

SINGLE MOTHERS’ COORDINATION OF TIME AND SPACE IN THE PARIS REGION

analyzing daily mobility to understand a gender issue

Gonçal CERDÀ BENEITO

(he/him/his)

PhD Candidate - Urban Planning

goncal.cerda-beneito@enpc.fr

1. Introduction

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

5. Strategies...

6. Conclusion

70's → emergence of research on women's travel (Coutras & Fagnani 1977, Rosenbloom 1978)

➤ “Gender and daily mobility” research field:

- Deepen knowledge of women's daily mobility and deconstruct “neutral commuter” (Madden 1981, Hanson & Pratt 1995, Uteng & Creswell 2008)
- Study beyond commuting → mobility of care (Sánchez de Madariaga 2016, Gilow 2019)
- Analysis of the effects of different positions and conditions more “feminine”, i.e. parenthood (Rosenbloom 1986, Schwanen 2007, Fan 2017)

1. Introduction

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

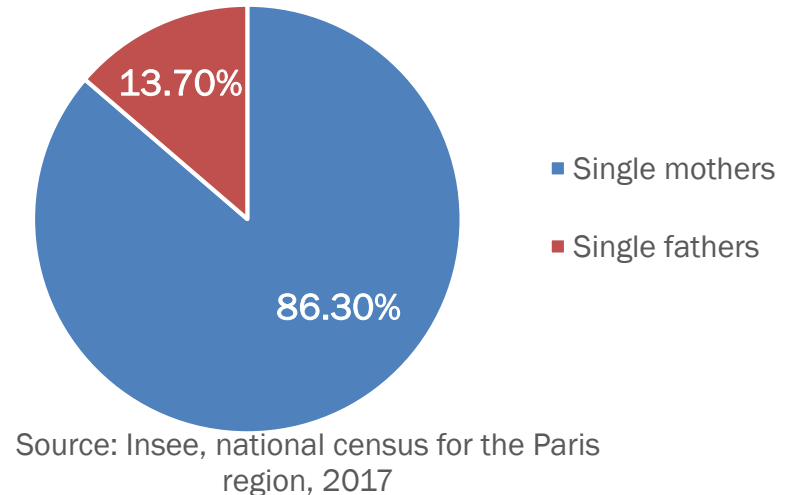
4. Influence of space...

5. Strategies...

6. Conclusion

Some limits:

- Weak consideration of single parenthood
 - Single mother, an important and growing category → gender issue
 - A daily mobility more constrained by their children than parents in couple (Kostyniuk et al. 1989) and more affected by care activities than single fathers (Rosenbloom 2006)
- Mostly quantitative analysis (Law 1999)
 - Difficult to understand subjectivities (Scholten et al. 2012, Sweet & Ortiz-Escalante 2015)
- Little research on both space and motherhood
 - Despite introduction of spatial variables (McDonald 2005, Lo & Houston 2018), and interest on women's perception in different urban spaces (Valentine 1989, Lewis 2019)



Single parents
27% of
households
with children
in Paris

1. Introduction

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

5. Strategies...

6. Conclusion

To what extent single mothers' daily mobility is influenced by the need of coordinating, in time and space, the multiple activities related to their role and condition?

- How gendered care activities influence single mothers' daily mobility?
- What role for the spatial characteristics of the urban areas on their daily practices?
- Which strategies (related to daily mobility) do they implement to perform the coordination of activities?

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

5. Strategies...

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

a) A qualitative methodology: semi-structured interviews

- 31 single mothers (children under 18)
 - Between 1 and 3 children from 1 to 21 years old
 - Low-range employees or precarious employment (on short term contracts or self-employed)
 - Modest standard of living
 - Interviews from September 2020 to May 2021
 - From diverse municipalities in the Paris region



Gonçal Cerdà-Beneito, February 2021

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

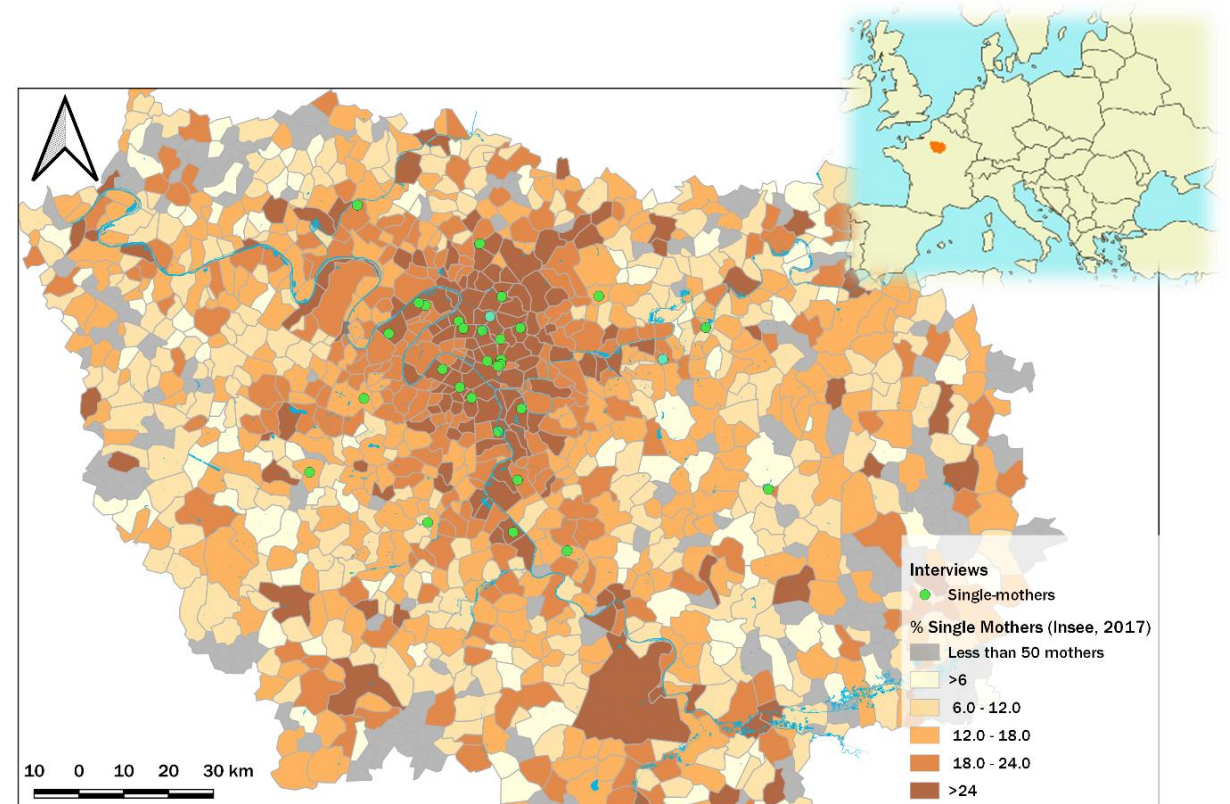
5. Strategies...

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

b) The Paris region

- 12.3 M inhabitants
- Well-developed public transit network (metro, buses, tramway, suburban rail service)
- Strong population density in the center
- Rural and suburban outskirts



3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

5. Strategies...

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

2. Methods

The main role of spatial mobility: coordinating time and space

Activities

Not shared with any other adult within the household

Diverse nature

Domestic, professional, familial, spare-time

Multiple rhythms

Every weekday, on evenings, twice a month...

Different places

Workplaces, home, school, extracurricular activities, shops, administrations, healthcare...

MOBILITY

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

5. Strategies...

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

2. Methods

Needs for planning, with low budgets/incomes

- Need to plan the activities early
- Lower incomes → constraint “choices” of places for grocery shopping

“In June, when it's time to inscription in activities, I organize the schedules. So, I take my schedule... in fact, it's several schedules that overlap: there's the family schedule, there's the professional schedule, and there's the schedule of my daughter's activities [...], so, at the time of inscriptions, I see how everything can fit together. For example, this year I wanted to enroll her in a dance class, it was on Wednesday, it was from 3 to 4 pm, so she did a trial class. And then, finally, it wasn't possible to fit into the schedule. I can't, from 3 to 4 pm, leave my job in the center of Paris, and pick her up. I'd have to pick her up at 1 p.m. at the most, well, it's a thing... it's not possible.”*

Simone, mother of 6 years-old girl from a dense outskirts

* All the quotes are translated from French

4. Influence of spatial characteristics: a comparison between dense and non-dense areas

5. Strategies...

a) The car, an ally of low density and multiple activities

- Higher distances + multiple trips = car dependency
 - Taxi-mums (Zwerts *et al.* 2007)
 - Helps trip-chain

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

“Well, I always travelled by car anyway because it was very complicated to travel otherwise. [...] On Mondays, I drop the twins off at judo and dance, and I pick up my older daughter who has just come out of study hall or the leisure center, and I go back with her to pick up the twins. And on Thursday, I'll pick her up at snack time because she has gymnastics at 5 pm. I drop her off at the gym. I come back to pick up the twins and I go back with them to pick up the older one. Then you go back and forth, but that's how it is.”

Samia, mother of three young children living on suburbs

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of spatial characteristics: a comparison between dense and non-dense areas

5. Strategies...

a) The car, an ally of low density and multiple activities

6. Conclusion

- Transport children and heavy charges (groceries)
- Avoid public transport disruptions
- **Reinforcement of car-dependency effects**

1. Introduction

“Since I have the car, I can go to the big supermarket buy some food, put my groceries in the back of my car, and then pick up my soon in his football match. It’s essential for me, now, if I want to do all that I have to do”

Muriel, mother of 11 years-old children living in suburban municipality

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of spatial characteristics: a comparison between dense and non-dense areas

5. Strategies...

b) Proximity to daily services and transportation: a resource for the coordination of activities in the center

6. Conclusion

- Organize the activities as close as possible, within the neighborhood
 - Articulate activities & trip-chain

1. Introduction

“I quickly got used to this area: the market on Sunday mornings, I have a cinema at the end of the street where I used to go with my son very often. We have a great library right there too, so we go there very often to borrow books, but also to sit and read books there. There are several places like that, that have quickly become anchor places for me. [...]

2. Methods

On Wednesdays, our trips stay in the neighborhood, we don't go very far because he has capoeira classes on Wednesday afternoons, but capoeira is maybe a seven-eight minute walk from here, so we do it on foot. [...] This week I came back from work to take my son to capoeira, and while he was at capoeira, I went to the supermarket.”

3. Mobility & responsibilities

Céline, mother of 6 years-old boy, living in a dense central neighborhood

4. Influence of spatial characteristics: a comparison between dense and non-dense areas

5. Strategies...

b) Proximity to daily services and transportation: a resource for the coordination of activities in the center

6. Conclusion

- Accessibility to many public transport alternatives
- No car-dependency

1. Introduction

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

“For me, the metro is great! The station is really 56 meters far from here. And It’s the line I take to go working and I can take it one stop when I want to buy food on the big and cheap supermarket if I want to do some savings”

Jeanne, mother of 1 and 3 year-old sons living in a dense central neighborhood

5. Strategies to juggle activities

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

a) Optimization of time spent in the mobility spaces

- Depends on the mode of transportation and the travel time
 - Mostly in public transportation for rather long trips (> 10 min.)
 - Activities related to care work

“When I’m in the metro to work, I do all the personal mail that I didn't have time to do. At work, I work, I try to be concentrated. But, of course, the children's life is around... I try to organize it during the journey to work. It could also be a bit of shopping; errands that I'm going to do for the kids: buy a pair of shoes, buy things. Or, I'm running out of something, I'm going to buy it online, and I'm going to do it during my commute time.”

Jeanne, mother of 1 and 3 year-old sons, living in a dense central neighborhood

5. Strategies to juggle activities

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

a) Optimization of time spent in the mobility spaces

- Can also take place in the car (space of mobility)
 - While driving (phone calls)
 - When the car is parked (in the car or during a stop)

“On Mondays, my son have an appointment with the psychologist, at 6:30 pm, 20 minutes far by car. I have to take his sister out of school at 5:30 p.m. at the latest, pick up his brother, and then go to the psychologist, to be on time. So, during the session, well, we, if there is a need, we go to the supermarket in the area. Or I help my daughter with the homework in the car while waiting the end of my son’s session. Finally, I always try to find ways to move forward, to save time on the week's schedule.”

Sabine, mother of a 6 and a 12 years-old children, living in suburbs

5. Strategies to juggle activities

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

b) To devolve some trips to relatives

- Relatives not far from their homes
 - Family members
 - Parents of children's friends or other acquaintances

“Well, they [mothers from the children's school] are always willing to help me when I teach, for example. I try not to disturb too much because the friend who has been helping me a lot this year also has twins, and it might be a little chaotic. Since she's freelance, she's still pretty available, so if I'm teaching a class at the university, she can pick up my kids at school and watch them for a while.”

Martina, mother of three young children living in central Paris

5. Strategies to juggle activities

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

b) To devolve some trips to relatives

- Use as a “joker”
 - Social pressure: “to be a good mother”

“I had my next-door neighbors; their son was in my daughter's class. So I told them... We told each other that if we were late and we couldn't pick them up or whatever, we shouldn't hesitate; we had our phone numbers, we called each other. So, I had this little, you know, this little buffer that allowed me to say to myself that the day I was really late, I could call them directly to ask them to go and get my daughter at school, to get her at the same time as their son”

Valérie, mother of 11 years-old daughter living in suburbs

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

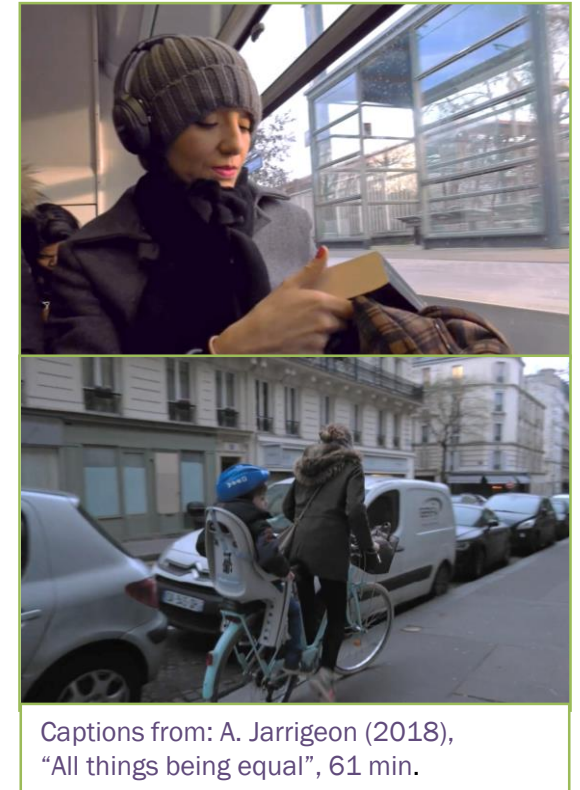
2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

5. Strategies...

- Parisian single mothers' daily mobility:
 - Constrained by multiple activities
 - Related to their role
 - Influenced by the urban characteristics of their living space
 - Car-dependency on suburbs
 - Need for proximity in dense central areas
 - Used as a tool to implement strategies
 - Optimization of time
 - Devolve some trips



Captions from: A. Jarrigeon (2018), "All things being equal", 61 min.

6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

2. Methods

3. Mobility & responsibilities

4. Influence of space...

5. Strategies...

- More knowledge of urban practices of specific women categories
 - Better understanding of women needs
 - Reflection on policies about work schedules or transport solutions
- Further research needs
 - Other contexts
 - Other situations with parenthood and gender

SINGLE MOTHERS' COORDINATION OF TIME AND SPACE IN THE PARIS REGION

analyzing daily mobility to understand a gender issue

Thank you for your attention

Gonçal CERDÀ BENEITO

(he/him/his)

PhD Candidate - Urban Planning

goncal.cerda-beneito@enpc.fr

