

Modes and Moods of Mobility: Tourists and Commuters

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Abstract

What can we learn from comparing different modes and moods of travel, among, for example, tourists and commuters? This paper contrasts these two very different kinds of mobility, and the ways in which they organise both motion and emotion. It is not only a question about how people interact with various systems of transport, but also how materialities and affects work together. An important topic is the question of how people acquire travelling skills. How do they learn to be a tourist or a commuter, to handle a train ride, navigate a transit space, or interact with strangers?

A good reason to contrast commuters and tourists is also because they have often been studied within very different research paradigms. How can these different research traditions be put into a dialogue with each other, and help to develop methods for capturing the often elusive ways in which motion and emotion work together?

Keywords: Tourism, commuting, mobility, affect, materiality, ethnography

Itinerant Sensations

Reunions. Farewells. A smile. Tears. Anger. Irritation. Anxiety. Boredom. Stillness.
Akhila sees them all. The train begins to move.

In Anita Nair's novel *Ladies Coupé* (2003:2), we meet Akhila, middle-aged and single, who dreams about travel as an escape. She keeps going down to the nearby busy Bangalore Cantonment station. She is fascinated by the station life and the strange mix of motions and emotions that make up its special atmosphere; the irritated and stressed commuters fighting for standing room in packed trains; resigned passengers waiting for the Mumbai Express that never arrives; holiday travellers in high spirits leaving the city for a spell by the sea; young European backpackers in search of adventure, clinging to their copies of the *Lonely Planet*.

Akhila feels a "queer itinerant sensation" in her body as she moves among the platform crowds. What kinds of "itinerant sensations" can we discover by comparing different modes and moods of travel – for example, among tourists and commuters? In the following, I will contrast these two different kinds of travel, and the ways in which they organise mobility. I am drawing here on an ongoing project about "travel fever"; a study of travel infrastructures, from suitcases and hotel rooms to airports (see Löfgren 2015a and c). My comparative framework is not only about contrasting two different kinds of mobility. I have chosen them because these two groups, the tourists and the commuters, have been studied within different research traditions, using differing theoretical and methodological tools. Two research traditions, each with their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to trying to analyze the moods and modes of travel. What kinds of analytical dialogues can come out of this?

My own background is in the tradition of cultural analysis in European Ethnology, an approach that, to some extent, has moved in parallel with the development of non-representational theory in British cultural geography (see Ehn et al 2015; Anderson & Harrison 2010; and Vannini 2014). This latter tradition combines several theoretical and ethnographic perspectives and should, rather, be termed "more than representational theory". Like much ethnological analysis during recent years, it focuses less on codes, representations and discourses and more on everyday practices and skills, as well as sensibilities and affect (drawing as it does theories of materiality, performance and affect). In many ways, it is grounded in the phenomenological interest in beginning an analysis with "the how" rather than "the why" of social action. It means focusing on the constant making and remaking of everyday life. Methodologically, it is very much a bricolage approach, inviting dialogues with art, popular culture and fiction. The result is a strong interweaving of theory and methodological experimentation, by finding new ways of doing ethnography and often learning from approaches outside academia; from artists, for example, who are experimenting with destabilising or provoking eve-

ryday life (see the discussion in Thrift 2008). I will combine this bricolage technique with Doreen Massey's (2005) evocative concept of "throwntogetherness", the ways in which a situation or a setting is made through the mixes and confrontations of very different elements: animated by affects, bodies in movement, objects, fantasies and histories.

As a starting point for my discussion, I have chosen a setting in which tourists and commuters are constantly confronted with each other: the rail link between southern Sweden and Copenhagen in Denmark, a result of the long bridge that links the two nations across the Sound, or the Öresund strait. I have followed this commuting route since the bridge opened in 2000, comparing it with earlier travel patterns by ferry. (I have been involved in several interdisciplinary projects on the creation and development of this mega-project and the commuting life it has produced; for an overview of this, see Löfgren 2015b). The Öresund link is an example of a connection that mixes many functions and different kinds of passengers.

I draw here not only on existing studies and my own ethnographic work, but also on art projects, fiction and popular culture. Motion and emotion are strong themes in fiction and other media, especially if you are out to catch the elusive interweaving of modes and moods in travel, which are often hard to verbalise. A genre such as film may open new analytical insights; films can compress or stretch out time and space, they can distort, enlarge or miniaturise themes, and make material realities stand out as important props or mode-setters. Travel is attractive to filmmakers as it provides a narrative structure for capturing emotional conflicts and transformations. Motion carries the story forward; emotion energises it. It is, thus, no surprise that the world of film is crowded with travellers of all kinds: mysterious young ladies in the dining car, wild chases through railway stations, misty farewells at airports, people falling in love on commuter trains or fighting in the holiday car – an abundance of favourite tropes and well-established clichés.

There is an ongoing discussion on how film material may complement more traditional ethnography in, for example, capturing moods and local atmospheres (Blom Hansen & Verkaaik 2009; Adey et al 2012:170). In a discussion of trains in film, to give one example, Graham Fuller (2008:38) has pointed out how train scenes "are claustrophobic microcosms that intensify class conflicts, criminal urges and sexual tensions". Film also illustrates what aspects of travel are cinematic, or not. It is no accident that films about tourists or travellers outnumber films about commuters, probably at a rate of about fifty-to-one. How can a moving train, an airport lounge or a ride in a car be used as a co-actor? What happens when a boring commute is turned into a romance, or a holiday trip into a disaster?

There is another reason for bringing media material into the discussion. Travelers bring their own emotional luggage on a journey; in their travel experiences, memories, media images, tunes or texts interact with the actual landscape, a special kind of throwntogetherness. Jenny Diski (2002) looks at the vistas of the

Western USA from the train window, and is carried back to the matinées of west-erns that she went to see in her childhood. Holidaymakers awestruck in front of a sunset are pre-staged through thousands of postcards, film scenes and advertise-ments. For the tourist, Manhattan looks so familiar, just like it does in the movies. There is a constant overlaying of images occurring here; and with the new infra-structure of mobile media, this mixing of experiences becomes even more marked, as the traveller’s gaze moves between the smartphone screen and the travel environment.

Two Research Traditions

The cultural analysis of tourist modes of travel has a long history with a strong focus on the sense of adventure, and the exciting sights and events – in contrast to the trivialities of everyday life at home. “Getting away from it all” has often been the framework for understanding tourist life. From a theoretical point of view, there has been a tradition of focusing on the semiotic and the symbolic, but by the late 1990s there was some critique of the research perspectives that saw tourists as passive consumers who were all eyes and no bodies (Franklin 2014). This led to a stronger emphasis on agency: on tourists as producers of their own experiences, which also brought a new emphasis on the role of the other senses, often with a phenomenological approach; an analytical shift that can be illustrated by compar- ing John Urry’s classic study *The Tourist Gaze* from 1990 with the later, newer edition *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (Urry & Larsen 2011). This shift led to studies of the ways in which bodies in motion shape a landscape, how a heritage sight is attuned by different affects or a fiesta is shared through Facebook. What kinds of tourist skills, competences and forms of multitasking have been developed in such processes?

There is a strong tradition of using a historical perspective in tourism studies, of mapping the ways in which sights and settings are institutionalised, from life at the beach or in the hotel to the staging of city walks and rural excursions. This kind of historical perspective has given us a fairly good understanding of how people learn to be tourists, how expectations are produced, and movements chore- ographed and emotions verbalised. Tourism studies is a very interdisciplinary world, so broad that it has often resulted in a somewhat inward-looking research community. There has been a clear risk of insularity, of tourism becoming a world of its own and not just one form of mobility among many. Studies of commuting have quite a different history. For a long time, the field was dominated by transport studies and logistics, the measuring and mapping of the movements of commuters in urban settings and the study of transport infrastructures. The focus was on flows rather than on commuting as an experience. Some years ago the Danish sociologist Henrik Dahl (2008) complained that there were few studies of commuter life that explored the seemingly mundane and trivial commuter experi-

ences. He argued that researchers still lacked a language and conceptual framework to capture activities and experiences such as sharing a train compartment, buying a ticket or waiting in line.

Today, this is no longer the case. In recent years, the development of the interdisciplinary tradition often labelled “the new mobility studies” has taken up precisely this challenge: how do we produce good and dense ethnographies of the daily commute? As Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman (2012:5) have pointed out, the new mobility studies have looked very much at mobility as an embodied practice, but also at moorings – the infrastructures of railway stations, airports, highways (in a sense continuing the old interest, but in totally new ways). The recent *Handbook of Mobilities* (Adey et al 2014) illustrates this rapid expansion; such a handbook with its emphasis on the cultural and social organisation of mobility would have been unthinkable a decade earlier.

The new mobility studies also presents a changing theoretical landscape: it is mobility seen through new analytical lenses, from Actor Network Theory, to Post-Phenomenology and Non-Representational Theory. What unites them is an interest in the ethnography of the everyday, often with a focus on the dimensions of affect, materiality and sensibilities. A basic approach in the new mobility studies is mobility as practice (words such as craft, art of travel, skills, rhythms and competences are frequent). In a sense, what has been called “the material turn” and “the affective turn” have helped to create these foci. The challenge here has been to look for the details, to capture the ways in which routines are made, challenged or naturalised into invisibility. In the new commuter ethnographies, there is an eye for small details, body movements, micro-rituals and the constant interaction with the material surroundings, which tourism research could benefit from.

The new commuter studies may help to develop a focus on the things that are too often forgotten in tourist research – the trivialities of tourist travel, or as Johan Larsen (2008) put it: the need to de-exoticise tourist travel. Here, I am thinking about situations such as waiting in line, delayed flights, bad weather, wearing ill-fitting walking shoes, carrying an overloaded travel bag or being lost in a railway station (see Löfgren 2008b). How do such seemingly banal and insignificant objects as suitcases, train seats, iPhones, waiting rooms and malfunctioning ticket machines shape travel experiences, and what kinds of skills are needed to handle this material world?

Recent years have seen more exchanges between these two fields of research. A good example is the work of Tim Edensor and Adrian Franklin (see for example Edensor and Falconer 2011, Franklin 2014), but the dialogue needs to be evolved further. Unlike in tourism studies, there is still strikingly little historical analysis of the making and remaking of different commuter worlds. Here, I mean not only cultural history but also the kind of analytical historical perspective for provoking or destabilising the present that is found in Michel Foucault’s genealogical approach to objects “without history”. (Foucault 1977). Such an analysis

will assist in an understanding of how commuter skills – from moving in crowds, to understanding time tables or negotiating close encounters with strangers – now taken for granted but which were once open and undecided options, slowly turned into historically conditioned competences and conventions. In this process, they often become invisible.

Proximities

One of us on that sliding subway train was clearly not heading for work. You could have known it immediately by the size of his bag. And you can always tell a fugitive by his vagrant expression of smugness; he seems to have a secret in his mouth...

These are the words of Paul Theroux (1989:1), surrounded by morning commuters in a Boston train. He is observing their commuter habits, the ways they don't look out of the window at the all too familiar landscape, or how they avoid glancing at their fellow passengers. But Theroux himself is not one of them, he is the fugitive with a secret. This is his first lap of a journey by train from Boston to Patagonia in southernmost South America. For him, this mundane commuter carriage is the starting point for an exciting adventure – everything looks different when you start a grand journey; even dreary old Boston is no longer the same.

Sitting on the Öresund train, squeezed in between tourists and daily commuters on their way to Copenhagen from Sweden, I am reminded of Theroux's opening lines. The route I will be using as a narrative structure runs from Helsingborg on the Swedish side, through a number of towns and cities, over the bridge to Copenhagen airport, on to Copenhagen Central Station and then along through the Copenhagen suburbs to the end of the line, the town of Elsinore. The journey takes about two hours, but most passengers only use part of it, which means that during these two hours the train presents rather different travelscapes with a changing mix of passengers. There are international travellers going to Copenhagen airport, tourists and day-trippers crossing the bridge for sightseeing or shopping in either Denmark or Sweden. Students commute between different campuses along the line, and commuters living or working on the other side of the bridge are on their way to or from work, while suburban commuters are just making the short trip into the nearby city centres. They all inhabit the same space, but bring along with them different modes and moods of travelling. There is a parallel here to Colin Syme's (2012) discussion of mobile choreographies in his study of rail commuters in Sydney, and also to Tom O'Dell's (2009) studies of commuting in this part of southern Sweden.

My stops on this journey will deal with different aspects of mobility. I will start with the making and unmaking of moods and atmospheres, move on to the social life in train carriages and then to railway stations as transit spaces. Along the journey, I will bring in a few Hollywood movies for some contrastive material.

Mood Work

I am on the train bound from Lund to Copenhagen, happily reading. I love reading and writing on the train when I am commuting; there is something about the atmosphere, the rhythm, the sounds and the landscape gliding past that produces a creative mood. Ideas come to me in a sudden rush, but now something disturbs this state of meditative bliss. The train slows down suddenly and comes to a halt – in the middle of nowhere. The railway carriage turns silent, a moment of an almost meditative mood while people wait for an explanation from the loudspeaker system. “We are waiting for a green signal”, is the message that is repeated every so often as time moves on. Slowly the irritation inside the carriage builds up, people feel an urge to communicate their frustration to others, and begin to look at their fellow passengers and make wry faces, sighing or shrugging their shoulders, making some comments. Many turn to their mobile phones in a need to have an audience and complain loudly about being stuck on the train “again!” “I hate this train”, says a girl next to me into her phone. Some commuters start calling their office to say that they might be late. Tourists nervously check their flight departure times. I notice how I am influenced by the mounting atmosphere of irritation on the train; I try to stick to my book and hold on to the earlier feeling of bliss, but no, my body is invaded by the collective atmosphere. At first I feel a vague anxiety, then a lump in the stomach. I begin to stare at my watch; the book cannot hold my attention any longer, I keep thinking about what’s going to happen. Will I be late too?

At last the train starts to move. But now mine and the other passengers’ feelings of stress have grown and this becomes evident when we finally arrive at the station. Suddenly, things cannot move fast enough. Commuters sigh behind slow tourists who are blocking the gangway with all their luggage, there is a lot of pushing and squeezing to get off. I become aware that I am staring angrily at a man who is taking too much time getting his stuff organised. I am not the only one who now has a short fuse, the atmosphere is short-tempered, gone is the meditative mood of commuting. The delay lasted maybe 15 minutes, but I carry it around in my body for the rest of the day.

Over recent years there has been a growing interest in the study of atmosphere, often in urban settings, from the pioneer studies by Böhme (1993, 2006) and Brennan (2004) to more recent examples (Anderson 2009, Heibach 2012 and Borch 2014, to name a few). The interest in these topics is also marked in mobility studies, but it is striking that the old interest in mood-setting and mood work in studies of tourism are rarely brought into the debate. There is much to be learned from studies on the making of tourist ways of sensing a setting, of experiencing a view or a beach.

Although the study of atmospheres has become a vibrant field, research still needs to pay more attention to actual ethnographies, emphasising the actual mak-

ing and unmaking of moods. The anthropologist Kathleen Stewart has used the term “mood work” to research such complexities of movement and interplay. She points to the need for developing experimental ethnographies of how atmospheres are created, sustained and shared:

Mood is a contact zone for the strange and prolific coexistence of sense and world. An orientation alert to something already set in motion, it is a mundane register of labors to sense out what is actual and potential in an historical moment or a situation. Mood works, in other words, to articulate the labor of living. It marshals bodies, objects, technologies, sensations and flights of fancy into forms of partial coherence. Its legibilities are inchoate and yet pronounced in practices, socialities, scenes, social circles, events, and landscapes. (Carlsen & Stewart, 2014)

Mood work is a good example of throwtogetherness. The changing atmosphere in the delayed train described above was produced between travellers sharing the special infrastructure of a train carriage, an outside landscape of “nowhere”, but also activating past memories of delays. A new “itinerant sensation” spread along the seats, creeping under the skin, finding its way past defences such as earphones and newspapers.

There are other examples of such processes. In his train ethnographies, David Bissell (2009 and 2010) discusses the ways in which affective atmospheres are created in commuter settings. He looks at collective sharing and exchange (of glances, gestures, words) as well as passivity. Such temporary communities are shaped by the materialities of the train setting, but also, of course, by the kind of journeys being undertaken.

An ethnographic study of long-distance train commuters to Copenhagen by Louise Nielsen (2012, 2013) illustrates the ways in which both temporary and more stable forms of travelling “Gemeinschafts” develop. On the train line in question, veteran travellers reserve spaces for their commuting friends and create temporary social settings by sharing all kinds of things, from food and anecdotes to services like waking up sleeping fellow travellers when the station approaches. There are also many micro-technologies of inclusion and exclusion inside the train carriage, which makes it possible to withdraw from or decline contact. Some travellers devote a lot of energy into *not* being dragged into shared moods, trying to stay in their private bubble, closing their eyes, looking away, hiding behind the newspaper or keeping busy with other travel props they have brought along. They might be training the commuter skill of what Erving Goffman (1966) has termed “civil inattention”. Nielsen also discusses how the commuter community may also set itself apart from other travellers, such as the tourists, who do not know the local rules of the train. They are a nuisance.

In a study of British commuters, Laura Straw discusses the ways in which certain moods are created inside the train. She walks through the carriages and notes how the atmosphere changes from cool and detached to noisy and warm. In one carriage, working on laptops defines the mood as quiet and effective – “in here we work” is the silent message; in the next one, the atmosphere is different, social

and chatty, while in a third there might be a feeling of sleepiness that makes time stand still (Straw 2008: 722).

I can recognise Straw's descriptions in my own Öresund commutes between Sweden and Denmark, on a train with continuous mood changes. One of the stops is Copenhagen airport and there is usually a good number of tourists on the train, dragging their heavy suitcases along, checking their flight tickets and anxiously waiting for when they have to get off. They sit next to veteran commuters who could do this journey with their eyes closed; their body knows when it is time to get off. A part of the line unites three university campuses and here many carriages are turned into library spaces, the students are busy with their textbooks and laptops, sheltered from the surroundings by their earphones.

Rush hour situations, of course, change the mood. A tightly packed crowd turns into a swaying collective as the train lurches forward. I am reminded of the commuter footage in the Indian film, *The Lunch Box*, from 2013, with its silent and bored crowds packed inside the carriages. The train's steady swaying and abrupt movements are transplanted into the bodies of the travellers, who swing back and forth in synchrony, like reeds moving in a breeze. In the Öresund crowds, privacy and personal boundaries are renegotiated in the cramped conditions. People stand back, squeeze past, trying to control their breath and their limbs in order to create a personal minimum distance. They will spend the next ten minutes looking at the hairline of a total stranger's neck or being pressed into a rucksack, trying to avoid eye contact. There are several micro-rituals at work here.

Confrontations between tourist and commuter moods were, however, much more dramatic in the earlier era of ferry travel between Denmark and Sweden. At night there were unhappy clashes of the two moods, with the day tourists returning after a great trip to Copenhagen and enjoying the tax-free drinks during the 45 minute hydrofoil journey. Their party spirit did not fit with the tired commuters on their way home after a long day, who just wanted a quiet journey.

In his evocative ethnography of ferry travel in western Canada, Phillip Vannini (2012) has observed other conflicts on board between the tourists and local commuters. For example, the irritation among the latter when the captain slows down as the ferry passes some impressive tourist sights. Hey, is this is a commute or a sightseeing trip?

Intimacy and Anonymity

On the train itself, questions of privacy and collectivity become a constant theme. As Adey and Bissell (2012:171) expressed it: "The passenger invites us to move away from imagining solitary individuals on the move towards considering the assemblages within which people on the move are sustained." To talk about fellow passengers calls for a discussion of what kinds of togetherness this creates.

How are people transformed into a temporary community? As a passenger, one has, to some extent, surrendered control and is confined to the platform or inside the train; mobility and activities are severely restrained. There is a tension between the active and inactive, restfulness and restlessness. Most of these tensions are taken for granted today, but this was not the case back in the 19th century.

In the pioneer era of rail travel there were many complaints about being thrown together with total strangers in a compartment or on the platform, but there were also complaints about the dehumanising aspects of mass travel: about being turned into a mere package, and giving up one's individuality.

A Swedish professor, travelling in Germany in the mid-19th century, complained in his diaries that the railway lumps everyone together: barons, servants, workers, luggage, oxen and pigs. Like many others, he also complained about the lack of freedom; one was now totally dependent upon chemical and mechanical forces. Even the staff, the driver and the conductor were slaves to the timetable – people had no space for initiative and were worn out by all this collective travel. “All peculiarities, all nationalities disappear like stones in a rushing stream, all acquire the same rounded and smooth form. One like the other.” (Quoted by Arvastson 2008.)

With the arrival of the railways, an entire etiquette of train travel had to be invented as people learnt how to handle the strangers next to them in the compartment. Like the stagecoach, the tiny rail compartment created a very special social space. Women felt particularly exposed (Letherby & Reynolds 2009). Gradually, conventions and routines for train travel developed (as well as handbooks). Thriller directors like Alfred Hitchcock, and mystery writers such as Agatha Christie, loved these settings, which offered perfect storylines of motion and emotion. Much of these tensions and confrontations with the narratives of strangers were based upon the earlier system of small train compartments: on the claustrophobia or intimacy of sharing a confined space with perfect strangers.

In the Öresund trains, there are open carriages, but two spaces are organised as smaller compartments, the first class section and “the silent compartment”, and both turn out to be more ridden with potential conflict than the rest of the train. Rush hour crowds tend to invade both these spaces and a common complaint of commuters is that many new travellers don't know or respect the rules. There is a constant hushing, or silent sighs and shrugs going on... as tourist groups begin to talk or use their cell phones. The train staff have a difficult job policing this. Outbursts of “train rage” occur, for example when a man who is dozing can't take the conversations in the next row anymore and explodes: “Shut up, can't you read the bloody sign!”

Commuting and tourist travel produce different sociabilities. Regular commuters may come to feel that they know their fellow travellers, although they don't know their names and perhaps haven't even exchanged a word with them. Gradually they become familiar faces with familiar habits. Long distance commuters

may develop closer ties, as discussed earlier. The organisation of seating creates specific conditions for such socialising (see the discussion in Nielsen 2014 and Gilboa Runnvik 2014). In holiday travel, other kinds of social moods and contacts develop. Package tour travellers often find it easy to make new friends, but also that these new and warm friendships rarely survive after the vacation (see Löfgren 2000:260 ff); being on holiday creates a very particular platform of sociability.

Imagination at Work

To a varying extent, tourists and commuters share a special condition for socialising and mood work. The French sociologist Jean-Didier Urbain (1998) called this the small secrets of the traveller – that is, to be on the move and away from well-known settings offers the possibilities of anonymity in new surroundings. On the road, one is often a stranger to fellow travellers and this creates some interesting room for manoeuvre; you have the possibility of inventing a new personality, pretending to be someone else, or daydreaming about the person next to you on the subway or the flight.

In a study of daydreaming (Ehn & Löfgren 2011), we found that commuting creates a perfect condition for setting the imagination to work. The swaying rhythm of the train, the passing landscape and the faces of fellow travellers produce a good platform for daydreaming. When we interviewed commuters, we were given answers such as, “It can be anything that sets me daydreaming. An interesting person in front of me, an advertisement, a big suitcase, a hat, or just a sound.” Helen Hunt, back in the 1870s, wrote about “the magnetism of every human” in the train carriage, while a New York commuter of today said she couldn’t understand why people read on the subway when it was so much more fun observing other travellers and reading fantastic stories into their faces.

The anonymity of the commute gives plenty of room for the imagination. I wonder who that man is across from me? A woman told us about watching a couple in a train slowly gliding past on the platform. Before they were out of sight, she had created a fictive love story about them (see Ehn & Löfgren 2011:147). In her interviews with commuters, Gilboa Runnvik (2014:171) found the same focus; as one commuter put it: “It is exciting just to sit and look at everyone... who are they and where are they going?”

An artist that has tried to capture this potential of frozen moments is Adam Magyar in his Berlin subway film. With his special filming technique, one sees the anonymous crowd on the platform in a totally different light; it dissolves into unique individuals, frozen, statue-like, every person with a strange personality aura surrounding them, turning into individual stories (see vimeo.com/83663312). Watching this inspiring piece of subway ethnography, one can understand the daydreaming potential through which a commuter draws her or his fellow passen-

gers into imaginary worlds. Something as trivial as the commute is emotionalised, sometimes in surprising ways.

Copenhagen Central Station

As it is for most of the other passengers, my stop is Copenhagen Central Station, where I have spent time registering mood changes around the clock (Löfgren 2015a). I begin late one morning by following a couple of tourists who are hesitantly dragging their luggage around, searching for information. Their body movements give them away as newcomers to this setting. They are equipped with both the tourist gait and gaze, as they scan the terrain for all kinds of signs, moving around slowly, often looking lost, but also admiring the decorative items in the building, sightseeing. Suddenly, the arrival hall fills up; a late commuter train has arrived and the atmosphere changes drastically. The commuters move swiftly like a military phalanx ploughing its way through the tourist travellers, who try to get out of the way but here and there they are surrounded like islands in the fast flow of commuters striding across the floor with their gazes fixed into the distance. Mentally, the commuters are probably already at work, they do not observe the station surroundings at all. There is no hesitation in their bodies – this is just the same old morning routine. They are the station veterans.

In just a few moments the stream of people ebbs out and the station returns to its atmosphere of lethargy. The tourists are in control again, together with the homeless and others who use the station as their temporary urban refuge or meeting place, surreptitiously checking for the guards or police that circle the station. The homeless are another kind of station veterans, viewing the setting with different eyes.

As I move among the rush hour crowds that are confidently hurrying through the station complex, I can feel in my own body what it is to be out of synch. I feel like a country bumpkin; I have lived too long in a small town, just visiting the metropolis, and I realise that I have lost some of the skills of manoeuvring in fast crowds. I can't read the signals, my body movements are indecisive. I am often about to bump into people, I'm not part of the flow.

Trying to record these rhythms and intensities, I felt the need for more inspiration and turned to a classic site so often depicted in movies: the bustling crowds at New York's Grand Central Station. In a study of space, Tony Hiss watches the crowds and reflects on the social skills you need to learn to handle this setting. He observes:

...the swirling, living motion of five hundred people walking, two and three abreast, from and toward the fourteen entrances and exits of the concourse. Moving silently, as it seemed, within that sound, I noticed again that no one was bumping into anyone else – that every time I thought I myself might be about to bump into people near me, both I and they were already accelerating slightly, or decelerating, or making a little side step, so that nobody ever collided. On top of this, the weightless sensation

in my head gave me the feeling that I could look down on all this movement, in addition to looking out at it. I had a sense that the cooperation I was part of kept repeating itself throughout the vast room around me and the vaster city beyond it. (Hiss 1991:8)

How is this collective choreography made possible, with its coordination of hundreds of different styles of walking and moving? Here, a capability of quick glances, body signals and swift movements is needed.

In her study of commuters, Gilboa Runvik (2014: 165 ff) found that the commuters often complain about the behaviour of tourists. The tourists slow down the flow, block the way and have to be pushed aside. But commuters coming from small towns into a large city like Stockholm often found it hard to adjust to the faster pace of city crowds.

In Copenhagen, the morning rush hour gives the station a very special atmosphere. There is a feeling of expectancy in the air, the start of a fresh working day, a kind of positive stress. Later in the day the tempo slows down, the sounds and the mood are different, with the echoes of solitary travellers moving along the hall. As the tired commuters return later in the day to go home, the station has a different feel. Compare this to the festive mood of the station on a Friday or Saturday evening, when groups of people are leaving or arriving in search of a fun night out; a party feeling pervades the place – and then the mood changes drastically again as at night it becomes deserted.

Writing about her impressions of the Copenhagen station when waiting for the midnight train back to Sweden, Julia Svensson (2010) captured the mood of frustration and depression that takes over the station. The train is, as always, late. She is thrown out of McDonald's, the last place to close, and after that there is only the chill of the platforms and the arrival hall.

"Everything is closed", all the closed shutters and locked doors help to produce an atmosphere of being left out. The passengers become a group of losers, marginalised, outside society. What are they doing here, in this godforsaken place? The general mood becomes slightly depressive, gone is all the morning energy. Now even the commuters begin to feel like "undesired elements" in an unwelcoming atmosphere. There is a striking throwntogetherness at work here, both the physical and mental atmosphere start to feel chilly; the clattering sounds of shutters being pulled down, lights being turned off, the tired bodies – all work together to create this sensation.

The changing atmosphere of the station is also gendered. Women may feel much more exposed at certain hours and in certain spaces in a railway station. Who can claim space and feel secure? Who feels exposed or vulnerable and in what situations? At Copenhagen station back in the 1950s, young girls from the country were warned that the station was a dangerous territory, and a YWCA mission took it upon themselves to assist them. Observing stations at night, Frers

(2006:257) noticed how many women took up a brisk pace and avoided eye contact at a time when there were few other people around.

At times, the station management have tried to deal with such problems by designing waiting spaces for women or families only, but historically it is class rather than gender that has organised segregation in rail travel. Above the entrance to *O'Leary's Sportsbar* at Copenhagen, one can still read the message cut into the stone: Waiting room for 1st and 2nd Class. The railways introduced a class system, teaching people to think about what kind of travel class they belonged to. This still exists, in the business lounge at Copenhagen Central Station and in the two class systems on the trains, but there is a much more complex history behind this (see Löfgren 2008b).

At the station, it is possible to see how moods or atmospheres are produced and how they change, for example, among a group of passengers waiting for a delayed train. Jokes and complaints are exchanged, the stranger next to you now becomes a fellow sufferer. The crowd can create an atmosphere of resigned waiting, with sighs and shrugs, but the passenger collective can also be highly combustible as irritation and anger erupts. Bodies begin to fidget, people become less tolerant of others trying to make their way in the crowd, and suddenly the mood changes. (Cf. the discussion on commuter frictions on trains in Corvellec & O'Dell 2012.)

To what extent can an ethnography of stations benefit by watching films? Using stations as a mood-setting scene is a common choice for filmmakers. There are hundreds of films that use railway stations and trains as settings for comedies, dramas and thrillers.¹ For a station like Copenhagen Central, there are also all the amateur videos on YouTube. An American tourist, for example, disembarks from the train and records his first impressions by video with a running commentary as he moves through the station: "Hey, they even got a McDonalds here!"

A film I found helpful in understanding the many ways in which the station infrastructure becomes a co-creator of moods is the classic *Brief Encounter* from 1945, in which two unhappily married people meet by chance while waiting for their connections. Their relation develops into an illicit commuter romance in-between trains and the anonymity of the location shelters them. The director David Lean systematically uses the station as a tool for setting moods and emotions in motion: desolate and windblown platforms, dark passages, a drab cafeteria. Sudden loudspeaker messages and the shrill whistle of a guard intensify and disturb the quiet emotional interaction between the couple. The uninviting, cold setting reflects their depressed home life and their guilt-ridden meetings. The express trains rushing by give a certain urgency to the forlorn couple on the platform; the inner and outer turbulences reinforce each other and the life of the station itself takes a leading role.

The Infrastructures of Love

Leaving the Öresund commute for a more general discussion of emotions and affect, I would like to start with a question that David Picard (2013) poses in a study of German tourists on the island of Réunion, in the Indian ocean: “So what does it feel like to be a tourist?” Following groups on nature treks, he points out how central emotion is here and how tourists may be emotionally moved without being able to explain why. They feel at a loss for the right words to describe a breath-taking view or a fantastic event and tend to fall back on well-worn clichés from tourist guides and marketing texts. Picard does not aim to join the tired critique of the shallowness of the tourist experiences; instead he shows how tourists carry with them a heavy baggage of descriptions and possible ways of trying to verbalise strong emotions. He points out that they may talk of “the magic” of a site in trying to describe their personal experience and immediately become conscious that this sounds very much like a slogan. This feeling of having to fall back on existing formulas for expressing very personal experiences is typical of tourism and has a long history. Is my experience authentic enough? There are probably few social activities where this emotional luggage is as strongly present as among tourists. Let me discuss this by focusing on one historically conditioned emotion, that of romantic love and travel.

“It is so easy to fall in love here”, a young female tourist wrote home from a seaside resort in the mid-19th century. The holiday romance is a particular phenomenon, depicted in scores of films about tourist travel. The tourist journey has always been connected to ideas of emancipation from everyday demands and routines, of letting go. Ordinary everyday people are magically transformed into something else as they step off the charter flight, enter a village in Tuscany or find their paradise beach. They are entering a zone of carefree hedonism, ready to have a great time! It is this emotional transformation that can be witnessed in a large number of films with a tourist theme, which often depict people out to mend their broken hearts, as in *Under the Tuscan Sun* from 2003, or *The Tourist* from 2010. Here, as in many other cases, Italy is the tourist territory that will transform you. Holiday films often work from the basic understanding that a holiday trip makes you ready for love. It might be used as a remedy to rekindle a tired relationship, as in the 2013 *Le Weekend*, when an ageing British couple try to repeat their Paris honeymoon weekend of long ago. But there is no chance of a rerun, they quarrel on the train and when they check into their old hotel, it just looks scruffy and small. The magic is gone. The journey starts off as a romantic weekend in Hell, but in the end the *ambiance* of Paris does the trick.

Tourist destinations such as these often play a central role in films, they are depicted as laboratories for emotional change, helped by the warm-hearted and care-free locals and the enchanting light over the landscape. Old bitterness, depression or everyday greyness simply melt away. This is, of course, a theme that is also

taken up in tourism marketing: you will become a different person by visiting Paris or Tuscany. Such films also address an analytical theme: what kinds of affordances do certain destinations offer, which enable travellers to create new emotional landscapes? Again, there are certain forms of throwntogetherness at work here.

But what about passion and the tedium of the daily commute? In 2014, the BBC broadcast a two-part television drama about two commuters falling in love on a suburban train, *The 7.39* by Dave Nichols. Here the commuter train is full of pent up emotions, disenchantment with work and the hopeless boss, the tired marriage or the difficult teenage kids. For twelve years, the commuter train takes the hero back and forth between an unhappy home and a dreary job. A strange young woman, who has the cheek to occupy his favourite seat, opens up something new and romance is in the air. It also echoed another classic commuter film, *Falling in Love* from 1984, in which two total strangers and daily commuters (played by Meryl Steep and Robert de Niro) begin to notice and fantasise about each other, slowly developing a secret romance on the train to work. The film captures very well one of the basic conditions of the commute, the constant repetition. People gradually recognise their fellow travellers, a face becomes familiar and after a time one may choose to acknowledge this by a slight nod, maybe later passing some remarks about the weather or the delays. Over time, a regular commuter may turn into something of an acquaintance. *Falling in Love* follows this slow process. The couple surreptitiously glance at each other. Will she or he be waiting on the platform or getting on the train today and in what carriage? Can I sit down next to her? Could I find a trivial comment? “Excuse me, is this seat taken?” Slowly there is a build up of an emotional relation and a tedious commute turns into a passionate journey. Watching a film like this alerts you to the micro-physics of the daily commute, the repetitive rhythms and body movements, and the minor changes in seating arrangements, bodily proximities and delays. I am reminded of Walter Benjamin’s analysis of a poem by Charles Baudelaire (Benjamin 1969:45), in which the poet “in the deafening traffic of town” catches a glimpse of a woman, who gives him a swift glance:

Neither knows where the other goes or lives;
We might have loved and you knew this might be!

This is, as Benjamin says, “love at last sight”.

The landscape of potential contacts is always gendered. The male gaze exists on the commuting train as well as on the holiday beach. When Gilboa Runvik (2014) interviewed female commuters, they talked about the feeling of having to perform. They often felt like an object to be scrutinised, judged or ranked as they got on to the platform or the train.

Emotional Luggage

By using examples of tourists and commuters on the road, I have explored some ethnographic challenges for studying modes and moods of mobility, contrasting two research traditions. My focus has been on skills. We need to continue develop an understanding of how people learn to be a commuter or tourist and also how they change between the two roles. There are skills of handling rhythms, switching between different kinds of movements and standing still, synchronising one's movements to others. Some of these travelling skills are shared by both tourists and commuters – the art of waiting, for example, an activity that can produce very different kinds of feelings, a time for boredom, rising irritation or commuter's rage, but also for meditative bliss and a great opportunity for daydreaming (Bissell 2007; Ehn & Löfgren 2010: 9 ff).

Travel life is full of technologies. Buses, railway platforms, arrival halls and train carriages are containers, but they are not only physical containers, which separate and join objects, bodies and activities – they are also cultural containers, held together by cultural conventions, norms and learned behaviour. What do they do to the traveller – and vice versa?

I have argued that the concept of throwntogetherness is useful for exploring modes and moods of travel and that the bricolage approach of non-representational theory offers a tool chest for such analytic work. The station, the holiday resort or the bus may seem like very stable material infrastructures, but they are really constructed of all the comings and goings, as well as the very diverse tasks carried out in them. A station, for example, is a constant interweaving of the ebbs and flows of people and their heavy luggage, the malfunctioning ticket machines, shiny hard floors, the unintelligible loudspeaker calls, or the smell of hamburger fat – all of which create the atmosphere of a transit space. The ethnographic task is to explore how such elements work together – reinforcing, blocking, uniting, separating each other. The ways people are influenced by such throwntogetherness, consciously or unconsciously varies with their travel situation. At Copenhagen station, veteran commuters barely notice all the architectural details, which the visiting tourists examine so closely. At the same time there is an overlaying of pasts, presents and futures, which calls for a historical perspective. The building, for example, was originally constructed as a different kind of transit machine than it is today.

But it is not only the infrastructure that surrounds the visitors. People also drag all kinds of stuff into this setting – just check the very different contents of a commuter's handbag and a tourist's suitcase. Such micro-universes carry very different ideas of the necessities (and longings) of travel (Löfgren 2015c). And add to this the emotional luggage of memories, anticipations and imaginations, a reminder of the affective dimensions that are always at work in such processes of throwntogetherness. By talking of travel modes as platforms for affective oppor-

tunities (Hui 2013:174), we have to ask what kinds of “itinerant sensations” are facilitated by certain kinds of journeys. Looking at the new mobility studies of commuting and traditional tourism research, different foci emerge. With a somewhat grand oversimplification, one could start by saying that these are two traditions that have been studying experiences, experiences with a capital “E” (for tourism) and a small “e” (for commuting), and this has meant to some extent a focus on emotions on the one hand, and, on the other, on affects.

There is a long tradition of studying emotions in tourism (Picard & Robinson 2012), often of experiences with a capital “E”: the making and consumption of a great, a unique, an authentic experience. Tourist experiences are also organised by a considerable tradition of emotional anticipation and longing: a journey or vacation is not only planned but also played out in the imagination before it has begun. The investments in the future also shape the special mixed sensation of “travel fever”, which produces at least two kinds of excitement: anxiety and euphoria. Feeling footloose can be both a blessing and a threat. Anxiety is a vague nervous energy searching for an outlet. But travel fever also changes form and structure in different social and historical settings, and it has aspects of both class and gender.

There are many energising processes going on in the emotional life of tourists. The anticipations of happiness can also produce another common emotional state: disappointment – this is not the perfect beach, or the romantic weekend or the carefree life that one had hoped for. There is a strong normative element in tourism, but also a competitive one: what if my experiences are not as exciting or authentic as those of the travel writer, or my neighbours?

Studies of commuting have tended to explore more mundane experiences, with a small “e”, and affects, in the sense of bodily reactions, not usually consciously articulated, such as a mounting irritation or boredom, the reflex of a helping hand, pent up anger waiting for an outlet, a sudden smile or a shrug, a face turned away, a body tensing in stress or relaxing, a gaze that turns glassy and isn’t looking [anywhere](#) in particular. In the early years of the new commuter studies, there was an attempt to dismantle the common idea of commuting being wasted time. Instead of just seeing it as a hopeless in-between of intense boredom or tedium, the focus turned to the potential richness of the commuter experience and the many parallel activities it opened up for. On looking back, this turn was quite called for, but it was also sometimes overworked. Standing pressed up close to other bodies in a warm commuter train can still be a pretty boring experience: “I just can’t wait to get off.” Tourist research, on the other hand, has tended to ignore those in-between aspects of the journey. It is the getting there – to the sight, the beach, the event – that counts, the rest is just mindless transport.

But the polarisation of tourist and commuter modes and moods of travelling can also be misleading, as I have pointed out. What if commuting is sometimes an adventure, and tourism just a routine? The commute can constantly open up surprises: close-ups of strangers (breathing down one’s neck), as in Baudelaire’s

sudden pang for love. The journey can be dramatised by daydreaming, or a sense of meditative bliss, or the fierce battle with delays and rush hour crowds. The tourist adventure, meanwhile, can often become just mundane routines and trivial details.

A starting point for a comparison is the fact that many of us have learned to seamlessly switch between these two modes of travel. Alone in a European city I have never visited before, I have an extra day before my conference begins. Suddenly, I have the sense of myself turning into a tourist. As I begin to saunter aimlessly down the street, both my body and my mind are reprogrammed. I begin looking for “sights”, my eyes curiously exploring buildings and city life, my movements becoming slow and uncertain. Now I am unconsciously activating both the traditional tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen 2011) and gait (Österlund-Pötzsch 2010). I am surrounded by city commuters on their way to work, yet my movements are badly synchronised with theirs; I keep bumping into people, my pace is too slow, my movements unpredictable. It is quite clear: at this moment, I am one of those tourists!

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Notes

¹ See for example Richards & MacKenzie 1986:340 and for later examples: movieclips.com/yRHE3-train-station-setting-videos/; www.railservice.com/trainmovies/

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