



# The Copenhagen Stories

Of everyday life and the car

A Master Thesis in Nordic Urban Planning Studies

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# Abstract

In contemporary life, the reflections and ambivalences of mobility choices in everyday life takes place as individuals have to be constantly reflexive about decisions, experiences, and possible risks within the mobile risk society. As the number of privately owned cars are rising steadily in the city of Copenhagen, there is an increasing focus on creating livable cities. Studies are increasingly focusing on robust, socially cohesive, and inclusive mobility systems that answer to the consequences of climate change and enabling sustainable cities that not only caters for the systems of automobilities.

This thesis explores the reflections and ambivalences that are present within a group of 11 young Copenhageners and how car use relates to their everyday lives, based on the following research question:

*How are concerns of sustainability in the everyday life of young Copenhageners embedded in the reflections and ambivalences of mobility choices?*

With inspiration from Malene Freudendal-Pedersens *structural stories* and Nina Moesby Bennetsens *small stories* I explore, through an abductive approach, how a group of young Copenhageners relate the car to their everyday life and how negotiations of sustainability and coping with risks takes place. Analytically I find how the car is understood as an enabler of possibilities in relation to: children, summerhouse, family and free time. I conclude by arguing that for this specific group of young Copenhageners, there are reflections to be found about the unintended consequences of car use and that there may be a tendency towards a new form of informed reflections that questions the production and reproduction of automobility and all of its unintended consequences.

# Acknowledgements

The thesis you are about to read is the culmination of the last two years of my master's studies in Nordic Urban Planning Studies from Roskilde University in Denmark, Tromsø University in Norway, and Malmö University in Sweden.

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Secondly, I would like to thank every one of the participants who took the time to tell their stories and answer my (sometimes) weird questions. It has been a great pleasure to be able to get a glimpse of your daily lives. There would not have been this thesis without you!

I would also like to thank all my friends and professional colleagues with whom I have had nerdy conversations about this topic, especially Ida Marie Nygaard Christensen whom I have developed my interest in this field of research together with. And to Caroline Samson with great inputs to gain focus.

This thesis is my humble contribution to the area of sociological everyday mobilities and a glimpse into the lives of young Copenhageners and some of their stories and reflections. This thesis is written on the basis of a genuine desire to transform the cities we live in - for the better.

Enjoy the reading

Rasmus Koustrup Larsen

Copenhagen, December 1, 2022

# Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Problem area	5
Problem formulation	8
Structure of the thesis	10
<b>Chapter 2: Telling the story</b>	<b>12</b>
Building upon earlier work	12
Mobility regimes & Societies	13
Climate change and sustainability	14
Reacting to climate change	16
Ready for change?	17
<b>Chapter 3: Doing the Research</b>	<b>20</b>
Methodology	20
Qualitative Method	21
Young Copenhageners	22
Picking participants	24
Working with the empirical data	26
<b>Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>28</b>
The Arena of ontology and epistemology	28
Theoretical Framework	30
The mobile risk society and the ambivalences within	30
Everyday life	32
The urban sphere and the mobilities within	34
<b>Chapter 5: The Copenhagen Stories</b>	<b>38</b>
Copenhagen and the car	38
Not an everyday car	45
Reproducing structures	50
<b>Chapter 6: Concluding remarks</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Literature</b>	<b>61</b>



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

# Chapter 1: Introduction

In the introductory chapter, I will outline the problem area that leads to my problem formulation and the supplementary sub questions I am working with. I then present the overall structure of the thesis, after which I present the analysis strategy.

## Problem area

About a year ago, I had a conversation with my girlfriend about getting a car, at least at some point. I am not keen on the idea, given the fact that I am an engaged bicyclist and believe that it should be possible to live without a car in the center of Copenhagen. She argued, the car would enable us to visit friends and family outside of Copenhagen and, more importantly, make things easier in a future that involves kids. And so, in the name of compromise, I told her that the only way I would be able to morally justify owning (or at least have access to) a car was if we would have a summerhouse.

I had stumbled upon these thoughts before, especially among young people living in Copenhagen. As a topic for future research, I was drawn to the reflections and ambivalences of morally navigating the mobilities of everyday life. This is especially based on the understanding of how mobilities relate to contemporary cultural norms that are firmly anchored in the mobile risk society (Freudendal-Pedersen et. al. 2020; Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2018; Kesselring 2008). In this regard, I point towards the need for robust, socially cohesive, and inclusive mobility systems, as contemporary studies are pointing towards (Freudendal-Pedersen et. al. 2020; Sheller 2018; Sheller 2020). Especially mobility systems that go beyond just transportation networks and connections if we are to develop sustainable mobility practices (Freudendal-Pedersen et. al. 2020). In 2007, Malene Freudendal-Pedersen publishes her Ph.D. dissertation *Between Freedom and Unfreedom - Structural Stories about mobility in everyday life*. She discovers the ambivalences of late modern society and the structural stories that play a vital role in the choice of transportation, as well as how (un)freedom is embedded within these choices, using a sociological approach to everyday mobilities (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). The phrases “when one has kids, one needs a car” and “society is arranged around automobility and one

can therefore not live without a car” are examples of universal structural stories that are told in relation to everyday life (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). Many of the complexities of mobility in everyday life serve as the foundation for this thesis (Bech-Jørgensen 1994; Pink 2012). The structural stories are frequently used to communicate our perceptions of how mobility manifests itself in our everyday lives (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). The intriguing thing about structural stories is that they are presented as universal truths that come to serve as an apparent rationale for everyone when we have to choose which form of mobility we should utilize in everyday life (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007; 2022). Because of the way structural stories frame our ambivalences, the story appears to be a rationality that everyone can accept (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007).

With an inspiration in the structural stories I focus on a group of young Copenhageners. Not to find the stories that everyone can accept, and not to find rationalities that serve as an apparent rationale for all, but rather an exploration on a group of young Copenhageners to open the reflections of mobility and especially the car on this specific group. The structural stories serve as an inspiration for researching the reflections and ambivalences of everyday life mobilities. This is done on the basis of the mobile risk society that entails uncertainty as an ontological condition (Kesselring 2008). And with climate change as a condition for everyday life that emphasizes the inevitable reflexivity that is increasingly demanded of individuals (Beck 2010; Freudendal-Pedersen 2016; Kesselring 2008; Bennetsen 2021). Especially given the massive shift in how we talk about climate change and sustainability (Bennetsen 2021), and with reflections of car *ownership* increasingly being transformed into car *access* (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022), as well as an increase in self-aware reflections on the consequences of cars in the urban planned cityscape (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Martin 2021). Additionally, with concepts arising such as flight shame (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021), a focus on car-free cities, (Nieuwenhuijsen & Khreis, 2016), and concepts such as the 15-minute city (Samson & Freudendal-Pedersen 2022) the urban citizens of 2022 and their choices of mobilities are intertwined in a web of ambivalences (Hartmann-Petersen 2009; Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). Ambivalences are considered inevitable in contemporary everyday life, as individuals have to be constantly reflexive about decisions, experiences, and possible risks (Beck 2009;



Hartmann-Petersen 2009; Kesselring 2008). Freudendal-Pedersen (2007) describes how this individualization of choices of mobilities is described by some of the characteristics that define the time we live in: lifestyle, time pressure, risks, ambivalences, reflexivity, security, freedom, etc. (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). On this basis, there is an increasing need for information about what drives and inspires people to choose particular forms of mobility, not just in terms of their identities but also in terms of the production and reproduction of societal mechanisms (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). The risks and ambivalences are closely related to the consequences of climate change, and on this basis, sustainable mobilities become one of the many ways of acting as an individual (Beck 2009; Bennetsen 2021; Urry 2011). Studies suggest that Danes are generally concerned with climate change and sustainability, and 95% of all Danes say that they have either changed behavior at some point or are willing to change behavior in regards to climate, environment, and sustainability (Landbrug & fødevarer 2020). However, concerning putting the action into practice, the actions that related to mobility (using the car less, buying an electric car, and using public transport more) are all ranked as some of the most difficult actions to change in everyday life (Landbrug & fødevarer 2020). Similar studies have found the same results (Forbrugerrådet 2019; Afry 2016; Information 2015). Because those mobility changes are still some of the most difficult to change in everyday life, the focus of the car in the life of young Copenhageners is a focal point for this research.

Within the peer-reviewed scientific literature, there is a greater than 99% consensus on human-caused climate change (Lynas et al., 2021). Climate crises, as well as attention to the consequences of fossil fuels, a need for change in mobility systems (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). Road transport accounts for roughly one-fifth of the European Union's (EU) total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, of which passenger cars are accountable for 75% (European Commission 2015; EEA 2015). Furthermore, transportation is the only major sector in the EU where CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are still rising (European Commission 2016). In the case of Copenhagen, up to 26% of cars are idle from Monday to Friday, which results in vast amounts of public space being occupied by idle cars and thus reproduces a system of car ownership (Urban Creators 2021). And in the last 9 years, we have seen an increase in car ownership of 28% (Københavns Kommune 2022). Previous studies have shown that shared car schemes can

replace 5-10 private cars (Urban Creators 2021). Similarly a study from DTU on car sharing indicates that the intention to postpone or do without buying a car is high among carsharing users, when they become a member, but also that changes in car ownership often turn out to be related to life events, such as moving or a family increase (Urban Creators 2021).

The vast majority of cities around the world have one thing in common: they are primarily rooted in and defined by the car (Sheller & Urry 2000). Likewise, cars occupy large areas in urban space (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007) and thus affect not only those who drive but also those who do not (Sheller & Urry 2000). And as such mobility for some, is immobility for others (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). Mobility is an essential part of everyday life, and the car is a means of being able to move (Sheller & Urry 2000; Urry 2007), and for an individual's identity, being able to get from one place to another plays a big role (Urry 2007). Keeping in mind that still more cities around the world work dedicated towards sustainability, and the fact that increasingly academic literature points to the need for changes, there is thus, a serious push towards the concept of sustainability (Freudendal-Pedersen et. al. 2020; Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021). It underlines not only the need for a modal shift away from the private car as the center of modern mobilities, but rather a shift towards it being a system of mobility as a service. (Freudendal-Pedersen et. al. 2020; Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021). And so *"If we want to change practices, we need to take practice seriously"* (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022: 30).

Therefore, by talking to a group of young Copenhageners, I explore their reflections about car use in their everyday lives. How do concerns, risks and ambivalences unfold in their reflections, and can they become enablers for change? This lead me to my problem formulation:

## Problem formulation

*How are concerns of sustainability in the everyday life of young Copenhageners embedded in the reflections and ambivalences of mobility choices?*

To answer my problem formulation, I have developed three sub-questions that focus on specific aspects of the problem to work with the overall problem in the most manageable way.

1. How are theoretical concepts of the mobile risk society, everyday life, climate change, sustainability and mobility choices connected and how do they contribute to analytically answering the overall problem formulation?
2. How do mobility choices of young Copenhageners and reflections about sustainability and climate change interrelate?
3. Which reflections and ambivalences are connected to car ownership in the every life young Copenhageners?

## Structure of the thesis

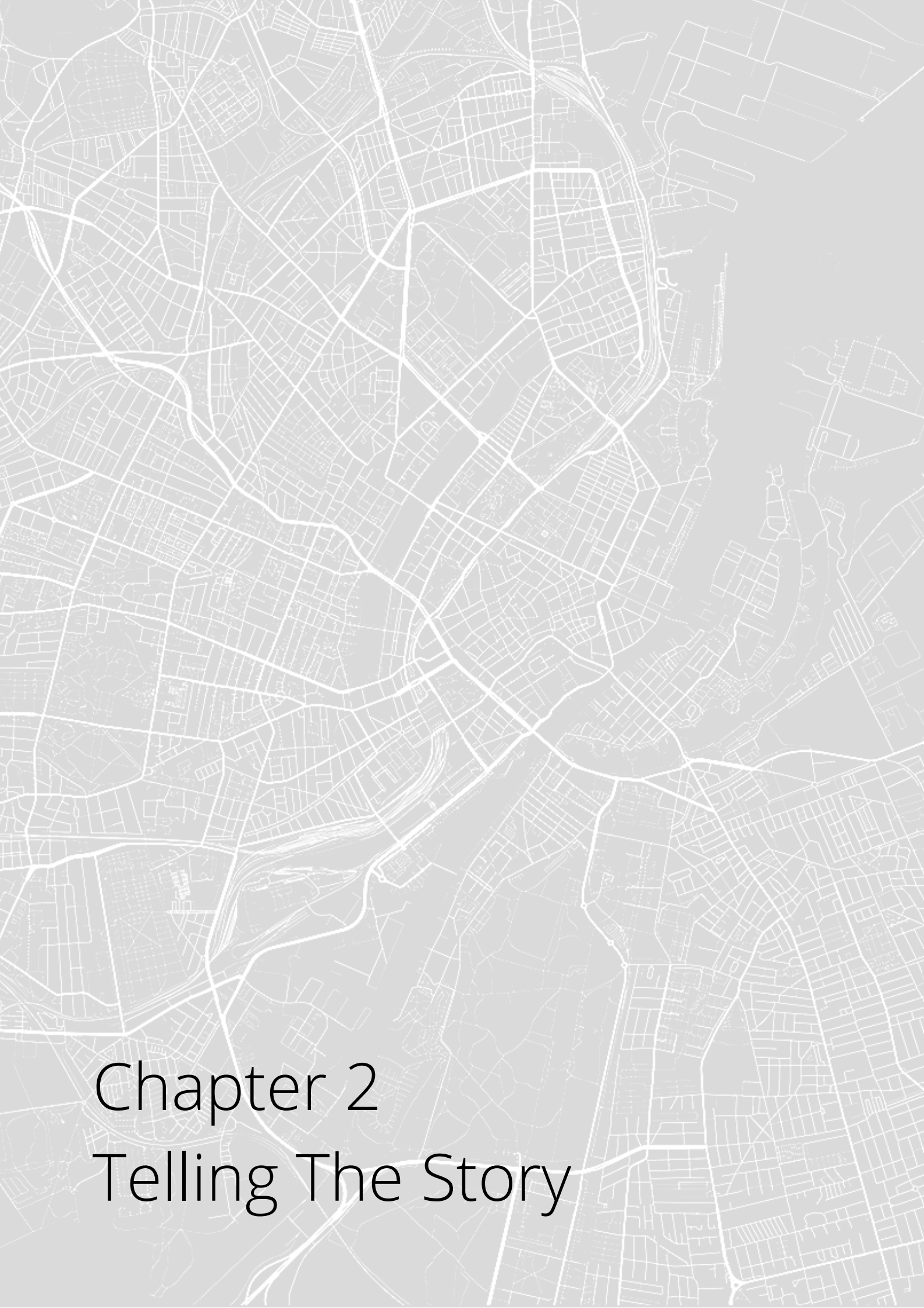
I have presented the problem area and research question that this thesis revolves around. To build an empirical foundation for why it is important to develop a sociological understanding of notions of sustainability and mobility choices in everyday life, I will initially frame the narrative of the research area and how I seek to contribute to the field of research in Chapter two: Telling the Story, with an introduction to relevant research, how I position myself within this area, and the research gap I seek to fill. As such, the thesis will be framed geographically and empirically, thereby determining the relevance of the subject.

In chapter three, I present the chosen methods and, thus, my methodological approach and considerations. I will present the qualitative interview and the framework for producing the empirical data through qualitative interviews. Furthermore, I will present the participants and some of the considerations that have led to that specific group of participants, as well as present the generalizability of the study conducted.

To answer the problem formulation, it is crucial to understand the interaction between theory and method, especially in the light of the ontology and epistemology. Therefore, in chapter four, I present my ontological basis for the field of research and how this scope influences both theoretical and methodical considerations and vice versa. This leads me to the second part of chapter four, where I present the chosen theories that lay the foundation for an understanding of the empirical data. The overall theoretical frame is situated within the understanding of the mobile risk society. It is with this understanding of society that I present the everyday perspective, with Birte Bech-Jørgensen's definition of everyday life. This also means that my understanding of the reflections from young Copenhageners and their mobility choices are closely intertwined in everyday life, and so the meaning-making processes are developed in a dialectic process between the individual and their surroundings. To add to this, I will present the urban sphere as the planned physical space that every life takes its place within. Lastly I present Zygmunt Bauman's considerations of freedom in relation to mobility.

In chapter five, the empirical data of young Copenhageners is the analytical focus. The analysis sets the basis for the participants' reflections of sustainability and mobility choices in everyday life. The analysis explores how negotiations are made in everyday life to cope with reflections on sustainability, as a concept concerning climate change, and how these reflections impact mobility choices. The analysis consists of three parts: First I present how the car is present within the lives of the young Copenhageners. Thereafter I will explore the car as an enabler of possibilities on the basis of four essential reflections that connect closely to the stories of the need for a car, this being: children, summerhouse, family and free time. Lastly, I'll delve into the conflicting feelings, and reflections particularly the negative ones, about the unintended effects of owning a car.

This leads me to the concluding remarks, in chapter six where I present how my findings and the contributions of my thesis.



# Chapter 2

## Telling The Story

## Chapter 2: Telling the story

In the following chapter, I will unfold the area of research and how this thesis is situated in relation to other research. Therefore, I will present the state of the art of relevant research, how the thesis is situated within the area, and the research gap I seek to fill. The sociological approach to the planning area is presented as the focus point of the area I place myself and the thesis within. As a result, I will also discuss the thesis's relevance within the field of research as a realm between everyday life and the mobility choices we make, as well as how these choices connect to reflections on sustainability.

### Building upon earlier work

My opening to this research area and the design for inquiring about the reflections of mobility choices stems from earlier work that touches upon the same research area. Thus, I build upon my bachelor thesis, which studied the structural stories of everyday life mobility in the Danish city of Holstebro and how these stories clashed with the development that initially envisioned a reduction of cars in the city center (Christensen & Larsen 2020). Not to say that this thesis can be seen as a continuation of the work conducted through my bachelor thesis, but the reflections and knowledge I have gained through the process leads me to the development of this thesis. What was especially interesting in regards to the bachelor thesis was that we had multiple openings in the structural stories, which meant that there was a basis for a change in mobility choices and a greater understanding of planning changes. For structural stories to unfold as a basis for change, clear municipal communication is needed; First, clear communication about what was physically developed in exchange for parking lots and car-oriented streets; Secondly, the municipality had a substantial responsibility as facilitators and communicators of the benefits of a car reduction in the city center of Holstebro (Christensen & Larsen 2020). A motivation for developing upon the reflections of mobility and especially the car, in this thesis, is to incorporate the increasing focus on sustainability and knowledge about climate change. Due to the increase of car ownership, and at the same time, a decrease of bicycle use in the city of Copenhagen (Københavns Kommune 2022), I find it relevant to discover the stories

of young Copenhageners. Therefore, there are still questions to be answered about the seemingly taken-for-granted reflections about the choices of mobilities and notions of sustainability and sustainable living (Bennetsen 2021; Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). The questions are all part of a perspective to answer as to how urban residents break out of existing mobility schemes and the reflections and ambivalences that lie within the realm of everyday mobility choices (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Hartmann-Petersen 2009; Kesselring 2008). As we increasingly see both academically and in political and civil life across the globe, there is a stronger and increased focus on transitioning cities, zero-emission mobility solutions, and concepts such as transitional mobility (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007, 2016, 2022; Samson & Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Freudendal et. al., 2016; Nieuwenhuijsen & Khreis 2016; Martin 2021; Sheller 2018, 2020).

Analytically diving into the reflections of everyday mobility is first and foremost based on Malene Freudendal-Pedersen's analytical concept of structural stories (2007), as well as inspired by Nina Moesby Bennetsen (2021) and the term 'small stories' that explores young Copenhageners stories about experiencing and responding to climate change in everyday life, and are related to the structural stories (Bennetsen, 2021). The concept of small stories are detailed accounts that represent what is found challenging and taken for granted about an issue (Bennetsen 2021), whereas structural stories are condensations of common stories about an issue (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016). In the same manner, and related to respectively Freudendal-Pedersen (2007) and Bennetsten (2021), I will analytically be discovering the reflections for a group of young Copenhageners, building on top of both understandings in the light of climate change and sustainability reflections on mobility uses in everyday life.

## Mobility regimes & Societies

Modern civilizations have created highly sophisticated and powerful infrastructures around mobility for speed, flow, and social cohesiveness which is a result of mobility (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021: 2). These mobility regimes that accompany the materialities of the mobile society are concentrated on the technical artifact of the



automobile (Urry 2004) as a technology that may bring freedom, flexibility, and, also now with COVID-19 increased safety and security (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021: 2). Concerning mobility use, we have seen how a pandemic such as Covid-19 can be a major factor in changes in behavior and mobility patterns (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021: 2). The concept of Kesselring's (2008) 'mobile risk society' (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2018; Kesselring 2008), is based on Beck's (1992) concept of the 'risk society' focuses on the unexpected repercussions and disruptive dynamics of modern societies' constant mobility. It sees climate change and the role of mobility as a mutually reinforcing component, a fundamental issue, a threat, and a disruptive process that calls into question the current way of life and the consumption it entails (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021: 2). The focus on the mobile risk society will be unfolded in the theoretical chapter as a key analytical concept.

## Climate change and sustainability

In recent years, the concept of sustainability has been widely described in the literature (Beck 2010; Bennetsen 2021; Fjalland 2019; Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021; Jouzi et. al. 2021; Martin 2021; Nieuwenhuijsen et. al. 2016; Norgaard 2011; Samson & Freudendal 2022; Soneryd & Ugglå 2015; Urry 2011; Sheller 2020; Weder et al. 2020). The concept is negotiated in public spheres, at least in western countries, in which sustainable development also contains normative ideals and principles (Weder et al. 2020). Some of these include responsibility for future generations, living up to global climate agreements, protecting the environment, participating in responsible development, as well as engagement (Weder et al. 2020). In this regard, sustainability is being linked as closely related to climate change especially (Bennetsen 2021; Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021; Urry 2011; Sheller 2020). Since it is now recognized that climate change has a significant impact on social interactions, social scientific study on the topic is now considered to be of comparable importance to natural scientific research (Bennetsen 2021; Beck 2016; Fjalland 2019; Urry 2011). Sustainability is frequently related to environmental challenges such as global warming, or climate change but also social issues such as poverty and social inequality, as well as economic issues such as resource inadequacy (Bennetsen

2021; Urry 2011; Weder et al. 2020). Despite how frequently sustainability is discussed in various discourses and public processes and debates, a discernible definition of the word has rarely been addressed and examined (Giovanni & Fabietti 2013). According to Giovanni and Fabietti (2013), this is due to the term's multifaceted (environmental, social, and economic) and integrated definition, which produces friction between the different dimensions and understandings (Giovanni & Fabietti 2013). In cities, the question of sustainability is also closely related to cars that occupy large areas in urban space (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007, 2022; Martin 2021).

There is a growing academic research area that focuses on the individual and accountability for sustainable choices in everyday life, as well as individual reflections (Bennetsen 2021; Fjelland 2019; Samson & Freudendal 2022; Soneryd & Uggla 2015). Academic research on mobility choices concerning climate and sustainability has up until recently been mostly occupied by the focus on individual responsibility which is also apparent in public debate and media (Bennetsen 2021; Norgaard 2011). While international negotiations, as well as local and national initiatives, are answering the growing range of climate and environmental problems, there is rising attention to individuals and their consumption, transportation and food (Samson & Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Soneryd & Uggla 2015). Attention to the environmental impact of individuals is often answered by "simple solutions" such as choosing public transport or changing light bulbs (Soneryd & Uggla 2015). However, in a broader individualization process: citizens are increasingly referred to as actors who *"understand and enact their lives in terms of choice"* (Rose 1999, 87). This method of addressing citizens is a critical component of regulatory mechanisms that rely on the concept of "free will," which implies the individualization of responsibility (Soneryd & Uggla 2015). The modern idea of the individual presupposes a specific sense of individual freedom and responsibility, which Beck (2009) refers to as 'institutionalized individualism.' Rose (2000) refers to 'technologies of freedom,' which control through the individual's free choice. In this discourse, *"each person [is] obliged to be prudent, responsible for their own destinies"* (Rose 2000, 324), and *"each person [is] obliged to be responsible for the global environment."* (Rose 2000, 324). This results in a form of self-regulation that leads to a paradoxical situation for the individual.

## Reacting to climate change

The notions, debates, and urgency of climate change and sustainability have drastically changed within just a decade. Climate change has previously been understood as a distant phenomenon that will have a drastic impact on lives in the future (Beck 2016; Bennetsen 2021). At the same time, because the phenomenon has been considered temporally distant in everyday life for people in the global north, responding to it has proven difficult (Beck 2016; Bennetsen 2021). When environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg reached the global arena in 2018, 'flight shame' (Swedish flygskam) quickly became a new discursive framing of flight mobilities in the climate change discussion (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021). The phrase "staycation" has similarly entered common usage as a descriptor for the ethically sound method to spend holidays at home, and flying has been associated with fear and the need for justification rather than luxury and excess (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021). We have also seen that in Denmark, in recent municipal and national elections, the climate has been the single most important issue for all age groups (Eberholst & Blach-Ørsten 2021; Stubager & Hansen 2021). Climate change has shifted from being predominantly addressed by natural scientists to being seen as a problem that affects people's social life to the point where social scientific research on climate change has become just as essential (Beck 2016; Norgaard 2016; Urry 2011). As such, climate change now has a strong presence in Danish political and public debates, the media, and all levels of planning (Bennetsen 2021). Most Danes still perceive climate change to be a serious problem to be concerned about (Concito 2020; Rambøll 2019; Landbrug & Fødevarer 2020). An analysis suggests that Danes are generally concerned with sustainability and climate change and that 95% have either changed their behavior or are willing to change their behavior regarding climate, environment, and sustainability (Landbrug & fødevarer 2020). The same analysis presented 35 different actions that participants can do to help concerning climate, environment, and sustainability, and extends over several different types of consumption - everything from flying less, eating more fruit and vegetables, using less plastic, eating less meat, using public transportation more, using the car less, and buying an electric car (Landbrug & fødevarer 2020). The analysis showed that when questioned about how easy or difficult it would be to put the

action into practice, the actions that related to mobility (using the car less, buying an electric car, using public transport more) were all ranked as some of the most difficult actions to change in everyday life, compared to actions such as eating more vegetables or using fewer plastic bags (Landbrug & fødevarer 2020: 21). When asked how big an impact these actions will have on creating a positive impact on climate, environment, and sustainability, actions such as buying an electric car, driving the car less, or using public transport more, were all ranked in the higher end of having a big impact (Landbrug & fødevarer 2020). This dichotomy is relevant because it shows that there is a need for a deeper understanding of individual accountability for mobility choices and how the choices we make in everyday life are constructed through structuring and restructuring (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022), as well as how those changes are so hard to make in everyday life. In the case of notions of sustainability and mobility choices, there exists a rising discourse on the environmental challenges that are connected to the use of fossil fuel-based mobility options, especially towards the use of the automobile (Urry, 2007, Sheller 2020, Kesselring 2008). For the individual to act sustainably in everyday life, can thus require effort, as well as cause inconvenience, and conflict (Soneryd & Ugglå 2015).

## Ready for change?

Within the last decade, a small revolution has been happening as micro-mobilities, shared riding systems, and urban plans that integrate MaaS and rental bikes are more and more becoming a part of cities as of 2022 (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022, Martin 2021). With digitalization and smartphone apps that have enabled users to access multimodal mobility services and enabled shared mobilities, we start to see changes towards Mobility as a Service (MaaS) (Hensher et. al., 2021). Even though, for many planners and politicians today, restricting car ownership can still be unthinkable. However we have seen that agendas that focus on making and remaking urban space for moving, living, and dwelling are typically more accepted (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). While some of these plans include some extent of restrictions on car ownership and driving, they place a strong emphasis on developing livable green cities with active green mobilities, and so far, their implementation

in various urban areas has proven to be a very effective method of reducing the negative effects of automobility (Freudental-Pedersen 2022).

In his PhD dissertation from 2021, *Points of Exchange: Spatial Strategies for the Transition Towards Sustainable Urban Mobilities*, Robert Martin draws inspiration from a number of cities, including Ghent and Barcelona, to develop a plan to remake Copenhagen (Martin, 2021). The starting point is a car-free city, organizing daily life while limiting the spatial need for a car-dependent city (Martin, 2021). Through two workshops on the development of Copenhagen, Robert Martin uses a visualization to discuss the concept with key stakeholders (Martin, 2021). The potential designs for this were visualized in the first workshop, and the second workshop further enhanced the visualization based on the discussions from the first workshop. Developing on the plan of Copenhagen, a key objection from key stakeholders were concerns of not being too radical in the development, regarding limiting cars (Martin, 2021). This objection was also connected to concerns of the plan being too radical to be implemented. Returning to the second workshop, the general concern for the stakeholders upon seeing the refined visuals was that it was not radical enough. Accordingly, the participants would ask why there were so many cars in the revised visualization (Martin, 2021). Thus, visualizing the ideas became an enabler for urban futures (Martin, 2021). These findings, together with the findings of my bachelorthesis where we found that a shift in communication was needed. From a focus on removing car parking to instead focus on all the benefits of freeing the planned physical space from car use into livable spaces that enables play and dwelling (Christensen & Larsen 2020). What's more, In 2019, Copenhagen municipality put together a citizens assembly (borgersamling) consisting of 36 citizens to come up with recommendations towards a transformation of Copenhagen's medieval inner city. On this basis, the assembly recommended a reduction of traffic of up to 75%, a 80-90% reduction of parking, significant speed reductions, better bicycle parking and greener non-commercial public spaces (Københavns Kommune 2019). On this basis it is relevant to discover further how young Copenhageners reflect upon cars in the city. Also given the fact that within mobilities, we see that a shift from ownership to access is slowly emerging (Freudental-Pedersen 2022). We also see a rising focus on concepts of livability, and question of the physical fabrics of

cities, especially regarding the unintended consequences of cars (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Martin 2021) Furthermore, there is as an increased focus on concepts of climate change and sustainability (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022), and therefore there is a need to look at how the stories of mobilities are reframed for young Copenhageners. As a consequence of all these changes and shifts we see emerging, a new level of reflexivity may be achieved toward livable cities that cater to the good life (Sheller 2018).



# Chapter 3

## Doing the research

## Chapter 3: Doing the Research

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodological approach and empirical data preparation. To begin, I will present why the overall methodological approach is appropriate for the empirical data collection and how it aims to uncover the everyday stories and how they connect to notions of sustainability, and mobility choices. The qualitative semi-structured interviews are presented as the central method for the data collection as well as the strengths and weaknesses they possess. In continuation of this, I present and consider the choice of participants and the development of the interview guide.

### Methodology

The data for this research is gathered based on notions of the everyday life of young Copenhageners and their mobility choices. The knowledge I gather is based on subjective knowledge of processes and opinions, and the choices that are made in everyday processes. The methodical approach leads to an investigation of the reflective processes of everyday life, sustainability, and mobility choices (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). With this scope it is the social phenomenon that manifests itself in the stories which are connected to mobility choices. Through an open qualitative sociological approach to the research question, I seek to identify the interviewees' subjective experiences and opinions that are central to the empirical data collected. The qualitative interview method can accommodate both social phenomena and the reality in which they are rooted.

It is not the purpose of this study that the opinions of this group of participants must be generalizable to any context. My research has aimed to explore the reflections of mobility that are found within a group of young Copenhageners. To be able to empirically uncover the stories, I am qualitatively approaching data as a way to interpret how reflections of everyday life and mobilities are produced and reproduced, and negotiated in a social realm. In this thesis, a small group of participants - 11 young adults who live in Copenhagen, a group I refer to as young Copenhageners - are asked to describe how sustainability affects their everyday lives and their thoughts on owning and using a car. My goal has not been to



find all-encompassing or objective truths about the area of research, but rather to investigate how reflections of sustainability, mobility, and car use are produced in many ways in everyday life, in this particular group of young Copenhageners. The empirical data, and thus the information I gather, can be understood as local knowledge (Nielsen 2007) and shows how participants' experiences come to form a shared story. Even so, a common story must be able to accommodate differences, because different people and groups have different experiences that should be highlighted in public communication (Nielsen 2007). This means that while I may find shared stories, these stories exist through different perspectives and are based on different everyday lives. The method involves speaking with young Copenhageners, and why their statements and everyday life experiences are important for an understanding of everyday processes. The goal was to learn more about *"how everyday problems are connected with overall societal conditions"* (Andersen & Hovgaard 2009: 104) and how the large history is expressed in the little story, not that the interviewees should constitute one diverse or representative group or that their statements should be generalizable (Andersen & Hovgaard 2009: 104). In this manner, it is intended to investigate how societal factors influence how one set of people navigates daily life. The interviews focused on the respondents' realities and began with questions regarding their day-to-day lives. The knowledge produced can thus, not be generalized, but it is local knowledge - a shared story (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015). In this case, examining young Copenhageners' stories about mobilities, thus I can conclude on this specific group of individuals (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015).

## Qualitative Method

To explore and produce the empirical knowledge to answer the problem formulation of the thesis, I build the methodological frame around the qualitative methods that enables me to collect knowledge that is produced through interpretive and procedural notions (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2018), where the knowledge is generated between the researcher and the object in a conversation whose direction and outcome are not predetermined (Freudental-Pedersen 2007). As a result, carrying the obtained knowledge is also distinguished by being knowledge that changes and develops (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2018;

Egholm 2014; Kvale and Brinkmann 2015), just as I, modify and develop my knowledge and focus through the process. Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) underline the relevance of such an approach: "If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk to them?" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015: 17). As I aim to understand the world from the perspectives of the subjects, unravel the significance of their experiences, and unveil the lived world - all without the prejudice and bias of science (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015: 19).

Methodically I have relied on semi-structured interviews as the main approach to interpret and explore the reflections and perspectives that are unfolded within the scope of mobility in everyday life. While you are reading the product of my work that has been conducted, the research is shown as a more or less linear strict product that seems to be unfolding as you are reading through. However, this thesis is a product of constant dynamic development which as for most qualitative research, is somewhat bumpy to an extent. This means going back and forth between approaches, and theoretical understandings, and through a development that was constantly evolving in between discussions with my supervisor and professional colleagues. Much of this is the case for a research process that is characterized as an abductive research design, in which the development has gone back and forth and in a spiral (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2018; Egholm 2014).

## Young Copenhageners

Focusing and picking young adults between the age of 25 to 35 in the city of Copenhagen lets me dive into a specific target group. This specific group of informants is called young Copenhageners within this thesis. The selection of this specific group is based on years of observations and talks with young people in the same age group as me. The talks and observations fueled a need for further and deeper research. Methodologically, I have had a chance to put my reflections and observations to use, not only while conducting the interviews, but also when choosing the theoretical basis as a triangulation between the experienced, observed, and theoretical approaches (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). With young Copenhageners as a target group, the experiences they have concerning everyday life are at the foundation of the scope of the research. As such, the area of research is very much

connected to and based on the traditions of the qualitative study area, with a narrow(er) focus and thus investigates the intricacies of individual experiences (Neergaard 2007). The participants have been purposefully selected with whom the characteristics fit the research question and design (Neergaard 2007). It is within this group of participants, I conduct the in-depth interviews and provide detailed subjective descriptions from a limited size of individuals (Neergaard 2007).

Choosing to work with this limited sampling group in the age of 25-35, also means that there are some considerations behind, which in part, have developed through many years, of studying some of the conflicts, notions, and experiences that revolve around mobilities, sustainability, urban and spatial changes, all within a scope of the experienced subjective everyday life. Developing upon this scope in this thesis means focusing on a specific target group. Focusing on young Copenhageners is in part due to some of the challenges that the city of Copenhagen faces in terms of planning (urban) mobilities and the rise of private car ownership, but also a national and international scope of sustainable everyday practices, in which the car has a fundamental impact (Freudendal-Pedersen et. al. 2020; Samson & Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Sheller 2018; Urry 2007).



process of moving as a transition phase for sustainable consumption (Samson & Freudendal-Pedersen 2022), others have argued how transitions such as having children can lead to transformations within mobility use (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Scheiner and Ray, 2020). Having interviewed 11 people, 6 of them had at least one child, and the aspect of children and mobility use was therefore a theme that was incorporated into the interview guide.

Participants	Age	Area Of Copenhagen	Car Usage / Ownership	Kids	Education
Oliver & Lene	29 & 30	Nordvest	Rental / Leasing	1	Graphical Designer & Nature Management
Malte & Sara	29 & 30	Nørrebro	Considering owning or leasing	2	Civil Engineer & Landscape Architect
Thomas & Maja	32 & 31	Tingbjerg	Owens a car	2	Metal Worker & Culture Operations Manager
Nanna	27	Valby	Boyfriend owns a car	2	Insurance Agent
Sille	29	Nordvest	Former car owner	0	Design Engineer & Sustainable Urban Development
Vega	28	Sydhavnen	Considering leasing / Rental	0	Urban Planner
Rasmus	34	Nørrebro	Owens a car	0	Building Construction Technologist
Mathilde	26	Sydhavnen	Former car owner	0	Urban Environmental Planner

Figure 2: List of participants

The methodical choices concerning Copenhagen have given an angled knowledge about the everyday stories which is present for the participants (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). The interviews are based on the interviewees' daily lives and experiences. With the interviews, I have inquired about their daily routines and habits, as well as their ideas on sustainability and mobility, to gain insight into their impressions and taken-for-granted acts of everyday life. The empirical data is thus based on the interpretation of the interviewees' stories and perceptions of their own everyday lives; the thesis analysis is based on the interpretation of the interviewees' stories and perceptions of their own everyday lives. To interpret and analytically work with the participant's statements as an understanding of their reality

means that the interpretation is based on their statement as the empirical data. This is to get insight into and comprehend the participant's perceptions of their own daily lives and verify if they do what they say in the interviews in their daily lives. As a result, the subject field is the reality of the interviews as a basis for the analysis. With this approach, I do not criticize or challenge the validity of the participant's remarks made throughout the interview.

## Working with the empirical data

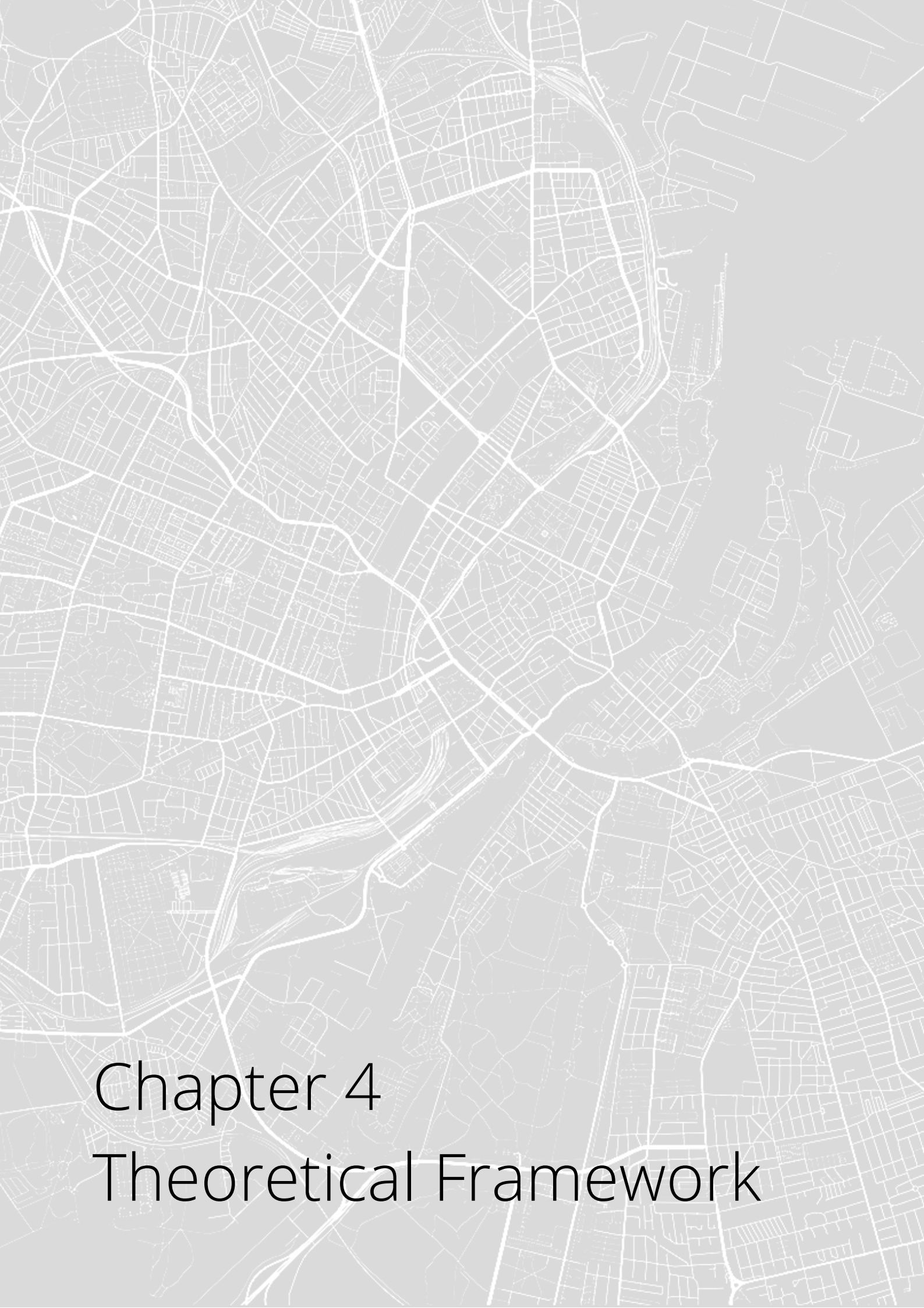
Working analytically with the problem formulation is done through an abductive process involving the interaction of empirical and theoretical foundations. The condensations of the participants' statements are done as analytical condensations to understand the interviewees' dealings with late modern everyday life. Thus, the categorical condensation is not predefined or adapted to the empirical data, but developed based on the empirical data with a foundation in the applied theory of the analysis. Hartmann-Petersen argues how the creation of such condensations might sometimes appear to shape itself as a result of the alternating between the empirical and theoretical material: *"This is most likely - and hopefully - a question of how the material is condensed and molded in relation to and in dialogue with its own context."* (Hartmann-Petersen 2009: 61). With the motivation to understand the everyday dealings and actions with sustainability and mobility, it's difficult to avoid the normative understandings and dealings with concepts and actions. Individuals' everyday handling is an expression of their normativity because it deals with how they handle everyday life. When I talk to others about their everyday lives, I naturally reflect on my normativity and become conscious of my notions and ideas of everyday life.

Working with the process of developing the analysis is as much connected to the development of the rest of the thesis and throughout the research process, analytical work has been a reflexive continual effort and not just the work I completed throughout the last stages of the process. Approaching the analysis is thus similar to the abductive process (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2018). As a beginning of the process of developing an early research question, to developing an approach based on early theoretical readings, the analytical

approach is first and foremost based on the interviews, and analytical coding and thematization of the empirical data, going back and forth between early hypothesis and the collected empirical data. Thus, working with the analysis forms an interaction of both bound by a theoretical and empirical basis. Combining a theoretical onset to working with the empirical data, while being open to new interpretations and openings was at the core of the analytical strategy.

The empirical data consists of the transcribed sound files which were all conducted and danish and transcribed in danish. All used parts for the analysis are then translated into English. Throughout the transcription process, an overview of the material is obtained which not only sparks an initial coding process but has also brought me back to the experience of the situation of interviewing (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). The interviews were carried out within the framework of the thesis' ontological and theoretical foundation since the interview guide was theoretically motivated. In order to give the numerous reflections and stories in the compilation of all interviews of some organization, I have organized the interviewees' accounts into topics (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). This kind of analytical condensation can reveal some of the dilemmas and ambivalences that one can encounter in the mobile risk society (Hartmann-Petersen 2009; Kesselring 2008). Coding the transcripts of the interviews served as the foundation for the creation of the analytical chapters. The majority of the codes and categories formed from an interaction between, on the one hand, the theoretical concepts and on the other, the data collected. Coding the material was conducted using the Google docs add-on, Highlight tool, which enabled me to format and sort my transcriptions into overall categories listed as the following:

- Children
- The Weekend Car
- Sustainability
- Reproducing Structures
- Ride sharing
- Public transport
- Economy
- Bicycle



# Chapter 4

## Theoretical Framework



## Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

Within this chapter, I present my methodological choices, and the ontological as well as an epistemological arena that has laid the foundation of the thesis, followed by the theoretical framework of the thesis.

### The Arena of ontology and epistemology

The understanding of the field of research is from my ontological and epistemological points of view intertwined and stems from both (mild) constructivism, phenomenology, and critical realism. This lays a foundation for my approach to the research area wherein I explore and understand the empirical data. The scientific theoretical starting point serves as the foundation for the theories and methods I have chosen, as well as the interactions between them. The theories, the analytical approach, and practices have been evolving and changing continuously. As you are reading this, the work that has been produced has been a back-and-forth process, while not linear, but rather in a spiral (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018). To picture this, and how the process has been unfolding, you could think of it as an arena where different approaches have been tried out as an ongoing process. In this arena where my ontological and epistemological groundings exist, I have continuously developed the best practice for my approach. As such this is a trial and error process on, for example, how to theoretically approach the interview guide, how to work with the empirical data, and how to analytically navigate through to the conclusion. In this arena, there exist different approaches at the same time that may go in different directions but still co-exist in the same arena. This means that the traditions I build upon for my research are in some ways associated. As such, the phenomenological approach that associates with critical and hermeneutic approaches lays the foundation for a social constructivist approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018).

Just as I have presented how I am influenced and add to the works of Malene Freudendal Pedersen (2007) and the *structural stories*, as well as Nina Moesby Bennetsen's *small stories* (2021), my ontological point of departure is somewhat similar (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007;

Bennetsen, 2021). Since I do not address the question of whether there is a reality that is incomprehensible to humans, this research is grounded ontologically in mild constructivist and phenomenological approaches (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018). Although phenomena may occur that are unknown to humans, the focus is to examine how people interpret the things that we experience and come to understand as reality in everyday life (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). According to the constructivist viewpoint, there is no single approach to understanding a phenomenon, because various problems and occurrences are given various interpretations in various settings (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018). The constructivist perspective to comprehend the relationship between the individual and society serves as a key framing element for the interaction between theory and method (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). Researching the subject, I choose the strategy of a qualitative and contextual approach. Ontologically, it is about understanding experienced reality as a construction, where the main concern is how the phenomena are produced in the specific context rather than the nature of the phenomenon itself (Egholm 2014; Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018). Thus, I perceive and learn about the phenomenon of mobilities regarding everyday life as a continual becoming, since the phenomenon is replicated and remade every day (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007), which is an essential distinction to my ontological starting point.

The theoretical framework and approach are sociologically founded but reach into different realms of contemporary everyday life, mobilities, risk, and sustainability. Thus, the theoretical approach is somewhat eclectic in the sense that I draw on multiple theoretical orientations, which calls for a somewhat disciplinary openness since I draw on concepts that stem from mobilities, sociology, and anthropology. Going beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries can be beneficial in this regard, as a wide range of mobilities research has shown (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2016; Moesby-Bennetsen 2021; Sheller 2014). Working transdisciplinary can allow for an understanding of the dialectic processes between actor and structure, between daily life, urban planning, and between individual and society (Samson & Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Moesby-Bennetsen 2021). I approach not only the sociological concepts and the methodological approach but also the theoretical framework and concepts with an open scope and somewhat disciplinary

broad-mindedness. I will therefore unfold the theoretical framework which is highly influenced by the transdisciplinary broad-mindedness that is all within the arena that I situate myself in, regarding ontology and epistemology, as described.

## Theoretical Framework

As I have presented the ontology and epistemology I will, in the following, be presenting the theoretical framework within the mobile risk society and how the following theoretical concepts take place in this sphere, where everyday life and all its mobilities take place, as well as the ability to transition. It is within this sphere that I analytically approach the empirical data.

### The mobile risk society and the ambivalences within

Beck has coined the term *risk* as a central concept, and as such an inevitable condition for social life in contemporary societies (Beck 2009). The idea of a *world risk society* (Beck 2009) introduces reflexive modernity as a replacement for modernity, in which the modern life modernity and the development that followed the industrialization leads to policies that can answer these issues, as well as reflexivity (Beck 2009). The risks that follow as a consequence of the modern (or late modern if you like) society, call for reflexivity towards the uncertainties and the knowledge of transnational risks, such as the consequences of climate change (Beck 2009; Kesselring 2008). Whereas risks have always been present in human life, in present modernity, risks occur as a consequence of decisions and developments in technology, instead of external events to society (Beck 2009). One of the most present risks in today's society is climate change according to Beck (Beck 2009). As climate change is such a potent threat that it is unpredictable in its outcome and consequences, and as such making it impossible to know or predict, which in return makes individuals rely on expert knowledge to respond and act to the risks that arise as a consequence (Beck 2009; Urry 2011). With climate change as an uncertain and complex condition in everyday life, there is a demand for individual reflexivity, inextricably linked to everyday life (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016; Kesselring 2008; Moesby Bennetsen 2021), and it

is discussed as a complex condition that causes uncertainty in everyday life and requires individuals to be reflexive about global phenomena (Norgaard 2011; Urry 2011).

The "mobile risk society" (Kesselring, 2008) is a concept used to describe how the development of automobility concerning climate change is causing tensions in everyday life and producing ambivalences (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Kesselring, 2008). In the analysis I will be referring to cars, understood within a system of automobility. In the mobile risk society, individuals are themselves in charge of navigating and negotiating through the choices and complexities of everyday practices (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Kesselring, 2008). As a consequence of individualization, responding to the problems that follow with cars and climate change can lead to apathetic feelings of dealing with the issues or even ignoring the problems (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). Emmy Laura Fjalland sums up this response: *"A response to environmental change can be paralysis, ignorance, denial, anxiety, and these can be performed in multiple ways"* (Fjalland 2019, 27). Additionally, the ambiguities and ambivalences that are seen as unavoidable in modern-day life might muddle our awareness of what constitutes a suitable answer and heighten our sensation of being unresponsive (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016). And with the case of Young Copenhageners, they might be perceived as more responsible to act and respond than those with fewer resources or less knowledge available (Moesby-Bennetsen 2021). Climate change as a condition for everyday existence emphasizes the inevitable reflexivity that is needed of individuals, drawing on concepts from risk society that include uncertainty as an ontological condition (Beck 2009; Freudendal-Pedersen 2016; Moesby Bennetsen 2021). With a constant need for reflexivity in terms of decisions and the possible risks that follow, individuals will meet ambivalences as an inevitable consequence hereof (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). Freudendal-Pedersen (2007) connects the ambivalence that follows with mobility options of everyday life and the inherent inequality these choices also contain (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). While the choices create opportunities, they can also be action-limiting and thus be both a capital and a burden (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). The ambivalences are in this context considered inevitable in contemporary everyday life (Hartmann-Petersen 2009), and just as in the case of mobility choices, the uncertainty of the effects of one's actions are not black-and-white, making the ambivalences challenging to manage (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). Ambivalences

are not only about well-studied differences between what people think and do, like knowing about the environmental consequences of driving a car (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). Ambivalences also aid in comprehending negotiations when disputes arise between the desirable and the possible, between the ideal and the pragmatic (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). Thus, all these ambivalences and the concepts of sustainability and climate change are seen as part of, rather than separated from everyday life (Beck 2016), however many social scientific studies have found that on the question of climate change, the issue can be described as spatially and temporally distant in everyday life in countries in the global north (Beck 2009; Bennetsen 2021). However, Bennetsen (2021), finds that for a group of young Copenhageners, the concept of climate change was talked about as a phenomenon that is both near and distant in their everyday life (Bennetsen 2021). It is described as both a risk and a present condition, as well as the expectation of upcoming events (Bennetsen 2021). Bennetsen makes the case that it is crucial to investigate this dual impact of climate change because it can contribute to conversations about the nature of the problem and the reasons why it is challenging to address in urban planning as well as in research (Bennetsen 2021). And as these global risks and issues are perceived and experienced in everyday life, making meaning of a sometimes meaningless reality is important and can be done in conversations with others (Beck-Jørgensen 1994; Norgaard 2011). This leads me to a presentation of the next theoretical concept of everyday life.

## Everyday life

As described, everyday life takes place in the mobile risk society (Freudental-Pedersen 2022; Kesselring, 2008; Moesby Bennetsen 2021). Therefore I will be drawing upon the definition and understanding of everyday life, based on Birte Bech-Jørgensen (1994):

*“Everyday life is the life we live, maintain and renew, recreate and re-create every day. This life can not be defined, at least not with sociological concepts. What can be defined are partly the conditions of everyday life and partly how these conditions are handled.”* (Bech-Jørgensen 1994: 17).

According to Bech-Jørgensen, it is the activities that are renewed, reshaped, and recreated through the conditions of everyday life that are the starting point for an analysis of how certain people handle the situational conditions through which the concept of everyday life develops. Freudendal-Pedersen (2007) describes the linking of everyday life to mobility in that we create a personal identity when we link the various forms of participation in everyday life, e.g. in our homes, in the labor market, and not least in traffic (Freudendal-Pedersen: 2007). Thus, the scope is not everyday life, but the activities that shape everyday life, and within that scope, the dealings, ambivalences, and choices in everyday life. Malene Freudendal-Pedersen points to the fact that everyday life, with all its culture, ethics, and morals, is as such the full life: *it consists of many different activities demanding different types of responses, but it is still the full life* (Freudendal-Pedersen: 2022). In this scope, the full life also inherits the leisure life and the mobilities which enable the activities within. As for cars and the increase in both numbers and use, Freudendal-Pedersen points to the fact that it has much to do with political economy, but a part of it has something to do with everyday life with all its emotions and feelings (Freudendal-Pedersen: 2022). Giving voice to the trivial activities of everyday activities is ever important when dealing with mobilities, and the changes in practice can lead to sustainable mobilities (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022).

Large parts of everyday activities go unnoticed and can be described as *“everything we do that we do not notice that we are doing, but not unconsciously”* (Bech-Jørgensen 1994). It is the unnoticed activities that recreate and reshape the common-sense taken-for-granted understanding of everyday life and both restrict and facilitate daily activities (Bech-Jørgensen 1994). Beck-Jørgensen defines everyday life as a processual grip rather than a substantial grip and states that everyday life must be described by the concepts that describe or denote the activities, relationships, and processes through which everyday life is recreated and re-created (Beck-Jørgensen 1994). Concerning changes in everyday life, these can be caused by internal or external conditions (Bech-Jørgensen 1994). The internal conditions are our unnoticed activities or what we want to change in our everyday lives. The external ones, on the other hand, are caused by something external, such as socially created institutions (Bech-Jørgensen 1994). The notions of a good life, routines, disruptions

as well as global and local challenges merge and collide in everyday life (Bech-Jørgensen 1994; Freudendal-Pedersen 2016).

About the changes that can arise, Bech-Jørgensen (1994) points to three types of changes; Displacements, ruptures, and shifts, in which everyday life conditions can be more or less noticeable and comprehensive (Bech-Jørgensen 1994). Displacements are the smallest-scale changes and are described as a rearrangement of the taken-for-granted of everyday life, whereas rupture occurs when there has been exactly the right amount of displacement of the taken-for-granted (Bech-Jørgensen 1994). The ruptures of everyday life are happening with the process of displacements, which in turn results in shifts that eventually occur when displacements result in more displacements and ruptures (Bech-Jørgensen 1994).

## The urban sphere and the mobilities within

The physical planned space is the realm in which this every day life takes place and is shaped (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). The physical space is a planned reality, which defines the external conditions (Bech-Jørgensen 1994). It is thus essential to illuminate everyday spaces and their planning, to also understand planning, within an urban area such as the city of Copenhagen, how the reflections, ambivalences, risks, and meanings are socially or intersubjectively produced, and how individuals and societal structures are mutually influential as individuals both structure and are structured (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016; Moesby-Bennetsen 2021).

In order to better understand the scale of planning and policy there is a need to discover why things are important to people (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). At the same time, the emphasis on the everyday aids in comprehending aspects of policy and planning (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). Imagining urban futures and changing the unsustainable practices of everyday life should therefore start by concentrating on understanding the everyday size of mobilities (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). It is extremely undervalued how

important the trivial and banal accounts of daily life are, if the goal is sustainable futures (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022).

The structural stories are thus embedded within a local physical context where they are produced, reproduced, lived, and relived (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016; Jensen 2013). As a result, everyday life takes place as inextricably intertwined in the physical urban sphere in a continuing dialectic process (Moesby-Bennetsen 2021). As far as the urban sphere and physical space are concerned, the urban planning which takes place is, as I have described, not only intertwined in and with everyday life but at the same time, the planning of the urban realm is closely connected to the structural stories and vice versa (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016). As urban planning continues to be dominated by a traditional approach to transportation, increased attention is however being paid to the impact of mobility on climate change and to developing cities for people (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022).

Introducing mobility as intertwined in modern societies, John Urry's (2000) book *'Sociology Beyond Societies - Mobilities for the Twenty-first Century'*, the concept of mobility sheds light on the perspective of movement in everyday life for both individuals and societies (Urry 2000; Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). The mobilities term is derived from the emerging interdisciplinary field of mobilities research (Urry 2000; Sheller 2014; Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Hannam & Kesselring 2016). As a concept, it includes both large-scale and small-scale movements of people, goods, capital, and information daily (Freudendal-Pedersen et al 2017). The mobilities paradigm has during the last decade sparked interest in a variety of sectors and influenced research on a variety of issues (Freudendal-Pedersen et. al., 2017). Mobilities have throughout history resulted in positive economic and social outcomes such as wealth, freedom, flexibility, and exchange while simultaneously increasing inequality, environmental issues, acceleration, and volatility (Freudendal-Pedersen 2009; Freudendal et al 2017). Urry describes how mobility historically has been associated with the promise of frictionless speed as a means to a better and happier life (Urry, 2007), but instead the unforeseen consequences of achieving the ideal of "seamless mobility" and a "zero-friction society" revealed themselves as traffic congestion, noise, and environmental issues (Freudendal-Pedersen et. al., 2017).



Within everyday mobilities, unintended consequences play a role in today's complicated and time-constrained world, so a great deal of information must be integrated into everyday decisions (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). To be able to understand how the unintended consequences of cars plays a role in the life of the young Copenhageners, I will be employing a theoretical understanding of freedom, as an analytical concept to help understand how the notion of ableness to move, connects to the everyday life of young Copenhageners, therefore I will be utilizing Zygmunt Bauman's (2003) definition of freedom. Under the conditions of freedom, we can do what, under other conditions, would be impossible or risky; "We can do what we want" (Bauman 2003: 7). This connects closely to time as we can link this statement with time; "We can do what we want when we want" (Bauman 2003: 7). In this sense, mobility becomes a facilitator for freedom in the notion that increased mobility equals increased freedom (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). Freedom can thus be defined as freedom of movement precisely from this utopian notion of being able to do what one wants (Bauman 2003; Freudendal-Pedersen 2007).

Freedom as a relational idea is bound to a particular social context. As a result, freedom must be viewed concerning oppression and can only exist within a social context (Bauman 2003). As a result, according to Bauman (2003), the ability to act freely must entail that others' freedom of action is constrained (Bauman 2003). Thus, the desire and need for freedom can be attributed to the experience of oppression, which is the sense of being unable to carry on one's potential desires (Bauman 2003). The constraining of other's freedom will be used in the analysis to understand how car ownership produces reflections and ambivalences that resemble oppression and constraint. As the idea of freedom inevitably will be followed by the idea of unfreedom (Bauman 2003), the relationship between freedom and unfreedom is binary (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). This can be interpreted in terms of mobility in the same way Freudendal-Pedersen (2007) explains it, namely that what is mobility for some people is immobility for others (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). According to Bauman, freedom is not solely characterized by the lack of constraints but also by the availability of resources (Bauman 2003). And so, choosing what is 'right' or 'wrong' in everyday life is defined by an eternal balance between what is then regarded as

'right' or 'wrong', in which individuals must navigate how to best manage everyday life to improve their lives and the lives of their families (Freudendal et. al., 2017). Furthermore they must also manage this navigation on the basis of freedom or unfreedom (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). In this navigation, individuals' everyday mobility choices are heavily influenced by habits, routines, ambivalences, and irrational arguments (Hartmann-Petersen 2009). The focus on people's willingness to act on sustainable practices in everyday life shows a close relation to a focus on limited time in everyday life (Jouzi et al., 2021). Lately, there has been an increased focus in academia on the rhythms and practices of everyday life and the consumption habits that forms between temporalities and practices (Jouzi et al., 2021; Heisserer and Rau, 2017). The focal point of this paper is the scope of young Copenhageners, as their everyday life takes place in an urban space. In this urban space, notions, and perceptions of time, infrastructure and consumption are all connected (Samson & Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). Understanding urban mobilities is at the heart of the need to deepen the understanding of young Copenhageners accounts of mobility in everyday life. In the accounts of young Copenhageners there are also considerations of how the car is situated in the planned physical realm and what ambivalences that connect to all of the considerations in the mobile risk society. Therefore, understanding that these stories of everyday mobility can enable a process towards sustainable urban futures is crucial (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022).



# Chapter 5

## The Copenhagen Stories

## Chapter 5: The Copenhagen Stories

In the following chapter I conduct the overall analysis of the thesis and present the empirical data in relation to the theoretical framework. I present quotes from the interviews and explore the group of 11 young Copenhageners reflections of mobility choices. The analysis consists of three parts. In the first part I will discover how the car is talked about as a part of everyday life in Copenhagen. Afterwards I go further into the reflections of car ownership and access in relation to four central aspects for the participants. Afterwards I explore deeper into the ambivalences of car ownership in terms of reproduction of physical structures within the mobile risk society.

### Copenhagen and the car

As I have described in Chapter 3, I have chosen to interview young Copenhageners between 25 and 35 years of age, who consider themselves as someone who thinks about sustainable choices in their everyday life, and last but not least, if they have considered getting a car, have a car, or have had a car.

I asked all of the young Copenhageners how the car could contribute to their daily life within the city of Copenhagen. For two of the participants, car use was connected to commuting outside of the city, however not as a fixed practice from monday to friday but rather supplementary to the bicycle (Thomas, Rasmus). Instead, car ownership was closely related to enabling family visits, holiday and weekend experiences - all outside the city. For the participant Sille, whom recently sold her car, I asked, whether car sharing services was relevant for her:

*"No, because most car sharing schemes have shared cars internally in Copenhagen, so you can't take the car out of the city, or you can, but it will be really expensive, and that's not what the scheme is designed for, so I haven't used it" (Sille).*

For Sille, there is a clear distinction between the use cases of car sharing schemes within or outside of the city. When discussing time or flexibility in relation to mobility in daily life, time continues to be a significant factor in the participants' decisions about their modes of transportation. I then ask her to elaborate whether she feels that there is a need for a car in the city:

*"I think I feel like I can cycle to most things, and if I have to transport something big, I'm more likely to ask if someone can help me, and I also just have to say - The public transportation is fantastic. I can easily take an S-train connection or metro to Nørrebro or a bus here. It's not because there isn't a good network of public transport around me. So in that way, I also think that in relation to how long I would spend finding a parking space even if it was a shared car, and finding the shared car, I just think it would take more time anyway and be just as quick to take public transport anyway"* (Sille).

Sille describes the interconnectedness of multi uses of mobility, in terms of different use-cases within the city of Copenhagen. We hear that public transport is experienced positively, and in the realm between the shared car and public transport, time becomes an element of the reflections of everyday transport. On the basis of Bauman (2003), When Sille reflects on shared car use in the city, the element of constraint becomes a reflection against car use, wherein the element of time becomes a factor, as Bauman describes that wanting to do what one wants is closely connected to *"When we want"* (Bauman 2003: 7). Urry describes how mobility historically has been associated with frictionless speed also in enabling the good life (Urry, 2007). But in the urban setting, Sille remarks how the shared car scheme is still connected to unforeseen consequences of car use, such as parking. With the ideal of achieving "seamless mobility" (Urry, 2007), and within the time-constrained mobile risk society (Kesselring 2008), the bicycle or public transportation becomes an enabler for most of Sille's everyday mobility uses.

Similarly, for Nanna, the train and bicycle is the choice of transport, with a job outside and inside the city, as well as enabling the best practices in everyday life:

*“And it's funny in relation to my work, it's actually a requirement that I have a car, but public transport works much better in the city, and it would take me much longer if I had to drive to Hillerød or Lyngby because there are queues all the way, and it makes no sense when I can jump on the train, which is 180 meters away [...] If I were a private insurer and had to go to people's homes privately, it would only make sense on a bicycle, because public transport can't even compete with a bicycle - It makes no sense with a car” (Nanna).*

This reflection, where the car is not described as an enabler of more freedom or leads to the notions of the good life (Within the city) is similar for many of the participants including Sara, Malte, Lene, Oliver, Nanna, and Rasmus. Instead, the focus for many of the participants is on the unintended consequences such as queues, and the reflections take place within a realm of optimization of speed and time, which has been called a condition within the mobile risk society (Kesselring 2008). With the willingness to use sustainable practices in everyday life being closely related to the focus of limited time in everyday life (Jouzi et al., 2021), it becomes evident that for many of the participants the sustainable practice of using public transportation or bicycle is closely related to what is easy, less time consuming and *“what makes sense”*. The interesting thing about the stories of everyday life is precisely that they are about people's imagination about their own lives and not the concrete actions and are therefore often contradictory. And so, while interviewing I found that based on the concrete story the participants were telling, the car could both be an enabler *and* constraint of freedom, and the same would happen with the reflections of public transport and the bicycle. Also in terms of the time aspect, and the notions of possibilities. This was the case for all the young Copenhageners. And for some of the participants, the car can be an enabler for some of the feelings of convenience and freedom. However, these everyday dealings are not black and white, as I have previously described (Freudental-Pedersen 2022; Hartmann-Petersen 2009). For Thomas and Maja they reflect upon the ambivalences of using the car:

*"For example, I took the car the other day, and we have made a mutual agreement that I can take the car 2 days a week. But I want to be a cyclist and I want to cycle to work because that's the exercise I'm going to get, and my hours are arranged so that my cycle ride is included as part of my working hours in my head" (Thomas).*

The need for flexibility and freedom in everyday life involves, among other things, a need for movement. Mobility can be understood as a basic condition in the everyday life of mobile risk society. When we hear that Thomas talks about his commute on the bicycle, it can be understood as a need for freedom and flexibility in everyday life, and that within everyday life in late modern society the ability to move is a fundamental condition. Between Maja and Thomas, the car can be an enabler within the everyday life dealings. As Thomas accounts for his daily commutes, Maja cuts in:

*"Yes, but the reason why you took the car the other day was because you were very tired, and angry and you were no fun at all as a father or partner and were completely flat. It was the first real week at work, and I was just like 'now just take the fucking car' get that surplus of energy, get that coziness and convenience and let it be an experience and listen to the radio and enjoy it, and there are hardly any queues and you can park for free - And then come home and have the energy to cycle next week - And that's when you start to make it up, that it's problematic to take the car because you have a mental image of when you drive a car, there's that exhaust, there's pollution" (Maja).*

Everyday decisions involve some fundamental aspects of choice making in the mobile risk society. The abundance of options makes life more difficult and forces us to make important choices on a regular basis. In the quote from Maja, it seems clear that there are considerations of doing what is necessary to enable the good life. In the interview, I would also ask the participants about the balance between when it is motivational, and when it becomes overwhelming to make sustainable choices in everyday life. From many of the participants they felt that the notion of an overwhelming stream of information and acting upon that information could make them numb in their decision making. Ambiguities and

ambivalences that are perceived as inevitable in modern life may muddle our understanding of what constitutes an appropriate response and increase our sense of being unresponsive towards action (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016). When an individual will try to respond to environmental change, it can lead to *"paralysis, ignorance, denial, anxiety, and these can be performed in multiple ways"* (Fjalland 2019, 27). Because of the many choices available to them every day, they occasionally reduce the decisions they must make regarding sustainable choices. Maja and Thomas talk about how the image of the polluting car can be an enabler for reflection towards not driving the car all the time, as well as the negotiation of how the daily bike commutes can make up for the days that they use the car (Thomas, Maja). For Maja and Thomas it is a balance between the everyday and the good life, and on the other hand, taking an active choice towards sustainable choices (Maja, Thomas). As Maja sums up:

*"I think that it makes sense to say that right now, I can be a decent person and have value in my life and then I'll take that car and the world will survive it, and tomorrow I'm looking forward to putting myself back on the bike"* (Maja).

What is present in the reflections that Maja and Thomas are having about their daily life is the very present notion of knowing the unintended consequences of mobility choices and how there is an active engagement and negotiation between enabling the good life, and the navigation between how to best manage everyday life to improve their own lives and the lives of their families (Freudendal et. al., 2017). As the reflections show, managing daily life, means that the ambivalences of mobility choice inflicts the unfreedom on others as the talk revolves around pollution, and an active problematization of one's own choices (Bauman 2016; Kesselring 2008).

For Vega, When I ask if she has considered acquiring a car, the ownership of cars leads to a somewhat conflicting ideal: *"Yes, I have considered that, but it weighs me down a bit because we have always said 'No, we live in the middle of the city, so we don't need a car'"* (Vega). But enabling everyday practices and with all the dealings of reflexivity (Beck 2009), ownership becomes entangled in a web of ambivalences of decision making for Vega. As the mobility



choice of the car creates the notion of opportunities for Vega, the unintended consequences are presented as a burden. This is similar to what Freudendal-Pedersen describes as the mobility options of everyday lives, where opportunities of mobilities can be both a capital and a burden (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). For Vega it is a web of ambivalences between owning a car that suddenly becomes an integral part of everyday life:

*"And then it suddenly becomes more convenient to shop with the car [...] And I think that's what I mean by bad habits, then you do it the next day and the next time, and then it just becomes an everyday thing" (Vega).*

Leading on to the reflections of the risks that connect to climate change: *"I am also afraid that we will become monster emitters because we just think it's super luxury to drive a car"* (Vega). During the conversation with Vega, she described how she was fearing that owning a car would lead to bad habits, and therefore she had considered leasing a car on the notion that it would be easy to get rid of it again (Vega). In the following quote, she describes these thoughts on the basis of an internal choice making in everyday life:

*"I don't think I actually have the backbone to say 'Okay, now I'm going to go by bike to all the places I would normally go by bike', because I know I can and it's not far. Because I can't quite explain what the need is for a car, I just don't think I have the backbone to make the sensible choice once it [the car] is parked right outside" (Vega).*

As Vega explains, car ownership is reflected upon as something to stand against in everyday life as she explains a possible future where she has to take an active choice between the car or the bike. The subjective concerns of navigating through the risks and ambivalences in the mobile risk society is very much an Individualization of choice making (Kesselring 2008). The choice is both between the personal need of a car, the possible freedom it enables and as a consequence, the need for a strong backbone to control all those ambivalences.

In this first part of the analysis I find that negotiations of time and freedom are weighed in on some of the ambivalences that are present in everyday mobility choices. I find that many of these ambivalences are connected to the underlying consequences of mobility uses, namely climate change. I also find signs of negative thoughts and reflections towards car usage, which will be unraveled further in the next part of the analysis.

## Not an everyday car

Moving on from how the car connects to the life within the city for the young Copenhageners, we will now discover how the car is understood as an enabler for various practices outside of the city. Various factors are at play, but I will focus on four essential reflections that connect closely to the stories of the need for a car. This being: children, summerhouse, family and free time. For the participants with kids, the expectations of a life with kids means that new expectations of mobilities find their way into the stories that are told. In the analysis below we will discover how the car is understood as an enabler of family visits, holiday and weekend experiences, as well as getting out of the city.

Going back to the introduction of this thesis, I described the reflections I have personally had with car ownership and how the bargaining and morally justifying owning or having access to a car, was related to a summer vacation house. Similarly, for Vega, car ownership connects to a summerhouse, but also openings of new possibilities:

*“Now we have suddenly found out that there are some values and some people want to see and places we would like to see which might require us to get a car. But it is difficult when you have grown up with the fact that you only need a car when you have a summerhouse. It's kind of a reverse thing about not wanting to limit ourselves, but the car creates the possibility that we don't need to limit ourselves going forward” (Vega).*

With the car as a creator of possibilities as Vega points towards, it is similarly a reflection about the limitations of everyday life the mobilities - or rather a lack of mobilities can lead to (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007, 2016, 2022). The idea of the good life is thus connected to the seemingless idea of freedom (Beck 2016; Urry 2000; Sheller 2014), and in this sense, the good life stands as opposed to the limitations of possibilities in reflections we hear from Vega.

For Several of the participants, there is a distinction between the flexibility they demand revolving the routines they experience in everyday life and leisure and weekend time.

Similarly, some interviewees also distinguish between everyday life and leisure, weekends and evenings that becomes a free space where you can do something other things. - That in turn leads to other demands and needs of mobilities. When I ask Maja and Thomas what the biggest reason is for getting a car, it is a combination of a range of changes in their life, but owning a summerhouse is closely connected to buying a car, as Maja says:

*"We could get it [the car, red.] cheap and had just bought a summerhouse. I remember that we were expecting, but we got it in 2017 and I wasn't pregnant there, but we knew what life lay ahead with children and a grandmother in humlebæk. It's not impossible to take the train at all, but it was quite clear that it was a great deal on that car, and we had a summerhouse, so it just made sense"* (Maja).

As Maja describes, the life with a summerhouse, a future with kids and family outside the city are all reflected upon as enablers for owning a car. To this remark, Maja emphasizes that having children is a part of her reason for owning a car (Maja), to which Thomas says that *"Yes if grandparents and grandmother lived in Copenhagen, we wouldn't have a car"* (Thomas). Within these thoughts of what the car enables, there are the reflections of the problems that also arise with the use of the car: *"There is something with starting up and parking and finding your way around, GPS, and parking and one-way streets"* (Maja). To this, Thomas adds: *Bus locks and queues, fucking queues* (Thomas). Maja Explains how a car trip with kids can be inconvenient when she is alone, especially if they cry, shout or scream. While on a bike *"It's completely different [...] they can see the road, there's air and light and sun, it's buzzing, and you can easily stop anywhere"* (Maja). Asking whether getting kids changed their everyday behavior concerning using the car, Maja is distinct in her response:

*"It [the car, red] was not used more in everyday life after we had children. We are still Copenhageners and we cycle to everything and the institutions are very close. It is actually more difficult to put two children and have them in a car than to have them on a bicycle and put them in a bicycle trailer. Also, you have to find parking, and so on. So we don't use the car more in everyday life, it is still a weekend thing. But yes it changed*

*from being an ego need and driving to the summerhouse and transporting various things, to being diapers and car seats and prams and all that sort of thing” (Maja).*

What is interesting when hearing Maja’s description of the car in daily life she comes to the conclusion that *“We are still Copenhageners”* (Maja). According to Freudendal-Pedersen (2007) we create a personal identity with our mobility choices, and for Maja it seems like a strong notion of identity that the car is not a part of her everyday routines. What I find interesting is the distinct differentiation between everyday life from Monday to Friday, and the weekend life, as I have previously described. I find this reflection again when Nanna describes her car use:

*“We have a car, but we don't use it. It's actually a bit mind-boggling that we have it - We don't use it in everyday life at all, we only use it on the weekend if we are going somewhere” (Nanna).*

I then ask Nanna, if you could then call it a weekend car to which she answers *“Yes, it is purely a weekend car”* (Nanna). Just as it previously came to be expressed that the distinction between everyday life and leisure time was important to several interviewees, it also becomes clear that weekend time implies a dimension of freedom (Bauman 2003). Throughout the interviews I find that weekends, holidays and free time are very much connected to the possibilities and the hopes of freedom that the car can offer. Similarly as Maja described the connection of the bicycle and identity we also see how Lene compares car use to other choices they make in everyday life:

*“Yes, but it's mostly holidays and free time it's about. But I also want to say, and it is important to mention that it is also one of the reasons why we live where we do - It is so that our everyday mobility can take place in the way it does now [...] If we moved to the countryside, it would require us to have a car and drive everywhere, and we just don't want that. We don't want to spend time on it and it just doesn't feel right compared to the choices we otherwise make” (Lene).*

As Lene describes, mobility refers to the idea that everything must be understood in relation to systems of motion and that for people, movement is essential to everyday living, to enable relationships. Interestingly while the car is described as an enabler of possibilities in holiday and free time, the car is similarly connected to restraints and seen as a time consuming element (Bauman 2003). As the everyday mobilities take place in urban space, the perceptions of time, infrastructure and consumption are all connected (Samson & Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). For Lene, the reflections take place as a negotiation of time, but also the freedom it enables to not be bound by the car. She too, makes the distinction between the mobilities that are part of the working days from monday to friday and holidays. For Malte and Sara, having kids changed many of their overall mobility uses, especially in their spare time and weekends. However, as described in the first part of the analysis, the car has not been present within everyday transport in the city. As Malte and Sara do not have a car, they have considered buying or leasing one (Malte). However, a car is not an enabler within the city. Sara reflects how getting their first child changed their behavior:

*"We use much more public transport now, but it is perhaps during free time, in everyday life, it is the same, we transport by bicycle with a child seat, so it is exactly the same. Maybe you choose other roads when you cycle" (Sara).*

For all the participants, the reflections of car use within the city tells the same story. This is also the case for all the participants that have kids. However, for many of the participants, the car can enable other uses. Sara sums up the reflections that have been prominent throughout the interviews with all the participants:

*"I think that the car is not an alternative to the bicycle or public transport because we take public transport to where it makes sense. It is more that a car can provide the opportunity for some other destinations, i.e. you can rent a summerhouse outside the city which does not have to be close to a station" (Sara).*

In the empirical data, there is a difference between the interviewees who have children and those who do not; those who have children express that they generally decide in everyday life, but that it is frequently the children who are in charge of the routines in everyday life, while the interviewees who do not have children express that they decide for themselves about their everyday life to a greater extent. For Lene, the car was a natural coming together with the expectations of having a child:

*"Yes, and Oliver got a driving license because we had a child coming and because we imagined that we would use a car more when we had a child. I don't think we had any idea that it would be included in our everyday life in that way, but mostly concerning holidays it has been a motivation [...] We have had a notion that it will be easier to drive so that we can do it at our own pace" (Lene).*

As we see in the passage, Lene connects the control of pace in relation to the expectation of a child coming. As we have seen, other respondents who had children shared the same need for a control of routines. Having children does not necessarily translate to having less self-determination for the young Copenhageners but rather implies that they have chosen a life with children that marks out the playing field of mobilities in everyday life.

## Reproducing structures

In this last part of the analysis I will dive into the ambivalences and especially the negative emotions towards the unintended consequences of car ownership. As an umbrella term, I am referring to the *mobile risk society* as an inevitable condition that the young Copenhageners are living their everyday life within, in contemporary society (Kesselring 2008; Freudendal et. al., 2020; Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021). The reflexivity and ambivalences quickly comes to light when asked about private car ownership for almost all of the interviewees. For almost all the participants, private ownership of a car comes with conflicting notions of contributing to a negative development of Copenhagen, as the first thing.

When I ask Malte and Sara what speaks against acquiring a car, Malte says:

*"I think that I would simply have a bad conscience about having it [a car, red], and I would feel that I had to use it. And I simply think that it [the car, red.] would end up sitting idle down at the front of the building so much of the time, and every time I look at it I would feel a little guilty about having bought something that pollutes so much and just sits there"* (Malte).

For Sara, similarly the environmental aspects come to mind at first, but thereafter, the urban aspect is named:

*"I would say that it is the environmental aspect, especially if it is a petrol car, but for me also the urban aspect of having a car that takes up space on a road, regardless of whether it is an electric car or not. And it doesn't matter if you use it once a week or every day. The fact that it should dominate the way the city should look and that there should be so many cars parked, I think it would be a shame. And then I would feel that I am contributing to it if I have a car myself"* (Sara).



The individual navigations and negotiations of everyday mobilities practices that Malte and Sara are talking about, are some of the key features of what Kesselring describes as a condition within the mobile risk society (Kesselring 2008). The need for reflectivity towards mobilities in their everyday life becomes ambivalent (Hartmann-Petersen 2009) - and not only that - the sheer thought of owning an idle car leads to feelings of guilt and shame for the two. Malte adds to the ambivalences of car ownership:

*"Also with electric cars, in terms of materials, I can't really see through that. When you read about it, all the different metals require different methods, and Africa and child labor, and then I may doubt whether it is a better solution with an electric car, and where does the electricity come from?" (Malte).*

It is within these everyday reflections, such as the one above, that global and local challenges merge and collide in everyday life (Bech-Jørgensen 1994; Freudendal-Pedersen 2016). As Malte reflects upon, there is a longer range of processes that goes beyond the product itself. Most of the objects we surround ourselves with, have been transported over long distances through production (Hartmann-Petersen et. al. 2007). For the couple Malte and Sara, the physical planned space and its surroundings are reflected upon as altered as a consequence of idle privately owned cars. As Beck (2016) asserts, not only has climate change transformed the physical environment, but it has also changed how we perceive the world (Beck 2016). While the car does offer freedom, it also imposes structures on the city that have unforeseen implications and hence contribute to unfreedom (Freudendal-Pedersen 2022). The same aspect goes again for the couple Lene and Oliver, when I ask them what speaks against acquiring a car, Lene says: *"We would never get a car and just let it be there" [on the street, red.]* (Lene), to which Oliver states:

*"It's also great when you can make an ethical argument for what you do, but then it's also a holistic way of thinking that there are just too many cars in the cities that just stand there and aren't used (Oliver).*

Lene agrees to this and reflects about the derived consequences of car ownership in the urban landscape:

*"Yes, when I think about how annoying I find it to be that the whole street is just filled with cars instead of sidewalk cafes, so I don't want to have one myself and fill up in the streets" (Lene).*

It is in the reflections between the subjective stories and the planning of the physical space as the external conditions (Bech-Jørgensen 1994), that we see how everyday mobility for the young Copenhageners collides with the ambivalences of car ownership. The intersubjectively and socially produced reflections then take place in the realm between individuals and societal structures (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016). In this sense, the individuals both structure and are structured with (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016; Moesby-Bennetsen 2021). When Oliver and Lene refer to the contemporary planned space, there is a reflection towards the reproduction of structures (Freudendal-Pedersen 2016). Oliver adds to this point:

*"Yes, one thing is what it costs to produce a car and drive it, but another thing is just the many parking spaces and how much space it takes up - Shared cars are just brilliant in that regard. Those green mobility cars almost never stand still because they are always in use" (Oliver).*

Lene adds to that: *Yes, and precisely because it is a leisure need for us, it makes no sense and it is not at all worthwhile for us to just have a car parked all the time* (Lene). What I find intriguing about the answers from both Malte, Sara, Lene and Oliver is that the informed reflections are happening by themselves and relies on many different levels of the derived effects of car ownership - not as individualized problems such as personal economic considerations or problematizing the daily hassles of finding a place to park - or even the immobilities and unfreedom of *not* owning a car. Instead, reflections arise on issues of societal matter; the planned physical space, CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and the cost of producing a car in terms of resources. Similarly in relation to the concept of mobile risk society, inflicting

immobility and risks on others leads to the ambivalences of car ownership (Kesselring 2008). The immediate reaction of informed reflection that arises, when being asked about car use or car ownership is repeated by Nanna when I ask her if she would use the car if it was the fastest mobility choice in Copenhagen:

*"No, I simply don't think so. And there are several reasons for that. I think there are way too many cars in the city. I think that the cars are almost starting to push the rest of us out of the city because of too many cars. And that's a shame. Whereas in other big cities around the world it is completely different and cars are not allowed to drive inside the inner city and I think that is actually cool. I can understand that if you live in a place where it is a necessity, but when you live in a place where there are so few kilometers from the city center, I think it would be a shame that someone could feel that they need to have a car" (Nanna).*

The same goes for Silje, who recently sold her car. When asking about the biggest incentive to sell the car, the reflections on the physical structures and problematizing car ownership is the first aspect that comes to mind:

*"I think it was actually my education, knowing that you have a car that takes up space in the city and reflecting on what I actually need, and I actually don't use that car very much, and I have something materially that I hardly ever use and I could also feel that when I sold it to a young girl from Jutland whom would get a lot of pleasure from using the car until it doesn't work anymore, and then knowing that others can get more pleasure from the product that I can" (Silje).*

Vega reflects on car ownership as something that she has always questioned in the city of Copenhagen:

*"Acknowledging that throughout my childhood and growing up in Frederiksberg, I have always thought "why do people have cars like that?" Because you can bike from inner Frederiksberg to Nørrebro and Vesterbro in zero point five, and the central station in 10*

*minutes - It should be irrelevant to have a car, so for me, it has been insanely difficult to say: - I live in the city, right by a metro station and bike everywhere and I still think that I need a car - that is crazy" (Vega).*

Similarly for Mathilde, reflecting upon car ownership leads to considerations of some of the cars;

*"It's funny when I cycle through the small roads on Frederiksberg, when I have to work, I see a lot of these big 4-wheel drive vehicles and range rovers and then I think, of all places in the whole of Denmark, there is the least need to have such big cars, on fucking Frederiksberg, it's the wildest thing - off-road driving on Frederiksberg?! - It makes no sense!" (Mathilde).*

What is more interesting, when I ask what speaks against acquiring a car, many of the participants do not name challenges that would directly impact themselves e.g. their economy, or problems related to issues that will make their everyday life more difficult. Instead, many of them named more structural problems, on a societal level, namely the number of cars in the city, and how that reflects on how the physical sphere of the urban landscape is formed. Furthermore, climate was named by many of the participants as one of the main arguments against owning a car (Maja, Thomas, Oliver, Lene, Malte, Sara, Nanna, Vega). Climate change has previously been understood as a temporally and spatially distant phenomenon in everyday life in the global north (Beck 2010; Bennetsen 2021; Urry 2011). As Bennetsen (2021) has recently similarly found in a group of young Copenhageners, with the analytical concept of small stories, climate change is talked about as both near and distant in everyday life (Bennetsen 2021). For eight out of the eleven participants for this thesis, risks associated with climate change and taking up space in the city were one of the biggest reasons that speaks against owning a car (Maja, Thomas, Oliver, Lene, Malte, Sara, Nanna, Vega). As the structures are embedded in people's consciousness, they are recreated when acting. But the already-existing structures are influencing their actions (Freudental-Pedersen 2022). However, as we see from these participants, there are strong concerns regarding the unintended consequences of car

ownership. What surprised me, when talking to the participants, was the very active reflections on not wanting to recreate the domination of cars that take up space in the city.

The future of sustainable mobility requires both compelling narratives and imaginative representations that challenge our preconceived notions (Christensen & Larsen 2020; Freudendal-Pedersen 2022; Martin 2021). On the basis of the group of young Copenhageners, one could argue that there are tendencies towards momentum for creating new stories of the car as taking up too much space in the city. This is especially the case when reflections of imposing a lack of freedom on others is negotiated, as a consequence of car ownership, and the reflections that connect to the possibilities of less cars in Copenhagen. Furthermore, I find a tendency towards reflections of car ownership that are not only negotiated between being a car owner, or not, but also between having access or not having access to a car. The pivotal point here is that the freedom that the car enables can still be realized through access with Mobility as a Service (MaaS). However, for some of the participants, I find that the car sharing mobility options are not able to facilitate the same kind of feelings of unlimited freedom and enabling the ability to transport oneself out of the city - A key feature that many participants describe as the most meaningful use for the car in their everyday life, as the car is not able to replace their everyday mobility use within the city itself, as we have found in this analysis. The problem is here, that if the car sharing mobilities are to be a driver for change towards a decrease of car ownership and thus a transition towards green(er) mobilities, the shared mobility schemes need to be able to facilitate the same kind of case-use that we find in the reflections of car ownership. The question is if this will change as MaaS is implemented further across the borders of the city. This is a case for further research.

As we have seen in the reflections of car ownership for this group of young Copenhageners, notions of shame, guilt and a bad consciousness of either driving a car, or owning a car that sits idle for most of the time have been strong for many of the participants. For many participants, these reflections came early in the interview, sometimes when I asked, "*what speaks against having a car?*", and sometimes it would come naturally in the interview, while not doing much to dig into the unintended consequences of car ownership. More

interestingly, the reflections had a character of being on a highly informed basis, and for many of the interviewed, these were thoughts and reflections that did not seem new to them, and were thus not provoked from my practice of interviewing, but came up rather naturally. Asking Mathilde if sustainable choices are connected to her generation, she reflects upon her own mobility choices:

*"I think that has really turned around for me in the last few years, because I traveled a lot before I came to the university, and I remember I once thought it was cool, and now I think that it's the most uncool if it becomes a big part of your personality and that you pollute by flying [...] I think that it is embarrassing and I judge them, I don't feel it is something that is brought upon me, but I am the one judging them because they still think it's cool (Mathilde).*

For many of the participants they connect their reflections of sustainability and climate change to their education, as Mathilde does in the sentence above, when she describes a before and after university. Similarly, Sille, Vega, Rasmus, Maja, Malte, Sara and Lene all describe in one way or another how their understanding of sustainability is connected to their education or their professional job. Mathilde reflects upon the embarrassment of flying:

*"I also think that I will post less on SoMe now when traveling far... we even have a CO<sub>2</sub> calculator and it's embarrassing because I don't lie to anyone but myself, when I change how much I fly when I type it in, and I thought it was really embarrassing that I had to lie to myself. I caught myself lying about how much I actually flew, because I've already flown two short trips this year, and the year is far from over - But then on the other hand you can say, well, I don't drive that much by car" (Mathilde).*

Interestingly, Mathilde finishes by weighing her actions between car use and flying, and thus the car is similarly understood as something that can be connected to feeling of embarrassment and maybe even shame. Similarly we have seen how car ownership, for many of the participants, has led to notions of guilt and shame. Interestingly, For Mathilde,

the embarrassment comes to light in the reflections when she types in the calculations. The calculations become tangible numbers. Maja also reflects about flying in relation to car ownership:

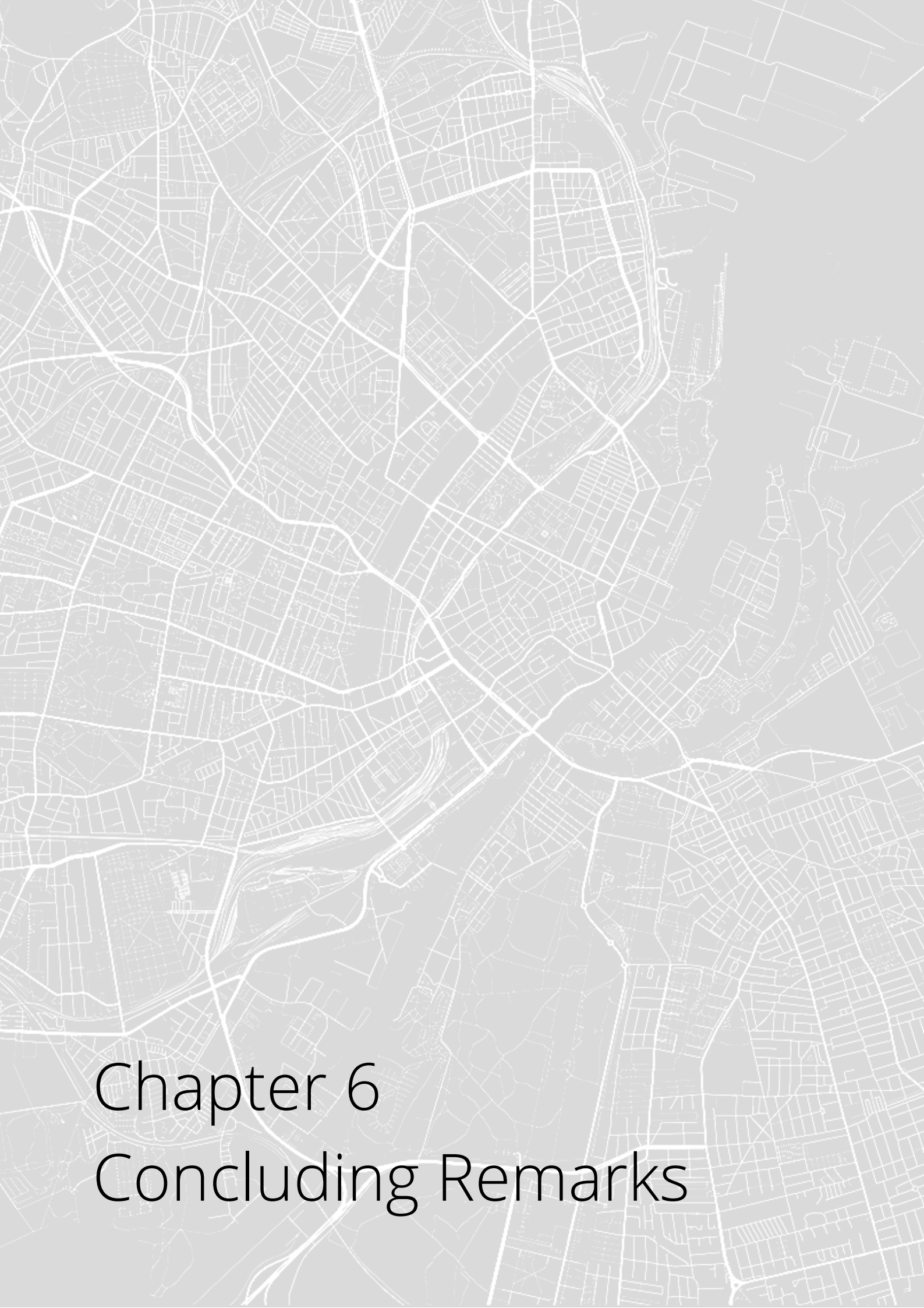
*"You just learn along the way about what is convenient and what is not - It's fluid. And in relation to, if you shouldn't fly, and you shouldn't have a car, you shouldn't eat meat and all that stuff"* (Maja).

In Bennetsen's (2021) study of young Copenhageners, she finds that climate change is talked about as both near and distant in everyday life (Bennetsen 2021). In the same way, one could argue that the physical appearance of the idle cars, for the young Copenhageners, leads to guilt and shame because the car becomes a token for all the unintended consequences - And so a near concept in everyday life. As the young Copenhageners of this specific group connect car ownership to such strong notions of shame, guilt and a bad consciousness, it resembles what has recently been coined as 'flightshame' (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021). In the same manner, you could argue that for this specific group, there exists a level of car shame where owning a car, in the same way as flying has been associated with the need for justification rather than luxury and excess (Freudendal-Pedersen & Kesselring 2021).

As the reflections and ambivalences from the young Copengeners are unfolding, we can begin to picture some of the layers of informed reflections that build on top of each other; First of all, we see that for a big part of the young Copenhageners, car ownership is related to feelings of guilt and ambivalences of reproducing the car dominated state of Copenhagen as today. We see that the reflections revolve around many of the unintended consequences of cars. Namely, the feelings that stem from the physical realm of idle cars on the street. From this observation, a bigger construct of reflections about car production and thus, the resources used to fabricate the car are problematized, as we hear from both Malte and Oliver. This in turn leads to reflections of climate change and sustainability. We then discover that reflections arise on what could have been instead of idle cars. And as we hear from Oliver and Lene, these reflections lead all the way to reflections of a shift from

car ownership towards car access, when they name car sharing options such as Green Mobility as a possible solution in picturing and enabling urban futures.





# Chapter 6

## Concluding Remarks

## Chapter 6: Concluding remarks

In this final chapter I will present my conclusions as I connect the research question to the analysis.

In this thesis I have explored the mobility practices of young Copenhageners with a focus on the car and its role in contemporary mobile risk society. I have discovered notions of car use in the light of climate change and the reflections and ambivalences that connect to reproductions of car dominated city scapes. The research form on the basis of my problem formulation:

*How are concerns of sustainability in the everyday life of young Copenhageners embedded in the structural stories of mobility choices and car access?*

To explore this, I have interviewed 11 young Copenhageners in the age of 25-35. Through an abductive methodological approach and with an understanding of uncertainty as an ontological condition in the mobile risk society I have explored the reflections that connect to car access. With a disciplinary openness towards the empirical data, I give voice to the notions of trivial activities in everyday activities and mobilities. I have explored how young Copenhageners relate climate change and sustainability to complex choices, dilemmas, and ambivalences.

In the first part of the analysis I find that the car has a limited use case for many of the participants, and that reflections of time and freedom play part in the young Copenhageners reflections of car usage. I find that many of the unintended consequences of the car plays a role in the choices of everyday mobility. Notions of constraints and the element of time as a factor contributes to the fact that for many of the participants, the car does not grant them the possibilities within the city as the ones that describe that they can get outside of the city.

In the second part of the analysis I find that for this particular group of young Copenhageners, the use case for the car is closely related to children, summerhouse, family and free time. However, I find that there is a clear separation of the daily life from Monday to Friday and weekends and holidays in the use case of the car. - In short, between the daily routines and leisure and freetime. For all the participants the car is not thought of as an alternative to the bicycle or public transport within the subjective boundaries of the city. However, within the reflections from the young Copenhageners it becomes clear that the car is strongly connected to the notion of all the possibilities that the good life inherits. I find that owning a summerhouse is closely connected with the apparent need to have access to a car, as well as opportunities for new destinations and possibilities.

Finally I find that there is a tendency towards a high level of informed reflections of the production and reproduction of the system of automobility in the city of Copenhagen. Within this group of young Copenhageners there seem to be feelings involved with car ownership that resembles guilt and shame, regarding the risks associated with the unintended consequences of car dominance and systems of automobility. I find that there seem to be some of the same feelings involved with car ownership as we have seen with flightshame. While this finding is not at all conclusive or final there seems to be a tendency within this particular group of young Copenhageners.

In conclusion, this study contributes with an insight into a group of the mobilities of young Copenhageners and their reflections and ambivalences of their everyday lives within the mobile risk society. I do not contribute with any new definitive conclusions or clear answers on sustainable transitions or societal changes. However I find that there are new reflections to be found in the lives of this particular group of young Copenhageners, and that there may be a tendency towards new informed reflections on production and reproduction of car usage and automobility.

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