

Hypermobile travellers more

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6. Hypermobile travellers

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Introduction

The contribution of aviation to climate change is, with a global share of just 2% of emissions of CO₂ (see chapter 2, this volume), often regarded as negligible. This perspective ignores, however, the current and expected growth in air traffic, as well as its socio-cultural drivers. Aviation is a rapidly growing sector, with annual passenger growth forecasts of 4.9% in the coming 20 years (Airbus 2008). In a carbon-constrained world with the ambition to reduce absolute levels of greenhouse gas emissions and limited options to technically achieve these (see chapter 13, this volume), the growth in air traveller numbers thus indicates an emerging conflict (see also chapter 4, this volume). Moreover, it becomes increasingly clear that aviation is an activity in which comparably few people participate. With regard to international aviation, it can be assumed that only about 2-3% of the world's population fly in between any two countries over one consecutive year (Peeters et al. 2006), indicating that participation in air travel is highly unequally distributed on a global scale. The vast majority of air travellers currently originate from industrialized countries, even though there are some recent trends, particularly in China and India, showing rapid growth in air travel (cf. UNWTO 2007). There is also evidence that air travel is unevenly distributed *within* nations, particularly those with already high levels of individual mobility. In industrialized countries there is evidence of a minority of highly mobile individuals, who account for a large share of the overall kilometres travelled, especially by air. These travellers are "hypermobile" in terms of participation in frequent trips, often over great distances. The following chapter sets out to describe hypermobile travellers and their mobility patterns from both statistical and sociological perspectives. It also presents a case study of the distribution of mobility in France, and discusses the importance of hypermobile lifestyles for emissions of greenhouse gases and climate change more generally.

Evidence of hypermobility

The terms "hypermobile" and "hypermobility" were introduced into the transport and cognate literature in the 1980s and 1990s (Hepworth and Ducatel 1992; Lowe 1994; van der Stoep 1995) as well as related literature on the geography and sociology of globalisation and regional change (e.g. Damette 1980; Shields 1996; Cox 1997). Whitelegg (1993), for example, in looking at the connections between sustainability and transport contrasted the hypermobility of those in the North with the chronic underprovision of transport accessibility in the South. Adams (1999) contribution to an OECD report on sustainable transport is a widely referred to with respect to the term "hypermobility", but he does not go beyond the statement that "*The term hypermobility is used in this essay to suggest that it may be possible to have too much of a good thing*" (Adams 1999: 95). For the purpose of this chapter, Khisty and Zeidler's (2001: 598) definition of hypermobility as "[...] *the maximization of physical movement [...]*" is more suitable to characterise the vast growth the vast growth in temporary mobility by a relatively small number of individuals (Hall 2005a; Bell and Brown 2006). The chapter has thus a focus different from the perspectives of earlier works on hypermobility in that it seeks to describe highly mobile travellers rather than just the consequences of hypermobility for society (the focus of C. Jotin Khisty, P.S. Siraja and John Adams). In this chapter, the term should be understood to include a quantitative and qualitative dimension, and comprises a range of temporary mobilities, including leisure and business-related mobility, both of which will be reviewed in more detail in the following.

Leisure travel in industrialized countries has changed substantially in recent years, with a trend towards more frequent, but shorter trips to more distant locations, which is increasingly involving air travel (e.g. Peeters et al. 2006). Within Europe and the United States, this development is characterized by the emergence of low-fare carriers, now carrying some 150 million passengers per year in the European Union alone (Nilsson, chapter 5 this volume).

However, there is also a rapidly increasing leisure class of people travelling to distant or relatively peripheral destinations, often for considerably short periods of time (The Guardian 2008). Similar developments can be observed in business travel, where a considerable number of people may now be commuting on a daily or weekly basis between their places of residence and work by air. Clearly, over the last 20 years, there has thus been a transition of aviation from being a luxury form of mobility for the wealthy few to being a self-evident and often cheap means of mass transportation for large parts of society in industrialized countries, including both leisure- and business travellers. It seems equally clear that these changes in the availability and affordability of air travel have also fundamentally changed perceptions of distance, place and space (e.g. Janelle 1969, Urry 2000, Gössling 2002a; Adey et al. 2007); including what is regarded as routine and non-routine environments (Hall 2005a, b; Coles and Hall 2006). For example, Hall (2005a) criticises the notion of tourism as

a being a break from routine for the hypermobile give that for them mobility as well as frequent visitation to the same locations is the norm.

The routinised space-time paths of those living in 2004 are not the same as those of people in 1984 when Giddens was writing or in the 1960s when Hägerstrand was examining routine daily space-time trajectories. Instead, because of advances in transport and communication technology, for a substantial proportion of the population in developed countries or for elites in developing countries being able to travel long-distances to engage in leisure behaviour (what one would usually describe as tourism) is now a part of their routine activities (Hall 2005a: 24).

As yet, little is known about hypermobile travellers (cf. Hall 2005a). Statistically, some 390 million tourists trips have been made between any two countries by air in 2007 (UNWTO 2008) - out of a global population of about 6.7 billion (UN 2008). However, as the same individuals will often have made multiple international flights over one year, it is estimated that the percentage of the world's population participating in international air travel is in the order of just 2-3% (Peeters et al. 2006). This implies that a very minor share of humanity accounts for a large part of the overall kilometres travelled and consequent impacts. From a global point of view, all international air travellers may thus be seen as "hypermobile travellers", as they usually account for vastly greater travel distances than the rest of the global population, but there are substantial differences in individual distances travelled as well as motivations for frequent travel. This demands a more thorough analysis of hypermobile travellers. However, while the term is widely used with respect to the scale, magnitude and frequency of travel, there are only a very limited number of published studies that provide an empirical basis for this.

One of the first to look at a group of frequent travellers were Høyer and Næss (2001). In studying conference tourism, they report on at least three important insights with regard to hypermobile travellers. First, Høyer and Næss (2001: 452) summarize a Norwegian travel survey by Denstadli and Rideng (1999):

According to a recent Norwegian travel survey, job-related trips account for about 60% of all flights, domestic as well as flights to and from foreign countries. Five per cent of air travellers make more than 15 return flights annually. This group of customers alone accounts for a quarter of all domestic flights. Most of their flights are made in connection with their job. [...] Amongst the 60% of flights characterised as job-related, courses and conferences account for about one-third (a little more for domestic flights and a little less for foreign trips), while service/consulting makes up about one-seventh.

This study indicates that the distribution of air travel may be highly skewed within industrialized countries, i.e. countries where overall mobility is high, and that a considerable share of mobility may be work-related, with 'courses & conferences' accounting for a significant share of travel motives. The respective shares of personal- and professional mobility in air travel are, however, still debated in the absence of reliable global data sets on travel motives. Høyer and Næss (2001) go on to report on the case of scientist 'H' as a case study of a hypermobile citizen. Over the course of one year, H travelled on average 124 km

per day, which can be compared to the average daily mobility of 42 km per Norwegian per year. As indicated in table 1, almost 65% of H's annual mobility is a result of air travel.

Table 1: Annual accounts for a conference tourist: mobility and energy use

	<i>Mobility km/year</i>	<i>Mobility km/day</i>	<i>Energy use kWh/year</i>
Residential energy			7,000
Private car	16,000	44	6,130
Domestic scheduled flights	8,000	22	6,450
International scheduled flights	13,000	36	8,670
Charter flights	8,000	22	3,400
Total	45,000	124	31,650

Source: Høyer and Næss 2001
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Høyer and Næss (2001: 460) also present the results of a survey of conference participants (n=128, conference 'Traffic Days 1999', Aalborg University):

The participants included researchers as well as public and private sector practitioners. The respondents all lived in Scandinavia. On average, they had attended 2.7 conferences during the latest 12 months. Of these, 43% were in the home region (within 100 km distance of the workplace), 39% elsewhere in Scandinavia, 15% in Europe outside Scandinavia, and 3% in the rest of the world. The conference participation of the researchers was considerably higher than among the practitioners. [...] On average, each researcher had travelled by plane to 1.4 conferences during the latest 12 months, compared to a mean of 0.5 among the practitioners.

They conclude that scientists are highly mobile travellers, and, consequently, an important group contributing significantly to the overall amount of airmiles flown within a given society. While these results seem to indicate that business travellers may be an important group of hypermobile travellers, leisure travel can be as important.

In a study of 252 international leisure tourists in Zanzibar, Tanzania, carried out in October 2003, Gössling et al. (2006 and unpublished data) found that the average distance flown for leisure in 2002 and 2003 (i.e. over 22 months, air travel only) was 34,000 pkm per tourist, *excluding* the trip to Zanzibar. The 10 most frequent travellers in this case study had covered almost 180,000 pkm each for leisure travel by air in 2002/2003, with a maximum of 24 countries visited by one traveller in this period. Together, these 10 travellers had covered 20% of the total distances travelled. Averaged per year, the study thus indicates that leisure travellers can cover vast distances with an average of 17 000 nkm travelled by air by each

travellers can cover vast distances, with an average of 17,000 pkm travelled by air by each respondent over the course of one year, corresponding to 46.5 km per day (a conservative estimate, as the trip to Zanzibar was not included and the study did not address the last two months of 2003). As various studies of individual mobility patterns in industrialized countries show, this is about the *total average distance* or about twice the *average leisure distance* travelled per capita in industrialized countries (cf. Gössling 2002b). Furthermore, the study indicates that within the group of these highly mobile leisure travellers, there is a sub-group of hypermobile travellers, covering 90,000 pkm each within a period of 12 months, i.e. effectively travelling more than twice around the globe within a year, corresponding to 246 pkm per day (air travel only!). The study thus suggests that there is a group of long-distance leisure travellers, who are responsible for a considerable share of the distances travelled for leisure-related purposes. Their demographic characteristics suggest that they are 20-50 years old, well educated and wealthy, while their awareness of environmental problems caused by energy-intense lifestyles is low (Gössling et al. 2006).

Another more recent study of air travellers at Gothenburg Airport, Sweden (Gössling et al.

