CASA Seminar Abstract

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Tracking Kids from Home to School and Back: The CAPABLE Project

Abstract:
Obesity amongst British population, especially amongst children has become one of the most serious social problems in the UK. British government has become increasingly focused upon the setting of targets in efforts to improve children's obesity and thus physical activity promotion has been put high on the domestic political agenda. In response to this, several initiatives have been taken that try to promote walking to and from school. Consequently there have been growing interests in understanding the environmental influences on walking. Most parents are reluctant to allow their children to walk alone in the fear of crime and traffic accidents. Previous studies suggested that good access to pedestrian-friendly space and parental perceptions of issues regarding safe pedestrian and cycling conditions are associated with children's walking or cycling to local destinations.

This presentation outlines the CAPABLE (Children's Activities, Perceptions And Behaviour in the Local Environment) project, which is currently being carried out at University College London (UCL). The prime aim of CAPABLE project is to understand how children currently use their local environment and to identify possible environmental factors which affect their choice of transport modes. Although children play a significant part in the generation of local and household trips, they remain understudied in the field of transport. It is partially because that most transport management until recently exclusively focused on motorized transport and thus most data collection methods were not designed for dealing with children. A broader issue here is how to collect necessary datasets not only to see the big picture of children's lifestyle but also to investigate details of their spatial movements such as types of activities, the spatial and temporal extent of these activities and choice of transport mode and place to play. In this project, approximately 200 children aged from 8 to 11 have been fitted with physical activity level monitors, GPS monitors and asked to keep a travel and activity diary for four days as well as to complete a questionnaire which covers issues such as where the children are allowed out without an adult. With main focus on children's walking activity, we analyzed these datasets using several approaches that include:

- Spatial Analyses of the movement pattern of the children
- Social network analyses of children's relationship with their relatives and friends
- Analyses of the influence of socio-economic characteristics of the local area on children's transport behaviour
- Analyses of the influence of parental attitudes on children's transport behaviour