Mobilities Design
– towards a new research field

Professor Ole B. Jensen
PhD Student Ditte Bendix Lanng
Plan of presentation

1. Designing Mobilities
2. Thinking Mobilities
3. Staging Mobilities
4. Exploring Mobilities Design
5. Mobilities Design Group
Ole B. Jensen

Professor of Urban Theory
Department of Architecture and Media Technology, Aalborg University, Denmark.
BA in Political Science, MA in Sociology, PhD in Planning.

Co-founder and board member at the Center for Mobilities and Urban Studies (C-MUS), Aalborg University.
Co-founder and Coordinator of the Mobilities Design Group (MDG) at C-MUS.
Task Force Member in the Cosmobilities Network.

Main research interests are within Urban Mobilities, Urban Networked Technologies, and Performative Environments.

Co-author of Making European Space. Mobility, Power and Territorial Identity, Routledge, 2004 (with Tim Richardson)
Author of Staging Mobilities, Routledge, 2013.

Homepage: http://personprofil.aau.dk/Profil/104214

Ditte Bendix Lanng

Ph.D. fellow, Urban Design
Department of Architecture and Media Technology, Aalborg University, Denmark.
Cand. polyt. (MSc) Urban Design.

Member of Center for Mobilities and Urban Studies (C-MUS).
Co-founder and Co-coordinator of the Mobilities Design Group (MDG) at C-MUS.

Worked at UN Studio, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Effekt, Copenhagen, Denmark; Beijing Xingsheng, Beijing, China; Rødovre Kommune, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Home page: http://tinyurl.com/bgxzrs7
1. Designing Mobilities
CMT = P + P
2. Thinking Mobilities

The Mobilities Turn
What is the 'Mobilities Turn'?

Mobility is more than A to B, i.e. mobility is also the production of culture and identity.

Mobility means to move beyond 'transport'.

The Mobilities turn questions an 'instrumental only' understanding of movement (e.g. Transport = Costs).

The Mobilities Turn opens the black box of transport.

by hock http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3
A Cross-disciplinary gaze
From mono-centric order to multiplex complexity
A relational sense of place and mobilities

Buildings, sites, cities and regions are always only something due to their relational couplings to other places.

Mobility is the key to the nature of the relation.

Problem: Is the place switched off?

Potential: Could new couplings be made?
“Consider a house, and a street, for example. The house has six storeys and an air of stability about it. One might almost see it as the epitome of immovability, with its concrete and its stark, cold and rigid outlines. (Built around 1950: no metal or plate glass yet). Now, a critical analysis would doubtless destroy the appearance of solidity of this house, stripping it, as it were, of its concrete slabs and its thin non-load-bearing walls, which are really glorified screens, and uncovering a very different picture. In the light of this imaginary analysis, our house would emerge as permeated from every direction by streams of energy which run in and out of every imaginable route: water, gas, electricity, telephone lines, radio and television signals, and so on. Its image of immobility would then be replaced by an image of a complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits. By depicting this convergence of waves and currents, this new image, much more accurately than any drawing or photograph, would at the same time disclose the fact that this piece of ‘immovable property’ is actually a two-faceted machine analogous to an active body: at once a machine calling for massive energy supplies, and an information-based machine with low energy requirements. The occupants of the house perceive, receive and manipulate the energies which the house itself consumes on a massive scale (for the lift, kitchen, bathroom etc.)”

(Lefebvre 1974/91:92-93)
Power and competing mobilities rationales
Mobilities and contestation
Mobilities matter

**Light Traffic**
- 3.0 friends per person
- 6.3 acquaintances

**Moderate Traffic**
- 1.3 friends per person
- 4.1 acquaintances

**Heavy Traffic**
- 0.9 friends per person
- 3.1 acquaintances
3. Staging Mobilities
Towards an analytical vocabulary

‘Staging’ is a dramaturgical metaphor derived from the work of Erving Goffman (e.g. front stage/ backstage)

It does NOT mean that social life IS a theatre, but that we may understand it AS theatre

Avoid conflating epistemology with ontology!!
Ten pointers for future mobilities research

1. Mobilities must be thought of in plural
2. There is no singular discipline for understanding mobilities
3. Thinking mobilities does NOT turn everything into flows
4. Think relationally about place
5. Rehabilitate and Politicise the armature
6. Encourage Mobilities Potential Thinking
7. Understand the 'Dark Sides' of Mobilities
8. Explore ‘Mobilities Design’
9. Mobile pragmatics
10. It all comes together ‘in situ’

4. Exploring Mobilities Design

The design of mundane transit spaces
- How does it feel to travel through a tunnel?
The functional plan

Organisation of transport and other urban functions

CIAM 1933
SCAFT 1968

Zoning
Traffic segregation

Rational and instrumental logics
*frozen* in asphalt and concrete

Pedestrian/bicyclist tunnel in functionalist suburban district, Aalborg East, Denmark
Land use
Aalborg East

1/3 = Destinations
- buildings
- gardens
- recreational areas

1/3 = Access spaces
- roads
- pathways
- parking lots

1/3 = In-between spaces
- verges
- unprogrammed areas
Functionalist transit space design

- Critique and Constructive Vision

The transported traveler - utilitarian-only transport agenda
Desensitizing environments, placelessness, suburban anti-city
Wayfaring

- perform journeys: “a mundane but meaningfully ritualistic and artful practice which creates occasions for unique interaction settings and relationships”
- when wayfaring “life is lived”

Philip Vannini (2012) Ferry Tales
Dwelling—in—motion

“[b]eing-on-the-move is a contemporary everyday life condition in the city”

Ole B. Jensen (2009): 
‘Flows of Meaning, Cultures of Movement – Urban Mobility as Meaningful Everyday Life Practice’
Multi-sensorial encounters

“Physical travel involves lumpy, fragile, gendered, racialized bodies encountering other bodies, objects and the physical world multi-sensuously”

Sites of entangled journeys

- “continually practiced and performed through the movement and enfolding of a myriad of people and things”

Cresswell and Merriman (2011) Geographies of Mobilities – Practices, Spaces, Subjects
(Tunnel) design

- "a way of producing additional attachments that make a variety of actors congregate, forming different groupings and assembling social diversity. Tracing networks with wood, steel, polished surfaces and blinking signals, bip-bing doors and blinking elevator buttons, design connects us differently, linking disparate heterogeneous elements and effects, thus entering a game of producing, adjusting and enacting the social."

Måløv Aksen
Denmark
Adept Architects

Pijnaker Tunnel
The Netherlands
Nio Architekten

Ekko
Denmark
Thilo Frank
Mundane activities – between wayfarers and tunnel

- "These moments are made possible by specific conjunctions of experiential corporealities and material surroundings. The physicality of the city constantly interacts, supports and collides with our bodies. And our bodies respond, go along with, or ignore these environmental affordances."

Degen, Rose, Basdas (2010) ‘Bodies and everyday practices in designed urban environments’, p.60
Identifying gestures – moments on the way

Sheltered by the roof
Anxiety inside the narrow dark passage
Casual and sunny break above the tunnel entrance

A film-elicitation study of the journey home from school

R + D, 13 and 14y old
“There is not always light in there. And, when there is light, you cannot see out. Well, and there are also motorbikes and such which drive in [...] There can for example be afterparties [...] and then you get: Ooh, let's hope they are not drunk. Or, let's hope they are not looking for trouble [...] Well, you don't know - you can't exactly see what's on the other side of the tunnel, and you get like: phew! - the heart skips a few beats.”

(D. 14 years old, follow-up interview 05.07.12)
Re-design studies: architectural gestures

the tunnel as a social environment and sensory fabric
Tunnel dimensions

Could we imagine a body-space proportional caress, and daylight reaching far into the tunnel interior, inviting our comfortable passage - slow by foot or faster by bike?
Tunnel materials

Could we imagine some smoothness and warmth to the tunnel interior, some inclination to its wall inviting us to lean upon it and pause in conversation during an in-the-tunnel encounter?
Tunnel edges

Could we imagine to knit the tunnel closely with the surrounding urban fabric, some soft and smooth transitions, inviting both entries and exits during continuous journeys?
Tunnel lighting

Could we imagine weaving the interior intimate passage with the open space paths on either side - some lit continuity, inviting nighttime journeys?
Transit space design

Architecture which welcomes your 'dwelling-in-motion'

Functionality
Safe and efficient traffic

Journeys - wayfaring ways of life
The journey experience - consideration for activities, materials, form and space on the way

Public space
Invitations to engage in urban life and meet others on the way
5. Mobilities Design Group

MDG has as the key focal point real-life, material and situational mobilities.

MDG works across methodologies and across disciplines, e.g. cultural analysis, communication studies, sociology, architecture, traffic planning, urban design, traffic engineering, digital technology, interaction design.

www.c-mus.aau.dk
Travel can be a pleasure!

“Travelling is traditionally considered an unfortunate necessity, a ‘waste of time’ to be minimized. Yet recreational travel is widespread, and ordinary routes could easily be designed to make travelling a delight, and not just a necessity.”

Lynch, Kevin (1990)
*City Sense and City Design*, p.779
“[Designed artifacts] can mold the decisions we make, influence the effects of our actions and change the way we move through the world... [Actor-Network Theory] examines how objects with their scripts and incorporated programs of action compel and rearticulate new social ties, how the way they are shaped and designed is related to specific ways of enacting the social.”

Coming soon