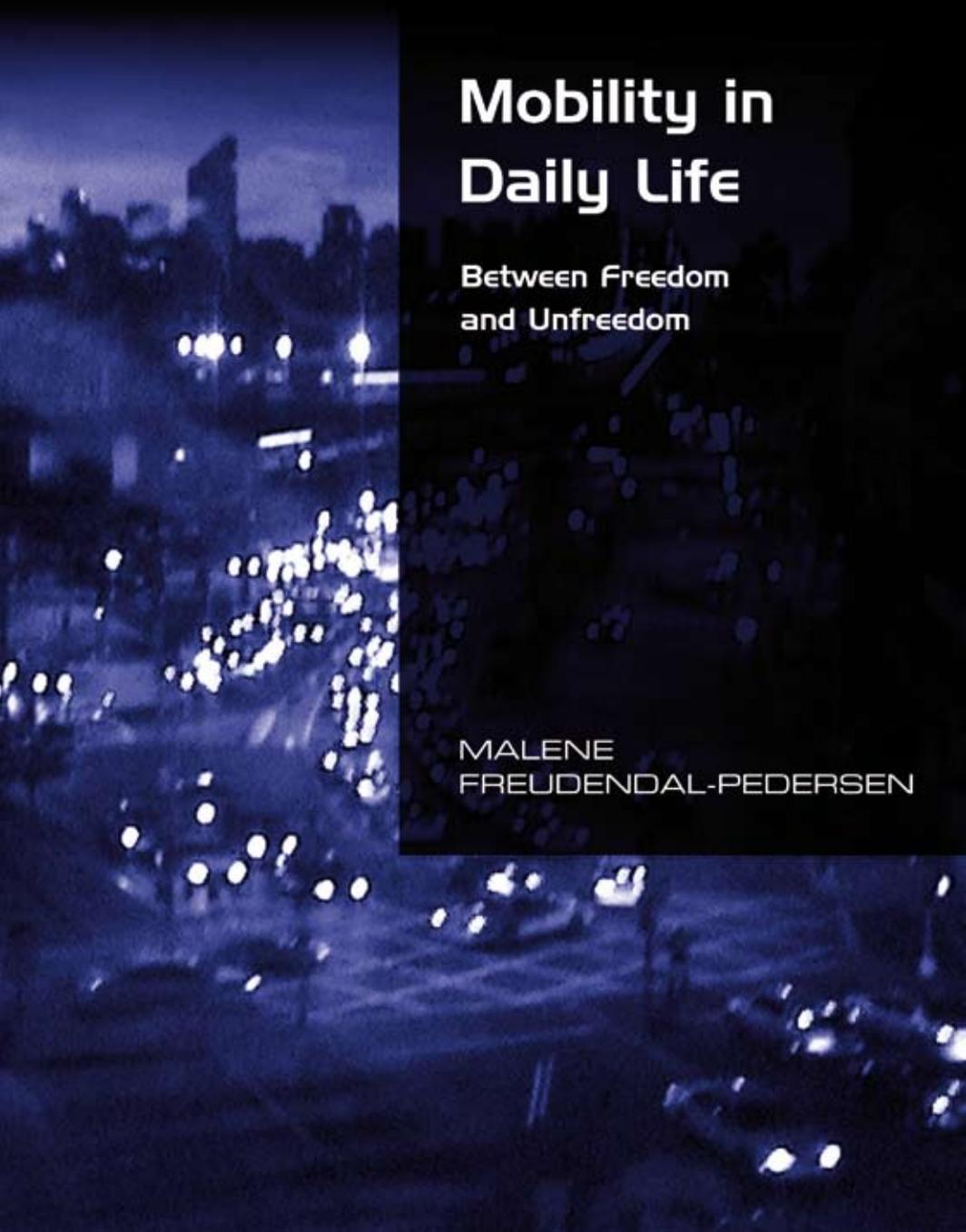ASHGATE

Mobility in Daily Life

Between Freedom and Unfreedom

MALENE
FREUDENDAL-PEDERSEN

MOBILITY IN DAILY LIFE

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Mobility in Daily Life
Between Freedom and Unfreedom

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ASHGATE

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Chapter 1
Introduction

On a cold January evening in the beginning of 2007 I was in Oslo participating in a conference on freedom. I decided to take a mental break and went to catch a movie. I cannot clearly recall the movie, but what I do remember was a commercial running before the movie aimed at attracting new tram drivers to Oslo Sporveier (Oslo's public transportation system). The advert went like this: a big large utility vehicle (SUV) arrives at a parking basement in Oslo. Mom is driving and Alexander is sitting on the back seat. Mom is talking on the mobile phone: 'You know Alexander's birthday … I was thinking we might have to postpone it a couple of months … I'm parking right now, can you believe why people in such small cars occupy such a big parking space?' Mom is commenting and honking at a woman fetching her baby son from the back seat of the small car. She continues her conversation on the mobile: 'I want it to be a decent party you know, I have ordered a pony and all.' Alexander and Mom leave the parking basement walking to Oslo city centre. //New scene//Alexander is just about to finish a soft drink and is trying to get to the other side of the pedestrian street to throw the empty soda can in a dustbin. Mom is on the phone again: 'I am in no way interested in having one of those Eastern European cleaning maids … I don't trust those people at all.' While talking, she grabs the soda can from Alexander, and throws it at the feet of a man cleaning the street. They move down the street, Alexander is curiously experiencing the surroundings. Mom makes sure he doesn't get in contact with the homeless man whom she disgustedly mumbles 'hopeless' to, or the peace activist handing out leaflets to whom she snaps 'fool'. Then Alexander tries to give money to the Salvation Army collection for poor people at Christmas, and Mom reacts by lecturing him: 'Alexander what are you doing, how can you even think about giving to someone when you're not getting anything in return? You know it's very important to think about yourself in life. Dad and I always did that. If you are going to waste time on being nice to all these people, who are just feeling sorry for themselves, then you might end up like him.' Mom points towards a tram driver picking up passengers. The driver smiles and waves to Alexander, who smiles back. Mom and Alexander are leaving the scene when Mom says: 'Not all uniforms are equally cool you know.' Across the picture it says 'Tram driver – a job for nice people'.

The direct way in which oppositions between individuality and community are presented in this commercial is unlike anything I have ever seen. The public transport system struggling with private automobilisms is not, in any

way, special to Norway, alhough portraying car drivers as stressed and self-obsessed individuals without community feeling is unique.

Another memorable example of the battle between public transport and the private car comes from one of my visits to New York City. This is more in line with the traditional power relation between the private car and the public transport system. New York City is a huge mix of different people, families of all kinds, buildings, cars and, not least, oversized commercials. An enormous commercial for an SUV is difficult to miss, where it visually roars at Broadway and 58th Street. The text says 'Life, Liberty and the Pursuit'. At the same time I see a bus crawling down Broadway, between yellow taxis and cars of all colours and sizes. On the side of the bus there is a big streamer saying: 'This is a SUV.' This was a commercial for the Metropolitan Transport Authority aiming at attracting more passengers. The contrasts are omnipresent and 'freedom's stronghold in God's own land' contains countless unfreedoms, not least symbolized through the enormous quantity of automobilities which routinely slows movement down to a snail's pace.

This book takes its starting point in the tension between freedom and unfreedom, articulated through the dichotomy between individuality and community: a dichotomy that we, in our everyday lives, vacillate between and navigate through, creating the good life for ourselves and our families. An essential task in this everyday life is to plan and coordinate our own, and our families', activities spread over time and space. Our mobilities, and the places they shuttle us between each day, become an important task to organize and plan. As the title suggests, everyday life choices lie between freedom/unfreedom and individuality/community – extremes we hover between and reside within. This book focuses on everyday life mobilities and our movement between the activities of which our lives consist. It offers a critical view on how mobilities maintain dichotomies, as well as the multitude of unintended consequences of mobility.

From Transportation Research to Mobility Research

Transportation research has traditionally been dominated by engineers and planners. The central goal has been to remove impediments to mobility and facilitate mobility for an increased number of people. Research has traditionally been centred on questions of accessibility, risk and optimizing of infrastructure, conditions of noise and other environmental impacts. Increasingly throughout the 1990s, sociologists and psychologists focused on behavioural aspects of transportation, which became a major component of Danish transportation research (Jensen 1997a; 1997 b; Maglund 1997; Læssøe 1999 Freudendal-Pedersen et al. 1999; 2000). Slowly there emerged an entry point to transportation as more than just a question of getting from point A to point B efficiently. Simultaneously an understanding of modernity and

mobility as highly interconnected gained ground internationally. A decisive step in this direction was taken with Urry's book *Sociology Beyond Society – Mobilities for the Twenty-first Century* (2000). Urry illuminates mobility as an integral component of modern societies through which societies should be understood and analysed. This argument is followed up and further developed in his book *Mobilities* (2007).Through exploring modernity/mobility dynamics, the formation of CeMoRe (Center for Mobility Research) and later Cosmobilities Network, lead by John Urry and Svend Kesselring, placed mobility as a key concept in understanding society.

As opposed to transportation research, mobility research takes its point of departure in recognizing that mobility is not only about distance covered. The potential to be mobile is equally important in understanding mobilities impact on society. Mobility research thus focuses on mobilities' impact on social, cultural and psychological factors which were previously ignored by social science (Urry 2007). Mobility research, like transportation research, is often interdisciplinary and covers a wide range of theoretical and empirical fields. Urry (2007, 10–11) lists 12 main mobility forms, ranging from 'migration' to 'visiting friends and relatives'. This list, however, focuses on the grouping of mobility purpose. Moreover, I would add to the list empirical fields in a different grouping affecting purposes and materialities of the surrounding world. Some of these fields could be: information and communications technology (Dodge and Kitchin 2004; Vogl 2007), politics and planning (Jensen and Richardson 2004; Jensen 2006), the transportation of goods (Hansen 2005; Jespersen and Drewes Nielsen 2005) etc., all from a global and local perspective. Thus mobility research stems from many different traditions and includes a vast array of different approaches. In recent years, a number of anthologies have been published in an effort to show the variety and the formation of a mobilities paradigm (for example, Thomsen et al. 2005; Knowles et al. 2008; Bærenholdt and Granås 2008; Bergmann and Sager 2008; Canzler et al. 2008).

Mobility as a Challenge to Sustainability

Mobility is an important part of late modern lives, enabling a vast variety of possibilities which have created the kind of life we know. Mobility also poses many challenges in environmental, social and economic regards. In relation to the environment, automobility is in particular a large source of pollution. Automobile travel today accounts for 15–30 per cent of total trips in the developing world; in Western Europe the amount is 50 per cent and the United States tops the list with 90 per cent (Ribeiro et al. 2007). Automobility is rapidly and steadily growing, most rapidly in developing countries. Between 1950 and 1997 the worldwide car fleet increased from about 50 million vehicles to 580 million vehicles, which is five times faster than the growth in

population (Ribeiro et al. 2007). On an everyday basis, individuals suffer from the discharge of gasoline, hydrocarbons, toxic chemicals and micro particles when moving around the city. Today virtually all transport energy (95 per cent) comes from oil-based fuels and more and more people travel longer distances. Thus transport energy use amounted to 26 per cent of total world energy use in 2004. In recent years more focus has been placed on automobility's contribution to air pollution and CO_2 emissions. In 2004, the transport sector as a whole produced 23 per cent of world energy-related CO_2 emissions, and 74 per cent of the total transport CO_2 emissions came from road transport (Ribeiro et al. 2007). During recent years, traffic noise has attracted focus, as it has been shown that noise has significant health consequences (Miljøstyrelsen 2003). Apart from the environmental consequences, automobility also has a huge impact on the design of our cities. Today, cities are organized according to the architecture of automobility (Scanlan 2004). Contemporary mobility, particularly automobility, takes up a huge amount of space in the city and creates congestion and insecurity. Today 25 per cent of the land in London is a car-only environment (Urry 2007), a figure similar to that of several Nordic cities. It seems that when a car is acquired, most trips are facilitated by automobility. More than 30 per cent of European car trips cover distances of less than 3 km, and 50 per cent are less than 5 km (Ribeiro et al. 2007). One can wonder why and how automobility has been able to take control of our surrounding world. It has done so to a high degree, because of the close connection between mobility and economic growth. Automobility has been very significant for economic development in the western world. It seems, though, that the close connection between economic advantages and automobility have reached a tipping point. An important conclusion of the Eddington Transport Study (2006) was that in western countries, which have a developed infrastructural system, new road spaces do not create growth. Furthermore, automobility entails a vast amount of external costs, which are not related to the maintenance of roads, parking spaces and so on. In 2003, the Danish Ministry of Environment calculated that the cost of transport externalities in Denmark (5.5 million people and 43,000 km²) is around DK33 billion per annum (approximately €4 million). Thus the major consequences of transport are mainly estimated in relation to the private car. This is due to the fact that public transport moves more people, and even though some trains and buses are also massive polluters, they are still more environmentally friendly than the private car. The overall idea when changes of transport habits are discussed concerns moving individuals from private car usage to public transport. Public transport systems are, in many countries, fighting an uphill battle to maintain a certain number of passengers. According to Urry (2007), the public transport system has incited 'three limited responses of the rail system – the speed response, the neo-liberal response, and the integrated transport response' (110). None of these has successfully stopped individuals from preferring the car. One main reason why public transport cannot compete

with automobility is its affiliation to the state. Even if the public transport system is not owned by the state (which is the case in an increasing number of countries) the state still regulates access, price, timetables and so forth (Urry 2007).

When taking a starting point in the material, it becomes important to understand mobility's disadvantages as well as its advantages and to relate critically to mobility as a societal transforming element. The critical perspective is not to be understood as saying that all mobility is bad, but instead as a wish to challenge some of the taken-for-granted ideas concerning mobility. This book seeks to contribute to critical mobility research, to understand mobility and thus to help facilitate changes. The knowledge of how meaning and apparent rationales become built into everyday life are fruitful in understanding how the individual masters everyday life mobility. It is, however, important to underline that the critique is aimed at apparent rationalities and ideas in our surrounding world. It is aimed at theoretical perspectives in which the lived life and the embedded mobilities, in my point of view, are not getting enough attention. The critique is not aimed at the individual and how he or she overcomes everyday life, structured and compounded by mobility. As individuals we master everyday life mobilities in certain ways, so that they give meaning to ourselves and those closest to us. The mastering draws patterns and imprints that we have in common, and it is these that I wish to understand and illuminate, and thus clear the way to examine, understand and perhaps lay out tracks to change mobility preferences. The changes and breaks in the daily rhythms, routines and actions are not merely matter-of-fact, they imprint on the way we construct meaning in our everyday life. The goal is to understand mobility's soul in the light of a sustainable horizon of change and focus on some of mobility's unintended consequences. Sustainability understood in its widest context focuses on lived everyday lives, guided by dreams and wishes for the good life.

The Sociology of Mobility

The sociological mobility research works both empirically and theoretically with ideas that can capture the social dynamics of the understanding of mobilities' needs and habits. Thereby the sociology of mobility also comes to deal with the good life, what it can or should include, how it is achieved and at what cost. Mobility sociology constitutes a theoretical and methodological basis for understanding the psychological and social dynamics of mobility. In this way it can be used to build a better understanding of mobility's meaning, and contribute to a better basis for the regulation of, for example, traffic security and traffic demands.

An important characteristic of mobility is the notion that increased mobility provides increased freedom. This is the result of a 'simple equation summed

up thus: mobility is good, because it equals open-mindedness, discovery and experience, and an effort must be made for individuals to maximize mobility for this reason' (Kaufmann 2002, 37). This notion is, as Kaufmann (2002) states, a part of a value system which can only be illuminated by integrating the intentions of the individual and the reason that makes them mobile. Within mobility research a range of voices highlighting different aspects of mobilities inherent consequences also exists. Mobility for some creates immobility for others (Beckmann 2001; Nielsen 2005; Freudendal-Pedersen 2005). Mobility can both be an asset and a burden (Fotel 2006) and mobilities, especially automobility, create an exceptional level of inequalities (Fetherstone et al. 2004; Urry 2007). In this book, the focus is specifically on mobilities' relation to, and the tension between, freedom and unfreedom. When does my freedom create unfreedom for others and, not least, when does it create unfreedom for myself? The pivotal point is the mobilities involved in organizing everyday life, and the often unintended consequences they have. Here, the concept of mobility is used in plural to underline the countless possibilities we have and use in our everyday lives in late modernity. The field of mobility is broad and ranges from information and communications technology to tourism and to everyday life, However, when the word 'mobilities' is used in this book it is limited to everyday forms of transport, namely cars, trains, buses, bicycles and walking.

This book is placed within everyday mobility research where the cultural and social implications and potentials of and in mobility are the pivotal points. The original motivation for entering this field stems from diverse behavioural transportation research, which is based on ideal types, lifestyle categories and travel patterns. Often, everyday life mobilities are split into patterns and functions (work-home, home-leisure and so on) and not analysed as a whole, as mobilities significant to lived lives and their activities (Urry 2007, 19). These analyses provided a picture of different people and their different affection and need for diverse transport modes. My desire was to understand the reasons for these choices, by investigating common reference points for these ideal types. With a starting point in concepts characterizing late modern everyday life such as lifestyle, time pressure, risk, ambivalences, reflexivity, security, freedom etc. I describe how the choice of, and the responsibility for, mobility has become individualized. There are increasing demands on what motivates and inspires the individual to choose different types of mobility, not only in relation to the individual, but also as a production and reproduction of societal mechanisms. Increasingly mobility researchers express a need for '… redirecting the interest of researchers towards the aspirations and plans of those involved, as well as the things that motivate them, and their possible realm of action' (Kaufmann 2002, 37).

Much of the sociological research concerning mobility has centred on the automobile. This is partly due to the fact that this type of mobility is the clearest expression of the conquering of space, and problems of pollution and

risk. This has become more and more prevalent over time as car ownership and mileage has increased. In addition, the car has become a place where one feels at home and can relax. The car is no longer only a medium for coming to and from 'home', it is a home in itself, a place for dwelling (Urry 2000; Bull 2004; Sheller 2004). For many, their social lives would be impossible without a car (O'Dell 2004 in Urry 2007). The car also comes to function as a place where the individual can organize and do things begun earlier in the home (Urry 2000; 2007; Laurier 2004; Bull 2004). The car space moves in what Urry (2000) calls car-only environments such as motorways, parking places, bridges and more. These domains possess a spatial and time dominance over the surrounding environment where they transform everything that we see, hear, smell or taste. 'Such car-only environments or non-places are neither urban nor rural, local nor cosmopolitan. They are sites of pure mobility within which car drivers are insulated as they "dwell-within-the-car"' (Urry 2000,193). Within these 'non-places' the individual lives in their mobile homes constantly searching for places where things happen. This contributes to the (re)production of the automobile as the technology which more than any other provides freedom (Featherstone 2004; Urry 2007) and, thereby, civil society becomes defined by the power of the car. Today, cities are designed on the premise of the car, on an 'autologic' which underlines policy and planning in large parts of the world (Drewes Nielsen 2005; Burdett and Sudjic 2008). It seems there is an understanding that only the car can provide a cocoon or a place to dwell, but studies have been made suggesting that trains also provide cocoons (Watts 2008; Freudendal-Pedersen 2007a; 2007b). With late modern lives' inherent lack of time, the car is seen by many as the only possible medium to attain the flexibility individuals are expected to possess. To examine which possibilities and potentials other means of transportation have for fulfilling the needs of everyday life is, however, also the purpose of this book.

Mobility in Everyday Life

Mobility is an essential part of late modern everyday life. To go from place to place, to move and to seek out new and old communities plays a large role in an individual's identity. This is in many ways positive, but also contains a wide range of negative consequences for the environment as well as for the sociality of which we, as individuals, are part. We have demands concerning the different aspects of everyday life, which together compose the good life. Often mobility, particularly automobility, becomes the glue that enables and fills these demands. Everyday life consists of numerous competing discourses with significance for our understanding of the good life, as well as for increased mobility (Hagman 2004; Thomsen 2005; Pooley 2005; Oldrup 2005; Freudendal-Pedersen et al. 1999; 2000; 2002; Freudendal-Pedersen 2005). In the search for good life mobility, especially automobilities, negative effects are

often overlooked. Choosing one transport mode over another is not merely a rational reflection on factors such as distance, travel times, costs and regularity etc. The choice is also influenced by a wide range of factors, embedded in everyday life's complex compounding of purpose and priorities. It is precisely this combination – what the individual understands as rational, impacted by social, spatial, timely and behavioural perspectives – which I find interesting to examine.

Structural Stories

To illuminate everyday life's mobility I introduce the concept of 'structural stories'. Structural stories are an expression for some of the most common stories about mobility within everyday life conversations. The concept was originally developed in collaboration with Katrine Hartmann-Petersen and Kenneth Roslind, where the structural story was placed at the centre of analysis. (Freudendal-Pedersen et al. 2002). A common example of a structural story is 'when one has children one needs a car'. The structural stories are an expression of how we feel mobility forms everyday life. What makes 'structural stories' an interesting concept to work with is its representation as universal truths, functioning as an apparent rationale when choosing mobilities in everyday life. The structural story frames everyday life ambivalences and serves as a uniting rationality. The starting point in structural stories uncovers conceptions and prejudices that exist about the automobile and public transport. Analytically, the structural story is interesting when it can reveal 'common truths' existing around different types of mobility as well as significant themes valued by the individuals when organizing everyday life. The structural story forms the starting point for understanding considerations and dilemmas behind everyday life choices and priorities. Through the structural stories I pin down elements that constitute the good life. This book is a contribution to empirical analysis of everyday life mobilities, where the construction of meaning becomes examined through qualitative research methods. I will, through the lens of mobility, show how we produce and reproduce the foundation for the good life we desire for ourselves and our families. The goal is to develop analytical tools that can summarize meanings and actions behind everyday mobilities; and thus listening to the voices of everyday life becomes important. The voices of everyday life can reveal the ambivalences or cracks through which mobility patterns can be developed and changed (Drewes Nielsen 2005). This book demonstrates how the structural story can be used to understand apparent rationalities of why and how we use everyday life mobilities. The structural story has the possibility of highlighting concepts and dichotomies which are important focal points in understanding the dynamics of mobilities. The structural stories are mapped and analysed on the basis of extensive qualitative work with individuals interviewed, both separately and in focus

groups. The material is analysed in relation to ideas and dichotomies such as individualization, risk and ambivalences, with a special focus on freedom, time and space. This book is a narrative on everyday life mobilities, where I set out to solve theoretical and empirical dilemmas for which there might be no answers. Instead, other interesting perspectives, illuminating new aspects of the mobile late modern everyday life, are opened up. It is a search process where choices are made, closing some doors but also opening others. This book is characterized by an explorative task with weight on the process, where empirical and theoretical work are constantly in dialogue with each other, still exchanging their points of view.

The starting point for this book is the taken-for- granted mobility of everyday life – a mobility seldom reflected upon, which plays a large role in the possibilities and potentials that individuals experience in creating the good life. Research on everyday life is not undertaken from a conception of daily lives as an isolated unit. Everyday life is constantly challenged and influenced by, among other things, globalization (Giddens 1999; Castells 1996; Urry 2000). This should not be understood as a global-local dichotomy (or a zero-sum game), but instead as a process which cuts across all scales, while at the same time co-creating the production of individual scales. Kesselring (2008) argues that mobilities cannot be understood without involving scale. He exemplifies this using the empirical field of airports, which is an obvious clash between different scales within in the same space. Kesselring (2008) points to the importance of examining this interface within mobility research, where different scales meet and influence each other. Understanding the importance of mobility and the apparent rationalities we form in everyday life is not simply a question about everyday life. Global and local news, commercials and politics play a decisive role in the themes of everyday life, relevant for the creation of the structural story. At the same time, the structural stories are experienced and reproduced on various scales. This accounts for many of the mobile actions we perform as part of everyday life, not least when moving in traffic systems. Thereby it becomes important to create space for 'the acknowledgement of the multi-scale character of social praxis, identity formation and social processes' (Simonsen 2005, 28 [my translation]). Aiming to understand social praxis and the formation of meaning, in relation to structural stories on mobility, thus entails acknowledging relations to other global and local processes. The materiality of mobility and construction of meaning spans all scales in an ongoing process, and the narrative on mobility in everyday life travels across time and space. Spatial scales are not distinct but '… relational, they are woven together and contemporary and therefore without a prior mutual theoretical or empirical primate' (Simonsen 2005, 28 [my translation]). Kofoed (2006) argues, by referring to Howitt, for understanding scales within the metaphors related to music. Imagine a symphony in which different instruments play on different levels; together they make up the symphony we listen to as a whole, but with an ear for the fragments and differences. What then becomes important is

neither size nor level but relations, interwovenness and concurrency (Kofoed 2006, 28). In this light, everyday life is an analytical frame without distinct borders which predetermine relevance.

The Book's Empirical Starting Point

To examine how individuals narrate their reasons for mobility choices in everyday life, I have interviewed an equal number of men and woman between the ages of 25–35 living in greater Copenhagen. Approximately half of them have children. All of them have, or are studying towards, a higher education qualification and belong to the middle class, thus their status in relation to class, ethnicity and gender are more or less the same. They all use a variety of different transport modes as well as a car. Each person was first interviewed individually and subsequently interviewed in focus groups. This resulted in empirical evidence within the following areas:

- knowledge about the individual's living situation and daily life;
- knowledge about concrete use of transportation modes in everyday life;
- knowledge about dreams and utopias existing as guides when aiming at the good life;
- knowledge about perceptions of freedom in relation to mobility and the good life;
- knowledge about rationales, significant to mobility habits and patterns in everyday life.

Data Collection

In the book, the interviewees and the focus groups are referred to by the letters A, B and C. Individual's names have been changed to ensure confidentiality. Individuals are given names which correspond to their groups; thus, for example, Anna is from group A. The groups are designated A, B and C as an expression of a time span wherein the individuals and groups are interviewed. Thus individual interviews followed by a focus group were made with group A and then with a time span of two months group B was formed and so forth. The data collection started out with semi-structured qualitative interview. The qualitative interviews can create the frames for in-depth understanding and the study of motives and rationales behind individuals' everyday life choices. The choices and utopias by which individuals arrange everyday life are revealed through conversations about everyday life routines. This makes it possible to pin down the way in which the good life is strived for, explained and articulated (Kvale 1996; Fog 1995). The semi-structured life world interview '… is defined

as an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee's with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena' (Kvale 1996, 5–6). The precise understanding of mobilities' meaning for individuals' everyday life, and how they reveal themselves in the formulation of structural stories, is central in this book.

The focus groups which followed the individual interviews had a central role as a place where meanings, positions and structural stories were tested. Focus groups subsequent to individual interviews were essential when this allowed me to follow the process of interviewees, validating rationalities and structural stories in larger forums. In the focus group, the participants were initially given five bricks naming different transport modes, car, cycle, train, bus and metro. To open the discussion I asked them to arrange the bricks in order of environmentally-friendly transport mode (this was also done in relation to health, freedom, community and socio-economic costs). I also asked them to agree on the order of cards. Subsequently I presented them with quotes from the individual interviews which I asked them to discuss, and concluded by discussing the concept of structural stories with them. Neither the individual interviews or the focus groups were given the status of a primary source of data, as they must be seen as complementary methods of equal value, what Morgan (1997, 3) defines as 'multimethod':

> … focus groups typically add to the data that are gathered through other qualitative methods, such as participant observation and individual interviews … In these combined uses of qualitative methods, the goal is to use each method so that it contributes something unique to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under the study.

Holding individual interviews followed by focus groups in one group at a time allowed me to use and redevelop experiences. An important element in the use of qualitative methods is to challenge the tools used and thus create the opportunity to act on new issues which arise (Fog 1995; Kvale 1996; Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Some themes entering the first round of interviews did not survive, while new ones became essential.

Groups A and B knew each other in advance: by contrast members of Group C were unacquainted with each other. Thereby I created an opportunity to see how structural stories were negotiated and accepted differently. This was important as creating different groups with 'strangers and acquaintances can generate different group dynamics, which may lead a researcher to different choices' (Morgan 1997, 38). My preconception was the presence of structural stories in both the presence of strangers, as well as in the presence of the 'safe' acquaintances. Also, I wanted to examine if any difference existed in addressing and negotiated structural stories in known/unknown surroundings. My role became quite different in the two groups, since in Group C I was the person they were most familiar with. In Groups A and B I was the stranger.

This was not a problem in relation to my aim with the focus groups – learning the difference in negotiating and validating structural stories. The interviewees' quotations in this book stem from the empirical work undertaken with the three groups, with a few exceptions from older empirical work whose origin is explicitly stated.

Refraining from Material Circumstances

Although the interviewees quoted in this book have similar living conditions, many differences exist. The book's empirical focus has been on emotions and seemingly rational ideas behind everyday mobility. Traditionally research into transport/mobility concerns categories such as shopping/leisure, time/work, travel habits and duration are also taken into account (Urry 2007). I have made a conscious choice not to describe the material circumstances behind everyday life mobility in order to allow another narrative about mobility in everyday life to come to the fore. One might argue that the structural story for some is 'more true' than for others, when their homes and workplaces are separated by great distance or by complexity in everyday life chores. This is however, precisely, what I hope to avoid by not describing the concrete aspects of transport. The structural story is equally true for all, because it makes sense to people and helps them navigate their everyday lives. The key concern of this book is how we produce and reproduce the structural stories, and why we use them. Individuals who have to cover large distances between their everyday life activities have, in one way or another, chosen to do so exactly because mobility makes it possible. These choices are not to be understood as simple, but are woven into factors such as class, education, ethnicity, gender and so on. My focus is on the knowledge and understanding of reality that the respondents have about their everyday life. Their mobility is created through conflicting interpretations and options, discussed and negotiated among the members of a society. It is important to point out that I, as a researcher, do not wish to evaluate the truth of the interviewee's statements. For example, an interviewee may state that using one type of transport to get to work saves time compared to another. Crosschecking may reveal the interviewees' estimates to be widely inaccurate, but this is not the point here. My interest is to learn about the rationales, explanations and structural stories that lie behind the calculation and which determine the preferred mode of transport. The focus is on how different rationales are substantiated, and thus not on showing what is 'true' or 'false' (Fog 1995, 18–22).

An individual makes several choices every day and these have both conscious and unconscious consequences. My interest has been in analysing how the rationales that underpin these choices are formed. To be the judge of whether or not the foundation for forming this rationale exists is not my wish. Just as importantly, I do not wish the readers of this book to fall into

this trap either, when it clouds the understanding of the structural stories. Apart from concrete distance, a wide range of different factors such as age, educational level, family life, gender, economy, location and so on, matter for the role mobility comes to play in everyday life. With this in mind, I have attempted to choose a homogeneous group of people, which makes it easier to refrain from presenting information about material conditions. This selection provides the possibility to discuss rationales and motivations of individuals who have no significant differences in living conditions. This does not in any way mean that their lives are not surrounded by restrictions and limitations which make some choices seem impossible. The problem with this selection may be that the conclusion of this book builds upon, and thereby cements, one specific group's notion of mobility, a group which already has a considerable voice in the public domain. Furthermore, there is no attempt to establish to what extent this group differs from others. Thereby a critique could be that this book comes to underpin the process of producing and reproducing the structural stories, instead of the vast array of other voices with great influence on and meaning for the mobile everyday life. It has, however, not been my ambition here to uncover the different narratives existing about mobility among different groups in society. On the other hand, it will be retained for future examination, using this design to give voice to others' view on mobility. Such important considerations could form the basis of another book.

Constructions, Materialities and Normativity

In their article 'Critical Realism and Semiosis',[1] Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer (2001) show the interfaces between critical discourse analysis and critical realism. They argue that the study of the making of meaning will benefit from articulation with critical realism, as well as the other way around:

> [C]ritical realism has tended to operate with an insufficiently concrete and complex analysis of semiosis. It has tended to take symbol systems, language, orders of discourse, and so on for granted, thereby excluding central features of the social world from its analysis. (Fairclough et al. 2001, 9)

Thereby societal processes and institutions are explained in reference to their context, with respect for the ongoing process that takes place. At the same time, it gives the material its own place and right. Even though the material is not visibly present in the concrete analysis, the ontological point of departure is the awareness that materialities can make or start processes significant for the object analysed. These materials are an undertone in the understanding and construction of the structural story.

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1   Semiosis refers to the 'making of meaning'.

Materialities have an obvious significance in the study of mobility, while at the same time clouding other important aspects. This has been made visible through the development in transportation research where parts of it have moved towards mobility research. Being a part of the Cosmobilities Network, sharing and discussing issues with a range of other mobility researchers, has been very inspiring. There I found a space with no preconceptions about categories and geographical distance, as a necessity in the analyses of mobilities. Instead the analysis of various concepts relation to mobility as a societal transforming element has been given much space. The inspiration to look elsewhere for frames of explanation has also led me to the concept of 'human security'. This is an internationally formulated analytical tool, stemming from human rights, and focuses on individuals rights in relation to everyday life. It highlights the right to security and freedom as fundamental elements of good everyday living (Hylland Eriksen 2005; Freudendal-Pedersen and Hartmann-Petersen 2006). The concept of human security made me reflect on how ingenious it is that often the things we do not focus on and which are difficult to handle have a huge significance for how we understand and interpret the world. This is an important part of why the primary focus is on the significance of utopian ideas of freedom and happiness in creating the good life. As humans we have basic needs in everyday life, which it makes perfect sense to take seriously. Understanding how these needs are agenda setting in producing and reproducing structural stories about mobility in everyday life is what this book concentrates on. The idea of 'human security' has had a huge influence on the final result in this book, although it is not directly visible in the text.

The Normative as Consequence

The reflections above have substantial significance for the normative approach which lays the ground for this book. First and foremost I find it essential to focus on the unintended consequences of mobility on everyday life. Everyday life is influenced and guided by our surrounding world: the capitalist system particularly has great significance for our modes of thought and possibilities. Also, it is important to see that humans have fundamental needs in relation to security and safety, and for creating and maintaining ontological security. When we create the structural story, it is also to maintain security and to provide a feeling of meaning in the way we navigate living conditions. When lives are made more complicated and time more pressed than wished for, it is because of an attempt to master everyday life within a course which feels right for us. Behind this book, therefore, is a wish to draw attention to the values we attempt to create or maintain as part of our everyday lives. Also in line with this is how, to keep up with the speed of which society develops, we make life strategies which undermine our wishes. Therefore attention to the

unintended consequences is essential when the goal is to create an everyday life in which freedom, safety and happiness can be distributed more equally – an everyday life with responsibility for the common good as well as ourselves, and consciousness of the consequences our actions have for others. There is no claim that this will happen as a result of this book, but nevertheless this is the type of everyday life mobility which I attempt to work towards.

This normativity can sometimes be difficult to deal with when the transport sector is hypersensitive towards the idea that some things are better than others. On top of this, asking individuals to reflect upon values of everyday life, and the way they create meaning in this life, demands respect for different life choices and mastering strategies. It is crucial to respect the way individuals handle their everyday life, but at the same time to dare to introduce a critical perspective on the taken-for-granted knowledge – which makes it possible for an individual to act without considering the alternatives – that guides everyday life, Sayer (2004, 3) describes the difficulties with normativity:

> Social scientists are taught to adopt and priorities the positive point of view and, unless they also read philosophy, to suppress normative reasoning. The gradual separation of positive and normative thought that has occurred over the last 200 years in social science has involved not only an attempt (though incomplete) expulsions of values from science, but an expulsion of science or reason from values, so that values appear to be mere primitive, a-rational subjective beliefs, lying beyond the scope of reason.

Normativity is not a barrier for the researcher's knowledge production. However, it needs to be accompanied by respect for and understanding of others' social realities, wishes and preferences. The normative approach works as an eternal inspiration for understanding what drives individuals when they deal with their everyday lives. Moreover, is it difficult not to address the normative, when I am mapping the individual's normative expression – structural story – as something they handle and structures their everyday life by. 'In everyday life, the most important questions tend to be normative ones' Sayer says (2004, 3). What is important is to make visible and explicate the processes that take place in the interview, and qualitatively evaluates the power of these processes penetration in the completed interview (Fog 1995, 158–9). Believing that, through the empirical, one can have access to an objective social reality, independent of the researcher is, according to Kvale evidence, of a 'naive empiricism'. The interview is a conversation where knowledge is created in an interpersonal relationship jointly by the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale 1996, 158). An important pivotal point in qualitative research is what Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) name 'thick descriptions', defining the importance of transparency in the research process. This refers to what (Denzin and Lincoln 2000) call the research's value loading.

One question concerning qualitative research relates to its generalizability. Often qualitative interviews are described as 'ad hoc' narratives that cannot be used as part of a greater whole, and from which generalizations cannot be made. 'Realism replaces the regularity model with one in which objects and social relations have casual powers which may or may not produce regularities, and which can be explained independently of them' (Sayer 1992, 2–3). The research I set out in this book can be generalized analytically and is an estimate of the socio-cultural processes and dynamics that have significance in mobility choice (Blakie 1993, 176–81; Kvale 1996, 233–4). But the results, on the other hand, offer no results about the Danes' general relation to mobility and everyday life.

Outline of the Book

In this introduction I have repeatedly mentioned the notion of structural stories without fully explaining what is meant by the term, a narrative which has to wait a little longer. In order to grasp the idea behind the structural stories, Chapter 2 describes the sociological research concerning mobility, my starting point being everyday life in late modernity. The chapter describes how the conditions of everyday life and its mobilities in late modernity create processes and ways of handling lived lives. In Chapter 3, I describe and develop the concept of structural stories. This is a narration of how the concept arose from working with individual's transport and mobility behaviour, and how it has been developed further through additional work. Subsequently, I present empirical work on the use of structural stories in everyday life and the negotiations which took place in the focus groups. The structural stories concerning mobilities' connection to freedom are often aired, and this is elaborated on in Chapter 4, which deals with freedom. This chapter starts out by describing how freedom has come to play an overriding role in late modern lives. It is an attempt to illuminate some of the sociological mechanism behind freedom. Some historical connections will be drawn to show how the idea of freedom has developed and has come to play a significant role in the notion of the good life. The concept of freedom is related to dichotomies such as unfreedom, security and community. This sets the focus on the book's subtitle, 'Between Freedom and Unfreedom', in a desire to illuminate the ambivalences of mobility. The conception of motility, which has a huge significance for everyday life mobility choices, is also described and analysed. Throughout the chapter the empirical work will show how freedom and its dichotomies are perceived and understood by the individual. Chapter 5 deals with the development of time and space. It is a description of different understandings of time and space related to mobility's dominance of late modern society. The chapter also analyses how individuals use time and space in mobility to create in-betweens in everyday life, based on the empirical material. These in-

betweens come to work as coping strategies for the individual in a time-pressed late modern everyday life. Chapter 6 concludes on the theoretical work and the empirical findings. After this I move beyond my field of research, in an effort to use different scales to show how new or different communities for handling mobilities unintended consequences can be created. I do this through the use of my knowledge about sustainable cities and through my hope of creating utopias which can support a common 'us'.

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Chapter 2

Mobility's Anchorage in
Late Modern Everyday Life

Mobility's Sociology

Mobility and movement play an increasing role in the lives of the late modern individual. Mobility has a decisive influence on a wide range of social, political and economic processes and has a great significance for the organization of society. This focus on mobility as an important starting point for understanding late modern society is articulated by Urry (2000) in *Sociology Beyond Societies – Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, where mobility is used as a starting point for understanding modernity. 'In particular I elaborate some of the material transformations that are remaking the "social", especially those diverse mobilities that, through multiple senses, imaginative travel, movements of images and information, vitality and physical movement, are materially reconstructing the "social as society" into the 'social as mobility"' (Urry 2000, 2). Urry argues that mobility must be the starting point in an analysis of modernity when the social is characterized by streams and mobilities. In his book *Mobilities* (2007) Urry elaborates on this and seeks to develop a detailed 'analysis of just how and why mobilities make such a difference' (10). On the basis of this work he states: '… that the analysis of mobility transforms social science. Mobilities make it different. They are not merely to be added to static or structural analysis. They require a wholesale revision of the way in which social phenomena have been historically examined' (44).

These streams and mobilities are touched upon by different researchers who take their starting points in streams of information, pictures, assets and symbols etc. as to what constitutes material, spatial and social praxis. Castells (1996) writes about the network society, Bauman (2000) writes about fluid modernity and Beck (2006) about cosmopolitan sociology. The most thorough is, however, Urry's (2000) analysis which states that it is no longer relevant to analyse society by taking the nation-state as a starting point. Instead, the focus must be on mobility as the basis of the development of different global and local networks and streams that undermine the social structures which have traditionally been the starting point for sociology. The central point here is that we have to see the social as including mobility, and at the same time understand how mobility produces (parts of) the social.

The different mobilities produce and reproduce social life and cultural forms and it is in these mobilities that cultural patterns and identities are

shaped and reshaped (Lassen and Jensen 2006). Similarly, in the analysis of mobility, it becomes essential to analyse it not only as actual movement but also to put weight on the potential for movement – a potential which deals with the individual's capacity to be mobile in a specific mobility domain – and on how this potential activates and becomes resolved (Kaufmann 2002, 37). In his book *Re-thinking Mobility*, Kaufmann (2002) developed the concept of motility as an idea that can be used to understand and analyse the potential for mobility. I will examine this in greater depth in Chapter 4. Thereby, mobility becomes an ambivalent concept containing a division between mobility and motility, actual movement and potential for movement, which then becomes structuring for collective and individual actors. Understanding this mutual relationship between mobility and motility becomes a prerequisite if we wish to understand how and why individuals are in movement (Kesselring and Vogl 2004, 8). Mobility makes possible an individual's composition of the many fragments and moments that comprise time. In that way, mobility makes the late modern individual's autobiographical narrative possible, and this expectation concerning the mobile individual is coped with through different behavioural patterns and personal strategies.

A significant number of those who undertake sociological research into mobilities see mobility not solely in terms of movement or potential for movement. Mobility moves as much as it freezes: mobility for some will create immobility for others (Beckman 2001; Drewes Nielsen 2005). Mobility can be possibility-creating just as it can be action-limiting (Freudendal-Pedesen 2007a; 2007b). Similarly, it can be an asset or a burden (Fotel 2007). In this way, mobility has an ambivalence and an inherent inequality – an inequality which can also, but not only, be seen across social classes.

An important part of the mobility sociology is the time and space mobility moves in and between. In Chapter 5, which deals with time and space in mobility, I will focus in on an understanding of time and space through the mobility sociological lens. Here I will very briefly present some of the major points. Urry (2000) distinguishes between clock time and instantaneous time, where instantaneous time is that which mobility encourages. Mobility becomes the method whereby the late modern individual retains the possibility of keeping abreast with a complicated and rapidly changing world. It is no longer solely the place the individual is going to which is important, but also that the individual has the possibility to be mobile and fast. This understanding of time is the same as that which Bauman (2000) refers to when he says that time is marked by temporality. It is the increasing speed of social life that reduces the distance there has been between time and place. This means that the time/space paths of individuals are often desynchronized and replaced by varied and segmented patterns (Urry 2002; 2007). As such, timeframes for individuals are no longer necessarily the same when each person has individual time to live by. Clock time has, however, retained an important function in our mobile everyday lives, as it still controls many everyday life activities and mobilities

such as, for instance, work, opening hours of institutions, public offices and businesses and, not least, timetables and gridlocks on the highway. Some have argued that the increasing speed means that the place loses significance (Giddens 1991; Virilio 1998). This discussion takes its starting point as a dichotomous understanding between place and mobility, where mobility is seen as a process which minimizes the meaning of a place and thereby also erodes societies (Putnam 2000).

The lived late modern everyday life contains a number of everyday life combinations of mobility and place, which include relations which cannot be thought of dichotomously. Everyday life is still fixed, to some degree, in specific places, such as the places in which we live, in an attempt to create limits and security for the good life (Hylland Eriksen 2004; 2006; Brenner 2004). Space does not lose significance because of mobility when 'space is necessary to give quality to time' (Urry, 2000,117). The memories and experiences which our lives are built on and around are always related to a place, just as the majority of communities have local connection and influence on everyday life. The different spaces we enter into in everyday life are of great significance for our ontological security, but the understanding of space has evolved, as it may well involve the spaces of mobility (Urry 2000; O.B. Jensen 2006).

There are a number of emotional and symbolic meanings tied to mobility. A lot of research has been done in relation to automobility as it contains a number of identities and lifestyle-related significances (Berge 1997; Shove 1998; Magelund 1997and 2000; Jensen 1997a; 1997b; 2001; Hjorthol 1998; 2006; Læssøe 1999; Beckmann 2001; Thomsen 2001). Examples of this can be, amongst other things, the private car as a sign of value and status symbol, and a gathering place for the family etc. Research has also been done on how the public transport system can have the same meanings (Watts 2008). The symbolic and emotional meanings have great importance for the individual, and the structural stories on mobility can often have a starting point in these meanings. At the same time, these meanings also form competitive discourses in everyday life.

Everyday Life

A number of analyses have been undertaken concerning how we should comprehend everyday life and what defines it (Bech-Jørgensen 1994; Gullestad 1992; Goffman 1990). It is a comprehensive discussion and ongoing conceptualization. The point of departure for this description of how I understand everyday life and its actions as a starting point for the study of mobility is primarily inspired by Bech-Jørgensen's (1994) procedural and overall approach to everyday life. Bech-Jørgensen's approach does not divide everyday life into different spheres or specific categories, but instead views it as a whole that surrounds our lives. There are many convergences in the actions