

Invitation to PhD defense

Making Everyday Mobility

- a qualitative study of family mobility in Copenhagen

by Simon Wind

Time:

Monday the 10th of November 2014 at 13.00

Location:

Rendsburggade 14, 9000 Aalborg - room 3.329

The dissertation is a result of a PhD study at the Department of Architecture, Design and Mediatechnology, Aalborg University, Denmark. The study is part of the project 'Analysis of activity-based travel chains and sustainable mobility' (ACTUM), hosted by the Technical University of Denmark in a strategic research alliance with Aalborg University. The project is funded by the Danish Strategic Research Council.



Assessment Committee:

Associate Prof. Lea Louise Holst Laursen, Aalborg University, Denmark

Senior Lecturer Eric Laurier, University of Edinburgh, England

Chief Research Sociologist Randi Hjorthol, Centre for Transport Research, Norway

PhD Supervisors:

Professor Ole B. Jensen

Associate Professor Claus Lassen

Both from the Department of Architecture, Design and Mediatechnology, Aalborg University, Denmark.

After the defense, the Dept. of Architecture, Design & Media Technology will host a reception.

Questions can be directed to Senior Secretary Lisbeth Dam on Tlf.: +45 99403603,
e-mail: ldam@create.aau.dk

Summery:

This PhD thesis concerns the everyday mobility of 11 families with children living in the Greater Copenhagen Area. The study is empirically based on a series of qualitative family interviews and GPS tracking, complemented by field studies of everyday family mobility. The main focus of this qualitative study is to explore how everyday mobility is associated with the family's processes of coping with busy everyday family life. The overall research question and the three sub-questions that are approached in the study are:

How are selected families in the Greater Copenhagen Area coping with practical, social and emotional conditions in everyday life through the making and performance of mobility practices?

- (i) How can the family's mobility practices and the coping processes in everyday life be theoretically conceptualised?*
- (ii) How can qualitative family interviewing, GPS tracking, mental map making and ethnographic field studies be used to gain insight into how family members make and perform everyday mobility, the meanings ascribe to mobility and the sensorial and emotional experiences it affords?*
- (iii) How can qualitative knowledge of everyday family mobility contribute to quantitative approaches to and knowledge of everyday family mobility as produced in academic fields such as transport geography and transport and traffic planning, as well as provide insights for policy decision support in the areas of harriedness and stress as a tendency in contemporary everyday family life?*

People in contemporary Danish society, and in particular families with children, lead busy lives. Experiences of feeling harried, time squeezed and stressed are becoming increasingly a normal part of everyday family life. Family life is characterised by balancing complex schedules of geographically dispersed activities and tending to the social and emotional needs and wishes of the family by carving out time for quality family time and togetherness. This study's primary research aim is to produce knowledge and understanding of the role mobility plays in coping with practical, social and emotional conditions of everyday family life. Secondly, the thesis aims to discuss how such qualitative knowledge of everyday family mobility can contribute to the ACTUM project and provide decision support for transport policy making.

Through the analysis of the 11 families and their everyday mobility, the thesis elucidates the how the family members through their mundane quotidian mobility performances, such as commuting to work, escorting children to the kindergarten, going on the weekly visit to the grandparents, driving children to after-school activities, etc., are not only instrumentally moving family members around, efficiently and safely getting them from point A to point B, but also transforming travel time into small pockets of togetherness, experiences, care, play, relaxation, reading, work, planning and coordination. Furthermore, the thesis addresses the extensive labour, mobility skills and practical knowledge used by the family members in continually crafting and sustaining their practical, social and emotional usages of everyday family mobility.

