

Connecting Time and Space: The Significance of Transformations in Women's Work in the City

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Abstract

Growing numbers of women with children living in western cities are entering the labour market, raising new questions about changes in the allocation of the tasks of social reproduction between household members and others and about the effects of the increasing time women now spend in the workplace. As Manuel Castells noted over 25 years ago, women's unpaid labour has long been essential, not only in the domestic arena, but also in patching together facilities separated in space. The spatial layout of cities, with its specialized and segregated land-uses, only works, he argued, if women's unpaid labour is available to connect urban locations. But many women now spend many more hours in the labour market, replacing their former domestic labour with a range of commodified goods and services as well as by help from a range of related or unrelated others, sometimes but not always remunerated and/or by state-provided or supported services. This article examines the consequences of the growth of women's employment in Britain and the concomitant decline of the old breadwinner family, the growth of workfare policies that assume all individuals are available for waged work and the rise of commodified caring. The arguments are illustrated by empirical examples from interviews undertaken with middle-class mothers in waged work in London and Manchester in the UK.

Introduction

Almost 30 years ago, before feminism had had much of an impact on urban analysis, the now grand old man of urban theory, Manuel Castells (1978), commented on the significance of women's unpaid labours in maintaining the structure and form of capitalist cities, ensuring their functioning. He argued as follows:

In the end if the system still 'works' it is because women guarantee unpaid transportation . . . , because they repair their homes, because they make meals when there are no canteens, because they spend more time shopping around, because they look after others' children when there are no nurseries, and because they offer 'free entertainment' to the producers when there is a social vacuum and the absence of cultural creativity. If these women who 'do nothing' ever stopped to do 'only that', the whole urban structure as we know it would become completely incapable of maintaining its function (Castells, 1978: 177-8).

Castells' argument was a welcome recognition of the crucial importance of women's unpaid domestic and caring work, as well as an interesting extension of the then-

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dominant socialist-feminist emphasis on the connections between the means of production and domestic labour (Seccombe, 1974; Walby, 1990), which largely ignored the structure of urban form (although see Hayden, 1984). But this claim now seems strangely unconvincing. For women, in large numbers have neither continued to devote their lives to domestic labour nor have they replaced it by leisure activities, as the work on the post-industrial society predicted (Bell, 1974) and Castells seemed to intimate. The women who 'did nothing' but the tasks identified by Castells instead have entered the labour market in growing numbers.

But neither capitalism nor the city stopped functioning as a consequence, even though an inevitable corollary of increased time spent in the labour market might seem to be a reduction in the amount of time that women spend in the type of work that ensured the social reproduction not only of urban families but the very functioning of the urban fabric itself. As Barbara Ehrenreich (1984) rather presciently pointed out, the claims that women's unpaid domestic labour is essential for the functioning of both capitalism and individual men was a too benign interpretation of the functioning of the capitalist system. It turns out that a wide range of activities previously provided for love (i.e. both in the sense of for nothing and through ties of affection) are replaceable by commodities produced for profit. And men, as Ehrenreich wryly noted, showed an unexpected capacity to thrive on fast food and commercial forms of emotional servicing, although dependent children still need servicing, typically by wives and partners, or by other women for low pay.

The consequences for the maintenance of the urban form, however, are perhaps less straightforward and have been less well investigated. While numerous studies have examined the growth in the provision of commodified domestic services and some of the consequences for wages rates, relations between professional women and the women who replace their domestic labour, and the connections between migration and women's low-waged work, there are few British studies that assess the consequences for spatial arrangements and the urban form (Little *et al.*, 1988; McDowell, 1983). In light of the rapid expansion in the number of in-work mothers, particularly in the UK, and the still poor provision of subsidized childcare by the state, further investigation would seem appropriate. In this article, we address this lacuna, examining the consequences of women's growing labour market participation for their use of time in two large British cities (Greater London and Manchester), and exploring the ways in which women's unpaid domestic and what we might term 'space-connecting' labour has changed. We examine the extent to which women have reduced these types of connecting work, have replaced them by commodified forms or, alternatively, have experienced a speeding-up in their work, so that they perform the same amount of work but in a shorter time or at anti-social hours. It seems probable that the amount of space-connecting labour, and those involved in it, will have become more complex and may even have increased as women, especially those with children, enter paid work and as new locations in the city have to be connected. Our argument focuses on middle-class women in particular, as they are more likely both to be employed on a full-time basis, so exacerbating the space-time squeeze, and to be able to purchase replacement care for their own labours than women who are members of less affluent households.

Space and time

There is a large and growing literature about the use of time and the increasing pressures on urban households (Daly, 1996; Harkness, 1999; Jarvis, 2005; Presser, 2006, about changes in the household allocation of labour (Finch and Mason, 1993; Brannen, 2005), about the changing relationship between home and work (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Smart and Neale, 1998; Lewis *et al.*, 2003), for men as well as for women (Sennett, 1998) and about the growing commodification of domestic labour (Gregson and Lowe, 1995; Anderson 2001) and care work (Ungerson, 1997), about overwork (Schor, 1992) and

about women's employment and the changing ways in which children are cared for (Brannen and Moss, 1998; Crompton, 2001; Skinner, 2003; Brannen *et al.*, 2004). However, these bodies of work are seldom counter-posed with work in urban geography, and are even less likely to speak to work produced in transport studies (Preston, 2004). Bringing these literatures into a conversation would allow us to think through their implications for spatial arrangements and connections and the necessary travel between sites. Time, rather than the connections between time and space, has tended to be the main focus of earlier work (Hochschild, 1997; Harvey, 1999).

A partial exception to the neglect of space-time connections and constraints lies in an approach in geography that has rather fallen into neglect (although see Jarvis *et al.*, 2001; Jarvis, 2005) — the work developed by Hagerstrand (1976; 1982) in the 1970s about time-space relations and what were then termed the 'coupling constraints' that affected behaviour in urban areas. These constraints included, for example, the hours during which urban facilities and services, including retail outlets, hospitals, dentists, nurseries, shops, cafes, and theatres were open, compared to, for example, the 'normal' working day and conventional school hours. There have been considerable changes in the extent of the provision of both leisure and what might be termed servicing facilities in many western cities and, especially, in their hours of opening as the major cities of advanced industrial economies move towards a 24/7 society. It is, however, perhaps more difficult to loosen the spatial, rather than the temporal, constraints on urban residents, despite rising car ownership and a lengthening of the hours when public transport is in operation: at least in some major cities. The location of homes, shops, leisure activities and commodified forms of caring services — whether elder care facilities, childcare provision or the growing number of services to maintain the necessary physical attributes for an aestheticized labour force (gyms, massage services, hair salons and so on) (Bauman, 1998) — are seldom located in close proximity, with out-of-town developments and suburban sprawl exacerbating rather than easing the issues of urban mobility/connections. Frequent cross-city journeys are often required to use different facilities, and complex time-scheduling by busy employees, parents or their substitutes and other family members is needed to allow households with multiple workers and dependants to function. The complexities of this co-ordination are often compounded by traffic congestion and unreliable public transport services, an acute problem in London at present, but also in an increasing one in many UK cities as the growing privatization of public transport has led to an emphasis solely on profitable peak-time routes, which often run from the urban periphery to the centre, making cross-suburban journeys difficult.

Helen Jarvis (2005) is one of the few scholars to have examined the connections between time and space in her work on urban families in London. She draws on work in geography that insists on the significance of space — or more accurately geographical locations and distributions. In a sense it is truism to argue that 'geography matters'. As Andrew Sayer (2001) has pointed out, the concrete world is inevitably 'spatial' and so, as Jarvis also recognizes, 'any observations of socio-temporal organization in daily urban life necessarily encompasses spatiality' (Sayer, 2001: 138). But it is also clear that the spatial layout of the city, what Jarvis (2005: 141) terms the 'infrastructure of everyday life', has an effect on how daily activities may be organized, and in turn, the reorganization of these daily activities may lead to a remaking of the urban infrastructure. But the significance of spatial location, and of the work needed to connect disparate and often distant activities, is seldom evident in British policy discussions and documents. The policy implications of the location of childcare, for example, are seldom addressed in contemporary discussions of the connections between women's rising employment rates and the provision of childcare, whether by the state or in the market in the UK, despite an interesting discussion in Nordic childcare policies about the relative advantages of workplace- or neighbourhood-based facilities. It may be that for British women privatized care in the home is at present the most effective way of helping them combine what used to be termed their 'dual roles', challenging current Government

policy to expand childcare places outside the home¹. Home-based care eliminates one return journey across urban space for the more affluent households who are most able to afford nannies or other live-in childcare arrangements such as the employment of au pairs. The consequence, however, is that the journey costs (time and money) are displaced onto the nannies and childminders making daily journeys from lower-income households to work for more privileged families.

Rising rates of women's employment and the consequences of neoliberal workfare policies

Women's labour market participation rates have increased in Britain over the last three decades or so. As the decennial UK census figures show, in 1971 less than 50% of women were recorded as in waged employment. By 2001 this had risen to almost 70%. As Harkness (2003) noted in her assessment of the implications of these changes for the distribution of household tasks, the 1990s were a decade of particularly rapid change. Among younger women (aged 25–49), the rates of increase were highest, and by 2002 73% of this age group were in waged work. This means, of course, that growing numbers of mothers entered the labour market in that decade. By its close just over half of all mothers of pre-school children, for example, were in the labour market compared to 27% twenty-five years earlier. Although the rate of full-time employment is growing among mothers, many are employed part-time², and recent work has shown that it is this group of mothers who have the most complex childcare arrangements (Skinner, 2003). It is evident, then, that there has been a remarkable shift in the extent of women's waged work since Castells' claim, with necessary implications for the hours that women now spend in the home, the sorts of tasks that they are able and willing to undertake there and their availability for urban connecting work.

While part of the explanation for women's rising labour market participation stems from women's increased expectations and aspirations due to the combination of rising costs of living, expanded educational opportunities and falling birth rates, there has also been a remarkable shift in the assumptions that lie behind employment and welfare policies in Great Britain since the election of the New Labour Government in 1997. This shift radically alters the traditional assumptions embedded in the establishment of the post-war British welfare state about the obligations and duties of mothers of young children. In 1945 women's primary duty, enshrined in the Beveridge report and in later legislation, was to provide for their dependants through unpaid domestic work within the home. In return for this unpaid caring labour, they were to expect financial support from a male breadwinner whose duty was to seek employment in order to provide for his dependants. Sixty years later this assumption has been replaced by an obligation that all able-bodied adults, regardless of their marital status or their responsibility for dependants, undertake waged work.

This challenge to the 'male breadwinner' presumption that lay behind the development of post-war social policies in advanced industrial economies has taken a particular form in the UK, influenced by neoliberal arguments. A model of support based on a workfare rather than a welfare state is now dominant. Through a range of policies from the New Deal programme (its name reflects the US influence on policy in the UK) to tax credits to support the working poor and the reduction of the value of benefits for

1 In October 2005, a large-scale study of pre-school children aged up to 36 months also seemed to argue that individualized one-to-one care was most beneficial for children's development rather than communal care (Leach *et al.*, 2005), fuelling the debate about the most satisfactory type of care for young children.

2 About half (56% of all partnered households now include two waged workers: only 17% of these households, however, have two full-time employees, in the other 39% the female partner is employed on a part-time basis (source: National Census, 2001).

those not in waged work, the obligation for citizens to seek employment has become the basis of current social and employment strategy. Hence, the labour market and welfare policies introduced by the New Labour Governments since 1997 have actively constructed a new version of the 'good mother' and reshaped the boundaries between the 'private' arena of the home, the state and the market. All mothers — including lone parents — are expected to be in employment or looking for work, rather than drawing on income support, whereas in the development of the post-war welfare state mothers of young children were explicitly exempted from this expectation (Lewis, 2002). Mothers living in higher-income households do not face the same direct compulsion from the state as low-income mothers, as they seldom claim benefits, but they too are increasingly pressed into waged work, to finance, for example, the burgeoning costs of property ownership in many parts of the UK. As part of this shift in the state's expectations about what constitutes 'good mothering', there have also been a number of new measures to improve 'work-family' policies to make it easier for women to meet these new demands, and childcare in particular has become a matter of national policy. A national childcare strategy was, for example, launched in 1998 and extended in 2004 (DfEE, 1998; HMSO, 2004), and it became a central topic in the 2005 general election. However, state-provided childcare remains limited in its provision. The dominant policy assumption is that de-commodified public care should be available only to the socially excluded in 'deprived' urban areas rather than a general service to replace women's privatized domestic labour. In this assumption the UK state differs from the social democratic welfare regimes of the Nordic countries (Esping Anderson, 1990; Perrons *et al.*, 2006).

It is now clear, then, that while femininity, domesticity and mothering used to be inextricably intertwined in Great Britain, this relationship has been challenged, even broken apart, in the last five or so years. The 'good mother' now is a mother who enters the labour market to raise her income and skill levels for the benefit of her children (Irwin and Bottero, 2000), a mother who no longer occupies the home as a continuous presence and who hands over the care of her children to another for part of the day. In the UK, new active labour market policies have been introduced that not only encourage more women to enter employment to enhance national competitiveness but also aim to challenge social exclusion (McDowell, 2004; 2005). These are now a central element of New Labour's agenda as, drawing on US experience, welfare-to-work policies have been introduced which aim to address the underemployment of low-income parents, especially single mothers, as well as to challenge the poverty, social exclusion and limited social capital of working class children in certain parts of British cities (Scott *et al.*, 2002). The uniting focus of both aims, therefore, is paid work for women, and so, of necessity, childcare has become a key economic issue. And childcare in these recent policies has been recast through a substitution lens primarily into a commodity form, reconstituted as a social responsibility enacted largely through the market, especially for middle-class families, and performed by the labour of socially unrelated others, typically in specialist facilities such as private nurseries or in the homes of individual families, where mainly young working class women, some of them migrants (Anderson, 2001), replace the selfless labours of maternal love for (often inadequate) financial recompense. As a consequence, the home, for growing numbers of families who rely on forms of privatized care, increasingly is transformed into a site of commodified interactions. As women no longer have the time to care for their own children or to provide a range of home-based services, other forms of provision — typically commodified in the UK — expand to fill the time-gap (Smith *et al.*, 2004).

While dual-earner arrangements, where both adult members of a household are in employment, are increasingly the norm for couple households in Britain, the nature of this trend takes a class-specific form. Highly educated women who are members of the expanding professional classes are not only more likely to be employed than women with fewer educational credentials but they are also more likely to be employed on a full-time basis and so to work long hours. Thus Harkness (2003) showed that in 2002

in dual-earner households where women had some form of higher education, the total hours worked by the couple involved was 73 hours compared to 60 labour market hours where the woman had basic minimum school-leaving qualifications (O-levels/GCSEs) or less. In both cases, however, these are long hours spent outside the home, raising complex questions about the replacement of the sorts of household domestic and caring labour, previously and typically undertaken by individual women in their homes, by alternative forms of provision. While professional and middle-class households are more likely to resolve their time/care deficit through forms of market-based provision, lower-skilled/lower-income households often renegotiate their working hours to use time rather than money to bridge the gaps and/or to enable partners and other family members to share the labour of caring between them rather than purchasing unrelated others' labour. Thus in one in ten families with pre-school children, parents work shifts, typically men working during the day and women in the evenings or at night. This 'split-shift' parenting arrangement is most prevalent in households where one or both parents are in manual jobs (Fagan, 1996; Perrons, 2000; Harkness, 2003). In 2001 there was still only one part-time place for every 6.6 children under 8 years of age in the UK in state-provided or subsidized childcare facilities (Fagan, 2002).

The costs of childcare

It is clear then, that for many more affluent families, the purchase of market-based childcare has become a necessity in order for households to function. Furthermore, as we showed above, the corollary to the British Government's emphasis on employment as a means to challenge social exclusion, as well as to raise productivity, is some expansion of state-provided services as a substitution for women's domestic work. The replacement of an individual woman's caring labour, especially when the care is that of children, is not, however, a simple straightforward issue. It is more than the substitution of one form of care by another. As feminist economists have insisted (see, for example, Himmelweit, 1995; Gardiner, 1997; Donath, 2000), the specific and restrictive notion of how to define 'work' in the majority of economic thought is inappropriate here. The typical economist's definition of work is that it is a wage relationship: labour performed in a market, independent of who performs it, in which the worker and the product are separate and one form of product may be substituted for another, dependent on the cost. But service sector employment in general, and childcare and other forms of caring work in particular — those forms of work that now dominate advanced industrial economies — are not, as many labour market theorists have begun to recognize, like this. Care work is an example of what Leidner (1993) has termed 'interactive' work, in which the product sold embodies characteristics of the worker. Consequently, as caring/servicing labour cannot be separated from the person doing it, it matters who undertakes substitute care, especially when the relationships involved also embody notions of love and trust. Thus almost all service work, especially work that involves some form of care for others, is, as Hochschild (1983) so perceptively defined it, 'emotional labour'.

But inter-personal caring labour — whether childcare, elder care or that range of personal/counselling work that has expanded so rapidly in advanced industrial societies in recent years, what Wolkowitz (2002) termed 'body work' — also has another defining characteristic. As Baumol (1967) pointed out many years ago, in all forms of caring service provision there is a low potential for productivity gains as this sort of work cannot easily be speeded up or replaced by mechanized forms of provision. This productivity problem, by definition, makes services expensive to provide/purchase compared with manufactured goods, resulting in what Baumol called the 'cost disease' of services. This problem is exceptionally clear in childcare which, in the regulated formal sector at least, is based on a required ratio of carers for each pre-school age child: a ratio that may not be reduced. Thus, although the rates of pay for childcare workers

are extremely low — they are amongst the least well-paid of all British workers (Smith *et al.*, 2004) in part because of the natural associations of caring with femininity — market-based or state-provided childcare is still extremely expensive for individuals to purchase from their post-tax incomes.

One way to resolve the cost problem is to provide state subsidized childcare, as a number of Nordic countries have done. At present, however, the British state has declined to accept arguments in favour of universal public provision for pre-school children of working parents, opting instead for forms of tax-credit systems and some tax-free financial aid from employers to subsidize purchase in the market of replacement care for all but the most deprived families in British cities. For this latter group, provision is to be expanded under the augmented Sure Start programme which will be significantly increased between now and 2010, supplemented by longer school opening hours, after-school clubs etc. But, even so, the availability of such care will be limited and for most families, high-cost care purchased in the market will continue to be the main option. At present, childcare costs absorb a higher proportion of household income in Britain than in many other European countries, for both low- and high-income households (Bradshaw and Finch, 2002).

So, it seems clear that in Britain the replacement of women's free caring labour means either neglected children or high costs for individual families and, in some cases, for the local state. Clearly the purchase of high-quality care in the market is not possible for all those families where parents chose to or must seek work. Hochschild (1997) in her book *The Time Bind* included terrifying figures of the growth in what is euphemistically termed 'self care' among US school-aged children whose parents are in employment. The success of the film *Home Alone* taps into contemporary fears, just as *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* captures parents' anxieties about commodified replacement care for 'mother love'. This ignores, of course, the evidence that mother/child relationships are also often conflictual and troubled, but rests on an ideological and idealized set of assumptions about the nature of motherhood. In households dependent on low-waged work, working parents are far more likely to rely on reciprocal forms of care within the family than are high-wage earners. Other local studies have found evidence to confirm this general trend (Ward *et al.*, 2005) Thus it is clear that the distribution of income is crucial in determining whether and what commodified services are affordable.

A range of forms of commodified childcare provision (and other substitutable services for domestic labour) are, however, available, raising different questions for the sorts of connecting work identified in the introduction in part depending on the location and quality of care. Are high dual-income households more likely than less affluent households to purchase care in the form of nurseries — that is in collective forms of provision outside the home and so necessitating a 'connecting' journey? Or do affluent families prefer to purchase individualized privatized care in the home, thus resolving some of the problems raised by transporting children between two urban locations? In either case, it is likely that provision will depend on the low-paid labour of other women. And despite recent policy changes to subsidize the purchase of care, for low-income households it is clear that the still high cost of childcare will inhibit some women's labour market participation altogether. For these households, if cheap or cost-free forms of care are not available, their wage-earning capacity will be less than cost of childcare. Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of Greater London, has suggested that this is one reason why fewer single mothers and women in working-class households in the capital are employed than in other British cities. It seems likely too that the costs of connecting home, work and childcare are higher in London than in physically smaller cities (Jarvis, 2005) and that other urban differences, both between and within cities, will have an effect on decisions about employment and caring. Variations in housing costs are a key factor here, as may be local differences in the availability of nannies, child-minders, cleaners and that whole range of women workers that constitutes 'the new servant class' identified by Gregson and Lowe (1995) a decade ago. Comparative analyses of the

different size and constitution of this new servant class across the OECD would be illuminating in assessing the connections between women's employment, different welfare regimes and the extent to which replacement domestic labour is reliant on privatized and commodified provisions or state-provided or subsidized services. In the section below a more local comparison is the subject.

A British comparative study: London and Manchester

To explore some of these questions about the changing ways in which home and work are connected as women enter the labour market in growing numbers, we undertook a comparative study of middle- and working-class households in three localities in London and three in Manchester, selected to include a mix of social classes and housing tenures and costs and so capturing a range of income and housing positions as well as different patterns of women's work and childcare provision. In London we interviewed in the southern and the northern ends of the London Borough of Islington and in Haringey, the adjacent borough to the north of Islington. In Manchester, the three areas were all to the south of the city centre, in Burnage, Chorlton and Wythenshawe. In each area we interviewed between 15 and 25 mothers with dependent children. Our aim was to identify households with young children with at least one adult in paid work, although in a small number of cases we also interviewed households without a paid worker. We used a wide variety of methods to contact potential respondents ranging from leafleting schools and nurseries to visiting play schemes and libraries, as well as an element of snowballing. Each interview took place in a woman's home and lasted from 45 minutes to an hour and a half and was tape-recorded and later transcribed. In most cases the mother was interviewed without her partner (where there was one) present.

Our respondents in London were in the main middle-class, reflecting contacts made through formal childcare facilities. In Manchester, in part because of higher levels of state-provided childcare and the class formation of the city (Savage *et al.*, 2005), we interviewed a larger proportion of working-class women, but in both cities women who relied on their mothers, on other family members or on informal arrangements with friends were hard to identify and so their choices of care are less visible in our work. In total 127 complete interviews have been transcribed and coded: 67 in London and 60 in Manchester. In the total group, 40% of mothers were employed on a full-time basis, just over a third worked part-time and a fifth were not seeking work. The small remaining proportion were either unemployed or in some form of higher education. In each city the majority of women lived with a partner: 74% of the women in London and 79% in Manchester and all households included at least one dependent child. Almost all the partners (of whom almost all were men) of the women in employment were also working, typically on a full-time basis. Thus, as other studies have found, the data for London and Manchester show that women in full-time employment are also likely to have a partner who is employed (or self employed) on a full-time basis: 92% of the women we interviewed. But, similarly, women in part-time employment also tended to have a partner in full-time employment (83%). The joint incomes of households with two full-time employees were, not surprisingly, the highest, enabling them to purchase care in the market.

The pattern of childcare arrangements among the people in our survey, however, was extremely complex (see Table 1). While this might have been reflected on the ways in which we accessed interviewees through doctors' surgeries, nurseries and schools in the main, other studies have found similarly complicated arrangements (Skinner, 2003). There were 25 different combinations of childcare among the 33 interviewees working full-time in Manchester and 19 combinations among the 19 participants employed full-time in London. For women working part-time, the arrangements were equally complex; in London we found 15 different patterns among 26 interviewees and in Manchester an

Table 1 Main form of childcare* used by households in London and Manchester, by employment status

Region and number of respondents	Full-time		Part-time	
	London	Manchester	London	Manchester
Private Nursery	9	4	12	2
Nanny at home	2	0	1	0
State Nurseries	2	11	1	7
After School Club	3	14	2	9
School plus childminder	1	4	3	5
No paid help nuclear	4	1	6	0
No paid help but drawing on relatives	3	4	2	3
	24	38	28	25

*The number of childcare arrangements exceeds the number of interviewees who provided complete information, as in some households no single form was dominant.

Source: Authors' survey 2002–4.

even higher level of variation: 18 different patterns among 20 respondents. This complexity, like city-level differences, arises from a variety of circumstances including the age and number of children in a household and the age gap between them, as well as the different patterns of provision, household circumstances and preferences. Given the extent of variety, it is important to be cautious about making North/ South comparisons but differences are evident.

In London, the most affluent, typically women in full-time employment, are most likely to purchase full-time quality care in an upmarket nursery, whereas less affluent women found themselves having to piece together a patchwork of different forms of care over the course of a week. Thus, we found many women who used a mixture of part-time nursery places, playgroups, baby-sitters, relatives and friends to match their needs over a week. And even households who typically relied on full-time nursery places had to cover anti-social hours or the absence of on parent on business by, for example, buying different forms of care for limited hours in the day (after 5.30 pm for example) or to cover occasional weekend or overnight absences. Interestingly, two participants, women in high-status jobs in the City of London, reported that their employers provided emergency care for these eventualities, although long-term childcare places on a daily basis were not provided. This makes clear the assumption by many employers that childcare is a personal or private responsibility in the ordinary way of things.

In Manchester, we found a rather different pattern. A larger percentage of the women whom we interviewed were in full-time work (52% compared to 30% in London). This is in line with national census and labour force survey data which show that women are more likely to be in waged work and to be employed full-time in Manchester than in London. Mothers in Manchester were also more likely to use state-provided nurseries than the London mothers, as well as local childminders rather than private nurseries. In addition, none of the Manchester mothers employed nannies in their own home, whereas three London mothers did. A further difference is that relatives, typically parents, were drawn on more frequently for help in Manchester. Thus, in 10 out of 33 households in Manchester where the mother worked full-time, parents were mentioned as significant providers of childcare, but by only 3 women in full-time work in London, perhaps reflecting the greater significance of London as a graduate labour market, pulling in recruits from other regions. There was a similar pattern among women working on a part-time basis.

While these different patterns may, in part, be an artefact of the way in which we recruited women (through a combination of providers as well as snowballing), it does reflect real differences between women's employment participation and nursery provision in the two cities. Women in Manchester are slightly more likely to be in waged work (68% compared to 63% in the 2001 national census and more likely to be working full-time). There is a higher level of state-provided places for pre-school children in Manchester and such places tend to be less expensive than in the private sector. Lower-cost childcare then enables more mothers, especially those lower down the income hierarchy, to take full-time work. It may also reflect the long tradition of women's work in Manchester (Liddington and Norris, 1978; Bradley, 1989) as well as the fact that Manchester is a more manageable city in terms of size with relatively good access to public transport in most areas — although, as we show later in the article, as in London, women often have to take taxis in Manchester to connect different points in the care network and facilitate women's reconciliation of work and family responsibilities as well as the 'connecting work' that this necessitates.

Few surveys of childcare preferences question users about the location of their preferred options (see, for example, Bell and Finch, 2004), but we found that whether or not to use home-based care and, if not, the location of alternative options were key considerations for the parents in our survey. The difficulties of travelling between home, childcare and work were of particular concern for the mothers in our London group, even for those living near the Angel who had often chosen to live there for good access to public transport, especially the underground, and for its proximity to employment opportunities in central London and the City. But for these mothers, and especially for those living further north in the city, the time, cost and, above all, the unreliability of making journeys between key locations was a matter of almost daily anxiety. The extracts below are from interviews with three London and three Manchester women employed in professional positions. All but one of them are married to men working full-time, also in a professional position. The sixth woman, although she lives apart from her child's father, still relies on forms of familial exchange, in particular from the father's own parents. In most cases, however, familial assistance is not forthcoming from the fathers themselves. As we show later, they tend to assume that the arrangements for childcare are largely a woman's responsibility.

Living and working in London

Chloe is the mother of twin boys aged four and a third boy almost two, living in Islington with her husband who is a high-status banker. Chloe had decided that the only way to resolve the temporal and spatial conflicts in her life was to employ a full-time nanny who would share her home. She is a clinical psychologist and while she had returned to her job a year after the birth of the twins, she took extended leave when her third child was born. The two older boys had started school on a part-time basis at the time that we interviewed her, and the youngest child was in a nursery for a few hours a week. Chloe found the complexities of scheduling their hours, the school run and her other commitments made it hard to contemplate going back to work. She had help from a local woman for two days a week but at the time of the interview had just advertised for a full-time nanny. Before the third birth, Chloe had taken her boys to a local private nursery about a mile from her home but found the long hours that she was required to work combined with her journey across London extended the day beyond what she found acceptable for small children.

I worked in Tower Hamlets just past the Mile End tube. And I used to have to leave them at nursery about 8.15 to get to work for 9.00, and then leave work at 5.00 and sometimes not be able to get home until 5.45. It's too long a day really when they're 2 years old.

Women in professional employment in the other two London neighbourhoods had similar stories about the difficulties of connecting home, work and childcare. Melissa,

who lived in Finsbury Park, was, like Chloe, an NHS employee working as a psychiatrist. She too was married to a man working in the private sector. She also has three pre-school children and currently employs a daily nanny during the week, although she only works on three days. As she explained:

Having a nanny is the cheapest form of childcare with three children, we would probably have broken even on nursery with two children, but when we started to have the third, we realized that we couldn't, it was the most cost effective way.

Before she employed a nanny, Melissa had been involved in a heroic commute: she worked in Chelsea, and travelled there by tube and bus, via a nursery in Waterloo, which was 'the only nursery we could get'. She told us that she was constantly worried about being on time — at work, to pick up the children, for appointments — as well as finding the journey exhausting with 'a baby, a buggy and a briefcase'.

Tricia, living in Bowes Green, about three miles north of Finsbury Park, has one child, a 13-month-old daughter, and, unlike Chloe and Melissa, is employed in the private sector. Her husband owns his own business. She works part-time, 3 days a week, in market research for an advertising agency. Their daughter 'goes to a day care nursery which is all day, she gets there at about 8.15 am and we pick her up about 5.30 pm. It's a private nursery because we didn't stand any chance of getting her into any of the local state ones'. Although it is expensive, Tricia regards the cost as a trade-off to keep her job open as she planned to return on a full-time basis in the future.

It is clear that for Tricia, as for many other women in middle class jobs in London, travel, and specifically combining the journey to work with that to the nursery, is problematic. Here is what she had to say:

I go straight down [to the nursery], drop her off, and then go to the tube station. Um, it generally takes about between 50 mins and an hour [to get to work] depending on what the tube's like. The trouble is because the nursery doesn't open until 8.00 then I can't go in as early as I might have done. Not that I want to get to work early but it's nice to go to work early to avoid the rush on really packed tubes. And there's been once or twice when there's been problems on the way home, particularly on a Friday night . . . One of my biggest worries that I mightn't be able to get home. And hopefully it won't get to the stage where I can't go to work any more because I won't be able to get home.

So, as Tricia makes clear, connecting home, nursery and work is a key problem for her. She worries that her journey is not sustainable, even with a single child and that she may have to leave her job. As the examples of Chloe and Melissa make clear, with three children purchasing another woman's labour had become an essential part of reconciling work and 'life'. One woman's unpaid work, squeezed into the gaps left by a demanding high-status job, was insufficient to reconcile the competing time and space demands of their households.

Living and working in Manchester

What about women in professional occupations in Manchester? Is 'life' easier to combine with 'work' in a city outside the capital? The three case studies that we compare below are chosen to illustrate the range of choices made by women in professional or semi-professional employment in the city. Alex is a school administrator and her husband is a businessman. They have four children aged 11 and under, three of whom attend the school that she works in. The youngest child is 4 years old and is looked after by a childminder who picks him up in the mornings and three evenings and also takes him to and fetches him from a playgroup that he attends for two long mornings. Alex walks to and from the local school each day with her other children but told us she could not manage without her childminder. She adjusted her hours and her working life during the years when the children were born. Initially an accountant in central Manchester she started working at a tuition centre in the city after the children were born. She worked

in the evenings to fit in with her husband's hours and also started marking scripts at home, compromising her professional career for the sake of her children and necessarily finding her income was significantly reduced. While her time/space connections are clearly very different from the three London women, Alex told us that they became a problem, as she was only able to pick up the scripts that she marked at home during working hours.

I stopped doing that [the exam marking] after about 5 years. Just because it became a hassle to go into Manchester and pick the scripts up. I think just before Jonathan [her third child] was born I gave that up, because the idea of trekking 3 children into pick the papers up was just too much hassle.

The second example illustrates a different way of coping — one dependent on a network of relatives in the locality which, given the rising mobility rates among professional couples, is becoming less common in British cities (Devine *et al.*, 2003). Jane, who also lives in Burnage, works full-time in the centre of Manchester as an administrator for a public-sector organization. She has three children aged 5, almost 4 and 2. Before the eldest child started school, she and her younger brother attended a nursery for part of the week and were looked after by their grandparents on the other days. As Jane explained, 'at that time they [the children] were in a full-time private nursery that was attached to my work'. Jane found it hard and stressful to have to take the children with her, as she had to leave by 8 am. Life became somewhat easier, however, when her daughter started school as the two smaller children then became eligible for places in the nursery attached to the school. As Jane and her husband both work full-time, however, and leave before school starts, they needed help connecting the school/nursery and their home at the requisite time, an issue raised in other similar studies (Skinner, 2003). They are fortunate as Jane's father lives nearby and comes to the house for 8am each morning:

Before school, my dad comes here . . . he walks the three of them and takes them to nursery and school. And then when he's picking up, he picks up the three of them, and takes them either to their house or it's one of us, but depending on what day it is, depends on who's doing all of that.

As she went on to explain 'getting picked up, it's [her husband's] mum on Monday, my dad on a Tuesday and a Wednesday. Colin (her husband) on a Thursday and it's me on a Friday. We have complicated arrangements and I am dependent on a lot of people'. Jane was the only one of these six women who explicitly mentioned that her husband was involved in the school/nursery run.

It was clear that, although these arrangements worked well for the family, Jane would have preferred to be more self-reliant:

They're [the grandparents] picking up twice and then we're doing it, which is not too much, but the thing is it's still a demand on somebody every day. And it's like, it's a lot that. I mean, I suppose in an ideal world, if you said, what would I like? Then what I would need is something from after-school for Emily that lasted till about 5.30 pm so that we could pick up the boys and Emily at 5.30 and we could do that and nobody else would need to be involved.

The final extract is from an interview with Livia, who is a single parent. She works full-time for the local authority in the housing department and has one son, aged four. At the time of the interview her son was cared for five days a week in the council-run Children's Centre, which he had attended from the age of one. Before that, she told us, 'his grandparents were looking after him when he was first born, on his dad's side. His dad's mum and dad had him; after that I got him into a private nursery, until eventually I got the council place so now he is there'.

The Children's Centre opens early and suited Livia who was able to work flexi-time for part of the week. Sometimes she would drop her son off by 7.30 am in the morning,

at other times after 9 am. Its location, however, was less convenient, although she found it easier to get to, than the private nursery in the city centre that she had used before:

That was a pain, it was a trek. Once I got over to the nursery it was like 10 minutes down the road to my workplace but it was just, like, getting him to the nursery. . . . When he was younger it was awkward taking him on and off the buses and everything, with the pram and bags and whatever else.

The Children's Centre is nearer to Livia's home and she is able to walk there with her son but then she has to get to work and back by public transport. As the Centre closes at 5.30 pm she worries both about fulfilling her contracted hours of employment and about the inevitable stress at the end of her working day.

It is just, because of the times it [the Children's Centre] closes, and because I am on flexi time, and working full-time, I'm knackered – so, sometimes it is difficult to fill all your hours in each week, you know. Because it shuts at 5.30 pm so it's like you're having to rush or get taxis or whatever sometimes.

But, she added resignedly, 'that's what I have to do anyway'.

Help from co-parents?

It is clear that for all six mothers patching together childcare, school, home and work often creates problems, making women anxious and adding both to the costs and time involved in what is optimistically termed 'work/life balance' in government policy documents (HMSO, 2003). Most of the women whose voices are included here, as well as many of the other 127 whom we interviewed, needed to rely on a cast of various others — paid carers, family, friends — to permit them to combine paid employment with motherhood. Even the two women employing a full-time nanny had to patch together other forms of help when the nanny was not working. And what was starkly evident from the interviews was the almost total absence of the efforts of fathers in this connecting work, and indeed more generally in the tasks that constitute domestic labour. This reflects the national pattern of relatively little change over the past twenty years or so (see Sullivan, 2000). The women whom we interviewed, by and large, did not resent this lack of effort but justified it in conventional terms: their partner's job was better paid, often on a career track, and, in particular, they argued that employers were less sympathetic to men's requests to come in late or work flexi-hours. As Chloe noted about her husband, who had just moved to a new high-level managerial position in the private sector:

There is a culture of being seen to be there. In fact, in his last job, part of the reason they didn't give him promotions and various things was because they said he wasn't visible enough. So there is a kind of, got to show your face, can't be the first to leave all the time, that sort of thing.

It was not only the culture of organizations that affected the households' decision-making and employment choices. As all the families whom we interviewed had dependent children, often high housing costs and many other demands on their income, it is not surprising that their first concern was to ensure the security of the person considered the main household earner — in most cases the male partner. While the old post-war British breadwinner model is being replaced in government rhetoric and policy, in practice, women's own moral commitments to care (McDowell *et al.*, 2005) and the reality of the gender pay gap means that men's employment continues to take precedence in many two-parent households.³ Women, their parents, friends and the other women whom they employ are still the ones who continue to stitch together the urban patchwork, continuing, as Castells suggested, to make the city 'work'. Increasingly,

3 The average earnings of all British women in employment were only 53% of those for all men in employment and women are more likely than men to be poor in retirement (DTI, 2005).

however, women in waged work, manage by purchasing the labour and time of others, almost always other women, rather than by doing this connecting work on their own behalf and for 'love'. Thus the gender of those who make the city 'work' has not changed, but the social relations within which the labour is undertaken have.

Conclusions: new research questions and a new urban form?

Almost fifteen years ago, in an earlier assessment of the connections between women's rising labour market participation rates and the still limited provision of good, accessible childcare, McDowell (1991) argued that the social speed-up experienced by growing numbers of British families could not be extended indefinitely. Many women and men within their own households were becoming too stretched to undertake all the labours of production and reproduction for themselves. The response to this 'speed-up' has been that growing households have become more and more implicated in each other's social reproduction, in both commodified and uncommodified relationships. The unpaid labours of all those individual women identified by Castells have been supplemented, if not supplanted, by many hours of both waged and unwaged labour, typically by other women, sometimes related to the women whom they help or who employ them, and in a wide range of urban locations. A number of important questions, that urban researchers are just beginning to address, are thus raised. Among these questions are the following: if more and more women are working for wages, then who is performing the unpaid care in the home? For how long will this privatized, individualized unpaid care be possible, and how much of it can there possibly be? Is the 'speed-up' that has been necessary to meet the continuing demands on families' time infinitely extendable? What will happen if and when it is not? And, as the focus of this article is connecting space and urban design, what are the implications both for the location of new forms of care and for travel patterns between home and care?

Clearly the commodification of caring labour is one response to the growing demands on time; another would be the significant expansion of state-subsidized services. But both raise complex questions about, for example, access to different types of care, about its form and quality and its effects on both child development and social inequality. It is important to assess how much of the care previously undertaken by individual women for love is already commodified, how much is provided at subsidized rates by the national or local state and what are the consequences for disposable household incomes and living standards. And what are the social and geographical variations in its provision and accessibility at both cross national and regional scales? Commodified care, of course, is provided for a profit. Should this form of care be the main form of provision? Is the neoliberal 'solution' adopted in Britain increasing class inequalities? Why has the British state decided only to provide care outside the market for low income or socially deprived families? Is this decision either morally or socially justifiable?

For the argument of this article, the location of care is central. Where and why are these different types of care located in the city? Are they attached to workplaces? And if so, to whose — to predominantly female-employing workplaces or not? There is long-standing gender segregation in the British labour market at the level of the workplace, which means that men and women often work in different locations. And is care perhaps better provided in association with neighbourhood facilities than with workplaces: with schools, for example, and/or facilities for the growing numbers of ageing people? And how are homes and different forms of care connected — both in the sense of which households are able to access different forms of care and put together different 'packages' of commodified, de-commodified and state-provided care and care for 'love', as well as in the sense of who now does the spatial connecting work that facilitates the continuing operation of an urban form that is itself based on those now out-dated assumptions that lay behind the establishment of the breadwinner welfare state?

In its recent policy statements, the British Government has attempted to address some of the issues of connecting work through the establishment and coordination of childcare networks, which are to be based around the state-provided Children's Centres developed as part of the Sure Start initiative in deprived areas. These centres are to be extended to other areas and linked to the expansion of 'after school' clubs (facilities for school-aged children) between now and 2010, under the guidance of a new Children and Families Directorate (Strategy Unit, 2002). A new post — a Minister for Children — has also been established in the Department for Education and Skills. Whether spatial planning will form part of the brief for the new Directorate or for the Minister remains to be seen, although the efforts to coordinate pre-school and early school provision are welcome.

Two decades ago in her provocative book *Redesigning the American Dream*, Dolores Hayden (1984) made a powerful plea for architects and planners to design for the better integration of 'work' and home to facilitate family well-being as well as ease women's access to employment opportunities and to reduce traffic congestion in US cities. Since that time, there has been growth in the US of the so-called new urbanism movement (Steuteville and Langdon, 2005) that is based on the celebration of small-town life, aiming to build new communities where housing and jobs are available within walking distance. Whether this is seriously an option open to more than the affluent few is debatable and in most cities there is a continued expansion of residential suburban developments (Hayden, 2004). The traditional notion of the home as a haven from the rough and tumble of urban industrialism has continued to make concrete out-dated gender divisions, exacerbating the problems of connection discussed here. But if men and women are expected to have life-long careers in the labour market as well as to continue to raise children, then new ways of city living need consideration that challenge the public/private divide and the separation of home and workplace. New developments that link pre-school care, early education, residences and workplaces in spatially contiguous ways are needed, as well as plans to rethink current urban layouts. Clearly, these new forms must respond to local and regional differences within nation states as well as draw lessons from other EU and OECD countries where state involvement in day care planning and provision is more developed than in neoliberal welfare regimes such as those of the UK and the USA. The UK Government has promised to increase the number of Children's Centres under its Sure Start programme tenfold in the next four years. The location of these centres and the connecting work needed to link them to children's homes and parents' workplaces must no longer be an absence on the policy agenda.

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Résumé

Dans les villes occidentales, un nombre croissant de femmes ayant des enfants rejoint le marché du travail, ce qui pose de nouvelles questions sur la répartition des tâches propres à la reproduction sociale entre les membres du foyer et les autres, et sur les conséquences de l'accroissement du temps que les femmes passent désormais au travail. Comme Manuel Castells le remarquait il y a plus de 25 ans, le travail féminin non rémunéré a longtemps été essentiel, dans la sphère domestique mais aussi pour rapprocher des sites éparpillés dans l'espace. Selon lui, la disposition spatiale des villes, avec son affectation des terrains spécialisée et distinctive, ne fonctionne que si le travail non rémunéré des femmes permet de relier les sites urbains. A présent, beaucoup de femmes passent bien plus d'heures sur le marché du travail, remplaçant leurs tâches domestiques passées par une série de biens et services banalisés ainsi que par l'assistance de diverses personnes plus ou moins proches, parfois mais pas toujours payées, et/ou par des services subventionnés ou fournis par l'État. L'article étudie les effets de la croissance de l'emploi féminin en Grande-Bretagne et de la chute concomitante du modèle ancien du soutien de famille; il examine aussi l'essor des politiques d'allocations conditionnelles qui supposent que tout individu est prêt à un travail salarié, ainsi que l'expansion de la marchandisation des prises en charge. Les arguments sont illustrés par des exemples empiriques provenant d'entretiens avec des mères issues de classes moyennes et salariées à Londres et Manchester.