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## **Making Family Mobility**

*Mobility Labour in Everyday Family Life*

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## **Making Family Mobility - Mobility Labour in Everyday Family Life**

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### **Introduction**

Think about an ordinary and everyday mobility practice; probably commuting to work or going to the grocery store or maybe taking children to soccer practice comes to mind. These are examples of the quotidian mobility that fills everyday lives. Obviously, this mobility play an immensely important role as it is what enables us to physically move between the many spatially dispersed destinations and activities in everyday life. And hence, mobility play a integral role in accomplishing complex daily schedules, honouring agreement, fulfilling obligations and tending to needs and wishes. On top of the instrumental role of getting effectively and safely from A to B, mobilities studies have also shown that everyday mobility also constitutes an essential social, emotional and experiential sphere in everyday life (Holdsworth 2012, Wind 2014, Jensen, Sheller & Wind 2015). Despite this vital role and the time we spend travelling (in Denmark everyday citizen, young and old, spend 53 minutes in transit every day (TUDATA 2014), everyday mobility is usually unheeded. It is part of the ‘background’ of everyday life – things that go unnoticed by us, as it has, through countless performances in familiarised spatialities and temporalities, been naturalised and inscribed into the mind and body of the traveller. To a large extend, everyday mobility is what Joe Moran terms ‘infra-ordinary’ (2010, p. 3), as it falls outside the conscious realm of thought, just as infrared light falls outside the visible spectrum. Mobility in the family and in everyday family life pose a particular interesting case as many families are very dependent on highly coordinated and often synchronised mobility practices in order to accomplish everyday family life.

One of the major accomplishments of the stream of mobilities literature coming out of fields of sociology and human geography (amongst others) in the last 10 to 15 years has been confronting, destabilising and advancing our understanding and knowledge of mobilities that takes part in creating the world/our society (Urry 2007, Sheller & Urry 2006, Cresswell 2006, Sheller 2014). In doing so, mobilities scholars have sought to gather and develop approaches, methods and theories that help us in exploring and understanding the multiple meanings and experiences of the mundane mobility in everyday life. Viewing everyday mobility through this lens elucidates a much wider spectrum of meanings and uses than merely the practical one. For most families, travel

time constitutes a socio-emotional charged space, that besides moving is often also filled with productive, social and emotional content such as work (Laurier 2004), thrill (McIllenny 2013), play (Vannini 2012), daydreaming (Lyons & Watts 2008), care (Holdsworth 2012, Fotel 2007), togetherness (Jensen, Sheller & Wind 2015). Also much mobilities literature explores and explicates how such socio-emotional consequences of everyday mobility is emerges in the actual mobility performances, how it feels (Spinney 2011, car litt), the skills and competences needed (Kaufman 2002, Vannini 2012) and micro-coordination involved (Ling 2004, Larsen, Urry & Axhausen 2006, Schwanen 2008)

However, while the mobilities literature has a lot to say about the multiple meanings, experiences, affordances, understandings and embodied performances of mobility -the actual mobility and its consequences- less have been said about the labour involved in assembling and preparing ordinary mobility practices prior to their enactment. Notable exceptions that touches upon the actual doing of everyday mobility are Peters, Kloppenburg and Wyatt's (2010) investigation of spatio-temporal 'reordering' of mobility practices, Watts' (2008) account of crafting train journeys and Vannini's (2012) study of how mundane ferry mobilities in islands of British Columbia is being assembled. Importantly, Ole B. Jensen (2013) urges us to remember that 'mobilities do not 'just happen' or simply 'take place''; instead, everyday family mobility is "carefully and meticulously designed, planned" (p. 4).

Leaning on the clues and insights from these studies, this paper wishes to further explore and expand understanding of the extensive and intensive mobility labour that prefigures the actual embodied movement, the effort involved in establishing the socio-material conditions for successful everyday journeys. To facilitate this inquiry, the paper draws on empirical material from a qualitative study of 11 families' everyday mobilities in Copenhagen, Denmark. Although this paper takes point of departure in family mobility, arguably this might also provide a broader, general, understanding of the dynamic and relational labour involved in making everyday mobility practices on a micro level. In particular the paper unfolds the empirical material in two distinct 'moments' in making mobility practices in the family, namely the moment of planning and negotiating and the moment of preparing just prior to setting out. By doing so, the paper shows that planning, organising and preparing mobility practices is a deeply relational endeavour (especially in the context of family) and while assembling socio-material mobility practices and everyday geographies is about securing movement, it is equally about performing care for other family members and the family as a whole. Furthermore, the paper elucidates the mobility labour of enrolling objects and information as well as just-in-time communication and coordination that happen at the moment of *setting out*. In total, the paper argues that the family members' mobility labour, besides attempting to make complex family life accomplishable, is also, by using experience, creativity and skill, trying to foresee and fortify against potential disruptions and contingencies in everyday life that might destabilise the family's mobility performances.

However before turning to the empirical material, in the following section, drawing on heavily recent mobilities literature, the paper start by deploying a theoretical platform for analytically approaching the notion of mobility practice in the context of family. After a brief outlining of the methods and empirical material used in the study, the paper will then address the analysis of the two moments in mobility labour of planning and setting out in the empirical material. Finally the paper is concluded with brief discussion on the findings of the paper and possible future applications.

## Mobility practices and performances

The mobilities literature special interest in mobility practices and performances can be seen as part of a wider theoretical movement across disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, in which there is a heightened interest in and a ‘turn’ towards doings, practices and performances (see for instance Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, Savigny (2001)). Because of the broad interest and usage, there is no singular use or understanding of the term practice<sup>1</sup>. Rather it is used differently and carries multiple meanings in various academic fields. Hence, the intention of this section is to clarify how the concept of mobility practice is defined and used in this particular study. Relying on a pragmatist approach and by juxtaposing theoretisations in the mobilities literature with theoretical tenets from nonrepresentational theory (see Anderson & Harrison (2009) or Vannini (2015) for introduction), the aim is to assemble a sensitising device that allows for inquiry into the phenomenon of mobility labour in the family.

Sociologist David Morgan’s (2011) work on family practices stir up some very useful insights and thoughts on practice that might serve as a starting point for discussing what a practice is. The first meaning of practice refers to ‘the action of doing something, method of action or working’ (p. 23). One of the consequences of understanding practices as actions is relationality, as actions are performed in relation to others, which usually means that actions can be understood as *social* and to some degree *coordinated* (Schatzki 2010, p. 68). The second meaning of practice Morgan (2011) points to is *habit*, “the habitual doing or carrying on of something usual, habitual action or pattern of behaviour, established procedures” (p. 24-5). Here it is important to notice that there is a general shift away from a commonsensical understanding of habits as static and solid, merely repetitive series of actions, as they are normally conceived to be. Instead mobilities scholars (Bissell, Vannini, Jensen) advocate for a vitalist approach to practices as being in constant movement, dynamically shifting, swerving and becoming. In this light, mobility practices are understood as changing processes but with a form that is shaped over time, they become ingrained in everyday life as “something that ‘comes naturally’, that is done ‘as a matter of course’” (Morgan 2011, p. 27). Finally, this also speaks to another meaning ascribed to practice, the notion of practice as *training*. Training refers to when something is done intensively or repeatedly, such as performing everyday

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*This term has recieved considerable attention in the social sciences. In particular scholars of practice theory are concerned with defining and theoretical developing the notion of practice (see i.e. Schatzki (2002), Reckwitz (2002), Warde (2005), Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012) for reviews of practice theory).*

mobility; one increases proficiency and skill and gradually increase tacit and embodied knowledge of what is being practiced, which can benefit future performances (p. 28).

#### *Networks and performative effects of practices*

With these initial conceptions as an overall understanding of practice we might further pursue the notion of mobility practice. Drawing on actor-network theory (Latour 2005) and practice theory<sup>2</sup> (for introduction see Reckwitz (2002)), a mobility practice can be conceptualised as a kind of *socio-material network or assemblage* that relationally coordinates or orchestrates human subjects and material objects into a functioning and stabilised configuration to the effect of rendering physical movement from one location to another possible. Highlighting this hybridity of mobility practices, Urry (2007) writes that, ‘there are thus various assemblages of humans, objects, technologies and scripts that contingently produce durability and stability of mobility’ (p. 48). Hence, in being mobile, the mobile subject cannot be separated from materialities such as infrastructures, places and routes; technologies such as transportation modes, GPS systems, mobile phones and other things such as bags, tickets, newspapers, and coffee to go that are brought along on everyday journeys (Vannini et al. 2012, Jensen 2013).

Therefore mundane materialities are not separate from our doings in everyday life, but take active part in mobility practices as they co-shape travel time and move alongside human subjects in everyday journeys (Hui 2012). While being on the move, mobile subjects engage in ‘mobile sense making’ (Jensen 2013, p. 138), interacting with the material environment of objects, buildings, signs and symbols, while negotiating their way from A to B. For instance, the practice of biking to work might include a range of materialities such as a bike, the right clothing, a helmet and lights, not to mention work-related items, i.e. a bag, laptop, papers. It also involves a set of interlocking infrastructures of bike paths, streets, traffic junctions and places coming together as a route. Hence, the practical accomplishment of successfully commuting cannot solely be attributed to one subject or object in particular; rather it is a ‘network phenomenon’, a collective effort, as ‘objects and people are temporarily linked in a mobile coalition’ acting together in concert enabling movement (Hui 2012, p. 206).

#### *Relationality of mobility practices*

Pushing further in a relational approach, it is important to understand that mobility practices ‘almost never happen in isolation’ (Adey et al. 2014, p. 14); they are at any given moment embedded in socio-relational ensembles of other tasks, doings, actions and practices in the family in everyday life. Consequently, mobility practices ‘involve how we form relations with others’ (Adey 2010, p. 19) and must therefore always be understood relationally, as part of the social context (like the family). Because of this profound interweaving of practices in daily life, interdependencies and contextuality, the family’s mobility practices gain their shape from dynamic enmeshing with other everyday

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noticed that practice theory does not represent a coherent theoretical field but the ongoing work of creating a diverse theoretical framework of understanding human performances and practices.

practices such as going to work, school, kindergarten or the dentist; doing the shopping; visiting friends, grandparents or family and so on.

*Mobility practices as everyday taskscapes*

This complex meshing of everyday practices in the family can be described with Tim Ingold's term 'taskscape' (2000, p. 194-200). A taskscape, in its most basic understanding, denotes a gathering of tasks, "an array of related activities", performed by "a skilled agent" or agents, "in an environment, as part of his or her normal business of life" (2000: 195). Deploying taskscape in relation to everyday life, allows us to focus on how performances of everyday life, often involving several individuals (as in the family), are relationally configured by their tasks, taking shape as dynamic threads interrelating and interweaving, each responsive to others. Hence, the things we do in everyday life are performed with and in relation to others; naturally our doings in everyday life affect others, just as others' doings affect us.

While the concept of taskscape provides an analytical tool for highlighting the mobility practices wider contextualisation, the heterogenic conceptualisation of mobility practice as an assemblage advances an analytical sensitivity that allows us to inquire into the makeup, the particular gathering of subjects and objects in temporary stabilised configurations within the mobility. Furthermore, subscribing to these conceptualisations of mobility also includes an inherent processual understanding. Nonrepresentational theory speak of a world that is not ready-made, finished and lying "out there"; instead it is continuously *in the making* through the complex, contingent and relational processes of events (Anderson and Harrison 2010, p. 14). Consequently, mobility practices are not isolated performances; they are interrelating events that in the process of interaction are mutually affected and "constantly evolving organically" (Vannini 2012, p. 39). Mobility practices are therefore neither static nor only mechanical unfoldings of pre-scripted behaviour. The same mobility practice never unfolds exactly the same way; but as it responds to the world-in-motion, there are always permutations and change (Middleton 2011). This vitalist conception resonates with Ingold's (2011) taskscape in which 'we continually feel each other's presence in the social environment, at every moment adjusting our movements in response to this ongoing perceptual monitoring' (p. 196). Following this, everyday mobility practices can be understood as skilful, organic and on-going *-living* processes- rather than static, *dead* repetitions (Edensor 2007, Trentmann 2009, Bissell 2013, Middleton 2011).

Vannini (2012), wants us think of everyday mobility practices as *performances* in a non-linear fashion, they do never unfold in similar ways, although often being alike there are always differences. Mobility practices are therefore inherently on-the-move, so to speak, as they, on one hand, are dynamic intersections in family taskscapes that require frequent communication, planning and negotiation of family members' individual complex lives, and on the other, are responsive devices that dynamically adjust and adapt to what Vannini (2012) calls the 'elusiveness', the immediacy and contingency, of unfolding mobile situations. Without this labour of constantly adapting to changing socio-material conditions and situations throughout everyday mobility, there would be little chance of

holding mobility practices together, and there would soon be a breakdown. When sudden and abrupt disruptions emerge somewhere in a mobility practice assemblage, they generate the instant need for adaptation in order to keep moving. Hence performing everyday mobility practices in the family, whether it is driving the kids to soccer practice or going to work, is always a *making* process, “whereby ‘making’ refers to successful performance of one’s task” (Vannini 2012, p. 163).

Equipped with these insights and understandings of mobility practices and performances, the paper will shortly turn to the analysis of the empirical material. However, before doing so, to provide context and transparency to the production of the empirical material, the paper will briefly discuss the research and method design of the study.

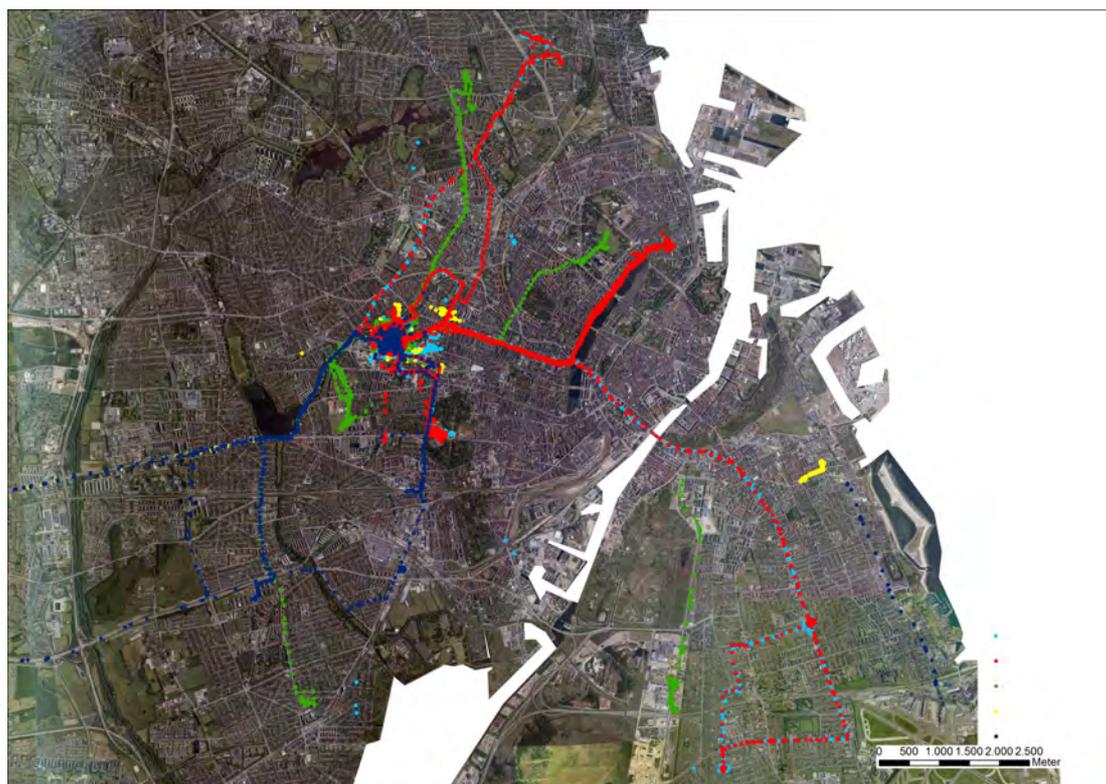
### Studying mobility practices in the family

A major source of inspiration for the method design in this study stems from the heightened interest in and discussions of methods within the mobilities turn under the umbrella term “mobile methods” (see D’Andrea, Ciolfi and Gray (2011), Büscher, Urry and Witchger (2010), Fincham, McGuinness and Murrey (2010), Urry (2007), Mobilities (2006), Sheller (2014) for extensive reviews). Researchers in studies of mobilities are tinkering and experimenting with methods attuned to the exploration and investigation of the multi-faceted aspects of mobility. While the relevance, novelty and capabilities of these *new* mobile methods are debatable, their newness should, according to D’Andrea, Ciolfi and Gray (2011), rather be understood in relation to the ‘concern with the singularity of mobility as a sui generis node of phenomena requiring particular methodological and conceptual work’ (p. 155).

Based on a pragmatic mixed method approach, qualitative interview methods (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, Hitchings 2011) were coupled with ideas from mobile methods to facilitate in-depth inquiry into both the meanings and making of mobility practices in everyday family life. In particular, the empirical material was produced from two rounds of qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 45 respondents distributed in 11 families with children spread across the Greater Copenhagen area in Denmark (part of the research project ACTUM<sup>3</sup>). In the sample, variance was sought within socio economic variables, number of children, age of children, education, income, accessibility to public transport and car ownership of the households. Additionally each of the family members in 11 households was GPS tracked for approximately one week prior to the interviews (see figure 1).

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<sup>3</sup> ACTUM is short for ‘Analysis of activity-based travel chains and sustainable mobility’. This project was hosted by the Technical University of Denmark in a research alliance with Aalborg University, Denmark. The project is funded by the Danish Strategic Research Council under the grant (No. 10-094597).



[figure 1 – GPS]

This tracking data was then processed and visualised on maps and presented to a part of the families during the interview sessions. This proved as a valuable technique for overcoming the ‘infra-ordinariness’ of everyday mobility and made it possible to attune and focus the interview discussion towards the family’s actual mobility practices in a very detailed manner. In the second round of the family interviews, approximately a year after the first, the families were tasked with different assignment during the interview. Firstly charting their weekly activities on a board gave overview not only of their complex activity schedules but also proved to be a valuable window into the on-going negotiation and coordination work involved in carefully interweaving activities in family taskscape. Secondly, the family members were tasked with making family timelines visualising their family history and milestones of various residences, educations, work places, child births on one hand, and on the other, they had to imagine their future, where they were going next and how they envisioned their family in the near future. All of these assignments provoked discussion and gave insights to understanding the meanings of and role their everyday mobility played in these diverse arenas of family life in the present but also in the past and future.

Finally, mobile field studies based upon the respondent’s everyday mobility practices were conducted. Drawing inspiration from participatory and performance-oriented approaches, such as mobile methods like *shadowing* (Jirón 2011), *follow the thing* (Hui 2013) and *moving along* (Lee and Ingold 2006, Vannini 2012), a phenomenological ethnographic method in which the researcher is involved in observation of and participation in the

mobility practices was brought into the research design to complement the qualitative interviews (see figure 2).



[figure 2 – mobile field studies]

Multiple of the actual mobility practices of the 11 families were selected and performed mirroring mode, route, timing in the family members mobility practices. This creates opportunities to explore and gain deeper insight into the embodied performances and sensorial experiences of mobility the family members reported during the interviews. These mobile field studies were video recorded and used with the purpose of attuning the researcher to the life worlds of the respondents in the work of analysing and interpreting their mobility practices and performances in the empirical material (Spinney 2011).

### Mobility Labour: Making everyday mobility

To develop the notion of mobility labour and explore how it intersects with everyday family mobility, the paper will in this section take point of departure in two vignettes from the empirical material. By using empirical vignettes, the aim is to not so much to *represent* as it is to *present* and thereby evoke recognition and hopefully emphatic resonance and recognition (Vannini & Taggart 2014). The vignettes invite the reader to become familiar with and attuned to the mobility labour involved in making everyday mobility practices. In doing so, the paper tentatively advances a “nonrepresentational style” (Vannini 2015) in which one “cease to be so preoccupied with how the past unfolded and with your responsibility for capturing it. You become instead interested with evoking, in the present moment, a future impression in your reader, viewer, or listener” (p. 12).

Hence, the vignettes in this paper are not supposed to accurately mirror the world, but rather to “evoke encounters, animate experiences, enact mundane performances”

(Vannini 2012, p. 28), however importantly, they do so without departing from the actual happenings and performances in the family members' everyday mobility practices conveyed during the family interviews. Based on this approach, the paper will now turn to unfolding two vignettes or defining moments in the family member's making of everyday mobility practices that are useful in discussing and developing the notion of mobility labour: the moment of *planning* and the moment of *setting-out*.

### Planning: Pre-travel efforts in negotiating and organising family taskscapes

The labour performed in everyday family mobility is not only confined to the actual embodied performance of moving (Peters, Kloppenburg and Wyatt 2009, Jensen 2013). Rather it extends well beyond the act of movement itself and involves various interrelated tasks that in concert enable coordinated movement of family members in their everyday lives. Hence, besides the actual embodied physically movement, performing mobility also entails “preparing, scripting, regulating, recruiting, organizing, rehearsing, anticipating, strategizing, plotting backstage, boarding” (Vannini 2009, p. 245). This ‘pre-travelling’ (Peters, Kloppenburg and Wyatt 2010, p. 361) labour is instrumental in coordinating the family members' multiple mobilities and interweaving it with other everyday practices and activities in the family taskscape. To illustrate the planning and coordinative labour the family conducts, we might turn to the first vignette. In this, we follow the couple Mille and Henrik in their planning of the week to come:

#### SCENE 10:

*It is almost 9 pm on a Sunday night. Mille and Henrik's two children, Emma and Christian, are sleeping at last. “Wanna go over next week?”, Henrik asks while sipping tea. He and Mille sit down at the dinner table in the kitchen with their family activity planner, each opening his or her calendar. Nearly every Sunday after the kids have been tucked in, they look over their own and the children's activities in the week to come and plan the week ahead. Their activity schedule usually stays the same every week and they know roughly who is picking up, what their activities are and when and where they are going. However, more detailed coordination needs to be worked out every week, as there may be changes in their work schedules or unusual activities.*

*Mille looks up from the calendar on her phone. “I'm going to Jutland this weekend”, she says, “I won't be home until Sunday evening; the train arrives at 8 pm. You're to eat without me”. Henrik nods. “It's gonna be a packed one next week”, he declares, and continues, “I think we have to move or cancel dinner club on Thursday or you have to begin without me if I have to go to that parent-teacher thing”. On top of the two unusual activities, they have the normal weekly activity schedule of swimming lesson Monday, gymnastics Tuesday and Friday, play date Wednesday, dinner club Thursday and (usually) shopping Saturday. While this pattern is fairly consistent, who escorts the kids is more fluid, as it also depends on the parents' work schedules. “So can you pick up Emma and drive her to swimming tomorrow?” Henrik asks. “You can take the car; I'll bike if it isn't raining”. Mille looks at her calendar again. “Is it at 4? I might have a meeting; I'm not sure I can make it. I'll see if mom or dad can take Emma to swimming”. “Sure...I think I have to work late Wednesday”, Henrik states. “No problem, as long as I've got the car”, Mille replies with a grin. Both of the parents can make due without the car, but when it comes to the children, their after-school activities and ad-hoc play dates are far easier with the car. Thus*

*usually the car follows the children, except when Mille's parents, who have two cars, help out. "Is Mathilde's father driving them to gymnastics Tuesday?" Henrik inquires. "Yeah, I think so; I'll call him tomorrow". Henrik sighs, "It's gonna be a busy week..." as he gets up and hangs the family activity planner back on the fridge.*

*(Based on P1 and P2 interviews with the Bach family)*

#### *Ordering in family taskscapes*

This brief vignette speaks to the relational dimension of mobility labour. Besides making movement possible, mobility labour is about making the individual mobility practices part of greater wholes, in which mobility bridges or connects various arenas in everyday family life. In this regard we start to see how choices of mode, route and timing in the making of mobility practices are relationally restricted and embedded in complex taskscapes that reach beyond the individual.

Across the empirical material in this study, the families reported of tightly packed everyday activity schedules that necessitated negotiation and coordination. However, the extent and level of detail of this planning and coordinative labour differ widely amongst the families. Most of them had a set of fixed activities that were repeated in weekly patterns. Such stable socio-temporal ordering in the family taskscape greatly aids the family in coordinating their weekly activities and making their spacing and timing achievable (Shove 2002, p. 5). In the family, in the vignette above, this socio-temporal ordering of the family taskscape is quite strong and prescribes most of their activities, their location and sequencing. This order often becomes, as Shove points to, a "'social fact' that exists beyond the [individual family member]" (p. 5). Hence, the part of the mobility labour that has to do with pre-travelling efforts relies heavily on experience, existing socio-temporal patterns and ordering of activities. If everything were to be re-negotiated and re-coordinated from scratch from week to week, the resources and energy required in planning and coordinating everyday family life would indeed be insurmountable.

Hence, with point of departure in this socio-temporal order, the family can be said to have a *baseline* organisation of the family taskscape from which negotiation and planning of the specificities of weaving in unusual activities (i.e. weekend trips or parent-teacher conferences) or changing recurring activities (i.e. working late or cancellation of family activities) take place. The scope of this negotiation and coordination is not only the family's activity schedule; it is also, as Peters, Kloppenburg and Wyatt (2010) stress, directly tied to the coordination of the "geographies of network members", such as family members and significant others, "but also of their temporalities" (p. 353). Hence the planning and coordination of a family taskscape requires taking into account the spatial distribution and temporal synchronisation of family members in relation to others and their respective practices and activities.

Therefore, when planning and coordinating as in the vignette above, the family is attempting to weave a *virtual* family taskscape by matching geographies, sequencing and aligning rhythms of family members and their practices and activities in everyday life, to

be actualised in the week to come. The family members' individual mobility practices play an intricate role here because they are instrumental in making the whole family taskscape come together and function. The pre-travel mobility labour is concerned with the everyday rhythms and patterns of activities that shape family life. For instance, Mille's working hours: her late meeting is irreconcilable with Emma's after-school swimming lesson, which means another constellation is necessary. Hence juggling and achieving resonance among the multiple rhythms of working hours, opening hours, bus schedules, rush hour, naptimes, dinnertime and so on is a crucial part of planning and coordinating the family's mobility practices.

Furthermore, the pre-travel labour of making the family's mobility practices also involves detailed planning and coordination of a wealth of non-human materialities, infrastructures and things. The particular spacing and timing of the family's transport modes, bikes, cars, travel equipment, auto chairs, bike trailers, helmets, season tickets, bags, tablets, laptops, etc. is likewise negotiated and coordinated, as these are integral and essential elements in mobility practices and, ultimately, in the successful accomplishment of the family's everyday life. The scarcity of these material resources such as the car or bike trailer makes careful negotiation and strategic planning of the material configuration of mobility practices necessary. Illustrating this, the parents in one family explain how the car is a vital element in their everyday planning:

*Father: Often it's them [the children] who decide it [their mobility], I think. It's the one who picks up who has the car. That's the classic way of deciding.*

*Mother: I think it's all about what you have to do. Who you have to pick up and what it is, how many children you have to bring home, it's always related to that.*

*Father: And if you have to drive them somewhere afterwards, right. If you are doing the 'gymnastics-round' [an arrangement with other parents to bring and pick up all the children to and from gymnastics practice].*

...

*Mother: I actually think it is a very deliberate choice every morning what transport mode each of us chooses.*

*Father: Often it's ... well it's a negotiation, 'I drive there' or you agree on something.*

*Mother: But it relies very much upon what is going to happen during the day. In reality, the number one argument is really logistics. Family logistics of how we are going to transport ourselves during the day.*

(Bach Family P2)

Depending on the specificities of the particular day—time schedules, activities, practicalities and obligations—they plan and coordinate the particular configuration of

the accompanying mobility practices to suit these conditions. As this couple states, modal choice is a deliberate and relational decision, which needs to fit into the “logistics” of the entire family.

*Pre-travel mobility labour as a kind of “emotional work”*

Additionally, as the family’s everyday mobility serves do not only serve an instrumental purpose but is also a potential social and emotional site of care, togetherness, intimacy, contemplation and relaxation (Jensen, Sheller & Wind 2015, Holdsworth 2012), the labour involved in planning, negotiating and coordinating mobility practices can also be understood as a kind of ‘emotional work’ (Morgan 2011, p. 113) that besides from render movement from a to b possible also take part in establishing and sustaining the emotional and social relations between family members. Practical and emotional aspects in the family members’ mobility practices are often deeply interrelated, and particular socio-material configurations as enacting co-presence and togetherness in mobility or coupling the car with the children, as seen above, is as much about ironing out practicalities as it is about enacting care and a sense of family (Wind 2014).

The mobility labour involved in planning and organising everyday family mobility, as explored in this section, mostly concerns the broader strokes of making and maintaining a family taskscape that is capable of successfully accomplishes everyday family life. On an overall basis it deals with the timing and spacing of family members and materialities, however, to further explicate or elucidate the family members’ effort and labour involved in making of the individual mobility practices in greater detail we will next turn to moment of setting out.

### Setting out: Imagining the destination and fortifying against disruptions

As departure closes in on carefully spaced and timed mobility practices, family members are tasked with further preparatory labour such as mentally preparing, gathering things for the journey, bag-packing, recharging mobile phones, checking timetables and itineraries, putting on suitable clothing, buying a coffee to go, saying goodbyes, to ensure successful journeys. Whether the journey is biking to work, driving to the local grocery store or having dinner with another family, one usually has a good sense of the interrelating mobility practices that are going to be performed. Rarely does one simply step out of the door completely unprepared, unsure of where to go, how to get there or why one is going. The making of a journey, an ordinary mobility practice or road trip vacation, it always starts with an idea, or, as Watts (2008) writes, the “imaginary work of creating the destination” (p. 713). From this, working backwards from this potential destination, one formulates an “‘umbrella plan’, an idiosyncratic constellation ... of stylistic, functional, procedural and economic considerations” (Ingold 2011, p. 54). The umbrella plan is the local and situational guidance of the yet-to-come performance of mobility.

It is often routinised to such a degree that little thought is necessary. Nonetheless, there are often deviations from or alterations to the trivial performance of mobility that need

to be incorporated into mobility practice assemblage. Often there may be local and temporal events such as scheduled roadwork, a postponed meeting or having to run an errand on the way, that might affect the configuration of the mobility practice. However, leaving the cognitive realm of the imagination, the preparatory labour that goes into making a mobility practice, as Ingold states, is a “mundane practical activity ... rather than a purely intellectual, ‘inside-the-head’ exercise” (p. 54). To illustrate this labour we will turn to the vignette from the empirical material of the mother Sigrid:

*SCENE 11:*

*It is early morning. Sigrid is running around the house. The others are still sleeping. She is gathering her things and packing a large handbag—the usual: phone, money, bus season ticket, makeup, hairbrush, work-related papers and laptop. With some room still left, she crams a lightweight paperback novel into the bag for killing time. She glances at the departure time on the printed train ticket and carefully folds it and puts it in the side pocket for easy access. She goes over the plan in her head: catch a bus, then track 5, carriage 72, window seat 12 in the quiet zone. She more or less knows the timetables of the bus, but double checks online anyway, just to be sure. She just needs her keys. They’re not on their usual spot; she searches some other bags and coats in the hallway. She tries to mentally backtrack to the whereabouts of her keys, without luck. Sigrid is going to Jutland for work, back and forth in one day. Her train departs from the central train station in Copenhagen in approximately 40 minutes. There is still time for finding the damn keys. Getting there by bus at this time of day takes only 15 minutes. Sigrid hates to be late and in a hurry, especially when it comes to taking the train. Usually she likes to have 15-20 minutes as a buffer, just to be able to snitch and take a taxi or bike if the bus doesn’t show up or if something extraordinary happens. As she walks into the kitchen to grab some fruit, her eyes catches the keys sticking out from underneath a magazine. If the bus is on time it will be there in a couple of minutes. She quickly scans the hallway hoping she remembered everything. She locks the door and strides down the stairs and into the street.*

*(Based upon P1 interview with Sørensen family)*

This pre-travel effort of setting out highlights some of the key moments of the umbrella planning and preparatory labour that family members may engage in prior to departure. As Jain (2009) puts it, “crossing the threshold of home, work, place of study or other point of departure, travellers are equipped for the journey (albeit in varying states)” (p. 96). Usually family members perform a sequence of (often ritualised) acts and a gathering of things important and indispensable to the mobility practice and/or the destination. For instance, as Sigrid is leaving home she packs a bag with essentials such as her wallet, phone, keys, season ticket for the train, a novel and make-up; she also brings necessary things related to work. Often packing also involves bringing *transitional objects*, things that hold affective value and that may ease the transition of travelling (Ferguson 2009). For children this may be a favourite toy, while for adults it may be a specific album of music on the iPod, a special coffee mug, or, as in Sigrid’s case, a good novel. Prior to departure, various practical acts, such as putting on suitable clothes, checking oneself in the mirror, saying goodbye, double checking that everything is locked, turning off lights and (for many, like Sigrid) running around looking for misplaced items, are a systemic part of getting out the door. There are often many such small acts associated with leaving home that in themselves form small-scale taskscapes that need to be accomplished to ensure a

successful journey. Other places of departure have different sets of particular acts related to them. At work, these might be shutting down the computer, punching out and remembering personal items; at kindergarten these might be retrieving the empty lunchbox and finding a staff member to say goodbye to and on the bench in the park these might be reduced to looking around for dropped things before leaving. These are acts that serve a practical purpose, as they ensure everything is in order and prepared for departure. Often, however, situated acts associated with departures also take shape as rituals ingrained into family members' mobility performances, not only practically but also mentally and emotionally preparing themselves and others for the imminent transition. Hence pre-travel labour is, in addition to be emotional management of others, also often emotional management of oneself, mentally coping with the anxieties of 'anticipation' or 'suspense', not knowing entirely what the future may bring or how a journey may unfold, that sometimes emerge ahead of setting out (Vannini 2012, p. 186).

#### *Fortifying' mobility practices*

Vannini (2012) writes that alongside anticipation and suspense, 'tension' is a profound phenomenon in everyday mobility. Tension emerges from the 'resistances to free movement', the mobile subject might experience when encountering disruptions on the move (p. 186ff). However, for travellers who are aware of many such events and know of their disruptive potential, a major part of the pre-travel labour revolves around anticipating disturbances and pre-emptively accommodating looming tensions in their journey to come. By doing so, the family member attempts to *fortify* his or her mobility practices by making them as resilient and flexible as possible. Some of the prime tactics family members in the empirical material rely on in fortifying their mobility are installation of reserve time buffers, crafting specialised material coalitions and gathering knowledge and codified information. In the following, each of these will be unpacked. Sigrid explains during an interview how, depending on the destination, family members incorporate time buffers into their pending mobility performances:

*It has to do with the fact that I hate being late. If I have to do something work-related then I plan it thoroughly. I like to be at the train station at least 20 minutes before the train departs in case something unexpected should happen. ... Typically I'd check the bus schedule, choosing a departure that would allow me to have time for taking the bike, a taxi or something else [and still make it in time]. I think a lot about making things fit together. Also, we have to be at the school [dropping off the children] at 8 in the mornings, and then it's important to get out of the door, but everything else can be loosely planned, unless you have something work-related early in the morning...*

(Jensen Family P1)

In inserting extra time, family members are able to 'exchange' (Peters, Kloppenburg and Wyatt 2010, p. 363) reserve time in the event of unforeseen disruptions and delays, and thereby negotiate their journey without compromising their destination. Depending on the activity—school, the departure of a train, etc.—time buffers or safety margins are

configured differently. “The length of these safety margins”, Schwanen (2008) notes, “is traded against the expected travel time and penalty of late arrival” (p. 997).

Besides utilising time as a protective resource, family members fortify their future mobility performances through the inclusion of materialities in their mobility practices. For instance parents might carefully furnish mobility practices with child seats and bike trailers or equip their children with season travel tickets, money and mobile phones as effective measures for averting disruptions to mobility performances (see Schwanen (2008) for excellent account of sharing bike seats in family life). Modes of transport are also material resources for fortification. Depending on the particular conditions in the urban family’s life and the sequence, timing and geography of activities, different modes hold varying capacities for absorbing contingencies. Some family members prefer the car as *the kit* in everyday life (as in the prior section), while others prefer the bike. However, fortification of mobility in the family is not an individual endeavour, but a relational achievement as resources are negotiated and shared across the family. Sometimes, allowing for more liability in one mobility performance can be part of fortifying other higher prioritised and more vulnerable mobility performances, and therefore be beneficial to the welfare of the entire family:

*Both of us can manage one way or the other without the car. That means it’s the needs of the children that decide who has the car. I can just as well take the train if Mille [the mother] needs to use the car.*

(Bach Family P2)

All of the families in the sample have similar statements (however stronger in the families with younger more dependent children). Pre-travel labour of planning and coordination is a collective achievement in which it is not “atomised individuals that manage uncertainty about the duration of activities and trips, but rather, assemblages of agents” (Schwanen 2008, p. 999). Family members (and often significant others) have a joint responsibility in accomplishing everyday life and they, parents in particular, often work hard to ensure relatively safe and unhindered passage for all family members, which typically only is possible through making compromises and accepting sometimes less-than-optimal conditions for the individual. This further underscores the notion that mobility practices are not simply instrumental processes but emotional work and also a medium for enacting care in the family.

Finally, the preparatory labour of fortifying mobility often includes gathering knowledge and information prior to departure. This entails checking calendars, plans, itineraries, timetables, connections, schedules and appointments. To the experienced mobile subject, such as Sigrid, such details are mostly common or even tacit knowledge. Nonetheless they are often double-checked, as minor mistakes or misreading can easily jeopardise and destabilise entire mobility practices. This is done by consulting or confirming with others, or, as Sigrid does, by retrieving ‘codified information’ from transportation timetables, travel scheduling websites, route planners, wayfinding apps and so on (Peters, Kloppenburg and Wyatt 2010, p. 361). Although this labour prior to departure is often

miniscule, as most travellers have extensive knowledge and experience of their mobility practices, it should not be diminished, as it is essential in both preparing and fortifying everyday journeys. Hence the mobility labour prior to setting out is of the utmost importance for the successful accomplishment of family mobility. Drawing on past experiences, the family members' preparatory efforts at fortification effectively make room for manoeuvring that in the event of disruption or breakdown can be utilised as a resource to reconfigure and redirect the trajectory of the mobility performance as the mobile situation unfolds (Peters, Kloppenburg and Wyatt 2010, p. 363).

*The accomplishment of 'setting out'*

As Sigrid steps out the door of the family's apartment, a new stage in her mobility performance begins. Setting out is a crucial moment in any journey. This is when all preparatory labour of umbrella planning, gathering of stuff, last-minute configuration, coordination and retrieving information is put into motion and actualised in the performance of mobility. Ingold (2011) points to this transition as a critical one, "at which rehearsal ends and performance begins" (p. 54). The departure is a liminal stage in the performance of mobility in which the body is both physically and mentally set into motion, "marked by a switch of perspective, from the encompassing view of the umbrella plan to a narrow focus [on the journey unfolding]" (p. 54).

The setting out in everyday mobility practices often marks a *point of no return*. The plan has been set in motion and mobility performance has begun; the mobile subject quickly becomes practically *locked in* and has to proceed, at least to the next train station, bus stop or traffic junction, where one can get off or circle round. A turnaround, however, does not come without cost, as everyday mobility performances are normally tightly temporally and spatially emplaced amongst other activities and practices, and cannot easily be untangled without disturbing the order of the family taskscape. Altering the trajectory and reconfiguring mobility practices after setting out is often troublesome and may result in missing a train or a connection, being late for an activity or cancelling one altogether, depending on the installed safety margins.

Hence, as family members set off on their everyday journeys and their preparatory mobility labour is set into motion the preconceived plan often starts to liquefy. The moment one step out the door, all the planning and coordination changes from a coherent and theoretical construct into an open, practical and processual engagement with the world. Although the umbrella plan is highly attentive to the family's actual situation and usually takes all kinds of circumstances, needs and wishes into consideration, mobility practices seldom play out completely as expected. No matter how complex it may be, an umbrella plan is at best tentative. Yet, when reversal and reconfiguration of mobility practices happen, it is usually negotiated through the exchange of resources in the mobility practice that have been carefully implanted through umbrella planning. By looking into this pre-travel mobility labour we are able to see that skills, knowledge and efforts involved in accomplishing everyday mobility, whether it is merely getting to a destination in time, escorting children, evoking togetherness, working while moving or relaxing with a good book in the train like Sigrid,

is not achieved solely in the actual mobility performance but equally secured in the immense preparatory and pre-travel mobility labour family members conduct.

### Concluding remarks

The principal understanding in this paper has been that making and performing everyday mobility (in particular in the family) is based upon extensive and intensive labour conducted by mobile subjects and this should be studied not only as something that happens during actual embodied performances, but also as taking place prior to any movement. The concept of mobility labour as a tentative analytical tool capable of inquiring into the planning, coordinating, negotiating and preparatory efforts in making everyday mobility has been proposed and illustrated through a study of family mobility in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The theoretical tenets underlying the concept of mobility labour, drawing together lines of thinking from both mobilities studies and nonrepresentational studies, points to a profound relational, material and vitalist understanding of both mobility practices as hybrid assemblages as well as skilful and embodied performances. This theoretical framework has allowed the paper to inquire into the making processes of everyday family mobility and elucidate how mobility practices are created and sustained in the socio-material context of other family members together with artefacts, modes of transport and material urban environments.

By zooming into the empirical material and the family members' actual pre-travel labour, the paper has brought insights into the spatio-temporal ordering of family members, equipment and mobility resources, activities and other practices in family taskscapes as well as the practical preparations of conceiving umbrella plans and fortifying mobility practices just prior to departures. Moreover, by diving into the empirical material, the paper also argues for multiple understandings of the family's mobility labour as it can both be approached as a practically effort in accomplishing everyday life but also as emotional work involved providing care and enacting family and finally it can be understood as emotional management of oneself mentally coping with travel time, anxieties and tensions emerging in everyday journeys.

Finally mobility labour, as proposed in this paper, should not be seen as a finished concept, rather the notion of mobility labour is tentative rather than definitive and in this paper it has acted as merely an analytical vessel carrying the analysis and conversation on some of the less noticed or understudied aspects of everyday mobility in the mobilities literature. Obviously, within the strict confines of the paper format choices have been made and only a fraction of the extensive efforts that are involved in making and performing everyday mobility (and consequences hereof) have been visited. Hence, the pre-travel efforts of planning and preparing mobility practices elucidated in this paper do far from exhaust the potential content of mobility labour and as a pragmatist thinking tool, mobility labour should be understood as open to further development.

Although not within the scope of this paper, mobilities research has a general and overall obligation of tending to societal and environmental issues and complexities. Following this ideal, future work on everyday (family) mobility could, through using the mobility labour concept, inquire into matters of inequality, gender and disempowerment of women, children, youngsters and seniors in families. Moreover, pursuing the research agenda on pollution, congestion and sustainable mobility, the mobility labour concept could also be applied in gaining a better understanding of the relational and contextual nature of mobility practices that potentially challenges swift sustainable transitioning into greener modal choices. Loosely tied into this, there is perhaps also an opportunity for using mobility labour to open dialogue, as what Cresswell (2012) call a 'contact point' (p. 645) between studies of everyday mobilities and transportation modelling. This means challenging, discussing and (dis)qualifying the preconceptions and understandings underlying much of the transportation modelling that provide forecasts and decision support for politicians and policy makers. And hopefully, in doing so, it is possible to provide even better and broader knowledge foundations for the major decisions and investments in transport systems and infrastructure that are crucial for a more sustainable future.

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