Mobile encounters: bus 5A as a cross-cultural meeting place

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Abstract

The paper explores modes of encounters in the everyday practice of bus travel. Particularly, it addresses cross-cultural encounters located in the tension between familiarity and difference, between inclusion and exclusion. The paper is located in contemporary thoughts, approaching public transport not only as a moving device but also as a social arena. Furthermore, the bus is simultaneously perceived as a public space, at once composite, contradictory and heterogeneous, and as a meeting place involving 'Throwntogetherness'. The encounters analysed are bodily, emotional charged and outspoken meetings between passengers, with the socio-materiality of the bus and drivers as co-riders and gatekeepers.

Keywords: encounter; public transport; mobile methodologies; bus travel

Introduction

To travel by bus is not simply transport from one place to another (Jensen 2009). Public transport is a part of everyday life in the city, and for many, a necessary banal aspect of everyday routine that is not experienced in isolation. While travelling, we become part of a mobile collective; becoming a passenger always involves a 'being with' (Adey and Bissell 2010). Mobility *with* others, therefore, involves relational practices – in bus travel intense embodied encounters with others are often unavoidable. The urban bus is, therefore, an important site of everyday intercultural encounter in the city (Jensen 2009; Wilson 2011).

The aim of this paper was to present the bus as a cross-cultural meeting place and a social arena for complex spatial negotiation of difference. Bus travel often marks 'an onerous breach of class, race and ethnic boundaries' (Hutchinson 2000, 118). Mobile encounters, we argue, are located in the tension between familiarity and difference, between intercultural dialogue and racist intolerance. As a specific icon of public space, the bus is composite, contradictory and heterogeneous, involving multiple prac- tices that are bodily performed and emotionally charged.

The paper is based on ethnographic work carried out in Copenhagen as part of a wider research project on *Paradoxical spaces: Encountering the other in public space.* The aim was to study how the complexity of cultural difference is experienced and practised in public space. In this case, it makes sense of the meetings that take place in the socio-material site of the bus. This renders central the question of the bus as *public* space. Public space is a contested concept (see, for example, Fyfe 1998; Mitchell 2003; Staeheli and Mitchell 2007). A broad definition could be that 'public space is that space where "the public" is formed and thus social and cultural rules governing public behaviour predominate' (Mitchell and Staeheli 2009). Seen from this angle, the bus as public space is a particular space. Not only is it a mobile space, but it is also simultaneously a 'public' space and a highly controlled space. It is controlled by an entrance fee, managed through the formal authority of bus drivers and ticket inspectors; the practices in the bus are regulated through both formal and informal rules of conduct; and the materi- ality of the bus's interior and the seating regulates the opportunities of spatial practice. It is within this complex framework that we explore cross-cultural encounters and the negotiation of difference. How do the passengers manoeuvre in this socio-material environment? How is otherness produced and negotiated? Which emotions do these everyday encounters generate? How are the encounters with the authorities of the territory of

the bus managed? What are the cultural schemes and broader social relations activated in the encounters?

Our concrete case in the paper is bus 5A, which forms a central part of the urban mobility in Copenhagen. With more than 65,000 passengers a day, bus 5A is the busiest route in Copenhagen and the Nordic countries. Day and night, the bus cuts through the streets and connects different parts of the city. Bus 5A is iconic and loved, but also hated among bus drivers who have named it 'the suicidal' route and in everyday language refer to it as 'Slamsugeren' (suction vehicle) because it transports all kinds of people and connects many different places in the city. The bus starts in the suburb (Husum) and connects the multicultural part of Copenhagen (Nørrebro) with the more gentrified inner city and the outskirts of Copenhagen, ending at the airport (Hartmann-Petersen 2009, 2012). Copenhagen car-ownership is relatively low, as only a third of households in Copenhagen have a car (Danmarks Statistik 2005), and a large portion of transport is facilitated by either bike or public transport. This means that public transport is used by various groups and is not directly connected to class. Buses accommodate 72% of all journeys by public transport in the capital region, and a staggering 96% of the passengers suggest that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the bus as a means of transport (Movia 2012). The bus is often slow and crowded in rush hours, which makes it a space of extraordinary intimacy and intense space where bodies are pressed up against each other.

After this introduction, the paper is structured into six parts. First, we provide a methodological discussion. The second and third sections are theoretical contributions, first presenting our under- standing of encounters as producers of similarity and difference and second focusing in particular on mobile encounters. In the fourth, fifth and sixth sections, we develop the empirical analysis. First, we display a range of manoeuvres and tactics among bus passengers involving bodily practices, spatial placement and orientation, and tactical avoidance of contact with 'mobile others'. Second, we explore emotions and negotiations of difference in the encounters and the modes of sociality emerging from them. Finally, based on interviews with bus drivers, we analyse the diverse roles, episodes of conflict and everyday racisms that are part of driver–passenger relations.

Mobile methodologies

The empirical work was inspired by mobile methodologies (Fincham, McGuinness, and Murray 2010) and sensory ethnography (Pink 2009). Sensory ethnography takes its starting point in the multi-senso- riality of experience, perception, knowing and practice. To study everyday movement and mobility in the city is a challenge provoking methodological questions such as: How do we research and represent mobile experiences of passing through and of being in between? How do we study forms of travel that have come to be taken for granted (for example Löfgren 2008). In this article, we employ a strategy of methodological triangulation combining observations, participation and interviews.

The first step we took was actually 'being there', on the bus, at different times of the day and night *observing* what was going on. We conducted the ethnographic fieldwork and observations between 2014 and 2015, spending around eighty hours on the bus making participatory observations. There were always two of us on the bus observing, one situated at the front and the other at the back. In the visual observation, we were particularly interested in bodily encounters (facial and verbal expressions as well as movement and gesture), different kinds of emotion and meanings generated in the encounters – the social relations in the encounters (strange(r)ness and familiarity) and the role of design and materiality of the bus. The visual observation was concerned with meetings between passengers as well as between passengers and the bus driver. We took detailed field notes on the move or immediately after. Then, we shared the field notes among the three of us in order to discuss and interpret them. Since visual observation remains on a more descriptive level, we felt we needed to use other methods as well to achieve a deeper exploration of the meanings, emotions and social relations involved in the encounters. The challenge of observing cross-cultural embodied encounters is that it relies on an unspoken and unreflected 'grammar of difference' produced in the encounters through visible makers of identity such as gender, age, ethnicity and clothing. Therefore, we followed up our observations with on-the-spot interviews consisting informal conversations with passengers either on the move or waiting for the bus and talks with drivers taking a break. These informal dialogues were valuable in the sense that they gave us insight into the way the participants reflected on their own travel practice, reactions and interpretations of different forms of embodied encounters. The on-the-spot interviews also covered the participants' own experiences, conflicts and negotiations of

difference taking place in the bus. We wrote the interviews down immediately after the conservation, which was helpful in interpreting the different forms of encounter.

Finally, we also needed a deeper exploration of how the complexity of cultural difference was experienced and practised on the bus. We, therefore, complemented the observations with thirteen qualitative in-depth interviews with selected 5A bus drivers and passengers. Parallel to Pink (2009), the aim of the interviews was to reflect and communicate about experiences. The qualitative interviews were inspired by a narrative methodology (Jackson 2002) that facilitated dialogue around narratives on different forms of encounter experienced on the bus. The informants were selected in order to obtain variety in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. The interviews were concerned with themes such as the experiences of the 'route', 'the bus as a meeting place', 'rhythm', 'atmosphere' and narratives on situations of 'conflict' on the bus.

The fragments from field notes and interviews used throughout this paper have all been translated from Danish. Using extracts from field notes and interview transcripts in a text does not, of course, imply a claim of 'authenticity' or 'verificational realism' (Crang 2002a). They are interpretations and perceptions of different situations taking place on the bus made by us as a collective or in dialogue between us and the narrators. However, the extracts do endow the presentation with some flavour of 'flesh and blood' and establish a certain transparency of the interpretations we have made.

The primacy of encounters

Our theoretical starting point is a practice-based understanding of social life giving ontological priority to interrelations or encounters. Among others, this priority takes inspiration from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the lived body in which he emphasises the interrelational structure of our embodied existence. The constitution of others, he says, does not come after that of the body; 'others and my body are born together from an original ecstasy' (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 174) – that is, an original intercorporeality already functioning as a pre-personal form of communion. When we here use the term 'encounter', however, it is supposed to add to this idea of interrelation. The term suggests a meeting, but a meeting particularly involving two characteristics: surprise and time space (Merleau-Ponty 1968;

Ahmed 2000). It involves surprise (and maybe conflict) because of its inevitable content of similarities and difference, inclusion and exclusion, or incorporation and expulsion that constitutes the boundaries of bodies or communities.

At one level, encounters, therefore, refer to face-to-face meetings as experienced in everyday life. They are, however, also temporal and spatial through historical–geographical mediation. They presuppose other faces, other encounters of facing, other bodies, other spaces and other times. In this way, they reopen prior histories of encounter and geopolitical imaginations of the other and incorporate them in the encounters as traces of broader social relationships. In other words, particular encounters both inform and are informed by the general: encounters between embodied subjects always dwell between the domain of the particular and that of the general, the framing of the encounter by broader relationships of power and antagonism. As such, this understanding of encounters adds to Merleau- Ponty's ideas of the social body as a body opening up and intertwining with the world (other bodies and materialities) by accentuating that this world is not a general but a differentiated world. In such a world, what is meant by the social body is more often than not 'precisely the effect of being with some others over other others' (Ahmed 2000, 49).

Hence, the constitution of others involves *spatial negotiations* over mobility and home, (imagined) communities, boundaries and bridges, et cetera. 'Like bodies' and 'unlike bodies' do not precede encounters of inclusion or expulsion. Rather, likeness and unlikeness as 'characteristics' of bodies are produced through these encounters. Part of that process is the experience of being exposed to oppressive visions or emotions. Fanon (1967) describes the phenomenology of incorporating otherness and the development of a 'double consciousness' owing to the enculturation of the body. Men and women of colour, he says, develop a third-person consciousness trying to reconcile their own experiences with the operation of a 'historical-racial schema' within which their corporeal schema is supposed to fit.

Encounters, then, are deeply charged with emotions. The 'strange encounter' (Ahmed 2000) is played out *on* the body, and it is played out *with* emotions. As a basis for interpretation, we suggest a phenomenologically inspired understanding of emotions starting from Heidegger (1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) who both see emotions as basic human attributes but neither inner psychic nor purely physical phenomena. Merleau-Ponty, in particular, associates emotions with practice, embodiment and social situation. As a first approximation, we can condense his view into a notion of *situated corporeal atti- tudes*, understood as ways of being

and acting in relation to the world (Crossley 1996). This account opens the possibility for a double conception of emotional spatiality (Simonsen 2007, 2010). one side of emotions is an *expressive space* of the body's movements, which might be seen as a performative element of emotion. emotions are something practised and as such connected to the expressive and communicative body. The other side of emotional spatiality is *affective space*, which is the space in which we are emotionally in touch – open to the world and aware of its 'affect' on us. This means that emotions are not just active bodily actions, something that our bodies express or articulate. Another aspect is how we are possessed by them or swept into their grasp. It is the felt sense of having been moved emotionally, the more passive side of emotional experience. This active–passive doubleness of emotions is what we shall see played out in the concrete encounters analysed below.

In this sense, the paper inscribes itself into an emerging literature on 'geographies of encounter' (see, for e.g. Amin and Parkinson 2002; Valentine 2008; Leitner 2012; Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). This literature attaches considerable importance to the character of encounters in public space and their opportunity of producing 'meaningful contact' – that is, contact that involves recognition of others. By doing so, it implicitly links to classic urban theory's understanding of the urban as 'a world of strangers' where the experience of difference and negotiation hereof becomes an essential and necessary part of the urban sphere (Lofland 1973; Tonkiss 2013). Georg Simmel's essay on *Metropolis and mental life* ([1903] 1950) is seminal in this field. His concept of *indifference* has been very influential, and it should be understood as simultaneously a 'reserve', developed to contain a latent aversion growing out of the bodily closeness of urban life, and a basic form of 'sociation' allowing urban coexistence. Among the followers are Goffman (1963) with his concept of *civil inattention* and Lofland (1973) with her ideas of capacities of coping and manoeuvring in urban space (see also Jensen 2006). The urban bus, the space of encounter explored in this paper, can be seen as an extreme case of the 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005) and closeness with others, the intensification of experience and the over-stimulation of the senses by which these authors characterise urban life. Goffman describes buses as 'vehicular units'; that is, shells of some kind controlled by a human pilot or navigator (Goffman [1971] 2010; Jensen 2006). These units and the modes of encounter they afford vary according to the thickness of their 'skin' and the rules regulating their operation.

Mobile encounters

Spaces of mobility have often been described as empty non-places deflated of meaning. However, all places involve meaning and are inscribed by power. Mobility is a privilege not evenly distributed. The businessman travelling internationally and the cleaning woman catching the bus after work will experience the space of the airport differently (Crang 2002b; Jensen 2010). Furthermore, mobility has been seen as an eroding power, draining communities of life, or as a retreat from sociality (Swanton 2010). Such perspectives fail to understand the social interaction within the spaces of mobility or how place, identity and subjectivity are produced on the move (Jensen 2009). We are inspired by theorists focusing not only on the power relations of spaces of mobility, but also on the social qualities of these spaces.

> People's subject positions are mediated by their habitual activities in moving about the city. The common practice of walking, bicycling, bus-riding, or driving constitute distinctive forms of urban life, each with characteristic rhythms, concerns and social interactions. (Patton 2004, 21 in Jensen 2009, 146)

The human being interacts in temporal–spatial relations and knows itself through experience, meaning and sense-making created on the move. This calls for further investigation of the different modes of experience connected to different modes of movement and to the way in which different spaces of movement produce different encounters and meaning.

An emerging theme in mobility research is the relational practice of being mobile with others (see, for instance, Sheller 2004; Adey and Bissell 2010; Bissell 2010; Laurier et al. 2008; Löfgren 2008; Swanton 2010; Adey et al. 2012; Jensen 2012). The experience of being a passenger is always a shared experience and will necessarily involve being with others; this is especially true when travelling with public transport where the passenger is often in close physical proximity with strangers (Bissell 2010, 270). In a world where international migration flows are increasingly intertwined with the flows of urban everyday commuting, everyday spaces such as the bus to work can become a meeting place for global difference. This makes public transport particularly interesting as a mediator of subjects meeting with ethnic diversity and imagined others. Journeys by bus or other public transport create spaces in which unacquainted strangers interact in much tighter spaces than found elsewhere (Jensen 2009, 2010; Wilson 2011).

Using public transport requires several practical skills. From mastering route planning and timetables (Jensen 2006), to making travel time effective by transforming the train into a mobile office (Löfgren 2008), to mastering sleep techniques on the move (Jensen 2006, 2012). Navigating in the dense, shared space of public transport puts the passenger in a situation of constant choice. Here, we argue for the usefulness of the notion of 'negotiation in motion' to capture the social interaction made in a mobile space of norms, values and power. Some of these ways of encountering our'mobile other'may be linked to an already existing repertoire of actions, mobile negotiation techniques and mobile interaction tactics (Jensen 2010, 13). The dense spatial economy of a bus ride makes one aware of one's body and the intensity of corporeal relation. This makes the mobile negotiation an embodied and situated practice. even though verbal communication is limited, communication is still occurring, through gazes and the spatial organisation of bodies (Bissell 2010, 271). These micro social manoeuvres are not coincidental, but a result of complex negotiations (Wilson 2011, 638).

Most research on public transport focuses on trains (for example, Löfgren 2008; Bissell 2010; Jensen 2012). Only a few exceptions examine the bus as a social space, a space where race and ethnicity are being politicised in battles over space, access and mobility (see Hutchinson 2000; Wilson 2011).

> Subjectivities develop not only as a result of movement between settings,
> but are formed *during* movement and are crucial to our perception of others
> – both on and off the bus, at other times and other places. (Wilson 2011,
> 635, original italics)

Wilson suggests that experiences on the bus have meaningful effects and that busses can be spaces of identity making, racial segregation, conflicts and contestation. The bus carves directly through the fabric of the city, creating routes and rhythms of its own. Hutchinson suggests that riding the bus offers an exclusive knowledge of the city, as the bus allows for direct experience of the surrounding city (unlike metros) and its inhabitants, as the bus ride imposes itself on the body:

> Riding enables another mode of looking, seeing, hearing and smelling that
> 'eludes the discipline of automobility even as it reproduces it'.(Hutchinson
> 2000, 2)

This involves direct contact and a sensual getting to know others, as strangers travel from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, encounters occur and stereotypes are challenged or reinforced. Too much work overlooks the potential of social interaction within the buses

themselves (for exceptions, see Hutchinson 2000; Wilson 2011). The space of the bus is an interesting case since the body subject is here exposed to reactions and meetings with a diverse group of people. In this sense, 5A, our chosen case, might be an iconic one for the purpose.

Tactics of placement

The social space of the bus is characterised by a certain 'getting along with each other'. The level of direct conflict is low and passengers are expected to recognise and accept existing norms and rules about certain forms of behaviour (Wilson 2011, 638). The spaces of public transport encourage a certain getting along with each other, which Augé recognises as 'contractual consensus' and which resonates with Amin's notion of 'situated multiplicity' (Amin 2008; Augé 2002, 44 in Wilson 2011, 638; see also Jensen 2006). Our observations supported these notions, and we witnessed only a few direct conflicts. even when social norms were challenged, for instance by a group in their late teens playing loud music, dancing between seats and chatting loudly, other passengers mainly ignored the offence with forbearance or slightly irritated glances (Field notes, 8 March 2014). Avoidance and tolerance appear as essential tactics in order to navigate intense cohabitation in a secure manner. Although we will show that passengers are continuously stretching and reshaping these normative expectations, violations remain manageable, as they do not challenge what Goffman calls 'the essential grammar of the situation' (Goffman [1971] 2010).

On the bus, communication is mainly non-verbal. Passengers treat each other with civil inattention, and negotiation of seats and personal space is handled with bodily signals. As such, passengers demonstrate highly attuned awareness of fellow passengers. Intent of future action is communicated through what Goffman would call 'body gloss'; a self-conscious bodily gesture functioning as an externalisation of evidence; an intention display that can be read by anyone in the situation who cares to perceive it (Goffman [1971] 2010, 128). Body gloss is displayed when a lady in a window seat gathers the hem of her coat and the person in the aisle seat gets up to ease her exit. The twisting of the torso, gathering of bags or simply breaking inattention by looking in the direction of a seat-mate's face is frequently used to indicate the wish to leave one's seat and only rarely is an 'excuse me' required to motivate this gesture.

As passengers move between seats and areas of the bus, we observe few direct glances exchanged and even fewer words. With apparently little effort, seats are taken and left again. It is, however, not an unregulated affair, but rather a choreographed performance where formal as well as informal regulations of closeness and spatial economy unfold. Relations within the bus are diverse, not only between passengers travelling with others and those travelling alone. Bodies are ordered through formal and informal rules, and this ordering requires that passengers are continuously aware of other passengers as obligations and dangers of proximity are being negotiated (for similar observations see Bissell 2010; Jensen 2010; Wilson 2011).

In any case, different areas of the bus attract different passengers. The first rows of seats are near an area reserved for prams and wheelchairs. Seats here are priority seats for the elderly and people with small children, clearly signalled with priority stickers outlining these official codes of conduct. Younger passengers explain to us that these seats are for 'others' – the less capable. Rather than risk getting up at a later point, they move directly to the back, creating a front space for perceived vulnerable passengers and a back area for those who perceive themselves as physically capable. our observations support that the back rows are often male dominated, whereas the front areas of the bus, besides families and the elderly, are popular with middle-aged women, especially those of Middle eastern and African descent.

Tactics of placement are closely intertwined with the number of passengers on the bus. on a crowded bus, most passengers will take any available seat. When there is a choice of seat, and no possibility of occupying a double seat alone, passengers attempt to place themselves in proximity to mobile others with an experienced sameness with regard to gender, age and ethnicity. This observation is supported by Sufia, a young woman with Somali roots:

> Non-Danes sit with non-Danes. Girls with scarfs sit together. There is this sort of grouping. I think it is about safety or 'I feel comfortable sitting here because she is the same as me' or 'I do not dare to sit here because they seem dangerous'. I do not know, but sometimes it is how I experience it. Sometimes people walk past me and I am like: 'There's room here, if you would like to sit!'. (Sufia, passenger)

Besides addressing seating preferences, Sufia addresses the feeling of being slighted as a travel companion. Such experiences can be received and interpreted in numerous ways, not necessarily connected to the intention behind the gesture. However, as observations indicate that civil inattention is a strong norm between strangers on the bus, remedial work with

regard to seating choices is scare and, as such, intent is often left open for various interpretations. Goffman addresses how most public interaction is oriented towards avoiding the worst possible reading of an offence by offering remedial work to display proper intentions and sustain oneself as a moral character (Goffman [1971] 2010, 108). Although possibly unintentional, an empty seat can reinforce feelings of otherness and'have powerful and enduring effects' (Wilson 2011, 635). on a similar note, Bladt (2013) finds that young adults with ethnicities other than North european experience the bus as a place of exclusion and practised racism.

A safe seat?

Various tactics are used in order to secure an unproblematic seat without violating social rules. one commonly observed tactic is to occupy the aisle seat, thereby blocking access to the window seat. Props such as bags or coats are also often used to control who gets close to whom.

> An elderly, ethnically Danish woman has her handbag safely placed on the window seat next to her. A young man of African descent stops, signals and encourages her to get the empty seat. She moves her handbag extremely slowly and seems almost congealed. The young man becomes impatient and continues to the end of the bus. The next passenger takes the now empty seat. (Field note, 31 January 2014)

> A Muslim woman wearing a long coat enters the bus. She looks around for a seat. She appears to be gazing inten- sively for a seat that meets her preferences. She moves to the back of the bus to a seat towards the aisle with an empty inner seat next to her. (Field note, 28 January 2014)

The frequency of and tolerance for such tactics diminish with the available space within the bus and as such are structured through informal regulations as well as an awareness of others. Notions of gender and ethnicity are interwoven in attempts to secure an unproblematic and harmless seat. This process is an informal ongoing negotiation of personal space where ignoring signs, intent or simply stalling communication gives way for gamesmanship as to who gives way to whom (Goffman [1971] 2010).

Although conflict often remains covert, it is occasionally exposed when social rules are broken. Social norms dictate that not all passengers are equally entitled to a seat, as physical weakness especially, age and occasionally women or children are given priority.

> A young man, seemingly of Middle eastern heritage, addresses a redheaded
> woman: "Get up! Show some respect!" He wants her to give up her seat for
> an elderly man who is standing behind him. Not inclined to take orders, the
> woman asks the elderly man if he would indeed like to sit. It appears that
> he cares less about the matter than the young man in front of him. She stays
> seated in spite of loud protests from the younger man, who insists that the
> woman should show respect for the elderly and give up her seat. After a
> while he stops protesting, leaves the bus and the woman sighs: 'I'm
> actually a lot older than him! In his logic I suppose he should respect me?'
> (Field note, 27 September 2014)

What is at stake in this episode encompasses conflicting perspectives on informal guidelines of spatial ordering with respect to gender and age; but also zones of the bus (the back is not a priority area), ethnicity and the right to dictate norms of space seem to be at stake. It appears that the tone of the younger man actually inspires the woman to act against his bidding. Bissell suggests that ignorance of unspoken rules of collective travel serves to heighten and produce the intolerance of others (Bissell 2010). Disagreements on social regulations as well as ways of handling them reproduce images of otherness. An episode such as the one above reinforces an image of Middle eastern men as especially prone to handling conflict with a tone of aggression. This theme emerges as a central reference point in the majority of interviews, especially with bus drivers, and is reproduced within a space that is particularly dominated by avoidance. Furthermore, the situation can be understood as what Katz (2003) would call a moral drama. Both the young man and the redheaded woman attempted to turn the passengers close by into an audience to justify their actions and their perspective on the informal regulations and to uphold their image as a moral character (Goffman [1971] 2010, 154).

Between 'habitual multiculturalism' and 'the little racism'

In the above, we have displayed a range of tactics among bus passengers involving bodily (non-) communication, spatial placement and tactical avoidance of contact with 'mobile others'. one of the passengers characterises these practices with the metaphor of 'a dome of a cheese dish' (Sufia, passenger) in this way unintentionally leaning on Goffman's notion of 'involvement shield' (1963). Immediately, these manoeuvres might be conceived as leading to a desocialisation of the potentially social space of the bus (see, for example, Bauman 1993). We do, however, follow Simmel ([1903] 1950) – and many current writers on

mobility – by arguing that these attitudes of distance and *indifference* are in fact a basic form of urban sociality, one that allows people to coexist with all the largely unknown others. Indifference is one way in which difference can be *lived* in everyday social spaces. Also, the intensity of contact in the space of the bus opens up pre-personal emotional registers reaching from the performative to the passive end.

Habitual multiculturalism

As previously mentioned, bus 5A has a route cutting across very different parts of Copenhagen. It is the experience of this fact that makes many passengers tell us that they are used to diversity:

> I don't think much about it ... I believe that in this part of the city you are more or less merged, there is not so much – nobody frowns at anybody, or anything at all. (Lis, passenger)

> Maybe it is because it is the bus of Nørrebro. You know that the spectrum is broad and that you have to be more open-minded. I believe that because Nørrebro has this diversity, you are prepared when you enter the bus. You are prepared to meet somebody that you are not exactly ready to meet. (Michael, passenger)

For these people, living with diversity has become a routine. They expect the unexpected. They do not celebrate difference; it is just a fact of life. We have worked previously with the notion of 'lived multiculturalism' connected to transcultural relations performed in everyday life situations (Simonsen 2008; Koefoed and Simonsen 2011). What is at stake here relates to that notion but is also slightly different. These passengers are close to performing what Tonkiss (2003) calls an 'ethics of indifference' where 'differences go unremarked because unremarkable, where otherness is ordinary, where a logic of anonymity displaces one of visibility'. They accept a mutual strangeness that makes the strange other a familiar other. That is why here we prefer the concept of *habitual multiculturalism.*

> There are quite a lot of young guys, and they are really mixed when it comes to ethnicity. It is a meeting place for them. They meet and then they get off at Røde Plads. They talk about something that has happened or somebody that has done something during the weekend. They are together those two stops and then they part. They meet, share some info and then they part again. It's fun to be a bystander sometimes. They meet and ask, 'Where have you been?' ... 'We are going to Røde Plads, won't you join us?' It is really *a rolling marketplace* sometimes. I think that happens in 5A frequently. (Michael, passenger)

Besides the general diversity, some specific communities stand out. Michael has observed how 5A works as a meeting place for a group of young guys – as 'a rolling marketplace', he says. What are at stake here are transient relationships – or what Jensen (2010) calls 'temporary congregations'; a sociality connected to the kind of place Amin and Thrift refer to as 'moments of encounters' (2002, 30), but they are at the same time spatial practices that, such as walking rhetoric, have a 'phatic' role in the creation of the urban fabric (cf. De Certeau 1984).

> Four boys of Asian/African background entered the bus and headed towards the back end. They were running and speaking loudly. 'Is he talking out of his ass!', I heard one of them say. They were romping about on the back seats. Nobody reacted. (Field note, 25 February 2014)

These groups of what some passengers call 'cheeky boys' we observed frequently during the bus rides. The other passengers either did not react to them or reacted silently with stiff backs and glassy stares. Both passengers and drivers notice these groups. For instance, Sufia comments:

> There are those small, cheeky rascals who can't behave, who want to attract attention, to look big and dangerous. They have small quarrels of the 'I am better than you' type ... If I see that they are Muslims, I approach them: 'Listen, Islam tells you to behave yourself, I think you should respect that. Don't give people something to talk about. It's exactly when you do so the racists come out.' ... Some of them just look at me, some think 'oh well' and some become ashamed and a bit frightened. (Sufia, passenger)

In this exchange, Sufia mobilises different cultural techniques. She appeals to the boys' religious feelings, to the risk of provoking racism and to a potential feeling of shame. Shame is a basically social and inter-corporeal emotion. With Sara Ahmed's words, it 'impresses upon the skin, as an intense feeling of the subject "being against itself"' (2004, 103). Ahmed also points out that not just anybody can cause a body subject to feel shame. only certain others can witness your actions such that you get ashamed, somebody whose view 'matters' to you. Precisely by exploiting their common interest as Muslims, Sufia can impose shame on the boys in the situation. Another passenger, who teaches immigrants Danish language, takes a more analytical view of the 'cheeky boys'. She suggests that they are pupils from the Koran Schools. The bus ride home from school, she says, becomes a free space for them – a space in between the discipline at home and that at school: 'They need that free space to blow off steam' (Charlotte, passenger). The bus becomes to them what Németh (2006) calls an 'un'adult'ered' space.

The little racism

Even if habitual multiculturalism engenders the site of the bus as a place of intercultural exchange and banal transgression, the ghost of racism still haunts the place, as we saw in Sufia's exchange with the boys. Sometimes it pops up in rather undisguised forms – for instance, with regard to language. A typical example refers to an episode where two women of Pakistani origin were speaking Urdu together. A woman seated close by became hopping mad and yelled at them:'You are in Denmark; you must speak Danish together', in this way performing a cultural hegemony (Interview with Charlotte, passenger). An interesting twist of the story is a parallel experience of two young women of Somali origin. Here, the shouting woman was not a Dane, but another Somali woman whom they subsequently characterised as 'integrated-integrated', indicating that she has incorporated the assimilationist discourse of Danish society.

Another contested racialised marker is the headscarf. In the public debate in Denmark –as all over europe –there has been an obsession with Muslim dress. The 'hijab', 'niqab' and 'burka' have been some of the most controversial issues in relation to religious pluralism. The most common framing of the debate is the *victimisation* frame in which Muslim women are represented as oppressed by their community and in need of liberation (Andreassen and Lettinga 2012). The debate pops up again and positions these pieces of clothing as a racialised signifier of cultural hierarchy. Here, one passenger tells:

> Even if you don't wear burka, you get such a look from time to time ...
> There was this elderly man; he didn't approve of Muslims and scarves and
> such. He had a whole lot to say. I overheard the discussion, and then I left
> the bus. (Sufia, passenger)

In these encounters, Sufia has been exposed to two different techniques of estrangement, one visual and one verbal. Both are charged with emotions and both mark out boundaries and redefine her body as a body *out of place*. Sufia tries to act untouched, but ends up leaving the bus.

While such incidents are not uncommon, the dominant picture of the bus more often involves what we could call 'the little racism'. A Pakistani immigrant describes this to us with a strong use of body language. He looks askance and moves a bit away from an imagined person next

to him, wrinkles up his nose and says, 'Ashh', in this way performing distanciation. Another respondent confirms this impression by telling: 'You can feel it on the Danes, in particular when it is crowded'. She has difficulties finding words but talks about discomfort and anger. She is aware that she cannot rule herself out from the feeling:

> I can see that I actually do it a bit myself. When a group of young immigrants enters the bus, then I strengthen my hold on my backpack or my bag. (Charlotte, passenger)

She recognises that it must be an unpleasant experience for the young men and feels a bit guilty, but she 'tries to do it a little discreet[ly]'. What is at stake here is a sensing of an affective space, the more passive side of emotional experience, where emotions such as fear, discomfort, anger and disgust are circulating in the intense atmosphere of the crowded bus. This affective space is also at work as a background when young boys, asked about visions for the future, develop a utopia of a bus without racism (Bladt 2013).

Encounter with authorities

> I am the captain on board. For instance, it matters a lot how you meet the passengers, how you talk to people, what you decide and how you solve problems. You are the captain and it means that you have great responsibility. (Nasib, driver)

> We are social workers, we are ambulance drivers, we are police officers, and the only thing we actually should do is to drive our bus. But when a mentally ill person is standing next to you ... It happened yesterday. He kept talking to me, right. And yes I'm talking with him, of course, but you know, it's a little disturbing. (Susanne, driver)

Being the person of authority is related to what happens inside the bus. All drivers emphasise the *inter- relational practice* with human difference. As a driver, you meet all kinds of people. As a *point of reference,* the driver also deals with the socially marginalised, urban outcast, the homeless and the mentally ill. Some drivers describe how they sometimes face extraordinary situations, of conflicts, violence and accidents where they have to act immediately, including driving a man to the hospital, solving violent conflicts, talking to mentally ill individuals.

Episodes of conflict

Conflict between driver and passengers occurs quite suddenly – the bus is full and a man shows disappointment by flipping the finger to the driver. There are passengers not following the codes of conduct; a man is suddenly screaming and yelling in his telephone, and there are passengers who are drunk or who do not respect the other passengers. But the drivers all agree that the main conflict between driver and passengers relates to ticket inspection:

> Ninety-nine per cent of all conflicts are about ticket inspection. For instance, you tell someone that his ticket is not working or that he has to buy a ticket. And then many ugly things can happen. everything from spit in your face to nasty comments by the passenger. Many of my colleagues have experienced that. I have tried to get a clot of spit in my head and it is really, really disgusting and obnoxious. And then you are called all sorts of things ... (Erik, driver).

As erik explains, nearly all conflicts are related to ticket inspection. Such conflicts can happen daily and drivers cope with this in different ways. If strict as a bus driver, they experience that inspection can develop into an open conflict. Some drivers tell that inspection is also related to the encounter with others, for instance checking the picture in the personalised monthly passes of women wearing the burka. This situation is related to controlling the other and can be part of a both-way racism between driver and passengers.

Both-way racism

From a driver's perspective, driving bus 5A is like driving through continents, and some of them refer to these 'global' urban spaces of the city with geopolitical imaginations relating to war zones in the Middle East:

> Sometimes when my friends call me and ask me what I am doing I say: 'I am right here, Fallujah, Kirkuk or Islamabad.' Do you understand? It is a difficult area, it really is. (Dejan, driver)

> All the problems start at Hulgårds Plads. I am not a racist but they are many and they behave badly. The problem with foreigners is that they don't smile ... We have a lot of problems with passengers who wear burka. We can't inspect them and they create a lot of trouble. (Susanne, driver)

In this narrative, the bus driver produces the multicultural neighbourhood Nørrebro as a *strange place* outside the borders of civilisation – it is an *imaginative geography* that connects geopolitical imaginations of the other to specific parts of Copenhagen. In the eyes of the driver, the area is characterised and dominated by strangers who do not smile, behave

badly and are impossible to control. Her experience takes the form of strange encounters, and of things that threaten her as a person of authority.

> Often a lot of children enter the bus, children of foreign origin, and they just walk in without buying a ticket. Then three stops later, a little Dane of eight or nine years enters and raises his hand to buy a ticket. And it is this that annoys me so much, right? That it is like that. (Dejan, driver)

> We have many strangers. We have many from Somalia and Nigeria, and you know them. You know, I can see where they come from. BUT the ones from Nigeria are more polite. They show their tickets to us. Many others, especially the second group [the Somalis], are disastrous to deal with. And also people from the Middle east. They are very aggressive towards us. It is sad, but true. And then we also have many passengers from India, no problem, Thai, Japanese. I have never, I have driven the bus for many years, but I cannot remember that I have had problems with an Asian or an Indian. It is absolutely incredible. (Dejan, driver)

In this narrative, the driver creates a distinction between the passengers in 'us' and 'them'. The honest Danish child stands in contrast to the cheating and aggressive other. But it is not an unfamiliar stranger. As Sarah Ahmed argues, the stranger is not simply anybody whom we do not know. The stranger is 'some-body whom we have already recognised in the very moment in which they are "seen" or "faced" as a stranger' (2000, 21). The figure of the stranger is 'painfully familiar' in its very strange(r)ness. It has already come too close and been recognised as a body out of place. In the narratives, some of the passengers are not only recognised as strangers but also categorised into different degrees of strange(r)ness. The driver constructs a geographical imagined hierarchy of strangers going from the worst aggressive and problematic to the best polite and unproblematic.

However, some of the bus drivers of immigrant background also experience being produced as an other in the everyday banal language use of passengers.

> Sometimes you also meet someone who thinks of you only as black hair. (Nasib, driver)

> But, of course, I also have limits; if someone like a Dane says 'Paki' to me simply for fun ... I mean, I do not like that word. Maybe he thinks it is funny, but I do not like it. I stop the bus no matter who it is. And they look at me – we know each other. But I do not like the degrading words. He can call me anything else like 'you stupid pig'. Call me what you like, but the word 'Paki' is a generalisation and I don't like it. (Ahmad, driver)

For Ahmad, the problem is related to being categorised as a stranger and met as a person that is *out of place* and not at home. The word 'Paki' produces him as the other and reproduces estranging geograph- ical imaginations. It is, as Ahmad explains, far worse to be called 'Paki' than other epithets like 'stupid pig', because it immediately *stigmatises* him to a general category that he cannot escape.

> There was this situation. It was two elderly, retired people – the man was in the front and he denied to give me the ticket. I asked him to see the ticket but he replied that he would not show his card to foreigners. Despite the fact that I was working, and the work I do is legal. I am not mad. You drive people around the city – you drive them to work, shopping and home again. It is good, but sometimes there can also be bad experiences. (Nasib, driver)

In this case, the everyday racism becomes incorporated into the role of the driver as a person of author- ity. The passenger produces the driver as an outsider who is out of place and undermines his authority as a controllant.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have approached the everyday meetings on the bus from the ontological premise of 'the primacy of encounters'. That is, the constitution of others does not come after that of the body. others and my body are born together as the effect of processes of inclusion and exclusion, or incor- poration and expulsion that constitute the boundaries of bodies and lived communities, including communities of travel. It is from this premise that we address the specific mobile encounters in bus 5A, which cuts through the streets of Copenhagen.

These encounters show specific characteristics. First, the mobile space of the bus can be seen as an *extreme case* of the intensity of meetings that characterises urban life. Travelling by bus involves a particular 'throwntogetherness', and encounters with others are often very intense. There is a specific proximity with others, bodies touch bodies and become exposed to others, and there is an intensification of experiences and an over-stimulation of several senses. Therefore, travelling by bus involves specific embodied skills related to what we in the analysis call *tactics of placement.* There is an ongoing negotiation over space that takes place with bodily signals and through either avoidance or tolerance. Seats are often selected according to sameness of gender, age and ethnicity (safe seat). As one of the respondents

observes, there is a certain sort of grouping and social order in the bus. often negotiation of space is unproblematic without spoken communication but sometimes it develops into conflicts, when, for example, the essential grammar of the situation is challenged. Second, the encounters that occur on the bus are extraordinarily ephemeral. There is a constant stream and flow of passengers that makes the encounters transitory, but that also gives occasion for 'temporary congregations' exchanging experiences from the urban environment. Third, and connected, the encounters are charged with emotions, where bodies in movement create an expressive space of emotional performance. Finding a proper seat and meeting the other face-to-face and body-to-body involve emotional experiences that also affect others. Discomfort, irritation and occasionally anger or aggression pop up.

As a cross-cultural meeting place, bus 5A appears as a *paradoxical space* stretched out in the inter- section between what we call *habitual multiculturalism* and different *modes of racialisation*. The notion of habitual multiculturalism is used to grasp a mode of coexistence in which living with diversity has become a routine or a fact of life, giving rise to neither positive nor negative reactions. Several passengers connected this feeling to the specific route of 5A, running through one of the most multicultural parts of Copenhagen. Diversity is expected and passengers are prepared for the unexpected. The encounter with strangers on the bus is more or less taken for granted – one passenger in this connection characterises the bus as a 'rolling marketplace'. The bus becomes a mobile place formed by moments of encounter between many different ethnicities. Along these lines, habitual multiculturalism comes close to what we have referred to as lived 'indifference' (Simmel [1903] 1950) and 'civil inattention' (Goffman 1963), even if these concepts do not involve the same content of ethnic difference. It can be character- ised as an urban cosmopolitan competence, involving an ability to manoeuvre in an urban 'globalised' landscape. Some of the bus drivers even indicate that this is the pleasure of driving bus 5A. Its diversity and cosmopolitan character render the tour an experience felt as driving through continents 'just like a garden with different flowers having all kinds of colours'.

But encounters on the bus also involve specific *techniques of differentiation*. Likeness and difference are directly produced through embodied encounters on the bus. They involve particular forms of rec- ognition of some bodies as strangers or bodies out of place and also emotions such as disgust and fear. everyday cultural racism takes the form of processes of *racialisation* producing unknown others as strangers. These processes occur both between

passengers and in the meeting between passengers and drivers. Between the passengers, it often takes the form of what we have called *the little racism*. It primarily takes place in the form of bodily gestures: the specific gaze, the avoiding touch, moves of avoidance expressing distancing, gripping tighter to your bag, etc. These are all gestures that generate the feeling of being an other, producing what Fanon (1967) describes as a third-person consciousness. But it also takes more outspoken forms as we saw in relation to the question of language (speak Danish, you are in Denmark) or through outspoken reactions to visual racialised markers such as the headscarf. In the passenger–driver encounters, we saw processes of racialisation in even stronger forms, both from ethnic Danish drivers in relation to the passengers, and against drivers of 'other' ethnicities. Drivers regularly produce some groups of passengers as bodies out of place and see them as potentially dangerous for the social order of the bus. These drivers produce an imaginative geography of specific parts of their route and its habitants, describing them as out of place, belonging in an-Other part of the world, and they produce imagined hierarchies of ethnic others. And some of the bus drivers experience their own otherness in their face-to-face interactions with the passengers and feel estranged and undermined in their authority. Processes of racialisation are then an incorporated part of everyday life in the bus and they produce a mobile space with ongoing negotiation of proximity and distance involving embodied processes of inclusion and exclusion – likeness and difference. The bus becomes a 'postcolonial' space driving through strange places. In this sense, the encounters also reopen prior histories of encounter and geopolitical imaginations of the other and incorporate them in the encounters on the bus as traces of broader social relationships. This is, for example, the case when the drivers construct specific parts of the city as a strange place outside the border of civilisation.

In this sense, the urban bus can be seen as a condensation of the paradoxical space between 'cosmopolitan hope' and 'postcolonial melancholia' (Keith 2005; Gilroy 2006), a place for coexistence and potential intercultural dialogue, but at the same time still haunted by racialisation, stigmatisation and intolerance that reflects the colonial present of our time.

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