

**ENACTING MOBILITY:
Studies Into the Nature of Road-related Social Interaction**

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ABSTRACT

Mobility has become a keyword for contemporary western society. It encompasses both global flows of ideas, goods, money and people as well as ordinary movements of everyday life. Focusing on the mundane features of mobility, this thesis highlights two vital assemblages – the road and the roadside – as disregarded phenomena in accomplishing mobility. The aim is to counterbalance the predominance of insufficient or inadequate road conceptions by providing alternative sociological observations and interpretations of road interaction. This is achieved by taking a closer look at roadsides and the residents, representational objects and mediators that inhabit them.

Instead of dwelling on the inherent 'horrors of representation', my attempt to contribute to a sociology of the road, will be fuelled by an overarching ambition to learn more about how representations actually are made strong - how they are repaired, how they are framed, how they are used and distributed, how they are tended and not attended to, how we 'muddle through' and accomplish things - despite their insufficiency and pitfalls. Cast as two complementary challengers of current models of representation, ethnomethodology and actor-network theory are comparatively analysed, tracing out a theoretical underpinning of alternative interpretations and studies of road/roadside interaction.

Additionally, I contribute to a more profound understanding of road use and road interaction by looking in some ethnographical detail at three sites of 'roadside negotiation'. I have followed bus-drivers as they move between bus stops, as were they bees visiting flowers. The mutual understandings of locations are crucial for these mobile occupational groups, enabling to successfully perform collaborative tasks. I have participated at the work of a petrol station where a continuous flow of vehicles, commodities, money and people is sustained and made accountable. From the production and recognition of fluency, the constant negotiation and articulation work of situations, to continuous maintenance and repair of movement, petrol stations *tend* to mobility.

Finally, I have documented the population of private, personal, moral and illicit signs mounted along the roads. These signs enable intermediate interaction between roadside residents and their passers-by. But the signs are also carefully edited through the maintenance work as editing the road. The ultimate ambition, empirical and theoretical, is to counterbalance inadequate conceptions of 'the road' and 'the social' while casting the road as media enacting mobility.

Keywords: mobility; road; roadside; road-related social interaction; ethnomethodology; actor-network theory

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