Staging Time.
Between Time Perception and the Timetables

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Chapter I. Introduction

What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know.

Saint Augustine
Chapter I - Introduction

Introduction

Why is it that some train journeys seem short even though the distance covered is objectively significant? Why can a daily commute on the same route appear like an ordeal on one day and a zen-like experience on another? Why is our time perception on a home-bound journey different from its perception on an outbound journey? How do people cope with the passage of time while travelling by train? Do they always seek to shorten the perceived time of a trip by exploiting various ‘killing time’ strategies? What sort of embodied practices are present when travelling by train? Do policymakers and engineers devising new transport models take into consideration travellers’ time perception and not only the precise amount of time that can be saved according to the model? These are just some of the questions that have inspired and defined the scope of this work.

With the aforementioned questions in mind we decided to analyse one of the most prominent transport infrastructure projects in the history of modern Denmark i.e. the ‘One-hour Model’ (’Timemodellen’ in Danish, hereafter also called ‘OHM’). In particular, the analysis concerns the tensions between the macro- and microscale, i.e. the individual traveller’s time perception and the depersonalised, monetised understanding of time which rules major transport infrastructure projects, such as the OHM. With this semester project we are trying to look at the present infrastructure and the potential influence of the OHM through the lenses of the ‘mobilities’ turn. Based on this approach we were able to unearth the aspects of the OHM that lie beyond the scope of instrumental movement from A to B.

Since the aforementioned undertaking has not yet been introduced and its full completion should only be expected by 2026, the main focus of our interest has been set towards travellers, both daily commuters and occasional, on trains operating currently between four major Danish cities included in the OHM – Aalborg, Aarhus, Odense and Copenhagen. This railway connection constitutes the backbone of the Danish railroad system, moving thousands of passengers and tons of goods on a daily basis, thus playing a crucial role in the socio-economic development of the country. The quality of DSB’s (the Danish railroad operator) service as well as the travel time on this route have not been satisfactorily and have become uncompetitive over the course of recent years. The decision has also been dictated by environmental concerns, i.a. the will to cut down GHG emissions by reducing car traffic and changing the modal split along this transport corridor. These among other reasons (e.g. politicians’ predilection to fund flashy megaprojects and to cut ribbons), led the Danish parliament to undertake a decision by a large majority of votes to build a high-speed rail connecting the aforementioned cities.

In order to gain insight into how time is perceived from different perspectives we have prepared a research design appropriate for the interpretative theories of science such as hermeneutics and phenomenology. Therefore, we have conducted a series of interviews with current rail users. Furthermore, in an attempt to add a more personal stamp to this report, we have included the descriptions and insights from our own experiences of travelling with DSB as well as the that of travelling with high-speed rails in other countries. Additionally, this has been supplemented by situational analyses of both the train stations and trains themselves, which enabled us to confront the reported time passing strategies with behavioural observations. At the same time, for a better understanding of the underlying logic of the OHM, we have also conducted a document analysis, with special focus on the feasibility study and other official documents related to this transport undertaking.

Hence, one of the aims of this semester project is to investigate some of the, often conflicting, main perspectives on time informing the everyday mobilities. Time has been a major investigation theme for philosophers, physicists, social scientists, and many others since time immemorial. In this work, when discussing time, we mostly draw inspiration from John Urry’s seminal work i.e. Sociology Beyond Societies (2000). His account of time, in particular the so called ‘clock time’, together with many different theoretical frameworks from various fields of science, including transport research, psychology and philosophy, have shaped this research. In order to analyse the tensions between the ‘clock time’ and the individually perceived time, we have adopted the ‘Staging mobilités’ framework and developed the ‘Staging time’ perspective, which enabled us to look at how travellers stage their time from below and how it is staged from above.

Taking the above into consideration, it needs to be underlined that our main goal in this project was to apply the analytical toolbox of the interpretative tradition, based on both phenomenology and hermeneutics, to a domain traditionally governed by the rules of perfect rationality and punctuality – the rail. The railway, with its timetables and strictly defined routes, is par excellence a product of a predominantly positivistic worldview,
which attempts to transform all human problems into mathematical equations that can be solved with the use of appropriate tools. By examining these two very different ways of viewing travel, either as an embodied performance or as a statistical fact, we aim at eliciting the tensions between the underlying world views shaping these two perspectives. Nevertheless, it is not our goal to reconcile them, as we are not trying to find a statistical expression of traveller’s time perception, which could be added to traffic forecasts as yet another variable explaining a particular mode preference. Rather we have a more modest goal of raising awareness of the usually underestimated significance of the individually lived experiences of travel time. Since it cannot be expressed in numerical or money terms, it is often hidden from the eyes of decision makers. However, it is important to bear in mind that the mode choice preference is often influenced by such a phenomenological and idiosyncratic perspective on par with the commonly acknowledged travel time and cost.

**Historical background**

The first railway in Denmark opened in 1847, between Copenhagen and Roskilde. During the nineteenth century railways were used to connect Copenhagen with the rest of the country. The network was expanded to reach the most important cities and towns of the country, first by private companies and later by the state, who took over the companies and merged them into Danske Statsbaner (DSB) in 1885. Other important dates in the history of railway travel in Denmark includes the opening of the Little Belt Bridge in 1935, the electrification of the main line across Zealand, Funen and southern Jutland in the 80s and 90s, the construction of the tunnel under the Great Belt in 1997, the Oresund Bridge in 2000 and the funding of the signaling program that, as will be later explained, is a prerequisite for the One-hour Model. It is also worth mentioning that, due to the European Union directive 91/440/EC (also known as the “First Railway Directive”) the Danish railway company was split between the national agency for management of rail infrastructure (Banedanmark) and a train operator company (which inherited the name DSB) in 1997, while the train operation market was opened to other companies.

The story of the One-hour Model started on the first of march 2013, when the government made public its proposal for an overall modernization of the national rails through the electrification of the remaining main lines and other infrastructural projects aiming at reducing the travel time between the four largest cities in Denmark to around one hour, both to be funded through the Danish Train Fund, fueled by tax revenues from the oil industry operating in the North Sea (Transport-, Bygnings- og Boligministeriet, 2013).

The signaling programme is planned for completion in 2021, even if the earliest lines to adopt the new system are already using it, typically Copenhagen’s suburban rail network. The electrification programme is bound for completion in 2026, although the lines in the OHM are expected to be electrified by 2021 (Banedanmark, 2014). The OHM itself has not a clear date for completion, as many infrastructural projects are still in the planning phase, but the first segment (the high-speed line between Copenhagen and Ringsted) will open in 2018 and the upgrade of the line from Ringsted to Odense is expected for 2020.

**Technical background**

The One-hour Model, as already stated, aims at reducing the travel times between the largest cities in Denmark to around one hour. The tool to pursue this objective is the High-Speed Rail (HSR, for short). The official document of the Danish Train Fund (Banedanmark and Trafikstyrelsen, 2013), states the technicalities of the model. There are two pre-requisites for the HSR project, one being the electrification of the most important rail track in the country and the other being the upgrading of the signaling system to the European Union’s ERTMS standard.

The electrification programme (Banedanmark, 2013) is partly funded through the Train Fund and is needed to run modern High-Speed trains which have better performance than the diesel trains currently operated in most of the country (only the line from Germany to Sweden through Kolding, Odense and Copenhagen is currently electrified). It is worth to say that the electrification program covers more lines than the ones affected by the OHM, as the electrification can bring several advantages also to the traditional lines, the Banedanmark website states that it can increase the stability of the train operations, lower maintenance costs, increase speeds and reduce noise levels and air pollution.
Chapter I - Introduction

The upgrade of the signaling system (Banedanmark, 2007), which regulates train traffic keeping them apart increasing safety and regulating capacity, is a stand-alone program co-financed by the European Union. The program aims to implement the ERTMS system in the whole country. The ERTMS is a modern digital signaling system relying on wireless connection between trains and the traffic management centre, with the traffic information (speed limits, clearances, warnings, delays, etc.) delivered directly to in-cab displays. It is developed by the European Union to enhance the inter-operability of the trains running in the Union, to cancel the need to fit the trains for the different systems in use in the different countries. It is also more reliable than the older systems, and the increased accuracy (the system operates in real-time with the actual position of the train instead of long rail blocks) results in an increased capacity of the lines.

Apart from the electrification and the signaling upgrade, the OHM will work on the rail tracks, including completely new sections and upgrades to the existing lines. The new lines planned by the model will run on both dedicated rails as bypasses for sections already used at high capacity by local, slower trains, bypasses for cutting current detours of the tracks to smaller cities and town, and normal tracks used by all kind of trains. This operative scheme is identified by Campos and De Rus (2009) both as a “Mixed high speed” and “Fully mixed”: some of the new sections are to be used exclusively by the high-speed trains while others can be used by other passenger services and also freight trains.

Starting from Copenhagen, first a new section of HSR is being built between Copenhagen and Ringsted for the exclusive use of high-speed trains. This section is needed because of the current usage of the capacity on the traditional line, used by commuter trains. This new section is designed for up to 250 km/h. At Ringsted the trains will use the existing track to Odense, upgraded for speeds up to 200 km/h. In Vestfyn a new HSR with speeds up to 250 km/h will bypass the existing line, with a straighter trajectory and bypassing the more populated areas. Between Middelfart and Fredericia trains will use the existing line without any upgrade. From Fredericia to Horsens the existing line will be upgraded and a bridge to bypass the Vejle fjord will be built, allowing speeds up to 250 km/h. The new bridge will be open to freight trains if they can operate with the designed steep elevation. Regarding the nodes of Fredericia and Horsens, no bypasses will be built. The line from Horsens to Hovedgard will be upgraded and from there new tracks to Aarhus will be built, enabling trains to run up to 250 km/h in this section. Finally, from Aarhus to Aalborg no new tracks are programmed, only upgrading the existing line especially between Hobro and Aalborg which is now being operated at a maximum of 120 km/h and, with the OHM, will enable speeds up to 200 km/h. The new tracks connecting Copenhagen to Aalborg will be 27 km shorter than now, bringing the total distance down to 442 km from 469 km.

Finally, from Fredericia to Esbjerg, the One-hour Model will bring along an upgrade of the existing line without building new tracks.

Research Question

Considering all the facts that have been shown in the previous passages, the research presented here seeks and provides insights into the gap and tension between the two opposing scales. Thus, defining the problem through the following research question:

What is the relationship between the traveller’s time perception and time use and the way the railway infrastructure in Denmark is designed?

In order to explain in more detail, the research wants to approach the understanding of the traveller’s perception who moves through a positivistic transport system, such as the railway. In order to answer this question we need to answer a How does this mode of transport treat travellers’ time? Furthermore, the paper tries to clarify the embodied performances and the different stages of travelling that affect traveller’s time perception. In order to fully answer these questions it is therefore crucial to take into consideration the physical and built environment of the stations and train itself, since they have a great impact on the time perception. This question is set against the background of the OHM which is to be introduced in the following years, which helps us understand travellers’ attitudes towards time spent travelling.
Structure of the report

This report has been structured into five chapters. After the introduction comes the literature review and philosophy of science reflection chapter, where we discuss the relevant literature from a wide array of fields, ranging from mobilities, philosophy, psychology to transport literature. We concentrate primarily on the available literature concerning time perception and time use while travelling. Additionally, we also introduce Jensen’s ‘Staging mobilities’ framework, which we then incorporate into our own methodological toolbox by developing the ‘Staging time’ perspective. Thereafter, we shall discuss the place of our research in the field of philosophy of science, pointing out the reasons for adopting the specific approach used in this research, i.e. the phenomenological perspective.

In Chapter III we shall present the methodological toolbox used throughout the research, which includes predominantly interpretative tools, i.e. interviews and anthropological observations. We present how the interview questionnaire has been constructed, how we recruited volunteers for our research and how the interviews themselves were conducted. Furthermore, we present how the project has been progressing, the obstacles encountered along the way, as well as limitations resulting from the adopted approach.

Chapter IV is dedicated to the analysis of the gathered data from the interviews, which is conducted with the use of the ‘Staging time’ analytical framework. In the analysis Chapter, we present how people stage their time at different stages of travel, that is during preparation, the waiting time and the travel itself. We analyse how various external factors influence people’s time use and time perception, but also how people themselves develop strategies to make the time pass at a pace optimal from the point of view of the individual. Based on these findings, we endeavour to develop a typology a timestyles that we have discovered in our research.

In the fifth and final Chapter we conclude the findings of our research and show how the approach used in it could be further refined to provide interesting insights into travellers’ ‘staging time’ habits. We end the chapter with a discussion of potential future research stemming from our own, which could include an ex-post analysis of travellers’ behaviours after the introduction of the OHM. We also discuss how an interpretative approach could be incorporated into the appraisals of such transport infrastructure projects, as well as how the design field could benefit from looking at time perception while on the move.
Chapter II. Theoretical framework

‘Perception is not something that happens to us, or in us. It is something we do.’

Alva Noë


Chapter II - Theoretical framework

Staging mobilities

In the wake of the Mobilities Turn, the theoretical toolkit of Jensen (2013), i.e. the staging mobilities perspective, is taken into account in this research project. In particular, it is explicitly evident the double nature of the staging dimension in the way this work deals with the travellers’ time perception and the railway transport planning and design. These two dimensions are easily readable through the glasses of the ‘Staging mobilities’ as ‘staging from below’ and ‘staging from above’, where the way that actual mobility takes shape is defined both by the users and the planners and designers of the system.

Staging from above

The role of staging from above, when long-distance train transport in Denmark is discussed, is portrayed by several actors:

* Trafik- og Byggestyrelsen – the Danish Transport and Construction Agency;
* Banedanmark – the Danish agency for management of the rail infrastructure;
* DSB – the national Danish train operator.
* Train-building companies – even if the train operators give specifications, they still play an important role in train design.

It is worth noting that all of these actors are controlled by the Danish government but each has its own role, respectively transport planning, rail management and train operations, and its own interests and expectations on railway transport in Denmark. Trafik- og Byggestyrelsen is the government’s agency which plans investments in transportation to put in effect the national policy, its role is to define strategic assets for the public good and to set the framework for train service. Banedanmark is the owner and manager of the rail infrastructure which makes it the entity responsible subject for maintenance of rails, stations and signalling systems, the assignment of track blocks to specific trains and traffic management. Finally, DSB is the train operator, physically running the trains on Banedanmark’s infrastructure and in specific track blocks at the assigned time.

The One-hour Model is developed by Trafik- og Byggestyrelsen and Banedanmark, without active involvement of DSB, as it is an infrastructural plan for the creation of high-speed tracks and the upgrade of some existing segments.

As said in the previous chapter, it is worth to be reminded that the EU directive 91/440/EC2 (also known as the “First Railway Directive”) is the policy responsible for the splitting of many state-owned rail companies in Europe into different organizations responsible for rail infrastructure management and rail companies responsible for train operations, with the objective of creating a free market for train services and increasing the competition in the European Union.

Going back to the ‘Staging Mobilities’ theory, these actors are involved in the staging from above, in particular with regard to the physical setting and material dimension of mobilities, including: physical planning and designs of routes, train stations, train interiors, services on board of the trains. They also have an impact on travellers’ embodiment through their design and planning: the landscape outside the train windows is dependent on the chosen route, food services in stations and trains, the creation of “silence compartments” where mobile phones cannot be used, the temperature on trains, the shelters on platforms, the WiFi service on board are all examples of how the staging from above can affect the travel experience.
Staging from below

As Jensen (2013) explains in “Staging Mobilities”: ‘Mobilities are carefully and meticulously designed, planned, and ‘staged’ (from above). However, they are equally importantly acted out, performed and lived as people are ‘staging themselves’ (from below). The stage for acting from below refers to train itself or the train station our project context. Staging mobilities from below refers to embodied performances, that is: ‘embodied acts of self-choreography that individuals perform as they create “mobilities in situ” ’ (Jensen, 2013:9).

Train travellers stage their mobilities according to train’s design and facilities, for instance they play cards if there is a table for four, watch movies if there is an electric plug, listen to music, look out through the window, sleep, meet people who sit beside them, depending on how busy they are. And it also brings the fact that for the duration of the train travel they engage in social interactions, e.g. by forming “mobile withs” with one another and by subtly negotiating when moving in situations like corridors or entering/exiting the train. Considering their waiting time in the train stations, there are factors like light, number of people waiting and personal needs which influence train travellers to make decisions in certain ways.
Chapter II - Theoretical framework

Time

What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know.

- Saint Augustine

Time as a phenomenon

After ‘setting the stage’ with the introduction of the staging mobilities perspective, we would now like to turn to the one specific, although incredibly multifaceted, aspect of train travel: time. As has already been indicated in the first chapter, this research project deals with different dimensions of time which affect our everyday mobilities. Therefore, the research topic of this project lies at the very heart of mobilities studies, since as John Urry noted: ‘Mobilities are all about temporality’ (Urry, 2001: 105). On the one hand, our daily mobile lives are shaped by strict timetables of public transport, on the other hand, each of us has a very personal perception of the passage of time which cannot easily be brought to a common denominator. There is a gap between the subjective understanding of time and the objective time, which seems unbridgeable. Does our lived experience of time have anything to do with time savings used in transportation forecasting as a profitability measure of infrastructure projects? In order to investigate this question, a theoretical account of how time is actually understood and how it is perceived, especially in motion, will be presented in the following chapter. For practical reasons, this reconstruction of main concepts concerning time will be limited in scope and will first and foremost include mobilities perspectives that had the greatest influence on this study.

Time has been a subject of scientific and philosophical inquiry since time immemorial, with Saint Augustine’s Confessions being one of the first attempts to understand the nature of time. And despite all the scientific progress and the refinement of time measurement, we seem to be just as perplexed by time as Saint Augustine was. As Urry points out, there is still much disagreement as to what we denote when we say time, stemming mainly from the fact that time is not perceived by any of human senses. Therefore, some will simply conflate it with the methods of its measurement, others believe these methods are merely metaphors, whereas others yet might underline the qualitative aspects of lived time (Urry, 2001: 105). One of the main ways of thinking about time was shaped by Isaac Newton, who saw time as an absolute entity, independent of any perceiver, a container of events, passing regardless of any succession of events. Another vantage point was introduced by Gottfried Leibniz, who argued, in opposition to Newton, that time does not exist on its own, and that it is created through the temporal relationship in the succession of events. These views have been superseded by Einstein’s relative time with the introduction of his relativity theory, where the passage of time is dependent on the observer’s reference frame (Kelly, n.d.). Without going into further discussion on these theories it is worth noting that Newtonian understanding of time, despite its scientific inadequacy, is still prevalent, because of its usefulness for many run-of-the-mill purposes, including transport engineering.

But time has also been one of the most intriguing phenomena for philosophers. From Zeno’s paradoxes of infinitely divisible time, Aristotle’s understanding of time as a measure of change, through Saint Augustine’s notion of subjective time, Kantian a priori form of sensibility, to Husserl’s time-consciousness, the greatest minds in the history of mankind have struggled to apprehend, how is it possible that we perceive time. The traditional way of thinking about time ever since Plato, as Alweiss points out, was that of a ‘linear series of ‘now’ points that can be measured. Time is thereby interpreted as a modification of presence. We call ‘past’ what is no longer present and ‘future’ what is not yet present’ (Alweiss, 2002: 119). Therefore, such and understanding of time is based on our apprehension of the unchangeable, the ideal, the eternity, and not on our lived experience of finitude. However, since this research interest attempts to take off from the vantage point of phenomenology, that is one which is primarily focused on the human experience, we refer to Husserl’s, the founding father of phenomenology, account of time. For Husserl, the main issue at hand was that of conscious, lived experience of the passage of time and of temporal objects such as tunes or a train travel for that matter. Three concepts are crucial in his view – perception of the present moment, the memory of the past moments and the anticipation towards what is to come. Therefore, he distinguishes three ways of internal consciousness of experiencing that are present at each moment: primal impression, retention, and protention. They can be explained in the following manner:
Chapter II - Theoretical framework

‘The primal impression is an intentional awareness of the present event as present. Retention is an intentional awareness of the past event as past. Protention is an intentional awareness of the future event as about to happen.’ (Smith, n.d.)

This also resonates with Alfred Schutz’s, another prominent phenomenologist, findings, who noted: ‘objective or “cosmic time” of clocks and calendars must be distinguished from the “inner time” or duree within which our actual experiences are connected with the past ... and with the future’ (Schutz, 1962:215-16). From this follows that the conscious self is always involved not only in the present moment but always reaches out intentionally towards both the past and the future. This is a crucial feature of the consciousness that allows for a better understanding of how we exceed the confines of the present moment. It needs to be underlined that for Husserl phenomenology is different from psychology because it ‘would study consciousness without reducing the objective and shareable meanings that inhabit experience to merely subjective happenstances’ (Smith, 2016) as psychology does.

Mobilities’ perspective on time

Since mobilities have its roots in social sciences, in our research we mainly focus on how social scientists related to the mobilities turn to understand time. As pointed out earlier, for Urry time plays a central role in investigations into how leading a life on the move influences individuals and the societies. Time-space compression (Castells, 2002), acceleration of time or living in the fast lane (Wajcman, 2008) are common features of our everyday lives and have fundamentally reshaped the way we think about the time-space. Following Whitehead, Urry believes that: ‘Time and space are not separate from the processes by which the physical and social worlds operate’ (Urry, 2000: 107). Thus, we need not think about time-space as something external in regard to social interaction, instead, we should embrace a more holistic approach, one where ‘changes in the temporal structure of modern societies transform the very essence of our culture, social structure, and personal identity’ (Wajcman, 2008: 62). Furthermore, the advent of mobile technologies has spawned new social phenomena, including the ‘stretched mobile interactions’ (Jensen, 2013), ‘absent presence’ (Gergen, 2002). Put in the words of Jensen:

‘In this perspective the definition of the situation is leaning predominantly on where the attention is, rather than who are physically co-present.’ (Jensen, 2013: 84)

Thus, our digital competences define where we find ourselves in a given situation, not necessarily physically, with mobile technologies providing inconspicuous new layers to our environment. This in turn is connected to a phenomenon observed by Castells, who claimed that:

‘In our society, the network society, where you live determines your time-frame of reference. If you are an inhabitant of the space of flows, or if you live in a locality that is in the dominant networks, timeless time (epitomized by the frantic race to beat the clock) will be your time – as in Wall Street or Silicon Valley. If you are in a Pearl River delta factory town, chronological time will be imposed upon you as in the best days of Taylorism in Detroit.’ (Castells, 2002: 18)

From this follows that mobile technology, by defining the situation that we find ourselves in, consequently also defines the time we live according to. This has deep running consequences, since mobile technologies can be used to actively change the situation we are in, e.g. when our immediate surroundings do not offer enough interesting stimuli, we can revert to our smartphones and put our attention somewhere else. This can also become a powerful tool in changing the way we perceive time, since by using mobile technologies we can enter the ‘space of flows’ and therefore get caught up in the frantic pace of time, making us perceive the time
to pass faster than it would have, had we stayed in the immediately available situation.

Furthermore, according to Urry, there is a need to overcome the somewhat artificial duality, that discerned social time from natural time. He demonstrates how time was usually thought to be a social arrangement, opposing the natural time. The embodiment of this social contract is the clock. It is the clock that has revolutionized our way of thinking about time, with its ability to transform something humans cannot directly perceive into an easily quantifiable entity. As Urry puts it: ‘The first characteristic of modern machine civilisation is temporal regularity organised via the clock, an invention in many ways more important than even the steam engine’ (Urry, 2000: 108). The preindustrial societies did not distinguish time from their activities, they did not arrange or measure the duration of their activities against the abstract passing time, they did not distinguish between work and leisure time (Ingold, 1995: 7). It was only after the introduction of clock time that a sharp distinction between work and leisure could be established, and the commodification of time could take place. Hence time began to be equated with money, most notably when Benjamin Franklin forged the famous saying: ‘time is money’.

But this led to some deeply running changes in our societies and on the individual level since ‘money is concerned only with what is common to all, i.e. with the exchange value which reduces all quality and individuality to purely quantitative level’ (Simmel, 1971: 326). Time no longer was something subjective, difficult to grasp and virtually unmanageable. The clock time allowed for a strict scheduling of events, the predictability of what and when is going to happen, which becomes especially apparent in the way the public transport operates. The whole machinery of modern societies hinges on a strict subordination to clock time, because ‘the lack of the most exact punctuality in promises and performances would cause the whole to break down into inextricable chaos’ (Simmel, 1971: 328).

Ever since time has become equated with money, people have searched for ways of putting it to more profitable uses and for ways of saving it. This has become one of the greatest concerns of the *homo economicus* in modern societies, as most innovations seek to either perform a given task in a shorter timespan or to lead to a qualitatively better result in the same amount of time. Hence, as Simmel put it: ‘The calculating exactness of practical life which resulted from a money economy corresponds to the ideal of natural science, namely that of transforming the world into an arithmetical problem and of fixing every one of its parts in a mathematical formula’ (Simmel, 1971: 327). And indeed, this has been the exact task of transport engineers and transport economists, namely, to devise these kinds of innovations and to forecast the potential costs and benefits of a given transportation scheme. As Graham and Marvin point out:

‘In their efforts to uncover transcendental ‘laws’ of aggregate transport behaviour, such technocratic and essentialist models have tended to squeeze the whole gamut of human life into crude, quantitative, deterministic, mechanistic equations based on the notion that the social world is analogous to Newton’s mechanistic ‘billiard ball’ universe’ (Graham & Marvin, 2001: 107)

This very way of thinking lays the groundwork for the widespread use of ‘value of time’ (hereafter also referred to as ‘VoT’) in transport forecasting. In simple terms, VoT represents the value that is ascribed to individuals’ time spent travelling. Naturally, trying to assign a value to time is not exclusive to transport economics, since insurance industry has also developed incredibly sophisticated mathematical formulas for calculating the value of a person’s whole life, based on their life expectancy. But it is in mainstream transport economics, where the time savings play the fundamental role, where each minute counts and may be crucial for the ‘green light’ decision regarding a given infrastructure project (although this approach is increasingly being questioned, see Graham & Marvin, 2001; Lyons, Jain & Holley, 2007; Metz, 2013). Therefore, time ceases to be simply a measurement tool, that merely reflects the passage of time. It becomes a tool for making often very politically informed decisions. Thus, it cannot be regarded as neutral anymore, since no matter how elaborate the mathematical formulas behind a specific transport forecast, there is always a human factor at the end of the chain, deciding which variables to include and which to disregard. Therefore, all transport forecasting should be seen as susceptible to some sort of window-dressing (for a broader discussion of this subject see Bent Flyvbjerg’s works).
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The objective and the subjective dimensions of time

As mentioned earlier, time has both an objective and a subjective dimension to it, which inevitably embark on a collision course. Above, we have discussed the objective side of it and in the following passages, we will turn to time perception from an individual’s perspective. The tension between these two dimensions of time has been already observed by Simmel, who over a century ago wrote that:

‘In any case this over-growth of objective culture has been less and less satisfactory for the individual. Perhaps less conscious than in practical activity and in the obscure complex of feelings which flow from him, he is reduced to negligible quantity’ (Simmel, 1971: 337)

In view of this, our research could be seen as a continuation of what Simmel undertook in his writings, that is to elicit the complicated relation between the depersonalised world of timetables, ‘VoTs’ and the individual, lived experience of the passage of time. We will now direct our focus to the topic of individual’s perception of time. Our everyday experience of travelling shows us how different dimensions of time interplay with one another or as Watts noted:

‘Train travel does not comprise a single, universal clock time through which passengers move in different ways. Although the scientific measurement of time, as measured by clocks and printed in timetables, is one very important time for the railways (Urry 2007: Chap. 5)—clocks tell passengers and crew when to arrive at the station and when they might depart—it is not the only time.’ (Watts, 2008: 718)

Time perception

As has been pointed out in the preceding section, several previous studies sought and explored the subjective fashion of time. As has been said earlier, Simmel observed it already a century ago, but there are many others references that have to be taken into account.

Simmel talked about ‘...whole complex system of our feelings which is in constant flux, adaptation, and reconstruction.’ (Simmel, 1971: 52). This line of thought can be traced in much later writings of Raymond Williams, who coined the concept of “Structures of feeling”, by which he wanted to refer to the varieties of the quality of life with the lived experiences framed in a concrete time and space. These words aim at exploring what is the relationship between the perception and the surroundings, hence to explain the concept of time perception we must move first through a psychological path.

‘In emotion, I exist in a paradoxical relation. I am not only but both’ (Hillman, 1960: 283). James Hillman was an American psychologist and he suggested that the different individual emotions build an interdisciplinary field, that is to say, they draw the relations between object and subject, mind and body, subconscious and conscious, motion and emotion, etc. In travelling this connection becomes clear in the feeling the Swedes call ‘resfeber’ that means literally ‘travel fever’; a mix of fascination, fear, anxiety, and anticipation of letting go. This concept can alter the trip and hence change one’s individual perception of time, which is what shall be put in focus in the following passages.

The concept of time perception has a long historical background, the philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) distinguished two times of thoughts, the active one and the passive one when he included the time-perception which springs from the soul or the intellect. After that comes the Newtonian way of thinking about absolute time, however this view was not unanimously accepted. In particular it was John Locke, an English philosopher, who hesitated about the ‘absolute’ time and he classified time perception as a sensation and reflection mix. But it was in the late 18th century when Thomas Reid stated:

‘When a man is racked with pain, or with expectation, he can hardly think of anything but his distress and the more his mind is occupied by that sole object, the longer the time appears. On the other
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hand, when he is entertained with cheerful music, with lively conversation and brisk sallies of wit, there seems to be the quickest succession of ideas, but the time appears shortest.’ (Hamilton, , Reid, & Reid, 1986: 349)

In this context the relation between time and individualism becomes apparent. Furthermore, in the 20th century, Paul Fraisse defined time perception as:

‘the attention to, or apprehension of, change through the integration of a series of stimuli and characterized by the ability to conceive of duration, simultaneity, and succession’ (as cited in Roeckelein, 2000: 53).

He also connected time with succession and duration which means that, on one hand, duration involves the gap time between two successive events, and on the other hand succession works with the perception of several and consecutive events. Events can modify the experience, therefore Yarmey (2000) distinguishes between regular or irregular events. Regular events are when they pass at regular intervals, and this tends to lead to underestimation of the objective time. In contrast when events occurred at irregular intervals, the time perception of it is usually overestimated.

Consequently, time perception is neither fixed nor a priori, it has different effects depending on diverse scenarios. As Doreen Massey stated in her 2005 book titled ‘For Space’, influenced by one of her train travel experiences in London:

‘as you travel you are part of the constant process of the making and breaking of link… …of yourself, of London… …of Milton Keynes, and thus of space itself’ (Massey, 2005: 118).

Concluding, travelling is very related to the time perception concept, different stages of travel comes with different time perceptions. Wardman, Hine and Stradling in 2001 structured the travel in terms of, firstly, cognition owing to the efforts to plan it, the expectations, and the time pressure. Secondly physical behaviour because it requires mobility and motility, and thirdly, it involves emotions as we explained before. Tipples sought the greater overestimations of durations of a travel when the negative emotion outweighs the positive or neutral emotions.

Stages of travel

‘[One morning in Lancaster] I am imagining sitting having breakfast besides a turquoise sea, beneath a warm summer sun.’ (Watts, 2008: 713)

When do you think, the travel starts? Some would say that the travel begins when you are physically on the move, for example in a train towards your destination, other say it starts in the preparations or when you buy the tickets. But it also starts before actually doing anything, when you imagine how your trip is it going to be. Hence, these moments are not continual but they are distributed temporally, time is discontinuous.

What it means for the traveller, is that the different stages have a different time consumption potential, the time will be perceived longer with more divisions, and it will be also perceived longer if it is evenly distributed. We can distinguish this stages as access, transfer, ride and wait (Yuen-wah Li, 2003). Yuen described different experiences in these stages. For him, ride is the stage when the commuters perceive the time faster due to the comfort and the polychronic time use, because these activities demand high participation of the commuter. Wait is the stage when the commuters perceive the most the duration owing to the unoccupied fragments of time. Moreover, Yuen says that this waiting time probably leads travellers to overestimate the time because the commuters are affected by discomfort and dissatisfaction. Finally he described access and transfer as stages where commuters have to accomplish different activities such as walking, looking for information screens and so on, and this can affect to their perception afterwards whether commuters are confident or not with the physical settings.

The time perception will alter itself in the different stages. Our research has focused on the Waiting stage and Travel stage, in other words, waiting time (WT) and in-vehicle time (IVT). We choose these stages due to the fact that the main literature body concentrates on them, and owing to methodological limitations. However, we are aware about transfer and access stages and we have included them in our observations.
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Waiting time

The experience of waiting is a common feature of using a public service. We wait for our turn, for the beginning of the service, for the ticket machine, for the change or for our train departure. People usually relate to waiting time as a waste of time or as an annoying experience (van Hagen, 2006; 2003). Previous studies have talked about this concept since the 80s.

One of the first researches who studied about the effects of waiting was Maister in 1985, he investigated how the waiting time is even more annoying before the services starts and when people do nothing at all in this interval. Loneliness takes part in this game making it more annoying. Some articles sought how to remove this negative perception, and using information beforehand about the travel can positively affect the travellers’ emotions.

Furthermore in 1996 Hui and Zhou classified two processes to enhance the experience of waiting time. Firstly, as it is already said, by providing information and secondly, by the distraction of the traveller, this distraction could be with different factors that we are going to explain later, but for example a study in 1994 by Areni and Kim demonstrated that the influence of light could affect the time customers spend in a shop, which is to say, with soft lights people spent more time in the stores whereas with hard lights people spent shorter times. It is similar with music, Milliman in 1982 showed that with faster tempo music, people walked faster than with slow music rhythms.

In public transport this time is usually perceived as negative and it is different from the time that people spent inside of the transport (IVT). Wardman in 1998 stated that waiting times and travel times are significantly overestimated by the travellers. This effect is expressed by a number called waiting time multiplier which describes the average ratio of perceived length of time and the actual length of elapsed time of the sample of travellers in one specific travel. There are more studies about this estimation of time perception e.g. Dholander in 2005 or Moreau in 1992. In conclusion, the majority of articles and previous studies such as Fan, Guthrie & Levinson in 2016 and more stated that in short periods of time (about 5 minutes) the time perception was more overestimated, with medium periods of time (5-15 minutes) the multiplier was close to 1 but a little overestimated, and finally, with waiting times longer than 15 minutes, people usually valued correctly their waiting time or even underestimated it.

These ratios can be different depending on the different studies, i.e. if the valuations are by observations or by asking directly. Abrantes and Wardman in 2011 found differences between these two valuation systems with ratios calculated through the observations being significantly higher. The ratio was 2.32 by observation valuations whereas the other ratio was 1.43.

These ratios can also be used to describe travel time perception, that is called in-vehicle time that is the second part of this stages of travel chapter.

Travel time

In contrast to waiting time there are not so many articles that treat the travel time perception, however there are studies that investigate the many uses of time. The assumption that travel time is wasted time is being increasingly questioned. Papers such as the written by Glenn Lyons and John Urry aim at exploring how this travel time is used productively by activities.

‘The boundaries between travel time and activity time are increasingly blurred. Specifically, many people are using travel time itself to undertake activities. The cost to the individual of travel time is reduced as travel time is converted into activity time. In turn, less of the individuals travel time budget is used, enabling more travel or encouraging greater use of modes that may enable en route activities to be undertaken.’ (Lyon and Urry, 2004: 263)

We will address later in detail the different activities, however it is investigated that the several time uses with activities enhance the individual value, specifically with the ICTs, the communication technologies.

For the purposes of the study, travel time shall be defined as the stage of the travel in which the passengers spend their time inside the vehicle (IVT). Horowitz in 1981 found that in 30’ trips, the overestimation in travel time inside the vehicle is over 8.4’ and in trips up to 45’ the overestimations were more than 13 minutes.
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‘Of all the modes of transport, the train is perhaps the best aid to thought: the views have none of the potential monotony of those on a ship or plane... …at the end of hours of train-dreaming, we may feel we have been returned to ourselves—that is, brought back into contact with emotions and ideas of importance to us.’ (Watts, 2008: 711-712)

Train travel, hence, is not a linear movement, it is more, it connects with our emotions, ideas, thoughts and influences them in a way.

Previous studies linked physical travels with telecommunications; Mokhtarian in 2003 enunciated different relations such as the substitution: sometimes telecommunications are used as a substitute of the travel itself and reduce the amounts of travels. Complementarity, telecommunications facilitates and enhances the travel concept ‘when the use of one mode is a necessary accompaniment to or side effect of the use of another mode, thereby increasing the efficiency of the latter mode’. (Mokhtarian, 2003: 43). Modification which means that each concept has the capacity to alter the other and the neutrality when she suggested that, in some circumstances, both modes can be unaffected.

Factors affecting time perception

Taking into consideration the multifaceted nature of time perception as a phenomenon, it is paramount to draw and talk about the several factors which influence the time perception of the traveller. For example, Moreau in his study from 1992 included factors like the design of the different stops, the lighting, the heat, comfort influences. Other examples in previous studies with diverse factors are: on-time performances studied by Daskalakis and Stathopoulos, the age factor, or the purpose of travel by Psarros in 2011 and so on. Another example is represented by the differences between the outward travel and the return trip (Seno, Ito et al., 2011). Takeharu and the others showed that the return travel seems to be shorter, due to at least three factors: firstly, we usually attend more in the outward travel and that makes us are more aware of the trip; secondly, in the outward trip, one has a purpose, thus one tries to anticipate events owing to nervousness; finally, it can be that the return trip is more familiar as the surroundings and events are very similar. (Cohen, 1956)

The most crucial factors affecting time perception found in the literature body are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

Environmental factors: in numerous articles where the study area concerns public areas, like banks, stores, hospitals etc., one of the most influential factor is the quality assessment of the environment. The environment contains tangible objects such as walls, furniture, floors, etc. and intangible things like sounds, smell, temperature, colour, etc. Since the environment affects our time perception, it is important to understand how the surroundings are designed to influence our time perception, specifically our perception of waiting time. Moving to the transportation field, the investigation about the quality of services on the railways has been always attributed to factors like the regularity, the comfort or the crowding, whereas the factors such as lighting, temperature, or others intangibles have been overlooked. Nowadays there is a heated debate about how this service quality should be measured with objective indicators and behavioural factors.

There is a renewed attention to railway stations, a phenomenon called “Station Renaissance” e.g. Edwards in 1997, Kid in 2005 or Tenner in 2001. The new wave of developing trends, specifically in Europe, that include functional spaces, aesthetics, travellers’ satisfaction, all at the same time. Some examples are Westminster Underground and North Greenwich stations in London, Metrostation Wilhelminaplein station in Rotterdam and The Arts et Métiers and Auber stations in Paris. Pruyn & Smidts in 1998 stated that a pleasant space can help to enhance the waiting time of the travellers.

The train system has evolved through time. The triadic scheme was installed in the 19th century, it separates different classes with different environments. Initially, the third class was transported in freight cars or cattle wagon, then the third class was included in the train but in a different section from the others. At this moment, designers, decorators and so on were appointed for the task of redesigning the train environment. The aesthetics of each class should be recognisable, and one of the most paramount markers of difference was the upholstery. Hence, different classes, with different environments produce various perceptions.

Furthermore, the perception of the environment can be different depending on your perspective, e.g. if you are in the platform area, you can feel the train and the passengers in motion, but when you are inside, the
seat is a very sedentary place, although the train travels at a relatively high speed. Thus, the design of the train itself is very important in the time perception. The physical materiality and the good or bad design of the seat can change the travel experience. The main issue here is the balance between the revenue, cost and benefits of the system and the comfort of the passenger. Companies and directives usually look out more for the benefit of the company than the comfort of the user. However, travellers respond to these discomforts with many activities, the seat and the user become a human-seat hybrid. For some people, their most comfortable position could be with their heads against the window, while for others it could be with their feet in other seats, and for others yet with some objects to ease their comfort.

Other variables in the environment that have been less studied are temperature and music: Hoagland in 1966 said that high temperatures make perception of time seem longer, while McDonnell in 2007 demonstrated that music interventions can also alter significantly the experience.

Technology is used to understand human behaviour and it is useful to make the transport systems more accessible. Law and Hassard in 1999 stated the concept of Actor Network Theory which relates the social human behaviour with the technology. Nowadays it is very hard to know where are the boundaries between technology and humans, humans are part of the machine when they enter each station, platform, train etc.

This issue is related to the concept of cyberspace: ‘feels like transportation through a frictionless, timeless medium. There is no jump because everything exists ... all at once’ (Heim, 1994: 98). It is related to travel, when people use technology as a ‘taskscape’ (Ingold, 1993), and nowadays technology is everywhere, surveillance cameras are electronically monitored, time-schedules in station are meticulously designed, the furniture has become a hybrid with technology, we catch buses hoping that there is Wi-Fi inside, we feel more comfortable and it makes our travel more pleasant when the technology and specifically ICTs (communication technologies) accompany us in the trips.

Since nowadays virtually everything is digitalised, we do not need to carry the weight of books to read in the trip, we have our multitasked device. People don’t need a surface or a table to play cards, they play virtually, there is no need to wait more than the necessary if you have your transport app in your mobile device (at least in theory). This suggest that maybe one of the many reasons that makes people use ICTs is to improve their time, or another reason could be given by the physical surroundings: for example, when there is no table to play, people find other ways to play.

Furthermore, as we have mentioned earlier, the use of mobile technologies enable one to disconnect from the immediately present situation and to put one’s attention somewhere else. Therefore, ICT could be seen as a tool to alter one owns time perception by engaging in different online activities.

Expectation: This factor is related to the repeated practices, the behavioural routines. The commuters have some expectancy due to the repeated experience of their journeys. Jones and Boltz in 1989 studied the predictions that urban commuters may have due to the daily routine events in each journey. In the case of an unexpected lengthening of travel time, commuters will perceive the increase in travel time even longer than what it actually is.

Other factors include gender and interruptions. Gender is another factor that many researches have considered, i.a. Wajcman in 1981 talked about the different patterns related to time, movement and space in women’s and men’s lives. Most of the infrastructures and diverse planning were planned and designed for the male worker needs. This can be seen in the waiting facilities, where women feel less comfortable, especially after dark, therefore making them feel like the time passes slower, leading eventually to an overestimation of the perceived length of time (Fan, Guthrie & Levinson, 2016). Interruptions: As Michael Serres states: ‘Time does not always flow according to a line... ...nor according to a plan but, rather, according to an extraordinarily complex mixture, as though it reflected stopping points, ruptures, deep wells, chimneys of thunderous acceleration, rendings, gaps’ (Serres, 1995: 57). Additionally, Fraisse states three principles explaining these interruptions in the different stages of travel:
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‘1. A divided interval of time appears to be longer than an empty (standard) interval of the same duration.

2. An interval of time with more divisions appears longer than one with fewer.

3. Of two divided intervals, the one that is evenly divided appears longer than that which is irregularly divided’ (as cited in Roeckelein, 2000: 124–125).

Due to the fact that time, or travel time is not following a line and it contains different sections of time which can be used for different activities or not, the time perception may be altered not only by the activities and the visible factors but for the division of the time itself e.g. One train travel with so many stops can influence the overestimation of the time perception whereas one direct train travel would underestimate it.

These are some of the factors that exist in the literature body, but there are also many more factors that influence the time perception, since it is an individual and psychological concept and thus it may be different in each human being.

Time use and Timestyles

‘Perception is not something that happens to us, or in us. It is something we do. Think of a blind person tap-tapping his or her way around a cluttered space, perceiving that space by touch, not all at once, but through time, by skilful probing and movement. This is, or at least ought to be, our paradigm of what perceiving is. The world makes itself available to the perceiver through physical movement and interaction. … [A]ll perception is touch-like in this way: Perceptual experience acquires content thanks to our possession of bodily skills. What we perceive is determined by what we do (or what we know how to do); it is determined by what we are ready to do. In ways I try to make precise, we enact our perceptual experience; we act it out.’ (Noë, 2004:1)

In the previous sections we dealt with the general notion of time, how time is perceived by an individual and what factors affect it. It could be said that until now we have only investigated the traveller as a passive entity, being subject to time and not displaying much signs of agency. In the following passages, we want to show how travellers and their emotions play an active role in time perception, e.g. influencing the perceived duration of travel, by engaging in different kinds of activities along the way. In other words, we shall look into possible time uses and emotions shaping our experience while travelling. Drawing upon consumer behaviour studies, we will then present a method for phenomenological classification of diverse patterns of behaviours undertaken on train travel, which can be termed ‘timestyles’.

Train travel activities

Train travel is in between domestic life and work for many people, it consists in activities where people try to balance their transition time (Jensen HL, 2011). People in this social space continue their daily habits like using their phones, reading a book, having short sleeps, talking to the people around them or doing work on their laptops. Train travel activities have been observed by different transportation researchers with different methods. According to the 2011 article ‘What Do Passengers Do During Travel Time- Structured Observations?’ by Russell, Price, Signal, Stanley, Gerring, Cumming, the method most often used in such studies has been a “structured observation”. The statistics on travel activities gathered in the abovementioned study, show that the most frequent activity in train travel is, with 56.6%, looking ahead/out of window. Next comes reading with 28.8%, listening to music with headphones with 20.9%, talking 16.8% either with strangers or with people they travel with, sleeping/eyes closed 12.4%. One of the main points the authors state is that, in previous literature, researches had the category of “doing nothing” for looking out the window or looking ahead. He asks:

“Are they really ‘doing nothing’, and, if so, how do they feel about that time? Are they bored, anxious, or content? Or are they ‘doing something’—thinking, planning, remembering, praying, daydreaming—and, if so, what does that mean for them in their everyday life?” (Russell et al., 2011)

And these seem like questions to be answered in future research, which we also consider in our interviews in this project.
Looking at previous research, shown in the table above, it is recognizable that the choice of categories varies. Technology’s effect and phenomenological approaches for investigating the activities will be explained in following headings.

The development of technology in the latest decades changed our lives in every aspect. In the field of mobilities, it enabled people to work, entertain and communicate in new ways while being on the move. But it isn’t
only a matter of new activities during the travel, also the way we find information about the journey itself has changed. Lyons and Urry in 2005 have published *Travel Time in Information Age* to illuminate the positive sides of the ‘travel time’ because the term itself is rarely used in the literature of transportation studies. Even though there is interdependency between travel time and work time according to the literature, travel demand analysis in transport literature treats them separately. Urry and Lyons have challenged this approach by exploring how travel time can be and is used productively as activity time, depending on travel mode and travel time. They have also investigated what enhancements to time use might be emerging in the information age (Lyons and Urry, 2005: 10).

Two researchers of travel time use are Mokhtarian and Salomon, who suggest three elements that provides positive utility to the travelling time:

1. the activities conducted at the destination;
2. activities that can be conducted while traveling;
3. the activity of traveling itself.’ (as cited in Lyons and Urry, 2005)

Moreover thinking about mobile technologies the shift of attention could be seen as ‘stretched mobile interactions’ or ‘absent presence, which we have mentioned before’ when there is an interaction with a technological device. This way of shifting attention and stretching mobile interactions might be considered as a coping mechanism with the unwanted emotions such as boredom.

Train travel and emotions

It is rare to see works about the analysis of emotions in transportation literature because most of them are focused on quantitative approach, however the article *Emotions on the move: Mobile emotions among train commuters in the South East of Denmark*, is one where Hanne Louise Jensen talks about the more intimate aspects of train travel activities by saying ‘the activity landscape of commuting by train are monotonous, the consciousness landscape offers the possibility of letting the commuter deal with his or her thoughts, emotions and secrets’ (Jensen HL, 2011: 1)

As we already mentioned, journey, according to Watts (2008), starts before the commute itself. It means that also the emotions we bring with ourselves into the station and onto the train will affect how we perceive the travel and time. In the words of Jensen HL:

‘Joy, lust, excitement, anger, frustration and nameless other emotions are affecting the approaching journey depending on the commuters experience of the activity, the situation at hand and expectations about the point of arrival.’ (Jensen HL, 2011)

In conclusion, Jensen HL reveals that observing commuting by applying a phenomenological approach helps to understand the rich social and emotional everyday lives lived on board. This suggests that the on-going emotional expressions and perceptions are important in creating a social space where the commuters thrive and struggle as they move between work and home. (Jensen HL, 2011:6)

Timestyles

During our literature research, we have come across papers on time use from various backgrounds. Though not all have similar contexts, they have a noteworthy way of categorizing and defining time use. Therefore, we will bring these approaches together throughout our analysis and our research methods. Briefly, the papers that have been looked upon have focused on consumer behavior, orientations such as social, temporal, planning, polychronic dimensions, and metaphorical timestyle categorizations.

Looking at David Bissell’s ‘Travelling Vulnerabilities: Mobile Timespaces of Quiescence’ in order to see the relationship between mobility and embodied experiences, we see the analysis of train travel activities through structured observations and talking about bodily situations like tiredness, lethargy and agitation. In the words
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of Bissel himself:

‘In contrast to work within cultural geography that has focused on the conscious, reflective and signifying practices of the body, this paper illuminates how the multiplicity of quotidian quiescent experiences induces a different set of experiential relationships between a more vulnerable body and the timespace of the railway journey.’ (Bissel, 2009: 427)

Bissell indicates insights on ‘embodiment’ in train travel research. These insights analyse ‘embodiment’ through the act of sleeping which is one of the most preferred activities in train travel. Its analysis with non-representational insights brings up various effects on body like material, disruptive and kinaesthetics.

Moving on, the paper titled ‘Times of Their Lives: Phenomenological and Metaphorical Characteristics of Consumer Timestyles’ by June Cotte, S. Ratneshwar and David Glen Mick, examines American women’s consumer timestyles in a phenomenological investigation and identifies five emergent symbolic metaphors for time like “time as a pressure cooker”, “time as a map”, “time as a mirror”, “time as a river”, and “time as a feast” through four orientations as social, temporal, planning, and polychronic.

‘Some people constantly think of the future, plan their time meticulously, immerse themselves in one task at a time, and guard discretionary time as strictly their own. Others may prefer nostalgia, spontaneous actions, multiple tasks, and socially oriented events. Such habitual ways of perceiving and using time are intricately woven into the manner in which we exchange the resource of time for products and services— whether traveling in a group on a cruise ship in the Caribbean, browsing alone in an art gallery, or spending a Saturday afternoon bidding on eBay while talking on the phone with friends.’ (Cotte, Ratneshwar and Mick, 2004: 334)

Looking from marketing and consumer behaviour perspective, this paper gives us the different concept of travelling as a consumer behaviour. Additionally, it suggests that people tend to act on cultural, interpersonal and individual levels and these acts are about their way of perceiving the service, products and the travel time (Cotte, Ratneshwar and Mick, 2004).

Later in the paper, talking about the first dimension of timestyle, that is the social orientation dimension, authors emphasize the distinction and differentiation between self time and others time or intrinsic and extrinsic time (Hirschman, 1987) or personal time and environment time (Bergadaa’s, 1990). The second dimension as temporal orientation dimension that is individual’s attachment to past, present and future which is very subjective and relating to personalities. This dimension brings the understanding that travel activities and behaviours can be related to past or future, or depending on the length of the travel, related to the mean-time. Third dimension which is planning orientation dimension, is about how the time is managed either in an analytic way or in a spontaneous way. And, finally, the fourth dimension polychronic orientation talks about how people can behave in a multitasking way (Cotte, Ratneshwar and Mick, 2004:334).

Moving beyond the dimensions of timestyles, findings of this research come up with the abovementioned metaphorical categorization of time use such as “time as a pressure cooker”, “time as a map”, “time as a mirror”, “time as a river”. The concept of “timestyle” was originated by Feldman and Hornik (1981) and Cotte, Ratneshwar and Mick uses the metaphors to identify, discuss and compare the different time uses and the explanations of metaphors are as follows: “Time as a pressure cooker” when time has become an external force for the person, talking about the interviewee Randy who is the planner type, faces a distinct conflict between her social orientation and her planning style because of her concern to catch up with appearances as a social norm. Though she envies people who are spontaneous. Second metaphor “time as a map” gives the meaning of time acting as a directioner and gives people the sense of where to stand and what to do. Nancy, who fits this metaphor has the characteristics of being analytical and goal oriented. Her planning would consists in considering both leisure and work carefully, however this might bring anxiety when she makes polychronic oriented decisions. Third metaphor “time as a mirror”, talks about Gloria who spends her days to become more efficient with the activities she does and these turn to a self validation for her that shows success. Fourth metaphor “time as a river” refers to a more spontaneous way of using time without planning things beforehand. This can be an approach to run away from the pain of past or as an opportunistic idea to enjoy each minute of each day, spontaneously, as it happens. Finally, the fifth metaphor “time as a feast” illustrated with Alice, who likes to live life fully with a lot of leisure time and professionally busy schedule, she might take major vacation choices (Cotte, Ratneshwar and Mick, 2004: 341).
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Relating these back to train travelling, Cotte, Ratneshwar and Mick give unseen reasons why people act and use the time the way they do and put four timestyle dimensions forward which makes the data unisolated and complex enough to rely on as an approach.

Staging time

As Jensen (2013) puts it: ‘Staging Mobilities is a socio-spatio-temporal process designing mobile lifescapes ‘from above’ and performed mobile engagements and interactions ‘from below’’ (Jensen, 2013: 8). In this research we focus mainly on the temporal aspect of staging mobilities, that is the time perception of travellers and the way time is treated by the railway authorities implementing the OHM. In particular, we wish to investigate how travellers actively seek to manipulate their time perception and how the staging from above affords or hinders these sort of practices. Therefore, one might call this perspective ‘Staging time’.

Staging time from above

As has already been indicated, if we look at a specific mobile situation we can try to understand it as being staged from above. In this research we wish to apply this way of thinking about mobile situations to their one specific dimension, i.e. the time. As has been shown in the previous chapters, time perception is influenced by many factors, some of them being subject to individuals’ choices, whilst others relating to the built environment or the entire transport systems. Therefore, when looking from above, we shall investigate how time is staged through planning, design, regulations and institutions. From this vantage point, the individual is merely a number, a statistical data, a cog in the inhuman transportation machine which relentlessly moves people from one place to another. This means that the research will focus on how the planners of transport schemes frame peoples’ travel behaviour so that they fit into the demands of rational movement system of people and goods. Their time is reduced to a statistical variable used by engineers and economists to justify the raison d’être of a given infrastructure project.

Through the lenses of ‘staging time’ we may therefore inquire how do changes in the timetables, especially those being the result of new transport solutions, affect the time use and time perception of individuals. In reference to our project, we shall discuss how the high-speed rail connecting the major cities in Denmark will change the ‘scenography’ of time for its users. Furthermore, in line with the growing interest of the mobilities research towards the materialities, we shall investigate how the materialities of a waiting room or that of a train wagon, compartment or a seat stage peoples’ time perception. In this context we can also research how the omnipresence of the seemingly immaterial wireless network stages peoples behaviour and thus their time perception.

Staging time from below

By contrast, when looking from below with the ‘staging time’ gaze, we must to investigate how people perceived the time through diverse factors such as the tangible or intangible environment, the time-styles and the activities while waiting or in the train travel itself. From this point of view, our data is qualitative and the importance is inside of each subject of the research. Although in many previous studies the time perception concept has been concluded in a multiplier factor, here, we are interested in the perception itself of the traveller. Our interest lies in answering the question, how different situations create various patterns of time perception. Looking at the stages of travel, we put our gaze in the waiting areas such as the train platforms, waiting rooms, stores, and other places. How people use their waiting time as a productive way. In the travel time, we seek how people act in different ways, and how it influences the time perception.

Moving to embodied performances, we also want to investigate about the non-physical settings. How the intangible things such as temperature, speed, expectancy, etc. affect the traveller’s perception. We inquire the differences between the outward travel and its return, how these intangible factors influenced the embodied performances and the individual perception. Furthermore, due to the fact that we are investigating about public transport trips with human perception, we must include social interactions. How people engage these interactions with others in different scenarios, e.g. what is the behaviour in waiting rooms or waiting in the platform, what are the negotiations between the travellers and how they use the semiotics, not only in physical settings but also in human behaviour. Embodied performances and social interactions are also related to the timestyles concept. The different activities that travellers accomplish can draw many patterns, and
Chapter II - Theoretical framework

because of that, different timestyles.

Then, Staging time from below tries to explain the embodied performances and social interactions, which are included in 'Staging mobilities', from the vantage point of time perception.

Philosophy of science reflection

Why the research question needs an interpretative approach

The choice of a position in philosophy of science is of great importance in research in general and in this project in particular. The value of time is a traditional way to treat the varying importance that individuals assign to the time spent in different activities in the field of transport economics. The problem of value of time has always been approached with quantitative positivistic methods, but in the light of the mobilities turn, a different approach is needed to study the relations between people and time. This approach should take into consideration the real impact of time and activities (or in-activities) on the long-distance train travellers in Denmark and the most appropriate way to do this seems to be by using an interpretative approach. The quantitative approach is useful for calibrating modal and trip choice in a transport model but it is less suitable for discovering problems and potentials in mobilities’ design. The interpretative approach seems the best way to deal with the different embodied performances and different stages of travelling that affect travellers’ time perception.

Phenomenology description

Phenomenology seems the most natural position for this research, as it is about how the world is experienced by subjective consciousness and the meaning of actions. In the research, this position of philosophy of science is used both to study travellers’ experiences and to also directly use the perspective of the researchers themselves. The three rules of phenomenology, as presented by Jacobsen et al. (1999), come very useful in this work.

- Rule of brackets – meaning that personal prejudice must be put aside and have clearly in mind what its before-knowledge is and how to manage it.
- Rule of descriptions – meaning that any kind of explanation and hypothesis should be formulated only after the phenomena has been observed and described.
- Rule of equalities – meaning that all experiences should be treated equally and be given the same importance.

Phenomenological approach: methods overview

The position of phenomenology enables the research to use the interpretative methods, the importance of which has been discussed previously, but also to use both other travellers’ and researchers’ insights on the matter. Since rule of equalities, stated above, highlight the importance of every single experience this study brings the researchers’ own experiences with the perception of time while travelling long distances by train, as long as the study also adhere to the others two rules: the rule of description and the rule of brackets imply that researchers’ experiences are valid source of knowledge as long as their nature is stated and their prejudices and before-knowledge are explicitly described.

Furthermore, one can also apply hermeneutical perspective to this research. It manifests itself in many ways, e.g. the way the research question was devised, since it was circular in nature, with the research team iteratively trying to find the right expression and wording of the problem, going back and forth with new problem formulations. Initially the research question has been formulated in the following manner:

What is the relationship between the traveller’s time perception seen from phenomenological perspective and the way the ‘one-hour model’ treats travellers’ time?

However, after the interviews have been conducted and we started to analyse them, we realised that what
these interviews are answering might actually be a different question, mainly since we did not focus as much as initially planned on the OHM, mainly because of time and language limitations. Hence, we have decided to rephrase the research question as follows:

What is the relationship between the traveller’s time perception and time use and the way the railway infrastructure in Denmark is designed?

This reformulation of the research question shows how adding new insights and new knowledge has enabled us to see our research in a slightly different perspective, changing our preconceptions and prejudices.

Therefore, the hermeneutic circle is an important part of the learning process and the group work itself. As the project went further, new methods were elaborated and new literature was taken into consideration, so new perspectives opened up for our project. Hence, the team needed to adjust its previous prejudices in order to accommodate new findings that may have influenced them. Through the accumulation of knowledge, the project has been able to continuously steer away from the rocks and into the right direction as new topics, perspectives and challenges arose.

In the end, the approach ended up being predominantly phenomenological if seen in its final state, but hermeneutics also played a role in continuously re-discussing methods, knowledge and perspectives.

The traditional empirical-analytical approach

It is necessary to mention that our approach is very different to the traditional way that transport economics and planning have dealt with the meaning of time for the users of the transport systems. In the empirical-analytical approach the role of time in transport planning is only the one of being a factor for the choice of a particular mode or trip, by assigning a value, acting as a mathematical weigh in a formula, to describe how time spent under certain conditions (e.g. waiting a bus standing up in the wind or sitting down in a repaired shelter during winter) is perceived in different ways by travellers.

The actual problem with this way of thinking is that it tries to reproduce the complexity of human behaviour in mathematical and statistical terms, without comprehending the underlying reasons. This can produce a certain degree of separation between the transport models and the real phenomena, depending on the number of factors included and their detail. Also, this approach brings little contribution to actual mobility design and its success is only in the fields of transport economics and planning.

Nevertheless it needs to be stressed out that this research deals to some extent with the products of this philosophical stance and tries to understand how adopting this stance in transportation actually affects peoples’ lived experiences of train travel. For this reason, we turn to the feasibility study of the OHM to unearth the underlying assumptions behind the travel demand forecasts and to confront them with the phenomenological perspective.
Chapter II - Theoretical framework
- Hello!
+ Hello!
- We are a group of students from the Aalborg University and we are conducting a research on train travel experience...
+ Yes.
- ...like for example what you do in your waiting and travel time...
+ Yes.
- ... and we are looking for volunteers to make interviews with...
+ Yes.
- ... so would you like to help us and take part in our project?
+ No.

Conversation in the station with an old man
Chapter III - Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, we are going to present the methods used in this research. The methods are chosen in the light of our research question and the adopted philosophy of science position, i.e. phenomenology, to better understand the staging of time of train travellers. As mentioned in the previous chapter, our methods slightly changed through the research process, as we were looking not only for good methods that would work in theory but also in practice: for example, we developed the idea of an online questionnaire after facing problems for recruiting travellers for our interviews. But things worked out in the reverse way: we found ourselves choosing to interview people that answered our questionnaire, using their answers to better steer the semi-structured interviews. All of this mechanism worked in a close, circular circuit, as we kept refining any idea, method, theory, question and so on while working on the project.

After discussing our methods, we are going to give a brief description of the volunteers we did interviews with, only to briefly profile their age, occupation, train travel habits, then a little description of our analysis work and an explanation of our time-frame and the parallelism between different tasks.
Recruitment

The first step towards recruiting people for interviews was designing a flyer and distributing it at the Aalborg train station to travellers waiting for long-distance trains and to people on-board the trains. The flyer was designed in a credit card format, written both in Danish and English, giving a general idea of our topic, an email address and the link to our Facebook page. The flyer also featured a QR code directing to our Facebook page to make it easier to check while on the move and only using a smartphone. We decided not to put too much information both for readability reasons and to instil curiosity about our project in train riders, hoping to generate more visits to our page.

Flyers have been handed out to the people waiting for ‘Lyntog’ and ‘InterCity’ trains on the platforms of Aalborg train station and to the riders on the trains, covering train departures in different times of the day and different days of the week, trying to cover the most heterogenous set of possible riders. We also tried to hand out flyers to people leaving the trains but they all hurried through the station towards their final destination making this approach a failure. We met people on the platforms, told them briefly about our project and asked if they could help us and take a look at our Facebook page: an evident vast majority of people accepted the flyers and answered positively about contacting us or checking our Facebook page, but the statistic tools of the social media and the feedback on our e-mail account showed a barren desolated reality.
Chapter III - Methodology

Online questionnaire

Since some of the people approached at the train station told us that they would prefer to fill out an online questionnaire, we decided to devise one, not without a grain of skepticism in terms of the quality of gathered information for the purposes of our research. The online questionnaire was laid with 4 different sections: firstly, a general profile of the respondent; secondly, questions about one particular train trip, to provide us some plain narrative with the dual purpose of providing us the less ‘tinkered’ narration as possible and of providing the respondent with a fixed point to think about; thirdly, a section regarding time perception while waiting for the train and traveling, with the activities and strategies to make the time pass faster; lastly, an empty space for comments and a question to mark the possibility of being contacted for a live interview.

1) Traveler’s profile
   a) Name
   b) Surname
   c) Email address
   d) Gender
   e) Age
   f) Nationality
   g) City of living
   h) Which long-distance route do you take the most? And how often?

2) Recall one particular train trip
   a) Why were you travelling, when and with whom?
Chapter III - Methodology

b) Describe your trip from departure to the destination.

c) How would your experience have changed if the trip had been considerably shorter in terms of time?

3) Time perception

a) How do you prepare yourself for the trip? Anything specific you do before starting to travel?

b) Where do you spend the time waiting for the train? What do you do in your waiting time?

c) What activities are you involved in during the travel? Which activities make you feel the time passing faster?

d) How were your previous travels on the same route? Any specific memory that you would like to recall?

e) What does travelling mean to you?

4) Conclusion

a) Would you like to be contacted by us if needed by our research?

b) Feel free to leave any comments and/or suggestions for us.

The questionnaire was done on Google Forms and all the research member could edit the questions and read the answers. We put the link to the questionnaire on our Facebook page, as on the flyers we put the link to the page. The decision to put on the flyers the link to the Facebook page and not directly to the questionnaire was made so we could communicate easily with anyone willing to and we could easily still use the page linked in all the flyers in case of necessity, i.e. changing our methods and dropping the questionnaire for something else.

Semi-structured interviews

The next step was to conduct interviews with the most interesting profiles we received through the questionnaire and some through our personal networks, like professors and friends. Since our research is a qualitative work, the most reasonable choice was to go with a semi-structured interview, a kind of open interview that enables the interviewer and the interviewee to bring up new ideas in a fluid way, instead of answering a set of pre-defined questions. To conduct this kind of interview we needed to define a framework of different themes to be explored with the open questions, therefore we have prepared an interview draft, which can be found in the appendix. The same themes of the questionnaire were chosen, but we went more in detail with the answers that were given there, helping our interviewees to expand more and guiding them more towards the theme of time perception during train travel, the strategies to pass the time faster, the difference between work-related travel and travelling for personal reasons. This mechanism is evident if the above questions from the questionnaire are compared with the transcription from the interviews in the appendix, but to provide an example here, we provide this short passage from the interview with Elizabeth (all the names have been changed to fictional ones):

*Interviewer-* Is there some particular task that you do and you realize that you’re doing and then you look around and then you say “Ah I’m already here!”

*Elizabeth* - That has happened. The time actually goes quite quickly sometimes, oh also sometimes I prepare lectures, put together power points and that sort of thing. That Works quite well in the train actually. But especially that I’ll be completely engrossed on that and suddenly I realize, oh I have to get off the train now and pack all my stuff together.

*I-* So is it related to how concentrated you are, the faster the times passes.

*E-* Yes

[...]

Chapter III - Methodology

I- If your train trip would be considerably shorter, would change your activities?

E- Probably, I think I would focus more on the communication tasks, email, messages that sort of things, I don’t think I would open something that I knew that it would require more mental input or time if I was planning a semester or try to make a schedule, I think if it would be a shorter period of time I was travelling I would look to do shorter tasks or a number of short tasks together.

I- Tasks that maybe require less concentration?

E- Yeah, less concentration and in once that I know that I can finish in a relatively short period of time, like answering emails with a specific question about it, but if it is an email that I have to discuss something then I probably would leave that till I have a longer period of time to work it.

I- Do you think that there is a paradox because you have said before that tasks that require more concentration makes time passing faster but with the shorter train time, you do another kind of activities.

E- Interesting, I think so, but I think that there is a potential of doing several smalls tasks, like a series of small tasks, I think time will go quite quickly actually, but I think there would be definitely thing that I would not start because it would just be, you need time to get your head into it, and as soon as I did that I have to close it and get off the train.

In this passage, we also see at work techniques like contextualization, apprehending and imaginative variation, which are some of the basic techniques in phenomenological interviewing (Bevan, 2014). Those are techniques of great interest in the phenomenological environment as they are the tools to extrapolate the phenomenon and to understand it by comparing different situations, in this case the longer and shorter travels and the tasks that Elizabeth would do are the variation used to better understand the complexity of the relation between real and perceived time.

Direct observations and narratives

Parallel to handing out flyers, designing the online questionnaire and conducting interviews we have been engaged in conducting direct observation of the train stations and inside the trains themselves. It was done to directly see and note the different activities and understand the different feeling that people go through while waiting for their train or riding it. We did it with the technique of ethnography, looking at the situation while being inside of it (i.e. we were also on the platform waiting for the train as the people we were looking at) but keeping a distance and not interfering with them and their activities. As for handing out the flyers, we conducted the observations in different times of the day and during different days of the week, to have a wider sample of people and activities. Our observations were on to see what static and walking passengers do in the station while they are waiting, and each session last two hours and covered several train departures. We documented them with visual ethnography methods by taking notes, photos, videos and sketching diagrams.

We also have written down personal narratives from our own travels, in order to be able to address better the phenomenon of time perception and also to better understand what our interviewees could tell us, a sort of ‘empathy’ towards their own experiences. We gathered this material not to use it directly in the analysis but to clarify ourselves, and we are using them throughout this work to address particular themes and ideas.

Methodological problems

We met several problems with our methodology. The main problem was the lack of visits to our Facebook page, even if we were met with positive feedback when handing out flyers we estimate that less than 1 in every 10 persons we gave the flyers to actually visited the page, and initially no one answered the questionnaire or contacted us for setting up the interview. Therefore, we were forced to look for alternative ways of recruiting interviewees as well as to look for additional sources of information. This is why we contacted DSB to ask if they had any customer satisfaction surveys, while at the same time we took advantage of our personal networks to find potential interviewees. Speaking with one of our professors at Aalborg University, we were told to try to ask the academic staff if they could help with our project, so we contacted the administration of CREATE and asked if they could send around an email with the link to our questionnaire. Through
Chapter III - Methodology

this method, we received one answer that led to an interview. Another problem regarded the time-frame of our research, we conducted observations from late autumn to early winter, thus we lack the data about what happens in other times of the year and other climates, this is especially relevant for the waiting time observations, since the winter in Denmark can be really cold. Another problem we couldn’t overcome was due to DSB regulations: when we tried to do interviews directly to train riders on the train, a DSB employee told us we couldn’t unless we got some special permission. Our supervisor advised us not to contact DSB to get the permission as we could have waited for months in order to get one. We faced DSB another time, when we were trying to see what data we could get to work on and we tried to contact their customer service in order to get some data from their customer satisfaction surveys, but we didn’t receive any answer, not even negative. When we instead contacted Trafik -og Byggestyrelsen, the Danish Transport and Construction Agency, for materials about the One-hour Model we received good help and some valid documents, unfortunately in Danish. A rapid look at the interviewees profiles in the following section clearly shows the last, but not least important, of our problems: though we tried to achieve the greatest level of heterogeneity with the strategies already mentioned, the majority of our sample is essentially made by young people (university students or just graduated) and university professors.

**Interviewees profiles**

In this section we present the profiles of our interviewees.

Aamir - an Indian engineer working in Denmark, he is a frequent train traveller and he travels both for professional and personal reasons. As a professional, he travels mainly between the cities of Aalborg and Aarhus, while for personal reasons he travels as far as Copenhagen.

Anna - a Danish nurse, she travels by train only for personal reasons (visiting relatives and/or travelling with her family), she doesn’t commute with trains nor use them for professional reasons, she is an occasional train rider.

Erik - a Danish university professor, he is an occasional train traveller as he is not a train commuter. Still, he uses the train for job-related travels and when visiting friends or on weekends and holidays with his family.

Pernille - a young Danish student, she doesn’t use the train for commuting but only to visit friends and relatives or for tourism in Denmark. She rides trains only on occasion.

Malthe - a young Danish who finished university and is looking for occupation. He is an occasional rider as he uses the train only with his family or to visit friends around the country.

Stephen - a Danish university professor, using the train for his daily commute to work between Aarhus and Aalborg. Sometimes he also travels with his wife during holidays, going to Copenhagen or different parts of Denmark.

Edward - a Danish student living in Aalborg and attending university in Aarhus, thus he regularly commutes by train.

Elizabeth - a Canadian university professor, she commutes to work several times a week from Aarhus to Aalborg and also rarely travels on trains with her family to visit relatives in Copenhagen.

Irina - a girl from Latvia studying in Aalborg and commuting several times a week from Aarhus, in the past with a friend but now alone. She suffers from motion sickness and on occasion takes other trains inside the Jutland for visiting friends and performing her hobby (singing in a choir), but those are shorter, regional trips.

Even if it looks like a small sample, it still can be a relevant sample, since this work is qualitative and not merely quantitative, and the size becomes irrelevant from a phenomenological point of view, as explained by Magnus Englander (Malmo University) in ‘The Interview: Data Collection in Descriptive Phenomenological Human Scientific Research’. The reason is that the researcher is looking for the deep meaning of the phenomenon,
Chapter III - Methodology

not how many people experience such phenomenon.

Analysis

Through the knowledge acquired thanks to the literature review, shown in the previous chapter, we analysed the data we gathered through observations and interviews. The data from the questionnaire was left out as its role was to identify the most interesting people to interview and specific topics to address with more depth during the interviews. Through a series of themes or topics in the form of keywords first we tried to address the different behaviours, ideas, thoughts, activities, strategies and so on of our train travellers, then we used the ‘timestyles’ theory seen in the previous chapter to try to categorize the different ways people stage their time while waiting and riding the train, keeping in mind that the timestyle is not depending only on the single person but also on the purpose of the trip or the mood.

Time frame

Lastly, it is worth to mention that this research has been carried out in a little more than three months, from October to early January and we conducted many different tasks at the same time, as our circular methodology presented in the first diagram of this chapter imposed us to push the work forward by working on many tasks, reviewing the work already done and so on.
Chapter IV. Analysis

‘All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts’

William Shakespeare
Chapter IV - Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter we will focus on the analysis part of the project research. In the previous chapters we have presented the literature review constituting the basis for this analysis, with particular emphasis put on the ‘Staging time’ framework emerging from it. With this toolbox are going to analyse what we consider the different stages of the train travel: preparation, waiting time and travel time. After this analysis, we will end the chapter with a proposal of different timestyles adopted by travellers. We support our analysis with fragments of our own narratives, fragments of interviews and with our observations. The raw data, in the form of interview transcripts, audio files and observations notes is included in the appendix.

Preparation

‘I was going to say that I am excited to start the travel but it has already started. My trip to Copenhagen and thereby my emotions related with it began two weeks ago when I bought the tickets, and I can feel the travel mood one hour before the departure.’ Jorge’s Narrative

Our analysis includes the preparation for the trips, not to study how time is perceived in this particular stage, but because studying how people prepare can lead to interesting insights to how people stage their time, by writing a script of sorts for their journey and how they, as a result, perceive time during the trip. This happens in two different ways: firstly, as people could plan ahead the activities they will carry on while travelling, may it be working, reading books, eating some snacks, watching movies, playing games, etc. secondly as the expectations for the trip, including the emotional factors, are generated in the moment the individual decides to travel. We have not conducted observation of people during their preparation phase, so the data we gathered for this stage comes from the interviews we made.

The first thing we noted is that the preparation varies depending on the purpose of travel and with who someone is travelling with.

Equipment

Erik noted that when he travels with his children he puts games in the bag, both in the form of digital games like a tablet and ‘old-fashioned games’ as cards or table games. When his wife joins them he also brings a book, as he explains: ‘because then I will hope that I am not playing all the time, but I also have the chance
of reading’. Instead, when he is travelling alone, he doesn’t plan ahead the activities as he enjoys talking or sleeping, activities that don’t really require preparation. Stephen instead differentiates between travelling for work or for leisure. He says he doesn’t plan his morning commute, as he will just take out his notebook and start working, but he admits that he bought a new lighter and smaller laptop with longer battery life to carry it more easily and not to worry about the battery. Even the choice of the right laptop computer can be seen as a form of preparation for the trip. When travelling for leisure he says he plans some reading in form of books or magazines. Edward, in his trip to Aarhus University, doesn’t plan ahead any kind of activity to do on the train, he only makes sure to bring the right material for his classes, the motivation relies in the length of the trip, as he explains: ‘my trip is one hour and twenty minutes, so I do not have to think too much about preparations’. The preparation phase at this point seems to be done only in relation to the “staging from below” dimension, but some preparations are also made as a consequence of the “staging from above”. This will be explained more in depth in the travel time section of this chapter, as the staging from above in later stages also affects the preparation phase through the activities allowed by said staging (e.g. the WiFi on the train doesn’t work and someone downloads a movie on the tablet before leaving home). Nevertheless, it’s worth to mention that some people prefer buying their tickets before getting to the station, through the computer or the smartphone, as Malthe. Malthe also states that he prepares some food to bring with him on the train as he ‘can’t buy anything from the train’. When he doesn’t prepare food in advance, he usually buys ‘something from the train station’.

Preparation of mobile withs

But preparation isn’t only about the things that one brings with him- or herself. Sometimes it is also about finding the company for the journey as is in the case of Aamir.

_Aamir: (_...) especially when travelling to Copenhagen 5 hours is a big time and you want someone to be with you to talk and... the views are good, the views outside are good, so it is good to have conversation._

In this context we can see that people can stage their travel time not only by taking ‘inanimate’ objects, if one can say so, but also by planning ahead the kind of social interactions that one will be engaged in during the travel. However, an attitude of openness to new encounters may at times prove to be even more rewarding than a conversation with an old acquaintance.

_Aamir: _I prefer travelling with people I may know so I can talk but sometimes people like you they just sit and they start talking more and more, that is even more interesting._

This sort of attitude is characterized by an openness to the unknown and to the Other, however some people also prefer to prepare themselves so that they can avoid social interaction. Planning to work while travelling and bringing the laptop is a clear sign of how a person wants to spend the time and taking out a laptop is a very clear indication that a person wishes to turn his or her attention to somewhere else than the train compartment itself.

Attitude towards travel

In case of Irina the preparation for the journey is a continuous activity throughout her other normal daily activities, especially Internet browsing serves as a way to find interesting materials to read or watch while on
Chapter IV - Analysis

Irina: (...) when I’m outside the train I try to set things aside that I will do on the train. For me personally it’s not about replying to emails or working but I do a lot of... for example I save videos on Youtube to “watch later” so I can watch on the train so I make sure that I don’t sit without a plan.

To some extent this shows, that the journey of a regular commuter is a never-ending business, since other activities can be seen as subordinate to the upcoming commute. Sometimes the preparations for the trip are so routinized, especially for the regular commuters, to the point where they aren’t even a subject of reflection or something one has put his or her attention to consciously. That is why at first Elizabeth and Stephen, when asked how did they prepare themselves for the trip, simply said that they just bring their laptop and the work is already waiting for them in it. However, even in these routinized journeys there are elements of preparation that can make the journey more or less comfortable, implying different time perceptions.

Elizabeth: But when I’m particularly well organized or make coffee and put it in a thermo-cup and bring that with me or fruit or something to eat. Quite often I leave in the early morning, so it’s kind of nice to have something to eat on the train. And sometimes I find that I just haven’t had any time to either prepare things from home or I’m leaving from work and going back and I’m starving because I forgot to eat lunch or something so I’ll get something from 7Eleven and eat that on the train but most of the time it’s just work, open the laptop and go.

Others are much more concerned with preparing well for the trip, not leaving anything to chance, so that they avoid any discomforts, and hence the trip can go as smoothly as possible.

Irina: Plus when I’ve been doing it for a long time, before I leave I always get a water bottle, so many times I ran to the train and then jump on it and the I’m thirsty for the next 2 hours so it’s like you learn from your mistakes so much so that’s why I do like prepare as much as I can, I make sure I’m never cold, I have water, I have my phone charged, I have some movies, sometimes the internet is down so I have some audio books down on my phone so I have something ready. So I usually prepare.

Moving to a perspective from above, preparation of the journey is also important include the starting point of the journey and the uses of the systems from above.

Technologies and tickets

As we discussed before the it is impossible to point an exact moment when the journey starts, but there are many researchers e.g. Laura Watts, who situate this point before the travel itself or the waiting time. Moreover, based on our interviews and observations we can support this observation, and from our personal experiences, as evidenced in Jorge’s narratives above that the ‘resfeber’ or the travel fever starts when the person is still weeks away from the travel, in his house or even when he buys the tickets. And it is paramount to talk about the ticket purchase because it is one of the links between the ‘universe’ from above and from below. It is shown in Malthe’s interview: ‘I buy the ticket on my phone, and I check the time on my phone’ and the same happens in Anna’s interview. In this day and age, most people buy the tickets online, mainly because this sphere is growing exponentially, now people are starting to use their mobile phones for daily purchases and activities like the ticket purchase. These technologies enhance the possibilities of the user to
create new mobilities, it improves the motility creating potential travels to almost everywhere.

Technologies and individualism are related because people use them while buying the tickets, surf on the webs, and others virtual structures designed with quantitative data, thus, this relationship between the person and the ‘external’ sites. Another perspective of what we are talking now is the future and specifically, the influence of the OHM in the preparation stage of the journeys. In the Stephen’s interview we can see how the systems ‘from above’ influence the everyday life and preparation.

Stephen: Normally I take the bus from where I live at twelve minutes past seven, meaning in order to be in Aalborg at 25 past 9, which is rather late actually. This means that I have to get up to leave my home so early that I can’t have my breakfast with my son of course. So, so a shorter time for transportation would improve my family life. And maybe also make it possible to get here early and also participate in meetings that start at nine o’clock, so it would still be a great advantage.

Summarising, we can state that by changing the staging from above, e.g. by implementing OHM, the everyday mobilities and the time perception of the rest of the journey can be affected significantly, because of the possibility to enhance the preparation stage.

Waiting time

In our approach, the journey’s second stage is the waiting time. Starting from when the passenger arrives at the station until he or she boards the train. This period of time is considered as the waiting time in our research, although we shall also analyse instances when waiting time is radically limited due to hurriedness. Our waiting time observations have taken place in Aalborg train station throughout a day, at four different time intervals and each for two hours. Waiting takes place mostly in the waiting area, waiting room, 7Eleven shop area, train platform or the small waiting shelters on the platform.

According to answers to our interviews and questionnaire, the waiting time is usually a period of between 0 to 20 minutes before the departing time. As Stephen declared, he arrives ‘normally, like 5 minutes before, but sometimes the train is already there and then I can enter the train right away. So hopefully, if everything goes right, I wait for like 2-3 minutes’.

Another choice is the medium interval when the waiting stage is more clear, our interviewee Pernille says ‘I’m always 10 mins early’ or yet a longer period of time supported by Erik ‘Maybe 20 minutes, 15 minutes before’ and Malthe ‘usually 20 mins because I come a bit early’. Passengers spend this time occupied with various activities like social interactions or simply walking around the station.

The Stage (Waiting Places) and Embodied Performances

When passengers arrive at the station early, i.e. 15-20 mins before the train departure, there are several possible activities they could get involved in to pass time. If they are in stations like Aarhus train station, then there is a possibility to walk and spend time in the shopping mall which has much more shops, cafes and waiting area than the station in Aalborg. Or in the Odense train station, a passenger has the chance to go to the
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city library and wait for the train there while looking for a book or reading one’s own book. Whereas in the Copenhagen train station, there are some shops and some cafes, although not as abundant as in the shopping mall adjacent to the Aarhus train station. To look more closely at what people do in their waiting time, we have observed passengers at the Aalborg train station.

Aalborg train station, which we focused on, has two main stages of waiting areas. One of them is the entrance hall with model railway of Aalborg in the middle and the other one is a room surrounded with glass windows with a view onto the platforms, equipped with sitting places and tables. It is worth to mention that it seems the only heated area in the station or, maybe, with a higher set temperature. After passengers arrive at the station it is very likely that they head first towards the info-screen, where they check if the train has any delay and what track it departs from. Based on this initial assessment of the quantity of time that’s available to them they stage their time in many different ways. They might be simply moving around, exploring the station (maybe even sightseeing) or the shop while waiting for their train to arrive. A possible staged movement of the waiting passengers would be as the diagram below. When people are temporarily being in the station, there is always a staged flow of people that come, wait and go. These movements can happen sometimes very quickly because of the crowd of the station, especially if it’s peak hour and there are more train departures. An example of this flow can be vividly seen when a seat is left empty and becomes occupied again in just a few seconds.
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7-12-2016
10:00 - 12:00
14:00 - 16:00
18:00 - 20:00

Focus Area
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The train model in the station is a built environment factor and at the same time a tool for people to put their attention to and one let’s them pass time looking for similarities with the real city. A scene in the station is as follows:

*Jorge:* A mother introduces a coin in the model and then a blue light is on and the train in the models starts to move. At the same time people leave the hall due to the train to Frederikshavn has arrived. In less than 3 minutes, new people arrive, they go to the screen information and to the ticket machines. Three kids are playing around the model, it is a kill-time for them. [Aalborg train station, 7/12/16]

Moreover one can observe people performing a very meticulous examinations of the train model, walking around it, bending to get a better view of some of the details. This is a way of diverting one’s attention away from the passage of time and towards something else, which makes the time flow faster in one’s mind.

Another elements that affect the movement and waiting experience in the stations are the ticket machines and information screens. There are two ticket machines and two information screens in the station. As Jorge states, people ‘usually go to the screen information and then go to the platform’. Furthermore, as we have observed people position themselves so that they can see the info screen most of the time, probably to check if there aren’t any unexpected delays, which suggests that being in control of the amount of time that’s left for departure is important for the time staging of passengers. If they haven’t bought a ticket in advance they use the ticket machine and either continue exploring the station or continue to the platform.

Besides the technological devices in the hall, there is also a 7Eleven convenience store in almost every station, which constitutes an important environmental factor that stages people’s time use from above. They provide various foods, drinks and magazines which people can buy before they take the train. Platform as one of the primary waiting areas, is sometimes not the most suitable place to wait, especially if it is cold outside. Therefore, the 7Eleven and the waiting room are the initial waiting places in Aalborg station. Interviewee Elizabeth, a frequent traveller from and to Aalborg, describes her use of platform, shops and her behaviour in the occasion of a delay:

*Elizabeth:* I usually just go to the platform and if it [the delay] happens the occasion that the train is delayed then I may go back up to the station itself and get maybe a coffee or just walk around a bit, particularly at this time of year cause it is cold on the platform so I go upstairs for some little bit of warm up […] So I think there is something about leaving the platform. Sometimes I just kind of walk, back and forth a bit, and watch people.

Similarly, Aamir reflects upon his waiting experience and his use of facilities:

*Aamir:* I prefer having some coffee nearby, like... to utilize this kind of service they have a very good business, they have a cafeteria, like in Copenhagen they have even Indian restaurants and quick take-aways, so definitely try to spend those times. Eventually, you want to get into the train just 5 minutes before departure, you don’t want to get on the train half an hour before and for that reason they open the gate just 3 minutes before the departure, so there is no point in standing on the platform. So, I prefer... and my eyes automatically start searching for something like cafeteria. If they are closed, I search for some plug points where I can plug my laptop [...].
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Erik recalls his train rides and waiting areas as:

_Erik_: And I remember that as you know, often sitting in the morning in a cold, windy, very cold waiting room, on the bench, sleeping or trying to prepare myself for the lectures. So that was a quite bad experience in the waiting room. It was terrible.

Weather, as might be expected, has a direct effect on people’s choice of waiting spaces and probably also on their waiting time perception. If passengers have to wait in the cold and if they have no other options, that experience of waiting can be seen as ‘terrible’ as Erik portrays, when talking about his waiting experiences in cold weather, and the time seems too pass much slower than if one can comfortably sit in a warm waiting room.

However, in case the weather is good and the station doesn’t have facilities like 7Eleven, as Malthe indicates, passengers can use the benches outside ‘to read articles or watch videos on the internet’, or simply occupy themselves with their mobile phones.

The small waiting area offers twelve seats, four standalone and eight placed next to two tables, lockers, photo booth and little standing space. Although the design of the tables could suggest that some social interaction should be taking place there, this isn’t necessarily the case. The seats themselves are uncomfortable, and seem to be too close to one another to grant people enough private space. This might explain why people tend to hide behind their phones or laptops rather than engaging in any interaction. Additionally, in order to create some privacy, every second seat is left empty, like it’s some kind of social norm, which considering the scarce seating space in the train station, amounts to a squandering of the available resources.
We can observe here, how the design, rather unwillingly, forces people to turn to their smartphones as a mean of creating a comfortable and controllable environment. This is a true ‘space of flows’, where people are ‘absently present’ and seem to be living according to the time of their online activities rather than the time of their immediate surroundings. This might in turn make them more likely to simply want to kill the time that’s available to them at the train station.

The only instance when people seem comfortable seating next to each other is when they know each other beforehand. In such circumstances the area might actually serve as a social interaction catalyser, enabling people to be unaware of the passing time, not necessarily preoccupied with killing it, just enjoying a conversation and forgetting about it.

As we can see from the above observations and interviews, people generally use the built environment to divert their attention away from the passage of time, whether by focusing on the train model, the news stands or on their smartphones, depending what affordances each of the waiting spaces offer and is most suitable for. Especially the small waiting area offers an insight into how people appropriate the space in a very different way than what the designers have been probably hoping for.

Social interactions and Emotions

It is not unlikely that people arrive the stations with their friends or families as their ‘mobile withs’. With them there is usually a different pattern of waiting. In order to see the passenger activities in Aalborg train station, Merve’s observation illustrates a small waiting room with some tables to sit around and free sitting places to sit and wait. The scene is as follows:
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*Merve:* I go inside to the waiting room to sit and observe what people are occupying themselves with. A girl sits on the chair, checking her Facebook for a while. Another blond-haired girl enters the station and she walks around the model as others do. When she sees the curly blond hair girl, she stops walking and tries to understand if it is the person she thinks. She approaches her slowly and says *hi*. They start talking immediately, it is obvious that they knew each other before. They seem to talk about daily stuff and it seems fun. They continue talking for a while. [Aalborg Train Station, 7/12/16]

These sort of emotion packed moments where people have feelings like abandoning or convergence are not uncommon in the waiting rooms. An observed scene in Aalborg Train station where intense emotions were being experienced:

*Giovanni:* Boy and girl, around 20 years old, one big luggage. 25 minutes to train, they enter station, leave, stairs, tunnel, platform. He is saying something and she keeps laughing and moving around. They stand on platform, no shelter. They keep talking, she is no longer laughing. He takes out a bottle of Pepsi from a pocket of the coat and drinks. Seems like to offer it to her but she refuses? They keep talking. 10 minutes to train, they are hugging and talking with low volume. Train arrives but departs in 5 minutes. They kiss, she cries. He gives her the luggage. She boards. She is saluting at the window. Train departed. [Aalborg Train Station, 7/12/16]

Their excitement or sadness may affect their waiting time perception, and we can only imagine the will to make a moment like this last longer than it actually does. Sometimes it can be mixed emotions with excitement, annoyance and anxiety all stirred in one bowl, as in Jorge’s narrative where he observes waiting people:

*Jorge:* Suddenly, a train arrives at the station and the young girl and I turn our heads to look which train is it, maybe it could be my train that arrives earlier. [...] The other guy continues reading a magazine and the other girl seems to be very relaxed just waiting. 21:00 I have been in the waiting room for ten minutes and the silence is annoying me. I only hear the noise and the buzz of the photo machine. I hesitate if I should put music with my earphones but due to it is only 5 minutes left for my departure time, I decide to leave the waiting room and I am going to the platform.

We can observe in the narrative how people have different moods, the young girl is more focused on her train travel and thus she turned her head to look for the train when she heard the noise, whereas the guy reading did not move his head since his attention was not directed towards an oncoming train and it remained focused on his magazine. Based on these observations, it could be said that, the higher the anxiety, the greater the attention to the passage of time and as a result the slower the time seems to pass.

Platforms play a big part in staging the waiting time due to their proximity to the train and possibility of doing different activities that you can not do in other waiting areas. We can differentiate several areas, the platform itself, where people usually wait on benches, leaning against walls or columns, the semi-closed, shelter areas, and the underpass which connects the station and the platforms. And it is in this connection where several problems pop up, as Jorge states in his observation of a visually impaired woman walking with a blind stick and a dog and she suffered many issues to go downstairs due to the lack of illumination in the stairs, it is very dark so she has to get help from the armrest and the stick.
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The darkness creates problem to handicap people and influence their mood, therefore, it influences their travel time perception, moreover, it is more clear in winter due to the lack of natural light. It is also unsafe for children and old people. Moving to the closed areas inside the platform, these areas are not so big and they include two benches to sit on. The number of activities in this area is limited mostly to eating or sheltering from the wind and cold.

A big difference is seen if we consider the open platform area, there are so many activities involved in the area itself, as Jorge reflects on his observations, people wait in different ways, a man with his laptop in the bench, people using their mobiles, even more extraordinary activities such as practising dance moves.

The platform is one of the most crowded areas because people usually wait between 5-15 minutes and they want to be close to the train to feel safer and more confident, hence easing the emotional tension of travelling. The activities are more varied than in the small sitting area, it is unusual to see people with laptops on the bench due to the lack of furniture and the cold if the weather is bad on a given day. The vast majority of people just use their phones in the platform close to the tracks or sheltered by the metallic roof do some superficial tasks while waiting for the train, as can be seen in Stephen’s habits:

*Stephen:* And if I have to wait for the train, the platform is once again like for using your smartphone, checking mail or reading Metroexpress or very, you know, brief types of media, like bad superficial media.

Another of our interviewees, Elizabeth talks about the insecurity feeling of not being in the platform just for the possibility of losing the train.

*Elizabeth:* There is always this sense of insecurity cause they said ‘the train is delayed, departing in 5 minutes’ or something like that and I can’t quite trust them. It is like, if can’t see the train I am thinking, it may come and leave before that 5 minutes. So I think there is something about leaving the platform.

This feeling is also showed in Jorge’s narrative:

‘When I am going upstairs, I realised that there is a train in my platform so I started to hurry myself by climbing the stairs faster. It is my train so I glimpse once again my ticket to see my wagon’

The importance of being in the platform becomes clear due to the lack of trust of the individuals to the train system and therefore as a measure to reduce anxiety. The train may be waiting in the platform until the given departure time but most of the travellers prefer to go inside the train the moment it arrives, so that the tension and emotions associated with catching the train may fade away.
Aalborg train station, besides having a waiting hall and platforms has an underpass which connects the platforms and the John F. Kennedy’s Plads. There seems to be people who, without coming to the waiting hall, directly go to the platforms. There is a connection from both ends to the parks on each side of the road, so some of the bikers also use the underpass to reach the park. The underpass looks illuminated, people can walk without having any fear. The fact that some people skip going to the train station may imply that they are regular commuters who know very well when the train arrives and at which platform, so there is no need for them to enter the main building. The routinization of these behaviours may lower the anxiety of catching the train and therefore allow for a more regular perception of time, where emotion don’t play such a big role.

Waiting time outside of waiting rooms

We’re not going to make it. There’s no way the taxi can manage to get on time to the train station. Road works ahead. Of course, there were road works ahead. We were racing against time. If only we could have stretched every minute to last just a little longer. But the clock knows no mercy. And yet, the time seems more flexible and now we’re getting closer to the station, we can almost see it. If we could just make it on this green light, then maybe we’ll catch the train after all.

The light was late yellowish as we stormed through the intersection. We arrived at the station, gave the taxi driver the banknote, told him to keep the change and rushed out of the cab. A glimpse at the information screen as we run across the main hall. Platform 4. That’s all we needed to know. We descended the stairs, taking big leaps and run to the closest train doors as we reach the platform.

Krzysztof’s narrative

As the example of going through the underpasses shows, waiting time doesn’t always have to take place in the actual waiting areas. This is especially the case when one is in a hurry or simply prefers to go straight to the train, maybe because one’s journey is so routinized and the train station is close enough. This is certainly the case for Anna and Edward, who are able to time their arrival at the station so that they don’t spend any time waiting on the train station.

Anna: Arriving just in time, more running than waiting [laughing].

Edward: I live 7 minutes by foot from the train station in Aalborg. I can time it such that when I arrive at the train station the train is already there.

And although they don’t spend their time at the train station, one could say that the waiting time is stretched beyond the confines of the train station. As can be seen in the narrative above, sometimes there isn’t time for waiting on the train station, however the anxiety and anticipation of the upcoming travel are still in play, even more so, as the emotions become amplified and the time perception changes significantly. The trip to the train station can therefore appear much longer than it actually is, as one pays close attention to the time passing by, making the running to the platform more memorable than the journey itself.

But the waiting time can be staged from above also through the distance between home or workplace and the train station. Since one is sometimes dependent on the public transport for this trip to the train station,
the amount of time left for waiting at the train station is a function of the bus time schedules. But from the perspective of the train travel, the time spent in the bus could also be seen as waiting time. However, what one can do with this time becomes very limited and so the quality of this time is much lower, leading eventually to a perception of a wasted time.

Stephen: And normally the bus at the quarter past seven is filled with like maybe 70-80 people for 50 seats so it’s so crowded that you can’t act in the bus. Maybe I can do a little bit of, you know, fun on my smartphone, playing, but I cannot do work on the bus. So part of the transport is not... The first forty minutes, riding on the bus, standing on the platform waiting for the train I cannot work, so it’s only the time that I am on the train that I can actually work.

In this situation, we can see that ending this first trip, probably leads to an acceleration of the passing time, since this interviewee gets away from a situation of limited time uses and as soon as he leaves the bus and boards the train, he can immerse himself in his work and let the time fly by.

At other times, there’s only just enough time to take a glimpse at the info screen and go straight to the train, maybe only buying a cup of coffee along the way, as has been observed on the train station.

Travel time

‘Trying to catch our breaths, we boarded the train and a faint smile appeared on our faces. We found our seats in the first car and heaved a sigh of relief as we sat down.’

Krzysztof’s narrative

The last stage of the train journey is the travel time itself. The phenomenal aspect of travel time initially includes adaptation just after entering the train and settling down in the reserved or non-reserved seat. Thereafter one negotiates with the physical environment and train’s design the potential effects on the passenger, passenger’s activities and time perception. It is observed that commuters’ staged activities may differ on outbound and inbound travels. Prearranged and spontaneous social interactions is another aspect that has a strong influence on passengers’ travel time. Furthermore we analyse the potential influence of the OHM’s time frame on how people stage their time, what they would do with the saved time, and if they believe it is a worthwhile investment.

Adaptation

Krzysztof: Time seemed to slow down as we settled into the journey and as we left behind the toil of that day. We had around three hours ahead of us, so we had plenty of time to relax, maybe indulge in a power nap, eat something in the dining car and get back to work. A quick look at the inbox to see if there were any urgent e-mails and off we went to enjoy our well-deserved meal in the dining car.

Entering a train is usually packed with emotions, especially if one didn’t reserve a seat. As one looks for his seat, repeating in his thoughts the number of the seat, trying to decipher the numbers above the seats and
match with the one echoing in the mind, the travellers is so concentrated on the task that it is easy to forget about the surrounding world. By entering a train one comes out of the limbo of the train station, where most people just feel like wasting time, while waiting for the real journey to begin. This is a moment of adaptation and transition, where all the anxiety and expectations that have been building up during the preparations and waiting time finally find an outlet. Obviously, the emotional tension associated with this transition stage is a very different experience for a daily commuter than for an occasional traveller, with the latter potentially experiencing a greater amplitude of emotional reactions.

We could say therefore that there is a brief adaptation period minutes after entering the train, where one needs to readjust and prepare for the awaiting journey. This is usually connected with the choice of the seat and compartment as in the following example:

Stephen: Well, I put my overclothes on the bracket above the seat and I guess that’s it. And I am off. But I think that adaptation of the train is very important for my purpose, to have a flight seat and if sometimes I don’t have the seat, then it’s more disturbing. If occasionally, the silent compartment is full, I have to go to the talking compartment and it’s very, very noisy and everybody is talking on the phone with their boyfriends or whatever. It’s very disturbing. And also, if I’m riding the ICE 4 train, which has a much harder acoustic, it’s also more noisy.

In the above case, adapting is very much about finding a quiet spot, where the person can concentrate and work. In other cases, adapting might be about talking to co-passengers.

Malthe: Usually take computer out and take jacket out to get more comfortable in the seat, you know sometimes I talk to people around if there is a nice person or looks interesting, just for the few minutes. I guess that’s also a way to make myself comfortable.

Sometimes there isn’t enough time, or it is perceived so, to actually adapt yourself, as is the case with Pernille, especially, when she expects to change to another train that will take her to the final destination.

Pernille: I think it depends which ride is longer so if the first one is longer then I might not work or not read in the other one because I did that in the first train I don’t know if that makes sense and the same with the other one for example the long trains to Aalborg, from Odense to Aarhus it’s not so long, but from Aarhus to Aalborg it’s longer. So I would always maybe wait until I get to the other one and take my stuff out in the next one. It would feel more comfortable. So I think it depends.

We can see that depending on the length of the trip, one can feel more or less prone to making oneself comfortable in the train by e.g. taking out a book and something to eat. If the trip feels like a short one, even if just by comparison to the next trip, one might schedule the more time-consuming or attention demanding activities for the longer part, while during the shorter he or she can just enjoy the views or a conversation.
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The Stage - Physical Environment and Train design

I usually enjoyed taking the train, as opposed to travelling by car, because for whatever reason the phone would be out of range for a considerable amount of time. This gave me an excuse not to call anyone and not to be bothered by any calls either. It thus created a zone of relative quiescence, where I could have a moment just for myself and be the master of my time again, even if only for a moment.

Krzysztof’s narrative

As one locates the seat for the journey, one already predefines how his time is going to be spent to a large extent. When looking at how people stage their time from below one of the first things to look at is how they choose their seats, whether it’s online or offline, i.e. aboard the train. Is it the quiet zone, is it a seat by the window or is it a seat by a four-person table, these are all important considerations when staging time. All of these choices go along with specific affordances or obstacles. They have been designed, or in other words staged from above, to allow some activities while reducing the opportunities to do other things. As two of our interviewees, who value quiet zone and uses the train as a mobile office, observed:

Stephen: ICE 3 trains are very good to ride, because, I mean, it’s almost like sitting on a sofa, you feel comfortable, it’s almost... the seat encapsulates you. And when you’re sitting in the flight seats, you have the chairs in front of you and the table, so you’re very like enclosed.

Elizabeth: Truth be told sometimes, some of the best concentrated work time that I get at all, because there are no phone calls, there is nobody knocking on the door, if you go to get a cup of coffee there’s no somebody there “oh by the way I wanted to ask you blah blah blah”. So you’re just sitting and very concentrated.

We can see here that these interviewees interacts with the built environment in a way that enables them to focus as much as possible on their work. Only under these perfectly arranged circumstances their journey can translate into a productive use of time, since this is their primary mode of staging time on the train. Naturally this way of dwelling in motion has its limitations, e.g. when a single seat in the quiet zone is not available and one is forced to seat by a four-person table. As another of our interviewees noted:

Aamir: [...] because on other kind of trains we have 2 seats here and 2 seats there so we have face to face communication and sometimes some people don’t like getting into their intimate zone and privacy and I’m sitting like this and I just want to talk to them and they’re not comfortable [...]

In this situation we see how social interactions can interfere with the intended ways of using time. This sort of interaction could prove detrimental for the travel experience for both parties, i.e. the one willing to interact and the one trying to carve out some privacy and avoiding contact. Bringing about feelings of discomfort, it may make the time run much slower than one would like it to.
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But it can also be disrupted by a gap between the design and how the train operator uses the train itself as for example is the case described by Aamir:

*Aamir:* Yes the experience on the train is that... it’s a comfortable train but not very comfortable train, in the sense that there is a silence zone but then like every 5 to 10 minutes it’s like “plinn” [imitates a sound] and you try to sleep during the night and just give up during the trip.

Whereas Stephen also criticizes the textures of the surfaces in the trains where he, as an architect, says that the surfaces decrease the noise vibrations and can create a less noisy environment. However, this depends on the train the passenger takes too.

*Stephen:* Especially in the ICE 3 trains, they can be pretty quite, there is a lot of textile surfaces, so keeping the noise down. Whereas in the modern ICE 4 train there is much more noise. Of course there are more hard surfaces, it is a very smart Italian design, smart looking train but it is much more noisy.

For less noise the passengers have the option to choose quiet zones. But there is the still the noise of the train itself as Stephen says “*But it’s not very comfortable also because there is certain noise on the train actually, so it’s not easy to talk on the phone. So it’s very, very rarely I do this, but it happens of course*”. Elizabeth adds:

*Elizabeth:* There are other noises like when people are with the computer, that makes a lot of noise. The worst thing, well okay, people with headphones on, people do that a lot too, they make more noise because sometimes they can’t hear it but the worst thing of all is people eating carrots [laughing]. Trust me, it is so loud. The thing that the quiet zone because you have this background of quieter or this expectation of quiet, any noise is kind of extra loud.

As has been mentioned earlier, the number of disruptions has an effect on time perception, and can make a journey seem to last longer or shorter. In the case described above, although the train operator leads one to think that he or she can expect a silent journey, this silence doesn’t exclude invading one’s soundscape with official announcements, which can render the attempt to sleep on a train futile and transform the journey into a never-ending ordeal.

But the stage that people encounter is also set in more subtle ways, like for example through media advertisements. One of the actors responsible for staging from above is, as we have mentioned in Chapter II, DSB. This train operator uses media actively to advertise and influence the passengers’ travel experiences. A blogger raatforusoedet.dk talks about his experience in trains referring to DSB’s slogan and commercial “In the train, the time is your own” (I toget er tiden din egen) with the title “In the train, the time is (not) your own” (I toget er tiden (ikke) din egen). The blogger’s writing is as continues:

“I love to run in trains and am happy, if I’m on a lonely long train journey. The train is namely my rock, here I can sit and read and relax in peace and quiet without having to relate to all the alternatives opportunities I would have if I was at home.

However, my joy of riding the trains is constantly being spoiled by DSB by insisting on having multiple wagon,
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with clear predominance or reserved seating where you sit in pairs facing each other with a table in between.

The comfort of these seats is far worse than those where there are just two seats next to each other. There is less leg room and one can not fail to keep up with the conversations often taking place over the table and table space is also limited, while up to seven other passengers can keep track of everything you do.

I do not know if DSB has an objective to link people together and help people meet. DSB kindly stay out if I am social or not. I just want to be allowed to be in peace and want you to live up to your previous slogan that said “In the train, the time is your own”!

(Andersen, 2011, own translation)

We see that for this blogger the train space used to be about peace and quiet. However, as a reaction to a mixed message from the train design itself and the DSB’s advertisement that aims to encourage people to use trains more based on the notion that the time is their own in train travel, the blogger vehemently denies the idea of time being his own. Clearly, relying on his own experience, because of the introduction of different design of the seats there is always a distraction in the train environment and loss of privacy, which contradicts the DSB ad. Therefore it is important to consider this aspect of train travelling where people might need more privacy.

Activities on outbound trips

But what do people actually do while travelling? And more importantly, why do they engage in specific activities and how does it alter the way they perceive time? In Chapter II we pointed out the activities that people engage in according to several previous studies, and in this chapter we shall compare these findings with our own results coming from interviews and observations. We therefore hope to add depth to understanding the rationale behind the mundane decision-making.

First of all, it is clear that what one does while on the train is heavily dependant on one’s other obligations and the purpose of travel, e.g. leisure or business. For some, especially those commuting on a regular basis, the time spent in the train is just a prolongation of their working time and so they work just the same as they would in a stationary office as is in Stephen’s case who says that: ‘(...) in order to make my day work it’s very important that my transportation time is also working time (...)’. For this reason, he tries to find a space in the train resembling as close as possible a work space in an office, i.e. with silence, no disturbances, avoiding social interactions. But what exactly occupies his mind in this time?

Stephen: And then I know that on the train I have maybe a little more than an hour to work on my notebook, so I know that in this case I can do certain things like answering e-mails or reading my mail, working with documents and stuff like that.

Another frequent commuter, Irina experiences bodily limitations all the time due to her motion sickness, which makes any productive work impossible and therefore renders travel time as wasted time almost by definition. The time spent commuting can however be put to other beneficial uses.

Irina: I’m a bit motion sick, so I don’t read or work on the train, that’s part of the reasons why I dislike it so much because I feel a waste of time as I’m limited in what I can do, I tried a couple of time but it was disaster. So books is something that allows me to gain something out of it and then doing my make up so I’m saving time so I’m kind of trying to get the most out of it but I’m pretty limited with what I can do on the train.
In this case, Irina tries to find ways of spending the travel time in a manner that will make it somewhat less wasted than it inherently has to. This is the time when she can do things that will save her up time when she gets off the train, e.g. catching up with the news, listening to audiobooks.

Whereas for some, not working on the train is seen as a waste of time and basically something to be avoided at all costs, others can see train travel as something enjoyable and thus a place where work should be avoided, as is the case with Aamir, who commutes professionally between Aarhus and Aalborg.

_Aamir_: I don’t want to work during the journey because I want to enjoy the journey and that’s what is... like if you’ve been travelling too much times you know what there is around and you probably want to focus on your laptop. But then I still I don’t want working.

This reflects to a high degree a significant difference in the prejudices, attitudes and affects towards train travel that people take with them when boarding the train. Because of this affective stance people choose to engage in different kinds of activities while on the train: some will prefer to work quietly on their laptops while others will remain open to interaction with other people.

_Elizabeth_: Sometimes I’ll read, work related things. I never read for my own pleasure on the train or you know like a novel or something like that. So it’s always work related. And sometimes it’s also easier now because there is an internet connection. There wasn’t always an internet connection on the Aarhus Aalborg route.

_activities_on_return_trips_

*It was a long day of work, but we both still needed to do some catching up with other ongoing tasks. Despite the train being a brand new Alstom Emu250 train it didn’t have WiFi, so I was at the mercy of my Blackberry serving as a mobile hotspot, ensuring that my mobile office is connected to the world.*

_Krzysztof’s narrative_

Obviously, not all trips are the same, especially the trip back home might be different because of the fatigue of day’s work one’s ability to transform time into productive time is impaired. Because of decreased attention span and ability to concentrate, the return trip work might involve simple or routine tasks.

_Stephen_: Normally unless I am very, very tired, I work on the train to home but it might be a something that is a little bit more easy, like cleaning up your mail box, you get a lot of mails which are not that important or you can delete them and stuff like that. Sometimes also work more intensely answering stuff and getting rid of the day’s upcoming subjects.
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This can be seen as a sort of transition time or a way of winding down and clearing one’s head before getting home, which can hardly be regarded as something unbeneficial. Elizabeth has similar feelings for going back home that even though she would do the same tasks that she does when coming to work, it makes hard to concentrate on a task when dealing with tiredness.

*Elizabeth:* It’s pretty much the same actually I think that, you’d also ask it, it’s probably more related to the task itself. I was going to say sometimes I’m more tired when I’m leaving work and going home. If I have to get up, I have to get up at 4.30 in the morning, in order to get here in the morning, like for 8 o’clock lecture or something. So I can be pretty tired then too. So sometimes it’s just the movement of the train itself that is a lullaby and so sometimes I feel a little tired. I think that happens more on the way home.

As has been discussed in the literature review, the trip home is quite different from the outbound trip, making it sometimes seem shorter than the morning commute to work or to the university, mainly due to different expectations, emotions and varying level of the body’s receptiveness to stimuli caused by fatigue. Although our interviews did not directly support these empirical findings, they did provide evidence of a different nature of the return trip.

**Social interactions**

When looking at how people stage their time in their train travel, we were also interested in social interactions between travellers. They can be interactions between travellers who are travelling together, interactions between travellers randomly meeting on the train or even the avoidance of social interaction. Usually, people who prefer to work during their train trip are the ones more likely to be avoiding any kind of interaction as it can distract them from their planned activity, i.e. work. For this reason they usually choose the silent compartment, were making loud noises is forbidden.

*Stephen:* So I am always working but with quiet things, because I am sitting in the place of the train, where you are not allowed to talk. And this is very, very important, because that is about maybe 25% of the train is normally reserved for, for... it’s a non-talking section of the train and it’s very important to get a seat in there, because then you can really work quietly.

For Stephen it is really important to use the time on the train to already start working before getting in the office, the commute itself is already a productive time of the day and he is trying to get the most out of it by isolating from the “outer world” and concentrating on his tasks.

For Elizabeth, though working in the train is her preference, she sees the train environment as a social space. When she is asked if she travels alone, she tells how she gets to know people, hence she is forming ‘mobile withs’ as a result of her commuting even though she doesn’t talk to people in her train travels.

*Elizabeth:* No, I’m on my own. But I do see some of the same people in the train and some of them are people who work here. But I kind of discovered this whole kind of ‘commuter club’ you can call it. It is the same people and it’s kind of interesting socially because you don’t necessarily know those people but you share the same activity in a way in the same space. So you kind of acknowledge each other, you nod or wave or smile. [...]
Merve (interviewer): It’s like ‘mobile with’s becomes a club of people.

Elizabeth: Yes, yes! It is very interesting that sometimes it has happened to me that I have seen one of these people like in the city, somewhere like downtown in Aarhus, before I really realize who they are, where I know them from, I say “hi” and they say “hi”, and then where do I know that person from.

But some people are the opposite of them and prefer to talk with other travellers, even with the explicit purpose of making the time pass faster. Edward is one of these, in the interview he told us about one particular travel he had in the past:

Edward: I was taking the train to get back home to Aalborg one Friday afternoon. I stumbled upon an old friend and I asked if I could sit next to him. It was nice seeing him again. Train trips are usually pretty boring, and I think that makes people more talkative.

Not only he was pleased by meeting a friend on the train, he also states that people are more prone to talking and interacting with each other while on train trips. Irina makes fun out of the question if she looks for social interaction on trains, saying ‘No, it’s Denmark [laughing]! I don’t avoid it but it’s very rare and if it happens it is mostly people needing help or it’s babies, I talked to a baby once that was bored.’ She is from Latvia and feels that Danes are particularly reserved and closed, not pointing it as a problem for social interaction but stating it as a fact.

The observations Irina makes stands in stark contrast with DSB’s advertisement that has been released in September 2016 which follows the slogan: “Du kan køre med os” (You can ride with us). In the TV ad the main character, played by Thomas Blachman, walks inside the train and talks to the passengers, creating and nurturing a social atmosphere. These messages that DSB wants to transmit, gives one the impression that DSB not only wants to simply transport people from point ‘A’ to ‘B’, but also invites people to trains for social purposes, recognising this aspect of train journey as something that makes it stand out.

As we have already seen in the preparation chapter, the social interactions are also dependent on who travels with us, Aamir was explaining that he prefers travelling with people he knows, so he could pass the time on the train talking with them. But he also states that random encounters on train are positive, when he travels alone:

Aamir: […] few days ago there were professors on the train and they talked and talked, so I enjoy that thing because they were talking more meaningful things and it’s what I expect to find in a train, might find people who is very good, who has a very good behavior.

But he also describes the downsides of social interactions on trains, where people behaving in unexpected ways can make the other passengers feel uncomfortable. When he is asked, if he uses his smartphone to pass the time during a trip he reveals this particular anecdote, when asked about the use of smartphones during travel:

Aamir: Yes, yes, they are very good devices, like another time when I was on a late night train from here to Copenhagen and I could find a person who was drunk, then something happened and he was so hungry that he
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was hitting his bag, and I wanted to stay away but unfortunately he was sitting there, so then I said okay, let’s watch something, so these phones, these things are very suitable for certain situations.

Personal technology

As we seen in the last quote about social interactions, technologies play an important role in the way people travel in the contemporary world. In that specific case, Aamir is saying that when social interactions are negative he prefers to turn to his phone and pretending he doesn’t see or even he’s not present at all, like when listening to music with earphones to avoid such interactions. This dualism between technology and social interaction was seen also in Stephen’s and Elizabeth’s interviews, as they choose a particular place on the train (the silent compartment) based on their need to isolate from what is around them to be more productive on work tasks. But for other people, technology is not an antagonist to social interaction, it acts more as a replacement when the trip lacks the opportunities for talking with other people, both for the lack of fellows (i.e. when travelling alone) or for the lack of opportunities (i.e. when other people on the train don’t want to talk). Malthe explains this particular attitude very clearly when asked which activities he is involved in to while travelling on trains:

Malthe: Reading, writing, watching videos, playing games, skype with friends because they have internet, a few I talk people on the train, and if I have a friend with me I talk to them. It’s a good place to have a discussion because you know you’re there for a certain amount of time. I feel like I have freedom in the train and when you’re in the train you don’t have control, so you might as well just give up. You know you’re there for a certain amount of time and you can just be there. I like that, the loss of control.

But usually the use of technology as an “alternative” to social interaction is only a secondary effect, usually technology is only a way to keep the mind busy with something while on the way, to speed up time. Elizabeth and Stephen work on their way to work, while Irina is forced by her motion sickness to use technology mainly for entertainment purposes, or to keep herself updated with the latest news:

Irina: I listen to something on my headphones primarily audio books and do a make up and go to school and then I go back whenever and then in the evening I primarily listen to books or music to kind of wind down. I’m a bit motion sick, so I don’t read or work on the train. … and then doing my make up so I’m saving time so I’m kind of trying to get the most out of it but I’m pretty limited with what I can do on the train. [...] I watch a lot of Youtube videos, for example with the elections recently in the US, every morning I would watch whatever updates there were because then I didn’t to it any other time, when I was at school or I was at home.

In the above cases we can see that people use technology whenever the situation immediately available to them in the train doesn’t offer enough positive stimuli to give their attention to it. Therefore in order to avoid the attention to simply remain in a state of a limbo, where the passing of time could seem slower, people prefer to take advantage of their full human-technology hybrid potential by activating their peripheral devices such as a smartphone or a laptop.

Particular moments

As indicated earlier, there are different attitudes and affects towards train travel and several social interactions with or without technologies, therefore, all of this universe emerge into multiple lineairties of the journey. The travel is no longer linear but multiple, going back and forth and overlaid with these factors. Aamir talks about the possibilities in the trips:
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Aamir: If you get fewer people the journey is just beautiful and if you find someone to talk to it’s very beautiful and if the vending machine it’s working it’s beautiful, you can go have a cup of coffee. […] But if no one is there I just open the laptop and start watching YouTube movies, that’s how I would like to spend my time.

Moreover, this multi-linearity characteristic gives the journey the potential to have particular moments for the travellers and these moments can affect the time perception as well. One example of such an experience can be seen in Aamir’s encounter with a drunk co-passenger, but other examples of what we call particular moments, can be seen in Pernille’s interview.

Pernille: It was one time like four years ago or something I just moved here, I was sick and wanted to go to my family and just to be sick there because I was living alone. So I got into the train to Vejle and sit down next to a really fat man. And he pulled out his computer and start watching some kind of soft core porn in the train and at the same time he pulled out sneakers and started eating it, really disgusting and I just felt like, I was going to throw up, I felt so sick. In the end, I just had to get up, I was really debating myself, should I stay or should I go. There was no station where I could go up and go, it would be rude but I felt so bad. That is the worst experience I had in the train. In the train, you know everybody is supposed to be there and feel okay but he was just totally going over my boundaries by watching that in the train. I felt so horrible.

The particular moments can obviously be either a bad or a good experience, and it could heavily influence the whole travel and the experience and thus, the time perception. In this case, Pernille experienced an uncomfortable situation due to the weird and unusual behaviour of other people with their technology devices. On contrary, Pernille also talks how the travel can be enhanced and better only with a smile of the staff, as she said: ‘I don’t have that perfect train ride in my mind but when for example the train managers are nice and give you a smile, it feels nice’. She doesn’t think about a perfect travel with a continuous series of good moments but she appreciates the kindness of the train staff. It can be seen as a good particular moment due to the repetition of the moment in several travels. Sometimes the particular moments can be caused by exterior factors that are outside of the trains. Merve reflects on her trip between Aalborg and Aarhus on a sunny day: ‘Sun is coming to my eyes, I can’t open them so I feel stressed. The view is beautiful but the sun makes it harder to look. When we put the curtains down, there is less disturbance of the view and the sun. Good tool to isolate oneself.’ This case is an example of how train design can give the flexibility to have more light or not, and therefore affect one’s comfort of journey.

One-hour model and clock time

In order to unearth some of the tensions between individual perspectives on travel time and the travel time staged from above by the train authorities, we have also investigated the possible effects of the introduction of the OHM on the passengers. The first thought would be that making travel times shorter is always a good thing, but it can change the habits of travellers in more subtle ways. Even if we mainly looked at the perceived time and stated that it is the one which affects travellers the most; the clock time is still the one in which we live in and in which we perform tasks during the day, train trip being one of them. In our interviews, we asked how the shortening of travel times due to the introduction of the OHM would change their habits.

Erik: I think it would affect me positively because I would travel more with train and because what I just told you, that is a really good work space. But I think at the moment going to Copenhagen is a bit too long but if I am going somewhere else, at Zealand then I would consider if I work with people from Roskilde University who is
you know, a bit out of the Copenhagen area. But if I go to the north Zealand, outside Copenhagen, well I would work together with companies which are localised there.

Erik sees the model as an opportunity to use the train more frequently against other modes and also as an opportunity for new job relations, it would help him expand his professional network and engage in markets which are further away from his “base” in Aalborg. Stephen sees it as an opportunity too, relating to work it would ‘[…] maybe also make it possible to get here early and also participate in meetings that start at nine o’clock [...]’. But it could be also an opportunity to improve his family life, because a faster commute to work would let him take the train later as the actual one ‘[…] means that I have to get up to leave my home so early that I can’t have my breakfast with my son of course […]’. A very interesting discussion about the changing of travel times was the one with Elizabeth. In our interview, she mentioned working on the commute to work and when asked about which particular tasks make the time passing faster, she answered that they are the ones that requires the most concentration and added:

Elizabeth: The time actually goes quite quickly sometimes, oh also sometimes I prepare lectures, put together power points and that sort of thing. That works quite well in the train actually. But especially that I’ll be completely engrossed on that and suddenly I realize, oh I have to get off the train now and pack all my stuff together.

This is worth reporting because later in our interview, we discussed the OHM, we asked how her commute trip would change if the travel time was considerably shorter, she stated:

Elizabeth: Probably, I think I would focus more on the communication tasks, email, messages that sort of things. I do not think I would open something that I knew it would require more mental input or time like if I was planning a semester or try to make a schedule. I think if it would be a shorter period of time I was travelling, I would look to do shorter tasks or a number of short tasks together.

She then admitted these tasks being ones that require less concentration and when inquired about the possibility of a paradox between having lower travel times but being forced on tasks that make the time passing relatively slower, she elaborated:

Elizabeth: Interesting, I think so, but I think that there is a potential of doing several small tasks, like a series of small tasks. I think time will go quite quickly actually, but I think there would be definitely thing that I would not start because it would just be, you need time to get your head into it, and as soon as I did that I have to close it and get off the train.

She notes that the shorter trip would have some effect like “diminishing returns” on the perception of the time spent travelling, but she says that taking on a multitude of shorter tasks would, in some way, counteract the engrossing caused by working on more intensive job.

Our other interviewees, Aamir and Malthe, had a more cautious opinion of the OHM. Aamir is concerned about the investment needed and if it is worth it. He doesn’t seem precisely informed on the model, as he thought it was more like a closed HSR built on completely new tracks, but he still has very strong ideas and is passionate about it: ‘Ok, anyone would like to go for free on to the moon, but then it’s like ok: you give
us good speed, but you then make those things more economical’. He is clearly concerned about a possible increase in ticket prices, as is Pernille when she says that ‘price means more to me than time because the time for Copenhagen is less than the car so of course I’d like to get to my train of course faster. It’s problem of the money not the time. It should be cheaper.’ Malthe, instead, is critical about the outcome of the model, he thinks that operating speeds aren’t the most important problem on the Danish network: ‘A company like DSB, you can’t expect them to run without any delays.’

These interviews revealed a number of different approaches towards the use of time that is available to the passengers on their commutes. For those who see the train journey as something of value on its own, like Aamir and Malthe, the shortening of travel time is of lower importance, than for those who see travel time predominantly as wasted time, like Stephen and Irina, unless, of course, it is put into use towards some productive ends.

Interviewer: Wouldn’t you miss listening for your audio books for example or other activities?

Irina: Absolutely not because it’s half an hour I would save for something else, so I can have the same audio book and to something else. Like cooking or something and listening to the audio books, so it’s still a waste of time.

This shows that there is a strong heterogeneity in people’s perception of their travel time and its relative value that they ascribe to it, which is in stark contrast with the homogenising stance adopted in the passenger traffic forecast prepared for the needs of the cost-benefit analysis. The obvious question is, if the traditional approaches towards traffic forecasting could in any way include such individual preferences, and if not, how could a new way of assessment of such grand transport infrastructure projects look like.

Time Perception

In the previous paragraphs, we were talking about activities, spaces, moments, embodied performances, social interactions, physical settings and now we would like to shift the focus to the time perception as a theme of its own. Moreover analysing the concept of time perception is immensely tricky, since there is no sense that would allow the perception of time. Each person’s time perception varies according to their lifestyles, attitudes, affects, bodily sensitivity, the situation around them and many more factors. In order to elicit some of these aspects we shall present the results of our investigation.

In line with the introducing narrative, in our observation in the train travel Aalborg – Aarhus we ob-
served a woman who was knitting in a very absorbed way, stopping only from time to time to check the phone or eat and drink, suggesting that this activity allows for the time to pass by in the optimal way, at least from her point of view. This shows how activities are deeply correlated with time perception. We see that for different people there are varying activities that usually make the time pass faster. For some it may include looking out of the window, as Edward says: ‘If I am too bored to do anything staring out the window is actually decent for passing time.’ For others talking to someone else on the train let’s one immerse him- or herself in the moment, as is the case for Aamir, who says about his trip to Copenhagen that ‘5 hours is quite a long time, but when you want to have a good conversation it is a good experience’. Furthermore, Irina talks about the activity of sleeping to make the time pass faster:

Irina: Time goes by really fast when you sleep but it’s very rarely that I sleep, but sometimes I feel so tired that I just go off and then all of a sudden you’re in Randers and I’m 15 minutes away.

Then, sometimes there are trips where the traveller experiences the time slowing down due to several conditions, and Irina also in this case explain that very straight forward.

Irina: But there has been times where... yea it’s usually when you are distracted with something else then it goes faster and sometimes you just want to get home and then it’s the longest trip of your life, yea, you just can’t seem to get home but it really varies from day to day, or the trip and... It also depends on how comfortable you are: if you’re hungry then it’s a really long trip. Or if you want to go to the bathroom but it’s broken you really want to get home, or when it’s really packed and you’re standing up obviously you’re more aware of the time. There have been times where I’m extremely comfortable, I have a cup of tea and some food and the computer and watching some movies and then the time goes on too fast “oh no I’m not done watching and I’m almost in Aarhus.

We can see that the time perception of each trip is not linear due to the fluctuations of it, depending on factors such as comfort, mood, physical setting etc. But the will to make the time run faster can sometimes get out of hand, and the time can pass almost too fast on a particular trip. This could be undesirable as it is for Irina watching her movie on the train. Such perception of time is usually associated with good experiences and a feeling of regret when it’s finally over. This is also apparent in Aamir’s account of his time perception, where he equates a pleasurable journey with one where you wish the time actually flew slower than it is one’s mind.

Aamir: But then if I’m sitting with you and talking to you, or especially with a beautiful girl, then you feel like “oooh let’s slow down time, please”, so when you enjoy the journey time is automatically shorter, because you want to spend more time in that “frame”, so when you’re trying to spend more time it means you’re enjoying the trip.
Nevertheless, there are many situations where the time somehow doesn’t flow as fast as we would like it to. This can be the case when something unexpected and undesirable at the same time occur, especially when our bodily sensitivity is highly prone to any external influences, e.g. in times of great fatigue or when being hungry.

_Aamir_: Time is a very funny thing, you know that. Sometimes when I’m too much tired and I want just to get to the train, in the night train from here to Copenhagen, I put my luggage in its place and it goes like this: I fall asleep, suppose it’s the 11 pm train and I fall asleep, and then I’m sleeping and somehow the subconscious or the inner side says: “Ah, you’re going to Copenhagen” and then I wake up, I look the watch and only 15 minutes passed, so it’s too slow.

We can see here, how the anxiety of the trip intervenes in time perception, making the traveller acutely aware of the passage of time. But time can flow slower not only because of one’s own particular attunement to time, since external hindrances or uncomfortable encounters can have just as big an influence, if not greater.

_Interviewer_: When you’re in one of these situation with other passenger behaving badly, do you think it changes how the time passes? And what do you generally do in that situation?

_Aamir_: Definitely, it is never ending, I just told you about the person who was drunk and beating his bag and I didn’t want to look at him when a person is already angry maybe you know, they just look at you and start... anything can happen. And there the traveling time was too high, you’re trying to spend the time but it’s not passing. After like 45 minutes of traveling he got down so I was a bit more relaxed, but those 45 minutes were like 45 hours or something like that.

In this case, the behaviour and the state of the co-passenger made the interval of time seem longer for Aamir because he was too nervous and the atmosphere was tense. This example shows that there are obvious limitations to one’s control over the perception of the passage of time. Whereas in the first case, when Aamir was only struggling with his own travel anxiety, he could deploy some strategies to alleviate this feeling, e.g. setting up an alarm clock to let him know when he will be arriving; in the second scenario, the staging of the situation leaves him feeling trapped, since he can’t just abandon the train and wait for another one. His desire for the uncomfortable situation to go away and the fact that he can’t easily divert his attention to a different activity, make him extremely vulnerable to the external distraction, and eventually make him feel like it would never end.

‘Listening music puts my mind into a flow, I don’t think much about the time, I sing the song.’

Merve’s narrative

Sometimes people are able not to think about the time itself and put themselves in a state where time perception and the actual clock time align, where it neither flows to fast nor too slow, as is reflected in Merve’s narrative or in Stephen’s account of his experience.
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Stephen: Whenever I am working I forget about time passing and I can always use the time... I forget about time, I mean I’m working and then I’m doing whatever I have time for and then I’m there and the time has passed. It’s not different.

When one is focused on an activity, then one usually forgets about the time passing and it happens predominantly during productive or enjoyable time with activities such as reading, working or watching a favourite TV show. We can see this in Elizabeth’s thoughts when she talks about the possibility of focus on work tasks such as writing.

Elizabeth: I haven’t done it yet but it is a possibility because it is like kind of pure work time without interruption, it has kind of character about, I think it allows for a sort amount of, for a great degree of concentration in work. So I think that would be also good for writing.

There are other times when the traveller is not doing ‘productive’ tasks, and although they would normally perceive it a waste of time, therefore making them more aware of the passage of time, they can at times change their attitude and find a different strategy to pass time.

Stephen: The only difference is if I haven’t brought any work with me. And then that’s more of a waste of time, but then sometimes I have a good view on the train so occasionally I enjoy the view.

This shows, how people adapt flexibly to the given situation, so that they are able to put their attention away from the passage of time, even though they are not performing an activity being at the top of their priority list.

Timestyles

In this section we wish to introduce a brief typology of what we call timestyles, following the timestyles metaphors developed by Cotte, Ratneshwar and Mick, as presented in Chapter II. Based on our interviews, observations and our own experiences we were able to distinguish three timestyles, that correspond to three ways of using and perceiving time by train travellers. It is important to remember that these timestyles are not something fixed, but can change fluidly from one to another for the same person on the same travel, depending on many factors at play in a given situation.
Narrow-gauge train

The characteristics of this timestyle, the ‘narrow-gauge train’, have been developed based on the interviews with the following participants Malthe, Aamir and Anna. These travellers usually adopt an open stance towards their co-passengers, seeking a connection and interaction with other passengers in order to pass their time. The travel time for Aamir and Malthe is most enjoyably spent talking, thinking and discussing with other passengers. Aamir points out clearly and compares his time perception when he is talking to someone to when he is not and tries to sleep. When he is in interaction with someone he doesn’t feel how fast the time passes. On the other hand when he attempts to sleep, the time usually passes slower, so that when he checks the time, it’s usually only a couple of minutes that have passed. Also, when travel time meaning was discussed with these two, they replied that travel time is mostly an enjoyable time or a free time where they get isolated from real world and enjoy themselves. Talking to other people is an option, it is not necessity therefore this makes the travel talks more enjoyable. If no interesting interaction is available on the train Aamir, Malthe and Anna use technology as a tool to make their time more entertaining by watching movies, playing video games and maybe writing. Malthe sometimes uses the internet connection and Skypes with his friends or if he has a friend with himself they can have a discussion together and benefit from the uncontrolled and alienated atmosphere in the train. For Malthe, train travel is clearly a gap between the departed location and the arrival destination. With this mindset he feels he is in an environment where it’s best to let go the control and enjoys the flow. Also it is a break from real life responsibilities and necessities in his journeys which takes around 2 hours. Anna on the other hand, sees the travel time as a relaxing time and uses Ud&Se magazine and her phone as tools of distraction. Ud&Se for her is interesting since for every issue they interview someone else in depth. And when she plays games on her phone, she can almost forget about time. All in all, this timestyle is mostly about making the travel time more entertaining if not always but at least it is seen as a relaxing time from passengers’ point of view.

High-speed rail

Based on our interviews we were also able to distinguish a timestyle that we metaphorically named ‘high-speed rail’. This timestyle is characterised by a very instrumental approach towards travel time, one where the sole meaning of travelling lies in getting a person from point A to point B as soon as possible. People who adopt this timestyle not only view the shortening of the trip as something positive, but also try to squeeze in as much productive work as possible into the time span that’s available to them. This is why rather than treating travel time as time-out in the hustle and bustle of everyday chores, these travellers look forward to use the travel time as an extension of the time dedicated to other activities they will carry on during the day. This is particularly visible in Stephen’s transformation of the train compartment into a mobile office, where the work performed on the move is an indispensable element of every workday. For a person adopting this timestyle the best way to pass time is to do something productive, as this is when one can get so immersed in the activity that one loses track of time. Such an attitude can also be noticed in Irina’s approach, resulting predominantly from her motion sickness, since she’s trying to make the most of the journey, viewing it otherwise as wasted time. These activities are usually something that excludes social interactions, which can be seen as intrusive and as distractions, therefore having an adverse effect on people’s time perception, making the time pass slower than they would like it to. For this reason they either choose a quiet compartment, where the amount of permitted interaction is limited on purpose and by design, hide behind a laptop screen or put earphones to cut themselves off from the immediate surroundings. All of these embodied performances and the body language clearly indicate to other co-passengers that they are not to be disturbed. Both Irina and Stephen look forward to the introduction of the OHM, seeing it as an opportunity to save the time and use it for something more important for them, such as breakfasting with family or cooking.
Chapter IV - Analysis

A regular commuter train

A regular ‘commuter train’ is the third metaphor that we use to explain another timestyle, in this case, a timestyle situated in between the two aforementioned timestyles, i.e. of using travel time instrumentally or enjoying the travel itself. This timestyle can be variable due to it having a strong versatility. People try to find a way to balance social and work life inside the travel itself and they don’t want to focus on one thing the whole journey. We can see this clearly in Edward’s case or Elizabeth’s. Edward usually commutes alone and he listens to music the most of the time, but he has a continuous feeling of wasting time thus he tries to study in the train but it is very complicated from his point of view due to several noises and vibrations, other times he appreciates a talk with a friend when he travels with someone, hence, this timestyle fluctuates the way to do the embodied performances going from one side to the other and it depends on the traveller’s choice. Elisabeth also is versatile in her travels, she usually uses her time productively and related to her work but she allows a certain degree of improvisation when she is not in the mood to be focused. She also sometimes travels with her daughters and then it happens the other way round, she focuses on her family and enjoys the travel in a social way but there are a few intervals when she can work a bit due to their daughters are busy watching a movie or something like that. This attitude towards train travel makes the timestyle tend to blur the boundaries of social and work productive time, inclusive or exclusive socialization, active or passive attitude, and so on.
Chapter IV - Analysis
‘OK, anyone would like to go for free on to the moon, but then it’s like OK: you give us good speed, but you then make those things more economical’

Aamir, an interviewee
Chapter V - Epilogue

Conclusion

Our project has been an attempt to look into how different perspectives on time interact in our daily mobility, train travel in particular, influencing the way we move around and what we do while on the move. This has been investigated through the lenses of what we call ‘Staging Time’, drawing on Jensen’s ‘Staging Mobilities’ methodological toolbox.

As has been explained in Chapter II, staging time is the outcome of the interaction of staging from above which includes the physical settings, the time schedules, the economics of the rail, the ICTs, the routes, and, secondly, of staging from below including the human’s perception of time, the travel time experience, the social interactions informing the uses of time, the embodied performances and the expectations, all shaping how we act on the time that is available to us on the train and while we wait for it.

For the purposes of the research, the travel has been divided into three different phases, with transfer and access as the links between these phases:

- preparation, which includes the booking of the tickets, the preparation or the luggage, even the imagination of the travel;
- waiting time that is the interval of time when people is waiting for the train until its departure;
- travel time, since the entrance of the train until the departure.

By applying an interpretative approach based on the use of interviews with long-distance travellers we were able to inquire into how people prepare for their journeys, spend their waiting and travel time and how they actively shape their time perception on their trips.

This perspective has been confronted with the ‘clock time’, that is the homogenising force, which orchestrates much of our daily activities, epitomised by the time tables of the railway. The clock time can be defined as the ‘real’ time between events ‘A’ and ‘B’. However, the main concept in our work has been that of time perception, by which we mean the individual’s experiential perception of the duration of the ‘real’ time, which in a given situation can result in an over- or underestimation of time. As has been indicated in our report, time perception depends on many factors, including the environmental, social and individual. Time perception, i.e. whether the time flows slower or faster in a particular situation, depends primarily on one’s attention towards the passage of time and the situation immediately available to him or her. If one finds him- or herself in a comfortable environment, either working on something work-related or simply indulging in a nice conversation, one can easily lose track of time and become nearly completely unaware of the passing time. Whereas on the other hand, if one is uncomfortable, distracted away from the initially planned activities or if one’s immediate surroundings require people’s full attention, making one tensed and stressed, time can flow much slower than one would wish, making the whole travel experience unpleasant. However, neither travel nor time perception is a linear concept: Travel can be influenced by many different factors, both from above and from below, and because of that, the traveller has nearly infinite number of choices to shape his travel experience.

Our inquiry into people’s time perception while taking the trains on the future OHM railroad has revealed a very complex and heterogenous picture of how travellers, both occasional and regular commuters, stage their time. This staging varies greatly among individuals and is often influenced by journey’s destination, but also by an affectual attunement to the train ride, whether one perceives it as a waste of time a priori or sees some indirect, non-monetizable benefits from the journey.

An interpretative investigation into people’s time use has shown people’s incredible adaptability to the built environment that is offered to them both on the train stations and on the train itself. Following David Bissel ‘the space of the railway carriage is not prescriptive in that it demands that passengers undertake a specific activity’ (2009: 430) and thus travellers can adapt the same space to be an extension of an office, as illustrat-ed by the examples of Stephen and Elizabeth, extension of a living room or a café of sorts, where one gets to talk to strangers.
Chapter V - Epilogue

In an attempt to generalise the observed behaviours and time uses on the train, we have developed a set of metaphors, called ‘timestyles’, to describe the different strategies and attitudes towards train travel. These are:

- the ‘narrow gauge train’, which is characterised by a sociable and enjoyment-oriented attitude;
- the ‘high-speed rail’, characterised by a work-oriented attitude and treating travel time as wasted time;
- and the ‘commuter train’, which is situated in between the abovementioned timestyles.

Furthermore, these timestyles can be related to the timestyles described by June Cotte, S. Ratneshwar and David Glen Mick. “Time as a feast” and “time as a river” can be linked with our “narrow-gauge train” being the most sociable attitude, “Time as a mirror” and “Time as a pressure cooker” can be related to the ‘high speed rail’ metaphor considering work as the focus of the travel, and finally, whereas “Time as a map” could be related to the ‘commuter train’ and the situation in between.

The project has been set in the perspective of the upcoming introduction of a grand transport infrastructure project taking currently place in Denmark, the so called ‘One-hour model’ or OHM. By putting the interpretative analysis in this perspective, we were able to look into the validity of the appraisal methods used to support this infrastructural undertaking and to question the way decision makers and planners treat travellers’ time. According to the Feasibility Study of the OHM the total time gains for OHM passengers will amount to 2.6 million hours yearly once the line is fully. Moreover, in the case of the OHM, travellers’ time is equated to DKK 86/hour for travel time, DKK 68/hour for waiting time and DKK 127/hour for the connection time between different trains (Banedanmark and Trafikstyrelsen, 2013: 40), regardless of their attitudes and personal values attached to travelling by train. However, as we have seen in our research not all of this time should be simply treated as a waste, and hence its savings as a gain. In some rare, but not non-existent, cases, this could even mean a loss of productivity, since people report that the train compartment provides a very productive work environment. This juxtaposition has, in our opinion, proven fruitful in terms of potential future research, which shall be explored on the following pages.
Chapter V - Epilogue

Future Research

Our research could generate potential for future research in a number of ways. First of all, since it has been carried out as an analysis on long distance trains in Denmark, it’s an ex-ante study referring to the HSR policy that the country plans to introduce with the One-hour Model. Therefore, future research could involve an ex-post analysis on the same topic of ‘staging time’ to identify if and how travellers’ behaviour will change with the new HSR, if new timestyles will emerge amongst ‘historical’ train travellers and also amongst possible new travellers switching from air or car travel as a consequence of the reduced travel times between the largest Danish cities.

On a different level, the research also shows that including interpretative research into planning of transport infrastructure projects could be very revealing and provide added value to the assessment of such projects. Since people do not perceive the passage of time in a linear, homogenous way, where each minute is identical, but instead can perceive time as flowing faster or slower, depending on what they do and how they feel, more emphasis should be put on this experiential aspect of train travel. This could be integrated into the user experience analysis of train cars or train stations design, so as to enrich it not only by looking at the comfort of being in a given space, but also by looking at how does it affect people’s time perception. This might also suggest that it is not the absolute amount of travel time that influences our evaluation of a journey most, but it is our idiosyncratic perception of time that shapes our attitudes most. And since our travel mode preferences are often based more on emotions and affects rather than rational calculations, as most traffic engineering would like us to believe, it is crucial to be able to influence, if only to a limited extent, how people might perceive time when on the move.

In this context it seems advisable to include next to the traditional CBA and passenger traffic forecasts a different type of assessment, i.e. one where the benefits of making the trip shorter would be confronted with the lost benefits of a longer journey, but one where people’s time perception is at a certain quasi-optimal level. In line with Glenn Lyons’ research, we would argue that people’s time uses are much more complex than is normally assumed, rendering the underlying rationale of equating travel time with wasted time indefensible. The predominant approach is blind to the fact that travelling is not simply moving from point A to point B, that is to and from places where one finally ‘does’ something productive, not necessarily in monetary terms of course. Travelling doesn’t simply put people into some kind of limbo where most daily activities must be suspended. This is particularly apparent with the advent of mobile technologies and the omnipresence of Wi-Fi enabling both remote work and communication while on the move. Because of the lack of many of the distractions of a traditional office environment, the train with its seats and tables can offer surprisingly good conditions for intellectual work. However, such intellectual work necessitates time, since mentally demanding tasks usually require a considerable amount of time to process. This suggests that saving travel time doesn’t invariably lead to more productive work outside of the travel time and may in fact in some cases deprive people of quality work time. The paradox would be that a decrease in travel time, or the loss of spaces designed to work while travelling, could decrease a worker’s overall productivity or force him to work extra hours to keep its productivity levels.

Additionally, based on our research a case for a different appraisal method for rail projects could be argued, i.e. for one less obsessed with predicting the seemingly exact values of time savings. This is in line with the findings of Næss, Nicolaisen and Strand. In their 2012 paper, they quote some of Bent Flyvbjerg research, pointing out that ‘the problems associated with forecasting benefits are much greater for rail projects than for road projects’ (Næss, Nicolaisen and Strand 2012: 300). If applying the business-as-usual forecasting produces an overestimation of the demand (probably in an attempt to support the decision to build a given rail project with ‘hard’ numbers), then maybe it is more reasonable to shift to a different appraisal method, one that is not trying to window-dress the numbers. How an interpretative research could be used to develop such a new tool is certainly something that could be looked into in future research.

Further research on how people perceive time while travelling could also open up new design related questions. For example, how to design a given space to afford the optimal choice of activities for a given individual, i.e. one which allows for a smooth or undisturbed passage of time. At the same time designers must confront the question of how to build in enough flexibility into a given space, so as not to define it too rigidly, thus leaving too little room for spontaneous action. Hence, this project ay inspire a way to design and think about the mobilities turn in more material terms, e.g. by asking how should we design our stations, trains, lines, etc.
Chapter V - Epilogue

The project uses the phenomenological way to understand the issues, the facilities, and drawbacks of the system staging travellers’ time from above. What would change, both physical and non-physical, in the ‘staging from above’, if we studied these spheres from an individual and experiential perspective?

As mentioned above, this project can open the design gaze for the future, but this gaze is already changing and started some years ago. We all know that Japan is one of the countries that puts the focus on the fastest trains e.g. Shinkansen train exceeds 320 km/h and the improvement of these bullets train has been always something paramount for Japan, but nowadays, Japan has moved a little their focus and one expensive part of the rail system of this country is now designed for the slow travel experience. It is one of the newest luxury experiences that started in Japan in 2013 and it is called Seven Stars.

Seven Stars is a train experience consisting in the concept of the slow travel, from 2 days and 1 night til 4 days and 3 nights, the customer can choose the main itineraries and the train will pass through the most beautiful natural or artificial places, hills, bays, hot springs, it will make stops in old stations to have breakfasts, and so on. The train design is fancy, wooden interiors, 14 suits, pianos, big windows and with all the comforts for the traveler. Definitively Seven Stars is an expensive and luxurious scenario where the goal is the experience of the traveler and the possibility to enjoy the unforgettable landscapes, and it is the first time that Japan make such a big investment in a train with the leitmotiv of going slow. Other examples could be the Transiberian route in Russia, used as a luxury moving hotel or the Bernina train crossing the Alps between Italy and Switzerland on a panoramic route. Although these trains are not used for commuting or travelling but only as “experiences” they show an interest towards a better designed train environment and could serve as a large scale labs, and eventually give real-world, widely applicable solutions for enhancing travellers’ time perception.
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