

# Invitation to PhD defence

## GESTURING ENTANGLED JOURNEYS MOBILITIES DESIGN IN AALBORG EAST, DENMARK

by Ditte Bendix Lannig

### Time and location

Thursday May 21, 2015 at 1 p.m.

Aalborg University  
Rendsburggade 14 - room 3.329  
9000 Aalborg

### Assessment Committee

Associate Professor Claus Lassen, Aalborg University,  
Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology (chairman)

Professor Lars Marcus, Chalmers University of Technology,  
Department of Architecture

Professor Monika Büscher, Lancaster University,  
Centre for Mobilities Research, Department of Sociology

### PhD supervisors

Professor Ole B. Jensen, Aalborg University,  
Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology

Associate Professor Henrik Harder, Aalborg University,  
Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology

The thesis is a result of a PhD study at Aalborg University's  
Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology.  
The study is part of the research project 'Aalborg Øst – en forstad i forandring' ('Aalborg East - a suburb  
in transformation') co-financed by the Danish funds Realdania and Obel Fonden, and local housing  
organisations Lejerbo and Himmerland.

Questions can be directed to Senior Secretary Lisbeth Dam,  
tel. +45 99403603, e-mail: [ldam@create.aau.dk](mailto:ldam@create.aau.dk).

Following the defence the Department of Architecture, Design  
and Media Technology will host a reception.



## Abstract



The PhD thesis examines mundane transit spaces in the city. Through a study of a tunnel and a parking lot in Aalborg East, Denmark, the thesis focuses on how we can understand and re-design functionalist transit spaces in the suburbs, spaces that tend to be criticised for their monotonous design and for being desensitised, placeless environments with little cultural and social value.

This critique is acknowledged in the thesis, but it is also challenged by asking whether these transit spaces could, in fact, be some of our cherished public spaces. The thesis explores how social and sensorial mobile situations, which are part of the (seemingly) trivial transport in transit spaces, can be accounted for in the yet-to-be of transit spaces. Transit spaces have potential as valued urban spaces with an architecture that invites us to move in it, inhabit it, use it, and touch it.

Through interviews conducted on-the-move in transit spaces, the thesis explores what happens between point A and point B during daily life journeys to and from school, work, shopping, and other destinations. Along these journeys life is lived in transit spaces. While wayfarers are on the move they are also dwelling-in-motion. They meet, experience, and do things while on the way to their destinations. The thesis examines how these activities and experiences entangle with the modest architectures of the selected transit spaces - how architectures co-condition mobile situations. These insights into small and unnoticed mobile situations are used in re-design experiments, which explore potential architectures of the suburban functionalist transit spaces to not only invite safe and effective transport but also gesture towards a richness of wayfaring ways of life.

The empirical and experimental work was developed in a reciprocal relationship with an integrated theoretical perspective on transit spaces. The thesis aims to supplement the rational functionalist logics of traffic planning with a combination of insights from social scientific mobilities research and from the discipline of urban design. Mobilities research offers a nuanced knowledge of daily life transport, appreciating it as embodied, social, and cultural mobilities. It offers concepts to understand the journeys and the mobile situations, and it contributes with a mobile ethnographic method to inquire into how wayfarers encounter transit space architectures in multisensorial and diverse ways. Urban design offers insights and tools to work with public space architectures. Urban design is an architectural approach that addresses city design in interdisciplinary ways. With the integrated perspective on transit spaces developed in the thesis yet another interdisciplinary layer to urban design is proposed – one that works from insights in lives lived in transit spaces to strengthen their architectural qualities.

On the basis of these empirical and theoretical inquiries the thesis contributes to an articulation of a new interdisciplinary field in research and practice termed 'mobilities design'. This field works with a cross-verbalisation between design thinking and mobilities in order to produce knowledge for the future of spaces, structures, and systems of mobilities. The thesis offers concepts and tools to a forward-looking work that supplements the functional efficiency of transit spaces with modest architectural gestures towards life on the move. The two design experiments expose concrete potentials for how the concrete and the asphalt of the tunnel and the parking lot can be enriched with a renewed consideration for multi-sensorial materialities. Thus, the thesis contributes to a rethinking of spatial qualities and mobile urban life in the ordinary suburb with an interdisciplinary approach to the re-design of ubiquitous transit spaces.