The Surveillance of Children's Mobility.

Trine Fotel and Thyra Uth Thomsen[1]

Abstract

The increased protection of children by monitoring them is said to be a central characteristic of modern childhood. In the field of mobility, this aspect of modern childhood is reflected in the fact that children's everyday mobility is to a great extent kept under surveillance, e.g. by parents, kindergarten or school employees and through general traffic regulation. In this article, we investigate the surveillance of children's mobility – primarily bicycling, walking and car usage - from three different angles. In the first, we investigate the general power relations in mobile practice that add to the surveillance and restriction of children's mobility. In the second, we illustrate how parents monitor children's mobility by chauffeuring them. In the third, we look into how parents remote control children's mobility by means of behavioural restrictions and technology. By using statistical material and qualitative interviews, we illustrate how parents perceive and perform their own surveillance of children's mobility. In addition, we comment on how children perceive their monitored mobility and how they cope with it. Finally, we reflect on the differences in parental mobile monitoring and relate this to welfare and socio-economic structures in the families.

Rationalities in contemporary mobility

This article contributes to the expanding field of the sociology of mobility and it highlights the mobility related norms, practices and perspectives of a very distinct group, namely that of families. It elaborates on children's and parents' views on traffic and mobility from a surveillance perspective and includes insights from the new childhood paradigm within the sociology of childhood (James, 1998; Prout and James, 1990). In spite of the fact that children's mobility accounts for around 20% of the daily travelling population in the EU (EU, 2000), children's perspectives are often left out in the general mobility oriented sociological literature (for instance in Bauman, 2000; Beckman, 2001b; Castells, 1996; Jensen, 2001; Scheller, 2002; Shove, 2002; Urry, 2000).

Even though mankind has always been mobile, the quintessential aspect in contemporary societies is that the consequences of mobility thoroughly influence our daily lives, local, national and global politics, as well as our environments and the welfare of human beings. Political and scientific discussions are often focussed on the environmental side effects of increased car-use. Welfare aspects of how mobility influence and shape people's every day life and how side

---

[1] Roskilde University, Denmark, mailto:trinen@ruc.dk and mailto:tut@teksam.ruc.dk

effects from mobility influence living conditions, are only debated in few academic discussions (for instance in Beckmann, 2001b; Carstensen, 2001; Christensen and O'Brien, 2003; Fotel, 2002b; Freund and Martin, 1993; Hillman et al., 1990; Hillman, 1993; Wilhjelm, 1999).

When analyzing mobility and late modernity, the central tendency is one of polarization, between those who have the means to be mobile and thereby be part of the space of flow and those who do not and, as a consequence, are more place bound (Bauman, 1998; Beckmann, 2001a; Castells, 1996). Mobility is often equated with driving a car – which children obviously are not permitted to do. So which position do children occupy in everyday mobile practices? Are children just the 'immobilized other' or are they reflective and coping actors planning their own mobility (Thomsen, 2004)?

The increased protection of children by monitoring them is said to be a central characteristic of modern childhood and we do not yet know all the consequences (Rasmussen, 2003; Qvortrup, 1994). Danish research has primarily focussed on the surveillance of children by web-cams in day-care institutions. The possibility of impersonal surveillance performed from a distance reduces children's privacy even more, and while some parents approve of it, the majority oppose the prevalence of web-cams (Jørgensen, 2003; Rasmussen, 2003). In the field of mobility, this aspect of modern childhood is reflected in the fact that children's everyday mobility is monitored by parents, kindergarten or school employees and through general traffic regulation. Although it is not our intention to advocate a `utopia´ where children are able to move around without any supervision or restrictions at all, research from within the fields of surveillance and mobility indicates how severe restrictions on children's independent movement should cause our concern (Hillman, 1993; Björklid, 2002). According to Björklid (2002:7), limits on children's mobility are critical for the development of children's spatial awareness and spatial activity, and affect children's social and physical development. From the surveillance research on the other hand, we learn how surveillance has two faces and is a matter of both care and control of which we do not yet know the consequences (Lyon, 2001; 2003; Rasmussen 2003). Seen in this light, the surveillance of children's mobility is not that clear-cut. Have dangers in neighbourhoods and cities increased so much that children need to be monitored in order to care for them properly, or is the monitoring of children's mobility done on behalf of parental perception with negative consequences to children's perception of space and place as a result?

Even though there is clear evidence on how parental accompaniment has risen throughout different parts of Europe during the past decades (Hillman et al, 1990; Björklid, 2002; Jensen and Hummer, 2002), this does not necessarily translate into a rise in the overall surveillance of children's mobility, since –as we will comment on later in the paper - accompaniment is only one particular aspect of surveillance. Rather than describing surveillance of children's mobility in terms of magnitude, the aim of this article is to map out the character of contemporary surveillance of children's mobility and to relate this to the welfare of families.

In this article, we investigate the surveillance of children's mobility – primarily bicycling, walking and car usage - from three different angles. In the first, we investigate the general power relations in mobile practice that add to the surveillance and restriction of children's mobility. In the second, we illustrate how parents monitor children's mobility by chauffeuring them. Finally, we

look into how parents remote control children's mobility by means of behavioural restrictions and technology. These are analyzed by using statistical material and qualitative interviews, which illustrate how parents perceive and perform their own surveillance of children's mobility; how children aged 10-12 perceive their mobility and how they cope with it.[2] In listening to children's voices, the methodological considerations of what has been labelled the new childhood paradigm have functioned as guidelines and children's voices are taken seriously in their own right. See also Thomsen, 2004; Fotel, 2002a; Christensen and James, 2000; James et al., 1998. Even though children's perspectives are a vital contribution to our knowledge of the character of mobility in everyday life, it is necessary to note, however, that children's perspectives need not be different from adults – children may, just as many adults do, reflect the general discourses of society.

The empirical material is understood, primarily, from a phenomenological and constructivist methodological approach, in order to show the variance and the complexity in children's mobility (see also Thomsen, 2004; Fotel, 2004). As part of some of the guidelines in the new childhood paradigm, the mobile practices of families are analyzed from a generational perspective, showing the differences in children's and parent's perspectives (Alanen, 2001). Reflections on the importance of material and socio-economic structures of inequality are continuously made, and the subject of welfare and mobility is expanded on in the latter part of this article.

Parental chauffeuring of children's mobility

> *"There is little empathetic treatment of the increasing association of the car with being caring parents, whether it is using the motion of the car to finally get an infant to sleep, or the sense at one stage in parenting that all one is doing is chauffeuring the kids to various friends' and activities".*
>
> Miller (2001:12)

As this quote from an English anthology of car-cultures states, the parental use of the car covers a wide range of aspects of which only a few have been analyzed. As Barker (2003) points out, three aspects are especially connected with parental escorting in the UK context, namely the increase in traffic, discourses of stranger-danger and changes in families' lifestyles.

Parents' surveillance of children's mobility is bound up with different aspects of their travel conditions of which one of the more important aspects, elaborated on in the following, is choice

---

[2] If not cited otherwise the qualitative data used in this article stems from three different research projects listed below. The interview texts quoted from these projects are reported in a slightly edited format in order to increase readability. 1) The PhD project 'Children and cars – mobile welfare in the everyday life of families' (Fotel, 2003a; 2003b) in which 39 interviews, a questionnaire, drawings, diaries and instant cameras were used with children and parents in two different urban neighbourhoods in Copenhagen. 2) The Post Doc project 'Children's perspective on mobility' in which diaries and interviews with children, parents and other gatekeepers in an urban and rural setting were conducted (children's views are reported in Thomsen, 2004). 3) The research project 'Traffic, welfare and living conditions in Kgs. Enghave' reported in Andersen et al. (2003) and Fotel (2002a) analyzed constellations of mobility and welfare by conducting a survey and interviews with children and especially parents.

of mode of transport. Automobility, for instance, clearly supports the physical supervision of children's mobility, whereas bicycling or walking can be performed by the child on its own and thus leaves room for unmonitored movement. Still, reasons for escorting and chauffeuring are multiple, and surveillance is only one aspect of this mobile practice.

Denmark is traditionally presented as a country where children are able to freely move around and have independent mobility to e.g. schools and leisure facilities. Hillman, who has worked extensively with transport and children's mobility in the UK, discussed the percentage of children cycling to school and stated, "…in Denmark, most children, even at the age of five, do so" (Hillman, 1999: 2). This is a very romantic presentation of the Danish situation and refers to a time long past. Even though a considerable share of Danish children still use their bicycle, there has been what some term "a generational change" during the 1990s (Jensen and Hummer, 2002:59f):

- The number of children driven by car on school journeys has doubled from 1993-2000[3]. Of the total journeys, the 6-10 year-olds have doubled their car trips and reduced their walking trips by 40% from 1978-2000, while the 11-15 year-olds have tripled their car trips during the same period.

- The share of children cycling to school has decreased almost 30%, while use of public transport and walking has increased.

The Danish situation has come to look more and more like the situation in other European countries, especially the UK (EU, 2000; O'Brien et al., 2000; Hillman, et al. 1990; Hillman, 1993). Just as in Denmark, the independent mobility of British children has decreased dramatically during the last decades. In the 1970s, 94% of the children were permitted to walk independently to and from school, but in 1998 the number had fallen to 47% (O'Brien et al., 2000).

In 2000, the national average modal split of children's transport to and from school looked like this:

	Walking	Bicycle or moped	Car	Bus or train
Children 6-10 years old[4]	23%	36%	23%	17%
Children 11-15 years old	22%	49%	9%	20%

(Jensen and Hummer, 2002: 59f)

The motorized movement of children is even higher in rural areas and though difficult to quantify, the following parameters can explain the national change in mobile practice during the 1990s:

---

[3] In the following, year 2000 refers to an average aggregate of local and national surveys conducted from year 1998-2000. About 1500 persons took part in the national survey. An average of local and national surveys is used in order to prevent distortion of the aggregated result. The listed percentages illustrate a tendency and it is too detailed to describe the exact figures in this context.

[4] 1% is missing due to rounded figures.

- 5-10% of the increase is due to increased car disposal.
- 5-15% is due to the closure of local primary schools.
- 24-30% is due to a lower average age among children.
- 55-60% is due to changes in attitudes and perceptions.

(Jensen and Hummer, 2002:69)

The interesting major factor causing the generational change is different attitudes and perceptions, primarily a less positive parental attitude towards cycling. The general increase in car traffic as well as road safety campaigns and campaigns for bicycle helmet usage may have had the counter effect of increasing parental risk perception (Jensen and Hummer, 2002). The wish to protect their children from the threats of traffic through automobilization is prominent in our interviews with parents. Whereas statistics show a reduction in the number of road accidents involving children during the past decades (Jensen and Hummer, 2002), parents report an increase in their concerns about their children's road safety. On a societal level this dichotomy is reflected in ongoing academic discourses on whether our behaviour is guided by real or perceived risks (Giddens, 1999; Beck, 1992; Luhmann, 1991; Rasborg, 2002). Accordingly, one of the parents offers the following as explanation for chauffeuring her 11-year-old son:

> His childhood has definitely been different from mine. I have chauffeured him. That is because I have been extremely scared that something would happen to him. This is not a good town for cyclists. It really isn't. Traffic is tremendously heavy, many one-way streets, and many people who do not know the city and go the wrong way in one-way streets. But you also have to listen to what the children have to say. I guess that's what you forget in your busy daily round. I didn't really understand how much it affected my son. It was a problem for him that I didn't teach him how to behave in traffic. Only when he was teased because he was taken by car, I realized how much it affected him. And then I had to do something about it. Then it turned out that he was actually pretty good at cycling.

(Vera, mother of an 11-year old boy)

This quote reflects some of the dilemmas that parents face when they monitor the mobility of their children. Even though the monitoring is done with a caring rationality, it can transform into a control, which, in this case, the child did not benefit from. The dilemma between wanting to protect the child from traffic and other dangers while also wanting it to develop independence, is well known in literature on children's use of space (Valentine, 1999; Blakely, 1994). Thus it is important to dwell on the question, if the monitoring of children through accompaniment is an end in itself or a sociality guided by other motives and developed across generations. Analyses must be differentiated as to whether monitoring of children's mobility is a motive for chauffeuring them or an outcome of a social practice. Monitoring children can be an end in itself, but as stated above, other motives for chauffeuring them exist (see also Björklid, 2002; Olsen, 2003). In the following we will elaborate on some of the main competing motives.

Less documented than the need for supervision is the practical rationality that some case-studies list as parents' prime reason for driving their child to school by car, where driving children is

perceived as easy because parents go the same way themselves (Jensen and Hummer, 2002:36).

Still, we find several other reasons for chauffeuring children, some of which may be surprising. For instance, children report that they themselves initiate and organize their automobilization (Thomsen, 2004). Not only do they go by car as a result of their parents' wishes, they may themselves wish to go by car and manipulate events to make sure it happens. For instance, sometimes Karen and her sibling deliberately choose to go to school one hour before they have to, because this means that they can go by car. As their mother states:

> *Their father takes them in the morning – they are able to bike, but they want to be driven and then get to school one hour before they have to. And it's their choice. They choose to go by car one hour earlier.*
>
> (Sofia, mother of a 10-year old girl)

Another reason for chauffeuring children is to avoid conflicts between siblings. One of the parents reports that even though her twelve-year-old daughter is able to go by bike, she is allowed to go by car together with the younger sibling, who is not yet able to go by herself.

Chauffeuring children is thus not necessarily connected to monitoring them, as the sociality and intimacy created is highly valued by the parents. Chauffeuring children gives them a common experience as the following quotes show:

> *I am very often one of those who drive, because then we share that activity. That's nice.*
>
> (Vera, mother of an 11-year old boy)

A grandparent drives his grandson to trumpet lessons every week, and the mother reports:

> *You get to talk when you drive in the car. The best example I have is my father who drives Emil. He really feels that he has got a much closer relationship to Emil, because they discuss just about everything on those trips*
>
> (Jenny, mother of an 11-year old boy)

The parental chauffeuring of children may also compensate for the risk of being isolated. This is particularly the case for children in the countryside and in differentiated urban environments. Children rarely bike in the countryside because the roads are too dangerous – actually 24-47% of the children aged from 7-12 never or very seldom bike (Magelund 2002:40(n=931)). Chauffeuring children is good family practice in the countryside and a survey showed that four out of five parents perceived it a parental responsibility to drive children around (Magelund, 2002). As one mother said:

Children have become a status symbol if you live in the country. You have to be careful that they are definitely not isolated, so you drive much more with them.

(Magelund, 2002:53)

This tendency is also reported in Zeiher's (2001; 2003) description of how children's lives are increasingly insularized. Their daily life in the western world is increasingly institutionalized; they have lots of activities and often a tight schedule to attend during their day. The process of insularization is especially apparent in the case of children living in differentiated urban environments, where activities for children are not in the immediate surroundings of the home, but scattered all over the city. Their playmates and leisure activities are not next-door, but several streets away and they have to plan their day in exact detail; who they want to play with and which activities they would like to attend. As Zeiher (2003) writes about such a boy living in a middle-class district of Berlin:

Thomas and his friends have learnt to organize their own social lives across the spatial distances with the involvement of their mothers. The middle-class parents living in this local district saw it as their duty to provide their children with good developmental and learning opportunities, including the chance to engage in social learning by playing with their peers. When Thomas was younger, his mother ferried him from one island to the next, often by car, to playgrounds, an organized playgroup, the swimming pool, his friends' homes. His friends' mothers did the same. [...] Since then, Thomas is used to moving on the road only as a passenger between home and the scattered islands where he meets friends to play with, rather than playing outdoors in the vicinity of the house.

(Zeiher, 2003:77).

Zeiher's unique study highlights important tendencies as it shows that children's daily life is *highly networked,* and when they rely on adult orchestration of their mobility, they are not that place bound or immobilized.

General late-modern tendencies of reflexive individualization, transformation of intimacy and a general time-pressure in families (Bonke, 2002; Dencik and Schultz Jørgensen, 1999; Giddens, 1991/1992; Daly, 2001; Hochschild, 1997; Jensen, 2001; Kristjánsson, 1999) may encourage this tendency for parents to ferry their children. The reflexive individual planning is also current among children, who plan their every day mobility with parental ferrying in mind.

Furthermore, the current urban tendency towards increased spatial and functional differentiation, creating larger distances between activities and more traffic, is most likely to increase children's insularized mobility between islands of activities.

These tendencies raise many questions and worries about the conditions under which children, who are transported around in the private space-bubble of the car, get a sense of public city life; how they learn to cope with the many different unplanned events in a city while contemplating

every social activity in exact detail, and how they get a sense of public, democratic, daily life. At a larger scale these questions are linked to the worries of how private mobility affects civil society and the public sphere, whose ethical standard and social glue are often threatened by increased mobility (see also Bauman, 2000; Scheller and Urry, 2000; Sennett, 1992).

Reflecting on the character of surveillance by monitoring children's mobility, it is apparent that physically supervising children's movements in order to avoid risks is only one aspect of the chauffeuring practice. Sociality and intimacy, as well as the possibility of avoiding conflicts between siblings are also reasons for chauffeuring. The type of surveillance reflected above is also highly connected to those families who can afford a car and who have the energy and time to chauffeur. Families, who cannot, for economic or social reasons, escort their child, may be just as nervous, but forced to monitor their children's mobility in other ways. Parents can e.g. just as easily escort children by bicycle or walk; only the extent of that phenomenon is not known. Statistics do not account for this, whereas the increase in driving children by car clearly implies a growing monitoring of their mobility.

Ambivalent chauffeuring

As we have shown there are many different reasons for monitoring children's mobility by chauffeuring them. It is important to note, however, that several parents express feelings of being torn between different arguments for monitoring their child on the one hand and, believing that the child should have the right to independent mobility on the other. Parents also express powerlessness towards the auto-logic and experience chauffeuring their child as stressful. As a mother from the countryside sums up:

> *It is the way society functions – we drive our children too much, but we have to because you live so far from everything, and you are so busy and you have to get from one place to the other and we have our cars. It is that way now, but I actually think that it is a pity that the children are so dependent on their parents. That they cannot say: "I'm off – I'll be back in an hour", or something like that. They can't. And it is not just because we live here. You are generally more anxious today, with the dark, violence, the street and everything. And the consequence is that they are ferried around by us – that's a pity. It is such a lovely freedom to ride your bike and get the air in your head.*

<div align="right">(Irene, mother of an 11-year old boy).</div>

Interestingly, parents who do not escort their children by car may also be torn between the same kinds of arguments. While providing their children with some of the requested independent mobility, they on the other hand realize the risks and the often-narrowed geographical radius in e.g. attending leisure facilities that it brings about.

Also, the reader's attention should be drawn to the fact that in spite of the joys that children and parents experience driving around in the privatized space-bubble of their car, there comes a time where many children prefer to be able to move around independently. In our interviews, we find examples of how being able to move around in the neighbourhood on bicycle or by foot, is

closely connected to the possibility of being alone and letting thoughts run freely. When asked whether he preferred to be accompanied or to go by himself one of the children answers:

> *Go by myself, I think. You can almost let your thoughts run freely. You don't have to sit and listen or walk and listen. You are more yourself because you can just rip along.*

> (Ole, age 10).

Some interviews also show that children's favourite transport mode is differentiated along generational lines as parents state that the child's favourite transport is the car, while the child states that it is the bicycle (Fotel, 2004). This tendency is also documented in Nordic survey studies (Fyhri, 2002; Olsen, 2003).

But even if children move around unaccompanied they are not necessarily unmonitored. In the following, we expand on a kind of monitoring which does not require the parents' physical presence.

Parents' remote control of children's mobility

Parents' remote control of children's mobility is performed in multiple ways of which we will touch on two in the following; that is remote control through technology in the shape of phones and remote control through behavioural restrictions, for instance instructing children to use certain routes, to cross certain roads in certain places and so on.

On top of monitoring children's mobility through escorting them by car or other traffic modes, some parents also monitor their children's mobility from a distance. New technology has made it possible to monitor children by e.g. their cellular phones, and some parents use that deliberately in situations where the children are testing the boundaries of where they can go independently. One child has to call his mother everyday after school in order to report that he got safely home, and other children have to report their plans for the afternoon, who they want to play with and so forth. Interviews show numerous examples of how parents keep track of their children's position in space by making them call during the day to tell where they are or by providing them with their own cellular phone. The mother of a 12-year-old girl says:

> *Before, she used to come to see me at work or called to tell me, 'Mum, I will go to this child's house', and that was fine. Because then you know where she is. It is good to have that in mind that she will let you know where she is. For her birthday she got this cellular phone - earlier she had to arrange to meet other children a day in advance, and if plans were changed she was supposed to get hold of me. She can only really do that, now that she has the phone.*

> (Mary, mother of a 12-year old girl)

This quote illustrates how surveillance of children's mobility is not necessarily tied up with escorting and dependent mobility. If surveillance is performed by remote control children may even be able to achieve a more independent and flexible mobility – which of course does not change the fact that their mobility is still monitored and thus subject to possible regulation by their parents. If you push this argument to its limits, monitoring children through the use of technology may even grow extensively based on GPS technology, and the consequences of automatic and impersonal monitoring - conducted also through general CCTV systems in the cities - are yet difficult to predict[5].

Monitoring children's mobility from a distance seems to provide some parents with the feeling of control and thus seems to minimize their risk perception. The following quote illustrates this:

> *I also think that it is natural and healthy to be able to go somewhere on your own, but I get very anxious if my son isn't home the minute I expect him to be back. After approximately 10 seconds I get very worried that something may have happened. The first time he went up to the church on his own I gave him my cellular phone in order to be able to call home when he got there. The next time he went to the church I also wanted him to take the cellular phone and he said that he really didn't want to do that.*
>
> (Anne, mother of an 11-year old boy)

Another way of remote control is if the parent, instead of the child, is within reach by cellular phone:

> *I always know if my son goes somewhere by bike. We have this agreement in our family that we have to know where we are. My sons are always able to reach me. I have a business phone and a private one, and the latter is always on.*
>
> (Vera, mother of an 11-year old boy)

This quote illustrates how the mother monitors her 11-year-old son by being within reach. Remote control of children's movement clearly eases the parent's worries even though their opportunities to save the child from any danger are limited. Contrary to the supervision of mobility through escorting, remote control of mobility seems to minimize the perception of risk rather than the risk itself.

In between these two extremes of using surveillance for physical or perceptional risk reduction, we find yet another way of monitoring children's mobility; that is behavioural control, which consists of behavioural rules and restrictions that parents provide for their children. Just like the other remote control described above, behavioural control is performed from a distance. Behavioural control, though, is formed in advance and aims at bringing about both physical and perceptional risk reduction by urging children to move within safe routes and to avoid places that their parents perceive as unsafe. Thus, on top of traffic regulations – which shape the mobility of

---

[5] See: http://www.shef.ac.uk/ccr/publicity/conference/index.html

all people – parents provide their children with behavioural scripts for a number of traffic settings, which they find particularly dangerous.

The behavioural scripts that emerge from our interviews are mainly concerned with the crossing of roads. Many of the children we interviewed are not allowed to cross on their bicycle. They have to get off the bicycle and cross the street using the pedestrian crossing instead. The same goes for the crossing of streets in general. Children are asked only to cross streets at pedestrian crossings. There are several more rules and they all have one common feature: they reposition their children to a traffic environment where other traffic users are expected to pay extra attention to them. Thus, these rules transfer some of the child's responsibility for its own safety to other traffic users.

Surveillance of children's mobility by training them and ordering them to act in certain ways does not, of course, necessarily mean that children will in fact behave accordingly. To solve this problem, strategies for forming behavioural rules in ways that comply with both the parents' need for control and the children's wishes are used. One mother explains:

> *Lately he's been allowed to cross a major road nearby. He's even been allowed to cross it where there is no pedestrian crossing. All the time I feel under pressure to allow more than I can take and I do it because I understand the arguments he puts forward. The two pedestrian crossings are extremely far away from each other and if he wants to visit his friend who lives right in between on the other side it's a huge detour to use the pedestrian crossing. And I don't believe that people are like that…to make such a detour. If I'm pigheaded about this and as soon as I turn my back he stops doing it……… I'd rather teach him a strategy to get halfway without being hurt. Then he can cross one lane at a time. In the middle of the street there is a traffic island where he can wait and then face the traffic in the other lane. And then I just pray to Our Lord that the cars stay away from the traffic island.*

(Anne, mother of an 11-year old boy)

This is an example of how the monitoring of children's mobility unfolds in an ongoing dialogue between parents and children. It is important to note how this illustrates that children actively engage in planning their own movement and how they are not just objects of their parent's remote control. Space is negotiated (Valentine, 1999). In fact, children often internalize the control that parents exercise. They are quite aware of the power-relations in traffic and how they should watch out and observe the rules that their parents have sketched. This illustrates Foucault's (1991/1998) reflections on the nature of power: it is relational, very often hidden and reflected in social practice. Combined with Bourdieu's reflections on conflicting positions, the clashes of interests in the urban 'space wars' are easily identified (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Andersen and Fotel, 2003). In the field of traffic and urban politics especially, two conflicting positions have been identified, namely that of the accessibility of car-traffic and that of sustainability. The doxa of accessibility is traceable in every small detail of traffic regulation and

the heterodoxy of more sustainable oriented initiatives face extensive problems in manifesting itself (Fotel, 2002b).

 Here's how one mother identifies the doxa of the auto-logic:

> *It is all about the possibility of being able to move ahead quickly and comfortably in your car, and there is not really room for the fact that children must be able to move safely.*
>
> <div align="right">(Pia, mother of a 10-year old boy)</div>

Children face these relations of power by recognizing what can be termed 'the hegemony of the car' (Thomsen, 2004), and by exercising a high degree of self-control. According to Thomsen (2004), children report on a lack of respect for children that adult road users seem to have; e.g. being honked at by a male car driver when trying to cross the street at what they believe to be a green light or watching adults violating traffic regulations. Children cope with the challenges that they meet in traffic, as they form a part of their every-day life. This leads to the final reflections on the consequences of this practice in a welfare perspective.

Mobility, welfare and surveillance – concluding reflections

The above insights in the mobile practice of families illuminate both positive and negative aspects of the surveillance of children's mobility. Of these, we have illustrated mainly two different aspects: the accompaniment and the remote control of children. Even though some parents perceive it to be a pity that children are ferried around, they also feel powerless towards what we have termed as the auto-logic. At the same time, both parents and children may experience advantages in the chauffeuring practice. The remote surveillance of children's mobility by cellular phones or by behavioural rules are also perceived as ambivalent and contain both good and negative welfare aspects. Also it is worth noting that both the accompaniment and the remote control of children's movement have implications on the levels of independence in children's mobility whereas their actual reach may not be affected.

A concept of mobility related welfare resources is one way to achieve a greater understanding of this ambivalent welfare-mobility nexus. Welfare is traditionally conceptualized as individuals' command over objective resources as well as their subjective ability to command, cope and act on behalf of those resources (Allardt, 1975; Doyal and Gough, 1991; Gough 2000; Hansen, 1978; Sen, 1992; Williams *et al.* 1999). In this respect, mobility related welfare resources is defined as the objective resources, e.g. having a car, a bicycle or access to public transport and the economic ability to get a taxi if necessary, as well the subjective ability to cope with mobility in everyday life (Fotel, 2003a).

The curtailment of children's mobility by parental surveillance causes the parents to expend a lot of energy on something that is perceived by them as ambivalent and stressful. This is the case with monitoring children's mobility through cellular phones and behavioural rules. Even though parents may monitor their children because they care for them, the surveillance and control

following from it can be viewed as negative welfare indicator. Children's perception of the hegemony of the car and their identifications of the power relations in traffic contribute also to negative daily welfare because children's right to mobility is minimized. In this respect it is thought provoking that the UN charter on children's rights does not comment on their right to mobility (Rosenbaum, 1993; UN, 1989). The larger negative consequences of curtailing children's mobility by monitoring it, is expressed by a mother in this way:

> *It will be incredibly sad if we reach the point where children aren't able to cycle anymore because it is too dangerous. First of all, it gives them a kind of freedom and independence to be able to get yourself where you need to go. So I don't think we can do enough to create safe cycle areas. I find it extremely important; I would hate to see a generation of children, who grow up in the backseat of the car, who cannot take care of themselves and who... I think it would rub off on all kind of other areas as well. If you cannot take care of yourself. I think it would rub off. How are you supposed to take care of your personal hygiene and figure out what you like, if you cannot even get yourself where you want to go? So I think it's extremely important that we give our children this opportunity. We just need to create surroundings to support it.*
>
> (Pia, mother of a 10-year old boy)

The mother stresses the need for creating secure physical neighbourhoods where children can move independently, but research shows that parental risk perceptions are not dependent on the public provision of physical infrastructure (Valentine and McKendrick, 1997). This is also apparent in neighbourhoods with e.g. independent bicycle lanes. There is a higher degree of independent mobility amongst the children, but the pivotal aspect determining the character of children's mobility is still the parental perceptions of stranger-danger and general insecurity (Fotel, 2004).

In conclusion, physical improvements such as e.g. safe bicycle lanes are only part of the solution. Furthermore, separate bicycle lanes confine children to certain spaces and places without changing the fundamental relations of power in traffic. Thus, parents have great anxiety that children used to separate bicycle lanes are unprepared and untrained for normal traffic regulation (Fotel, 2004). The central question can be boiled down to whether children should continue to be withdrawn from the threats of traffic or whether the threats of traffic should be withdrawn from children by taming it (Hillman, 1993).

In this perspective, initiatives such as safe routes to school and e.g. walking busses (where several children from a certain area walk to school accompanied by an adult) will only be attractive in the long run if they are followed up by intense general traffic regulation. Children's independent mobility will be markedly improved and the parental need for surveillance will be minimized when the doxa of the auto-logic is challenged and changed. Examples of this could be slower speed in school and urban areas, longer time for pedestrian crossing, the extension of space for pedestrians and bicycle lanes while reducing car accessibility.

The concept of mobility related welfare could enrich the debate on the surveillance of children's mobility and bring forward a nuanced perspective on the ambivalent character of children's mobility. Mobility related welfare contains three dimensions, namely mobility related welfare resources, economic resources and the character of the physical environment. Mobility related welfare resources consist, among other things, of parents' ability to cope with their children's mobility, torn between monitoring them versus letting them move around independently and torn between rationalities of care and control (for the latter aspect see e.g. Lyon, 2001; 2003). Future research along these dimensions can shed light on these dilemmas and also indicate how socio-economic parameters and physical planning influence children's mobility. For example, how do low-income families and single mothers without a car, in comparison to other family types, relate to children's mobility?

The dominant trend of surveillance of children's mobility – by the traffic system in general, by parents and internalised by children themselves, is backed by the tendency of insularization. The insularization process seems primarily to be a middle class phenomenon, as parents own a car and invest a lot of time and energy in chauffeuring children to various leisure facilities scattered in time and space. The private space-bubble of the car can create intimacy and valued sociality, but carries at the same time various problems; i.e. the families may experience time pressure and stress. In the long run this privatised mobility may also affect the character of civil society and public space and minimize social trust and democratic participation as a consequence.

By understanding the variety in children's mobility and in the surveillance carried out, the welfare of families can be enhanced and the contemporary traffic regulation improved. Minimizing the parental risk-perception by deconstructing the stranger-danger discourse, regulating traffic and improving physical infrastructure would - according to the analysis in this article - improve mobility related welfare. While one effect of chauffeuring children around in a car is that their mobility is monitored, some children enjoy it and they may even choose to be driven by car. We label this phenomenon children's semi-independent mobility, as these children are quite competent planners of their own automobility while their parents willingly drive them around.

Our findings thus force us to question our views from an ethical standpoint and ask whether chauffeuring children is really that bad. Should semi-independent automobility not be the right of every child? This question opens up huge dilemmas and goes right to the heart of contemporary discussions on mobility and welfare.

A society based on even more automobility, will only increase the monitoring of children's mobility both in families with and without a car. The mobility of children, whose parents do not own a car, will furthermore be increasingly curtailed and restricted. As illustrated, children experience the hegemony of the car and some even feel immobilized by car traffic.

As independent mobility should be part of children's rights in a just and sustainable welfare oriented perspective, the solution is thus not to have all children going by car. As illustrated above, this is not something that parents want either, it just happens to be a part of the everyday auto-logic. Our findings do not lead us to judge whether there has been an increase in the general surveillance of children's mobility, but we have illustrated current tendencies of the phenomenon

as well as the delicate dilemma of care and control, which require public debate. Central future discussions thus have to further focus on the kind of mobile every day life that families want because it will help us understand the dimensions of inequality and welfare and contribute to alleviate the negative aspect of parental surveillance of children for both parents and children.

References

Alanen, L. (2001) Explorations in generational analysis. In L. Alanen and B. Mayall (eds.) *Conceptualizing Child-Adult Relations*. London and New York: Routledge/Falmer, 11-22.

Allardt, E. (1975) *Att ha Att Älska Att Vara. Om välfärd i Norden*. [To have, to love, to be. Welfare in the Nordic Countries.] Lund, Sweden: Argos Förlag AB.

Andersen, J. and Nordgaard Fotel, T. (2003) Kampen om byens rum [Urban space wars]. In Andersen J.A. *et al.* (eds.) Empowerment i Storybyens Rum – et socialvidenskabeligt perspektiv. [Empowerment in Metropolitan Space – from a social science perspective] København: Socialpædagogisk bibliotek, 75-113 .

Barker, J. (2003) Passengers or Political Actors? Children's participation in Transport Policy and the Micro Political Geographies of the Family, *Space and Polity*, 7(2): 135-151

Bauman, Z. (1998) *Globalization: the Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid Modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity.* London: Sage.

Beckmann, J. (2001a) Heavy Traffic – paradoxes of a modernity mobility nexus. In L. D. Nielsen and H .H. Oldrup (eds.) *Mobility and Transport – An Anthology* Note no. 01-03. Copenhagen, Denmark: The Danish Transport Council, 17-26.

Beckmann, J. (2001b) Risky Mobility, The filtering of automobility's unintended consequences. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen.

Björklid, P. (2002) Parental restrictions and children's independent mobility. Paper presented at IAPS 17 A Coruña, 23-27 July, 2002. Available from: The Stockholm Institute of Education. Department of Educational Research.

Blakeley, K. (1994) Parents' conceptions of social dangers to children in the urban environment, *Children's Environments*, 11: 16-25.

Bonke, J. (2002) *Tid og Velfærd*. [Time and welfare] Report 02:26. Copenhagen, Denmark: Socialforskningsinstituttet.

Bourdieu, P. and J. D. Wacquant (1992) *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Carstensen, T. A. (2001) Børns transportvaner - trafikstrukturer og børns selvstændige mobilitet. [Children's travel habits – traffic structures and children's independent mobility] In A. Lohmann-Hansen and J. Nielsen (eds.) *Trafikdage på Aalborg Universitet. Denmark*: Aalborg Universitet, 153-161.

Castells, M. (1996) *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age Vol. 1*. Massachusetts/Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Christensen, P. and A. James (eds.) (2000) *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*. London: Falmer Press.

Christensen, P. and M. O'Brien, (eds.) (2003) *Children in the City: Home, Neighborhood and Community* London: Routledge/Falmers.

Daly, K. J. (2001) Deconstructing Family Time: From ideology to Lived Experience. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63: 283-294.

Dencik, L. and P. Schultz Jørgensen (1999) Introduktion. In: Dencik, L. og P. Schultz Jørgensen (eds.) *Børn og familie i det postmoderne samfund*. [Children and family in the postmodern society]. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 9-16.

Doyal, L. and I. Gough (1991) *A Theory of Human Need*. London: Macmillan.

EU (2002) *Kids on the Move*. Luxembourg: Environment Directorate-General. Office for official publications of the European Communities.

Foucault, M. (1991) *Discipline and Punish, The birth of the prison*. London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1998) *The will to knowledge, The history of Sexuality: Volume 1*. London: Penguin Books.

Fotel, T. N. (2002a) Rum, magt og mobilitet; et studie af trafik- og bypolitiske forandringsprocesser i Kgs. Enghave. [Space, power and mobility; a study of changes in traffic and urban policy] PhD Thesis. Department of Social Sciences, Roskilde University. Available online at: http://www.ssc.ruc.dk/workingpapers/

Fotel, T. N. (2002b) Researching Children: Ethical and methodological dilemmas. Conference proceeding at The Meeting between researcher and the field – methodological and ethical issues in qualitative studies. 9-10 December, 2002. The Danish National Institute of Social Research.

Fotel, T. N. (2003a) The Sociology of mobility in a welfare perspective – the need of revising central concepts. Paper given at The Danish Congress of Sociology, 20-22 February, Aalborg Universitet. Available online at: http://www.sociologi.dk/kongres03/wsdetail.asp?wid=8

Fotel, T. N. (2004 - forthcoming) Børnefamiliers mobilitet i to udvalgte skoleområder. [The mobility of families in two school districts]. Working Paper. Department of Social Sciences, Roskilde University. Available online at: http://www.ssc.ruc.dk/workingpapers/

Freund, P. and G. Martin (1993) *The Ecology of the Automobile* New York: Black Rose Books Ltd.

Fyhri, A. (2002) Barns reiser til skolen. En spørreundersøkelse om reisevaner og trafikksikkerhet på skoleveien.[Children's travel to school. A survey about transport mode and safety]. Report 616. Norway: Transportøkonomisk Institut.

Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press / Oxford: Blackwell.

Giddens, A. (1992) *The Transformation of Intimacy; Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies.* Cambridge: Polity Press / Oxford: Blackwell.

Giddens, A. (1999) *Runaway world: how globalisation is reshaping our lives.* London: Profile.

Gough, D. (2000) *Global Capital, Human Needs and Social Policies.* London: Palgrave.

Hansen, E. J. (1978) *Fordelingen af levekårene, Bind 1. Teori, metode og sammenfatning.* [The distribution of living conditions. Part1. Theory, method and summary] Socialforskningsinstituttet. Publikation 82. København: Teknisk Forlag.

Hillman, M. (1999) The impact of transport policy on children's development. Canterbury Safe Routes to Schools project seminar, 29 May, 1999.

Hillman, M. (ed.) (1993) *Children, Transport and the Quality of Life.* London: Policy Studies Institute.

Hillman, M. et al. (1990) *One False Move: A Study of Children's Independent Mobility.* London: Policy Studies Institute.

Hochschild, A. R. (1997) *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work.* New York: Metropolitan Books.

James, J. et al. (1998) *Theorizing Childhood.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jensen, M. (2001) *Tendenser i tiden: en sociologisk analyse af mobilitet, miljø og moderne mennesker.* [The tendencies of our time: a sociological analysis of mobility, environment and modern people] Samfundslitteratur. Frederiksberg.

Jensen, S. U. and C.H. Hummer (2002) *Sikre Skoleveje: en undersøgelse af børns trafiksikkerhed og transportvaner.* [Safe routes to school: an investigation of children's traffic safety and transport habits] Lyngby, Denmark: Danmarks Transportforskning.

Jørgensen, V. (2001) *Øjesten, Forældres brug af webkameraer i en integreret daginstitution* [The apple of the eye – parents' use of Webcams in a Day Nursery]. Speciale ved Psykologi. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Denmark: Roskilde University.

Kristjánsson, B. (1999) Hverdagslivet og tidens problematik. Nogle erfaringer fra en nordisk undersøgelse af børns opvækstvilkår [Everyday life and the problems of time. Some experiences from a Nordic investigation of the conditions under which children are brought up] in (L. Dencik and P. S. Jørgensen (eds.) *Børn og Familie i det Postmoderne Samfund*, Hans Reitzels Forlag, 132-155.

Luhmann, N. (1991) *Soziologie des Risikos* [The sociology of risk] Berlin: De Gruyter.

Lyon, D. (2003) *Surveillance after September 11. Themes for the 21st Century.* Cambridge: Polity Press

Lyon, D. (2001) *Surveillance Society; Monitoring Everyday Life.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Magelund, L. (2002) *Kollektiv Transport på landet - børn, unge og ældres perspektiv.* [Public Transport in the countryside – the perspective of children, young people and the elderly] Report 02-03. Copenhagen, Denmark: Transportrådet.

McKendrick, J. H. (2000) The geography of children. An annotated bibliography. *Childhood* 7(3): 359-387.

Miller, D. (2001) *Car Cultures Materializing Culture.* Oxford, New York: Berg.

O'Brien, M. *et al.* (2000) Children's independent spatial mobility in the urban public realm. *Childhood*, 7(3): 257-277.

Olsen, T. V. (2003) Hvorfor kører forældre deres børn til skole i bil? [Why do parents drive their children to school?] Unpublished PhD thesis. Denmark: Aalborg University.

Prout, A. and A. James (eds.) (1990) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood.* London: Falmer.

Qvortrup, J. (1994) *Børn halv pris. Nordisk barndom i samfundsperspektiv* [Children half price. Nordic childhood in a social perspective] Esbjerg, Denmark: Sydjysk Universitetsforlag.

Rasborg, K. (2002) Beyond the risk society. Paper presented at Nordisk Sociologkongres, Reykjavik, 15-17 August, 2002.

Rasmussen, K. (2003) *Kameraovervågning – i børns daginstitution?* [Surveillance by webcams in day nurseries]. Overvågningsprojektet – Del 1. Institut for Uddannelsesforskning. Roskilde Universitetscenter.

Rosenbaum, M. (1993) Independent mobility and children's rights. In *Children, transport and the quality of life*. M. Hillman (ed.). London: Policy Studies Institute, 19-27.

Scheller, M. (2002) Automotive Emotion: Sensual Velocities and the Ethics of Car Consumption. Under review. Department of Sociology, Lancaster University.

Scheller, M. and J. Urry (2000) The City and the Car. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 24(4) December 2000: 191-226.

Sen, A. (1992) *Inequality Reexamined*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Sennett, R. (1992) [1977] *The Fall of Public Man*. New York London: W. W. Norton & Company.

Shove, E. (2002) Rushing around: coordination, mobility and inequality. Paper for the Mobile Network meeting, October 2002. Department of Sociology, Lancaster University.

Thomsen, T. U. (2004 forthcoming) Children – automobility's immobilized others? *Transport Reviews*.

Urry, J. (2000) *Sociology Beyond Society: Mobilities for the Twenty-first Century*. London: Routledge.

United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child. Available online at: http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/44/a44r025.htm

Valentine, G. (1999) 'Oh please Mum. Oh please Dad'. Negotiating children's spatial boundaries. In L. McKie *et al.* (eds.) *Gender, Power and the Household*. Basingstoke: Macmillan: 137-154.

Valentine, G. and J. McKendrick (1997) Children's Outdoor Play: Exploring Parental Concerns About Children's Safety and the Changing nature of Childhood. *Geoforum* 28(2): 219-235.

Wilhjelm, H. (1999) *Hvor har du vært? – ingen steder. Miljøtilknyttede infrastrukturer og barns hverdagsliv – En kunnskapsoversikt.* [Where have you been? – Nowhere. Infrastructures connected to the environment and children's everyday life] Rapport nr. 52. Norway: Norsk Senter for Barneforskning (NOSEB).

Williams, F. et al. (1999) *Welfare Research, A critical perspective.* London: UCL Press.

Zeiher, H. (2003) Shaping daily life in urban environments. In Christensen, P. and M. O'Brien (eds.) *Children in the City: Home, neighbourhood and community.* London: Routledge Falmers, 66-81.

Zeiher, H. (2001) Children's Islands in Space and Time: The Impact of Spatial Differentiation on Children's Ways of Shaping Social Life. In M.S. Bois-Reymond *et al.* (eds.) *Childhood in Europe, Approaches - Trends – Findings.* New York: Peter Lang, 139-159.