transport policy and planning. Whilst transport policy and planning clearly has a very specific remit and jurisdiction, to understand commuting in Sydney as a problem that *requires* transformation risks overlooking the complex transformative capacities of the present. Examining how the virtuality of the past is an active force of transformation, this section explores three ways that the virtuality of the past inheres in and transforms commuting practices in the present. Taking its theoretical cue from Bergson and Deleuze’s conceptualisations of duration and the virtual, the empirics emphasise the need to affirm the movement of memory as a past that coexists in the present and is productive of new variations.

The vignettes are based on empirical research conducted in Sydney during early 2013. Methodologically I was keen to explore the potentials that loosely structured interviews with commuters afforded for creating sites of expression and receptivity for the affective forces that are moving bodies. The interviews therefore did not seek to trace generalizable patterns that would erase the experiential uniqueness of each encounter (Rose, 1993). Rather each interview was a performative attempt to heighten exposure to subtle transformations by fostering a self-reflective mode. Treated ‘less as revelations and more as reverberations’ (Vannini and Taggart, 2013, 3), interviews in this project are improvised encounters that can potentially heighten an attunement to the volatile, unpredictable affective tensions that teeter on the threshold of perceptibility. Practically, an advertisement was placed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *MX*, a free commuter paper, calling for participants who self-identified with experiencing stressful commutes.⁹ Keen to maximise the diversity of commutes across the city, the fifty-three respondents that I interviewed captured a diversity of routes, modes of travel, length and duration of commuting history, occupations, and family circumstances. Most interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, conducted at a location and time that suited each participant. The three interviews used in this paper were selected because of the way that their emergent concerns resonated most strongly with the concepts explored in this paper, based on their affectivity at the time, and subsequent readings of the interview transcripts.

2.1 Inhering movements

Before moving to Australia, Tom, a journalist in his late twenties, lived in London and had a commute of around ten minutes. He moved to Sydney with his Australian partner to take up a job in the city centre, necessitating a similarly short commute from his inner city apartment. After working for six months in this job, Tom had to search for a new job. With limited opportunities close by, and with mounting financial pressures, on receiving a job offer from an employer based in a business park in Sydney’s north-west, Tom began a new commute, taking around an hour and twenty minutes each way by two buses. Given the novelty of this commute for Tom, I was keen to hear his reflections on the experience. We arranged an interview at his apartment one early Thursday evening in March just after he had done the return commute for that day.

At the start of the interview, Tom describes his commute in ways that reinforce a chronological understanding of time: “so [the bus] takes—depending on traffic, it takes about an hour roughly. So, say, the

⁹ The project on which this paper is based is investigating the experience of commuter stress.

five-to-eight one—so we'll leave at five to eight and I'll get there at five to nine. A really good run through with pretty much lucking out on the traffic lights, and, you know, lucking out on traffic and everything like that—it's possible; I've seen it—and I get there at 20 to; but that's really getting very lucky. And then the worst days are really—20 past nine is an average bad day.” However, as the interview unfolds, I am particularly struck by the way that Tom draws attention to the qualitative differences in his commuting experience that hint at the transformative effects of duration. His reminiscences are poignant, particularly as he traces back to describe the “mistakes” that he made when he started out doing this new commute: “I look back when I first did the commute and I think, 'Oh'—you know—'You didn't have the option of a tablet; that's such a rookie error,' and, 'Oh, you were sitting in that seat that hasn't got as much leg room'—you know—'At least we've found this one.'” These “rookie errors” are evaluated from the perspective of the proficiencies that he has developed since starting.

The development of practical proficiencies has often been understood through Bourdieu's (1990a) concept of the habitus (Crossley, 2011). As a way of understanding how specific power relations become reproduced, habitus, for Bourdieu, is the internalization of social relations, “society written into the body” (1990b, page 63). This is expressed through the hexis, or bodily bearing, which involves postures, manners and ways of speaking. Habitus might help to account for the development of shared competencies, disclosed through the ways in which practical expertise appear similar and thus ‘shared’ by commuters. Yet through its emphasis on the regularities of practice, Bourdieu has little to say about the temporality of habitus, aside from that habitus acquisition happens through “practical mimesis” (1990a, page 73). The concept of habitus does not provide an adequate way of thinking about the developmental aspects of a practice such as commuting, focusing as it does on its inertia rather than its dynamism. This is significant because it overlooks the transitions that have to take place in order to reach the thresholds of practical mastery that habitus claims. Furthermore, it implies that once commuters reach a threshold of practical proficiency, transformations stop happening.

Whilst talking with Tom about his commute, he refers to other transitions experienced. With some sadness, Tom describes his capacity to sense particular aspects of the journey which were initially stimulating. This was most pronounced in his description of the impressions of the first weeks of doing the new journey: “Well, at first, it's—you know, the first couple of weeks, you're kind of listening to music and taking the view in. And, you know, I noticed different things each day and, you know, it took me about a week or so: 'Oh, there's the Foxtel building; oh, and there's this, this and this,' and—because there's one part of the motorway that's kind of a 'rainforesty' area and, you know, I was only six months in Australia, so, you know, everything was all new to me and stuff.” However, he goes on to describe the dulling effect of this view over time: “then I ended up—you're looking out the window at the same thing every day and it drives you crazy. So I thought, 'I'll stop watching things and then I'm not looking out the window and seeing the same thing every day.’” Furthermore, Tom describes how particular parts of the journey became differently experienced over time: “But then, you know, probably a month in is where I started to dread, you know, that final—when I get off the bus at Wynyard and I have to walk home. So it's kind of an extra—I feel like I've sat down in this cramped space for a while and now I've got to walk probably 20 minutes, half an hour, on the packed George Street.” He later refers to this as “the 'I hate my life walk' at the end of the bus”.

These transformations concern the temporal dynamic of habit that characterises the lineage of thought which connects Bergson and Deleuze's concern for virtuality with Félix Ravaisson. Rather than emphasising the similarities and consistencies that habit can give rise to, as is the case of Bourdieu's writing on habitus, this lineage of thought emphasises the ongoing transitional capacities of habit. Written in 1838 as a critique of the mechanistic orthodoxies of thought at the time, the contemporary relevance of Ravaisson's text for this discussion is the way that it helps us to understand how repeated actions give rise to tendencies and dispositions which changes capacities for affecting and being affected. For Ravaisson this is expressed as a ‘double law’ where the repetition of an active movement which initially requires willed effort, strengthens that movement. At the same time, the repetition of passive sensation becomes increasingly weakened. Through repetition, active movements become increasingly automatic, removed from the sphere of conscious will and effort, thereby becoming more passive; whereas passive impressions from the

environment are incorporated by the body and become desires, thereby becoming more active. Through this torsion of activity and passivity emerges a spontaneity that “is at once active and passive, equally opposed to mechanical fatality and to reflective freedom” (2008, 55). Empirically, whilst commutes might appear to be the same, repetition transforms the relations that constitute commuters and their travelling environments. Habit generates a tendency for action and decreases the tendency for feeling such that the physicality of moving becomes less strenuous and less cognitive.

Significantly here, undertaking the commute becomes second nature, freeing up attention to be devoted to other things, and thus the development of new capacities. Tom’s description about the dulling of sense leads into a discussion on how he needed to search out new stimulations during the journey. We talk for some time about how experimenting with different TV shows changed the experiential quality of his journey: “To get through this—I started watching movies; but then, because of the length of the commute, I couldn’t quite watch the whole movie unless it was a very short movie. So I was like, ‘Okay, this isn’t properly working.’ So, so I thought, ‘Maybe a way to get through this’—so, starting from about April last year—is to watch a TV show that goes on for ages that will pique my interest.’ And so I started watching the show *ER* because I thought, you know, ‘It’s gripping; it tells different stories; it’s not one of those shows that has a case of the week, like *House*, that’—you know, ‘It’s stand-alone, but I want to be able to follow it; I want to be able to’—‘so it’s something to kind of half look forward to.... So—so—that kept me sane for about—until, I think, October and—because then I was half looking forward to the commute some days.” Significantly, Tom’s reflections on how journeys were uplifting or depleting are less contingent on delays or the activities of other passengers (Bissell, 2010) and were instead shaped by the nature of the episode: “some days, the—which is based on points in the show where, you know, if it wasn’t that good an episode, I’m not particularly looking forward to the commute. But, if there was a particularly brilliant episode and there was a bit of a twist, I was looking forward to the commute and I was, you know, looking forward to ending the work day to get on the bus.” The joy is palpable in his evaluation of the intensities that this experimentation opened up. He comments that “So I wasn’t fully drained from it and I was enjoying it... it was a real highlight of—even my whole Australia time.”

Particular significant here are Tom’s descriptions of the importance of the bedrock habitual competencies that are required to enjoy using the device, experimenting with TV shows. At this moment in the interview, Tom gets up, walks to the far side of the apartment and returns with a silvery computer, placing it on his lap. “I try and do it a bit in front; but then, if there is a bump, it does bump it a bit. But—but, because I—because I didn’t get this straight away, so I didn’t go into the commute with this, I knew the parts of the journey that are very bumpy. So, when I know we’re getting up to the bumpy bits, I hold it a bit tighter and move it slightly forward. So—although I’m not aware of where we are, in the sense I’m not looking out the window, I know from the corner of my eye, ‘Yeah, we’re getting to the bumpy bit.’ I’m not even thinking about it. It just becomes natural.”

Evaluating changes to Tom’s commute in terms of changes to his mode of travel, the time at which he commutes, or where he commutes to, his commute from central Sydney to the northwest of the city does not change. Yet Tom’s reminiscences about his commute through the interview encounter show that such an evaluation overlooks other, more subtle transformations; namely, those that, through the work of duration, alter his capacities to affect and be affected. These transformations can be understood through the concept of habit. Whilst Bourdieu underscores the practical mastery of habitual actions, Ravaisson and Bergson’s theorisations of habit emphasise the virtuality that is central to understanding habit as a propensity for change. Past movements are contracted by Tom’s body which then anticipates future movements, ready to be deployed. Summarising Bergson’s concept of habit-memory, Grosz describes how habits are “memories that are activated unconsciously and without effort as preparatory for action” (2013, page 228). Habit is “memory orientated to action, to practice: it is memory which has a vested interest in the present” (2013, page 228). Habit is therefore a way that the past survives in and through the present, actualising its virtual forces through the development of a future-orientated preparedness for action.

2.2 Inhering events

Adam lives in a small town on the Central Coast 80km north of Sydney with his wife and two teenage children. He moved here seventeen years ago from Sydney's inner west just before starting a family and commutes by car to an industrial area west of the city centre. He is a technical manager for a major corporation and works a combination of twelve-hour day shifts and night shifts for just over three weeks each month with two or three days off to transition between day and night shifts. I met him at an airy coffee shop in his home town early one morning on one of his days off after doing night shifts. I was particularly interested in meeting Alan given that he indicated on the participant form that shift work means that he has to change routines regularly. I begin the interview by asking him to talk me through his most recent commute, the night shift. "Ah, that's a biggie", he notes, smiling. He briefly runs me through his half-hour preparation, often after only three or four hours of sleep, because during the day "there's always life going on". He says straight away how much he enjoys driving because it's "my time of solace; it's my serenity from home life to work life". Straight after that he tells me how much he enjoys freeway driving because "it's that calming, that droning sound of the road." He goes on to articulate how turning off the freeway back onto the single-lane roads to his house can be frustrating because "when you're in a zone and you've got someone driving at 55 in an 80 zone, I can't understand why".

Adam then describes an event that refrained throughout the interview. "With the driving, I still find it easy to do. If it's—if it's after night shift, a hard night shift, I've trained myself to pull over on the side of the road on the freeway and get a 30-minute kip, this micro—microsleep; I've learned by experience that it's very real. And, a couple of times, I've had some rock walls facing me that have just scared the bejesus out of me, you know." "What happens?" I ask, perhaps somewhat quickly. His demeanour, previously cheerful, suddenly turns more sober. "Oh, look; just to—goose bump." He points to his arms. The silvery hairs on his thick bronzed arm are raised and arcing out, and the surface of his skin has suddenly erupted into thousands of tightly-packed nodules. He swallows, frowns and looks out of the window momentarily. His face has lost some of its colour. He turns back and looks at me, his brown now furrowed, and takes a deep breath. "It just scares the life out of you. Immediate anger: 'Why did I let myself get to this just for the sake of fucking work?'"

According to a conventional way of thinking about memory, this is a present where a past event gets reproduced. In this understanding, the past remains in place, anterior to the present. However, turning to Bergson, what happened at this point in the interview encounter concerns how the past persists in the present in a much more active way, rather than as a faded present. Whilst habit memory is one way that the past persists in the present through motor mechanisms, recollection memory is another way that the past has a reality in the present. Where habit memory is nonrepresentational, recollection memory is where the past returns as an image in the present. For Bergson, the vastness of our entire past forms a virtual archive, preserved as a nonchronological existence in time (Rodowick, 1999), regardless of its practical utility. This is through the recording "in the form of memory-images, all the events of our daily life as they occur in time; it neglects no detail; it leaves to each fact, to each gesture, its place and date" (Bergson, 1988, page 82). Since this past exists as a series of planes, recollection is an event that requires "a leap into the past in general, then in a search through the different regions or layers where we believe memory is hidden" (Rodowick, 1997, page 99). This is a leap that requires bodily composure, detaching attention from the present. Adam's composure of looking out of the window before talking about the microsleep shows how "in order to attend to such memories, we require preparation, a mode of cutting ourselves off from the teeming distraction of regular perception" (Grosz, 2013, page 227-8). As Grosz describes, this event of placing ourselves in the past itself, where "the past may materialize itself in a memory" requires the cultivation of a kind of receptivity, a relative passivity (2004, page 180). The interview here is a privileged site for cultivating receptivity to leap into the virtuality of the past through the way that it creates a disconnection from the habitual activities of the present moment.

Much of the interview with Adam is composed of a discussion relating to specific recollection images. At one point, for example Adam describes a specific event of disruption on his commute in where "a few years ago, there was a beer truck that had an accident; it blocked off all three lanes... We had traffic banked back for kilometres and kilometres; there was just—there was no way in or out." This recollection generates

frustration for Adam as it pulls his discussion towards a critique of the state government. A less recent but particularly striking recollection image emerges when we talk about how Adam and his partner came to move from Sydney to the Central Coast over seventeen years ago. He talks about visiting his mother in law who lived there and described how “We’d walk along the waterfront—you know, pelicans and eagles and just—just everything that you didn’t have in Sydney”. These are recollections from a specific moment that could be pinpointed with a time and date. For Bergson, the needs of the present filter the images that are most useful to it in that moment. The utility of recollection memory is, then, though through the way that images become coordinated with present perception (1988, page 168-9). In this respect, the direction of the conversation at these moments during the interview created the conditions for these recollections to actualise from a field of virtual potential.

For Bergson, it is through the creation of recollection memories drawn from the virtuality of the past that people can respond creatively to problems that practices in the present pose (Lorraine, 2003, page 35) such that bodies can enlarge their living duration. This is most acutely exemplified later on in the interview when Adam’s train of thought returns to the micro-sleep. When I press him to consider the most stressful aspect of his commute, discussion turns back sharply and immediately to the experience of the journey home after a night shift. Again, his affable demeanour turns slightly colder and he looks at me with a steely gaze. “I’m concerned about the falling asleep—just accidents. I—I do think that I’m an accident waiting to happen.” He pauses and I try not to interrupt. “And, again, shit, imagine ending up in a wheelchair—the—the burden on my family, the kids—or, you know, if I was to be killed or something...and that’s that anger that I was talking about, like: ‘Jesus, don’t’—yeah; yeah.” He continues by describing the conditions that give rise to a microsleep: “You—you—you do know when I’m feeling too—too much and then, if it’s a sunny day, the sun generally comes in on this (*indicates*) side of the car because I’m driving north. If I’m feeling comfortable, I just—yeah; I—I don’t know. You’re—you’re sort of always thinking, ‘I’ll be right; I’ll be right; I’ll be right.’ And then, again, I don’t know; I think it’s that—why? Is that a conscious effort? I know why it occurred the other day: because I pushed myself to be here. Why it hasn’t happened for so long is probably because I’ve taken steps before—like, I’ve been at work—just to—or even the fact of having a cup of coffee.” What we can take from this is that the creation of recollection memories have intensified Adam’s susceptibility to be affected by the conditions that he has recognised can potentially give rise to the microsleep.

Evaluating changes to Adam’s commute in terms of changes to his mode of travel, the time at which he commutes, or where he commutes to, his commute from the Central Coast to the west of Sydney does not change. From the perspective of mode of travel, his journey has remained broadly similar since he moved to the Central Coast. However, Adam’s reflections on his commute during the interview show that there are other changes that are happening that fly under the radar of these modes of accountancy. These changes concern affective transformations where the virtuality of the past presses into the present, actualised in recollection memories, and where both press into the future. Reflecting on how everyday events of recollection complicate our actions in the present, Ben Highmore points out that stress, frustration and memory “poke holes in the smooth surface of the present; they do so by insistently invoking history (a history of the body) and disturbing the fake continuity of the present” (2004, page 325). Bergson’s concept of recollection memory therefore helps us to examine how this might be the case. Here, the virtuality of the past transforms present action through site-specific encounters. For Adam, the microsleep is one event that exemplifies this, transforming both the interview and pock-marking the experience of his commute. However, it is not the same past returning that he experienced once before, preserved and represented to him. Through its actualisation, it is the creation of a new moment and new virtualities. Recollection memories such as Adam recalling previous microsleeps clearly have a pragmatic role in that they transform the present by helping him to drive more safely. But to straightjacket the capacity of recollection memory into a strictly utilitarian understanding overlooks how it is precisely the excessiveness of the virtual that means that moments of actualisation in the present are richly uncertain and unstable.

2.3 Inhering milieus

Alice has been commuting between her home on the Central Coast and the eastern suburbs of Sydney by train for around ten years. She works at a government institution and has a total daily commute of just less

than six hours which involves a walk, then a bus, a train, then another train, then a bus, then a walk. Given the intricacy of her commute coupled with the time that it takes each day, I was particularly interested to hear her reflections on her commuting experience. I interviewed her at her workplace one sunny afternoon. Much of the conversation orbits around the pressures that she experiences owing to the relentlessness of her job and the punishing commute (see Bissell, 2014). However, particularly striking during the latter part of the interview is an attunement to pasts that inhere through the commuting milieus that she moves through which take us beyond habit memory and recollection memory. Just after bemoaning how so many of her fellow commuters are captivated by “that drivel that pours forward out of Hollywood”, she goes on to suggest that this seems to prevent people from appreciating the milieus that the train moves through. She sets the scene for the next few minutes of discussion commenting that “in the early days in particular, I found myself in total awe of the wonderful work done by the engineers who constructed the line. And you think, ‘Some poor bugger went through here with a tape and a—you know—compass and worked out where to put these train tracks.’ And it wasn’t a thoughtless choice; they’ve actually gone for the best views. It’s not just about, you know, the gradient”.

The milieus that commuters such as Alice move through are often narrated within the news media according to linear understandings of temporality. For example, a common refrain in the local media is that Sydney’s transport infrastructure has ‘failed to keep pace’ with the growth of the city (WSROC, 2012). Descriptors like ‘crumbling’ and ‘ailing’ (Irvine, 2011) historicise these commuting milieus by consigning them to a past that is out of step with the present.¹⁰ The new head of Sydney Trains, for example, recently declared that the city’s train system is “twenty-five years behind London’s” (Clennell, 2013).¹¹ According to a linear understanding of temporality, these inheritances become inconvenient acquisitions that require upgrading to fit the present’s needs.

Yet Alice’s palpable appreciation for the different milieus that the train moves through between the Central Coast and Sydney introduces a third way to consider how the virtuality of the past can transform present commuting practices through a different kind of memory. This firstly involves extending Bergson’s conception of duration to consider how we might think about spatiality in a more dynamic way. A key critique levelled at Bergson is his heterogeneous treatment of time and space where time is equated with duration and dynamism, and space with mere extension and stasis. Geographers in particular have sought to show how space might be more sensitively conceptualised as the “dimension of a multiplicity of durations” (Massey, 2005, page 24). Rather than space being conceptualised as the simultaneity of things at an instant, Massey argues that “the elements of the multiplicity are themselves imbued with temporality” (2005, page 55) such that space can be conceived as the open-ended co-existence of multiple interacting trajectories. Whilst retaining a Bergsonian appreciation for process and change, Crang and Travlou (2001), for example, assert that the breakdown of intervals in time and space produces the “virtual presence of the past through particular sites in a pluritemporal landscape not in the sense of a continuous historical narrative but as discordant moments sustained through a mosaic of sites where qualitatively different times interrupt spatialised juxtastructures” (Crang and Travlou, 2001, page 175).

Alice’s reminiscences of her commute during the interview encounter point to how the multiple pasts that bead her commute come to inflect her experience, disrupting a linear sense of temporality. Echoing Crang and Travlou’s contention that “the city produces ruins that bring the past into the present and future” (2001, page 174), Alice points out “You know, living leaves detritus; there are markers all around”. Becoming sensitive to the presence of these markers is important for Alice in terms of how it helps to intensify a stronger sense of place. Indeed Alice worries that not noticing such “markers” is problematic because it means that people are potentially “losing their sense of place. They are not attached to a place.” Whilst

¹⁰ These sorts of statement clearly have an important performative purchase in the way that they can potentially galvanise sentiment to influence macropolitical budgetary decisions, concerned, as they are, with growing and maintaining economic competitiveness in a globalising world-city network.

¹¹ These rhetorical devices that draw on comparative evaluations with other cities do little to get away from the tendency for imagining that places belong to a singular trajectory of change that Massey’s (2005) work in particular rails against.

Alice's description is perhaps reminiscent of a more sedentary sense of place that geographers have sought to remedy, instead we could read her sensitivity to these pasts of her commuting environments as demonstrating a receptivity to the "pluritemporal landscape" that Crang and Travlou (2001, page 175) invoke. As Massey suggests, it is not about being aware of all the durations, as if some totality could exist, since that would place us in a position of deficit, where we are always falling short. But rather it is about retaining "at least some sense of contemporaneous multiple becomings" (2005, page 120).

Alice bemoans how she feels that many people do not seem to notice these inheritances, saying that "I have numerous times been waiting at the train station and have said to people, 'The architect that built this place has a funny sense of humour.' Like, you can go, 'Look at the detail in there that is referencing that over there.' And they go, 'Oh, yeah; isn't that funny?' You know, people get it. But they need to have things pointed out to them because they can be standing somewhere but they do not see. They need somebody to show them what to look for." Her frustration about not being receptive to such pasts echoes Marc Augé's contention that commuters on the Paris Metro, far from being affected by the specific historicities of stations, are instead "occupied by the urgency of their everyday life and spotting on the map they are consulting or the stations that go by nothing more than the more or less rapid flow of their individual duration, estimated only in terms of being ahead or behind schedule" (2002, page 18). This 'goal-oriented' attention that Augé describes mirrors Lefebvre's concept of 'constrained time', creating a 'tunnel' effect where commuters are literally "missing" the city (Jíron, 2010, 66).¹²

However, there is another way of thinking about how these 'pluritemporal' milieus affect us that is not based on cognition. Stiegler (2010) reconsiders the relationship between humans and technology to argue that our very experience of being human is constituted by a form of memory that is 'exterior' to the body, regardless of whether or not we are alert to it. Where both habit and recollection implicate the biographical histories of individuals, Stiegler shows how the milieus that transcend the lifetimes of individuals have their own agency that cues experience in important ways. The 'technical' milieus that we are a part of form an impersonal memory never lived by consciousness (Hansen, 2004, np). For Stiegler, it is these traces, or 'tertiary retentions', that give us a sense of temporality.¹³ They form an impersonal archive that "constitutes us, at a fundamental level, as temporal beings who are aware of a past, experience a present and anticipate a future" (James, 2012, page 66). Whilst much has been written about the complex materialities of memory that inhere at specific sites (eg. DeLyser, 2004; Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004; Moore and Whelan, 2007), rather than grappling with issues of selection and contestation, Stiegler's argument is more ontological, intent on demonstrating the constitutive role of tertiary memory to human experience.

Whilst Stiegler's Derridian conceptual trajectory diverges from the lineage that connects Bergson with Deleuze, there are important resonances here with the virtuality of the past that is implicated in habit and recollection memory. This is through the way that Stiegler's economy of retention and protention disrupts a notion of chronological time.¹⁴ Where habit and recollection memory are two ways that the virtuality of past can become actualised, tertiary retentions are also past forms that potentialise future possibilities through the way in which technical milieus become transmitted into gestures and actions.¹⁵ The technical milieus

¹² This is a different mode of distantiation to Simmel's infamous although more self-conscious cultivation of a 'blasé attitude' (Simmel, 2005).

¹³ This is something that Stiegler is concerned about in relation to the proliferation of new forms of technical systems (especially things like real-time media technologies), that might on the face of it be the panacea of many contemporary 'problems'—including commuting problems—but actually serve to produce a very particular sort of time consciousness that potentially reduces difference and decreases individuation; echoing some of Jameson's arguments about the problems of depthless time (see Massey, 2005).

¹⁴ He also shares Deleuze and Bergson's notion that subjects are not always already formed, but are processes of individuation.

¹⁵ Stiegler's summary of how tertiary retentions relate to primary and secondary retentions is worth quoting at length here: "Primary retention is that which is formed in the very passage of time, as the course of this time, such that, as a present which passes, it is constituted by the immediate and primordial retention ('the primary retention') of its own passing. Becoming past, this passage of the present is then constituted as secondary retention, that is, as all those

that Stiegler focuses on are technologies of writing and all forms of analogue and digital recording that 'grammatize' audiovisual perception, because of the formative role that they have come to play in reshaping the capacities of our sensory organs. The materiality of these tertiary retentions therefore creates the supports for a collective, intergenerational memory which conditions future practices since "tertiary retention always already precedes the constitution of primary and secondary retention" (Stiegler, 2010, page 9).

In the context of commuting, these technical milieus include formal commuting 'archives' such as Sydney's Powerhouse Museum and its transport-related artefacts, together with government, media and academic writings on urban transport. But it is the traces of practices within the commuting milieu itself that are also tertiary retentions where memories are recorded and transmitted. The wooden escalators at Town Hall station in Sydney provide an indicative example (see figure 1). The smoothed surfaces, more pronounced on either side than in the middle, are the traces of people standing on one side and walking down the other side from the concourse to the platforms below. The technologies of the escalator and footwear have thus, in a small way, shaped the parameters of this dimension of the commuting practice where the traces of previous practices provide the bedrock for future actualisations specific to this site.¹⁶ As Crogan summarises, tertiary retention provides "a specific milieu in which individual experiences can take shape, make sense, be singular, and reinvent the milieu's potential by adding to its stock of recorded, that is, exteriorised adoption" (Crogan, 2007, n.p).

memorial contents (souvenirs) which together form the woven threads of our memory. Tertiary retention is a mnemotechnical exteriorization of secondary retentions which are themselves engendered by primary retentions" (Stiegler, 2010, page 9).

¹⁶ The transformative capacities of these environmental inheritances are borne out in Ingold's description of the mutual sculpting of bodies and landscapes through practices over multiple generations. Referring to the overlain traces of previous movements, he writes that paths and tracks impose particular movements, but "they also arise out of that movement, for every path or track shows up as the accumulated imprint of countless journeys that people have made" (2000, page 204).

Figure 1. Tertiary retentions. Wooden escalator at Town Hall Station.

Stiegler's work is therefore useful because it demonstrates how greater attention must be paid to how the technical milieus that form the commute are part of memory that individuates and thus transforms commuters. Objects in commuting milieus such as the escalator act as forms of memory that shape the kinds of attunements that are developed. Contrary to Alice's conviction that people are not paying attention to their commuting environments, the power of these tertiary retentions does not, then, just stem from their capacity to divert or even hold our attention since this would overemphasise consciousness as the primary site of transformation. Since consciousness is an 'epiphenomenon', a secondary *effect* of the primary forces of affect that work on and compose bodies in less conscious ways (Hynes and Sharpe, 2009), it is at the level of the bodily unconscious where these tertiary retentions make a difference. As Dewsbury succinctly points out, "such material nonhuman agency is performative, given that it both enacts a kind of *in situ* solicitation cuing human habits, much like site based memories, and mediates the ongoing constitution of the human" (2012, page 75). Tertiary retentions are therefore not inert materials, awaiting our conscious attention for them to do their work. Rather they have their own agency that transforms experience in less conscious ways.

Conclusion

Multiple constituencies have argued that commuting practices need to change in the face of pressing ecological, social and somatic concerns. Familiar modes of accounting for changes to commuting practices have focused on modal change or changes in the quantitative attributes of journeys such as distance travelled or time taken. Parallel to such evaluations there has been extensive debate as to how commuting practices might be most effectively intervened in to catalyse transformation. This paper has argued that in order to understand the complexities of these debates, we need to take much more seriously how commuting is a charged zone of transformation in and of itself. Non-representational theories of practice provide a way of considering how commuting practices are transforming not because of an intervening

agency external to the practice, but rather because the present transforms itself through the repetition of everyday practices. Put simply, this concerns how each repetition produces another memory that is then carried forward. Therefore, rather than understanding the agent of change as external to a practice, transformations are immanent to the enactment of practices themselves. This task is vital if we are to more sensitively grasp the nature of the transformations that are taking place but which fly beneath the radar of accountancy.

The paper has argued that we need to become more attuned to how the ongoing imbrication of commuting practices creates incremental, ongoing transformations within the affectivity of practices. These transformations concern the changing capacities of matter both human and non-human to affect and be affected, inviting us to trace the effects of the forces that effect these changes. Such transformations might eventually show up through familiar quantitative means such as route, or time taken. However, tracing how commuting practices self-generate particular dispositions, tendencies and proclivities because of the multiple ways that the past inheres in the present requires modes of evaluation that are receptive to these incremental transformations. The paper has argued for the capacity of interview encounters as sites that enable a self-reflective mode that can potentially intensify attunement to these sorts of transformations: transformations which might include the dulling of sense through habit, the resonation of events in recollection, and the bodily attunement to the multiple durations of milieu both within and prior to consciousness which affects how we inhabit commuting spaces.

This paper has argued that we need new ways of thinking about mobility practices as always evolving, adapting and elaborating precisely because of the force of the virtual. Linear, chronological understandings of temporality obscure how the virtuality of the past is an active agent of transformation. Pasts do not progress in a linear way into a present and future. Instead, through their virtuality, they *enlarge* the present and open onto futures. This requires us to grasp the coexistence of past and present where the past acts in a non-determinist way to condition the potentials of the present. Importantly, this moves away from a still-pervasive tendency to imagine the past, especially when conceptualised as memory, is a psychic, personal dimension of individuals that happens to an individuated human consciousness (see for example Halbwachs 1992). Instead, the significance of the virtual is about “seeing the past is outside us and we in it rather than its being located in us” (Grosz, 2004, 179).

The three inheritances that this paper has explored— movement inheritances, event inheritances and milieu inheritances—each exemplify a different perspective through which the virtuality of the past transforms the present. Where commuting has often been apprehended as a practice that is resistant to transformation, a practice etched with some of the most strictly programmatic temporal logics of our time, these inheritances demonstrate how commuting is also a practice that is curiously out of time: a knotty, fractured and folded set of durations. These are the temporal logics of the virtual that swell, augment and destabilize the present, shifting its course, creating the new. To attend to the virtualities of commuting practices acknowledges how the life of practice extends beyond their manifestation in present shapes of action. Indeed it is this complication of action in the present by the virtuality of the past that makes it politically charged. As Grosz reminds us “politics is nothing but the attempt to reactivate that potential, or virtual, of the past so that a divergence or differentiation from the present is possible” (Grosz, 2004, page 178).

The potentials that the virtuality of practices promise is not an incidental concern for transport policy. The power of these modes of transformation is frequently capitalised on in transport policy and planning in Sydney. Some examples in brief include, first, the City of Sydney council which runs a weekend cycling course that aims to enhance the proficiencies of urban cyclists.¹⁷ Here it is the actualisation of virtualities of movement through habit memory that are conscripted into transforming the affective relations that constitute the bicyclist-bike-milieu assemblage. The aim here is to dampen the overwhelming sensations that might prevent people from cycling whilst enhancing a perceptual awareness. Second, the New South Wales Government runs a high profile billboard campaign to enhance road safety through the use of graphic

¹⁷ See <http://sydneycycleways.net/get-riding/free-cycling-courses-sydney/cycling-confidence>.

images of a hospital operating theatre. This campaign attempts to actualise the virtualities of events through recollection memory in complex ways to affect passing drivers.¹⁸ Third, the redevelopment of transport interchanges across Sydney such as at Chatswood increasingly involves sensitively incorporating previous site uses. Here it is the actualisation of the virtualities of milieu through tertiary memory that works to become sensitive to the co-existence of multiple trajectories.¹⁹

The virtual presence of the past reminds us not only of the complexity and excessiveness of the present, but also the openness and the indeterminacy of the future. These are transformations that invite us to apprehend “a future that does not simply extend our needs and current wants but may actively transform them in ways we may not understand or control... where struggles are undertaken even in the knowledge that they will not solve current problems and questions so much as redirect them in different terms” (Grosz, 2004, page 260). Rendered in this way, commuting ‘problems’ become reoriented towards the *unsettling* of the solutions, strategies and entitlements that are often presented by macropolitical institutions.²⁰ To apprehend the transformative capacities of this virtuality is not to circumvent responsibility and the demand to respond to a crisis here and now. But neither is this commuting crisis a singularity that can be hastily solved with the optimal political gestures.²¹ Recognising how our present commuting practices are only part of the past is to acknowledge that they are only specific actualised potentials from a background of virtual, unactualised potential: a virtuality that is sometimes sensed in the barely palpable affective undercurrents of lived experience that take us to a different moment. This requires our understanding of practices to become more sensitive to how the past coexists with the present, providing the virtual resources for multiple futures and the potential to be otherwise.

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¹⁸ See http://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/campaigns/dont_rush/dontrush.html.

¹⁹ See <http://www.visit chatswood.com.au/art/public-art/chatswood-transport-interchange/>

²⁰ Alternative mobility futures are not a palette of choices, waiting to be selected because this reduces the future to that which is contained in the present.

²¹ As Berlant reminds us ‘long-term problems of embodiment within capitalism, in the zoning of the everyday, the work of getting through it, and the obstacles to physical and mental flourishing, are less successfully addressed in the temporalities of crisis and require other frames for elaborating contexts of doing, being and thriving’ (2011, page 105).

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