

# Memorising Mobilities: measuring mobility practices over the life course

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# Outline

- Consumption and the Life-course
- Researching transitions in practice
  - gaps & opportunities
- Development of methodology – a biographic, life-course, practice-oriented approach
- Preliminary findings
- Summary/reflections

# Consumption and Life-course

- Understanding of **dynamics** of **ordinary consumption** essential for developments in SC research and practice
- To date, lack of meaningful attention to **temporality, dynamism, longitudinal processes** in consumption research
- Linkages between **consumption, everyday life** & processes of transformation across the **life-course** poorly understood

# Researching Transitions in Practices

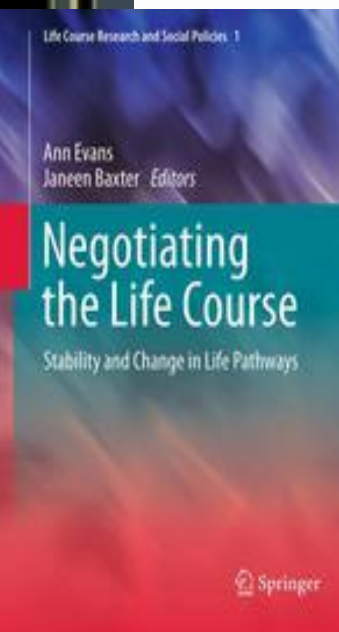
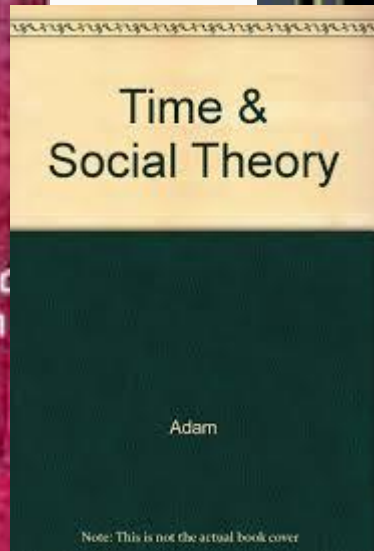
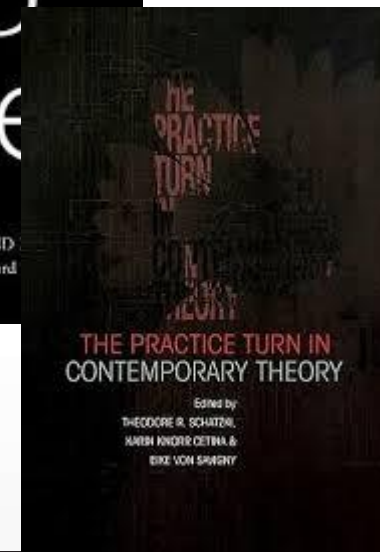
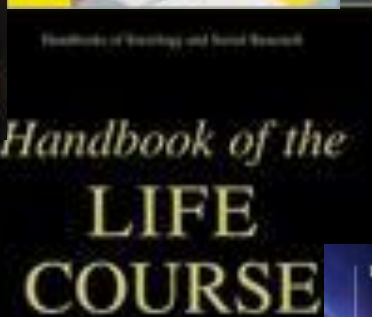
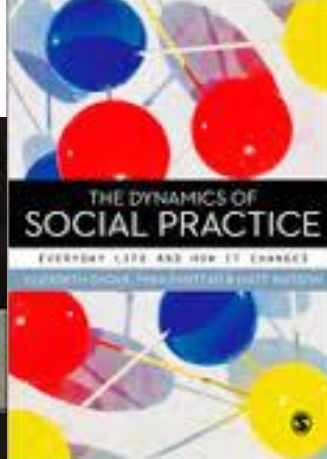
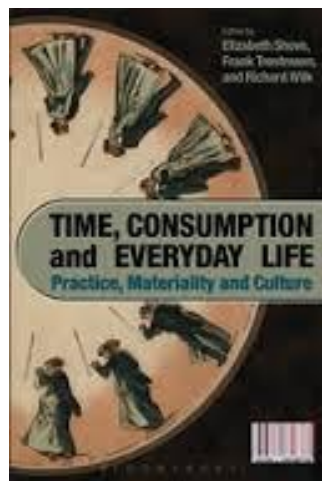
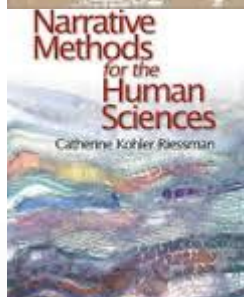
- Shift towards **social practice perspectives** & approaches in SC research
- Social practices as unit of analysis (cf. Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Shatzki 1996, 2001)
- **Consumption** as an **outcome** of social practice (cf. Warde, 2005)
- Understanding of the **dynamics** of routine, ordinary consumption practice (**entity** vs **performance**)

# Gaps & Opportunities

- But need for greater attention to **temporality** (cf. Rau and Edmondson, 2013; Southerton, 2013)
- Dynamics of entity  $\leftrightarrow$  practice (Shove et al. 2009)
- Rehabilitating notions of culture, **human agency**, **subjectivity** in social practice perspectives (cf. Spaargaren, 2013; Sayer, 2013) – understanding “**practitioners**” **biographies** and careers

# Researching Transitions in Practices

- What are the **methodological implications** of adopting temporally-oriented inquiry in consumption research?
- Potential for **cross fertilisation** between social practice perspectives and other temporally-oriented approaches for conceptualising social change?



# Researching transitions in practice

## Cross fertilising perspectives and approaches

### Life Course Theory

- ✓ Structure  $\leftarrow \rightarrow$  Agency
- ✓ Context
- ✓ Temporality
- ✓ Lived experience

✓ Focus on individuals-in – society

Concepts  
Methodological tools

### Social Practice Perspectives

- ✓ Structure  $\leftarrow \rightarrow$  Agency
- ✓ Context
- ✓ Temporality
- ✓ Lived Experience

✓ Focus on social-material practices

Concepts  
Methodological tools



# Life-course dynamics in consumption (mobility) practice



Conceptualising the life-course as a “social constraint” that serves to structure the contexts and organisations of everyday life and consumption practice over time (cf. Scheiner, 2007; Southerton, 2013)

# Time-centred concepts & methods

- Drawing attention to **trajectories** and **careers** of practice in people's lives
- Identifying periods of **change/stability** - changing **social roles**, key **events**, **turning points**, **transitions** and **milestones** in people's lives
- Exploring how these **wider biographic contexts** intersect with and **shape dynamics in everyday life** and consumption practice over time

# Mobility Biographies:

## A biographic, life-course, practice-oriented methodology

- Focus on social practice - **mobility** practice careers
- Emphasising the **lived experiences** of individuals, as **skilled embodied agents** in their recursive engagement with and performance of mobility practices over ***biographical time***
- Connecting **individual's biographies** (practitioner biographies) to **wider history of practices**

# Analytical Steps/Aims

- **Describing** the development of mobility practice – *How* does practices change over time?
  - Tracing mobility careers & trajectories
  - Practitioners' biographies
  - Embedded in a history of practice approach
- **Explaining** stability and change in mobility practice careers over time – *Why* does practice change over time?
- **Evaluating** the multi-methodological approach

Stage 1: Desk study of history of practice

Stage 2: Problem Centred Interviews

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Biographic context & practice careers

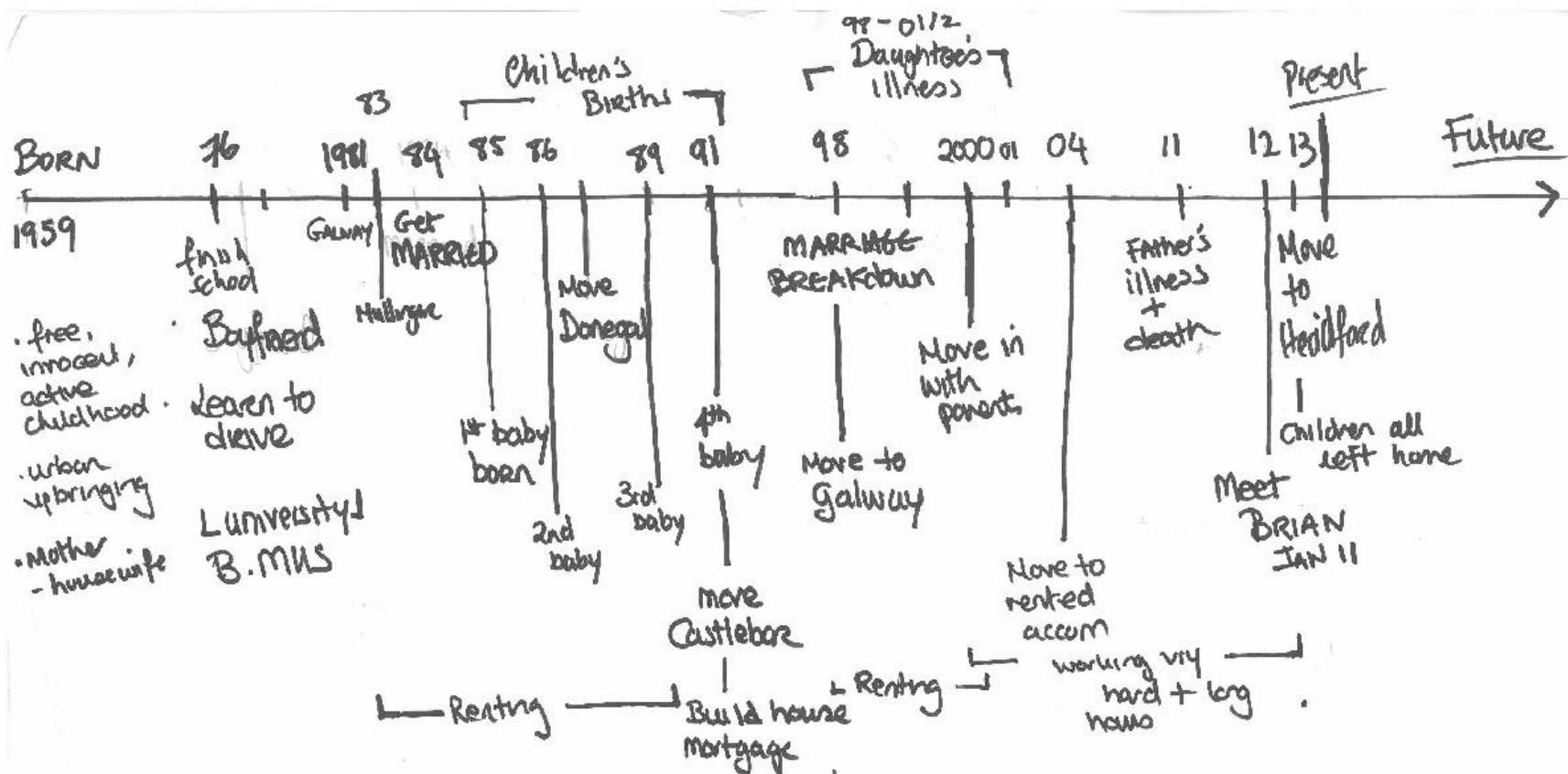
Stage 3: Daily practice diary  
(2 weeks)

Stage 4: Walking house tour & further exploration of practice biographies

Data collection phase	Overview of material generated
<b>Phase 1:</b> History of practice desk study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Key milestones &amp; transitions in broader mobility, policy, structural and cultural contexts</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b> Problem centred interviews  <i>Life Path, Daily Path</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•“Practitioner” life history &amp; biography</li> <li>• Practice careers and trajectories</li> <li>•Participatory timeline; practice biography graphs</li> <li>•Postscript, reflective field notes</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3:</b> Ethnography (2 weeks)  <i>Daily Path</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Material, temporal, social and spatial contexts of everyday practice</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 4:</b> Follow up interview & house tour  <i>Life Path, Daily Path</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Further reflections on life-course transitions in practice</li> <li>•Contexts, meanings, mechanisms/processes associated with transitions/turning points/milestones</li> <li>•House Tour – multi-sensory data on contexts of domestic practice</li> </ul>

# PRELIMINARY RESULTS

# Claire

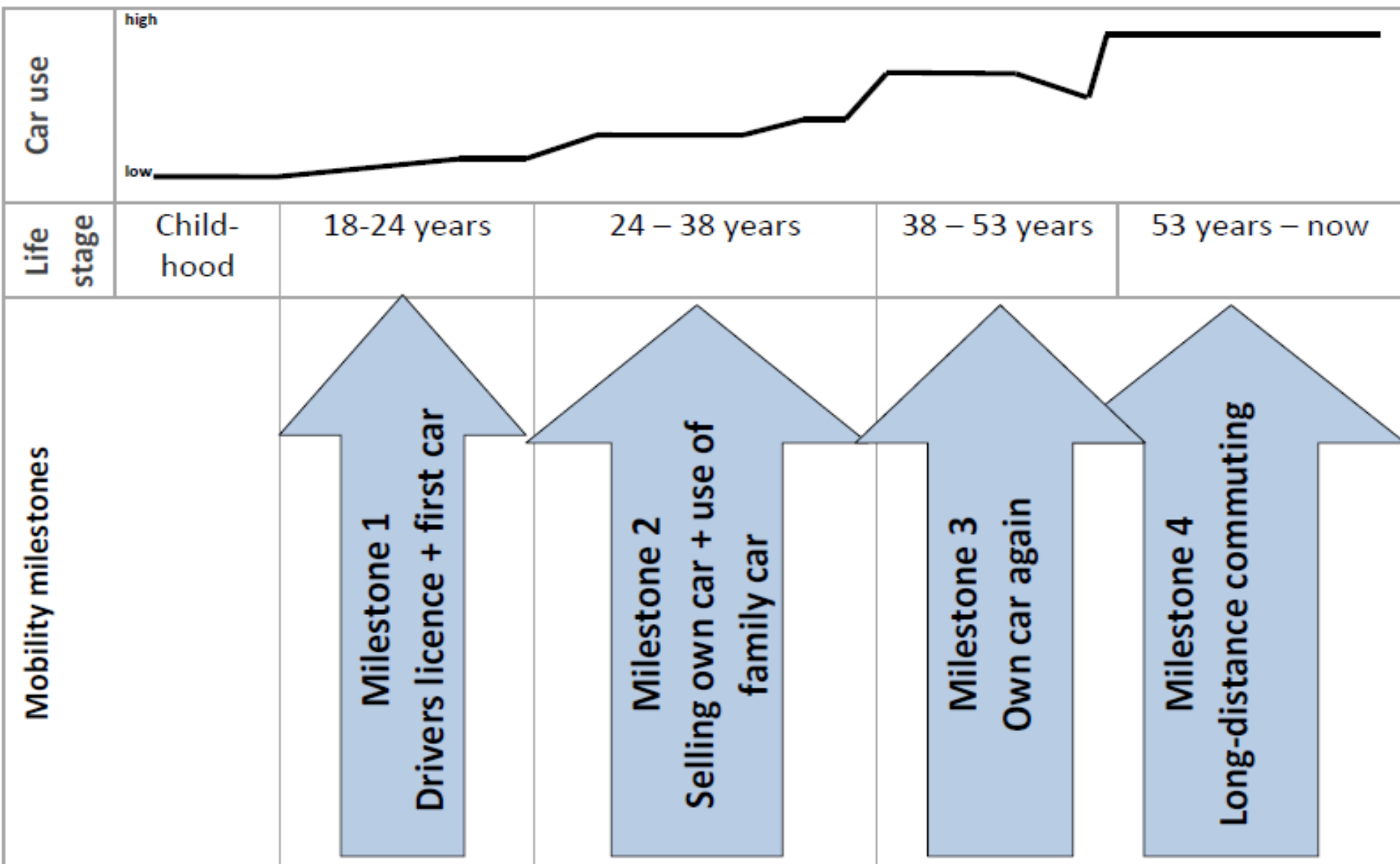




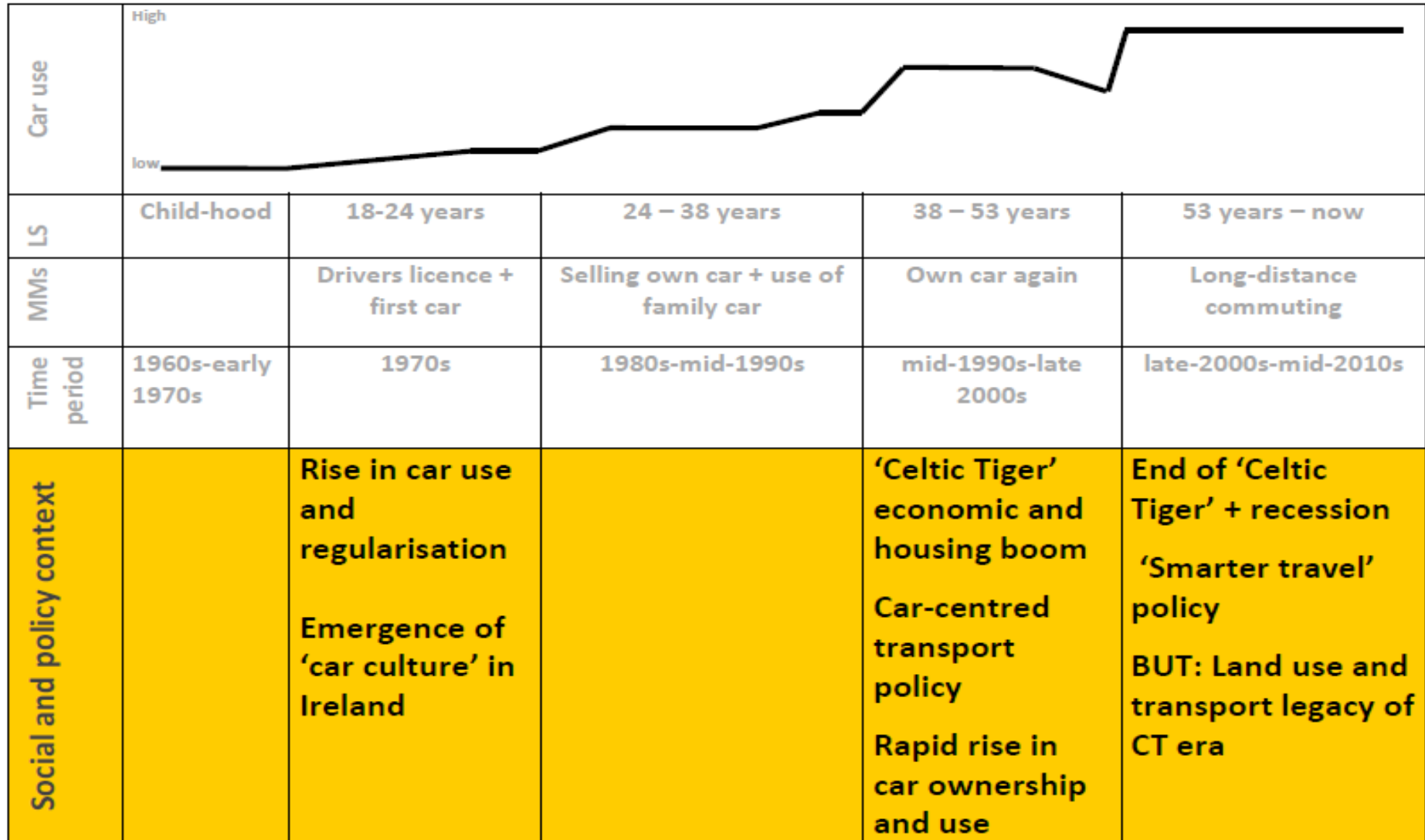
# Car use across life course

Car use					
Life stage	Child-hood	18-24 years	24 – 38 years	38 – 53 years	53 years – now
Practicalities	Couldn't drive	Learned to drive and passed test at 18 years of age. Drove parents' car occasionally	Lived in Mullingar so often drove to Galway shopping. Sold car in 1990 and shared one	Got my own car in 1996. Some travelling at weekends but mostly around Galway City	Moved to Headford – mileage greatly increased Average 60 km four days a week
Feelings, opinions, values		My boyfriend already had test so often drove to dates etc. Got first car when 24	Family car	Did a lot of mileage when examining around Ireland	Driving a pain but love living in the country

# Mobility milestones



# Social and policy context



# Summary

- Mobility → key consumption practice that changes across life course
- Turning points ('mobility milestones') reflect major life events
- Individual mobility biographies linked to wider social and policy context
- Opportunities and challenges of life- course- centred mobility research

# Discussion/Reflections

- Broader challenges of qualitative, retrospective methodologies
- Can interviews account for “doings” as well as “sayings”?
- Value of multi-method, combined Life History practice approach
- Methodology as intervention