



The rhythmicity of daily travel: young children's mobility practices along the mobile preschool route

Jutta Balldin & Anne Harju

To cite this article: Jutta Balldin & Anne Harju (2020): The rhythmicity of daily travel: young children's mobility practices along the mobile preschool route, Children's Geographies, DOI: [10.1080/14733285.2020.1828825](https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2020.1828825)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2020.1828825>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 01 Oct 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 320



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

The rhythmicity of daily travel: young children's mobility practices along the mobile preschool route

Jutta Balldin  and Anne Harju

Department of Childhood, Education & Society, Malmö University, Malmö, Sweden

ABSTRACT

The article aims to highlight the means of rhythmicity to social life from within a study of children's daily travelling with a mobile preschool in Sweden. The point of departure is the neglected mobility practices of young children in research and the difficult relation between children's everyday movements and persistent representations of childhood time and place. Based on sensuous ethnographic fieldwork travelling with the preschool, the analysis deconstructs to visualize mobility modes at work in the enactment of the daily route, and explores to highlight the preschooler's collective rhythms of practices while travelling. The rhythmanalysis shows how regular mobilities enable shared experiences and the (re)making of a rhythmicity grounded in an ongoing perceiving and managing of inside and outside rhythms. The result confirms young children's interdependent mobilities from within an entanglement of different rhythms, and contributes with readings of how they 'carry on' in practice.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 27 November 2018
Accepted 22 September 2020

KEYWORDS

Young children; mobile preschool; mobility constellation; rhythmanalysis; rhythmicity

Introduction

Travelling with the mobile preschool we are primarily aware of the young children's familiar though institutionalized gestures of play and interaction. After a number of journeys along the regular route and specifically noticing rhythms of practices, we are however observant of how the children make use of a plurality of inside and outside rhythms in the making of a specific rhythmicity of journey. Doing rhythmanalysis of the very specific setting of a mobile preschool in Sweden, and more precisely the travelling practices of children attending this preschool, we set out to highlight the rhythmicity of young children's daily journeys, and additionally problematize persistent representations of childhood time and emplacement that we argue work to channel children's (experiences of) movements. Through a sensuous perceiving of how children measure, attune to and (re)produce rhythms while being mobile we aim to stress that children's regular mobilities in their city neighbourhood bring about shared experiences of belonging, progress and joy, that strengthen relations within the group and with elsewhere. From these findings, we further argue that the actual journeys of the mobile preschool deserve attention to the same extent as its destinations, and that children's movements into knowledge and sociality are not (solely) restricted to specific places.

The mobile preschool is an educational unit operating with a reconstructed public bus to move around in the neighbourhood and enact educational and play activities at different destinations.

CONTACT Jutta Balldin  jutta.ballidin@mau.se

The mobile preschool was introduced in Sweden ten years ago to mitigate a lack of premises but has successively turned into an educational practice where children's mobilities are negotiated in both physical and symbolic ways (Gustafson and van der Burgt 2015). The preschool group travel daily from the 'preschool base' to a collection of different destinations. The back and forth journeys are scheduled to thirty minutes each way, while time at the destinations varies depending on place and activities. Owing to the fact that destinations are foremost outdoors and daily activities are planned at 'nature' places, the mobile preschool presents itself as an educational option of place (Harju et al. 2020) (rather than of mobility). The mobile preschool in the study is located in a middle-sized town in southern Sweden and comprises a permanent group of 16 children between the ages of three and five and three teachers, one of them assisting as a bus driver.

The Swedish preschool is a full-time practice that is organized according to the national curriculum and ECEC traditions from the late nineteenth century, and it engages a majority of Swedish children between the ages of one to five. Because of the young age of the children and a 'child-sensitive pedagogy', a caring and protective core is thoroughly intertwined with the geographical organization of the education (Tallberg Broman 2018). The timetable of Swedish preschools is by tradition characterized by rhythms of regularity 'known' to engender feelings of safety, harmony and peacefulness in the preschool group (Halldén 2007; Eckeskog 2019). This organization is significant to preschool practice and equally implemented and made important to the mobile preschool (Gustafson and van der Burgt 2015).

Our study is part of a nationally funded research project with the ambition of mapping the significance of the mobile preschool, especially in terms of its learning and citizenship benefits. We build on previous findings within the project, while taking into account the varied organization of preschools and the unique peer cultures of each preschool section. Key points visualize how the geographical organization of the traditional preschool setting is transformed to fit into the bus place of the mobile preschool. The bus is furnished like a preschool, with a toilet, kitchenette and storage for educational materials and toys. The three steps at the longside entrance work as a hallway with shelves for shoes. These are name-tagged in line with seats and drawers and children's drawings, dangling from laces in the bus windows. Together with the fact that children undress to board, and have breakfast at the bus, the atmosphere of place is made familiar, intimate and 'cosy'. The mobile preschool destinations are in this same way made specific from representational relations between place and early childhood activities. For instance, destinations in remote rural areas are narrated to enable the child's real and free movements (Ekman Ladru and Gustafson 2018; Harju et al. 2020), while children's movements in urban areas are restricted and legitimized by safeguarding routines and gestures, such as walking in line (Ekman Ladru and Gustafson 2020).

Safety presents itself as a material linchpin in the everyday organization of the mobile preschool (Ekman Ladru and Gustafson 2018, 2020) as well as seeming to function as a powerful tool in the difficult relationship between early childhood and public space (Holloway and Valentine 2000; Lee 2001; Horton and Kraftl 2006). This protective stance possibly explains the absence of the youngest in research on children's mobilities in the city (Cortes-Morales and Christensen 2014; Clement and Waitt 2018). As argued by Ekman Ladru and Gustafson (2018) the mobility norms of childhood and ECEC work to restrict children's everyday practices and additionally contradict research on young children's mobilities in public. Early childhood mobilities are most often organized and narrated from institutional and predominant representations of development and growth, but it is seldom noticed how children 'go on' in practice (Horton and Kraftl 2006), when in fact, 'it is only by focusing on young children's actual mobility practices in public space that we can know how these are enabled' (Ekman Ladru and Gustafson 2020, 1).

Our approach joins the growing field of non-representational research within children's geographies, where children's embodied and sensuous practices, as well as their experiences of everyday mobilities and places, are made a key issue (among others, Horton and Kraftl 2006; Mikkelson and Christensen 2009; Valentine 2010; Taylor 2014). Dualistic and static images of geographical phenomena are problematized within this approach, before placing emphasis on the

becoming, changing and overlapping characteristics of time, space and rhythms. Accordingly, children's mobile practices are not seen as separate but evolved in continuous co-operation with other modes of mobilities, places, beings, norms, and materials (Christensen and Cortes-Morales 2016). The shift towards the sentient or lived is equivalent to an increased interest in the sensational experiences of everyday mobilities within mobility research (Sheller and Urry 2006; Cresswell 2010; Bisell 2018). The body is from this perspective seen as a site of social knowledge and a primary tool in everyday navigation with capacities to create time and space through motions and rhythms of interactions (Lefebvre [1992] 2004; Massey 2005).

The research on young children's mobilities has according to Ekman Ladru and Gustafson (2018) united around some critical points, one of which is that young children's mobilities are seldom and by choice independent, but rather relational, interdependent, and often enabled by material extensions such as prams, bicycles, cars or buses (Mikkelsen and Christensen 2009; Kullman and Palludan 2011; Nansen et al. 2015; Christensen and Cortes-Morales 2016). In line with this, the mobile preschool bus can be understood as an extension enabling the children's daily practice mobilities from within an ecology of institutional norms and policy, material and geographical means.

The politics of mobilities

Building on the history of a scattered conceptualization of mobility and the imminent focus on instrumental movement, Cresswell (2010) suggests an exploration of how different modes of mobilities are entangled and work together in 'constellations', thereby highlighting the intertwined formations of instrumental, narrative and practice elements at work in all mobilities. Portraying how social narratives are connected to different modes of mobility over time, the deconstruction further visualizes how different constellations circumscribe the movement of individuals according to time, place, generation, gender, ethnicity and other social categories.

The *instrumental* aspect of movement is fundamental to the production of everyday social mobilities (Cresswell 2010) and accordingly to the enablement of the mobile preschool. Within this context, physical movement is due to *representations* of early childhood timespace, which together with material modes make up conditions of *practices*. Although as produced, reproduced and transformed through the human body, practices always have the possibility to change mobilities and constellations as they evolve. However, the deconstruction of constellation brings forth a possibility to grasp what is enacted and made to matter in between enablement and constraint.

The analysis is made specific by the use of three particular aspects of mobility that we find significant to the politics of the mobile preschool – namely the designation of the *route*, and how it cooperates with mobile *experiences* and *rhythms*. Following Cresswell (2010), mobility is always channelled along specific routes, and when it comes to the youngest citizens this is especially true (Zeihner 2003; Clement and Waitt 2018). Exploring the design of the bus route makes us attentive to how physical issues of transport and parking are intertwined with images of early childhood geography and mobility norms in a wider sense. For instance, the design of the mobile preschool route is showed to underrate travelling time in favour of its destination whilst works in line with early childhood emplacement and general narratives in which daily mobility is seen as primarily useless or even a cost (Edensor 2011). As a consequence, the route is restricted in time and to specific places.

The children's practices of mobilities are thus explored against a geographically regulated route and their experiences prove to have similarities with practices of commuting. From research on commuting, we learn that regular mobilities produce specific geographical experiences, such as senses of temporality from 'distinct duration patterns' (Vannini 2012, 259) and of spatiality from 'the regular passing of familiar landmarks, people, events and objects at a predictable speed' (Edensor 2011, 196). The synchronized movements with people in the same vehicle, and experiences of being mobile alongside other vehicles and people going at the same pace and in the same direction, further bring about senses of 'being in time' (Vannini 2012) or/and being attuned (Edensor 2011).

Moreover, regular mobilities become habitualized and embodied in ways that facilitate the enactment of activities beyond expectations (of place and time), such as daydreaming, singing, dancing and playing (Edensor 2011). Regular mobilities can thereby be said to change how we move and attune to each other and ongoing events (Bisell 2018), which in turn affect rhythms and change space (Edensor 2011; Massey 2005).

Rhythms of mobilities are described by Cresswell (2010) after Lefebvre's theory of rhythmanalysis or the way rhythm 'is implicated in the production and contestation of social order' (23). Rhythmanalysis aims to show how rhythms 'work' to create and maintain everyday life, but also to highlight how linear laws of economy and technology appropriate the circular, biological rhythms of the (individual) body. As a consequence, 'the everyday' necessarily embraces tensions and changes, causing resistance and clashes between rhythms (Lefebvre [1992] 2004). The focal point of attention and change is the body. Bodies are, like metronomes, sensitive to social rhythms and attune to (or refuse) them as a way to become knowledgeable about and navigate everyday life (Lefebvre [1992] 2004; Lyon 2019). Rhythmanalysis makes us attentive to how social rhythms are (re)made as a way to 'carry on', and bring meaning to everyday events whilst introducing themselves again and again as if new and astonishing. Drawing on Lefebvre ([1992] 2004), social rhythms are built on refrains which are measurable and memorable, although never identical. Rather, in all social settings 'there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive: difference' (Lefebvre [1992] 2004, 16). Differences are built into the refrains of rhythm and work to enliven and even bring surprise and enchantment to daily 'journeys'.

Methodology and fieldwork

Our fieldwork is inspired by Lefebvre's ([1992] 2004) rhythmanalysis of street life in Paris and the work of some of his followers in childhood geography (Kullman and Palludan 2011) and/or mobility research (Edensor 2011, [2010] 2016; Vannini 2012; Bisell 2018; Lyon 2019). Additionally, and since the 'rhythm-makers' in the study are very young we also rely on the ethnographic techniques of researchers of childhood such as Corsaro (2018). Lefebvre ([1992] 2004) made a point about the notion of rhythmanalysis which, contrary to analysis of rhythms, highlights the specific position of the observer as someone who measures surrounding rhythms from her or his own body (of rhythms). Thus, the 'rhythmanalyst' has to be grasped by the same rhythms that she or he observes, and thereby measures what other bodies measure (Lyon 2019). This methodology aligns with the ethnographic apprehension that observers need to take part in embodied experiences similar to those analysed (Gulløv and Palludan 2010; Clement and Waitt 2018). To be able to interpret embodied experiences of the Other, the sensuous attention and embodied presence of the observer is crucial (Pink and Mackley 2012). However, being immersed in ongoing practices is not sufficient for the analysis. In line with Corsaro's (2018) fieldwork with young children we participated in the practices from an in-between position, neither inside nor outside of ongoing practices, but observing from within our bodily engagement of the present. Nevertheless, as adult and temporary passengers we are aware of our subsequent shortcomings in grasping what is going on. Exploring children's experiences demands a certain measure of humility before what cannot be known, shared or re-told (Hackett, Procter, and Seymour 2015). Following Clement and Waitt (2018, 256) we are noticing 'moments of affective and emotional intensity indicated by the tone of voice or bodily gestures', which are said to guide us away from 'representational registers of thought' and towards experiences of importance. Doing rhythmanalysis we are sensitive to different modes of rhythms, such as sounds, scents, moods and gestures. We are further attentive to the intensity and circularity of gestures and especially to how rhythms of mobilities are made to matter collectively.

Following Taylor (2014) a collectivist (and non-individualist) approach to children's geographies highlights the interdependency of children's everyday practices and their entangled (and not separated) becoming in the social world. Furthermore, preschool children move collectively as a consequence of institutionalization and cause to their sociable ways and interests, such as the joy

brought about from sharing embodied movements (Corsaro 2018; Nome 2018; Ekman Ladru and Gustafson 2018, 2020). Going by bus is finally a collective act (Bisell 2018) even though the mobile preschool hosts a specific collection of passengers, known to each other as peers of a continual preschool group.

The fieldwork was performed over eight preschool days during the school year 2017/2018, and the main reason for spreading out the work in time was to be able to grasp recurrent travelling rhythms and events. Our primarily fieldwork concerned the children's lived mobilities, although we also produced data on narratives and instrumental mobilities from interviews and informal talk with children, parents and teachers engaged in the preschool journeys and from being attentive to preschool routines, gestures and use of material. All data is collected and recounted from observation, fieldnotes and video recordings.

The research process followed the guidelines for research ethics used in social sciences in Sweden and was approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Board. Written consent was given by parents and teachers, although with the children we were continuously attentive to their interpretations and informal approval of our observations. Even though the object of our observations was not individuals per se, the individuals of the mobile preschool had to deal with our presence and note-taking activities. Any expressions of unease or unwillingness among the children were respected and handled throughout the research process (Corsaro 2018). We were further attentive to sensitive events, encounters and/or separations (always consistent in preschool practice), and in these cases lowered the camera or stepped aside. The children were invited to use our technical equipment and some of them were interested to try out different gestures/postures in front of the camera or take notes while travelling, while others kept us at a distance. Our embodied presence and specific gestures certainly affected the place and rhythms of the bus, as well as the directed attention and questions co-creating in this way the phenomenon under study (Law 2004).

Findings

The organization of the route shows how and to what degrees different aspects of mobilities are considered (Cresswell 2010), why we direct our attention towards questions of *how long* and *in what direction*, to thereafter explore *how it is lived* by the preschool children on journey.

The scheduled route

The bus departs from the preschool base at 9 am and returns around 3 pm. The daily route of the mobile preschool is measured at thirty minutes each way, irrespective of destination. Counting the minutes of travelling, we learn that this temporality is repetitive in conformity with other temporalized activities of the preschool day. Going with the bus we notice how activities of the (ordinary) preschool timetable are enacted while travelling, such as reading out loud, listening to music and rest/sleep. The daily return journey is moreover taken up with an afternoon nap for the children. Time is in this way produced as a stable quantity, fragmented and scheduled, to be used well (Urry 2006). According to Markström (2007), preschool time is historically made to activate children in place in order to avoid their aimless or 'floating' movements, which can explain the translation of mobility (time) to the preschool timetable and the maintenance of the order of practice. In this translation, however, mobility as an activity in itself is being overlooked (Urry 2006). Another consequence is that time is qualified by scheduled (linear) activities, while time of (circular) movements or vital time (Lefebvre [1992] 2004) is made insignificant.

Even though the preschool timetable is made important to the route, according to the director of the mobile preschool it is not easy to persuade the public of its 'ordinariness'. In an interview with the director, we are told that the recruitment of children and teachers to the mobile preschool has been hard and the reason for this is explained by some recurrent misunderstandings, as for instance that the bus is 'running all day long'. According to the director this idea connects with worries for

the child's wellbeing. Parents worry about the un-healthiness associated with being seated and even 'seat-belted' for too long, as the circumstance of being mobile for too long or even being 'stuck' (in a bus) is notably connected with passivity (Edensor 2011, [2010] 2016) and useless time (Urry 2006). One of the preschool teachers keeps returning to false public perceptions of a bus in continuous motion and questions of whether 'the children ever get off'. With a gesture of resignation, the teacher quotes a question from the public: 'You do stop when you eat don't you?' From these public opinions we presume that even if they are corrected as 'false images' they visualize a concern over childhood time (and place) and a mistrust of how it conforms with mobility.

The mobility representations at work appear to contrast 'natural' ways of moving (circular) with artificial (linear) modes, and further to relate childhood and young children's health and interest with circular movements, and the mobilities by bus as at odds with this. The opposition is made from a connection of movement to qualities through which kinetic movements are seen as morally and aesthetically good, whereas mechanical movements are made unmoral or without any higher purpose (Cresswell 2010). This contrast contributes to the difficulty of appreciating travelling by bus as an activity, and even a good activity. The scheduled route is founded on representations where the narratives disclose an ambition to present the mobile preschool as ordinary and the daily journey as insignificant to preschool practice. As a consequence, a small amount of time is given to the route and mobility time is made to fit into the schedule of ordinary activities. In this way the route contributes to channelling the daily mobilities of the preschool group, scheduling them away from mobility and into preschool or childhood time and place.

The designed route

Acknowledging the tacit connection between place and mobility (Cresswell 2010) the route is designed from its destinations. Asking about the designation of the route leads us to its destinations as well as the ways these are picked out and scheduled. How the route is designed is therefore also a political issue of 'who travels where'. Travelling with the bus, we notice a repetition of direction of the route from one day to another. The mooring places vary, although the direction is recurrently out of the city and into the countryside, and the destinations of choice are legitimized with reference to their nature and safety qualities. This collection of destinations is similar to other mobile preschools in Sweden (Gustafson and van der Burgt 2015), thereby following representational ideas of 'Nature's good' and 'Outdoor education' in ECEC (Halldén 2003; Harju et al. 2020). We learn for instance that Mondays are destined for a natural playpark in a small forest just a few miles outside the city. The place is described to 'work as a weekly start up' as it 'gathers the children and allow them to move around and play freely'. These place-evoked mobilities are further described to acclimatize the child's bodies 'after a weekend in the city'.

The narratives visualize an emplacement of children in nature or rural areas and a connection between the collective gestures of children and qualities of place (Massey 2005; Edensor [2010] 2016). The place of destination is made to possess qualities that on the one hand evoke desirable sensations and mobilities of children and on the other 'displace' them from urban rhythms, which furthermore connect place-making to normative dichotomies of adulthood/childhood (Jenks 2005; Lee 2001) and nature/culture (Massey 2005). The historical image of a threatened 'mother earth' whose authentic and nourishing capacities are challenged by the mechanizing of the landscape and industrialization (Merchant 1994) still influences representations of childhood place and circumscribes children's mobilities. The connection made between childhood, authenticity and nature likewise separates it from adulthood whilst being linked to public places, mobility and to an extent, contemporary life. Following Massey (2005) the choice of destinations of the mobile preschool conforms with the protection of childhood place as authentic and 'nourishing', even though children by these manoeuvres risk being cut off from their contemporary world of relations.

The route is destined for specific places, although going with the bus we also notice how places are continuously organized and (re)stabilized by materials to produce rhythms of gestures, interaction and atmosphere (Edensor [2010] 2016). In line with the furnishing of the bus place (above), things are brought along to different destinations where they are staged to encourage and even 'dress' (Lefebvre [1992] 2004) or train children into institutionalized rhythms. Plastic animals are for instance brought to the beachside where they work to delimit place and 'remind' the children of preschool-specific rhythms of interaction and gesture. Moreover, since the group commonly have lunch outdoors, they bring food and water, cutlery, pots and drinking bottles, seat pads and even a potty to destinations to thereby (re)create familiar places and institutionalized rhythms. Material is hereby used to enact specific activities and contribute to enact preschool place temporalities. These are channelling the children's practices, although (and as we will see below) they give way to experiences and senses of matter to the children's daily bus mobilities.

The lived route

When the bus is about to depart and leave the preschool base in the city centre, the children's modes of moving change from various gestures of lingering, half lying on seats or wriggling around between and on seats, tables and the bus corridor, to a collective gesture of straightening and repositioning bodies on personal seats. The teachers walk the corridor and ensure that all children are ready to go, and the children participate in the choreography by putting their seatbelts on and making sure that their peers do the same. They are, with common bodily movements, 'getting ready'. The engine starting is a signal of departure and the bus place is set in motion. As if answering to the motions of the bus we notice how the children are also 'setting out'. Some attune more explicitly as they are stretching out and swirling arms and hands in the air and dangling their legs (a common gesture because of the high, adult-sized seats) in tune with the vibrations and sounds of the bus (engine). Others seem to be internally drawn away, letting their bodies go recumbent and having an absentminded look. Still other children are attentive to the moving landscape outside the bus windows and express their experiences of moving with excited gestures and goodbye waves, whilst some lean their heads towards the window and quietly but with intense eye movements observe the outside passing by. Even though the children collectively set out, the variation of embodied gestures reflects individual perceptions of ongoing rhythms of mobilities. From a rhythmanalytical view this can be understood from how individual bodies measure outside rhythms from inside their specific ecology of biological and 'personal' rhythms (Lefebvre [1992] 2004). Accordingly, children 'produce their own individual temporalities whilst ignoring or/and conforming to larger, collective scheduling patterns' (Edensor 2011, 191). The rhythmanalysis thereby makes apparent how the children individually and inter-relationally 'carry on' whilst negotiating with ongoing rhythms through and by their bodies.

The rhythmicity of practices is seemingly enacted by the collective of children, although we notice how a plurality of different rhythms co-operate with the children's practices. The mechanical vibrations of the bus seem to influence the children's bodies to take on specific gestures. Further, the engine motions are intertwined with a plurality of rhythms that together co-work with time, space and bodies, such as the sounds of children's music streaming from the loudspeakers, the smell of breakfast leftovers and scents of 'nature' (moisture, cold, leaves, grass and gravel) brought into the bus with our shoes, clothes and bodies, the light of the day and the ongoing city life passing by outside the windows. Together these rhythms work 'through bodies' to 'create certain vibes or moods' (Clement and Waitt 2018, 254). From inside the bus, we measure how different rhythms in this way intertwine, and together produce a specific atmosphere of space.

The sequence of phases of getting ready, setting out, and carrying on are borrowed from Ingold (2011) with the aim of showing how such a rhythmicity 'lend a certain temporal shape to the overall movement' (Ingold 2011, 53). Altogether these sequences of phases work to produce time of journey, as well as they bring about sensations of being in time (with each other and the outside world)

and of being on the move (in progress). Due to the ‘eurhythmia’ (Lefebvre [1992] 2004) of ‘smoothly combined rhythms’ (Lyon 2019) of take-off, it can further be understood to encourage bodies to go on, and even to let go.

Because of the regular mobilities and eurhythmia, bodies feel secure to let go and the children go along while daydreaming, playing, and ‘dancing’ with each other and in tune with the vibrations of the bus and the child music streaming from the bus loudspeakers. They appear to act uninterested in the outside, until we suddenly feel the slightly declining movement of the bus when passing under a road bridge, whereupon the children synchronously raise their hands in the air, shaking, stretching and twisting their bodies while shouting out loud. We notice how the children immediately react to the changed motions of the bus, the outside landscape (road bridge), and to each other’s movements, to perform a ‘collective body’ (Ekman Ladru and Gustafson 2018, 2020) of dancing and amused gestures. This event can be said to be enabled by the common experiences of and relations within the group, not least afforded by the regularity of the route. From the intensity of the gestures, we assume that the collective performance is made a sensorial matter or even a ‘shared ritual’ of the peer group (Corsaro 2018). In line with the rhythmicity of take-off this event further works to sequence the time of the journey and cause senses of temporality and progress. From regular mobilities, the children know ‘by body and heart’ what the journey will or may bring about and their bodies are prepared, maybe even awaiting. The common experience of the journey implicates a shared knowledge of the world passing by, whilst the regular route enables recurrent connection and even affective relationships with the neighbourhood passing by.

A mother of two children in the group works at an office stationed by the daily bus route and when the bus passes by in the morning she stands there at her large office window, smiling and waving at the bus. The children at the bus react immediately and collectively by raising their bodies, hands stretching and waving high up in the air, collectively leaning their bodies towards the windows and the woman at her office, shouting ‘Look, THERE SHE IS!’ ‘Hallo! Hallo!’

Once again, we measure the children’s synchronized and intense bodily movements, and assume from their expressions that this event of journey brings about sensations of matter. However, compared to the road bridge event, this encounter with the outside seems to afford another dimension of affect and quality of phenomenon. From the mother’s timely attendance and gesture, we understand that this encounter is a recurrent phase of the regular journey, although not just of the preschooler’s journey, but of her daily ‘journey’ too. This encounter is not due to an arbitrary overlapping of time, place and mobilities, or a momentous meeting, but caused by mutual attention and care, hence interdependency. It further stresses the relationship between affect and everyday rhythms (Wilson 2017) and how the young children’s mobilities are infused by the ‘relationships within’ the preschool group as well as the ‘interrelations with elsewhere’ (Harju et al. 2020, 3). We measure how the rhythms of atmosphere of the bus are influenced by the joy and excitement among the children, and how they in turn are enchanted by their common (experiences of) mobilities. The mood of space can possibly explain the follow-up conversation of this event, where the children are noticed to ‘stay with the moment’ and, inspired by the outside, begin to ‘thread other stories to it’ (Massey 2005).

The children start to talk about where their mothers work. The bus passes by a school, and one of the children exclaims, ‘There’s my MOTHER’S school, look!’; another child says, ‘There’s MY mother’s school’, to which the preschool teacher responds, correcting this assertion, ‘Your mother’s school is in [name of another town], isn’t it?’ Yet another child states, ‘My mother is in [name of yet another town].’

This discussion of mothers and their workplaces is notably not a consequence of this bus journey alone, although as an encounter through the children’s daily route it apparently works to inspire bodies and thoughts to movement (Bisell 2018). Even if we (from the moving bus) perceive only the present ‘story’ of the woman standing at her office window, the children take this story along and add to it their imaginaries and knowledges of the contemporary world of mothers, workplaces, schools and so on. From this event of the journey and the children’s attentive engagement in the

elsewhere and even in the 'else-when' rhythms of their city neighbourhood the space of the mobile bus is 'widening'. Space can in this way be understood to be 'becoming' with a plurality of co-existing and 'cross cutting' rhythms of mobilities (Edensor 2011). The regular route and the (re)created rhythms of mobilities enable the children's evolving connections and relationships with their contemporary world, as well as seeming to inspire and stretch their internal journey of knowingness.

To summarize, the deconstruction of mobility constellation shows how representations of childhood time, place and mobility are reproduced in the designment of the bus route, whilst produce a regular route of journey. Geographical norms further influence a continuous reconstruction of preschool place and rhythms by means of materials and gestures, that together work to channel the children's everyday experiences. However, the children's mobility practices visualize how regular mobilities afford shared experiences and common senses of familiarity and predictability that make room for lived or 'secret' (non-representational) rhythms (Lefebvre [1992] 2004) as well as the collective (re)making of travelling rhythms.

Going with the bus we notice how the young children measure and attune to a plurality of different rhythms and make use of their common mobility experiences to create a rhythmic journey grounded in connections between motions of the bus, outside events and collective embodiment. Based on the children's intense and sentient expressions we assume that their synchronized and rhythmic movements afford feelings of togetherness and pleasure. We further assume that these qualities of rhythms are of matter to the children's everyday navigation and how they carry on.

The regularity of the mobile preschool journey enables the making of travelling rhythms that we argue strengthen the children's relationships with each other and the outside passing by. Based on our noticing of the children's expressions and repeated moves we assume that the recurrent movements through their city neighbourhood involves encounters of matter to their everyday relations and knowing. These interrelational rhythms affect them, as well as they affect the bus space, and further, the mobile space of the bus is likely to widen the preschooler's thinking about the surrounding world. The children's travelling rhythms are thereby also an expression of their interdependent movements and a reminder of what and how places and encounters are made valuable. Based on these findings we argue that the mobile preschool journeys are revised and understood as something more than a transport to daily destinations. The children's mobility practices show how regular travelling through the city neighbourhood is an activity (in itself) of social and affective rhythms, encouraging and inspiring them to go on.

Discussion

The deconstruction of mobility constellation is an abduction of common logic and what is known to work. It encircles details in ways that are not done in 'reality' (Cresswell 2010), whereas the designing of the route may appear both ambiguous and simplified. Brought together into constellations, the different modes of mobilities are once again intertwined and impossible to sort out. This process of deconstructing and constructing, however, stresses the way children's everyday mobilities are entangled with and circumscribed by larger structures. Additionally, the analysis of the children's lived mobilities highlights the experiences and practices enacted, and brings to the fore how children negotiate with, contribute to and (re)create mobilities.

The critical reading of the mobile preschool route allows us to get close to and reveal the geographical norms of early childhood, such as the emplacement of young children in places of 'idealized and separated-off' qualities (Taylor 2014). This emplacement of childhood risk neglecting geographical relations and movements of importance to children (Ibid.), as for instance within their city neighbourhood. The route of the mobile preschool is not just designed according to its ideal destinations, but made to fit into the schedule of preschool activities, whereby the actual journeys with the bus are made insignificant. However, from the 'child's perspective' this regulation of route seems rather to enable than discourage them. Thus, the insignificant journey allows them (to a certain extent) to move 'secretly' or let their bodies go without specific expectations of gestures,

thereby enabling a collective making of travelling rhythms in close connection to the outside passing by. The children's travelling rhythms are to this a manifestation of what representations versus bodies (can) do (Cresswell 2010 ; Bisell 2018) and shed light on the built-in possibilities of the mobile preschool, beyond transporting and before the sensuous and social affordances of movement in itself.

The rhythmanalytical approach allows us to visualize and stress the non-representational elements of young children's daily mobilities. Noticing rhythms of mobilities reveals the role of the body in children's everyday navigation and visualizes the way rhythms work through bodies to create senses of time and space . Accordingly, rhythmanalysis makes us attentive to the way specific qualities of movements bring about and create rhythms of atmosphere (Lyon 2019). The rhythmic movements of the children can be read as their collective managing of bodies on the move, as well as performing a shared, ritualized and sentient, thus lived, journey.. Noticing how rhythms are made to co-work from within the children's practices visualize key relations between internal and external rhythms and how children in different ways attune to and find ways to carry on with the collective. In this way, rhythmanalysis also work to reveal the differences as well as making us attentive to the hidden variations behind social gestures (Lefebvre [1992] 2004).

Acknowledgements

The study has been conducted as part of the larger research project 'Mobility, informal learning and citizenship in mobile preschools', supported by the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences under grant number P15-0543:1. We are grateful to Danielle Ekman Ladru and Katarina Gustafson at Uppsala University for their inspiring collaboration and their feedback on several versions of this text. Our colleagues at Malmö University and the Childhood and Education research group also gave us helpful advice on a late version of this article. Foremost, we are grateful to the children and adults at the mobile preschool in this study for their generosity in letting us board the bus and go with them on their daily journeys.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The study has been conducted as part of the larger research project 'Mobility, informal learning and citizenship in mobile preschools', supported by The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences [Riksbankens Jubileumsfond], Grant Number: P15-0543:1.

ORCID

Jutta Balldin  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7320-9177>

References

- Bisell, David. 2018. *Transit Life. How Commuting Is Transforming Our Cities*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Christensen, Pia, and Susana Cortes-Morales. 2016. "Children's Mobilities: Methodologies, Theories, and Scales. Movement, Mobilities and Journeys." In *Movement, Mobilities, and Journeys*, edited by Caitriona Ni Laoire, Allen White, and Tracy Skelton, 13–44. Singapore: Springer.
- Clement, Susannah, and Gordon Waitt. 2018. "Pram Mobilities: Affordances and Atmospheres That Assemble Childhood and Motherhood On-the-Move." *Children's Geographies* 16 (3): 252–265. doi:10.1080/14733285.2018.1432849.
- Corsaro, William. 2018. *The Sociology of Childhood*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cortes-Morales, Susana, and Pia Christensen. 2014. "Unfolding the Pushchair. Children's Mobilities and Everyday Technologies." *Research on Education and Media* 6 (2): 9–18. ISSN 2037-0830.

- Cresswell, Tim. 2010. "Towards a Politics of Mobility." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (1): 17–31. doi:10.1068/d11407.
- Eckeskog, Linn. 2019. "Kommunikation i förskolan. Förskollärares och barnskötares kommunikation med föräldrar i ett digitaliserat medielandskap [Communication in Pre-School: Pre-School Teachers and Childcare Workers Communicating with Parents in a Digitalized Media Landscape]." PhD diss., Umeå University.
- Edensor, Tim. (2010) 2016. "Introduction: Thinking About Rhythm and Space." In *Geographies of Rhythm. Nature, Place. Mobilities and Bodies*, edited by Tim Edensor, 1–18. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Edensor, Tim. 2011. "Commuter: Mobility, Rhythm and Commuting." In *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects*, edited by Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman, 189–204. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Ekman Ladru, Danielle, and Katarina Gustafson. 2018. "'Yay, a Downhill!' Mobile Preschool Children's Collective Mobility Practices and 'Doing' Space in Walks in Line." *Journal of Pedagogy* 9 (1): 87–107. doi:10.2478/jped-2018-0005.
- Ekman Ladru, Danielle, and Katarina Gustafson. 2020. "Children's Collective Embodiment – Mobility Practices and Materialities in Mobile Preschools." *Population, Space and Place*. doi:10.1002/psp.2322.
- Gulløv, Eva, and Charlotte Palludan. 2010. "Børn som deltagere. Antropologi og feltarbejde [Children as Participants. Anthropology and Field Work]." In *Den lille bog om metode. Sådan undersøger du børnekultur og barns perspektiv [The Little Book on Method. This is How You Study Children's Culture and Children's Perspectives]*, edited by Anne Petersen, 40–48. Aarhus: Via Systime.
- Gustafson, Katarina, and Danielle van der Burgt. 2015. "'Being on the Move': Time-Spatial Organisation and Mobility in a Mobile Preschool." *Journal of Transport Geography* 46: 201–209. doi:10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2015.06.023.
- Hackett, Abigail, Lisa Procter, and Julie Seymour. 2015. "Introduction: Spatial Perspectives and Childhood Studies." In *Children's Spatialities: Embodiment, Emotion and Agency*, edited by Abigail Hackett Hackett, Lisa Procter, and Julie Seymour, 1–17. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Halldén, Gunilla. 2003. "Children's Views on Family, Home and House." In *Children in the City. Home, Neighbourhood and Community. The Future of Childhood Series*, edited by Pia Christensen and Margaret O'Brien, 29–45. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Halldén, Gunilla. 2007. *Den moderna barndomen och barns vardagsliv [Modern Childhood and the Everyday Lives of Children]*. Stockholm: Carlssons.
- Harju, Anne, Jutta Balldin, Danielle Ekman Ladru, and Katarina Gustafson. 2020. "Children's Education in 'Good' Nature: Perceptions of Activities in Nature Spaces in Mobile Preschools." *Global Studies of Childhood*. doi:10.1177/2043610619900519.
- Holloway, Sara L., and Gill Valentine. 2000. "Children's Geographies and the New Social Studies of Childhood." In *Children's Geographies. Playing, Living, Learning*, edited by Sara L Holloway and Gill Valentine, 1–26. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Horton, John, and Peter Kraftl. 2006. "Not Just Growing Up, but *Going On*: Materials, Spacings, Bodies, Situations." *Children's Geographies* 4 (3): 259–276. doi:10.1080/14733280601005518.
- Ingold, Tim. 2011. *Being Alive. Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge.
- Jenks, Chris. 2005. *Childhood*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Kullman, Kim, and Charlotte Palludan. 2011. "Rhythmanalytical Sketches: Agencies, School Journeys, Temporalities." *Children's Geographies* 9 (3–4): 347–359. doi:10.1080/14733285.2011.590709.
- Law, John. 2004. *After Method. Mess in Social Science Research*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Lee, Nick. 2001. *Childhood and Society. Growing Up in an Age of Uncertainty*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Lefebvre, Henri. (1992) 2004. *Rhythmanalysis. Space, Time and Everyday Life*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Lyon, Dawn. 2019. *What is Rhythmanalysis? Research Methods Series*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Markström, Ann-Marie. 2007. "Hallen – en plats i skärningspunkten mellan privat och offentligt [The Hallway – a Place at the Intersection of the Private and the Public]." In *Den moderna barndomen och barns vardagsliv [Modern Childhood and the Everyday Lives of Children]*, edited by Gunilla Halldén, 97–118. Stockholm: Carlssons.
- Massey, Doreen. 2005. *For Space*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merchant, Carolyn. 1994. *Naturens död. Kvinnan, ekologin och den vetenskapliga revolutionen [The Death of Nature. Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution]*. Stockholm: Brutus Östlings Förlag.
- Mikkelsen, Miguel Romero, and Pia Christensen. 2009. "Is Children's Independent Mobility Really Independent? A Study of Children's Mobility Combining Ethnography and GPS/Mobile Phone Technologies." *Mobilities* 4 (1): 37–58. doi:10.1080/17450100802657954.
- Nansen, Bjorn, Lisa Gibbs, Colin MacDougall, Frank Vetere, Nicola J. Ross, and John McKendrick. 2015. "Children's Interdependent Mobility: Compositions, Collaborations and Compromises." *Children's Geographies* 13 (4): 467–481. doi:10.1080/14733285.2014.887813.
- Nome, Dag. 2018. "The Flow of Play Among Toddlers in Kindergarten." In *The Philosophy of Play as Life*, edited by Wendy Russell, Emily Ryall, and Malcolm MacLean, 179–192. London: Routledge.
- Pink, Sarah, and Kerstin Leder Mackley. 2012. "Video and a Sense of the Invisible: Approaching Domestic Energy Consumption Through the Sensory Home." *Sociological Research Online* 17 (1): 87–105. doi:10.5153/sro.2583.

- Sheller, Mimi, and John Urry. 2006. "The New Mobilities Paradigm." *Environment and Planning A* 38: 207–226. doi:10.1068/a37268.
- Tallberg Broman, Ingegerd. 2018. "Pedagogikens Studieobjekt (upp)Fostran [Education – the Study Object of Pedagogics]." In *Pedagogik som Vetenskap. En Inbjudan* [Pedagogy as Science. An Invitation], edited by Mattias Nilsson Sjöberg, 59–78. Malmö: Gleerups Utbildning AB.
- Taylor, Affrica. 2014. "Situated and Entangled Childhoods: Imagining and Materialising Children's Common World Relations." In *Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Care and Education. Critical Questions, New Imaginaries and Social Activism. A Reader*, edited by Marianne N. Bloch, Beth Blue Swadener, and Gaile S. Canella, 121–130. New York: Peter Lang.
- Urry, John. 2006. "Travelling Times." *European Journal of Communication* 21 (3): 357–372. doi:10.1177/02673231060666655.
- Valentine, Gill. 2010. "Children's Bodies: An Absent Presence." In *Contested Bodies of Childhood and Youth*, edited by Kathrin Hörschelmann and Rachel Colls, 22–37. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vannini, Philip. 2012. "In Time, Out of Time. Rhythmanalyzing Ferry Mobilities." *Time and Society* 21 (2): 241–269. doi:10.1177/0961463X10387688.
- Wilson, Helen F. 2017. "On Geography and Encounter: Bodies, Borders, and Difference." *Progress in Human Geography* 4 (4): 451–471. doi:10.1177/0309132516645958.
- Zeicher, Helga. 2003. "Shaping Daily Life in Urban Environments." In *Children in the City: Home, Neighbourhood and Community*, edited by Pia Christensen and Margaret O'Brien, 66–81. London: RoutledgeFalmer.