The battle between the opposing structural stories on mobilities related to children's organised sports activities

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Abstract:

This master thesis investigates what affects the choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities. The concept of structural stories and the perspective on mobilities of everyday life frames the theoretical and epistemological starting point as well as the ontological point of view. The study explores the underlying arguments and rationalities contained within two opposing structural stories used to explain modes of transport and the level of independent mobility for children travelling to and from organised sports activities through qualitative interviews. In the two vertical and the horizontal analyses, we draw on theoretical notions from the mobile risk society, individualisation in late modern society, parents' interpretation of traffic risks, and the concept of structural stories.

In the conclusion of this study, we can note that the different underlying arguments and rationalities used to explain choices and mobility patterns were present in every family to some extent. The decisive factor for which of these becomes the guiding arrow er what rationalities are attached the most significant importance to. This is highly influenced by the individual's perception of "the good life", what it implies to be "the good parent", and the parent's interpretation of traffic risks.

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Introduction

1 Introduction

Climate change and its adverse effects are the biggest challenges facing global society today. Our way of life has proven unsustainable in many aspects, and transformative actions are needed across all sectors as quickly as possible to reduce irreversible impacts (IPCC, 2022).

Over the past years, climate discussions have gained increased focus from the political spectrum and the public in general. Actions to reduce carbon emissions in European countries have led to an overall decrease since 1990 (EEA, 2021) However, this is not the case for the transportation sector. Although efforts have been made to reduce emissions from fossil-fueled cars and promote the adaptation of electric vehicles, the transportation sector has increased its carbon emissions. As the transportation sector is the second-largest source of carbon emissions in the EU, responsible for a quarter of the total emission (EEA, 2020) the continuation of this tendency will make it very hard to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, which aims to keep the global warming below 2 degrees Celsius compared to preindustrial levels (UNFCCC, 2021).

This makes the transport sector vital for transformative change, not just in the EU but also in Denmark, where the same tendency is seen (Energistyrelsen, 2021). Road transport, which includes personal vehicles, busses, motorcycles, commercial vehicles and -trucks as well emissions related to cross-border trades (Petrol and diesel brought in Denmark but used in other countries) is by far the most significant contributor of the total co2-emissions from the transport sector (Energistyrelsen, 2021). Personal vehicles are responsible for most of the emissions within road transport. This is mainly caused by the energy consumption of the vast number of private vehicles, which exceeded more the 2.7 million at the beginning of 2021 (Statistic Denmark, 2022), most of which is powered by fossil fuels.

Although the Danish Energy Agency projections foresee a reduction in co2 emissions from road transport in 2030, the numbers only add to -1% compared to 1990 or -14% compared to 2019. This reduction is mainly powered by improved efficiency in combustion engines, biofuels, and a larger share of electric vehicles (Energistyrelsen, 2021). Many of the solutions presented to decrease the emissions from the transportation sector often focus on new and more sustainable technologies such as electric vehicles that, in turn, will maintain the current automobility regime (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2020).

However, energy consumption and carbon emissions are not the only problems with the transport sector. The sustainability and liveability of urban areas are also challenged by congestion, air and

noise pollution, and the vast amount of space allocated for road transport (Gössling, 2020). This is especially true in larger urban areas where the automobility regime has dominated for over a century (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2020). With increasing urbanisation, 60% of the world's population will be living in urban areas by 2030, thus making cities an essential arena for reconfiguring the transport sector and pushing a transition towards a sustainable mobility system (Ernstson, 2010).

So far, traditional transport planning has failed to address this issue, partly because of the strong connection between economic growth and transportation and the conventional approach to transport planning (Banister, 2008). Although transport is increasingly seen as a transdisciplinary field of study, engineers still heavily dominate transport planning (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022) Within the paradigm of traditional transport planning, travel is divided into categories, e.g. commuting, business, or leisure, which are addressed as separate entities neglecting the interconnectedness of cities, mobilities, and people. The primary objective is speed, efficiency, and the capacity and flow of the traffic with a strong focus on infrastructure and modes of transport (Rupprecht Consult, 2014). The 'demand' for transport, often seen as a black box with no particular significance (Sheller, 2006), is traditionally the point of departure in transport planning. The main tools rely on quantitative data, socioeconomic evaluations (Rupprecht Consult, 2014), and transport models to forecast future transport patterns, which entails a 'predict and provide' approach (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022).

Although sustainability issues related to the transportation sector have been recognised for many years, most recently through the Sustainable Development Goals with an Avoid-Shift-Improve approach (High-level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport, 2016, p.7), an isolated view of the transportation system fails to realise that mobilities are more than getting from A to B most efficiently, and understand that changing the practices of everyday mobilities also means changing the organisation of everyday life (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022). Thus, travel can be a valued activity and not only a derived demand. Therefore, the physical movement connected to travel should be understood through the interconnections between the cultural and social impacts (Urry, 2007).

The conventional approach relying on traffic forecasting and economic evaluations simply come short in understanding the complex network of urban mobilities and assessing the impacts of new projects (Banister, 2008; Freudendal-Pedersen, 2020; Stephenson et al., 2018). As Jonh Urry puts it in his book *Mobilities* from 2007: *"There is too much transport in the study of travel and not enough society and thinking through the complex intersecting relations between society and transport"* (Urry, 2007, p. 20). This

statement underlines the importance of a transdisciplinary approach where the physical and social dimensions are included in a multi-criteria analysis (Banister, 2008). So far, the traditional approach to transport planning has failed to realise any significant changes to the transport system and achieving sustainable mobilities, therefore, calls for alternative measures (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2020).

Radical changes to urban mobility, e.g. the restriction of cars in the city, have proven to be a challenging political manoeuvre yet very necessary if changes to the everyday mobilities are ever going to happen (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022). Active involvement of the people who use the different modes of transport is therefore essential for building support and realising change. Thus, an inclusive and participatory approach throughout the entire planning process, from discussion to decision-making and implementation, must be taken (Banister, 2008)

An essential element in achieving the sustainable, liveable city is a modal shift toward active modes of transport. As the notion implies, the physical movement connected to active transport relies on human power and does not require fossil- or electric energy or emit co2 and toxic fumes into the atmosphere.

Besides reducing the environmental impact and improving the liveability and quality of life in cities, a larger share of active modes of transport could also benefit society by improving public health (Interreg Europe, 2019).

Walking or cycling 150 minutes a week has a wide range of health benefits, e.g. preventing and managing diseases and enhancing thinking, learning and judgment skills (WHO, 2020). For Danish children, the suggested minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity a day is often not met (Klinker et.al, 2020), which can have an impact on the well-being of the children and lead to health implications later in life (Klinker et.al, 2020).

Furthermore, studies suggest that *"…children who walk or bike are more likely to consider active modes as adults…"* (Lucken et.al, 2018). This underlines the importance of establishing healthy and sustainable mobility habits from an early age, as these a likely to remain throughout adolescence and adulthood (Ferreira et.al, 2016; Talama, 2009).

Campaigns targeting the mobility patterns of children have mainly been focusing on the daily commute between school and home. However, an increasingly large part of children's lives takes place outside the immediate neighbourhood when attending sports, leisure- or other out-of-school activities. In contrast to the daily commute, these trips have received relatively little attention

(Hjorthol and Fyhri, 2009). As an unintended consequence of this, parents spend considerable amounts of time chauffeuring children between everyday life activities (Freeman and Quigg, 2009), increasing car use and the related environmental impacts (Kyle et al., 2018). Especially children's independent mobility has the potential to reduce trips made by car and free up time for the parents otherwise spend chauffeuring or escorting their children. Thus, children's everyday life and inherent mobility patterns become an interesting and often overlooked element of sustainable mobilities.

As stated, mobilities are an integrated part of everyday life and a necessary tool to carry out the patchwork of interconnected activities that make up the everyday, also, for children. Thus, changing the everyday mobility practices also means changing the organisation of everyday life for the entire family. Therefore, the everyday perspective can serve as a starting point for understanding how practices are produced and reproduced and how this reflects on politics, planning, and policymaking. On an ontological level, this perspective on the everyday becomes a way to understand the interconnectedness between everyday life and politics and planning, as well as an epistemological starting point to investigate everyday practices and the creation of meaning to facilitate change. If we want the unsustainable mobility practices to change – practices must be taken seriously (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022).

1.1 Research question

This perspective on sustainable mobilities, planning, and the role of everyday life, presented in the introduction, will be starting point and frame of reference for the entire master's thesis. In the light of this, we seek to answer the following research question.

Research question

What affects choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities?

Sub-questions

- What are the underlying arguments and rationalities behind choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities?
- What affects which underlying arguments and rationalities that become the decisive factor for choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities?

Children & mobilities

2 Children and mobilities

The following section will present a literature review of the newest and most relevant research on children and mobility. The literature has served as initial background knowledge but has also influenced the study's direction.

2. 1 The everyday life of children

Mobilities are an essential part of everyday life and how it unfolds. The routinised practices that make up everyday mobilities are not a subject for daily reflection but instead continuously repeated practices without great variation. (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022)

For parents and families with children, the children's everyday life and subsequent mobilities are an integrated part of their everyday life, whether managed or performed by adults or independently by the children themself.

For children in late modern society, everyday life is played out in an expanding territory to attend school, sports, and other out-of-school activities (Freeman and Quigg, 2009).

An increasingly large part of children's lives revolves around organised activities in institutionalised environments, such as day-care, school, sports facilities, and other leisure activities, that often occur outside the immediate neighbourhood (Hjorthol and Fyhri, 2009).

Zeiher (2001) describes this as "insularizational", where the different environments that make up the everyday life of children; home, school, organised sports-, and other leisure activities, can be seen as islands in the landscape where parent-controlled transportation often is required.

Organised leisure activities have become an increasingly large part of children´s everyday life, and taking part in 'meaningful' activities (that contributes positively to the overall development of the individual) seems to be the norm for both children and adults (Jensen et al., 2004; Mattson, 2002)

Organised leisure activities are therefore seen as an essential part of childhood and adolescence that contribute to the overall development and wellbeing of children (Malmgren et.al, 2022; Børnerådet, 2019) and participation in various out-of-school activities is often encouraged from early school age.

In 2020, the two leading sports organisations in Denmark, DGI and DIF, had more than 900.000 members under 18. Although some members might be inactive or duplicates, this number is very high considering the total population under 18 only accounts for 1.225.000 million Danish citizens.

According to Freeman and Quigg (2009), parents will spend a considerable amount of time chauffeuring their children to and from various out-of-school activities supporting meaningful, organised leisure time. In a Norwegian study by Hjorthol and Fyhri (2009), the car was the most typical mode of transport for these activities. This may not come as a big surprise considering private cars' dominant role in everyday mobilities (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022).

An unintended consequence of the mobility patterns associated with the everyday life of children is increased car use and the subsequent carbon emissions and environmental impacts (Kyle et al., 2018).

In a 2018 study, Kyle et al. (2018) found that carpooling to and from organised sports activities most often was initiated by the parents, primarily to reduce logistical demands and the time spent chauffeuring associated with participating in these activities. They also found that active facilitation by sports organisations or other actors could significantly impact carpooling behaviour (Kyle et al., 2018).

"… Strategies that include promotions initiated by the youth sports organisation and some form of structured facilitation that identifies carpool opportunities for participants travelling to each facility could significantly positively impact carpooling behaviour." (Kyle et.al, 2018)

Although carpooling can be part of the solution, there are many arguments for promoting active modes of transportation. Active modes of transport are undeniably linked to the liveability of the sustainable city. Besides the obvious advantages of being emission-free and a shift from car use to active modes of transportation has the potential to reduce co2 emissions and energy use, increasing the share of active transport has other important societal benefits. Most commonly active modes of transport refer to walking and cycling, but different modes of transport relying on human power for propulsion should also be included. In addition to this, public transportation, which is very much interlinked to active transport, could also be included as most journeys will have an active element, whether it is walking to the bus stop or taking the bike to the train station, part of the journey will require some form of physical activity.

The effects of a larger share of active modes of transport could benefit society by reducing the environmental impact of car use, improving the liveability and quality of life in cities, and improving public health, which would also benefit individuals partaking in active modes of transport. (Interreg Europe, 2019)

According to the WHO (2022) sufficient physical activity (walking or biking 150 minutes a week, WHO) has a wide range of health benefits, physically as well as mentally. This includes preventing

and managing diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes and reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Furthermore, studies find that sufficient physical activity enhances thinking, learning and judgment skills and ensures healthy growth and development in young people.

Although active modes of transport are likely to increase the exposure to air pollution and risks of traffic-related injuries, benefits will overweigh the risks. Especially in urban areas, where a shift towards active modes of transport is most likely to happen, effects could also be seen in the amount of traffic fumes in the air and levels of congestion. Besides improving the quality of life in the cities, this can save billions of EUR from a socio-economic perspective.

Therefore, we see active modes of transport as an essential part of a sustainable mobility system, and a means to achieve the necessary synergy effects across different sectors on the pathway towards sustainable futures.

In Denmark, many children and adolescents are not active for a minimum of 60 minutes a day, as suggested by the Danish Health Authority (Klinker et.al, 2020). Physical activity and the inactivity of children and adolescents impact health, well-being, and illness in their adulthood and, therefore, are essential to support (Klinker et.al, 2020). A Danish study of when children and adolescents are most active during the day shows that transportation is the activity that contributes most to physical activity when compared to the time spent (Klinker et.al, 2020).

Children's mobility patterns have mainly been addressed through campaigns targeting the daily commute to and from school, e.g. All Children Rides a Bike (Alle Børn Cykler), a recurring campaign initiated by The Danish Cyclists' Federation focusing on the health benefits of active modes of transport in the daily commute. Other campaigns focus´ on traffic safety, especially near schools and on the education of children in general traffic safety for cyclists, e.g., the Danish Council for Traffic Safety (Rådet for Sikker Trafik).

In contrast to the daily commute, other trips made by children have received relatively little academic and political attention (Hjorthol and Fyhri, 2009).

2. 2 Children´s independent mobility

As mentioned above, active modes of transport have significant benefits to the environment, public health, and the liveability of urban areas. This is true for both children and adults performing mobility with different modes of active transport. But childhood is an essential phase in the development of the individual, and patterns and practices established in this period, e.g. physical

activity, are likely to remain throughout adolescence and adulthood (Ferreira et.al, 2016; Telama, 2009)

Research also implies that: *"…children who walk or bike are more likely to consider active modes as adults…"* (Lucken et.al, 2018). If this is the case, establishing healthy and sustainable mobility habits from an early age could play an essential part in the transition away from the current automobility regime.

The daily commute between home and school can be a good place for children to practice the skills and competencies needed to move through traffic safely. Schools are usually located within a reasonable distance from home; the destination is known and the route consistent.

However, research from Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, and Norway has shown that the distance to school, in general, has increased, which has reduced the number of trips made by active modes of transport and increased trips made by car or other motorised vehicles. The main reason for this is the growing number of private schools and increased urban sprawl (Hjorthol and Fyhri, 2009).

According to a Dutch study, distance is the most important factor when choosing mode of transport for the daily commute to and from school (Dessing et.al, 2014).

For many families, walking or cycling to meet the mobility needs of their children can be challenging in the organisation of everyday life and family logistics, especially for families with younger children that still require a high level of adult supervision when moving through traffic.

Although many schools provide a general education in traffic safety, parents have a crucial role in teaching their children to assess traffic situations independently. (Dessing et.al, 2014).

According to Dessing et al. (2014), traffic safety, distance to school, and the general assessment of their children's abilities are the most influential factors for parents when deciding when they can travel to school independently. However, parents tend to underestimate or are not aware of their children's abilities to handle and assess traffic situations independently. (Dessing et.al, 2014).

These skills cannot be acquired from the backseat of a car but need to be learned in practice accompanied by adults. Mastering these skills can give children the freedom to travel independently, which can free up time for the parents otherwise spend chauffeuring or escorting their children. Furthermore, studies imply that independent mobility from a young age supports the child's mental and cognitive development, e.g. orientation in space, promotes interaction with other children, and provides a sense of belonging in the local community (Hjorthol and Fyhri, 2009).

Theoretical framework

3 Theoretical framework

Based on the above literature review this project wishes to focus on choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities by investigating the mobilities of everyday life and underlying argument and rationalities through the concept of structural stories.

Structural stories will serve as a theoretical framework for the overall understanding and approach to mobilities research and an analytical concept to help answer the research question. Thus, structural stories serve both as an ontological point of view and an epistemological starting point for data collection and the analytical approach. In this chapter, a key element of the concept will be laid out and explained. Furthermore, Thomsen's (2005) work on parents' construction of traffic safety is included to understand how parents interpret and assess traffic risks in relation to children's independent mobility. This will be explained in further detail at the end of the chapter.

3. 1 Structural stories

The concept of structural stories is based on empirical and theoretical research centred around transport, mobility, and late modern society. It has a strong focus on the different elements that make up everyday life and is concerned with the interconnectedness between mobilities and the choices we make when organising our everyday life. Thus, everyday life becomes the point of departure for investigating how everyday mobilities are perceived and understood and how they influence our mobility choices (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007a).

Structural stories as an analytical concept can be used to understand the seeming rationalities that underlie why and by what mode of transport everyday mobility is performed (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007a). By understanding meaning and consequences of mobility through the lenses of everyday life, opportunities for change can be revealed (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022).

In an article, Freudendal-Pedersen (2007a) defines a structural story as follows:

"A structural story contains the arguments people commonly use to explain their actions and decisions. A structural story is used to explain the rationalities behind the way we act and the choices we make when exercising our daily routines and is a guide to certain actions. The structural stories form the basis that determines how the individual views certain problems and their solutions. The social practice of the individual produces and reproduces these structural stories." (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007a)

The structural stories are used to cope with the dilemmas and ambivalences of everyday life. The stories are often used as an automatic explanation representing a "common truth" in society. The

space where choices and mobility patterns are formed is created by the ambivalences of everyday life and the structural stories (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007a) see figure 1.

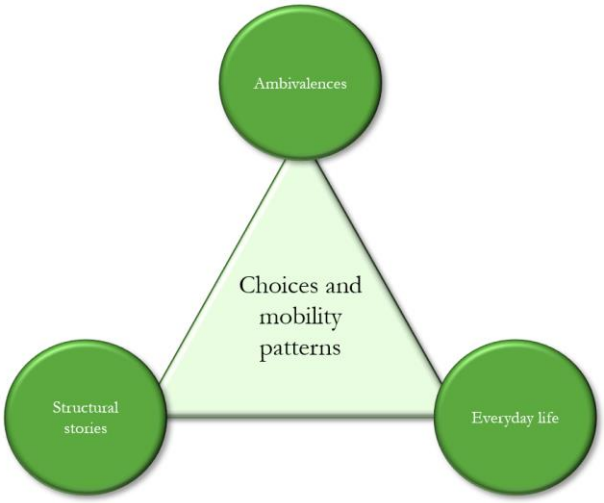

Figure 1 The space where choices and mobility patterns are formed, created by ambivalences in everyday life and structural stories - own production inspired by Freudendal-Pedersen (2007b)

The characteristics of late modern society are linked to the creation of structural stories (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007b). Characteristics such as individualisation, separation of time and space, the notion of risks and the following ambivalences (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2005) often play a role in forming structural stories. Therefore, it is essential to understand these characteristics of late modern society to understand how and why the structural stories on mobilities are generated and used. These characteristics will be elaborated on in the following sections.

3. 1. 1 Everyday life in late modern society

Mobilities are an important part of everyday life in late modern society, both when it comes to achieving a modern lifestyle and in the organisation of everyday life (Giddens, 1991).

Today, late modern individuals make up their everyday life of different components in the pursuit of creating "the good life". What components the late modern individuals' put into their everyday lives are affected by social discourses on what a good childhood is, how to be a good parent, etc. (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2009; Thomsen, 2005). In earlier societies, traditions were a guide to norms and values in the individuals' everyday life, but in today's late modern society, traditions are no longer restraining the individuals (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2005). The individual will only act according to the traditions that organise social life if they can reason with the rationalities behind it. If they cannot, the rationalities behind the tradition are removed, and the individual can no longer find security in the defined choices within the traditions (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2009). In

this way, society becomes more individualised, meaning that the individuals are responsible for their actions and the consequences. This creates dilemmas and ambivalences for the late modern individuals (Giddens, 1991). If leaving the communities offered by the traditions, the individuals will seek new communities and social interactions that can give the individuals a sense of ontological security essential for creating "the good life" (Giddens, 1991). Some choices are already provided by being a part of communities or certain lifestyles, which emancipates the individuals from a range of choices and the following dilemmas and ambivalences (Giddens, 1991).

The social interactions, communities and components of everyday life are no longer selected by distance but instead what makes it possible to create "the good life". In the modern lifestyle, the components are often scattered over a large geographical area, and mobilities are the glue that makes it possible to make all the components fit into the individuals' everyday lives (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022). When organising everyday life, the families' everyday life forms the transportation habits of each family member. Hence, the location of the families' everyday life components affects the need for mobility. In this sense, mobilities are also a part of constructing and achieving "the good life" (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2009). When organising everyday life and pursuing "the good life", the different components are negotiated but rarely the mobilities of everyday life (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022).

Considering the risk and downsides of the everyday mobilities would cause significant ambivalences for the individual. Thus, constructing structural stories provides deliberation from the ambivalences connected to the mobility choices we make in everyday life (Fredendal-Pedersen, 2009). For individuals of the late modern society, creating and achieving "the good life" is filled with dilemmas, the notion of risks and ambivalences. This will be further elaborated on in the following section.

3. 1. 2 The mobile risk society

In his book from 1986, Beck (1992 [1986]) argues that we live in a 'risk society'. In the wake of industrialisation, threats to human life and the environment have come to light as unintended consequences of the industrial society and past decisions, e.g. air pollution, contamination of water resources or CO2 emissions (Beck, 1992 [1986]). According to Beck, 'we are living in *the age of side effects'* and argues that the risk society has consequences for all aspects of our lives (Beck, 1994) and has become the driving force in late modern society (Beck, 1997).

Therefore, societal changes are a product of the efforts to limit the unintended consequences of modern life rather than the result of ideologies and intended policies (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022).

Risks are often abstract and invisible. We, therefore, rely on science to detect and acknowledge them through studies and experiments. Risks and the awareness of risk are, in this sense, both produced by science and expert knowledge and the solution to cope with the uncertainties connected to risk (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022). Therefore, knowledge is crucial for the risk society (Rasborg, 2021).

However, it also entails a state of general insecurity, uncertainty and ambivalence in everyday decision-making when navigating a world full of multifaceted risks. There may not be more or higher risks than in previous times, but due to globalisation and mobilities, knowledge has become easily accessible, and knowledge-production is widespread (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022).

Decision-making and risk assessment, therefore, becomes an integral part of everyday life: Is it safe to let my children travel independently, or should I escort them to school? Is it unhealthy for my baby to sleep outside because of air pollution? These are just a few examples of decisions we must make in our everyday lives. To help deal with this multitude of risks we are faced with every day, we develop what Beck (1997) refers to as "risk blindness" to reduce the many ambivalences related to the decisions we make when carrying out our everyday activities. (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022).

With mobility as a fundamental principle of modernity, a modern life without movement, motility, and mobility is hard to imagine (Kesselring, 2008). The mobilities of everyday life and all the (perceived) risks we face are closely connected and affect all aspects of our lives in every corner of the world. In the light of this, Kesselring (2008) introduced the concept of a "mobile risk society" by synthesising theories of reflexive modernisation and the risk society (Beck, 1992) with the mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2016), thus emphasising the risk-inducing affect mobilisation and globalisation have on contemporary society. (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022)

3. 2 Parents' interpretation of traffic risk

In an earlier study, Thyra Uth Thomsen (2005) investigates the way parents construct traffic safety and perceive danger and risk. The study takes its point of departure in the paradox of decreasing traffic injuries involving children, at least statistically, and an increased number of children being chauffeured to everyday life activities.

Through empirical research, Olsen (2003) and Fotel & Thomsen (2004) have hypothesised that one of the main reasons parents chauffeur their children around is concerns regarding traffic safety. With an increasing share of children being driven by car, this indicates that the parents' perception of traffic safety has decreased, while statistically, traffic safety has increased.

To make sense of this paradox, Thomsen (2005) argues that the parental worries related to children's independent mobility are complex social phenomena that cannot be understood by simply looking at the reported number of traffic accidents.

Based on an interpretive, social constructivist framework Thomsen (2005) puts forward three possible sources for parental worries. According to this constructivist framework, the social reality that he or she lives in is constructed by the individual as an active player. Therefore, the webs of knowledge that constitutes social life are interpreted in various ways by every individual.

From this point of view, Thomsen (2005) presents how parental concerns can be seen as; *"a product of parents' interpretation of traffic risks based on public information (i.e., injury statistics and safety campaigns), the mobility environment (i.e., Traffic density and infrastructure) and personal history (i.e., experience with traffic accident and the child's behaviour)."* (Thomsen, 2005) However, many other sources of parental concern exist, and the interpretation of the three mentioned sources are all bound up to other elements of the parents' social reality. See figure 2.

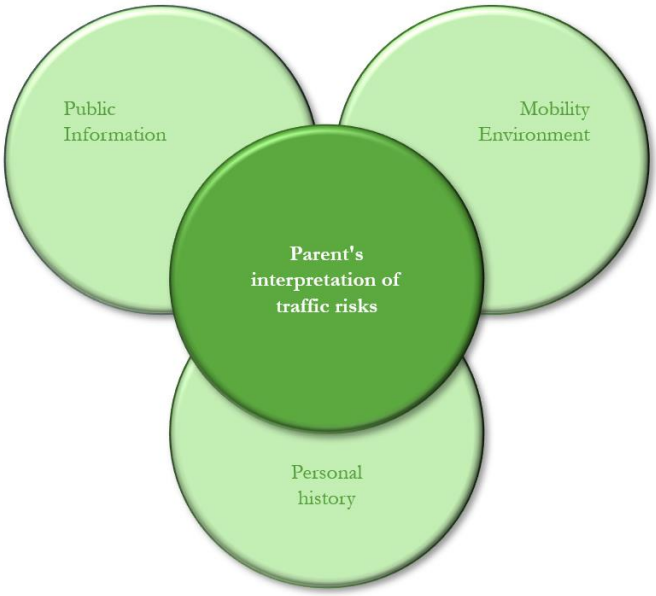

Figure 2- The three elements in parents' interpretation of traffic risks - own production inspired by Thomsen (2005)

An example of this is how parents understand what it implies to be a 'good parent'. If a 'good parent' is perceived as someone who protects his or her child, traffic risk will be a parental responsibility and therefore affect how this is interpreted. If, on the other hand, a 'good parent' is seen as someone who lets their children roam the neighbourhood freely, traffic risk will probably be handled differently. The children's mode of travel, chosen by the parents, thereby reflects on the parents themselves and becomes a matter of personal significance (Thomsen, 2005). In this sense, traffic safety becomes a personal matter for the individual families.

But risk is not just a matter of personal interpretation. As described above cf. 3.1.2 Mobile risk society, risk is also an unavoidable feature of late modern society – first described by Beck (1992) as the risk society.

As risk is closely linked to knowledge and decision-making, Thomsen (2005) argues that *"parents' response to risk may depend on their perception of risk and safety either as a given fact beyond their control or as a social phenomenon, which they have control and influence over".*

Therefore, parents will see risk as something that can be avoided and thus achieve safety in fairly different ways. Some parents may see the risks related to children's independent mobility as an unavoidable part of everyday life, while others will seek to minimise the risk in various ways, e.g. monitoring and tracking, rules and restrictions, or simply accompanying or chauffeuring the child.

Earlier studies from 1994 to 2000 shows that parents' fears related to children's independent mobility are targeted at heavy transport, traffic-related accident and stranger danger (Joshi and Maclean, 1995; Valentine and McKendrick, 1997; Valentine, 1996; Jones et al., 2000; Blakey, 1994)

How parents cope with these fears and choose to act in response to them is therefore linked to how they perceive risk through the interpretation of knowledge, the mobility environment, and their own past experiences. This decision-making is highly connected to ambivalences about the freedom and flexibility related to children's independent mobility and the dangers linked to it (Fotel and Thomsen, 2004).

Investigating the factors that come into play when parents interpret risk will help get a deeper understanding of the ambivalences connected to everyday life choices and how structural stories are used to explain actions and decisions.

3. 3 Theoretical approach

The theoretical framework and design of the thesis have changed and evolved several times throughout the process. Right from the start, the aim was to use the structural stories as an analytical framework for understanding how mobility choices and mobility patterns in everyday life are formed. Through the empirical data, it became clear that a theoretical understanding of risk and how it's perceived and interpreted by parents was needed as an addition to Kesselrings (2008) description of the unavoidable risks we face every day in the mobile risk society. In this regard, Thomsen's (2005) study on parents' interpretation of traffic risk contributes to understanding the different elements that come into play when parents assess traffic risk. In combination with understanding the dilemmas and ambivalences individuals face in late modern society and the importance of mobility in everyday life, this constitutes the theoretical approach to investigate the choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities, illustrated as the large triangle in figure 3.

The figure illustrates how we see choices and mobility patterns formed in the non-physical space made-up of everyday life, ambivalences, and risk, here illustrated as the small circles forming the triangle.

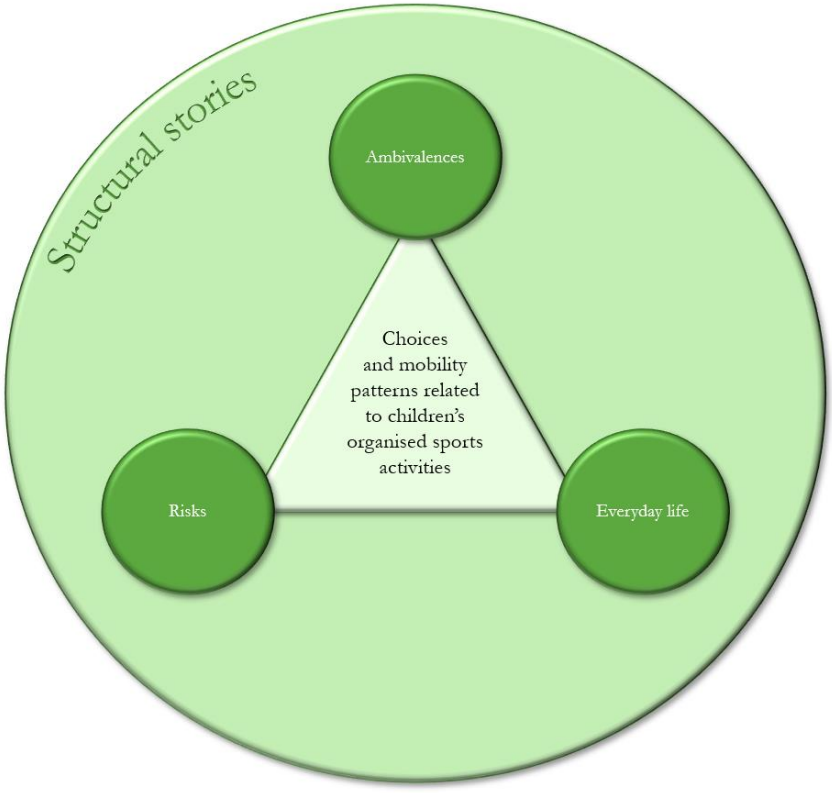

Figure 3- A visualisation of the theoretical approach - own production

By investigating everyday life, risk, and ambivalences through the structural stories as the underlying frame of understanding the production and reproduction of mobility practices, knowledge about the underlying arguments and rationalities contained within the structural stories and used to explain mobility choices and patterns in everyday life can become visible. The application of this theoretical approach will be further described at the end of the next chapter; see 4.6 – Analytical approach.

Methodology

4 Methodology

This chapter will present and argue the ontological, epistemological, and methodological points of view. Furthermore, the chosen methods and analytical approaches will be described, and the interviewees will be presented. This chapter aims to make the considerations and choices made throughout the process visible and transparent.

4. 1 Research strategy

This thesis takes its point of departure in structural stories to understand the arguments and rationalities used to explain the mobility choices of everyday life for families with children. Thus, the overall philosophical approach for this study has found great inspiration and reflection in social constructivism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This is mainly visible in our understanding of the subject of study, mobility choices in everyday life and related concepts like sustainable mobility.

Contrary to traditional transport planning and research, we see the construction of meaning and rationalities as a crucial element in understanding mobility as a phenomenon. These are all subjects to social constructions of what is generally considered legitimate and true. As these are formed by flexible social discourses that can change over time, there are no facts of nature or 'true reality in understanding mobility (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Therefore, they are shaped by the social systems surrounding them in an interaction between society and the individual and the time and place they exist. The study is therefore bound by the context of time and place (Egholm, 2014). Thus, no grand conclusions about the world can be made based on this study. Instead, it can serve to understand how individuals construct meaning in the interconnectedness between the materialities of everyday life and mobility.

The chosen methods used to investigate the problem area are highly influenced by the philosophy of science that frames the study. With everyday life and structural stories as a point of departure, this thesis calls for specific methods for investigating how individuals speak of and argue for mobility choices in everyday life. For this purpose, empirical knowledge in the following topics has been produced.

- Knowledge of the individual family's everyday life and living conditions.
- Knowledge of how specific modes of transport are used in everyday life.
- Knowledge of how children's independence, security, freedom, and flexibility come into play in the pursuit of "the good family life".

- Knowledge of arguments and rationalities used to explain mobility -choices, -patterns, and -habits in everyday life.

Qualitative methods have been used in the data collection process to produce this knowledge and ultimately answer the research question.

Using qualitative methods, the knowledge produced comes to light through interpretative processes in conversations between the researchers and the object of study (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), in this case, parents and the family's everyday life. The direction and outcome of the conversations were not set in stone from the beginning, and the produced knowledge has changed and evolved throughout the process. This approach can provide extensive instinct into the subject's recognition, including the context in which they are experienced (Pedersen and Bitch, 2018). However, the researcher will influence the produced knowledge as we as researchers cannot recognise social phenomena from outside the societal context.

4. 2 Data Collection

The data for this thesis consists of qualitative data collected through six semistructured interviews. The qualitative interviews make it possible to understand the underlying rationalities on which choices in everyday life are made. Based on conversations about the family's everyday life, the ideas and values that frame the organisation of everyday life in the pursuit of the "good family life" can come to light (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

The purpose of the semi-structured interview, focusing on the lived life of the individual families, is to obtain descriptions of the interviewee's life situation to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena, in this case, mobility choices in everyday life (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

In this thesis, we seek to understand the significance of mobility in the everyday life of individual families and how mobility choices are argued, rationalised, and articulated as structural stories. Therefore, the goal is not to judge or take a stand on the specific modes of transport but rather to investigate the everyday mobility choices of the individual families from a holistic point of view, still with a special focus on the children's independent mobility to the activities of everyday life.

We seek to understand what forms of meaning and apparent rationalities affect the choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities. The arguments and rationalities behind the choices and mobility patterns are formed based on a range of elements (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022). In this study, we acknowledge that distance can be an obvious factor when organising everyday life as described by Giddens (1991), Freudendal-Pedersen (2022) and Dessing et.al (2014). Therefore, we want to focus on investigating the range of other elements that forms

the arguments and rationalities behind choices and mobility patterns. By choosing a maximum distance as a factor, we ourselves, make distance an issue. The 4 km radius was chosen based on a distance in a suburb considered within cycling distance and with great access to public transportation. This makes us able to exclude the distance question from the analyses.

The interviewees were selected on three factors to ensure a homogeneous group of respondents; They had to live within 4 km from Gladsaxe Swim Club, which is generally considered within cycling distance, and have a minimum of one child active as competitive swimmers, aged between 10 and 12 years old. As competitive swimmers in Gladsaxe Swim Club, the children practice several times a week (morning and afternoon) at two different locations. The siblings, older or younger than the age mentioned above, were also included in the analysis. It contributes to the overall understanding of the family's organisation of everyday life and view on mobility.

Furthermore, all the interviewed parents were part of the white middle class with a high level of education and a high degree of flexibility in their work life. All families had access to at least one car in the household. Although this was not part of the selection, it also contributed to the homogeneity of the group by ensuring that all families had similar living conditions and opportunities to organise everyday life.

One issue this selection may entail is that the findings from this study are based on the perception and ideas of mobility from a single group of people. Factors like socioeconomic status, ethnicity, occupation, and residence are thereby excluded from the study. On that account, differences between the selected group and other groups of people in the society will not come to light. Although this was not the intention of this thesis, it could be an interesting focal point in future studies with a similar scope.

We must note that all interviewees were recruited through Gladsaxe Swim Club, where one of the authors works as a swim coach. Thus, a prior acquaintance between the author and the interviewees was present. This recruitment strategy ensured enough interviewees willing to participate on short notice. Although this could be characterised as "backyard" research and potentially jeopardise the roles of the researchers and the participants and compromise data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), the prior affiliation did not affect the questions asked or the response from the participants. On the contrary, the interviewees seemed very comfortable in the interview situation.

A literature review was also conducted to gather the newest and most relevant knowledge from scientific studies and academic research. This has formed chapter 2, Children and Mobility.

Children and mobilities highly affected the direction of the thesis regarding children's independent mobility. We found that children's mobilities, especially independent mobility and leisure time travel were an overlocked topic within mobility research. Originally, active modes of travel had a much larger focus in the initial study. Still, the concept of children's independent mobility was very intriguing. Active modes of travel could easily be included in the concept as all travel made independently by children are somewhat active. The data collection for this chapter was carried out as a structured database search with specific key search words.

4. 3 Interviews

All six interviews were conducted in one week on four different days. By spreading the interviews out over several days, it was possible to reevaluate the interview guide and implement new thematisations as they were presented. A full hour was set aside for all interviews covering topics such as everyday life, mobility patterns, health, environmental concerns, and children's independence (see Appx. 1 – Interview Guide).

To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees, the families have been named A, B, C, D, E, and F and given names according to their respective family letters. At the same time, the letter represents the order in which the families were interviewed. At the beginning of every interview, all participants were given a brief introduction to the scope of the study and how we intended to use the data collected.

The interviews were semi-structured with thematisations and questions described beforehand in an interview guide to steer the conversation in a specific direction. The questions varied between very specific and concrete and abstract questions regarding the "good family life". When new themes were brought up, an explorative approach was taken to pursue these topics when relevant. A recurring theme that was present in all interviews, to a much larger degree than expected, was the notion of risk. Because of this, and to be true to the empirical data, the notion of risk received more attention in the interviews and the analysis than initially planned.

At the end of the interviews, a couple of confronting questions was asked to try to provoke the articulation of structural stories. These types of questions can induce an uncomfortable situation for both the researchers and the interviewees. However, the questions were mainly perceived as uncomfortable by participants, primarily using the car for their everyday mobility.

This can pose an ethical dilemma as the interviewees were not informed or familiar with the concept of structural stories. Brinkmann & Kvale (2009) describe some of these ethical dilemmas related to qualitative interviews that can occur as researchers select specific data to interpret and

analyse to bring out the underlying meaning of statements. This dilemma came to our awareness just before the last interview should take place. After the interview, we enlightened the interviewee about the concept of structural stories and their role in the study. In hindsight, all the interviews should have ended with a presentation of the concept and the opportunity for the interviewees to share their perspectives on structural stories.

4. 4 Interviewees

This section provides an overview of the families that were interviewed.

Family A Is a one-parent family consisting of Ane and her two children Adam 13 years old and Astrid 11 years old. The children's primary mode of transport for organized sports activities is the cycle	**Family D** Is a one-parent family consisting of Dorthe and her daughter Ditte 10 years old In the family there is also a granddad, Danny. Dittes primary mode of transport for organized sports activities is the car
Family B Is a two-parent family consisting of Bo and Bodil and their two children Birk 13 years old and Bjørk 8 years old. The children's primary mode of transport for organized sports activities is the cycle	**Family E** Is a two-parent family consisting of Esther and Erik and their two children Ellen 12 years old and Espen 15 years old. Ellens primary mode of transport for organized sports activities is the bus and Espens the cycle
Family C Is a two-parent family consisting of Christian and Christina and their two children Carl 10 years old and Carla 12 years old. The children's primary mode of transport for organized sports activities is the cycle	**Family F** Is a two-parent family consisting of Freja and Frederik and their daughter Flora 11 years old Floras primary mode of transport for organized sports activities is the car

4. 5 Data processing

After the data collection, all six interviews were transcribed, condensing meaning to make it easily understandable and to make statements stand out clearly. The transcription was done right after the interviews were carried out while the situation was still fresh in our memories. Along with notes from the interview, this helped ensure that the transcription was as accurate as possible regarding the context and the wording of the statements (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

This process of transcribing and reading through the documents constitutes the first part of the analysis. Here, the notion of risk stood out from the empirical data much more significantly than anticipated. Although the notion of risk was part of the initial research strategy, it was clear that it needed to play an important role in the analysis and that a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of the notion was needed. Thus, the notion of risk became an important part of the thematisation in the coding of the interviews. The interview transcriptions can be found in Appx. 2.

The data processing has taken great inspiration from Tesch's (1990) eight steps in the coding process. After carefully reading through all the transcribed interviews, a list with all the relevant topics was formed. These topics were then organised into the following seven thematisations:

- Flexibility and (un)freedom
- Risk and (In)securities
- Distance, route, and time
- Values
- Age and maturity
- Work life and organisation of everyday life
- Car use

The transcribed interviews were carefully read through again, applying the thematisations to segments and statements. This was done several times as the direction of the study changed slightly during this process. These initial thematisations were used to identify two recurring structural stories framed by the statements and themes visible in the empirical data.

Finally, three analytical thematisations were formed based on common themes in the two structural stories by relating them to theoretical notions from the chosen theories. The following three thematisations were formed in this process:

- The Mobility environment

- Children's competencies
- The good life

These thematisations will provide the structure for the analysis. This will be further elaborated in the following section 4.6 Analytical Approach.

Quotes and statements used in the analysis' are translated from Danish to English, keeping the meaning as close to the original statement as possible.

4. 6 Analytical approach

In this section, the analytical approach for this thesis is laid out and explained.

As laid out in chapter 3.3 Theoretical approach, we seek to understand the choices and mobility patterns by looking at ambivalences and risks in everyday life through the structural stories, see figure 4.

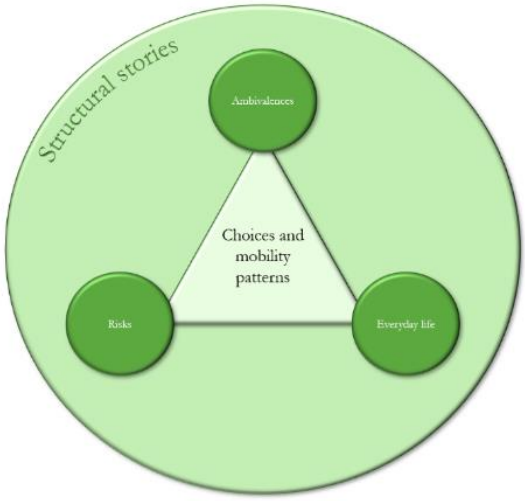

Figure 4 - Visualisation of the theoretical approach - own production

As stated in chapter 4.5 Data processing, two recurring structural stories were identified. The analysis is divided into three separate parts structured as two vertical analyses processing the two identified structural stories individually and a horizontal analysis relating and discussing the findings in the vertical analyses.

In the two vertical analyses, the underlying arguments and apparent rationalities for the choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities will be analysed through the two identified structural stories.

In the horizontal analysis, the battle between the two opposing structural stories will be analysed by comparing the underlying arguments and apparent rationalities connected to the structural stories based on the findings from the two vertical analyses. This will help understand what determines which of the structural stories dominate the formation of choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities.

The following three thematisations will provide the structure for all three analyses (see figure 5):

- The mobility environment
- Children's competencies
- The good life

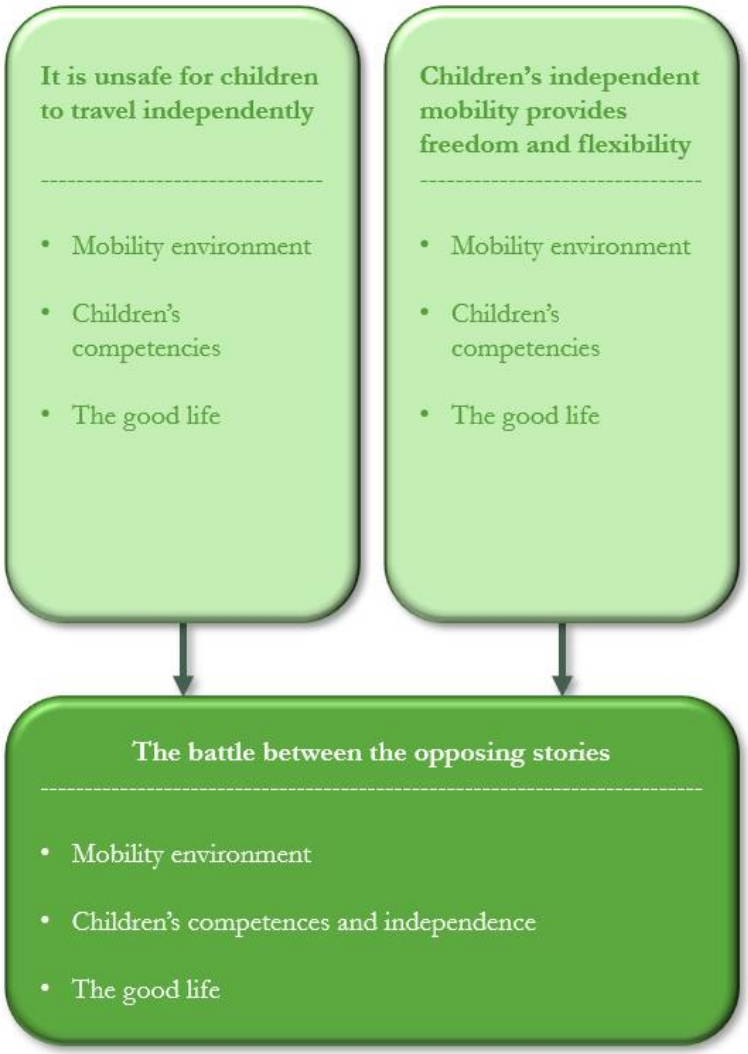

Figure 5 5 - Visualisation of the analytical approach - own production

In the analyses, we will draw on the notions Thomsen (2005) presents on how parental concerns can be seen as a product of parents' interpretation of traffic risks based on; *Public information*, *The mobility environment*, either in general or at a specific place on the route, and *Personal history* and experience which also includes the child's behaviour and competencies to navigate traffic independently. We will also draw on notions presented by Giddens (1991) and Freudendal-Pedersen (2005;2007a;2009;2022) on everyday life in late modern society as well as Freudendal-Pedersens (2007a;2007b) concept of structural stories. This theoretical approach will help us understand the argument and rationalities for choices and mobility patterns framed within the structural story.

Structural stories on mobilities related to children's organised sports activities

5 Structural stories about children's mobilities related to organised sports activities

In this chapter, the two structural stories identified through interviews investigating the everyday life and mobility choices of six families will be presented. Hereafter, the underlying arguments and apparent rationalities for the two structural stories will be analysed separately based on common thematisation for the two stories respectably. Finally, meaning and rationalities of the two structural stories and their opposing relationship will be analysed and discussed.

5. 1 The two identified structural stories

Throughout the six interviews, several structural stories came to light in various degree. Especially two structural stories were present in all interviews and were used to explain the choice of mobilities to and from organised sports activities. Although the structural stories were sometimes used indirectly, they still contained the same arguments and underlying rationalities used to explain the choices and actions regarding the everyday mobilities of their children.

Several structural stories came to light throughout the six interviews in various degrees. Especially two structural stories were present in all interviews and were used to explain mobilities' choice to and from organised sports activities. Although the structural stories were sometimes used indirectly, they still contained the same arguments and underlying rationalities used to explain the choices and actions regarding the everyday mobilities of their children.

Based on the seven thematisations described in chapter 4.5 – Data processing, the interview transcriptions were thoroughly organised and divided into groups of arguments and rationalities with similar meanings. The structural stories were then identified and formulated as statements that frame the underlying rationalities and arguments used to explain mobility choices. Thus, the structural stories fulfil the functions- and meet the criteria outlined in the definition of a structural story cf. 3.3 – Theoretical framework.

The two following structural stories were identified and form the basis for the ensuing analyses

- *"It is unsafe for children to travel independently"*
- *"Children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility"*

Especially the first structural story, *"It is unsafe for children to travel independently",* was mostly used indirectly and in a much more personal way than what is otherwise associated with a structural story. A possible reason for this is, like Thomsen (2005) agues, that traffic safety is a matter of personal significance and that risks are assessed through the parents' interpretation and perception

of traffic risks including factors such as personal history and experience. Furthermore, as the perceived risks are directly related to their own children's safety, it becomes a personal matter rather than a general question.

Especially the first structural story, *"It is unsafe for children to travel independently",* was mainly used indirectly and in a much more personal way than what is otherwise associated with a structural story. Like Thomsen (2005) argues, a possible reason for this is that traffic safety is a matter of personal significance and that risks are assessed through the parents' interpretation and perception of traffic risks, including factors such as personal history and experience. Furthermore, as the perceived risks are directly related to their children's safety, it becomes a personal matter rather than a general question.

The second structural story, *"Children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility",* acts as an opposing story to the other structural story regarding safety and risk. This story is used more directly by all the parents regardless of the level of independent mobility in the families. Still, the statements are very much linked to the individual's personal life and how it relates to their everyday practice. The opposing relationship between the two structural stories is discussed later in this chapter.

5. 2 It is unsafe for children to travel independently

Many different factors come into play when parents assess the dangers and uncertainties a child could face when travelling independently and determine whether the child master the necessary competencies to navigate traffic without adult supervision.

The structural story: "It's unsafe for children to travel independently", was present in all six interviews to various degrees. Although the story was only used indirectly, the statement frames many of the arguments and rationalities used to explain everyday mobility choices very well. This structural story is highly connected to the traffic risk parents constantly need to interpret and assess when choosing mode of transport and level of independent mobility for their children. The structural story especially comes into play when the traffic risk is perceived as too high for the children to travel independently as a way to explain actions and decisions.

In the next section, the underlying arguments and apparent rationalities for choices and mobility patterns will be analysed through the structural story.

5. 2. 1 The mobility environment

One of the most common parental concerns was the general traffic safety on the specific route to a destination throughout the interviews. If parents perceive the route, or parts of it, to pose a danger to the child, an unsafe mobility environment will be the main argument for why independent mobility is not an option. Even with a preconception that the child is of appropriate age to travel independently, age and maturity are not necessarily part of the arguments. This fits well with how Thomsen (2005) describes the mobility environment as an important element in the parents' interpretation of traffic risk.

Although Ditte, the daughter in family D, had independently walked home from school at their previous residence in another city, the conditions at a specific place on the route to school are seen as unsafe. *"I'm against her travelling by herself, but it's mainly because of the roundabout – It's life-threatening" (Interview D).* In this assessment, the child's age, personality, and maturity are not considered arguments but are instead based on previous experiences from the parent's own life - what Thomsen (2005) calls personal history. Dorthe mentions a specific episode explaining why the roundabout is life-threatening: *"Once a car drove into me because he didn't see the red light" (Interview D).* Dorthe has personally experienced a dangerous situation in the roundabout and did not want to expose her daughter to risk that happening to her. This relates to Thomsen's (2005) point that parents' perception of traffic risk also depends on their personal history. The mobility environment – here, the roundabout, is perceived as too risky. As a protective measure, her daughter is not allowed to travel this route independently and is instead taken by car. This is a good example of how the structural story forms the basis that determines how Dorthe views the problem and the solution to the problem (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007)

However, insecurity is not always linked to a dangerous crossing or place on the route. It can also be a more general concern, including the child's ability to assess and handle traffic situations. For Freja, the mother in family F, the number of roads to be crossed is a concern. *"I would feel unsafe if she had to cross many roads" (Interview F).* The fear of what could happen when crossing the road adds to itself and make it unsafe to cross it several times. For her, the risk of traffic accidents is multiplied by the times roads need to be crossed. Thomsen (2005) points to the general mobility environment as an essential element in the interpretation of traffic risk is thereby deemed unsafe for her daughter. Freja also uses references from her own life to explain this insecurity. *"People do not always respect zebra crossings… Several people have been run over in this area" (Interview F).* Although we do not know whether this belief is based on personal history or rooted in stories and local media coverage, the statement shows a distrust in the other road users to abide by the traffic regulations more than doubt in the child's abilities to handle traffic situations. Here it seems that all three

elements in the interpretation of traffic risk pointed out by Thomsen (2005); personal history, mobility environment and public information come into play.

Another factor that, in the eyes of the parents, can make an otherwise well-known route unsuitable for independent mobility is the weather, the season of the year, the time of the day, and the distance to be covered – all things that in one way or the other add changes to the mobility environment and entails additional risk.

The distance is not directly related to insecurities but rather an object in the temporal aspect of the journey. What distance is considered reasonable to expect for a child to travel independently is very subjective. It will often include the purpose of the trip and the amount of time needed to cover the distance. However, distance does come into play in questions related to insecurities and risk when combined with other factors like time of the day and weather conditions. These elements can affect or change the mobility environment, as described by Thomsen (2005).

For Ane, the mother in family A, distance matters when approving and encouraging independent mobility. But the distance considered reasonable for a child to travel is subject to change depending on what time of the day it is. *"Distance, of course, is a factor. But it also matters what time of the day she needs to travel. I don't think she is old enough to travel independently when it's dark outside." (Interview A)*

Thus, a route that would usually be considered okay and within a reasonable distance during the daytime could now be perceived as dangerous. For most, if not all, the respondents, the element of darkness was considered a strong argument against independent mobility even within shorter distances. The element of darkness is seen as a significant change to the mobility environment that adds additional risk to the child and raises the level of insecurity in the parents. For Ane, this was the argument in picking up her daughter after practice. *"During the winter months, it was dark when Astrid was going home after practice. So, so I continued to pick her up by car." (Interview A)* Once again, the structural story forms the basis that determines how the parent views the problem and the solution to the problem (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007), picking her daughter up after practice.

The element of darkness was mainly brought up in relation to the winter season, like Freja, the mother in family F, does:*" Even if the distance were shorter, I would properly take her by car in the cold and dark winter months." (Interview F).* In this statement, distance is not an essential factor. Instead, the argument is based on the fact that it is dark and cold during the winter months. Thus, the weather conditions come into play and add risk to the mobility environment and the parental insecurities. Freja also expresses this concern:*" Right now, the weather is alright for cycling. But when it gets to winter, and it is cold and slippery, I will properly take her by car." (Interview F).* In this regard, the fact that it is

slippery in the winter adds risk to the parents' interpretation of the mobility environment. Once again, this relates very well with Thomsen's (2005) point on the mobility environment as an element in the parents' interpretation of traffic risk.

Furthermore, the time of the day can also be a decisive factor in the level of independent mobility itself. In some cases, the argument is linked to the rationale of risk and safety, like Freja: *"The main reason I take her to practice by car is the distance. Also, I would never let her cycle by herself to morning practice at 5.30 – well someday, but not now." (Interview F).* In this statement, distance is the main argument for taking the car to practice. However, she also states that she wouldn't let her daughter cycle by herself at 5.30 in the morning, implying that she is not old enough yet. Although it might seem quite reasonable not to let an 11-year-old girl travel by herself at this hour, it also indicates that travelling this early in the morning is associated with and perceived as a higher risk or danger.

In other cases, the arguments are mainly aimed at the child's age and what is reasonable to expect the child to manage independently. *"I think the age of the child matters when they are travelling in odd hours of the day." (Interview A)* This indicates that the perceived risks decrease as the child gets older, which will expand the acceptable timeframe for children to travel independently.

In families where the children do not travel independently, the structural story about it being unsafe for children to travel independently is a lot more pronounced and used in a much more direct way than in families where higher levels of independent mobility are present. In these cases, emphasis is on traffic safety as parental responsibility, hence protective measures are taken to a larger degree. The structural story clearly explains the rationalities, and main arguments for why the child is not allowed to travel independently, especially by cycle.

The main concerns here are not explicitly related to the behavior and competencies of the child. However, it is part of the assessment. Instead, it is the uncontrollable element of other road users and how they behave in traffic. The other road users cause uncertainty to the mobility environment, and the structural story is here used to cope with the "loss of control" and ambivalences associated with the risk and as a guide for determining whether the child can assess and handle traffic situations independently (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2009). Thus, the structural story serves as a guide to certain actions (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007).

The general traffic safety, a part of what Thomsen (2005) calls the mobility environment, e.g. cycle lanes and safe crossings is considered a very important factor for assessing the traffic risk in all six families. For some parents, the risk and insecurities related to the mobility environment and the child travelling independently led to limited independent mobility. In some cases, the protective

measure to mitigate the risk of the mobility environment was to simply remove the child from the risk by not allowing independent mobility.

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5. 2. 2 Children's competencies

The age and maturity of the child especially come into play if there is ongoing road construction or other things that change the otherwise well-known route. This aspect is highly connected to the behaviour and competencies of the child, also included in Thomsen's (2005) description of personal history.

For Christian, the father in family C, the additional risk road construction can pose on an otherwise well-known route can be the determining factor for allowing the child to travel independently.

"It's a matter of personality between Carl (10) and Carla (12), but it's also about the age difference and how they can access and keep focus in the situation" (Interview C). In this situation, the father does not consider the 10-year-olds capabilities developed enough to handle the additional risk road construction can cause. It may be necessary for the child to leave the cycle lane and follow temporary road striping

or -traffic lights. They may also face concrete roadblocks and signs they don't know the meaning of. This could challenge the child's ability to assess the situation while safely navigating the road as the necessary competencies may not been acquired yet. Therefore, the child's age and maturity, a part of what Thomsen (2005) calls personal history, becomes relevant when parents consider the increased risk road construction can cause to the mobility environment.

None of the interviewees had experienced traffic-related accidents. Still, when asked about bad experiences where their child had travelled independently, Bo, the father of family B, told this little story. *"Once, construction workers had closed part of the road, and Bjørk couldn't find a way around it. When she called us, she was crying and was afraid she would never be able to go home..." (Interview B)*

The story illustrates how road construction can change a well-known route and challenge the child's ability to assess and handle the change in the mobility environment. Fortunately, the situation was handled with the guidance of her parents over the phone, and Bjørk found her way home safe and sound.

Arguments related to road construction are mainly used on specific routes where changes to the mobility environment pose an additional risk. About his 10-years old son, Christian, the father in family C, puts it like this. *"It also depends on what kind of road it is. If it's a very trafficked road they are familiar with and has cycle lanes; it's okay. But if there is a lot of construction or something like that, I wouldn't let him cycle by himself." (Interview C).* When road construction is perceived as too big of a risk for the child to travel independently, driving the child by car is the most used protective measure. With an emphasis on the structural story "It's unsafe for children to travel independently" the story becomes the rationale when the risk associated with independent mobility is assessed by the parent and perceived as too high. The structural story here acts as a guide in decision-making, underlining the need for protective measures or alternative solutions (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007).

In only one of the families, public transport was used regularly by the child to get from home to the sports facility at Gladsaxe Swim Club. In the other families, public transportation was only used on some occasions, e.g. going to the shopping mall with friends or visiting relatives. The insecurities and perceived risk related to independent mobility using public transport are contrary to cycling not aimed at general traffic safety. Instead, insecurities revolve around possible situations that might occur and how the child would handle them. Like the examples mentioned above with road construction, age, maturity, behaviour, and competencies of the child come into play as the element of personal history described by Thomsen (2005).

For Freja, the mother in family F, the fear of other people (stranger danger (Joshi and Maclean, 1995)) was a lot more profound in relation to public transport than cycling - *"With public transport, there is the insecurity of her meeting someone with bad intentions. When you are waiting on the bus, it's much easier to get in contact with other people, and drunk people might come by. When cycling, it's easier to carry on if someone tries to engage in a conversation." (Interview F)*

Because of the distance from home to the sports facility, Flora was primarily driven by car to practice. Her mother, Freja, acknowledged public transport as an alternative to driving but was not keen on the idea of Flora travelling independently by bus at this age (11 y.o.). This was mainly because of the fear of other people and what situations might occur. Ane, the mother in family A, agrees with this perception of risk and public transport *"It feels safer when they are cycling or are on a kick scooter than using public transport. It's probably also because - Well, I never really liked public transportation myself… There are also more weird people in the public transportation system, and the possibility of unwanted interaction with other people is much greater than when cycling." (Interview A)*

For Freja and Ane, the insecurities associated with their children travelling independently with public transport caused more concern than the risk of traffic accidents when cycling. The statements strongly indicate that this assessment is significantly influenced by their personal history and negative feelings towards public transport. In relation to Thomsen's (2005) description of the different elements that influence parents' interpretation of traffic risk, both the element of the mobility environment and the personal history come into play in Freja and Anes's interpretation of the risk associated with public transport.

Like other road users, fellow passengers' behaviour is entirely out of control for the parents, and there is no way of knowing what risks they might be exposed to. Although the possibility of a bad situation may not be great, the element of uncertainty and unknown risks made the insecurities more present, and the risk seem higher.

Another concern that was present among some of the parents was how the child would handle a situation if things did not go according to the plan. Ane from family A: *"The consequences of mistakes just seem bigger. If you miss your stop or something like that you can get very far away with the bus or train. If you go too far by bike, you can just turn around." (Interview A)*

If you have ever used public transportation, you will properly know that there is a real possibility that things will not always go according to schedule. The parents know this risk, but in this statement, the insecurity is not aimed at the public transportation system as such, but at the child's ability to handle situations if something goes wrong, e.g., if the bus is delayed, arrive early, or if

you miss your stop. These are situations that are hard to practice and prepare your child for and contain uncertainties and a lot of "what if's". Here, the element of personal history and the parent's assessment of the child's competencies also comes into play in the risk assessment.

In all families, the children had their own mobile phones. Besides the obvious benefits of owning a mobile phone, it was seen as a protective measure to handle and reduce the risk related to their children travelling independently.

When asked if it makes a difference for her level of insecurity that her daughter has her own mobile phone Dorthe, the mother in family D, replied: *"Yes, it gives a sense of security. It gives me peace of mind knowing she can reach me and let me know when she leaves the school or the sports facility. But it's mainly because I can track her location and see where she is." (Interview D)*

The mobile phone here has two functions. On one hand, it serves as a communication line, making it possible for the child to reach a parent, and vice versa, if needed. This, of course, can be practical when planning and organising everyday life and family logistics. Still, it also reduces the parents' insecurity and perception of risk knowing that the child can call them if they need help or guidance. On the other hand, it also serves as a tool for monitoring the child by tracking the phone's GPS location. By reducing the perceived risk and insecurity of the parents, mobile phones indirectly increase the level of independence and independent mobility of the child. It thereby gets an active role in making the organisation of everyday life work, thus helping to achieve "the good life".

For Bo, the father in family b, this was one of the main reasons for acquiring phones for his children at an early age. *"We bought them mobile phones at an early age so we could track their location and so they could call us if anything happened. We did try an arrangement where they would call us or send a message when they arrived at their destination, but they always forgot – so being able to track them just makes everything seamless." (Interview B)*

For Bo, the possibility of tracking their location reduces the level of insecurity. It feels safe to be able to check up on them, even without them knowing. As he says, it makes everything seamless. It also eliminates the insecurities that can arise when the children forget to give notice of, e.g. arrival, as agreed. However, if the phone runs out of power or is left at home or another place, the tracking function will not work or show the wrong location. This inaccurate- or lack of information may have a counterproductive effect and instead induce parental concerns. Ane, the mother in family A, also used location tracking as a protective measure for reducing the uncertainties. Especially when the children first started travelling independently, she used it a lot. *"I must admit that I used the tracking function a lot when they first started travelling independently. But then I*

had to convince myself that it was kind of silly and everything was okay." (Interview A) However, at some point, she had to actively decide to stop checking up on the location too often. As the children got older and the practice of independent mobility got more routinised, she got used to the risks being present and accepted the uncertainty of not knowing where the children were always. Nevertheless, the mobile phone still plays an important role as a protective measure to reduce the perceived risks by being a direct line of communication between the parents and the children.

Based on the above examples, the child's competencies and especially the parents' confidence in them become an essential part of the risk assessment when changes to mobility environment, e.g. ongoing road construction or other unforeseen situations, occur. Whether or not the parents trust the child's capabilities to handle different situations becomes significant for the rationalities used in relation to independent mobility. All the interviewed parents agree that mobile phones reduce the insecurities connected to independent mobility. Although it doesn't relate directly to children's competencies, it can make the perceived risk seem less significant. It can thereby compensate for insufficient or lack of competencies with an increased level of independent mobility as a result.

5. 2. 3 The good life

As shown in the two previous sections, some of the underlying arguments and rationalities framed by the structural story "it is unsafe for children to travel independently" is (clearly) that parents feel that it is unsafe to let their children travel independently. Especially the mobility environment and the children's competencies to navigate in the mobility environment and unforeseen situations affect how the parents interpret the traffic risks. When the parents interpret the traffic risks as too dangerous independent mobility is not viewed as an option. Instead, the children are taken by car (dependent mobility?) cf. 5.3.1 – The mobility environment and 5.3.2. – Children's competencies.

As Freudendal-Pedersen (2022) states, mobility is important in creating "the good life". It is the glue that makes it possible to fit all the components that make up "the good life" into individuals' everyday lives.

In family D, swimming is considered an important component in pursuing the good life. When Dorthe, the mother, is asked why she drives her daughter to swim practice, she answers *"safety"*. She is worried that her daughter might get in an accident if she travels independently. Therefore, Dorthe tries to avoid the interpreted risks of independent mobility by taking her by car. In this

case, risks are seen as something that can and should be managed, not as a condition that should just be accepted, as Thomsen (2005) describes.

Because traffic risks are interpreted as unsafe, it becomes an argument for choices and mobility patterns. The glue is the mobility that makes it possible to create the good life and in this case, dependent mobility becomes the possible glue because children's independent mobility is considered unsafe.

Another example of dependent mobility as the glue that makes creating "the good life" possible can be found in family F. Flora, the daughter in family F, used to play soccer before she started competitive swimming. Back when she was playing soccer, she could walk to practice independently as the soccer field was located very close to home. Today Freja is driving her daughter to swim practice. Here, changing one of the components that make up "the good life" for family F entails a new need for mobility.

Freja expressed a general concern for the traffic risk associated with her daughter travelling independently throughout the interview. In the above, distance is the main argument used to explain mobility choice. Yet, risk is still an underlying argument as the traffic risk is perceived and interpreted as higher simply because of the further distance. Thus, as Thomsen (2005) states, the mobility environment is an essential element in the interpretation of traffic risk, even when it is not connected to a specific route. Flora cycling to practice is therefore not viewed as an option. Thus, the change in the components of everyday life also led to a change in the mobility pattern. Freja tells how her everyday life has changed because of this: *"I had to adjust my workday. After all, my working day hasn't gotten any shorter just because I must leave early a few days a week. Before, I wouldn't work until 7 in the evening. I would have been home long before that. So, I work at more awkward hours because of this and make everything work." (Interview F).*

Freja explains how her everyday life has become less flexible because Flora can no longer travel independently to sports and is dependent on being taken by car. She also notes that "*It was a lot easier when she could walk to soccer.*" (Interview F).

Freudendal-Pedersen (2022) states that the mobilities rarely are discussed when pursuing the good life. This is also the case here. Even though driving Flora to practice has made Freja's everyday life less flexible because of the change in mobility pattern switching to another swim club is not in the picture:*" …she (Flora) is happy to swim here, so it is not like we would change to another swimming club because of the distance." (Interview F).* The component (swimming) is so important in the creation of "the

good life" that it is not up for negation to change that component. Instead, the mobility patterns are adjusted so that fitting the components into everyday life is possible.

In the families where the traffic risks are interpreted to be too high, the structural story "it is unsafe for children to travel independently" becomes a guide and an explanation to deselect independent mobility and instead take their children by car when pursuing the good life.

5.3 Children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility

The structural story "Children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility" was present in all six interviews to various degrees regardless of the level of independent mobility. This structural story is highly connected to the organisation of everyday life, how "the good life" is perceived, and what it implies to be "the good parent". Competencies like independence are seen as a highly valued quality that can provide freedom and flexibility for the family in everyday life. Thus, becoming more than the glue that makes all the components of everyday life fit together.

5. 3. 1 The mobility environment

One of the apparent rationalities behind this structural story is that it's considered safe for children to travel independently to organised sports activities. A premise for this structural story is that the parents interpret traffic risks as acceptable or accept that risks are a part of life in late modern society (Beck, 1992 [1986]). Here the mobility environment and how it's perceived and interpreted by the parents play an important role.

Esther, the mother in family E, explains what it signifies that her daughter Ellen can travel independently to sports a couple of times a week:" *It provides freedom for all of us" (Interview E).* One of the reasons Ellen can travel independently to sports is because of how her mother interprets the risk associated with the mobility environment: *"For us, taking the bus is really easy. It drives directly to the facility and the bus stop is very close, so it is nice and safe, especially when she has that big bag." (Interview E).* Ellen taking the bus to practice is seen as safe and convenient because the mobility environment is perceived as safe. This fits well with Thomsen's (2005) description of the mobility environment in the risk interpretation process. Ellen's independent mobility becomes possible because the risk associated with the mobility environment is perceived and interpreted as acceptable. However, this perception can change depending on the chosen mode of transport. When asked if Ellen could also take the cycle for this journey, she answered: *"Actually, she could cycle to practice. But I think her bag is too big – she needs to bring too many things to make it justifiable to let her cycle, and she must also cross multiple roads with heavy traffic." (Interview C).*

This shows how the mobility environment changes depending on the mode of transport. When cycling, carrying many things makes it unsafe for Ellen to travel independently, and the multiple roads with heavy traffic also become a concern. Public transportation is thereby a means to provide freedom and flexibility in everyday life of family E by making independent mobility possible.

For some families, the mobility environment has been an important parameter and tool to create "the good life". Ane, the mother in family A here, explains how she considered the mobility

environment when she decided to move to the neighbourhood where they are currently living: *"I only moved here to be able to give them (the children) the opportunity to transport themselves. I remember this from my own childhood. It was nice that you could decide when to go home." (Interview A)*

Besides interpreting the risks related to the mobility environment (Thomsen, 2005), it is also actively used to create the conditions that make the children's independent mobility possible in the eyes of the parents. For Christian, the father in family C, the mobility environment was also an important consideration when they were looking for a new house: *"It was very important. It was cycling distance for the kids we were looking for when we were looking at houses. It was essential in terms of what area we were looking at." (Interview C)* The mobility environment was also here used to create the conditions for independent mobility, thus achieving freedom and flexibility, which is considered an important element in creating "the good life". This relates to how Freudendal-Pedersen (2022) describes how individuals in the late modern society strive to create "the good life".

These examples illustrate that the way parents interpret the mobility environment as either unsafe for children to travel independently or perceive the risk as acceptable affects how the structural story: *Children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility* is used to explain the mobility choices and level of independent mobility.

5. 3. 2 Children's competencies

Besides the interpretation of risk, the competencies and independence of the child are important elements in the arguments and rationalities contained in the structural story regarding the freedom and flexibility children's independent mobility can provide. The competence to navigate the mobility environment, or at least the parents' confidence in them, are necessary for the parents to encourage independent mobility for their children. For many parents, independence is seen as a quality, not only in relation to mobility but also in the upbringing and development of the child.

When Christian, the father in family C, was asked what benefits to children's independent mobility he sees, he replied: *"The benefits I would say, is definitely a thing as independence, a sense of responsibility and the ability to free yourself from always being dependent on one of the parents." (Interview C)* This statement indicates that Christian sees independence as a great value for the child in general, not just in relation to mobility. He also mentions a sense of responsibility as a quality connected to and something that can be acquired through independent mobility. He further elaborates on this: *"In their upbringing, we have tried to educate them to be independent and take responsibility. They have been given responsibility, and we expect them to live up to that. [...]. We have also done this in relation to transport. They are*

responsible for that themselves. They are also responsible for getting out the door when they have practice." (Interview C)

It can here be argued that one of the apparent rationalities is connected to the perception of what it implies to be a good parent. For Christian, giving his children the competencies to be responsible and independent is a part of creating "the good life". This assumption is backed by Freudendal-Pedersen (2022) and Thomsen's (2005) notions of how "the good life" is influenced by the perception of what it implies to be "the good parent".

When Ana, the mother in family A, was asked why she does not drive her children to practice, she also clearly included general values related to the upbringing of her children: *"It is their responsibility (to transport themselves). I also think it's really important that they feel safe in the area and move around independently. […] I think it's essential for their development to become independent individuals who can manage their own lives. I hope that when they are 17-18 years old, they will think - I can manage and maybe try to live in another place and manage transport and all the other things themselves. That's part of it." (Interview A)* For Ana, general values and qualities in the upbringing of her children thereby become an argument and rationality for why independent mobility is important for them and actively chosen in the everyday mobilities. Thus, it is seen as an element that contributes to creating "the good life" for her children. However, it's still a necessity for connecting the different components that make up everyday life, as Freudendal-Pedersen (2022) points out.

For Bo, the father in family B, the freedom and flexibility that children's independent mobility can provide for the family is also an important element in creating "the good life". *"The first couple of times, I was a bit worried (when the children started travelling independently), but then it becomes part of the routine, and then you don't think about it that much. After all, it is a considered risk that is worth taking. I would rather that they have a little accident on the bike and maybe get upset than me always having to drive them around." (Interview B)* He is aware of the risks associated with children's independent mobility but accepts this as a general condition in modern life; he refers to it as a considered risk worth taking. This relates very well to how Thomsen (2005) describes risk as something that is either accepted or sought to minimise.

He further elaborates on the advantages of independent mobility and why it is important for their family: *"The advantage is that it gives the children autonomy, empowerment, and self-confidence. It is easier for the parents, and if they take the bike, they also get some exercise. They also learn to find their way around the local area when they are on their own rather than just cycling after their parents or sitting in the backseat of a car.*" (Interview B)

Here he also emphasises values and competencies related to the upbringing and general development of the child. He also points out the health benefits of active modes of transport and how it frees up time for the parents otherwise spend chauffeuring the child. Furthermore, he sees independent mobility as contributing to the child's sense of belonging in the local community and as something that should be learned in practice. These are all points also stated by Fyhri & Hjorthol (2009) in their study on children's independent mobility to school as presented in the literature review on children and mobility, see 2 Children's independent mobility.

The above examples show that the parents see children's independent mobility as a tool to help create "the good life" by providing competencies generally perceived as valuable for the child, e.g., independence, autonomy, and a sense of responsibility, and can increase the freedom and flexibility in everyday life of the family.

5. 3. 3 The good life

The two previous sections show that the mobility environment and the general perception of risks play an important role in how parents interpret the traffic risks. Together with the children's competencies to navigate in the mobility environment, this structural story is possible because it is interpreted as safe to let children travel independently. Furthermore, arguments for children's independent mobility are the competencies children can develop from independent mobility and the freedom and flexibility it provides for the whole family. In this structural story, the freedom and flexibility children's independent mobility provide is one of the main arguments for the choices and mobility patterns. In this framing, freedom and flexibility are very closely linked to creating the good life.

In families where children travel independently, an underlying argument for mobility choices is what makes everyday life work. Mobilities as an essential part of everyday life in late modern society and the creation of "the good life" is also pointed out by Giddens (1991) and Freudendal-Pedersen (2002).

In family C, they manage to fit in all the components of the good life because the children travel independently to their organised sports activities. Christian, the father, explains why they do not drive their children to sports: *"Because then I would not be able to work as much as I am supposed to. The fact that they transport themselves gives us the opportunity for them to actually get there on time without us having to compromise on how we work." (Interview C).* For the family, children's independent mobility is the

glue that makes it possible to fit the components of "the good life" into everyday life without the parents having to compromise on their components in the pursuit of "the good life".

This rationality is also present by Ester, the mother of family E: *"I have a clear conscience that she (Ellen) is taking the bus. Overall, it also provides the best flexibility in relation to our everyday life. It also means that we are not hanging in by the fingernails to be home at 15.30 which would actually be impossible two days a week."* (Interview E). As Esther describes, it can be stressful for families to fit in all the components of "the good life" and make everyday life work. Still, children's independent mobility can give some freedom and flexibility to the whole family.

Christian, the father of family C, explains how it had affected the family's everyday life that the children are now able to travel independently: *"When we had to drive to Hvidovre, it was a stressful moment almost every afternoon because it was always about how much can you push it before you have to pick them up and still be able to get to where they are supposed to be, so in that way it has given us a much more relaxed everyday life."*. He continues: *"Everyday life can be incredibly difficult, and this is where the flexibility of the children transporting themselves becomes extremely important to us and has given us a much more relaxed everyday life." (Interview C).* In this case, the problem in everyday life was that it was stressful to try to make everyday life work and the solution to this problem was children's independent mobility. Ane, the mother of family A, also explains how the children's independent mobility has been the tool to cope with a stressful everyday life:*" It gets a lot easier the more they can do themselves. There was a period when I would drive here (to the sports facilities) four times in one afternoon. First, I had to go one way and then home again, then I had to go the other and then home again, and then one could start cooking, and then you had to pick up one and then the other and then we could eat." (Interview A).*

For both families, the structural story forms the basis that determines how the problems and solutions are viewed by the individual, as described by Freudendal-Pedersen (2007). The arguments for the mobility choices are not just that it makes it possible to fit all the components of "the good life" into their everyday life. The mobilities become more than just the glue that makes everyday life possible. Children's independent mobility also provides freedom and flexibility for the family and the children themselves, which is also an important aspect in creating the good life within the framing of this structural story.

Another underlying argument for children's independent mobility is also closely connected to the perception of "the good life". Giving children competencies like independence and responsibility is, in this structural story, perceived as a part of the good life and independent mobility is a tool to provide the children with these competencies cf. 5.3.2 Children's competencies. In most families,

the competencies independent mobility provides are the underlying argument for independent mobility, and freedom and flexibility are the main arguments.

The structural story "Children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility" was present in all six interviews to various degrees regardless of the level of independent mobility. This structural story is highly connected to the organisation of everyday life, how "the good life" is perceived, and what it implies to be "the good parent". Competencies like independence are seen as a highly valued quality that can provide freedom and flexibility for the family in the everyday life. Thus, becoming more than the glue that make all the components of everyday life fit together.

5. 4 The battle between the two opposing structural stories

The two structural stories "it is unsafe for children to travel independently" and "children's independent mobility provides freedom" are used to guide and explain the mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities. The first story explains why independent mobility is not an option, and the second one explains why independent mobility is possible. Different underlying arguments and rationalities behind the actions and choices connected to the two structural stories were analysed in the two previous analyses cf. 5.2 It is unsafe for children to travel independently, and 5.3 Children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility.

The structural stories can exist simultaneously as opposing stories. Still, one of them will be stronger than the other. The strongest story's underlying arguments and rationalities will affect the choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities. To understand which underlying arguments and rationalities dominate choices and mobility patterns, the underlying arguments and rationalities framed by the structural stories found in the previous analyses will be compared and discussed by applying the theoretical framework.

5. 4. 1 Mobility environment

For all families, mobilities are crucial in connecting the different components that make up everyday life and help create "the good life", as described by Freudendal-Pedersen (2022).

As seen in chapters 5.2.1 The mobility environment, and 5.3.1 The mobility environment, the parents' perception of the mobility environment and the interpretation of traffic risk are important elements for how everyday life is organised. As Beck (1992) and Kesselring (2008) point out, risk is an integral part of everyday life in late modern society, which is also induced by mobilities. Parents seem to cope with this ever-present risk in various ways in relation to the mobility environment and children's independent mobility.

How parents understand what it implies to be a 'good parent' affects how risks are perceived and handled. Some parents will accept this as a well-considered risk worth taking and only take a minimum of protective measures like Bo, the father in family B explains: *"After all, it is a considered risk that is worth taking. I would rather that they have a little accident on the bike and maybe get upset than me always having to drive them around." (Interview B).* In this case, giving the children the opportunity to travel independently outweighs the risks (Thomsen, 2005). Other parents will try to minimise the risks as much as possible with different protective measures, ultimately by rejecting independent mobility as a possibility for their children like Dorthe, the mother in family D: *"I'm against her travelling by herself, but it's mainly because of the roundabout – It's life-threatening" (Interview D.* Here, 'the good parent' is associated with someone that protects their child at all costs. Traffic safety

thereby becomes a personal matter for the individual families and entails a high level of ambivalence. (Thomsen, 2005) This emphasises the need for structural stories as a guide in the decision-making process for certain actions (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007a).

However, in relation to risk, the most important factor for determining the argument and rationalities contained in the two structural stories, and which of these are the strongest, is how parents interpret traffic risk. As Thomsen (2005) explains, the mobility environment, personal history, and public information iarethe most significant factors in this matter.

In the two previous analyses, all three factors are visible in various examples. But the most pronounced in the determination of which arguments and rationalities are of most importance is the mobility environment. For some parents, emphasis is on how the mobility environment makes independent mobility possible for their children and, therefore, a tool to help create "the good life". A mobility environment that made independent mobility possible was even a decisive factor when looking for a new place to live for family A and C, cf.5.3.1 The mobility environment. Of course, a presumption for this is that the parents interpret the risk associated with the mobility environment as safe or acceptable. If not, they were willing to move to another area where this is the case.

If the parents interpret the traffic risks as too dangerous or unsafe, the mobility environment quickly becomes a hindrance to independent mobility. Here, rationalities are often tied to the general traffic safety and usually influenced by personal experiences, cf. 5.2.1 Mobility environment, or what Thomsen (2005) calls personal history. Arguments on both sides of this are contained within the two structural stories, respectively, and the parents' interpretation of traffic risk, especially in relation to the mobility environment, seems to be an important factor in which argument and rationalities dominate the choice of mobilities.

5. 4. 2 Children's competencies

For all the interviewed parents, a competence like independence is considered very important and a highly valued quality in the upbringing of their children. However, parents' level of confidence in their children's competencies and abilities to handle traffic situations differs between the two structural stories. Especially in relation to traffic situations, Dessing et al. (2014) point out that parents tend to underestimate children's competencies cf. 5.2.2 Children's competencies. In the parents' assessment of competencies, the interpretation of traffic risk and the mobility environment is highly influential.

In assessing the possibility of independent mobility for children, sufficient competencies are a natural and highly relevant question. But even for children that already travel independently, competencies can be seen as insufficient in specific situations where additional risks are perceived. Particularly changes in the mobility environment can change the parents' perception of this matter. In relation to Thomsen's (2005) description of how parents interpret traffic risk, both the element of the mobility environment and personal history is at play in this regard. For example, these changes can be induced by ongoing road construction that makes an otherwise acceptable route seem unsafe. All the interviewed parents agreed that road construction imposed an additional risk to the child and used rationalities contained in the structural story; "It is unsafe for children to travel independently".

Christian, the father in family C that normally lets his children travel independently, puts it's like this; *"It also depends on what kind of road it is. If it's a very trafficked road they are familiar with and has cycle lanes; it's okay. But if there is a lot of construction or something like that, I wouldn't let him cycle by himself." (Interview C)* Therefore, independent mobility was not an option, and different alternatives came into play. Some would take the children by car instead, completely removing them from danger, while others preferred escorting their children cycling or by foot. As the last option doesn't remove the children from the perceived risk of the mobility environment, competencies can be further developed.

Here, the interpretation of traffic risk is, therefore, the most significant factor in whether independent mobility is acceptable. Still, the importance attached to competencies and values and how it fits with the perception of "the good life" influences the choice of transport mode.

For Bo, the father in family b cycling is a value of great importance: *"I just really love cycling. I have always loved it and I cycle to almost everything"* He also sees the exercise connected to active modes of transport as an important value and considers cycling as the best mode of transport: *"[…] one of the reasons I want the children to cycle is for the exercise. But also, that they learn that cycling is the standard way of transporting yourself […]" T*his is also something he wants to pass on to his children.

Christian, the father in family C, agrees with Bo in this perception: "*We intentionally try to cycle as much as possible. Partly because it's the fastest way most of the time, but also because having the cycle as the natural choice is a good habit to give the children. It also provides the children with the flexibility of being able to transport themselves"* The rationalities used by Christian and Bo are very much connected to their perception of "the good life" both for themselves and for their families.

In these cases where parent trust that the child has the needed competencies to travel independently and thereby interprets risk as acceptable, the values attached to competencies like independence and sense of responsibility is considered of greater importance. Hence, the arguments and rationalities used to explain choices and mobility patterns emphasise what independent mobility can bring to creating "the good life" e.g. a, higher level of freedom and flexibility in everyday life. The benefits are here seen to outweigh the risks, and independent mobility becomes a tool to achieve "the good life" highly influenced by the perception of what it implies to be a 'good parent'.

In other cases where parents do not trust the child's competencies to travel independently, either in general, at a specific route, or by certain modes of transport, traffic risk becomes the decisive argument and rationality. For most parents, this entails a lower degree of flexibility in everyday life and often must make compromises in their own life to make everything work like Freja says here: *"I had to adjust my workday. After all, my working day hasn't gotten any shorter just because I must leave early a few days a week. Before, I wouldn't work until 7 in the evening. I would have been home long before that. So, I work at more awkward hours because of this, and to make everything work." (Interview F).* One of the reasons for this is how organised sports activities are seen as an important component in what makes up the everyday life for the child. One way or the other, mobility is what makes the organisation of everyday life work.

5. 4. 3 The good life

In all six families, the children's organised sports activities are considered an important component in creating "the good life". As Freudendal-Pedersen (2022) argues, the components of everyday life are up for negation but rarely the mobilities when creating "the good life". It has been decided that organised sports activities are an important component in these families. The family's mobilities are adjusted so that it is possible to fit this component into their everyday lives cf. 5.2.3 Good life and 5.3.3 Good life.

Different arguments and rationalities framed in the structural stories used to guide and explain the choices and mobility patterns affect how the mobilities are adjusted. The two structural stories and their underlying arguments and rationalities are present in all the interviews. This can be seen as a sign of the ambivalences the individuals have to cope with and navigate in everyday life, as described by Freudendal-Pedersen (2009).

In the two families, D and F, where the children do not travel independently to their organised sports activities, the argument that children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility is acknowledged. Here Dorthe, the mother, explains what the advantages will be when

Ditte can travel independently:*" The advantages are that it can make everyday life easier for the whole family, that you do not have to remember that now you must pick up and now you have to drive. An advantage is also the independence of the children that they are allowed to do it (travel independently), that they are allowed to try it, not to be adults, but to do it. I think that will definitely strengthen them in their future life." (Interview D)*. Dorthe sees the argument behind children's independent mobility and what it could bring to her family's everyday life. However, the risks associated with children's independent mobility are interpreted as too high and become a hindrance cf. 5.2.1 Mobility environment and 5.2.2 Children's competencies.

In family F, the flexibility in everyday life is compromised because Freja, the mother, must drive her daughter to swim practice cf. 5.2.3 The good life. She acknowledges the argument of children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility as a solution to cope with the stressful everyday life: Freja explains what it will mean to their family and everyday life if Flora could travel independently:" *Flexibility for both Flora and me. I also think that she will grow and be proud because she takes responsibility. It will also mean that she will not be so dependent on me. It is also easier that I will not have to drive her around." (Interview F).* The benefits of children's independent mobility are seen as so valuable in everyday life that Freja considers independent mobility as an option in the near future: *At some point, we will have to figure out how she gets to practice without me having to drive all the time. I have thought about her taking the bus." (Interview F).* Even though both family D and F can reason with the arguments and rationalities behind letting children travel independently the traffic risks related to this are interpreted as unsafe for now. Therefore, independent mobility is not considered as an option. Thus, the underlying arguments and rationalities contained in the structural story is acting like a guiding against independent mobility and are attached greatest importance.

In the families where the children do travel independently to their organized sports activities, the argument of children's independent mobility being unsafe is also present but not to the same degree as in the families where the children do not travel independently. Instead, the risks are acknowledged and accepted as an integral part of everyday life in late modern society cf. 5.3.2 Children's competencies, as described by Beck (1992) and Freudendal-Pedersen (2022). Furthermore, the traffic risks are being interpreted as acceptable cf. 5.3.1 Mobility environment and 5.3.2 Children's Competencies. The arguments and rationalities contained within the structural story is again acting as a guide for certain actions, here by indorsing the independent mobility of children's independent mobility. The arguments and rationalities are closely connected to the parents' perception of "the good life" cf. 5.3.3 The good life and becomes the winning arguments.

Conclusion

6 Conclusion

This master's thesis has investigated what affects choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities through the lenses of structural stories and mobilities of everyday life. This focus has evolved from a desire to shed light on the apparent knowledge gap on children's independent mobility and the need to address the various sustainability issues related to our transport system, especially in cities. The point of departure was leisure-time travel, a subject that has not received much academic attention, focusing on children's organised sports activities. We see the everyday perspective as the starting point for understanding how practices are produced and reproduced to be able to change unsustainable mobility practices. An important assumption is that changing the everyday mobility practices also means changing the organisation of everyday life. We, therefore, investigate choices and mobility patterns by looking at the entire family's everyday life.

Through in-debt conversation with six families, the underlying arguments and rationalities behind choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities were investigated and analysed through three thematisations: The mobility environment, children's competencies, and the good life. Several underlying arguments and rationalities contained in two opposing structural stories were identified based on the results.

In the first structural story: *"It is unsafe for children to travel independently", most* arguments were tied to risk, either directly or indirectly. This was often seen as distrust in the children's competencies to travel independently and handle unforeseen situations. This is highly connected to how parents perceive and interpret traffic safety. The most common rationality used to describe the mobility patterns framed by this structural story was that the mobility environment was unsafe and independent mobility, therefore not an option.

In the second and opposing structural story:*" Children's independent mobility provides freedom and flexibility",* the arguments were closely connected to pursuing and creating "the good life". A general presumption was that the risk associated with the mobility environment were considered acceptable for independent mobility. The most used rationality was tied to the freedom and flexibility children's independent mobility could provide in the family's everyday life. Furthermore, competence like independence and a sense of responsibility was perceived as generally valuable competencies in line perception of what it implies to be "the good parent". Furthermore, competence like independence and a sense of responsibility was perceived as generally valuable competencies in line with the perception of what it implies to be "the good parent" and for the creation of "the good life".

All the different rationalities were present in every family to some degree. What affects which underlying arguments and rationalities that become the decisive factor for choices and mobility patterns related to children's organised sports activities are the arguments and rationalities that are attached greatest importance to. These are affected by how the parents perceive "the good life" and how risks are perceived and interpreted. Although mobilities is a social phenomenon that is created in the interaction between society and individual, the materialities that surrounds the mobilities plays a significant role in the parent's interpretation of risk and choices and mobility patterns.

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7. 1 List of Appendices

The appendices are not publicly available. They are uploaded in Digital Exam for examiner and supervisor.

Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Appendix 2 – Interview transcriptions

- 2.1 Family A
- 2.2 Family B
- 2.3 Family C
- 2.4 Family D
- 2.5 Family E
- 2.6 Family E