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**DOI**

[10.4324/9781003160984-8](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003160984-8)

**Publication date**

2022

**Document Version**

Final published version

**Published in**

Post-Growth Planning

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[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Bertolini, L., & Nikolaeva, A. (2022). Individual well-being beyond mobility growth? In F. Savini, A. Ferreira, & K. C. von Schönfeld (Eds.), *Post-Growth Planning: Cities Beyond the Market Economy* (pp. 65-79). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003160984-8>

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## INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING BEYOND MOBILITY GROWTH?

*Luca Bertolini and Anna Nikolaeva*

### 1. Background and vision

Mobility growth confronts us with an obstinate dilemma (Bertolini, 2012): we (households, organizations, cities, countries) depend on mobility for our welfare and well-being, but our mobility practices are not sustainable. The current sustainable mobility paradigm (Banister, 2008) seeks a way out of the dilemma by trying to balance between the two sides: on one hand trying to make lifestyles and business models marginally less dependent on mobility, and on the other trying to make mobility practices marginally more sustainable. However, the sustainable mobility paradigm is not delivering. There is as yet no convincing evidence that modern lifestyles and business models are on the way to becoming sufficiently independent of mobility, nor that our mobility practices are on the way to becoming sufficiently sustainable (Holden et al., 2019).

Trends documented by the European Environmental Agency (EEA, 2019a; 2019b; 2019c) sum up the conundrum. First, although there have been recurrent calls and attempts to decouple mobility growth and economic growth, the two keep showing a strong correlation. When the economy grows mobility grows, and it is only when the economy declines that mobility declines. The trends in transport demand and gross domestic product in the EU documented by the EEA (2019b; 2019c) are a poignant indication of this. Both passenger kilometres and ton kilometres have been substantially growing in the past two decades. Reversals of this trend are limited and temporary and are correlated with the 2008 financial crisis and ensuing economic recession, rather than with a substantial and consistent decrease in the mobility intensity of the economy. Second, and similarly, although there have been recurrent calls and attempts to decouple mobility growth and carbon emission growth (a key measure of lack of sustainability), the two keep showing a strong correlation. As shown by the EEA (2019a), carbon emissions from

transport in the EU keep growing, and the only reversals are correlated with the decreases in passenger kilometres and ton kilometres shown in EEA (2019b; 2019c) and correlated in their turn with periods of economic decline.

In this accumulating evidence we see an urgent call to go beyond the balancing approach of the sustainable mobility paradigm and instead question at its roots the link between mobility growth and human welfare and well-being. In the context of this broader questioning, which should for instance also extend to a critique of business models and organizational practices, we need to better understand to which degree, and in which sense, individual well-being depends on mobility growth, or might even be impaired by it. And we need to understand what individual well-being independent of mobility growth could look like, and what could be enablers and barriers to achieving them. We acknowledge that there are important, unsolved debates around definitions and measurements of individual well-being, as well as its relationships with collective welfare. In this chapter, however, we use the term to loosely refer to the combination of material and immaterial processes and resources that make a human life 'good' (Rosa & Henning, 2018) in the understanding of those living that life.

The current pandemic has triggered a unique natural experiment in this respect, as individuals in a great variety of contexts are confronted with unprecedented restrictions of their mobility and challenged to find ways of pursuing their well-being independently of mobility growth, and rather in a context of mobility decline. Which risks and opportunities do these experiences document? With reference to the Multi-Level-Perspective (MLP) on socio-technical transitions (Geels, 2011), we see the pandemic as a landscape shock, providing a sudden 'window of opportunity' for emergent 'low mobility' niches to challenge the 'high mobility' regime. In this view, the pandemic shapes a context in which to explore 'for real' a range of material and symbolic dynamics both between and within the mobility niches, regime, and landscape (Sheller, 2012). In a similar vein, we see the pandemic as a disruption of the dominant mobility routines and arrangements, forcing adaptations in individual practices that might reveal latent, and previously hidden, possibilities for alternative mobility routines and arrangements (Marsden & Docherty, 2013; Marsden et al., 2020).

To structure the analysis, we will make use of the distinction between a 'local' and a 'stagnant' society introduced by Ferreira et al. (2017). In both a local and a stagnant society low-mobility practices are dominant, as presently forced by the pandemic. However, in a local society low mobility is preferred and the dominant social norm, whereas in a stagnant society high mobility is preferred and the dominant social norm.<sup>1</sup> In this perspective, instances of a local society could point at enablers of a transformation towards a society where individual well-being is independent of mobility growth. Instances of a stagnant society could instead point at barriers to a transformation towards such a society. Ferreira et al. (2017) further articulate the distinction between a local and a stagnant society with the help of the dimensions of 'mobility as capital' identified by Kaufmann et al. (2004), and the dimensions of 'social practices' identified by Shove et al. (2012). Combining the

two, they identify the four analytical elements of *access*, *competence*, *appropriation and meaning*, and *materials*. *Access* is about the resources that are within reach of individuals, and about the ways they have of acquiring them. *Competence* is about the skills required for everyday life, and about the ways of developing such skills. *Appropriation and meaning* are about the measures by which and the ways in which individuals take control of and shape their everyday practices and environment. Finally, *materials* are the physical artefacts that are mobilized in all the other processes (for a more extensive discussion, see Ferreira et al., 2017). The resulting characterization of a local and a stagnant society is summarized in Table 5.1.

With the help of this analytical framework, we will seek answers to the questions of: in which way and degree are mobility practices and values in the pandemic evocative of a local or a stagnant society? And what might be the implications for

**TABLE 5.1** Characterization of localism and stagnancy

<i>Analytical element</i>	<i>Type of society</i>	
	<i>LOCAL: Proximity as available capital</i>	<i>STAGNANT: Mobility as unavailable capital</i>
<b>Access</b>	Individuals have in their proximity enough valued people and resources to meet their needs and aspirations up to high levels of satisfaction	Individuals operate within imposed and confined geographical areas without proper access to critical resources, social contacts, and institutions
<b>Competence</b>	Individuals master the best skills to thrive in the environment where they are, and it is easy to develop new skills there	The skills which individuals have are not useful in the environment where they operate; learning new skills is difficult
<b>Appropriation and meaning</b>	Individuals feel rooted to their area and geographical landscape; they are deeply connected to local people, social practices, and institutions	Individuals feel that they belong ‘elsewhere’ and that this place is not reachable. Local practices and symbols are perceived negatively or convey no meaning
<b>Materials</b>	Use and disposal of materials is primarily based on local supplies and arrangements; bikes, cargo-bikes, and pedestrian pathways are highly valued, as is public space. Local environment and resources are well managed	Needed materials become scarce because they are not available locally and the necessary transport means are unavailable

a transformation towards a society where individual well-being is independent of mobility growth?

## 2. The COVID-19 pandemic as the trigger of a global experiment in a post-mobility growth society?

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 has led to severe physical mobility restrictions around the world: various governments issued decrees limiting movements of their citizens on multiple scales from international and intercity travel to daily walks. Although policies have varied, some degree of mobility restriction became part of the daily lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world. As such, the COVID-19 pandemic has become the trigger of a unique global experiment in mobility reduction and multiple scholars have attempted to measure the effects of this.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter we will do something different: we will discuss the reduction of mobility under COVID-19 in the context of our theoretical framework outlined earlier to understand the potential for what kind of society this experiment has unlocked or at least has shown. Has COVID-19 pushed the world towards a LOCAL or a STAGNANT type of society? How is this articulated in terms of access, competence, appropriation and meaning, and materials? And which questions does this all raise for a transformation towards a post mobility growth society?

Our entry point for this discussion is an analysis of the qualitative data collected in the summer of 2020 by a team of researchers, led by Anna Nikolaeva, as a follow-up of a survey on experiences with working from home with more than 1000 respondents globally (see Rubin et al., 2020). The team sent written interview requests to 300 survey respondents who had expressed interest in participating in the follow-up study. Of the contacted respondents 50 people from 12 countries participated and filled in the written interview forms. The written interview consisted of one leading question that was meant to invoke a story of individual experiences with reduced mobility in the context of the pandemic: ‘How has COVID-19 changed your daily mobility, and how do you feel about these changes?’ This question was followed by an elaboration and some optional prompt questions. The aim of such an open approach was to allow for the exploration of meanings of mobility and of reduction thereof without a predetermined framework. The responses offer a glimpse into what it means to live a life less mobile – not by choice, not for a long period (or, at least, so it was believed), and yet, precisely because of the abrupt nature of that change the observations and reflections of our interviewees offer a striking count of losses, discoveries, and questions that might accompany a transformation to reduced mobility.

We have applied the framework described in Table 5.1 for coding the data with the reservation that we focus on people’s *perceptions* of the changes in their daily lives, and thus the type of data at hand lends itself best to discussing the analytical elements of *competence* and *appropriation and meaning*. Another important reservation is that our interviewees are mainly knowledge/white collar workers based in Europe, the US, and Australia who are in full-time or part-time employment and

who in their stories, with a couple of exceptions, have not reported economic hardship, deep distress, and uncertainty about their future. It is also likely that a self-selection bias was at play as people who participated had an interest in the subject and had the time and energy to write down their stories. Our analysis is exploratory in nature and we pose some questions in the discussion that address the limitations of the dataset.

Before we dig into the data, we need to make two important disclaimers. First, we by no means want to suggest that the current pandemic is *prefigurative* of a post mobility growth world, be it local or stagnant. There are too many additional and even contradictory factors at play. One evident one is the restrictions on social interactions in physical space, both public and private, which would be key ingredients of a local, proximity-focused world (see Table 5.1). Also, the pandemic takes place in a world which is still dominated by economic, social, and cultural institutions assuming mobility growth, which have only marginally, if at all, adapted to the reality of a world with great constraints on physical mobility. Second, we do not want to suggest that the perceptions of our respondents can be used as evidence of any loss or gain in well-being. Subjective assessments are notoriously questionable and, in any event, insufficient means of reaching any such conclusion, which should also, if not most importantly, rely on objective assessments of well-being (O'Neill, 2018). In addition, the subjective assessments of our respondents might also be muddled by the awareness (right or wrong) that the mobility reduction is temporary and reversible. What we instead claim is that this crisis offers a unique chance to explore in the field what *could be* risks and opportunities of a transformation towards a post mobility growth society, from the point of view of the lived experiences of individuals affected by drastic reductions in their everyday mobility. We aim to generate questions, rather than to give answers.

## 2.1 Access

In terms of access the stories of our interviewees for the most part report situations that lie between the LOCAL and the STAGNANT society characteristics. Most respondents had to stop going to their workplace completely at some point during the period between March and July 2020 and experienced other limitations on personal mobility beyond their commute. Many interviewees report missing going to work for various reasons, while also underscoring some benefits of working from home in general or not having to commute in particular. Missing social contacts was a very important theme in almost all interviews. For some people socializing at work is a key part of their social life, whereas others see those interactions as pleasant and important for the quality of work:

Though we were able to carry out the work, we all felt that we are missing the face-to-face interaction. We had to make an extra effort to maintain the quality of work. [...] The current situation feels like an overdose of remote interactions. I feel that the face-to-face interaction with my students and

colleagues is essential. I can see that the quality of interaction (depth) is significantly inferior.

*(F, 58, Israel)*

The lives of our interviewees were largely not designed for staying in one place; their social connections, sometimes including close family, are often beyond their reach under the conditions of a lockdown:

I didn't move about nearly as much, which I like a lot, except that I have missed international travel the most, friends and family in faraway places.

*(F, 51, Austria)*

Many interviewees had to spend most of their time at home and in its surroundings, which for some has exposed that they had relied on mobility for satisfying multiple needs and now cannot find replacements for activities, experiences, and contacts they crave. Others report rediscovering their local environment and enjoying that. A university professor from a small English village discusses the sense of constraint:

Colleagues who live further from the university (but in cities or larger towns) look forward to not having to travel in. They are happy with the prospect of mostly working from home. I feel distant from this anticipation – we don't have places we can walk and see people, parks where at least we could hear others' voices and have social encounters, pavement cafes where one could sit when distanced. These are things that require me to travel deliberately into town. For me, the prospect of continued instruction to work from home fills me with fear. My mobility is entirely the source of my social interaction.

*(M, 56, the UK)*

Another university professor does not seem to feel confined to the same degree in her village in Israel:

My home is located in a small village in the middle of a rural area. That helped to prevent feelings of confinement and enabled me to carry out the physical activity I am used to (jogging). During this period, I had much more interactions with my neighbors from the village (mainly chatting while walking or jogging in the fields) than in normal times.

*(F, 58, Israel)*

Many interviewees reported enjoying long walks and learning more about architecture and nature in places where they live:

Because I try to go on a daily walk through my neighbourhood (about 45 mins) I spend a lot more time in my direct environment than before. I

have noticed things that I didn't really notice before – breeding birds, for example...

*(F, 30, The Netherlands)*

While discussing their local environments many interviewees raised issues around walkability and bikeability. A student who moved from Davis to Phoenix in the US to stay with his parents during the pandemic comments:

If I wanted to travel anywhere including the park, I had to drive a car. [...] Spending so much time inside made me realize how inaccessible a lot of the same destinations that I travel in Davis are in my neighborhood in Phoenix. [...] It wasn't necessarily a new realization but it was definitely apparent that destinations are more accessible by bike in Davis, which is a small college town with extensive bike infrastructure, than in Phoenix.

*(M, 23, the US)*

His fellow countryman, who recently became a father, discusses the dangers of walking and related constraints in Houston, Texas:

One thing that inhibits me from taking the baby and wife with me (aside from the weather – Texas summers are extremely hot!) is that I live in a neighborhood that, unfortunately, does not have sidewalks, and people tend to drive pretty fast even on the residential roads. This hasn't stopped me from walking, but I am a lot more protective of the kid, and frankly I don't trust drivers here to slow down just because they see someone walking with a baby in a stroller.

*(M, 33, the US)*

Some interviewees (especially people who use public transportation) also mentioned concerns regarding using public transportation because of fear of contracting COVID-19 and thus potential reduction in access to places.

To sum up, no one reported losing access to critical resources or facilities, but we must emphasize that we have a non-representative sample and our interviewees could be considered as a comparatively privileged group of people. The main impacts that they have experienced in terms of access have to do with (very) limited social contacts and the lack of variety and change in their daily life. Some, however, were also able to find new opportunities for social interaction and spare-time activities close to home.

## **2.2 Competence**

Most of our interviewees discussed the adjustment to new routines in ambiguous terms. Many of them mastered or began mastering new skills necessary in the situation and enjoyed that, whereas others experienced stress, anxiety, and boredom.



Examples of skills and competencies that people began mastering include learning more about the neighbourhood and socializing with neighbours (see some examples in the previous section), adopting new self-care practices, developing a different working rhythm and distribution of chores with their partner, and doing their shopping and planning vacations differently. Sometimes adopting new skills and routines is discussed as a direct result of struggles with separation between private life and work, loneliness, lack of physical movement, new digital tools, etc. For example, a marketing consultant from Germany comments on the already changing meeting culture and the future transformations of personal meetings triggered by the pandemic:

I think we have all learned that meetings do not need to be in person all the time. I am certain that we will have a larger number of virtual meetings in lieu of personal meetings. And we will cherish personal meetings a lot more. Meeting culture will change, as well. We have all learned that the level of being 'private' can be much higher on occasion and you still get work done.  
(43, M, Germany)

A university lecturer from The Netherlands explains how he adapted to the sense of social isolation during lockdown by becoming a more active member of the local community:

I also miss the simple daily informal meeting opportunities like going for lunch or a drink with colleagues. On the other hand, because I recently chose to become more active in a local organization (I applied for a voluntary position in the board of that organization, and was chosen for that position), I am building up new social networks in my city. This might have happened without the pandemic too, but maybe the pandemic and having to be at home much more was an incentive to make this choice.  
(47, M, The Netherlands)

An Italian researcher describes how the initial relief of not having to commute vanished and gave way to a sense of containment, inability to concentrate, sadness, and loneliness. Eventually she developed new routines and self-care practices to lift her spirits:

[...] during the first period I didn't miss anything of my travels from Modena to Bologna and back. Especially, I didn't miss the anxiety of getting to the train at the right time, in order to be able to arrive to work or home in time for all the already planned things. I didn't miss the frequent and regular delays of the trains. I didn't miss the crowd on the train [...]. I didn't miss the loss of time (2.30 hours per day) to commute. [...]

After the first two/three weeks at home, however, I started to feel depressed, like a tiger in the cage [...]. During the first two weeks of lockdown I found

it really difficult to force myself to follow a routine. I couldn't focus and I couldn't follow any schedule. Partially because I was worried, the situation was completely new and I never expected – as many other people – that I would experience a similar global situation. Partially because being at home all the time, waking up alone, living alone, eating alone, working in the same room every day and never changing environment was not giving me the motivation to have regular days, regular meals, regular working hours. [...] So, at some point I decided I needed to react and I forced my self to wake up at certain time, working from x to x, eating healthy, doing some gym. After this, days started to flow again a bit faster, even if the mood was not great in any case.

*(E; 33, Italy)*

The ease of mastering new skills and competencies varied across the stories of our respondents, with some painfully pointing out that their circumstances, such as the built and social environment around them, were too constraining when they tried to adapt (see section 2.1 on *access*). Thus, again we see a mixture of characteristics of a LOCAL and a STAGNANT society. Most interviewees discuss a variety of successful adaptation strategies – from building their own gym facilities to developing well-thought-out routes for daily walks – but the successes of such adaptations as well as difficulties reported by others are linked in complex ways to their personalities and unique circumstances.

### **2.3 Appropriation and meaning**

Perhaps as a reflection of the growing competencies discussed in the previous section, as well as possibly related to the nature of our dataset (relatively well-off respondents, living in environments they largely seem to like), we see a lot of appreciation of living locally and living 'slower'. A Scottish lawyer thus summarizes her experience:

My Life [sic] is much less frantic which is most pleasant. [...] Most of those I speak to – generally busy people are all saying we enjoy this slower pace of life...

*(E; 64, the UK)*

Many respondents explained why they appreciate the new rhythm of life, how they managed to make it their own and find joy, peace, and meaning in life under lockdown:

With no commute I get to sleep in an hour longer and instead of being in the car I walk for half an hour in my neighborhood and still start on time. I truly enjoy my new morning routine. I get to have lunch with my husband, check on my flowers in the garden, take an hour off when I am waiting on

materials from others, and can fill that time with something useful at home. I can be flexible with promising my time since I am not under pressure to take a train or be on the road to avoid traffic.

*(F, 55, the US)*

Many interviewees reported feeling more connected locally, learning more about places where they lived, and enjoying that new sense of place:

We are lucky to live in an area with shops, restaurants, a vibrant high street (well, during normal times) within walking distance and with very good transport connections (tram and train) also within walking distance. As we have walked more (than riding to specific destinations), we have learned a bit more about our neighborhood and have enjoyed being here more.

*(M, 53, Australia)*

And yet there is also a sense of the meaninglessness and emptiness of this 'local' life:

In lockdown, immobile, nothing is unexpected, there are no memories.

*(M, 56, the UK)*

Some people also gave meaning to the situation by connecting it to the issue of environmental degradation and the disastrous consequences that were revealed by the pandemic:

The corona lockdown for me is a confirmation how brutally privileged we are that we can do nothing for three months and still get strawberries and kiwis at the supermarket for a reasonable price and so how brutal we are towards others in the world and our offspring that we keep raping our planet because of shareholders value... We know that it can be different.

*(M, 57, Dutch living in Germany)*

I hope more generally the travelling behavior will change and will tackle problems like congestion and excessive plane use.

*(M, 41, The Netherlands)*

Similarly to the discussion of competences, we see in our data an effort to find meaning in the current circumstances, to make sense of the situation, to enjoy it even. Some interviewees report growing connection to places and communities, adopting and enjoying a new pace of life. Yet, given the perceived temporary nature of these changes and the possible effect of novelty of all those pleasant experiences, one can hardly conclude that a LOCAL society has materialized. Rather, our respondents got acquainted with some glimpses of it and tried to make it their own.

## 2.4 Materials

The interviews not surprisingly document a radical step-up in the presence and reach of digital technologies in all aspects of daily life. But the pandemic has also forced people to reconsider the role of the home as a place to not just live, but also work and physically exercise, and the direct surroundings of the home as a place for shopping, socializing, and recreation. These shifts have been met by ambivalent appreciation, as illustrated by the quotes which follow.

For example, some welcomed the replacement of face-to-face meetings, whereas others suffered:

Many of our clients all of a sudden are allowing us to do things remotely and electronically which we asked for in the past. It is more efficient and better for the environment.

*(F, 55, the US)*

Going to the office normally allows me to have some distance, now everything is absorbed into an amorphous blob and a small house does not allow for separation between intimate domestic space and the domain of my employer. I hate the communications technologies available. The way that they level all communication to a single undistinguished plane of distorted visual and compressed audio signal.

*(M, 56, the UK)*

Quite a few interviewees comment on the relative advantages of digital communication technologies while at the same time highlighting that for some purposes they are a poor fit:

At work I find it largely ok how much you can exchange and decide, now that everyone is comfortable using online tools. Now we can have meetings on one day that would have otherwise taken place in the Hague, Utrecht and Zaandam. That part of travelling I don't miss at all, sitting in the train half of the day, searching for an unfamiliar location at [...] But [I do miss] a bit networking after such meetings. Now everyone waves to the screen and the meeting is over in 5 seconds.

*(F, 48, The Netherlands)*

Many people discussed lacking a dedicated working space, as this Scottish transport policy officer comments:

The biggest change with COVID-19 is the lack of change in my daily routine. I now work, exercise, eat, home-school, and relax in the same room of my apartment.

*(M, 32, the UK)*

Yet, some highlight how they realized that office space is not as necessary as it seemed. What is necessary is the social contact:

The only part it's made me realize is how little of my work is really necessary to be in the office for. I could do 90% of it from home, however the social aspect of seeing colleagues is VERY important for mental health and productivity.

(M, 26, *The Hague, The Netherlands*)

As discussed earlier for the category *access*, the local built environment becomes key for quality of life and for mobility options that people consider when they do decide to go out. Many interviewees report lack of access to walkable and bikeable environments which, combined with the reported fear of using public transportation due to the perceived danger of contracting COVID-19, points in the direction of a STAGNANT society. Quite a few interviewees changed their views on their neighbourhoods because of the new balance of modes and new routines:

My view of the neighbourhood has changed too. I walked around a lot more than I did before, so I noticed new spots that are nice to go to. However, I also noticed I live in a really busy street. There is a lot of noise from cars / motor bikes and this annoys me while working. Also, it's hard to walk on the side walk and keep 1,5 m distance, especially in the afternoon and weekends.

(M, 26, *Utrecht, The Netherlands*)

Others acknowledge that they are 'lucky' to live in areas where they can walk or cycle safely anywhere they need to:

I've also gotten to know my local area very well, I'm lucky to live in a very walkable neighbourhood, with a shopping strip that supports most of daily needs, so I often combine a walk around the neighbourhood with a trip to the shops.

(F, 28, *Australia*)

### 3. Conclusions and discussion: what do we need to know and do?

Taken together our interviews point at four broader, underlying themes, each also highlighting directions in which further enquiries into the contours and conditions of a society where individual well-being is independent of mobility growth could go. They point at:

- *An ambivalent picture*: both a stagnant and a local society are evoked. Following Rosa (2018), on one hand people seem to suffer from the sudden impossibility

of pursuing the modern ideal that *ever more* resources and opportunities should be 'available, accessible, and attainable'; on the other hand, they seem to appreciate the value of an alternative ideal of 'resonance' with people and places that are *already* within their reach. And this raises the question: is this ambivalence caused by the fundamentally and intrinsically ambivalent impact of the reduction of mobility on individual well-being? Or is it instead caused by the path dependency of routines, habits, and networks developed in a high-mobility world?

- *Great heterogeneity*: positive or negative perceptions are very diverse and are much affected by personal characteristics (e.g. household composition) leading to reinforcing existing and creating new inequalities; a more diverse sample of respondents (e.g. including people who could not work from home, or could only do so with much difficulty; the unemployed, the elderly, the young, people with serious health concerns) would most likely show even bigger variation and inequality. What are the implications of all these personal and contextual differences for the pursuit of a society where individual well-being is independent from mobility growth?
- *Trade-offs*: on one hand respondents miss more faraway (and possibly more diverse) social interactions and place experiences, on the other they enjoy more close by (and possibly more intense) social interactions and place experiences. This raises the question of whether these different types of experience are interchangeable, commensurable, and cumutable, or in other words: do we have to choose between being rooted in a local world and connected in a global world? If we don't, what could that look like? If we do, what are the implications for individual well-being?
- *Cues for a post-growth society*: although we believe that any such choice should be the outcome of political and inclusive deliberation (see also the next point), the narratives of our respondents do provide some cues of what enabling a transformation towards a post mobility growth world might entail:
  - reconfiguration of social contact networks in a way that does not rely exclusively on travel;
  - working more locally or working both remotely and locally, working less, volunteering locally;
  - developing enjoyable, diverse, and accessible public spaces in close proximity to where people live;
  - enabling easy, safe, inclusive low-carbon mobility locally;
  - providing access to basic services within walking or cycling distance, or remotely.
- *Discovery and opening*: in spite of all the differences, the crisis is for everybody a moment of discovery and opening – not necessarily pleasant, but nevertheless forcing the reconsideration of old habits and routines and the exploration of new ones; as such, it seems a unique opportunity to redirect the course and shape the future (Marsden & Docherty, 2013; Marsden et al., 2020). However, a collective appreciation of this opportunity seems necessary, as physical and

situational conditions determined by collective decisions heavily affect the scope of possibilities and the type of impacts at the individual level, as poignantly shown in the interviews by the impacts of the built and social environment on lived experiences. There is no built-in irreversibility in the mobility practices emerging during the crisis, including those experienced as positive, and any continuation of them would require a conscious, collective choice to enable their survival proactively (and arguably, also selectively). In other words: it would require moving beyond identifying emerging individual practices towards questioning collective institutions as well. How, then, can individual discoveries add up to collective articulations of meaning? Can we common (Nikolaeva et al., 2019) the new meanings of mobility arising in a world less mobile?

## Notes

- 1 Ferreira et al. (2017) not only distinguish a local and a stagnant society, but also a 'global' and a 'liquid' society. In both a global society and a liquid society high-mobility practices are dominant. However, in the former they are preferred and in the latter they are not. Both these options are precluded during the pandemic and are thus not relevant for our analysis.
- 2 For a review of the research, including references to other reviews, see <https://airtable.com/tblWYkmgFZ3riUsA8/viwxIuFgPcFDhb0Ob?blocks=hide>.

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