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Abstract

This article argues for an understanding of public transit spaces as sites of multiple dynamic interactions. Much inspired by the approach of Erving Goffman, the article explore a "mobilized" understanding of some of his central concepts. The theoretical underpinning is the development of concepts related to interaction, mobility, and transit that focus on notions of the "mobile with," "negotiation in motion," "mobile sense making," and "temporary congregations." The theoretical approach aims at seeing public transit spaces as sites where cars, pedestrians, mopeds, and bikes on a regular basis "negotiate" not only routes in and across the space but also express dynamic flows of interaction in motion. The claim is that what seems like ordinary urban movement patterns are more than this. By moving in the city among buildings, objects, and people, one interacts with the "environment," making sense of it and ultimately producing culture and identity. Empirically, Nytorv square in Aalborg, Denmark, is mapped and analyzed through recurrent field studies. The article aims at unpacking the geography of mobility at the site of Nytorv by applying the two perspectives of the "river" and the "ballet" to the mobile practices of the site.

Keywords

mobility, everyday life, urban space

Introduction

This work is being conducted on the background of what has now become known as the "mobility turn" (see, e.g., Cresswell, 2006; Jensen, 2009; Urry; 2000, 2007). This means the explicit inclusion of mobility and movement within a wide array of academic studies crossing cultural geography, planning, urban studies, and architecture. Coming from such a perspective, the case study presented in this article is both a story about a particular design and a story about a more generic set of requisites and cultural practices developed through the daily urban mobility performance. What have been studied are the actual movements in and across the square of Nytorv in Aalborg, Denmark (see Figure 1). The reason for studying these mobile interactions is to uncover the meaning of movement to social interaction and cultural production in a general sense. The argument is

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Figure 1. Setting the scene—Nytorv, Aalborg

about studying the very concrete sites of movements and actual practices within a realm sometimes considered self-evidently a matter of technical design and optimization only. The Nytorv study is therefore to be seen as an argument for a much wider understanding of the meaning of movement in the contemporary city. Under a frame we term 'STAGING MOBILITIES'.

The structure of the article is as follows: After the introduction, the site is presented briefly, followed by the public debate at the time of its redesign in the mid-1990s. Next, the theoretical framing is presented. After this follows the empirical findings based on quantitative traffic counting and ethnographic field observations. The article ends with some concluding remarks.

Setting the Scene

The actual site of study is a crossing between three streets and their accompanying sidewalks for pedestrians in the center of a Danish city. The public space of Nytorv is more than just a random street crossing as it has come to carry a high symbolic importance among the inhabitants as the de facto city center area. The site is located in the fourth largest city in Denmark, namely the city of Aalborg, which is a municipality of close to 200,000 inhabitants. The city used to be an old ship yard and industrial city, but since the making of the regional university in the early 1970s, it has seen the cultural and economic changes of similar magnitude to many other lower tier cities in Europe.

Nytorv is located at the historic center of Aalborg and under its pavement runs the old river. The site is a central traffic node to pedestrians, cyclists, and busses (only cars with a business purpose are permitted to transit). The symbolic importance of Nytorv is seen in the fact that many young people designate Nytorv as the most obvious meeting point when they go to town. The site connects the two pedestrian zones of the city and thereby hosts a number of pedestrians and people on bicycles. Nytorv has been designated different roles in the municipal traffic plans through the years. In the mid-1980s, it was changed from a heavily car dominated node of intersecting traffic arteries into a designated bus and slow traffic area. The public debate that took

place along the transformation in the mid-1990s in the local newspaper *Aalborg Stiftstidende* is illustrative of the political significance of the site:

> Nytorv will become a City Square again. (Headline in *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, May 4, 1997; author's translation)

> We naively thought that we got a square with very little traffic. Instead you must jump for your life because busses, cars, bikes and motorbikes drive in all directions. (Jørgen Andreasen, Chairman of Aalborg Tourist Association, statement issued at the General Assembly, April 26, 1999; author's translation)

> The New Nytorv is Lethal. (Headline in *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, May 5, 1999; author's translation)

> The weak road users in the re-build Nytorv/Østerågade will be subject to a false sense of security. In particular the T-junction outside McDonalds is very dangerous. (Citizen interviewed to *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, May 5, 1999; author's translation)

To further set this public discourse in perspective, we called the local police to hear their story. According to the Police Department in Aalborg, there have been no major accidents at Nytorv in the period 2006 to 2009. The Police have registered four minor accidents in this period, but none of these took place at the mapping site. This suggests that there has been a different public expectation to the performance of the square than the actual situation on the site indicates. This in part has to do with the site being understood as the symbolic and actual center of the city by most inhabitants.

Framing

The theoretical framing of the study is mainly derived from the micro sociology of Erving Goffman. Goffman's sensibility to the mundane activities and their wider importance to the social fabric of the city are combined with understanding urban mobility as more than movement from A to B (Jensen, 2006). From this main source of inspiration, the article works toward notions of the "mobile with," "temporary congregations," "mobile sense making," and "negotiation in motion."

Goffman on the Move

To Goffman, the interesting thing to study was the actual interaction between two or more people in very specific settings. The "situation," according to Goffman, held the potential to serve as window into much larger issues such as social norms, cultural production, and identity formation (Goffman, 1963). From such an understanding, I want to point at mobility as an important mundane cultural manifestation:

> Traffic Culture [. . . is] how people drive, how people cross the street, how power relations are made manifest in those interactions, what sort of patterns emerge from the traffic. Traffic is a sort of *secret window onto the inner heart of a place, a form of cultural expression* [italics added] as vital as language, dress, or music. (Vanderbilt, 2008, p. 216)

To Goffman (1974/1986), actions, however strange or incomprehensible they might seem, are always meaningful. That is to say, social agents face situations (tacitly or overtly) with the

question "What is going on here?" (Goffman, 1974/1986, p. 8). Goffman termed these basic elements that organize such situational meaning *frames*. These are social conventions defining the situation at hand. Situations related to mobility would certainly qualify as relevant to the organization of "sense making," even though Goffman did not systematically pay attention to mobility as a theme on its own. However, a number of examples and empirical discussions in his work do refer to mobility. One such example is the observation Goffman (1972) made with respect to what we may term the *production of the street order*:

> City streets, even in times that defame them, provide a setting where mutual trust is routinely displayed between strangers. Voluntary coordination of action is achieved in which each of the two parties has a conception of how matters ought to be handled between them, the two conceptions agree, each party believes that this agreement exists and each appreciates that this knowledge about the agreement is possessed by the other. In brief, structural prerequisites for rule by convention are found. Avoidance of collision is one example of the consequence! (p. 17)

As mentioned before, Goffman (1972) was concerned to show how practices that might look banal in fact carried important connotations to them. One such example would be the everyday life traffic situations:

> When the individual is in a public place, he is not merely moving from point to point silently and mechanically managing traffic problems; he is also involved in taking constant care to sustain a viable position relative to what has come to happen around him, and he will initiate gestural interchanges with acquainted and unacquainted others in order to establish what this position is! (p. 154)

A feature that has been of particular interest in the Nytorv study is the way mobile urbanites practices mobility in a bodily sense. Goffman's (1972) reservoir of concepts is useful as he speaks of the techniques and gazes applied by the individual to present himself or herself and swiftly monitor other mobile consociates:

> Take, for example, techniques that pedestrians employ in order to avoid bumping into one another. These seem of little significance. However, there are an appreciable number of such devices; they are *constantly* in use and they cast a pattern of street behaviour. Street traffic would be a shambles without them . . . In American downtown streets, traffic tends to sort itself out into two opposite-going sides . . . The workability of lane and passing rules is based upon two processes important in the organization of public life: externalization and scanning. By the term "externalization," or "body gloss," I refer to the process whereby an individual pointedly uses over-all body gesture to make otherwise unavailable facts about his situation gleanable . . . he provides an "intention display." (Goffman, 1972, p. 6-11)

From these original thoughts of Goffman, we move to elaborate and explore new concepts that are applied in the case study.

Between "Mobile Withs" and "Temporary Congregations"

Goffman developed a rich vocabulary for describing daily urban mobility. The perspective leads to a set of assumptions about the city and mobility that has repercussions for the way we think about self and other, place and space. Here we want to offer a few new concepts for facilitating

the understanding of such a situation. Among the ones most directly linked to Goffman's work are the notions of the "mobile with," the "temporary congregations," "mobile sense making," and "negotiation in motion" (see Jensen, 2010, for a more elaborated account of these concepts).

On the street, among our fellow moving consociates, we saw how Goffman's rich vocabulary illustrated the way individuals navigate and interact on their way through the city. However, rarely do we move about on our own in the sense of meeting no one. Think of the way we walk down a pedestrian area—minding our own business, using all the civilized techniques Goffman's studies have vividly explored. However, facing a stoplight, we pause, and even though this might be for only a very short spell of time, we become "the group of pedestrians waiting for the green light." Needless to say, this rarely leads to any deep interaction of shared destinies, unless we include the marginal experiences of something very dramatic happening. However, in the mundane and ordinary everyday life, we make multiple "temporary congregations" as we are slipping in and out of different "mobile withs." So the "mobile with" comes into being very quickly and can be dissolved equally swiftly. The everyday life experience with "mobile withs" thus carries a certain ephemeral quality to it. The number of examples of "mobile withs" is large and will contain, among others, the following: groups of recreational runners or cyclists; rowing groups of football supporters in cars cruising after the victory; the car-cruising youth; people walking arm in arm; the bus waiting line; pedestrians and bicyclists waiting for the green light at the traffic light; fellow travelers (in public transportation e.g., planes, busses, trains, boats); fellow travelers in private means of transportation cruising down the highway (predominantly cars); fellow travelers not in same vehicle (e.g., bikes on a bike path); groups strolling around the city shopping, drinking, or socializing; or the "Sunday drive."

All these examples of "mobile withs" have to do with "temporary congregations." Such temporary congregations may take place on escalators, in lifts, on sidewalks, in bike lanes and freeway lanes, in flight waiting lines, and in other places where we meet and move alongside for a short period of time. However, these examples are thought of mostly by example of the nonaquatint. But many times the "mobile with" is composed of individuals very familiar to each other. We may arrange a trip together with friends and family members where the movement in itself becomes very central. But also coincidental meetings with people we know can turn into "mobile withs," as when we meet an old friend and decide to make each other company for the road. Somewhere between this fully planed very mobility conscious set of practices (e.g., the family holiday) and the coincidental meeting, we may, for example, find the night out on the town "pub crawling" or the shopping trip with a friend or family. Here the "mobile with" might have a prior established route (particular bars and pubs or specific shops) or the "mobile with" may have no other rationale than to drift about aiming for either a drink or an unplanned shopping experience.

The "River" and the "Ballet"—Two Perspectives on Mobility

From the inspirational insights gained from Goffman, we shall zoom in on an operational and methodological interpretation. The following is thus a presentation of a very simple conceptualization used to interpret and understand the meaning of moving at the site of study.

In social science, in general, there is some debate about the epistemological status of using metaphors (Czarniawska, 2004; Rigney, 2001). Furthermore, there is a particular position within cognitive psychology arguing for the ontological status of metaphors to the way we think, perceive, and inhabit the world as human beings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). We cannot engage deeply into these discussions here. But just as Goffman (1959) saw the metaphor as a strong and powerful tool to theorize the social, we see metaphors as interpretative tools leading to new insights. But the use of metaphors as methodology and framing device has advantages and disadvantages. On the productive side of things, metaphors help framing and shape what we see.

Figure 2. Nytorv—the "river"

Thus, we get closer to the understanding of what actually takes place at Nytorv when we start "seeing through" the metaphor of the "river" and the "ballet." Conversely, the coining of metaphors also carries the risk of simplifying the issue. And furthermore, metaphors are always setting certain issues in the foreground and others in the background. In other words, metaphors have "blind spots" that might cloud our analysis. Having said this, the coining of the two metaphors of the "river" and the "ballet" has been found very useful for the analysis at Nytorv as long as one remembers that the flow of the "river" and the interaction of the "ballet" are only two dimensions of the complex transit space called Nytorv. Equally important, the metaphor of the "ballet" does not do away with power issue. People are not "dancing" in one happy performance. Rather, there are many direct and indirect manifestations of power and its relationship to mobility at Nytorv.

The term *ballet* has been used in urban studies before and most notably by Jane Jacobs in her notion of the "sidewalk ballet" as a way of describing the complex interactions on city streets (Jacobs, 1961). Also, we find in the work of Lawrence Halprin (1963) an interesting relationship to the notion of dance and choreography of flow being influenced by his collaboration with his wife who was a dance choreographer. However, we are however using the term in a different manner here. Thus, seeing the mobility practices at Nytorv as a "ballet" means one is at the eye level of the moving urbanites. Seeing the mobility practices as a "river" means then to aggregate and "look down" at the mobile urbanites from above and thus create more abstract and generalized understandings and interpretations.

When seeing Nytorv as a "river," what becomes most clear is that the objects (the actual layout of the site with curbs, basins, and urban furniture) creates a "riverbed" shaping the flows of people as water in a stream (Figure 2). Once accustomed to this perspective, we start to see how we may discriminate between permanent "sedimentations" that are long-term and enduring conditions shaping the flows and the more temporary obstacles. From time to time, we might experience the

Figure 3. Meetings at "McIsland"

parking of a large truck, for example, in front of McDonalds unloading goods. With the arrival of such temporary "sediments," the flow of the "river" will be changed briefly, but with immediately observable consequences to the orchestration of the movement patterns and interactions. We might speak of permanent versus temporary "sediments" of the "river" and people themselves might of course also be seen as "sedimentations" of the temporary sort. At Nytorv, the presence of the global burger chain McDonalds has made a permanent impact on the "riverbed" as the site in front of the restaurant is widely recognized as the central meeting point among young people in the city (Figure 3). Seen from the perspective of the "river," we might say that the sidewalk in front of McDonalds has become an island of meetings and interactions—a "McIsland" so to speak.

As we shift to the perspective of the "ballet," we get at eye level with the mobile subjects at the site and thus become able to actually see the gestures, gazes, and embodied negotiations and interactions that take place ever so swiftly as people move in and out of Nytorv (see Figure 4). Studying the "ballet," it becomes clear that there are certain patterns and types of moving (what we may term *tactics*). These concern the nature of mobile interaction and power and may be illustrated by the traditional "power of speed" tactics as, for example, when cars gain predominance over bikes or pedestrians.

However, more subtle interactional patterns emerge. One such example is the "I pretend not to have seen you" tactic, which is used in particular by pedestrians and cyclists. Such tactics has to do with "the burden of responsibility." By this, it is meant that a mobile agent may deliberately give off the impression that she or he has NOT seen the follow urbanite moving into this person's zone. The notion has been discovered elsewhere and is described in the literature by Vanderbilt (2008) with reference to Mexico City (Vanderbilt, 2008) and also corresponds with the report from Kingwall (2008) stating that "running is a sign of failure" when one performs as a pedestrian on the streets of New York (p. 41). Running across the street is considered "uncool" and is a bodily illustration that gives away that one has seen the "mobile Other" and accepted his or her dominance. By adhering to the tactics of "deliberate ignorance," the mobile subjects put the responsibility for stopping or diverging on the ones who have seen them. Needless to say, this

Figure 4. Nytorv—the "ballet"

may be a risky tactic as people in fact might not have seen you! From the field studies at Nytorv, it seems that the situation is highly dynamic as many cyclists and pedestrians in fact check and double check the "mobile Other" a number of times and adjust their movements accordingly. Interestingly though, this only means that the ones that have perfected this tactic of seeming unaware often come out of the power struggle even more convincingly. We shall return to this particular tactic later. The perspective of the "ballet" is also what makes us realize the aforementioned "mobile withs" and their interactional dynamics. Here the number seems to have importance. Two friends shopping perform a very different "ballet" than the family or the group of youngsters out on the town. The latter often deliberately try to occupy as much space as possible to "claim territory," whereas the others use a wide array of "sliding and evasion" techniques to not interfere with the flow in direct bodily contact.

Mapping Mobilities

The field study has been carried out by the author and a research assistant over a 4-week period in February and March 2009. On-site traffic counts were made morning, midday, and afternoon. We counted during holidays and on an everyday basis. Traffic counting and mapping of the interactional mobility practices was conducted both at bird's-eye views (the "river") and as on-the-ground mapping (the "ballet") during a 4-week period.[1] The movers were observed from two places. One site was a bench at the square (the "ballet" viewpoint) and the other was a second-floor window in an adjacent building (the "river" viewpoint). Given the weather conditions in this North European country, a summer study might have provided more volume, but there is no reason to believe that the present results would look significantly different if the study was done at another time of the year. Many types of streets cater for different speeds and modes of transportation, and the literature is rich on recommendations on how to plan and design these (Marshall, 2005). However, here we shall pay particular interest to a site that is simultaneously and on an

almost continual basis negotiated and appropriated by multiple modes and speeds of mobility, at the same time as it performs as a meeting place and a "public domain" (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). Seen this way, Nytorv is the city's "living room" and "transit room" at one and the same time.

Nytorv is full of speed changes. All vehicular units slow down, speed up, stop, and start here. The busses slow down to pass, and they stop to let off passengers and take off again. The taxis also let off passengers and take new ones in, and the trucks park to let off goods. The bicycles slow down to turn and avoid pedestrians. They stop here and start from here either to park or to visit the shopping street. Pedestrians are found at all kinds of paces. They stroll, walk, or run as they to shop, talk, or cross the street. The traffic flows relatively unhindered at Nytorv, which might be because of a fairly small amount of signage and regulatory interventions. This would be in accordance with the findings of the "Shared Space" project (Shared Space, 2005). Also, in accordance with this, we find that the road users become more alert and attentive. At least the different users quickly adjust to each other. They develop a level of mutual trust that is vital to get Nytorv performing as a well-functioning transit space. The observations and the derived typologies are expressions of the author's interpretation rather than a reflection of people's own accounts. These accounts could have been included as in the form of interviews. However, observations were conducted by two researchers and the interpretation hereof discussed to lift this from the individual interpretation.

Negotiated Mobilities and Interactions—Mobile Ethnographies

There are different types of negotiations taking place at Nytorv between different road users and in different situations. The types found at Nytorv are not unique for this site, but they can be observed here in particular because the square forms a space where all types of road users meet. Considering how the users meet and in what situation they have to negotiate, three situations or setups are interesting. The first one is the "frontal meeting." This situation is very common as the traffic is two way, but beside the busses and their internal system of negotiation it is most interesting among the pedestrians. Second, we may speak of the "orthogonal meeting." This situation is also common at Nytorv because the square function like a T junction. Because the square works like a large crossing for pedestrians, the orthogonal meeting is a particular interesting form of meeting between pedestrians and other road users. The third typology of meeting is the "parallel meeting." This situation is best seen when busses overtake bicycles.

Different types of negotiations are possible. First of all, between pedestrians there is a "reading" of body language and a possible eye contact between the two parts meeting—that is a direct negotiation. Second, when the meeting is between pedestrians and cyclists, it is a matter of a "reading" and evaluating body language, not so much in direct negotiation but more as an estimation of the situation. And third, there is the situation where no negotiation in terms of "reading" is taking place. If we look more closely into the mapping details, we can focus on the different road users and their negotiation situations at Nytorv. The pedestrians negotiate with other pedestrians for the space, but mostly on the sidewalk. A number of "mobile negotiation techniques" were observed as part of the study. Here we will present the six most predominant ones.

The first one, or Type A, we term *Group passing other pedestrians*. In this case, the group will come closer together to pass, in order to make room for the "strangers." Type B is *Group letting in stranger*. We find here the same situation as in Type A, but with a different reaction. The group split and let the "stranger" between them. Type C is what we term the *classic dance*. This one could also be termed *pedestrian confusion* and is typically found in a situation where no one gives a clear signal indicating which way they are going. This type is often found at Nytorv in spite of the large space that should make it easy to avoid each other. Type D is termed *Both giving in* and illustrates a situation when both pedestrians give in a little and pass each other by

moving a little to the side. Type E is the *zigzag turner* and is exemplary of the pedestrian in a hurry zigzagging through the site (like the cyclist in high speed). To reach their goal faster, they zigzag in and out between other pedestrians and often turn the upper body sideways to fit between people walking closely together. Finally, we found the Type F, which is *Stop to pass*. Type F is the situation where pedestrians simply stop for each other, to figure out which way to go and to pass.

The pedestrians have different ways to negotiate for the space with the other road users. The ones that choose to follow one of the designated lines of the street in order to cross in a sense negotiate with the other road users by sending the signal that here they feel safe, as if they communicated, "I need to cross the road. Here I feel safe. Here I do not expect to negotiate. I expect others to stand back." In other situations, the pedestrians express the same emotion but still end up negotiating. The pedestrians also negotiate with people cycling. The cyclists travel at Nytorv at a higher speed than the pedestrians, which affects the negotiation but it still seems to be a matter of negotiating. From the field observations, we see that some bicyclists analyze the situation very carefully and observe the pedestrians to pass them without confrontation. This slows down the cyclist a little, but he or she still manages to avoid "obstacles" by zigzagging more or less between them. There are basically two ways of doing this. Either the bicycle follows the curb and makes a small curve to get around the pedestrian, or we see a cyclist at high speed making large curves to get around several pedestrians and getting faster through Nytorv without slowing down. If the cyclist does not analyze the situation, we have a potential confrontation, maybe with eye contact, and perhaps a need to stop to avoid an accident. In some cases, no agreement is reached in the negotiation and the "opponents" face each other head-on. Again we see two variations. The first one is when the bicycle stops—this is mostly seen at the zebra crossings where pedestrians often do not want to negotiate. The second is when a pedestrian stops carefully and stands back either at the sidewalk or on the road, not wanting to negotiate either (but, in contrast to the former situation, merely wait for free passage). The question is if bicycles always perform a meticulous dynamic interaction with other people moving across Nytorv? This seems not always to be the case. In fact, we did see bicycles totally ignore other vehicles and therefore pass Nytorv without any confrontation at high speed! Judging by our observations, these cyclists did in fact not see the other potential "collision parties" and thus did not apply the "I pretend not to have seen you" tactics but, rather, took a risk (however, this is an interpretation based on observations only).

Between the pedestrians and the cars at Nytorv, no extensive negotiation has been observed. The pedestrians seem to accept the rather small number of cars and therefore cross the street when it is free of cars. If we turn to the pedestrians' interaction with the busses at Nytorv, we get a different picture. This is mainly because of the fact that the busses are larger, take up more space, and drive slower through Nytorv. This makes more busses stop for the pedestrians at the pedestrian crossings, but on the rest of the road, pedestrians carefully evaluate the situation and the speed of the busses. Busses rarely hold back and wait for people to cross outside the zebra crossings but hold back if someone is in the middle of crossing the street. From our observations we find that people turn their heads to try and catch the eye of the bus driver and thereby tell them to stop for passage.

When we study the cycles in negotiation, we see three different kinds of mobile actions. Either they avoid, stop, or continue. This might seem banal, but in the different categories there are differences and elaborations. Here speed has a lot to say. A cyclist driving fast will for most part either avoid or simply continue. In the avoidance situation, speed is again a vital factor. At high speed the cyclist will make large curves around the pedestrians, at lower speed the curves will be smaller and run very close to the pedestrian and the curb. From the observations, it is the estimation that the bicycles are the ones that negotiate the most. Pedestrians are not as "afraid"

of cyclists as they are of the busses and cars, and the busses and cars are not forced to stop or hold back for cyclist in the same way that they are for the pedestrians. In fact, we would stipulate that this puts cyclists in a rather vulnerable position.

Furthermore, we see bicycles negotiating cars, but as the car transit is rather restricted at Nytorv we do not find that there are substantial data to conclude more significantly from. The relatively large number of busses causes a negotiation between them and cyclists. From the observations, the negotiation is primarily a matter of bicycles evaluating the situation and sometimes risking getting squeezed. The negotiation system between the busses, on how to hold back, and when to turn, is definitely internal. They have an internal system concerning how to navigate at Nytorv. The negotiation between the cars is not really relevant at Nytorv, because there is so little car traffic. The trucks do not negotiate. In the morning, they drive where they need to drive and "interact" only in that they sound the warning alert when they are running in the reverse telling people to beware. In their most interesting moment, when they are parked alongside the curb and function like a "stone in the stream," there is no negotiation between them and others as they become "sediments." For the mopeds, the case is as for cars as the number of passing mopeds is too insignificant to conclude anything substantial.

The final dimension to be considered is the ways of crossing the square. We will define four categories (needless to say, more might be relevant). The first type is the "speeded-up crosser" who is characterized by wanting to join a group of crossing people (an already existing "mobile with") before the cars/busses start to drive again. The speeded-up crosser will, as the name suggests, speed up, maybe even run a little, or even jump to make it for the safe "shore." This is especially seen at the pedestrian crossings. Next, we find the "random crosser" who moves toward the road to cross, maybe even drifting toward the road, not paying much attention to the traffic. The random crosser might even reach the road before looking out for traffic. If there is traffic, the person take a step back and instead follows the edge of the sidewalk to cross. The third type is the "shopping crosser," who generally moves from Algade to the right toward Bispensgade and crosses when the row of shops stops. The crossing line for the shopping crosser is very long and sloped (this type is defined by the contextual location of urban functions and thus becomes highly site specific). The fourth and final type is the "line crosser," who follows the lines in the pattern of the paving in the road to cross. There are especially two places at the square where this type of crossing is invited. The one is at Bispensgade close to the shopping center Salling and the other one is between the hotdog stand and Burger King.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In this article, we have contributed to the ongoing theory development within cultural studies in a very broad sense. In particular, we have aimed to contribute to the research agenda of the mobilities turn. Needless to say, much deeper research efforts could have been displayed at Nytorv. Moreover, we would point at the need for further mobile ethnographic accounts within other types of urban spaces and transit locations. Having said this, we find that there are a number of theoretical and empirical claims that can be sustained on the background of the Nytorv study. Theoretically, the main point has been to show the usefulness of rethinking the perspectives coming out of scholars such as Goffman. This results in a redevelopment of the interaction perspective applied on phenomena such as mobile practices in the city. The outcome is a set of analytical concepts and a new vocabulary for understanding the meaning of mobility in the contemporary city. Under a frame termed 'STAGING MOBILITIES'.

The point of departure was the mobile practices understood as meaningful actions or what we termed *mobile sense making*. A central concept is the notion of a "mobile with" illustrating the interaction dynamics and collective dimension to everyday life mobility. Furthermore, we saw

from the study that to capture the ephemeral quality of such interaction, we may benefit from understanding these as "temporary congregations." By this is meant that people meet, team up, and break up in very volatile social interactional patterns. But these are still sufficiently enduring to make us feel the collective (as when we share the experience of missing the bus). Furthermore, the unsettled and socially open character of urban mobility practices makes it clear that multiple decisions needs to be made. Obviously we are aware of modes of transport and routing decisions. But much more detailed and situational decisions, such as which way to pass a person coming against us, need conceptualization. Here we argue for the usefulness of the notion of "negotiation in motion" to capture the social interaction made in a mobile space of norms, values, and power. Some of these ways of encountering our "mobile Other" may be likened to an already existing repertoire of actions, mobile negotiation techniques, and mobile interaction tactics. These may range from the very physical embodied "sliding and evasion techniques" that people apply to avoid collision to the more general (and cultural specific) of the personal distance accepted for either passing or copresence in a mobile situation (e.g., bus riding). Also, we find different levels of subtleness to the way power is being displayed in mobile interactions. We saw the almost classic "power of speed" and the more subtle "I pretend not to have seen you" tactics. Here we are facing issues of "situational and mobile power" that are highly unstable and volatile as the execution of such powers take place during motion, in situ, and at times even at high speed.

In this research, we have named a number of types relating to the meetings ("frontal," "orthogonal," and "parallel" meetings). Needless to say, these are only emerging typologies. Also, we found reason to look at the situation where people cross the main traffic arteries and thereby become interpreters of the situation and tactical in the relation to how best to proceed. This is captured in the four types of crossings that we term the *speeded-up crosser*, the *random crosser*, the *shopping crosser*, and the *line crosser*. Again, these may not be taken to be too general as, for example, the "shopping crosser" category clearly is dependent on the actual site and its shopping facilities. As the interaction perspective has been highly influential on this research, we also saw the presence of negotiation techniques. In particular, we noticed six different negotiation techniques and typologies of passing that we termed *group passing other pedestrian*, *group letting in stranger*, the *classic dance*, *both giving in*, the *zigzag turner*, and the *stop to pass* typology. Needless to say, we might have come up with even more distinctions. Also, these need to be verified by further research to become elevated to more robust action types. However, they bring to the forefront the complex dynamics when people move in groups and perform mobility with an eye to other groups in a situational field of multiple decisions about modes, routes, and types of interactions. Finally, the research undertaken at Nytorv gave reason to coin the double metaphors of the "river" and the "ballet." These metaphors obviously have blind spots as all metaphors have. But seeing the transit space as a "stream and a riverbed of sediments" makes it clear that at times we must look at every physical entity as an object (including people), whereas the knowledge of the balletlike micro movements and interactions makes us see that urban mobility is about skilful interaction practices. To shift between these two analytical gazes our understanding of urban mobility increases.

There is often drawn a line of distinction between "movement space" and "staying space" in architecture and city planning (Gehl, Gemzøe, Kirknæs, & Søndergaard, 2006, p. 108). However, such a nice categorization does not always hold. Such understandings seem to think that spaces can have only one purpose and one interpretation. In the case of Nytorv, we find both types present at the same time. Clearly, it is a "movement space" as it includes road spaces and pavements. But equally people (predominantly youngsters) appropriate the space in front of McDonalds and turn the site into one of the main meeting points where they hang out after work or school and in weekends. Thus the phrase "Let's meet in front of Mac D" is a very common saying among the local youth. We might start to think of Nytorv as not just a "sociofugal space"

forcing people apart because of its transit qualities but equally as a "sociopetal space" in drawing people together (Lawson, 2001, p. 140). In this sense, Nytorv performs as both a transit space and an "urban living room" where different social groups interact, mingle, and meet to become a "public domain" (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001).

Even though Nytorv seems marked by random interaction on the move, we find the presence of normative codes of mobile action regulation present. These range from the formal traffic regulatory frameworks leading most people to pass on the right-hand side, and drive on the right side of the road. But also informal and situational norms become visible as we start to explore this site of flow and stasis. Much more is taking place than just people moving, and a significant proportion of this has to do with the production of social norms, cultures of interaction, and identity. We are slowly beginning to understand the complexity of such apparently simple and mundane activities. And we are in the process of articulating new theoretical vocabularies for enhancing this understanding of negotiation in motion.

Author's Note

The field study of Nytorv took place in 4 weeks of February/March 2009. Traffic counts were conducted three times a day (during 7-10 a.m., 11 a.m.-2 p.m., and 3-6 p.m.).

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Note

1. The traffic counting conducted in this research has been made in accordance with the methodologies made by the Danish Road Directorate (2006). Accordingly, the counting is termed *manual counting* with clocks, paper, and pencil. The calculated Daily Year Traffic (Årsdøgnstrafik, ÅDT in Danish) is calculated from the aggregated daily and weekly traffic counts. Countings have been made for 15 minutes at a time and multiplied with four to produce the traffic flows per full hour. The counting has been conducted on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in the time slots of 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. In terms of registration, a simplified system of notation and 15-minute interval registration was inspired by Low (2000).

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Bio

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