

THURSDAY, 21 April

9.00 - 10.20 Parallel Sessions

The Bus as Space of Encounters

[Marshrutka – Zenne 23]

Convenors

Dag Balkmar (Örebro University)

Malin Henriksson (Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute)

Tanja Joelsson (Stockholm University)

Charlotte Veal, University of Newcastle

Consenting To Everyday Propinquities Onboard the Bus during the Covid-19 pandemic

This paper will examine experiences of bus passengers during the COVID-19 pandemic, tracing the intimate bodily encounters, everyday anxieties, and practical negotiations of those travelling onboard buses with unknown human and nonhuman (microbial) others. It draws on ethnographic observations on buses and semi-structured interviews with bus users, cleaners, and drivers from multilingual communities in Bristol and Southampton, in 2021. I explore the changing affordances (between passengers, bus architecture, microbial worlds) in the performance of infection prevention habits, unwritten passenger codes of conduct, and material bodily cultures formed in response to shifting perceived risk and anxieties of the virus and governmental public health guidance. The paper is interested in the microbial imaginaries that emerged and gained currency, as people were learning to share the world with nonhuman agents (Sars-CoV-2) within a 'microbial landscape' that they could neither see nor scientifically understand. I consider what it was like to be a passenger during the crisis and the ordinary, everyday negotiations enacted. I draw on Berlant's 'theories of attachment' (2011) to address the complex feelings generated in and around the bus travelling space. These feelings include aversion, ambivalence and care that shaped whether to, or when to travel, and responses to strategies implemented by bus operators or bus users to maximise safety (seat occupation, mask wearing, hand hygiene, ventilation). I conclude with a call for critical consideration of the everyday experiences of public health and infection prevention within public transport spaces, and for the differentiated experiences of risk in relation to Sars-CoV-2 and future health challenges.

Bradley Rink, University of Western Cape

Sound-tracks on the bus: Listening to bus encounters in Cape Town

As elements of the public space(s) of the bus, sound and its related soundscapes are individual, ephemeral and place-specific. The sonic atmospheres of the bus are entangled in the attention economy of the city, and in its relational, social, and cultural contexts. Sound is constitutive of bus encounters through casual and transactional conversation, the signalling of movement and stillness, and the relational mobilities of the human and more-than-human assemblage within the bus. All of these sounds serve critical roles in movement and stillness, and help to shape our understanding of how mobilities are initiated, terminated, and more broadly sensed. This audio contribution to the workshop *The Bus as Space of Encounters* uses sampled sound-tracks—traces of sound gathered through mobile sonic derives—that coincide with the paths along which the bus encounter moves. Sound-tracks on Golden Arrow buses in Cape Town, South Africa evidence the everyday sonic experiences of bus encounter. Through listening to sonic mobilities on the bus, it is possible

to appreciate the banal chime of the bell as a desire to stop, while also understanding its use in voicing passengers' frustrations. Listening also tunes our ears to the out-of-place sounds such as the singing of mobile congregants or sermons from self-styled preachers. From the mundane to the extraordinary, listening to the sound-tracks of bus encounters complicates our understanding of the utilitarian public space of the bus and demonstrates the role of sound in the embodied experience of bus passengering.

Tanja Joelsson, Stockholm University
Dag Balkmar, Örebro University
Malin Henriksson, Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute
The bus as stigmatized space

In a qualitative research project relating to the mobility practices of families located in socially vulnerable neighborhoods in Sweden, the bus has surfaced as pivotal in and for the families' daily life. Interviews have been carried out with families (adults and children) in neighborhoods in three Swedish middle-sized municipalities. For many families living in socially vulnerable areas, the bus is vital as an everyday mode of transport. Many are employed in societally vital functions (care, transport and education) in the public sector. Further, many families choose schools outside their neighborhoods, which entail travel by bus to school. The residents are dependent on public transport for commuting to work or to upper secondary schooling.

During the pandemic, the bus quickly became a stigmatized space in public debates and have been the subject for various restriction. Young people in general were accused of free-riding and riding the bus "for fun and amusement", thus contributing to crowding and infection. Simultaneously, the informants live in areas perceived as violent and unsafe. We seek to investigate how research participants negotiate the double stigmatization of their neighborhood and their primary mode of transport. Which mobility strategies are employed? What are the discursive and practical implications for how public transport is perceived and used?

Daniel Muñoz, University of Oxford
The everyday production of mobility justice in Santiago's public transport system

Santiago de Chile's public transport system was conceived and has been managed following modernistic aspirations to efficiency, regularity and standardisation. However, these hegemonic principles of 'proper functioning' have tended to rely on the embodied effort and adaptability of its users. The system's stability is mobilised and ensured by several infrastructures, norms, and devices, while also being supported by the passengers' capacity to bodily endure and adapt to changing circumstances and lacking materialities. Disabled and older people experience this pressure upon their bodies in particularly acute ways. These individuals not only have to exert themselves in order to navigate the public transport system, but they also need to deal with the historical exclusion and miscategorising they have been subjected to by modern transport infrastructures. As part of Santiago's public transport system, buses constitute a space where infrastructural accessibility for disabled people has made a slower appearance (as opposed to the metro system), and where informal assistance plays a highly relevant role. Moreover, the installation in 2016 of a new turnstile model at the buses' doors has caused several users (including disabled people, women, older people, fat people, and children) to experience bodily exclusion and difficulties to becoming passengers. The turnstiles have triggered a series of conflicts and new practices aiming to circumvent or resist the device. Reactions in social media describe the turnstile as a sign of policy makers and 'technical experts' being oblivious to the actual needs and experiences of public transport users.

This presentation draws on ethnographic notes, semi-structured interviews, video analysis and graphic narrative to analyse how mobility justice is not prioritised by Chilean public transport infrastructure, and the ways in which passengers – particularly those with non-hegemonic bodily configurations – organise and produce local alternatives.

Rafiazka Hilman, Delft university of Technology
Portraying Bus Service as Multidimensional Social Contact

Individual mobility is dictated by one's meaningful places like home and work locations, or frequently visited places for shopping, children activities, leisure, etc. The choice of these places is strongly determined by the financial capacities, education, race and social network of people. Such factors determine an individual's socioeconomic status, which together with homophily stratifies society and leads to urban segregation. Home selection, for example, not only depends on the job and financial situation of an individual, but also on the neighborhood, schooling, and safety infrastructure the person desires. As a consequence, urban mixing of people with different backgrounds is far from homogeneous and depends on a variety of factors including geographic constraints and socioeconomic status. This leads to patterns of segregation in mobility and biased mixing patterns of the population of a city that might be observable with appropriate data.

Transport infrastructure, including prominent bus service, provides access to anyone to travel wherever in the city. Considering this embedded characteristic, issues related to transport accessibility and equality across neighborhoods in the city remains important. Consequently, transportation serves as the backbone of social mixing process in society. It is in the interest of this research to generate visual representation of spatial correlations between neighborhoods in the Netherlands through the lenses of bus connections in two comparative temporal sequence: before and during COVID pandemics. Multidimensional social contact is defined as the composition of income and ethnic composition. The result will be delivered in presentation format.