MOBILE MINGLING

A study on the sociality of travelling by train

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Preface

I do not believe anyone has ever described writing a thesis as "the best time of their life" (and if they did, they were probably lying). After already writing a thesis two times before (one in order to receive my Bachelor of Build Environment and one during the pre-master programme), you would believe it gets easier… Well, it does not! This report laying in front of you caused a lot of stress, made me cry sometimes and made me want to throw my laptop out of the window many times, however, I am very proud of the work I delivered and the product that came out of it as a result.

Of course, I did not travel this bumpy ride on my own. I am (cliché but true) very grateful for all the people who helped me during this process, especially my supervisor Rianne van Melik who provided me with useful feedback and with who I had pleasant and encouraging conversations. Furthermore, I would like to thank Maartje (my "spare Rianne") for having endless chats with me about our theses and for being the best complaining buddy one could ever wish for. Furthermore, I could not have written this thesis without "my" sixteen respondents who helped me conduct this research and who offered me a great amount of insightful information to work with. Additionally, I would like to thank Goudappel Coffeng – Leonie and Marie-José in particular – for giving me the opportunity to write this thesis at their organisation and also for providing me with a lot of freedom to work on it, while being there for me when needed. And last but not least, I would like to say thanks to my friends and family who lifted my spirits when I was complaining exorbitantly by distracting me with food, drinks and laughs, and also for yelling "Look, A TRAIN! You like trains, right?!" whenever they saw one drive by.

For now, I really hope you enjoy reading my thesis. Have a good journey!

October 15th 2018, Nijmegen

Dagmar

Summary

Travelling by train is an activity one never performs alone; one is always surrounded by strangers with whom he or she has to share this mobile space. While scientific data supporting this statement is scarce, popular media – shaping the general perception – claim that travelling by train is an activity where people try their hardest to keep others at distance (i.e. Collard, 2010; Kraaijvanger, 2012; de Bruin, 2014; Horn, 2017) and where social behaviour is seen as an exception rather than the norm. Since about 650.000 Dutchmen travel by train on a daily basis (NS, 2017), the sociality of travelling by train, which can be of influence on the way one experiences the journey and on the shaping of railway companies' policies, is a topic that requires investigation. This research aimed at decreasing our backlog in scientific knowledge regarding the social practice of travelling by train by trying to find an answer to the following main question: "How is the sociality of travelling by train assembled and shaped?".

In order to answer this question, data was gathered by conducting mobile ethnography. The fieldwork was divided into three phases: (1) an observatory phase, (2) diary-keeping by 16 research participants and (3) conducting interviews with those participants. Ultimately, this resulted in field notes documenting the observations of 25 single trips and two sessions of about five hours each, a total amount of 255 diary entries and sixteen in-depth interviews capturing the particularities of the diaries and the respondents' (social) desires regarding travelling by train.

The data that was gathered during those phases was merged into one story: the story of the sociality of travelling by train. One important feature of this story is the fact that the train is far from socially stagnant. While most people do not engage in extensive (verbal) encounters with their "train-neighbours", they do look out for each other (by i.e. removing one's bag if necessary) and have developed a subtle language running on body management (Lofland, 1973) and eye-contact/facial expressions. While this language is efficient and clever on the one hand, it can also lead to discomfort and uneasiness when people misconceive each other's non-verbalism.

Next to the problem of misconception, the most important challenges regarding the sociality of travelling by train are the lack of rules and the differences in what is believed to be proper behaviour. According to the research participants, the way in which one should behave on the train is mostly regulated by unwritten rules, which are mostly thought by experience and upbringing. While most people seem to have adapted to those implicit rules, the *throwntogetherness* (Massey, 2004) of all kinds of people with different norms and values can lead to conflict. An example that shows how people can benefit from rules and regulations can be found in the silence compartment. In this compartment, the rules are explicitly stated and, therefore, riders know what is expected of them and while the rules also empower them to speak up if others are disobedient. Those clear outlines of what passenger role (Zurcher, 1979) one should take on do not only make it easy to fit in (Goffman, 1963) but also creates a homogeneous riders community with similar behaviour and expectations, which is considered to be pleasurable. Therefore, NS (and possibly other public transport companies as well) could greatly benefit

from shaping and propagating what is considered to be proper behaviour and what is not. This should not only be done in the "negative" sense – by stating what is *not* acceptable – but also by highlighting that it is okay to engage in conversation sometimes, as this research (as well as Epley & Schroeder, 2014) shows that is generally considered to be pleasurable.

Next to practical implications, this research also led to some recommendations for further research. One could especially think of conducting a similar research with day trippers since this was a group frequently mentioned by the respondents in this research. Furthermore, it could be useful to give a more quantitative substance to the qualitative story as presented in this research. This could be done (i.e.) by including it in the OV Klantenbarometer: a periodical questionnaire carried out by Goudappel Coffeng (the internship organisation). By conducting additional research on the sociality of travelling by train one will get closer to unravelling "the messy nature" of this topic (and thus reducing the backlog in knowledge) and will, therefore, better be able to adjust the railway companies' policies accordingly.

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Chapter 1 – Introducing the theme

"Before the appearance of omnibuses, railroads, and streetcars in the nineteenth century, men were not in a situation where for periods of minutes or hours they could or must look at each other without talking to one another."

(translated quote of Georg Simmel, qtd. in Nio (2012), p. 12)

To be able to deal with this situation as described by Georg Simmel, the Stationers' Hall Court published The Railway Traveller's Handy Book in 1862; a book containing hints, suggestions and advice for travelling by train (Stationers' Hall Court, 1862). This book was not only about how to buy a correct ticket or how to distinguishes the different classes aboard, but it also described ways in which you should interact with other passengers and what topics of conversation should be avoided (Bissell, 2010).

Although it might have been common (or even prescribed) to talk to your fellow travellers in former times, the attitude towards travelling nowadays seems to have shifted. According to various media sources, people in public transport do not talk to others and try their hardest to keep others at distance (Collard, 2010; Kraaijvanger, 2012; de Bruin, 2014; Horn, 2017). Some, e.g. Metro, take this even further by stating that people in public transport are plain rude: "Doors are slammed in other people's faces and sighing people seat themselves on top of someone else's bags when the person already seated does not move his/her bags quickly enough" (van Amstel, 2018, p. 2). Satirical media also comment on the alleged lack of social behaviour on the train, e.g. by making a sketch about someone who gets fined because he was not using his phone while on the train: "This is an obligatory phone compartment" (Klikbeet, 2018). Whereas those popular media sources are of course not scientifically grounded, they do signal that people apparently do look at the train as a space where people are mostly withdrawn into their own little "mobile phone" bubble, while not paying attention to (or supposedly even being rude to) the other travellers surrounding them.

Next to the alleged decline in social behaviour on the train, in the Netherlands there are also counter developments to be found, e.g. the SocialCoupé (NS, 2012): a temporary initiative aimed at encouraging encounters amongst train travellers. Movements like this show that not all people prefer travelling in solitude and that there are in fact still people who attach importance to having conversations with strangers while travelling by train.

Evidently, there are different movements and opinions to be found regarding the train as being either a social space or a space for anonymity and seclusion. However, one thing that is sure, is that the train is a space where one encounters many strangers. According to Urry (2000), riders found all kinds of ways of dealing with spending time in close proximity to one another. Those behaviours can be encapsulated in the term "civil inattention", which can briefly be explained as demonstrating you notice someone while making clear that this person does not "constitute a target of special curiosity or design"

(Goffman, 1963, p. 84). Furthermore, people make use of body management (Lofland, 1973) and try seating themselves in particular ways (Sommer, 1969) in order to deal with this strangeness.

In this thesis, I will focus on the sociality of Dutch trains. By gaining in-depth insights in the (social) practice of travelling by train, and on riders' behaviour, interpretations, motivations and desires, the general claim that people nowadays prefer travelling in complete solitude, can either be confirmed or rejected, which in turn can be influential in composing/sharpening the policies of *Nederlandse Spoorwegen* (from now on: NS, meaning Dutch Railways).

1.1 Research objective and research question

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the research objective will be to gain in-depth knowledge on the sociality of travelling by train. The focus will not only be on social interactions, but also on the more tacit aspects concerning sociality, such as behaviour, positioning oneself, interpreting other people's actions, and (social) desires people have when riding the train (a more elaborate description of sociality can be found in paragraph 2.2). With the aim of meeting the research objective, the following main question was formulated:

"How is the sociality of travelling by train assembled and shaped?"

1.2 Scientific relevance & societal relevance

In order to conduct meaningful research, there needs to be a scientific and a societal relevance to the topic of interest. Both forms of relevance will be explained in the following paragraphs.

1.2.1 Scientific relevance

As stated by Cresswell (2006, p. 1): *"Study mobility we must for it is central to what it is to be human"*. Many researchers seem to agree with this statement because mobility is indeed a widely studied subject, especially since the so-called "mobility-turn" (i.e. Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007; Jensen, 2009). This transformation came into being in the last decade and "posits the powerful impact of mobility (…) in reshaping all levels of social life, from consciousness to global warming" (Gottschalk & Salvaggio, 2015, p. 5), which lead to a bigger focus on mobility in all kind of fields i.e. geographical studies.

Next to mobility, the topic of dealing with strangers in (public) space is also a subject that has been researched thoroughly. Famous researchers who dug into this topic are (amongst others) Goffman (1963), Lofland (1973) and Augé (1995) with their theories on (resp.) civil inattention, encountering strangers, and places versus non-places.

However, when combining the two themes (mobility and encounters), there seems to be a backlog in our knowledge. Popular media tend to write about how there are no social encounters to be found in public transport, but scientific knowledge supporting this is scarce. Next to the quantified statistics on mobility (such as the number of people owning a car, the number of people travelling by train, etc.), there appears to be a desired shift to focussing on the perception and experience of mobility. This is a very reasonable development since human mobility is most of all an embodied experience

(Cresswell, 2006, p. 4). Yet – when applying this logic to trains – it turns out that perceptions of (Dutch) train travellers have mostly been studied in terms of customer satisfaction (van Hagen & Exel, 2012; NS, 2016; MuConsult & Significant, 2017). This means we have gained insight into people's opinions regarding the trains themselves, the facilities aboard, and the staff, but it does not go much further than that.

Nevertheless, some researchers – such as Soenen (2006), Bissel (2009), Jain (2009), Nio (2012), Ocejo & Tonnelat (2014) and Thomas (2017) – did more than merely look at customer satisfaction; they tried digging for a deeper level of understanding the travellers' perception. By looking i.e. into social interactions in public transport, unravelling *the social code* of the practice of riding the metro, getting into unwritten rules of courtesy on the tram and investigating the public function of travelling by train, they shed a light on travellers' perceptions and behaviours regarding the social aspect of public transport. While those researches cover parts of the topic of sociality of travelling by train and therefore constitute a great starting point for understanding this theme, a lot is yet to be explored. Therefore, this research digs into the sociality of travelling by Dutch trains, which will help reduce our backlog in knowledge regarding this topic.

1.2.2 Societal relevance

Next to a scientific relevance, this research also covers a societal relevance. The alleged absence of encounters in public transport might not directly cause a severe problematic situation: it is not a case of life and death. However, it is a fact that on an average weekday over 650.000 people in the Netherlands travel by train (NS, 2017) and this number will even increase in the upcoming years (Snellen, Romijn, & Hilber, 2015). To those people, the journey by train is a part of their daily routine; a practice that starts off but also concludes their busy day at work or school. Hence, this topic plays a part in many people's lives and should, therefore, be paid attention to.

Furthermore, a situation in which people *do* have contact with strangers can be beneficial. Although it has not (yet) certainly been proven that people do actually have no/very little contact while riding the train, it is a fact that people nowadays are very dependent on electronic devices such as mobile phones (Raad voor Verkeer & Waterstaat, 2010). As Lindstrom and Seybold (2003, p. 24) described: "This is the first generation born with a mouse in their hands and a computer screen as their window to the world." The use of such devices is convenient in many ways, but it is also a substantial contributor to incivility in public space (Cameron, 2000). This is considered to be a negative development since it has been proven that contact with strangers can be beneficial as it broadens our horizon and "includes the formerly strange in a wider, more inclusive understanding and moral sense" (van Leeuwen, 2010, p. 634). Furthermore, research shows that people who *do* have contact with others while riding the train, rate their train ride as more pleasant than people who travel in solitude (Epley & Schroeder, 2014). Some claim this goes even further: people who have interactions with people they do not know, are considered to be happier and supposedly strengthen their cognitive skills (Geraerts, 2016). Although having contact

with strangers does not necessarily lead to ground-breaking achievements such as cultural destabilization or social transformation (Valentine, 2008), it is crucial for people in a diverse public environment to possess "intercultural skills" (van Leeuwen, 2010), which one gains and uses when encountering strangers.

Additionally, gaining insight into the sociality of travelling by train is advantageous for shaping railway companies' policies. As described by the Dutch Council for Traffic and Hydraulic-engineering works: "Mobility is (most of the time) not a goal in itself; it serves a purpose. Understanding underlying incentives enables policies to be adjusted to those motives." (2010, p. 15). The importance of sociality is also acknowledged by the Dutch Railways themselves, as they admit that "Our lifestyles are getting more and more digital, while the time we engage in personal contact decreases. Therefore, the value of human interactions is becoming more important" (NS, 2017). NS already tried to respond to this development by introducing the SocialCoupé, which is a temporary project aimed at increasing conversations between travellers (NS, 2012) and by designing the "Train of Tomorrow" (an aspect of the Dutch Design Week 2017) in which the emotional needs of travellers play a central role and where the encouragement of social interactions is of major importance as well (NS, 2017). Although the Train of Tomorrow can be seen as an ambitious and experimental project – and probably a pipe dream –, NS is in fact already changing the design of its trains nowadays and is simultaneously working on newer designs for the future (van Gompel, 2018). By not only paying attention to the basic aspects of travelling by train (a good infrastructure, a reliable train table and quick connections (van Hagen, ten Elsen, & Nijs, 2017)), but by also emphasizing the importance of the emotional well-being of train travellers, it might be possible to not only satisfy the needs of the current clientele but to attract new travellers as well (Galetzka, Pruyn, van Hagen, & Vos, 2017). This research will, therefore, be of use in the creation of appropriate policies and train designs that serve a social purpose.

1.3 Methods

In order to conduct this research, the data was collected by using (mobile) ethnography, carried out in three phases of fieldwork. The first phase consisted of observations (an amount of 25 single trips and two sessions of about five hours each), which helped to shape an image of what the sociality of travelling by train looks like and what kind of behaviours and routines can be found. The second phase of data collection entailed diary keeping. A group of 16 respondents documented a total amount of 255 trips travelled by train, documenting their experiences and ways in which they did (or did not) communicate with others aboard. In the last phase of fieldwork, the same group of respondents was interviewed in order to elaborate on their diaries and to ask some additional questions about their opinions and desires regarding the (social) practice of travelling by train. A detailed description of the methodology can be found in chapter 3.

1.4 Reader's guide

This thesis will start off with the theoretical framework (chapter 2), discussing the scientific works that served as the basis for this research. This chapter will, among other things, elaborate on the sphere of the train, the concept op sociality and the topic of dealing with strangers in public spaces. Chapter 3 focusses on the methodology used in this research, including a critical review expounding the possible limitations of the chosen methods. The fourth chapter contains the results section, encompassing the story of the sociality of travelling by train. In the fifth and final chapter, the conclusion and discussion – including an answer to the main question, recommendations for praxis and further research and a reflection on the research – can be found.

Chapter 2 – Train of thought: a literature review

No proper research can be conducted without taking existing theories and scientific works into account. Therefore, it is always important to – as stated by Isaac Newton – "stand on the shoulders of giants". For this thesis, there is a large range of giants to build upon as the social dimension of public space (and subsequently dealing with strangers) is a widely studied subject.

This literature review will discuss those theories that are believed to be most relevant for this research. The first paragraph (2.1) will deal with what kind of space the train is exactly. Subsequently, paragraph 2.2 will discuss the origins of the concept of sociality, while also including its relevance to and usage in geography and the train in specific. The third paragraph of this chapter discusses ways of dealing with a situation where one is surrounded by strangers, including the concepts of "fitting in", personal space and picking the right seat. Next, the fourth paragraph examines activities one engages in while riding the train in order to create a "private bubble". Then, paragraph 2.5 will deal with the topics of semi-strangers and parochialism. Lastly, the conceptual framework – accompanied by a description of the model – will be depicted.

2.1 The sphere of the train

A public space can be described as an area that is "open to all, unrestricted in character, and unconditional as to participation. In short, it can be entered by any person, and those present can conduct themselves as they wish" (Goodsell, 2003, p. 371). With this description in mind, a train is what you would call a "semi-public" place. Public in the sense that it is in theory accessible to everyone, no matter what background, age, gender, or whatever other personal characteristics. However, the train is a privately owned space that you are not able to access 24/7 and where you are required to carry a valid ticket. Those aspects limit the public accessibility of trains and therefore add the "semi" to public (Terpstra, van Stokkom, & Spreeuwers, 2013; Jones et al., 2015). Although the train is thus, in theory, not a *public* space, it is often perceived as one. Therefore, another term that is suitable to describe a train, is that of "collective space" (Morales, 1992). Collective spaces are, according to Morales (1992, p. 6), not public nor private; they are comprised by elements of both types of spaces, i.e.: public spaces used for private activities or private spaces where public/collective activities take place. Trains fall into the second category of collective space since technically they are not public, while people do experience and use them as if they are.

Although trains are thus considered *semi*-public, they are part of what you would call the *public* realm. This realm, "the world of strangers" (Lofland, 1998, p. 10), entails a world of anonymity, a world of ephemeral relationships. This world consists for a large part of so-called non-places, spaces that are excluded from any sense of fixity, place or local identity (Augé, 1995). Spaces that fall into this category are often "spaces of travel, consumption and communication, where solitudes coexist without creating any social bond or even social emotion" (Augé, 1995, p. 178). People present at those spaces do, most

of the time, only pass through them as those locations are more part of the journey than an actual area where they come to reside. Thus, those locations do not serve a social purpose and are very much focused on individuality. Trains typically fall into the category of non-places because of their focus on travel and the lack of a bond between the people present and to the location itself; Augé even describes the traveller's space as the archetype of non-places (Augé, 1995, p. 86). Though one cannot deny the fact that the trains of (e.g.) the Dutch Railways have a strong *corporate* identity – easily recognizable by their characteristic blue and yellow colour combination – a place specific identity is absent. Since the trains themselves have a very universal look (though slightly different per edition), they are not really distinguishable: a train is a train. Furthermore, the speed of the train passing through various landscapes makes it impossible to really absorb the surroundings as not enough time is actually spend there to really be able to experience the location: a train ride simply provides its travellers with a "series of snapshots" (Augé, 1995, p. 86) and therefore makes it hardly possible to take in the identity of the place.

Yet, this moving aspect is what distinguishes the train from other public domains. Normally people move through public space, whereas in the case of a train it is the space itself that moves. At the same time, the people who are riding the train are – on the contrary – limited in their mobility. Because they have a fixed destination, they do not have the luxury to flee from a situation at any time they want. Train travellers are, therefore, very mobile, while at the same time being immobile.

2.2 The sociality of travelling by train

Next to the train as the context for this research, the concept of sociality is also of major importance. Though sociality is a concept that is being used in i.e. the field of geography, it is originally a notion found in animal sciences signifying that animals live together and form cooperative societies. Sociality is thought of as a response to evolutionary pressures as it enhances the animal's chances of survival (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). Examples of animal sociality are wasps taking care of each other's offspring (Ross & Matthews, 1991), spiders sharing a web (Furey, 1998) and wolves hunting together (Vucetich, Peterson, & Waite, 2004). According to Martinelli (2017, pp. 22-23), "sociality is at the basis of nearly all processes and activities related to animal communication". He adds to this that animals are able to recognize and react to certain situations with appropriate behaviour because they share a similar way of interpreting circumstances ("a code"). Comparable behaviour can be found amongst humans, as human sociality also entails the ability to cope with and adapt to different demands of the group (Nugent, 2013).

Furthermore, human sociality even goes a step further than animal sociality as human groups sustain high levels of sociality while – in contrast to animals – having low levels of relatedness amongst group members. It has been proven that people are likely to behave prosocially and to reject antisocial behaviour, even when they know beforehand that the chances of encountering the persons involved again are next to nothing (Gintis, 2000). This shows that sociality is an evident part of human social behaviour and is also of importance in (semi)public spaces since those locations provide fleeting encounters with people one might only run into once in their lives.

One of the authors who applied human sociality to the field of geography/public space is Sophie Watson. Though a clear and definite definition of the concept is not included in her articles, her research does help shape the understanding of the notion. In one of her articles, Watson (2009) describes the "everyday sociality" as something that is enacted in i.e. a marketplace; involving lively social encounters, social inclusion, care of others and the mediation of differences. Therefore, the marketplace offers room for bonds to form and for communities to grow and therefore serves as a connecting factor. According to Watson, the sociality is held in place by a "social glue", a familiarity amongst the people visiting/working at the market, the traders being the main factor in creating and maintaining this social glue. Furthermore, she includes the concept of "easy sociality". This concept features the "rubbing along" of people, meaning people are not always engaged in extensive interaction but do act in certain ways when spending time together in the same location. Watson concludes her article by stating that sociality can take on different forms: from intensive interaction, which contributes to the forming of social bonds and communities, to people sharing the same space and engaging in "casual encounters" (which could also mean just passing each other by). Sociality, according to Watson, thus includes the ways people act around each other and can take place on different levels, to different extents.

More targeted at the topic of this research, the concept of sociality has also been applied to the context of public transportation. This was done by Bissell (2010), who – in his article "Passenger Mobilities: Affective Atmospheres and the Sociality of Public Transport" – conducted research on how everyday experiences of travelling with others in public transport unfold. In his research, Bissell does not only take discursive modes of communication into account, but he also minds the centrality of more "abstract" (non-verbal) forms of communication. Bissell refers to both forms of communication as *affective*, quoting Conradson & Latham who describe this as "the outcome of encounters between bodies in particular places" (2007, p. 232). Hence, Bissell believes affective communication on public transport can have a significant influence on the experience of a journey and the affective atmosphere aboard. This atmosphere, similar to "the code" earlier mentioned (Martinelli, 2017), facilitates but also restricts particular practices and behaviour. Next to the clear importance of the people aboard and the ways in which they interact (or do not interact), he adds to this that the sociality in public transport emerges "through the complex interplay of technologies, matter, and bodies" (Bissell, 2010, p. 284). It is thus not only about the people involved but also tied to a specific location and the material elements included. While, similar to Watson, Bissell does not come up with a clear definition of sociality, one can tell that in his perception it is all about ways in which people interact and the influence this has on them.

Combining those three perceptions of sociality – the "original" conception, Watson's application, and Bissell's use – results in the notion of sociality that will serve as the basis for this research. Sociality in this research is to be understood as the manner in which people associate with one another while on the train. This can i.e. be comprised of strangers meeting and engaging in extensive conversation, while it can also be about more subtle forms of communication, such as non-verbal communication. Furthermore, the deliberate choice *not* to engage in interaction, and therefore secluding

oneself, is also part of what sociality means for this research. Additionally, the interpretation of someone else's behaviour will also be taken into account as it is believed that people, similarly to animals, are able to recognize and react to certain circumstances with "appropriate" behaviour. However, those interpretations can differ per i.e. gender and ethnicity (i.e. Argyle & Dean, 1965; Gudykunst, 2003; Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2010). Hence, there will be examined what exactly the code on the train is and in how far this may differ per situation as the sociality is formed through the interplay of technologies, matter and bodies and therefore can be adapted to certain contexts and demands. Since sociality it thus about various interactions and dealing with other people, it is important to dig into the nature of those phenomena first, starting with the topic of being around strangers in (semi)public spaces.

2.3 Being around strangers in public space

2.3.1 Fitting in

Non-places, or spaces that belong to the public realm in general, are areas where one encounters many strangers. The train (just as the tram and other modes of public transport) forms a connecting node where all kinds of people encounter each other in random compositions (Soenen, 2006), so-called "throwntogetherness" (Massey, 2004). Those groups of people on i.e. the train are what Zurcher (1979) calls "encapsulated groups", meaning "collectivities of individuals who voluntarily or involuntarily are clustered together in close proximity by ecological constrictions, mechanical boundaries or equipment design, and who share physical but not necessarily social closeness for the purpose of attaining some goal or reaching some destination" (1979, p. 78). He adds to this that those groups are members in a spatial sense, but rarely become members in any (extensive) social sense. Being able to deal with this kind of diversity is, according to Stuart Hall (1993, p. 361), considered to be the question of the 21st century. Two important researchers who contributed to our knowledge on this theme – the topic of dealing with a diverse range of strangers – are Erving Goffman and Lyn H. Lofland.

According to both researchers, people have adopted several techniques to deal with strangeness and diversity in (semi)public spaces. As stated by Goffman (1963), the most important rule of behaviour in (semi)public spaces, is the rule of "fitting in". This rule is based on the distinction between acts that are approved of and acts that are believed to be improper. When a person fits in, the chances of creating agitation or conflicts are limited. However, what is considered to be proper or improper, varies depending on the situation, social group, or is quite possibly even different for every individual. On a train, what is proper behaviour is partly regulated by the railway companies' explicit rules, which – among others – state that you are not allowed to play loud music or have loud conversations (on the phone) and which declare that you should clean up your trash (NS, 2014). Those rules and the signs that convey them are characteristic for non-places but are also important features of "total institutions" (Goffman, 1961): locations where a group of individuals is separated from the rest of society for a certain period of time. Although those total institutions entail i.e. prisons and mental institutions, there are also similarities to be found between total institutions and public transport. Obviously, public transport does

not enclose passengers for a very long time and by using modern-day technology people are able to communicate with "the outside world" while on the train. In addition, there is no attempt to change the person's behaviour: train passengers do not need to be punished for criminal activities and are therefore not to be re-educated. However, the members of the encapsulated groups that are present in public transport are somewhat challenged in their "autonomy of action, personal economy of motion, privacy and picture of self as a physical person" (Zurcher, 1979, p. 86). The riders have to get into a passenger role, which comprises the rider to conform to specific expectations and rules set by the public transport operator. Those rules are propagated by the staff aboard but are also spread by signs. The signs portraying those rules can be prescriptive (e.g.: "place your bags under your seat or in the luggage racks"), prohibitive (e.g.: "smoking is not allowed") or informative ("the next station will be …"). The rules – or *instructions for use* (Augé, 1995) – require its users to only interact with texts spread by the company or institution in charge.

Conversely, Goffman's rule of fitting in is more about common sense, about tacit knowledge, and is therefore dependent on the riders themselves and the situation they find themselves in. While it might be proper to have a conversation in the "silence compartment" when the train is very crowded (and it is therefore not possible to secure a seat on another compartment of the train), you are not expected to behave this way when there is plenty of space available. Therefore, the rule of fitting is very context-dependent. Yet, a form of behaviour that is considered to be proper in a large set of situations, is that of "civil inattention". This concept is described by Goffman as follows (1963, p. 84): "One gives to another enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present (and that one admits openly to having seen him), while at the next moment withdrawing one's attention from him so as to express that he does not constitute a target of special curiosity or design." One could also say this is a "display of disinterestedness without disregard" (Hirschauer, 2005, p. 41), meaning one *does* acknowledge that the other person is there so that he/she does not make the other into a "non-person". In performing this act, the eyes of both individuals may meet, but typically there is no sign of recognition expressed. While very delicate, this interpersonal ritual is one that hugely influences how we interact with other members of our society (Goffman, 1963).

Although this civil behaviour is a common way of dealing with strangers in public spaces, it is not carried out by everyone. Research conducted by Sommer (1969) illustrates that people in public areas sometimes *do* treat others as if they are non-persons; as if the other people present are simply part of the environment; as if they are furniture. Though this is one way of "protecting yourself" from strangers in public space (psychological withdrawal) – "a non-person cannot invade someone's personal space any more than a tree or chair can" (Sommer, 1969, p. 37) – it is considered rude in most situations. Therefore, the principle of civil inattention seems to form the basis for a more appropriate way of dealing with strangers in public.

2.3.2 Personal space

Lofland (1973) acknowledges the importance of such "rules" as well. According to her, it is common for people to use body management in order to assure privacy and anonymity. To accomplish this anonymity to "survive" in a world of strangers, she recognizes guidelines such as minimize expressivity, minimize body contact and minimize eye-contact (Lofland, 1973, pp. 151-156). Those examples of body management are very much aimed at securing or defending someone's personal space: the invisible area surrounding one's body which strangers should not invade (Sommer, 1969). Personal space is what one would describe as a *portable territory* as it travels with you everywhere you go. According to Hall (1966, book cover) "the invisible bubble of space that constitutes each person's territory is one of the key dimensions of modern society". Although the "modern society" Hall is speaking of is one of decades ago, his statement is still very much applicable to our contemporary society as dealing with strangers (and subsequently keeping them at a certain distance) is still a key element in our everyday lives.

To turn the notion of personal space – or personal territory – into a more graspable concept, Hall (1966) has developed the *proxemic theory*, which divides the concepts of personal space and interpersonal distance into four measurable spaces. First, he recognizes *intimate space*. Within this distance, "sight (often distorted), olfaction, heat from the other person's body, sound, smell and feel of the breath all combine to signal unmistakable involvement with another body" (Hall, 1966, p. 116). Easier said: this is a very close distance in which it is impossible to not notice the other person as the distance ranges from physical contact
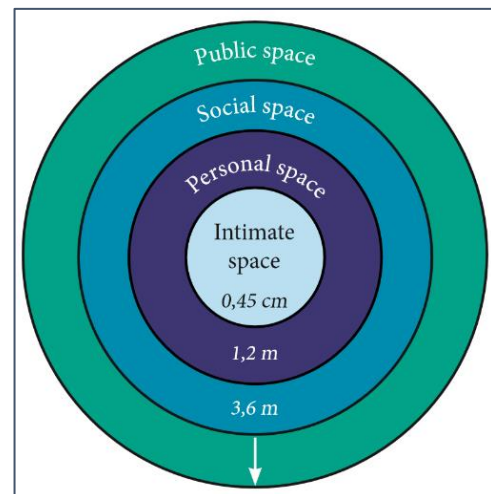

Figure 2.1 Hall's (1966) Proxemic Theory visualised

(which one has while, e.g., hugging) to the somewhat further distance of about 15 to 45 centimetres: space typically reserved for your closest loved ones. Next, there is what Hall calls "the personal space". This space coincides with Sommer's (1969) description of portable territory, entailing a distance ranging from 45 centimetres to 1,2 metres. People who are allowed to enter this zone are typically family members and close friends. Thirdly, there is the zone of *social space*. This zone is generally reserved for acquaintances and encompasses a distance of 1,2 metres to 3,6 metres from the individual. Lastly, Hall's proxemic theory covers the *public space*. This area is reserved for the people who you do not know, for the strangers you encounter. Preferably, those people stay at least 3,6 metres away from you, as this distance does not require (extensive) interaction.

Although the distances depicted in figure 2.1 are considered to be the general standard for interpersonal proximity, the actual distances at which one feels comfortable around strangers are different for everyone and for every situation, since this varies with the relationship between the people involved, the distances of others in the situation, and the physical positioning of the bodies involved (Sommer, 1969). Broadly speaking, extroverted people will feel more at ease at a closer distance than

introverted people (Sommer, 1969; Thomas, 2009). Moreover, ethnicity and culture are also of influence on the distance one keeps to a stranger as research shows that (e.g.) Frenchmen are used to smaller interpersonal distances than Englishmen (Sommer, 1969).

Next to differences caused by personality traits and/or ethnicity, interpersonal distances and interaction are also dependent on the physical features and spatial layout of an environment (Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950). It is not possible or realistic to preserve the ideal interpersonal distances at every time in every situation. In the case of travelling by train, especially during rush hours when crowding occurs, the distances depicted in figure 2.1 cannot always be maintained. As stated by Thomas (2009, p. 3) "travelling on public transport forces strangers into an intimate social distance (…) typically reserved for people with strong personal relationships." Therefore, travelling by train can be a very uncomfortable experience, as your personal or even intimate space is intruded by strangers; by people who would normally stay at distances belonging to the public space, meaning at least 3,6 metres away. Being in inappropriately close proximities to strangers leads to psychological or social discomfort (Altman, 1975), which is considered to be a key issue in trains or public transport in general (Thomas, 2009). More specifically, a discrepancy between the expected interpersonal distance and the actual interpersonal distance – and thus the invasion of personal space – leads to greater self-reported anxiety (Greenberg & Firestone, 1977), psychological stress (Nicosia et al., 1979) and (in extreme instances) can even lead to long-term physical or mental health issues (Cox, Houdmont, & Griffiths, 2006). A "simple" way of avoiding this feeling of discomfort (and all negative outcomes included) caused by travelling in public transport would be to choose to travel in the private atmosphere of a car (Thomas, 2009). However, this is not a solution for everyone as some people cannot afford a car or might have other reasons for choosing to travel by public transport. Furthermore, an increase in car use is not *desired* since this causes (i.e.) congestion, but more importantly since car usage contributes to an increasing emissions account which negatively affects the environment and public health (Verrips & Hoen, 2016). Since the withdrawal into the private area of a car is not a (desirable and realistic) option, people who *do* travel by train are forced to deal with strangers during their trips.

2.3.3 Picking the right seat

Next to body management as mentioned in the previous paragraph, Lofland (1973) acknowledges the importance of picking the right seat. According to Tonnelat and Kornblum (2017), who conducted research on riding the metro in New York, "people look for a spot that allows them the most defendable territory, one that minimizes contact" (2017, p. 112). This kind of territoriality is a basic concept in the study of animal behaviour which entails the claiming of an area and defending it against other animals (Hall, 1966). Although humans do not claim a territory in an "animal way" – they do not use scent or urination to mark a territory – they have found ways of marking a territory. Sommer (1969) distinguishes two ways of arranging oneself in order to gain privacy and thereby defend one's personal territory, namely: retreat (offence) and active defence seating. Although the unit of investigation in Sommer's

research was a public library, those seating arrangements are also applicable to other public areas, including trains. Figure 2.2 shows how people would choose their seat if they want to minimalize
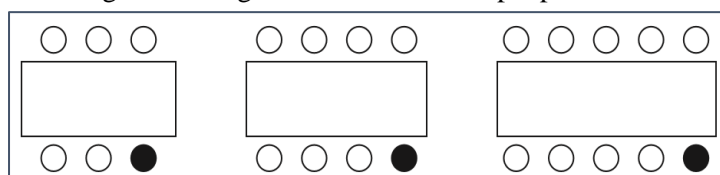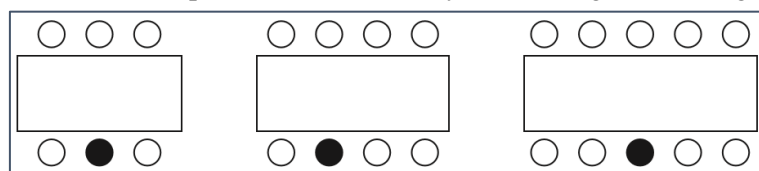

Figure 2.2 Retreat positions (Sommer, 1969)

disturbance by others (a retreat position) (Sommer, 1969). The scenario depicted in figure 2.2 makes clear that the ideal retreat position would be to sit at the utmost end of the table. In a standard train layout, this would mean that you choose to sit next to the window, ideally in a two-seat arrangement (which does not feature a vis-à-vis seat) where you can only be joined by one other person. Next to the advantage of being able to retreat, sitting next to a window is also believed to reduce stress. However, sitting at the window seat with another passenger besides you does hamper a hasty exit (Thomas, 2009). Hence, the window seat might be ideal for retreating, but simultaneously can be a factor that causes stress.

Figure 2.3 illustrates where people prefer to sit if they would want to have the table to themselves; if they would want to discourage others from sitting with them (a defence position). Looking at figure 2.3, it becomes clear that the ideal defensive position would be to sit in the middle of the table. Applying this to the environment of a train, it means that one would prefer to occupy the seat at the aisle. By doing this, a rider makes the chances of someone occupying the window seat a lot smaller. Although choosing an active defence position clearly sends the message that the seat next to you is not to be occupied, people who choose to sit in a retreat position also have ways of sending this message, such as placing objects (such as bags or jackets) on the seat next to them to claim their territory. Furthermore, people can make use

Figure 2.3 Active defence positions (Sommer, 1969)

of "situational withdrawal", which will be explained in the next paragraph (paragraph 2.4.1).

Moreover, figure 2.2 and 2.3 illustrate the "ideal setting", when the other seats are not (yet) occupied. This freedom to pick a seat gives one control over the situation, which makes one feel more at ease. According to Ruback and Patnaik (1989), who conducted a study on perceived control in an elevator, people who have control feel more confident about the situation they find themselves in. Furthermore, they experience larger feelings of freedom and feel as if they are better capable of dealing with the situation. Contrary to people who have a perceived feeling of control, people who feel like they do have no/little control over a situation are more anxious (Ruback & Patnaik, 1989) and some even suggest that an absence of perceived control can negatively affect people's health (Langer & Rodin, 1976). In an elevator, this would mean that people feel more at ease when they stand close to the control panel, as this puts them "in charge" of the buttons. A similar situation can be found on the train, as research shows that long trip commuters feel significantly less stressed during their trip (even though their trip takes more time and the train became more crowded during the trip) than people who enter the vehicle at a later and therefore more crowded point of the trajectory (Lundberg, 1976; Singer, Lundberg,

& Frankenhaeuser, 1978). This feeling of being in control – which mediates the negative effects of crowding and thus reduces the perceived stress – arises due to people's freedom to pick a seat first, the ability to spread out their stuff and therefore the opportunity to create a defendable space.

Lastly, the people who have no other choice than to sit next to/across from someone, do not pick their seat completely randomly. As stated by Thomas (2009, p. 8): "Passengers are likely to make visual discriminations when selecting a seat to find passengers that they determine will be similar to them. Selecting similar passengers is a beneficial strategy because they will be more likely to have similar expectations regarding social rules, what behaviours are appropriate, and use similar space regulation mechanisms". Since people from different cultures, genders and age groups have different conceptions of proper spatial arrangement and interpersonal distances, it can lead to feelings of uneasiness and stress when these are not met (Baxter, 1970). Hence, the chances of fitting in and therefore the chances of not causing/encountering forms of disturbance are higher when you are seated next to someone you share similarities with.

2.4 Private bubbles in public spaces

2.4.1 Situational withdrawal

In the previous paragraph, it was explained that encountering strangers – and therefore the invasion of the personal territory – is inevitable in (semi)public places such as trains. How someone deals with this situation is i.e. dependent on the person involved and the distance he/she perceives between himself/herself and the other. Furthermore, people who have the opportunity to distract themselves by focusing on something else are likely to deal with strangers surrounding them and discomfort more easily (Sommer, 1969). This is described by Goffman (1961) as "situational withdrawal". Activities of situational withdrawal are i.e. reading a book or magazine, or – probably more common in our modern-day Western society – using a mobile phone (Pinchot & Rota, 2010). By using such a device, people are able to "zone-out" and to maintain their "stranger status" (Zurcher, 1979). Situational withdrawal is considered to be a defensive adaptation (Thomas, 2009), however, the nature of engaging in such activities is not always intentionally defensive; one can simply enjoy reading a book or listening to some music on their mobile phone. Still, withdrawing oneself does give off some kind of sign – "this person is not to be interrupted" – and therefore reduces the probability of interaction. Therefore, situational withdrawal can create some kind of private space, or a stated by Soenen (2006, p. 4) "the private social realm can be present in certain moments like a bubble in the broader environment of the public realm".

2.4.2 Using a mobile phone in public transport

Creating a private bubble while being in a public situation (including public transport) by using a mobile phone is becoming more and more common and accepted (Pinchot & Rota, 2010). However, the excessive use of mobile phones "contributes to incivility in public space as individuals move in an through locations while locked in the private world of their conversations with the remote other"

(Valentine, 2008, p. 326). Therefore, the use of mobile phones in public transport blurs the distinction between what is public and what is private (Fortunati, 2002; Höflich, 2006; Soenen, 2006). Cooper takes this even further, by stating that modern-day technology does not only fuzz the distinction between public and private, but also between remote and distant, and between work and leisure (Cooper, 2002).

Although owning a mobile phone can be convenient, the disruptive nature is not to be ignored. This is acknowledged by Ling (2004), who found that by using a mobile phone in public spaces (especially when calling), you force others to become part of your life; of your personality which would otherwise have stayed hidden. Ling believes this kind of behaviour "lacks civility" because you expose yourself to strangers who quite possibly do not seek to become part of your life. This *forced eavesdropping* (Ling, 2004, p. 140) cannot only cause feelings of embarrassment for the caller but – probably more striking – can also make the eavesdropper very uncomfortable, this is described by Ling (2004) as the "embarrassment for others". Therefore, calling while on the train has the capacity to create uneasiness for the involuntary audience and is, therefore, seen as disruptive and unwanted by most.

Probably a more "innocent" way of using a mobile phone while on the train is using it in a more private way by e.g. texting, reading the news or checking social media. Those forms of mobile phone use are considered more discrete and therefore less disruptive than calling. However, making use of a mobile phone in this way also bears the risk of being uncivil as it decreases the chances of interactive behaviour. As (i.e.) eye contact is associated with positive affect (Scherer, 1974), being entirely focused on your mobile phone and therefore treating others as non-persons is considered to be rude. This is especially the case when listening to music (using headphones) while travelling. By engaging in this activity, one produces a personalised sound world – an "auditory bubble" – which creates "a form of accompanied solitude for its users in which they feel empowered, in control and self-sufficient as they travel" (Bull, 2005, p. 353). While offering the possibility to turn (semi)public spaces into someone's own technologically induced private realm, this mobile media sound bubble may contribute to a loss of significance for one's surroundings.

2.4.3 Travelling together

Nevertheless, using mobile phones or other distracting devices is not the only manner in which people create private spheres within the public realm of the train. Travelling together with friends, family and/or colleagues is also a form of situational withdrawal (Soenen, 2006; Tonnelat & Kornblum, 2017). While riding with people you know, people who you have "strong ties" with (Granovetter, 1973), the experience of riding the train becomes more of a social experience (Tonnelat & Kornblum, 2017), a time to catch up. When focusing on your strong ties, the strangers surrounding you become of lesser relevance and, therefore, riding together with other people is another way of creating a private realm within the public sphere, a form of situational withdrawal.

2.5 Semi-strangers in public spaces
2.5.1 Parochialism in the train

Although the train seems to predominantly be a place of strangers now, a place where anonymity is of biggest importance, there are also exceptions to be found. This was i.e. discovered by Soenen (2006), who conducted a research on the ephemeral relations in public transport (in this case: the tram): "Only having attention for the relationships between strangers would deny the complexity of social life on the tram where the private and parochial realm are also present. The public realm is the most prominent on the tram, but the parochial and private realm can reconstruct themselves" (2006, p. 4). In the previous paragraph, the appearance of the private realm within the public sphere already became apparent. But, as mentioned by Soenen, the parochial realm also needs to be taken into account.

According to Soenen (2006), people do not only use public transport as a means to get from one place to another, but they are also establishing ephemeral or in some case primary relationships with one another. While people might have the illusion that they are (figuratively speaking) driving an S.U.V. – "cocooned in a sealed chamber, behind tinted glass, with the temperature fully controlled and the GPS system tracking, and sometimes dictating, our every turn, our every stop and start, we are radically isolated from each other, able to communicate only through false connectedness of the cell phone" (Mitchell, 2005, p. 96) – they are still part of the public realm and there can still be found some kind of connectedness with the strangers in their proximity. This becomes clear when uncommon or unexpected events in public transport happen (Paulos & Goodman, 2004). When a train suddenly brakes and people bump into each other, they become aware of their surroundings again and interaction is established. At those moments "people become real again" (Sommer, 1969, p. 37) and the private bubble bursts.

Furthermore, you can become acquainted with those strangers you see in public space, although they might not directly become your best friends, they are people you recognize and who are missed when they are absent. Those people are called "familiar strangers" and form the frontier between the people we are acquainted with and the people we run into once and never see again (Paulos & Goodman, 2004). In case of the train, one can think of travelling with the same people every day; people who take the train at the same time as you do and who you share a train carriage with, but who you do not personally know. Because of the existence of such familiar stranger relations, (semi)public spaces – such as trains – can become part of the "parochial realm", the realm between public and private which covers the world of acquaintance networks (Lofland, 1998, p. 10). This realm consists of people with who one shares *weak ties* (Granovetter, 1973). Whether a tie you have with someone is weak or strong, is dependent on the "amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361). Although weak ties are the people you do not share a very strong emotional connection with, this does not mean that they are not important, as weak ties have the ability to create some sense of community amongst the members of the encapsulated group (Granovetter, 1973). This sense of community has a positive effect as it makes you feel as if you are part of a group which creates a sense of belonging and i.e. contributes to a feeling of

safety (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Therefore, familiar strangers have the ability to make one feel as if they belong; as if they are safe.

With your weak ties – or your familiar strangers – you share more than just the rules of civil inattention; with those people, you feel some kind of (temporary) bond (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1993) and although you normally do not explicitly directly interact with them (Paulos & Goodman, 2004) the interactions between familiar strangers are – most of the time – focused. This kind of interaction goes further than civil inattention – or unfocused interactions – and are what Goffman (1963) calls "encounters", which can both be verbal or nonverbal. Encounters can occur, for example, in face engagements (when people maintain "a single focus of cognitive and visual recognition" (Goffman, 1963, p. 89) or in conversations. Expressing positive body language (i.e. a smile or making eye contact) is associated with positive affect: people who make use of this kind of body management are considered more friendly and positive (Sherer, 1974). Furthermore, this kind of positive body language contributes to the so-called "we-rationale" (Goffman, 1963, p. 98) and therefore to the feeling of parochialism and simultaneously to a sense of community. In some cases, the relations between familiar strangers can even become stronger and more intense which can eventually lead to friendship formation (Thomas, 2009). This is also supported by Festinger, Schacter and Back's Passive Contact Theory (1950), which suggests that relationships form when people repeatedly spend time together in close proximity, which means that "familiarity breeds liking" (Thomas, 2009, p. 26). However, the chances of familiar strangers becoming strong ties are limited by the fact that consistency is not assured. People do not always take the same train and do not always sit in the exact same spot, which makes it hard for social bonds to form. Furthermore, verbal interaction – which is normally not considered appropriate while riding the train – is needed in order to create a strong tie. Therefore, forming bonds between familiar strangers is also very much dependent on unexpected events – moments that cause the private bubble to be burst – since they create more suitable circumstances for starting a conversation (Sommer, 1969; Paulos & Goodman, 2004).

2.5.2 Enhancing conversation

Those unexpected events are not the only things that might encourage a conversation on the train. Nash (1975) found that there are three interrelated factors that encourage social interactions on buses: the experience or competency of passengers and drivers (1), the density of people or crowdedness (2) and the duration of the ride (3). The first factor, competency, "implies familiarity or comfort with the social schema, which can lead to a relaxed atmosphere more conducive to social interaction" (Thomas, 2009, p. 97). Furthermore, the rules of civil inattention blur as the train carriage gets more crowded. According to Sommer (1969), crowded public transport removes one's dignity, privacy and individuality which makes it hard to interact with others. Lastly, as mentioned before, the duration of the ride also influences the level of stress perceived and therefore limits the chances of a relaxed atmosphere which is believed

to be favourable for the emergence of interactions. Given the fact that trains share many similarities with buses, it is expected that those interrelated factors will also be of influence in the sphere of a train.

Finally, it has been proven that travellers mistakenly seek solitude (Epley & Schroeder, 2014). Most people feel as if their train ride will be more pleasant if they travel in solitude, while research illustrates that the opposite is the case: people who interact with others experience their ride as more positive (and no less productive) than people who travel in solitude. Moreover, Epley and Schroeder (2014) found that people misunderstand the consequences of social interaction and thus "may indeed be social animals but may not always be social enough for their well-being" (Epley & Schroeder, 2014, p. 1993). Though feeling connected to others increases happiness and health (i.e. Myers & Diener, 1995), people seem to believe that engaging in conversation is not considered appropriate social behaviour on the train and therefore choose isolation over making a connection (Epley & Schroeder, 2014). Therefore, a lot of defensive behaviour keeps existing on the train, while this is not successful in reducing social discomfort and may even generate a bigger feeling of discomfort as the likelihood of a positive social environment is reduced (Thomas, 2009) and therefore the happiness one experiences while connecting with others does not get a chance (Epley & Schroeder, 2014).

2.6 Conceptual framework

To make a connection between the theories and concepts mentioned in the previous paragraphs and the sociality of travelling by train, the conceptual framework as seen in figure 2.4 was created. This model shows the reciprocal relations of the concepts described and the relation they have to the research topic.

In paragraph 2.2 it was already mentioned that the sociality in determined by "the complex interplay of technologies, matter, and bodies" (Bissell, 2010, p. 284). Therefore, the conceptual framework depicted in figure 2.4 shows three important aspects that influence the sociality of travelling by train: the individual traveller and his/her fellow travellers (the bodies) and the material aspects (the technologies and
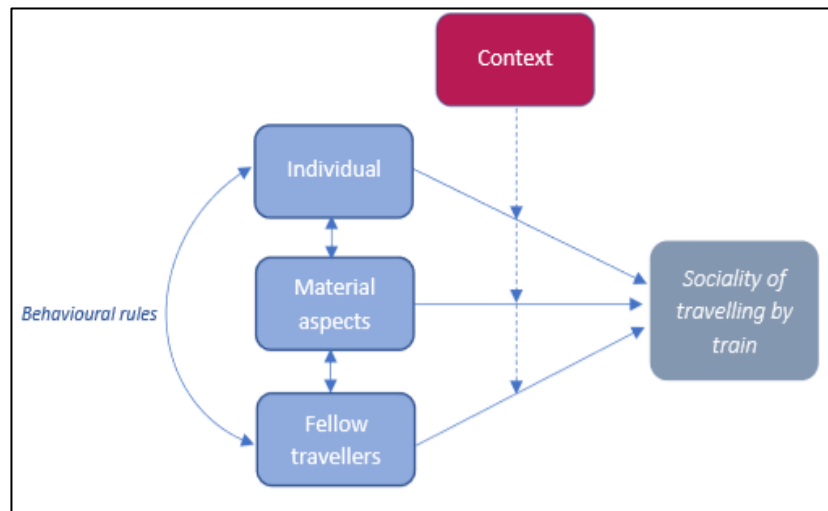
Figure 2.4 Conceptual framework

matter). Although those three topics are put into separate boxes, they are strongly related and are therefore connected by arrows. On an individual level, it is mostly about the ways in which people seat themselves (in a retreat or defence position), the activities one engages in and how one behaves around others and interprets other people's behaviour. Therefore, the fellow travellers and their activities, attitudes and behaviour are strongly related to and of influence on the individual traveller. The

encounters between the individual traveller and others can range from extensive (verbal interactions) to superficial ("rubbing along"). Yet, one always has to deal with implicit behavioural rules which are both explicit (imposed by the railway company) and implicit (rules aimed at "fitting in", including civil inattention and proper body management). Those rules are – for the most part – universal, though there are differences to be found between different social, ethnic and age groups.

In addition, not only human factors but also the material aspects need to be taken into account as they influence the ways in which people are able to "defend" themselves and their territory and therefore influence the ways in which train passengers come into contact with one another. Those material aspects range from furnishings to artefacts (Gobo, 2008), meaning that not only the design of the train but also the "distracting devices" (used for situational withdrawal) are of influence on the sociality of travelling by train.

Lastly, the conceptual framework includes the context, meaning the time and day of travel, the crowdedness, whether there has been a delay, etc. The dotted lines illustrate that the context is intertwined in the three other aspects as it is believed to influence them all. The three aspects, combined with the context, eventually determine the sociality of travelling by train. How the individual aspects and their coming together was researched, will be explained in the next chapter: the methodology.

Chapter 3 – Research trajectory: methodology

3.1 The train as the context

As expressed throughout the previous chapters, this research is about the sociality of (Dutch) train travellers. The train – or public transport in general – is a unique (semi)public space which distinguishes itself because it is moving and therefore involves various kind of spaces and places as it crosses through spatial borders (Soenen, 2006). Moreover, the train is a very diverse space, where strangers who would normally not encounter each other spend time together in a relatively compact space and create a negotiated social order (Ocejo & Tonnelat, 2014). Another aspect that makes public transport modes unique (semi)public spaces, is the fact that they are enclosed. In contrast to (e.g.) a park or a square, you are not able to leave at any moment and, therefore, public transportation makes you mobile on the one hand, while on the other hand, it limits your mobility.

Although the train shares some characteristics with other modes of public transportation, it also distinguishes itself in some ways from e.g. a bus or a tram. Most of the time (especially in the case of an Intercity), the distances travelled by train are longer, which challenges the travellers to kill a bigger amount of time. Therefore, people aboard will have more time to start working or to get comfortable, while a ride on a bus or tram is much shorter and therefore probably not used for such purposes.

Moreover, trains are becoming more and more important modes of transportation. Nowadays, on an average weekday, over 650.000 people in the Netherlands travel by train (NS, 2017) and this number is supposedly increasing. Predictions state that the travel demand for travelling by train will increase with about 25% to 33% in the upcoming years (Snellen, Romijn, & Hilber, 2015). Although this prediction is conjectural and therefore not necessarily going to become a definite reality, numbers show that the amount of journeys made by train has increased over the period 2015-2016 with 4% already, in the big cities, this increase was even a little higher (5%) (NS, 2017). Therefore, trains are very important in our current mobile lives and are supposedly even becoming of bigger importance. I believe this aspect, combined with the others mentioned in this paragraph, make the train a very special and interesting space which is worthwhile to conduct research on.

3.2 Methodology: ethnography

To be able to answer the research question, data needed to be collected. The data for this research was collected by conducting qualitative research, more specifically by doing ethnographic research. This method is aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of a situation by collecting data in a real-life environment (Creswell, 2013) in "all its richness and complexity" (Herbert, 2000, p. 551). Or, as Ley (1988, p. 121) puts it, "concerned to make sense of the actions and intentions of people as knowledgeable agents; indeed, more properly it attempts to make sense of their making sense of the events and opportunities confronting them in everyday life". Ethnographic research is considered to be very useful in unravelling the processes and meanings that are the basis of socio-spatial life (Herbert, 2000).

Over the past decade, geography has been subject to change. Whereas geography used to primarily focus on concepts such as space, time, place, scale and landscape (Clifford, Holloway, Rice, & Valentine, 2009), mobility has become a topic of major importance as well. This so-called "mobility-turn" (i.e. Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007; Jensen, 2009) has not only occurred in the field of geography as a whole, but has simultaneously taken place in the methods involved, such as ethnography (Hein, Evans, & Jones, 2008).

Mobile ethnography is – as the name already implies – a form of ethnography which centres around mobility. This method seeks to understand the *mobile everyday* by focusing on the interplay between observations, cognitions, and sensations in motion (Urry, 2007). Questions that play a central role in doing mobile ethnography are "How do individuals produce meaning of their motilities? How do individuals inhabit mobile spatialities? How does movement affect their lives? How does movement impact their practices, representations and worldviews?" (Novoa, 2015, p. 100). In the search for answers to those questions, there is a big emphasis on being part of the setting, on physical co-presence and thereby on first-hand social science (Fincham, McGuinness, & Murray, 2010). Although this is common in all ethnographies, mobile ethnographies distinguish themselves by paying special attention to movement, to the world in transit. When one recognizes that mobility is central to contemporary everyday life (Cresswell, 2006), it seems "reasonable to suggest that a mobile ethnography will logically 'make more sense' than ethnographies that are paralyzed by sedentarist metaphysics, and restricted by cognitive, acoustic, and ocular biases." (Gottschalk & Salvaggio, 2015, p. 11).

I believe this qualitative research method is suitable for gathering data for this research because it is an excellent way of getting into the behaviour of the "culture-sharing group" (in this case: the people who travel by train) and the patterns to be found, while also getting to know their attitudes and (social) desires towards travelling by train. *Mobile* ethnography, in particular, is very suitable because of the emphasis on transition and the meanings and processes that are to be found in moving spaces.

3.3 Phases of fieldwork

Ethnographic research requires an extensive amount of fieldwork (Fetterman, 2010). For this research, the fieldwork was divided into three phases, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.3.1 Phase 1: Observations

(Participant) observations are of big importance in ethnographic studies (Gobo, 2008; O'Reilly, 2009). In mobile ethnography, the traditional participant observations are applied to the context of mobility, which means that the researcher should not only observe the setting but also "experience, feel and grasp the textures, smells, comforts and discomforts, pleasures and displeasures of a moving life." (Novoa, 2015, p. 99). Therefore, participant observation allows you to shape thorough descriptions from the ground up (Laurier, 2010).

The point of this first phase was to observe the real-life situation, since making sense of the world and what works in practice requires us to soak up the everyday experience (O'Reilly, 2009). In the introduction, it already became clear that there is a general feeling that people who ride the train do not have encounters and are not open to others. However, there is no concrete data to support this feeling. Therefore, the observations were all about creating an overview of the current situation, about capturing the practices of the passengers, which entails picking a seat, killing time, encountering strangers and the rhythms of the journey. Of course, it would have been an option to just ask people about those topics, but it has been proven that there is a difference between what people say and what they actually do (LaPiere, 1934; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984). Therefore, observations enable you to gather direct information, without solely relying on informant's accounts (Gobo, 2008; O'Reilly, 2009); it considers what passengers do as well as what they say and thus "enables an insightful examination of any discrepancies between thoughts and deeds" (Herbert, 2000, p. 552).

During the observational phase, I focused on trains of NS, because this is the largest railway passenger transport company in the Netherlands (NS, n.d.). The NS operates journeys with two different types of trains: an Intercity and a Sprinter, which both have different editions (NS, n.d.). Both trains are similar in the main arrangement: they both have a division in first and second class compartments. However, they differ in design and purpose. According to NS, the Intercity trains are suited for medium and long journeys and the trains are accordingly designed for long(er) travels: (e.g.) all Intercitys are equipped with toilets and silence compartments. On the other hand, Sprinters are designed for shorter trips: they have big doors for a quick and smooth entry and access. Furthermore, the design of a sprinter is quite "open", while an Intercity can be considered more intimate. It is expected that both types of trains have different dynamics. Although I consider this variety to be very interesting in investigating the sociality of travelling by train and would, therefore, have liked to conduct observations in both types of trains, I decided to only focus on Intercity trains. Due to the limited timespan for conducting this research, I believe it was better to focus on one type than to focus on the "complete setting" without being able to grasp a complete image. The decision to focus on Intercity trains instead of Sprinters was made because of the number of people who make use of both modes of transportation. Even though a lot of trips are made by Sprinter (48% of the train travellers travel – at least for a part of their journey – by Sprinter), even more trips are made by Intercity (52%). In addition, 25% of the people who travel by Sprinter change to an Intercity train during their trip (NS, 2017). This shows that Intercity trains play a bigger role within the Dutch railway system and, therefore, were chosen to be the unit of analysis in this research. To be a bit more specific, all observations took place in the second class compartment. Because my railroad pass only allows me to travel in second class, I was only able to conduct research in this part of the train. Luckily, in the Netherlands travelling in second class is far more common than travelling in first class (van der Weerden, 2017), so this did not hamper my research.

Moreover, the observations were done in a way that is inspired by Actor-Network Theory (ANT). With ANT you do not only take human agency into account, but you also consider that non-

humans have agency (Farías & Bender, 2010). This approach definitely fits train rides: when just looking around in a train, you can see that (i.e.) the arrangement of the furniture causes people to sit in a certain way that might be of influence on their interactions. This is supported by Gobo (2008), who wrote about the importance of furnishings and artefacts in ethnography. He emphasizes that they both provide resources for action, while also setting constraints on it. Therefore, observing the artefacts as well as the furnishings was of major importance in this research since sociality cannot be fully understood without taking the role of those material elements into consideration.

The observational phase was intense since this method is, as described by Czarniawska (2007, p. 58), a method that "requires constant attention". Because of this intensity, it was convenient that I ride the train a lot myself. For my internship, I had to travel from Nijmegen to Deventer three times a week, but for visiting friends or my family, I am also very dependent on the train. Those trips formed the basis of the observational phase: in total, I observed 25 of those "mainstream" trips. However, combining long days at the office with observations during the commute eventually became too intense. That is why I concluded the observational phase with two days (of about five hours) completely devoted to doing observations. The variety in trips was considered to be important because the moment of travelling influences the particulars and the dynamics of the train ride. This is acknowledged by Juliet Jain (2009) who found that a day journey is completely different from a night journey as passengers shape (i.e.) the "tempo of flow through talk, music, reading" (Jain, 2009, p. 105) differently during daytime than they do in the evening or at night.

During the observations, I wrote down field notes. In those notes, I tried to grasp the main dynamics of the journey, these include: the occurrence of interactions (verbal or non-verbal), the ways in which people kept themselves occupied (by reading a book, listening to music, etc.), the rhythms of people entering and getting off the train, and aspects that interrupted the "natural setting" (e.g. a conductor checking if everyone carries a valid ticket) (see appendix 1). Next to those predetermined aspects, there was also room for "the unexpected" and additional comments. Therefore, the observational phase was considered to be "cognitively open", which means that the unexpected was expected (Gobo, 2008).

3.3.2 Phase 2: Travel diaries

Although participant observation provides a great amount of information and insights, it is even better to collect data in multiple ways. As stated by Tonnelat and Kornblum (2017, p. 231): "Observation yields rich data but is not exempt from bias, especially in an environment dominated by non-verbal communication". This is also acknowledged by Andre Novoa, who stated that: "An intense observant-participant can render enough data to produce a vivid account of the mobile lives of the individuals under study. Even so, completing it with other techniques, including the production of photographic albums, videos and interviews, might prove itself useful" (Novoa, 2015, p. 105).

Therefore, the observations were – amongst others – complemented by participatory diary research. This second phase of research was inspired by the work of Ocejo and Tonnelat (2014) who conducted research on how people experience and practice riding the New York City subway. In this research, Ocejo and Tonnelat followed 12 high school students who frequently travelled the subway. The research objective was to analyse how those teenagers actually experience being a stranger and how they negotiate social orders while being a rider on the subway. The teenagers were not simply observed or questioned, they were "christened" co-researchers who were asked to keep journals of their travels.

For this research, I wanted to do something similar. Not only because journal writing is considered an effective way of making explicit the tacit (and otherwise undocumented) accounts of social experience (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977), but also because it "illuminates their (*meaning: the participants)* meaning and hidden interpretations" (Tonnelat & Kornblum, 2017, p. 173), which does very well meet my research objective. However, instead of just focusing on high school students, I approached a larger group of people by advertising my call for research participants on various social media platforms, namely: Facebook, LinkedIn and the "NS Community" (an online platform aimed at people who want to share opinions and experiences on riding the train). Eventually, this call resulted in a group of sixteen travellers who wanted to participate in this research. Those participants and their main characteristics are depicted in the table below (table 3.1)

Name	Sex	Age	Type of traveller	Frequency of train travels (average)	Length of average trip (if they had one)
Sandra	F	17	Must (student)	5 days a week	13 minutes
Jennifer	F	21	Must (student)	5/6 days a week	28 minutes
Pascal	M	21	Must (student)	5 days a week	16 minutes
Jordan	M	23	Must (student)	5 days a week	53 minutes
Juliette	F	23	Lust (leisure)	Once a month	n.a.
Loek	M	23	Must (student)	3/4 days a week	43 minutes
Lola	F	23	Must (student)	4 days a week	10 minutes
Milou	F	23	Must (work)	4 days a week	33 minutes
Renske	F	23	Lust (leisure)	2 days a week	n.a.
Anouk	F	24	Must (student)	5 days a week	24 minutes
Joanne	F	24	Must (student + work)	5 days a week	43 minutes
Daan	M	25	Lust (leisure)	2/3 days a week	n.a.
Sanne	F	25	Must (work)	5 days a week	51 minutes
Jelle	M	27	Must (work)	2/3 times a month	n.a.
Paul	M	27	Must (student + work)	3/4 days a week	n.a.
Dimitri	M	28	Must (work)	4 days a week	66 minutes

Table 3.1 Research participants

Although the table mostly speaks for itself, it does require some elucidation. According to NS, there are two types of travellers: lust travellers (people who travel for recreational purposes) and must travellers (people who commute to school/work) (van Hagen & Bron, 2013, p. 8). While the participants – as shown in table 3.1 – were divided into "types of travellers", almost all must travellers added that they do not solely travel by train to get from home to school/work, but that they sometimes also tend to go by train when they travel for recreational purposes. Therefore, the table includes the traveling type that is most applicable, but one needs to bear in mind that this is not the *only* reason these participants travel by train since this distinction is not that clear-cut.

As shown in table 3.1, all participants – with ages varying from 17 to 28 – are quite young. However, I believe this is a very interesting group to conduct research on because of the "special position" youngsters have in public space: they are often seen as "perpetrators of disruptive acts" (Ocejo & Tonnelat, 2014, p. 497), which makes them an interesting group to study. Furthermore, younger people are the ones who are – as mentioned before – "born with a mouse in their hands and a computer screen as their window to the world" (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003, p. 24), which contributes to the general feeling that people nowadays are more interested in their mobile phones than in their fellow travellers. In addition, young people reaching their 30s are the ones who are most likely to change from travelling by train to travelling by car, since car ownership and usage in the Netherlands is highest for the age group between 30 and 50 years old (Kampert, Nijenhuis, van der Spoel, & Molnár-in 't Veld, 2017). Therefore, listening to those youngsters *now* might help to adapt railway policies to their needs and desires and therefore may increase their attachment to trains or public transport in general, which would have a positive influence on the environment (Verrips & Hoen, 2016).

Figure 3.1 Diary - paper version

The respondents were offered the choice to keep the diaries either on paper or digitally (via Google Docs). Eventually, two respondents chose the paper version (of which you can see an example in figure

3.1), while the other 14 preferred to keep their diaries online. During a period of about one and a half months, an amount of 255 diary entries – documenting an equal amount of trips – were filled in. Because some travel more than others, some people documented more trips than others: this ranges from one person documenting 8 travels to another person documenting 23 trips.

First of all, the travel diaries were used to document the participants' routines while riding the train (at what time do they get on the train, from what station, alone or with someone they know, etc.). Furthermore, I asked them to write down how they chose their seat and what they did to kill time during their journey. Moreover, I asked them to document if they were involved in any interactions (being either verbal or non-verbal). Furthermore, the participants wrote down if there were things that "interrupted" the normal setting, such as conductors or people from the railway catering entering the railway compartment. Those questions were all complemented with a "why?" or "how?" question to really get into the reasons for doing something and the way someone feels about something that happens. After the first entries came in, I changed the (online) diary form slightly, as many participants mentioned the train being either crowded or not. Since this seemed to be a relevant topic, as it showed up frequently, I decided to add the question: "Do you feel like this train is crowded and (how) does this influence your journey?". Furthermore, I added a question about where people leave their bags (and why), as I figured this might be useful information as well.

Since, "diaries can produce more detailed, more reliable and often more focused accounts than other comparable qualitative methods" (Latham, 2010, p. 191), they constituted a great basis for the third phase of the research (the interviews), while at the same time being of big importance in verifying and complementing my own observations. Furthermore, I believe that using diary methods is a great way of collecting data, without disturbing the natural setting of a train. By letting the respondents write down their findings and experiences (instead of directly asking about them), I – as a researcher – did not disorder the setting by starting a conversation that would otherwise have not been there.

3.2.3 Phase 3: Interviews

Next to the advantages of diary methods that were previously mentioned, the keeping of a journal made sure that the respondents did not forget important information. This is acknowledged by Alan Latham, who stated the following: "When asked in an interview or questioned as part of a survey, people will rarely be able to cite specific instances of certain interactions, and without a concrete event to organize their account around, will frequently reply in vague generalities that are difficult to interpret." (2010, p. 190). If you would do the third step of this research – in-depth interviews – without the keeping of a journal, it would be hard for the respondents to exactly remember what happened during their travels. Especially since travelling by train is such a habitual practice, the diaries formed a good basis for having interviews. Tonnelat and Kornblum (2017) recognized this as well; they stated that diary methods helped them to "determine what riders actually do, rather than what they think they do when they are interviewed in other locations" (p. 231).

There are different ways of conducting interviews, from structured – with predetermined questions in a predetermined order – to unstructured; meaning free-flowing and formless (O'Reilly, 2009). For this research, I chose to take a middle course: semi-structured interviews. In advance, I decided that I wanted to ask about people's (social) desires when travelling by train: do they like interactions and would they wish to be more involved with fellow travellers? Furthermore, the topics that were discussed were strongly dependent on the outcome of the diaries, as they form the basis for the interviews, and were, therefore, not suitable to be drawn up in advance. To make sure that all relevant topics were involved in the interviews, for every respondent a tailor-made interviewguide was created. The guide that formed the basis for those interview guides, can be found in appendix 2.

According to O'Reilly (2009, p. 125), "in-depth conversations (or interviews) give the ethnographer and respondent time to delve more deeply, to express their feelings, to reflect on events and beliefs, and to even expose their ambivalences". Therefore, this phase of fieldwork did not only contribute to understanding what the sociality of travelling by train entails but also engaged in riders opinions and desires regarding the social aspect of their train journeys; inflormation that can be influentual in the creation/sharpening of NS's policies and the designs of future trains.

3.4 Analysis

Next to data collection, an analysis is – of course – of huge importance. The ultimate goal of this phase is to create a "holistic cultural portrait of the group that incorporates the views of the participants as well as the views of the researcher" (Creswell, 2013, p. 96).

To get to this holistic portrait, the observations (which were kept in a diary) were digitalized. This collection of field notes was the first step in capturing the sociality of travelling by train. To be able to analyse this rich amount of fieldnotes, the data was imported into Atlas.ti – a program that eases the coding and therefore the categorizing of data – in order to search for patterned regularities (Wolcott, 1994). The coding process was open as there was no use of predetermined codes; the data itself served as a source for the codes.

Furthermore, the diaries kept by the research participants were thoroughly read prior to the interviews. By highlighting information that was striking, important or required further clarification, I was able to create a tailor-made interview guide for every interviewee. As mentioned before, this interview guide was not only targeted at the diaries but also included some basic questions that were asked to every respondent. Those interviews, conducted in phase three of fieldwork, were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The transcripts were uploaded into Atlas.ti and coded using the same codes as the observations, but also gave rise to the creation of new codes. A complete overview of the codes – divided into code groups – can be found in appendix 3.

At first, I intended to code all diaries that were kept by the research participants. However, I soon doubted the relevance of this since the most important information generated by the diaries was also included in the interviews and therefore in the coding process. To make sure this doubt was justifiable,

I decided to code one of the diaries (Jennifer's) to see if this did indeed not result in new information. As it turned out, the coding of this diary led to a list of codes which showed a significant overlap with the coding of the interview transcripts. Therefore, I figured it was more useful and efficient to start writing up the results based on the codes generated in Atlas.ti and to then complement this information with some interesting sections of the diaries. This eventually resulted in a story encompassing the sociality of travelling by train, which can be found in chapter 4.

3.5 Challenges of (mobile) ethnography

Although this research method is thoroughly thought through, there are some challenges (or possible limitations) that need to be taken into consideration. While I consider ethnography to be a good research method, it is a method that also receives substantial critiques. In his article "For Ethnography", Herbert (2000) described and countered the three most frequently expressed critiques, which I will summarize in short.

The biggest challenge of ethnographic research is the generalisability (Creswell, 2013). An ethnographic research typically deals with a certain (small-scale) case, where the information gathered is very much in-depth. Although this might seem a bit simplistic at first, it is best to avoid overly ambitious projects; as described by Gobo (2008, p. 75): "A preoccupation with obtaining a complete picture of a phenomenon with just one research project is the best recipe for wrecking an inquiry." Moreover, the findings of this research are not to be generalised, at most they can be relevant in understanding similar settings (Herbert, 2000). In contrast to – for example – surveys, where analyses provide striking generalizations but which say little about the ways in which place matters in the particularities of social life (Abbott, 1997), this research aims at decreasing our backlog in knowledge a bit, but does not give a conclusive, complete view of what the sociality of travelling by train looks like in the world, or even in the Netherlands as a country. Therefore, the goal of this – and every – ethnographic research was to "explore the messy nature of the social world in depth and in all its complexity, rather than seeking broad generalisations or predictable patterns" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 17). However, following the line of argumentation by Willliams (2000) and Payne and Williams (2005), it is possible to make so-called "moderatum generalisations". This means that your findings lead to every day, banal generalisations which are open to further development and adjustment; moderatum generalisations "can generate hypotheses that can be tested for their applicability to other settings" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 85). This is supported by Michael Angrosino (2007, p. 19) who stated that: "Ethnographic methods can help a researcher get 'lay of the land' before honing in on particular issues with more statistically precise measures". Therefore, one could argue that ethnography does not lead to broad generalisations directly, but opens up possibilities for further investigation.

The second "problem" is the concern about science. Ethnography is a research method in which interpretation plays a part. As described by Herbert (2000, p. 558) this raises questions for those who are committed to more value-neutral and "objective" social scientific approaches. However, the process

of interpretation is unavoidable in ethnography and, furthermore, is not unique to ethnography. To counter this problem of subjectivity, an ethnographer should be very self-conscious and reflexive and should "use his or her developing cultural competence to outline the symbolic architecture of the group under study" (Herbert, 2000, p. 558). By continuously describing specific instances and explaining the logic of the interpretation, ethnographers try to explain their thoughts to others and therefore justify their findings. In my research, I attempted to do this by not only keeping a significant amount of field notes but also by testing my findings against the experiences of the research participants. Including perspectives of different people that play a part in the sociality of travelling by train did not only strengthen the validity of this research but also helps deepen one's understanding of the topic of interest (Olsen, 2004).

The third main critique on ethnography is the concern about representation. Some argue that ethnographers are not very self-conscious about the activities in which they engage and the representation of those settings (Herbert, 2000). Some believe that ethnographies involve problems of power and even state that ethnography "can serve, willingly or not, as a handmaiden to broader colonialist projects that inventory oppressed groups as a means of controlling them" (Herbert, 2000, p. 562). Although I believe this is not going to be a problem in my research, since I do not conduct research on an oppressed group, I believe Herbert's three ways of preventing power to distort a research – forthrightness (providing clarity on how access to the group was gained), reflexivity (being critical and reflexive about your own cultural and intellectual position) and modesty (be open about how research is always positioned and partial, you cannot find *the* truth) – are of importance in every (ethnographic) research.

Next to ethnography in general, there are also some challenges to be found in the fieldwork methods involved. When doing observational research (phase 1), one limitation that has to be taken into account is "the tendency to see what one is looking for" (Tonnelat & Kornblum, 2017, p. 234). I tried to counter this problem by being cognitively open, which allowed me to not only focus on predetermined aspects but also to "go with the flow" and see what other interesting events occur. Furthermore, in a setting where non-verbal communication is central, one can easily misinterpret rider's demeanour. This problem was countered by combining my own observations with those of my research participants as this yielded a sufficient amount of data to enable me to draw a portrait of the sociality of travelling by train.

The second phase of fieldwork – the participatory diary phase – also had some limitations to it. Although I encouraged the participants to act as they would normally do when travelling by train, it is expected that they might have altered their behaviour slightly or looked at their journey differently when participating in this research. While this might have had some effect on the outcomes of the diaries, I believe this did not lead to major problems. Including participants in a participatory research will always change their views a bit as they simply become more aware of the way they (and the people surrounding them) behave. This is inevitable, but not problematic. Furthermore, I believe it was useful to – of course

– inform my participants about the research aim, but not to give away too many details. By doing this, I made sure that the participants stayed cognitively open and wrote down their experiences as unprejudiced as possible.

A second problem that could have occurred during this phase of data collection, is that the participants did not put enough effort into writing the diaries, or might have even dropped out. By checking in with the participants after their first (few) diary entries and by giving them a reward once they submitted all their diary entries and took part in an in-depth interview, I tried to neutralize this limitation as well.

For the last phase of fieldwork, I expected a more practical limitation to occur. As I wanted to conduct the interviews in July – during the summer holidays – I believed it would be hard to arrange appointments. By being as flexible as possible (in choosing a day/time but also the location of the interview) I was, however, able to meet with everyone (except one respondent) face-to-face. The one respondent is was not able to meet in person was open to doing the interview via phone call, which eventually turned out to be perfectly fine as well.

Even though ethnography (and the methods involved) does receive some critique, I – in accordance with Herbert – believe those issues can be countered. Furthermore, I experienced that the advantages of this research method (as described in this chapter) outweigh the possible pitfalls. Moreover, researchers working at NS used ethnographic methods in a similar research as well, in which they stated *(loosely translated)*: "The results of this research help NS to look at their service in an innovative way and provide input for creating policies aimed at enthusing customers" (van Hagen & Bron, 2013, p. 8), which confirms the practical use of such a research. Therefore, I believe doing ethnography was a suitable way of gathering sufficient data to reach my research objective.

Chapter 4 – The story of sociality: results

The data for this research was – as explained in the methodology (chapter 3) – collected in various ways: by observing real-life situations, diary keeping and conducting interviews. Though different in content and composition, the data that was gathered can be merged into one story: the story of the sociality of travelling by train. This story, which captures the main characteristics of the practice of riding the train regarding the social aspect, will be told in this chapter.

4.1 Getting on the train

One of the first things that became clear when collecting information for this research, was that no train ride is the same. The trains themselves can differ in design and amenities aboard, a train ride can take place at various times a day, and probably most interesting for this research: every train ride consists of a different composition of travellers. Though the context can be different, train rides are, however, very similar as well. Especially when travelling the same trajectory at the same time multiple times a week, you may not really experience those differences as the basics stay the same: most of the time the level of crowdedness is quite consistent, you are surrounded by strangers, most people engage in similar activities daily, which eventually results in it becoming a customary practice.

This routine already starts when arriving at the train station and entering the train. While this might seem like a random happening by just looking at it, it is actually a very strategic deed. From just reading the diaries, it became very clear that most research participants have a strong preference for entering the train at the same spot every time. This strategy is dependent on different aspects, of which one of them is the number of people already gathering at a spot. As explained by multiple respondents during the interviews, they prefer to enter the train at a point where few people are waiting to get in. As described by Jordan: "You choose a spot with as few people as possible so you can enter the train as quickly as possible to make sure you are able to sit down". Claiming a seat is very important for most respondents, as it enables them to use their time aboard more efficiently as "having to stand makes it impossible to get things done." (Sanne). Even if you do not have to finish some work or other tasks, having a seat is considered to be far more comfortable than standing: "You have to stand when it is very crowded, which means the trains are packed and people are standing very close to you: they get in your comfort zone. Furthermore, my feet get sore and when the train wobbles people trip or bump into each other. To me, that is simply annoying." (Milou). Differently stated: riders are in this case unmistakably involved with other bodies (meaning they enter their intimate space), which causes feelings of discomfort and stress (Hall, 1966; Altman, 1975). Yet, various respondents expressed that those displeasures of a crowded train are of lesser influence on their trip when they are able to sit down.

Furthermore, people tend to adjust their "boarding strategy" to where they have to get out, or – in case of a transfer – to the spot that allows them to change trains as quickly and easily as possible: "I calculate where I have to board to arrive at the right spot at my destination" (Daan). This is taught by experience, the respondents simply *know* where their train will stop and therefore which boarding

strategy suits their trip most. When they deviate from their "regular trip", their strategy is not as strict, but most of the time they still hold on to the first strategy: boarding at a quiet place.

4.2 Picking a seat

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, most respondents attach value to sitting down while on the train. First of all, this has to do with comfort and productivity, but there is more to this. As explained in chapter 2, Lofland (1973) acknowledges the importance of "picking the right seat" as a way of dealing with strangers in (semi)public space. While there seem to be clear preferences for boarding the train at a certain spot, people also have their preferences when being seated *on* the train. Though not everyone has exactly the same desires, the observations made clear that most people prefer to sit by the window. Most respondents agreed to this, primarily because they like to look outside. This corresponds with Thomas' (2009) theory, which states that people prefer to occupy the window seat as this reduces stress and therefore makes them feel more comfortable. However, the downside of sitting next to the window with a stranger sitting next to you – the hinderance of a hasty exit (Thomas, 2009, p. 60) – is also addressed by the research participants: "I do not like it when the person next to me falls asleep while I have to get out at the next stop. I feel uncomfortable having to wake that person up to ask them if I may get past." (Jennifer). For the same reason, the research participants do not really like sitting at the aisle next to someone who already occupied the window seat: "I feel like I constantly have to stay alert to notice if the person next to me wants to get out" (Milou). While this is typically a problem of sitting in a two-seat arrangement (with no vis-à-vis seats), many respondents do however prefer to sit here. On the one hand, this can be because of practical reasons: the two-seaters are equipped with a small table, which makes it easy to stall your stuff or to work on your laptop comfortably. On the other hand, a few respondents (i.e. Milou and Jennifer) mentioned that they feel uncomfortable being seated across from someone because they feel like their eyes constantly meet those of the person sitting opposite of them. This matches Goffman's (1963) rule of civil inattention, which claims that staring at someone is inappropriate and unwanted. Furthermore, a few respondents also choose to sit in a two seater for 'social reasons': "When I travel by myself, I prefer to sit in a two seater from a social point of view: so people who travel together are able to sit in the four-seater." (Loek).

However, other people *do* prefer to sit in a four-seater, even when travelling alone. This is mostly because they find two-seaters to be a bit "poky" and they feel like four-seaters offer more (leg) space. While observing people's seating arrangements, it became clear that in most cases people tend to sit diagonally across someone else who is already seated in the four-seater. This could be seen as picking a "retreat position" (Sommer, 1969) as it maximizes interpersonal distances. Of course, this seating arrangement can differ sometimes, especially when it is crowded and people simply focus on finding *a* seat, not the *ideal* seat. However, when people have the "luxury" to decide who they want to sit next to, they tend to scan their fellow travellers: "Unconsciously, you pay attention to who you are sitting next to. Some people are very big and therefore occupy one and a half seat, I prefer not to sit next to someone

like that. Furthermore, some people look a bit grubby, I would rather not sit next to someone like that either." (Joanne). This corresponds with Thomas' (2009, p. 8) findings stating that people make visual discriminations when deciding which seat to occupy.

Then again, in an "ideal situation", most people do prefer to sit alone. This can be easily achieved when it is not crowded and thus when a lot of seats are vacant. As mentioned by Lola and Juliette, it is even considered weird and unusual when people *do* sit next/opposite to you when there are a lot of seats available since you do expect others to keep interpersonal distance. This matches the findings of Greenberg and Firestone (1977) and Nicosia et al. (1979), who state that a discrepancy between the expected and the actual interpersonal distance can lead to anxiety and psychological stress. Furthermore, the preference to sit alone has various reasons. First of all, sitting alone allows you to "protect" your intimate and personal space. While surrounded by (many) other persons, numerous research participants spoke about creating "their own little space" on the train – some even referred to this space as a "cocoon" – where they can retreat and do their own thing, which can be working, sleeping, playing on their phone, or simply looking out of the window. By referring to this space as

Figure 4.1 Bags placed on vacant seats

their own, the respondents make clear that they temporarily territorialize a small part of this (semi)public space they share with many others. This cocoon can be "defended" by i.e. placing a bag on the unoccupied seat next to you, which is referred to as "active defence" (Sommer, 1969).

However, placing a bag on a chair is not always meant as a defence mechanism, it also happens when it is not crowded (figure 4.1) and furthermore it is considered to be practical: "I prefer putting my stuff next to me instead of putting it on the floor, because then I am better able to reach for it" (Renske). But still, it *does* discourage most people to pick this seat as they believe it is easier to just pick a vacant seat: "If I really want to sit down, I would say something about it. But if I can sit somewhere else, I would rather do that" (Milou). Just like Milou, most respondents do not really mind asking people to remove their bags in order to claim a seat. Also, it is quite common to remove your bag as soon as it is getting crowded. This already showed during observations but was confirmed by most respondents: "When I see that there are only a few seats left, I remove my bag to make room for the people getting in" (Anouk). Most respondents state that it is not necessarily a bad thing if people have to ask you to remove your bag, but they do believe it is "the responsibility of the people who are already seated" (Pascal) to make sure that others can get seated easily.

Furthermore, people have different strategies to make clear they want to sit down or they have to get out. From observations only, it became clear that some people simply ask someone if they can make room, while others choose to non-verbally "tell" what their intentions are: "Sometimes people make eye contact to signal that they would like to pass" (Paul). Frequently, this is done in an even more subtle way by using body language: people start to linger a bit when they want to sit down or they already pack their bags and sit up straight to signal that they want to get off. By making use of body language – or body management (Lofland, 1973) – people are able to express their intentions without requiring engagement in an actual encounter.

4.3 Keeping oneself busy

Another way of maintaining your privacy or cocoon on the train is – as already mentioned in chapter 2 – situational withdrawal (Goffman, 1961), which means riders engage in an activity to distract themselves from the discomfort of the situation. When looking around in the train, you could assume this is what many people are trying to do: you see people using their laptops, playing on their mobile phones, wearing headphones or reading a newspaper. A lot of people even use multiple devices to create this private (auditory) bubble (see figure 4.2). However, when speaking to the

Figure 4.2 Example of multiple activities during one trip (Juliette, diary entry 1)

research participants, engaging in activities is not primarily meant as a means for withdrawing oneself from the situation. Most respondents see the train as a functional space: "a riding office" (Dimitri) or somewhere you can eat, chill, or catch up with friends (either in person or via social media). Thus, the respondents make use of their time on the train in an efficient way by engaging in activities that one would traditionally engage in at the office/university (working) or at home (eating, sleeping, etc.). Therefore, the train combines the public, private and "professional" realm.

While most respondents do use their phone on the train (see figure 4.3), this is not exclusively done to avoid contact with others: "When I am at my internship, I do not have a lot of time to check my phone. Therefore, when I am riding the train home, I like to call my roommate to discuss dinner or I call my sister or parents to catch up. I enjoy doing those things." (Lola). Despite the fact that the main goal is thus not to shut others out, some respondents (about five) did mention that phones and headphones *can* be used to zone-out or to signal that you are not to be interrupted, as mentioned by Renske: "When I am on my phone, or reading with earphones in, I put up a barrier. People do not try to break through this barrier". Nevertheless, this does not mean that people are completely shut off when using such devices. While observing, various situations occurred where one would seem completely withdrawn in their own bubble, but they would immediately respond when something required their attention: e.g. when someone asked a question or when a conductor entered the carriage. Therefore, being on your

mobile phone or using another distracting device does not immediately mean that you are immune to what happens on the train and it does not equal (deliberately) treating others as non-persons.
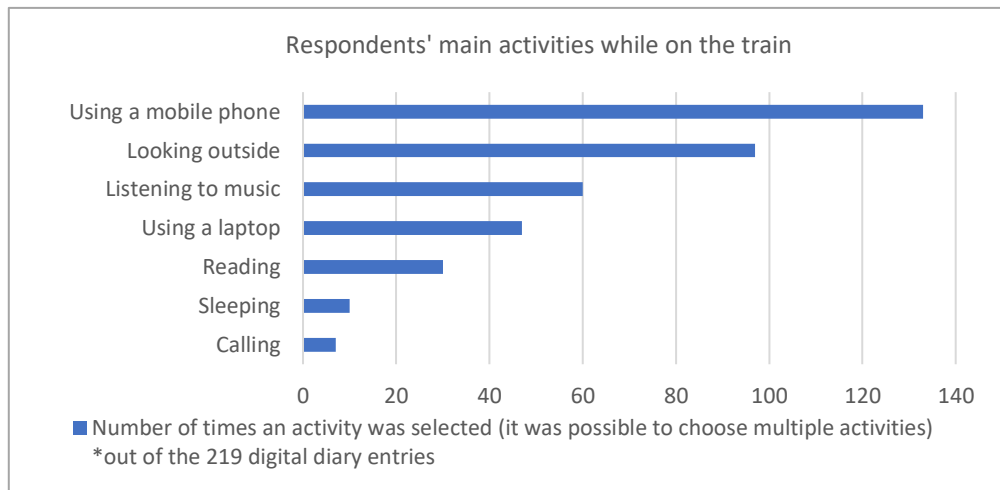

Figure 4.3 Respondents' activities during their train rides

As already mentioned, Lola likes to use her time on the train to make phone calls. While observing, it became clear that quite a lot of people seem to feel the same way as calling was something that happened regularly. The phone calls varied from short and concise to elaborate and personal and from soft and discreet to rather loud. As already mentioned in the theoretical framework (paragraph 2.4.2) calling in a (semi)public space can be seen as rude and disruptive. When speaking with the respondents, it became clear that there is a truth to this statement, however, it is a bit more nuanced. About half of the respondents admitted that they do sometimes call while on the train, but they all added to this that they try to keep it short and shallow, or at least lower their voice so that they do not bother others and make it harder for others to listen in on their conversation: "I try to adjust my volume a bit, but on the other hand, I do not have to be completely silent here. People who travel together might be having a louder conversation than I am having on the phone" (Juliette). Yet, most respondents agree that having a really loud and/or personal conversation (on the phone) is inappropriate and annoying while surrounded by other people. The majority of the research participants (at least eleven of them) do however tend to eavesdrop on those conversations, as it can be somewhat entertaining to listen in on someone else's chat: "At first, I am annoyed by a loud phone call, but after a while, I start to listen in on the conversation. Sometimes, you hear the most ridiculous things and I enjoy listening to those. It might not be a completely decent thing to do, but it has its kicks." (Loek). Therefore, forced eavesdropping (Ling, 2004) is not purely perceived as a discomforting experience, but can also be seen as an entertaining activity.

Next to being on your mobile phone, another way of creating a private bubble in public space – as mentioned in paragraph 2.4.3 – is to travel together with people you know, people you have strong ties with. Though travelling together is something that happens regularly (especially outside of rush hours), travelling solo happens more often (figure 4.5). Yet, most respondents agree that travelling

together is nice and makes time go by faster. It has to be with someone they feel comfortable around though; when this is not the case, people tend to feel less at ease since they are stuck in "forced conversations". In comparison to travelling alone, the respondents believe they engage in different activities while travelling together. They are more occupied with chatting and less focused on "business-like" activities such as working or doing homework. Yet, this does not mean that one is completely focused on their travel companion. Even when travelling together, people tend to be on their

Figure 4.4 Activities while travelling together (Milou, diary entry 3)

phone or laptop or even wear headphones (see figure 4.4). This once again shows that people do not use such devices to shut others out, they simply enjoy/are used to making use of those gadgets at all times, even when deliberately choosing to travel with someone they know.

4.4 Being around strangers

While travelling together does happen, most people (including the research participants) travel in solitude more frequently. This does, however, not mean that riders are not exposed to other people; they have to share the train with many others.

Figure 4.5 Travelling party of the respondents per trip (N=255)

When asked about fellow travellers, the respondents quickly tend to stir up annoyances: "I am a real complainer, am I not?! I hear myself whine the entire time!" (Sandra). Immediately bringing up negative or irritating aspects, probably has to do with the closed off context of the train, as rightfully mentioned by Pascal: "When you are outside, you can go wherever you like, you can *escape* if you want to, on the train you cannot." In this sealed off environment, annoyances can also be taken out of proportion: "Once something gets on your nerves, it gets bigger and bigger" (Jelle).

What is considered to be annoying then, varies per respondent and also per situation: while it might be fun to be surrounded by tipsy, singing riders when you are one of them (Juliette), they might get on your nerves when you were looking forward to a quiet trip. In general, something most respondents perceived as irritating while travelling by train are loud noises, e.g. people who play their music very loudly, people who make showy phone calls or who have very loud conversations in general. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned they dislike smelly people, people who chew in an unappetizing way, people who get too close to them, people who leave their bags on a chair when it is crowded and being stared at.

As already mentioned by Pascal, your chances of escaping are limited, since you are "stuck" on the train. Yet, some people *do* choose to flee the unwanted situation by walking over to another seat or
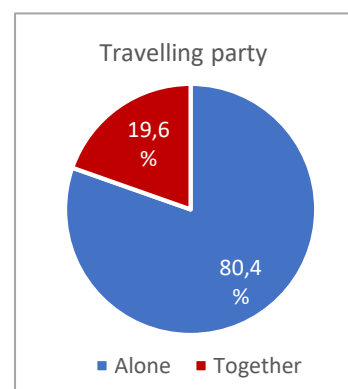
compartment: "When someone is bothering me, I am gone in a second." (Lola). While effective, this is not really the option most chosen: some claim that they do not let themselves get chased away (Sandra), while others feel uncomfortable changing seats (i.e. Renske). Even Lola, who *does* move, tries to be somewhat subtle about this: "I just pretend to go to the toilet. I exaggeratedly look at the sign pointing at the toilet and then I just go and sit somewhere else. I do not want that person to feel like I am leaving because of them, so I pretend to leave for another reason. I do not want to be unkind" (Lola). Thus, the riders do not want to make others feel unpleasant by "rejecting" them and hurt his/her feelings. This corresponds with Gintis' (2000) finding stating that people are likely to behave prosocially, even when it concerns people one might never see again. The tendency of overly thinking about others' feelings and filling in what they might think, will be discussed some more later on in this chapter (paragraph 4.5).

Since fleeing is not the most popular option for dealing with annoying aspects, people found other ways of dealing with those undesired circumstances. One would assume that just asking someone to (for example) lower their voice is a suitable option, yet this is not something that happens on a regular basis either: "I believe this is part of our *zeitgeist*: people do not really dare to speak up when things bother them." (Jordan). Though this might have to do with some personality traits as well ("I might be a bit of a *pussy*", Jordan), the respondents repeatedly mentioned that they feel like they are not *allowed* to speak up. The following quotes illustrate this statement:

- "You cannot say anything about this" (Anouk)
- "*Of course,* you cannot say something about it, that would be a bit weird. I would not seek a confrontation" (Daan)
- "At what point is something *that* bothersome that you need to speak up? Or does this person simply have other norms and values, other limits? Probably they would accept this behaviour from someone else, so I should mind my own business" (Joanne)
- "A train is a form of public transportation, everyone is allowed to travel by train, I just have to accept that" (Juliette)
- "Who am I to tell that woman that she is not allowed to tap her feet? You are in a place where, in principle, you are allowed to do everything you want. Thus, I just deal with it and say to myself 'it is part of the ride, no big deal' " (Loek)
- "You simply have nothing to do with it and it only leads to conflict. (…) You merely have to accept the rules and manners of others, since it is a communal thing; you cannot start acting like a cop" (Sandra)

These quotes make clear that the respondents do not feel like speaking up is an option, they believe you do not have the right to confront others and should mind your own business. As explained by Jelle: "You can either deal with it, say something about it or go and sit somewhere else". Since the final two are not considered an option for most, riders try dealing with irritating situations or persons by attempting to ignore them or by retreating to their own bubble by putting in earplugs to block out their surroundings.

Some even place the responsibility with themselves: "If I chose to sit in a regular compartment instead of in a silent one, I would not speak up if something bothers me. In that case, it is my problem that I am annoyed by it" (Sanne). Furthermore, the riders "comfort" themselves with the thought that they are not going to be on the train for a very long time: "You are not going to stay in this train for three days, right?" (Dimitri). Hence, the duration of the trip influences the way in which one experiences the trip as well: when a trip is short, one does not make many demands since they are only going to be there for a short time. Overall, one could argue that riders are, therefore, actually quite tolerant (though probably "forced tolerant"), since they do not speak up and choose to just accept that others act differently than they would do while on the train.

When asked why they believe that others have different attitudes towards acceptable behaviour on the train, most respondents argue that this has to do with your upbringing and surroundings: those factors taught them how to behave and what is appropriate. Most refer to those behavioural aspects as "unwritten rules". They mention not being too loud, making room for others, giving up your seat to elderly people, holding the door for others, helping people with strollers get on the train and basically being considerate of each other in general. However, the problem is that not everyone believes in the same rules; not everyone was taught the same "train-etiquette" (Dimitri). Since those behavioural rules are unwritten, nobody really knows what is within acceptable limits and what is not. Given that people like to see their expectations become reality, this discrepancy between what is expected and what actually happens can cause discomfort: "Sometimes I expect and look forward to a quiet trip: just listening to some music and relaxing. Then, when people on the train start making phone calls and/or start yelling I think to myself: 'I was really looking forward to a quiet trip and then this happens!'. Those people are not to blame, but it does not match my expectations and that is just dreadful." (Loek).

In contrast, most respondents spontaneously mentioned the "silence compartment" as a space with clear rules and expectations. In this compartment, there are stickers on the windows saying "silence" *(stilte)* and other signs clarifying this some more (figure 4.6). Explicitly stating the rules might come across as limiting or maybe even patronising, while in fact, respondents seem to

Figure 4.6 Signs indicating the silence compartment

get great comfort from those rules: "In the silence compartment you *know* you have to be silent, there you are allowed to say something if someone is being loud. In a 'normal compartment,' you would only

be able to speak up based on unwritten behavioural rules. You do not really have a leg to stand on." (Jelle). This statement is endorsed by Renske, who said the following: "I want to read my newspaper in silence and therefore I want others to be quiet. In the silence compartment, you have *the right* to this". When asked if they would actually speak up if someone was calling or chatting in the silence compartment (while in the "normal compartment" they would not), most research participants replied affirmatively.

This matter of (a lack of) rules, relates to Ruback & Paitnaik's (1989) research on perceived control in the elevator. Similar to standing close to the control panel in an elevator, travelling in the silence compartment offers a perception of being in control: people know what is expected and acceptable and feel like they have *the right* to address unwanted behaviour. This feeling of control over the situation makes people feel more at ease and contributes to the feeling of being capable of handling the situation one finds him-/herself in (Ruback & Paitnaik, 1989).

Furthermore, the silence compartment makes it easy for riders to comply with Goffman's (1963) rule of "fitting in". Since it is clear which acts are approved of and which are not, it is not difficult for a person to fit in: it is easy for someone to get into the right passenger role (Zurcher, 1979). One is expected to be quiet and when every person in this compartment obeys this rule, the chances of creating agitation and conflict are limited. Therefore, the presence of a homogenous group of silent people with similar expectations can contribute to a comfortable and pleasant journey.

4.5 Chatting with strangers

While the preceding paragraph confirmed that the silence compartment is – as the name already reveals – reserved for travelling in silence, the "regular compartment" most definitely is not. However, as mentioned in the introductory chapter of this research, there seems to be the general presumption that people in public transport are estranged from each other and travel in complete solitude. When observing and reading the diaries, it became clear that having conversations with strangers is definitely not a predominant activity on the train. Yet, this does not mean that the train is a completely socially stagnant space. Though most research participants tended to primarily bring up annoyances, there were many interactions that were considered to be positive and pleasant as well. Those kinds of encounters will be highlighted in this paragraph.

Considering interactions with strangers, the most spoken language on the train is definitely *non-verbalism*. As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, most riders seem to have adopted this language as they predominantly communicate through eye contact and body language. Smiling or making brief eye contact are expressions of acknowledgement that are frequently used. Though not everyone does this (at all times) and most respondents do not believe this is something you are obliged to do, such gestures are seen as friendly and enjoyable: "When entering the train, I made eye contact with two people who were already seated. This 'greeting' made me feel welcome in the compartment" (Daan, diary entry 13). This statement made by Daan matches Sherer's (1974) finding that positive body

language is associated with positive affect. Furthermore, people exchange glances when something remarkable or unusual happens, which makes them feel comfortable about the situation: "I made eye contact with a fellow traveller as the conductor said something funny. I felt comfortable knowing that we probably thought the same thing" (Jennifer, diary entry 4). Those unexpected or uncommon elements, such as a funny conductor or a delay, create – in agreeance to Paulos & Goodman (2004) – some kind of connection; it contributes to the we-rationale aboard: "You have something in common, you are both affected by the same thing. This makes you feel somewhat connected and it makes it easier for conversations to arise" (Jordan). Hence, such events can enhance verbal communication as they lower the barrier to approach others and give people a reason to engage in an encounter. However, during this research, it became clear that there were only *temporal* bonds formed on the train. Only one respondent actively mentioned the presence of familiar strangers and four of them mentioned those in the interviews when asked about it. Though some do recognize certain persons on their daily commute, they do not feel a much stronger connection to them than to others, they just think it is somewhat funny or interesting that this person who they do not know apparently travels the same trajectory. Soenen's (2006) finding that bonds between familiar strangers can evolve into primary relationships can therefore not be inferred from this research.

Furthermore, almost all of the respondents highlighted that they do not *mind* having a conversation with strangers – in most cases, those encounters are even experienced as enjoyable (similar to the findings of Epley & Schroeder (2014) – but they are almost never the ones starting the conversation. When asked why this is the case, several reasons were mentioned: because they want to enjoy their moment in peace or have to get some work done, because they do not know what to talk about, because they feel like they would be bothering the other person and because they do not want to get stuck in endless conversation. Therefore, most respondents do not start a conversation themselves and rather keep the contact they do initiate superficial and cursory, even while their own experiences with conversation brought them pleasure and definitely got etched in their memory. To illustrate such a positive encounter, a section of one of Daan's trips (diary entry 2) will be highlighted here:

"This trip I had a lot of verbal encounters with other travellers. There was an elderly man sitting next to me who wanted to tell all about his visit to a museum in Leeuwarden. After a while, another older man entered the carriage, who I offered my seat to. He was very happy about this and started talking to me about what the Bible says about helping others. The two elderly men, my ex-neighbour and the newbie, got along really well and started performing some sort of a comedy-act. I really loved that those two guys found each other and everyone was enjoying their presence. Later on, I asked a lady if she could pass me my bags, as I could not reach them. She was fine with helping me out and happily handed me the bags. It looks like the two guys really lightened up the mood in the carriage!"

While this is a very exceptional situation since such extensive conversations amongst strangers do not occur very often, it does show how such encounters do not only positively affect the persons involved,

but also the bystanders. Furthermore, this conversation illustrates Nash's (1975) three factors that encourage social interactions:

1. *Competency of passengers*. This conversation took place outside of rush hours, which involves a different public than during rush hours (lust vs. must travellers). The people on this trip mostly travelled for recreational purposes which means people engage in different activities: i.e. no people are working, instead, they are talking or simply looking outside.

2. *Density of people or crowdedness*. Daan mentioned that it was very crowded during this trip: a lot of people even had to stand in the aisles. Being so close together and Daan having to give up his seat to someone else enhanced conversation in this case.

3. *Duration of the ride*. Since this ride was a trip from Zwolle to The Hague (with a duration of approximately one hour and 40 minutes) there was a lot of time for conversation.

Nevertheless, while Daan did really enjoy the conversation, he highlighted that he thought it was fun during *that* trip, but that he can also think of situations where he would not enjoy this kind of trip and would rather travel in silence. This is acknowledged by other research participants as well, i.e. by Jennifer (diary entry 8): "Having a conversation can be nice if you have the time available and feel like it." Therefore, the setting is of huge importance in whether someone is perceiving an encounter as pleasant and desired or as unwanted and annoying. This setting involves a lot of elements, i.e.: the time of the trip, the rider's reason for travelling, the rider's mood in general and the person he/she is getting involved with. What stood out in this research, is that people seem to view "day trippers" (*dagjesmensen*), especially elderly people, differently than other travellers. Because of those people's lack of travel experience and/or age, the research participants were more accepting of their behaviour and tended to behave differently themselves as well, two examples:

- "I think that's quite cute: an elderly lady travelling by train. I don't know, I feel like smiling at her. Just to be social." (Loek)
- "I normally just sit down, except when elderly people are involved, then I smile at them." (Juliette)

This has to do with chivalry but also with expectation: most respondents *expect* that those people are open to others and are willing to talk. This is (i.e.) expressed by Dimitri: "They travel with a completely different motive, for recreational purposes. They like talking to others while on the train".

In general, this tendency to fill in others' thoughts and feelings is something that happens a lot on the train; "everyone thinks/does that" was a phrase regularly mentioned. Since non-verbal interaction is the most important form of communication, train riders are very dependent on their own interpretation of other people's behaviour and expressions. This can have a positive outcome, as in the case of Jennifer filling in that she and the other traveller were laughing about the same thing. However, thinking for others also happens by assuming the worst of someone else's behaviour: "Sometimes I feel like people are deliberately putting their stuff away very slowly, as if they want to let you know that they are annoyed by you wanting to sit next to them." (Joanne). However, what seemed to happen most, was that the research participants assumed that others were annoyed by *their* behaviour. This happened i.e. when

Jelle believed others were irritated by him eating a hamburger, when Jennifer was riding the train after a party – assuming she and her friend were a bit loud – and when Anouk believed that someone was irritated by her picking up and putting down her bag multiple times. When asked how they knew they were annoying the other person, it turned out that none of them had a clue: they did not get signals of the other person (neither verbal nor non-verbal), they just *assumed* this was the case. By being overly focused on what others might be thinking or feeling, the riders themselves got very uncomfortable (probably for reasons not even valid). It is of course very positive that people take the presence of others into account, yet, it might be a bit exaggerated in some cases.

> *"Someone once told me: 'The biggest mistake we make, is believing we know what others want or think, but we do not.' "* (Paul)

4.6 Characterizing the riders

Though the respondents agreed on many things regarding the (social) practice of riding the train, there are also differences to be found amongst the riders. Since the respondents do not differ much in age, a distinction based on age is not relevant in this case. However, there are personal traits and contexts that seem to influence the riders' behaviour on the train.

Figure 4.7 One of Dimitri's typical trips, diary entry 14

As already mentioned in paragraph 3.3.2, the predetermined division in must and lust travellers is in reality not as clear-cut. Though it is not really possible to place the respondents in one general category, they can be typified per trip they make: a trip for recreational reasons (lust) or one for "business-like" reasons (must). The reason for travelling cannot only be of influence on the travelled trajectory and the time of travelling but also affects the activities one engages in and the general attitude one has towards the trip. To exemplify this, Dimitri's diaries will serve as an example. The first fifteen trips documented by Dimitri were all trips made for work, where he engaged in pretty much the same activities every time: working on his laptop (see figure 4.7) and – on an incidental basis – chatting with a colleague or being on his phone: clearly, he does not describe the train as a riding office for nothing. However, during Dimitri's last trip, it felt like reading the diary of a completely different person. In this diary, he described that he spent his time listening in on other people's conversations and drifting of while looking out of the window. When asked about this in the interview, he explained that this was a "lust-trip" so that no work needed to be done. Similar statements can be found amongst the other respondents, e.g.: "My mindset is different then and I am engaged in different activities (…) When you're travelling in the afternoon and someone drops something, you smile at each other signalling that something like that could have happened to you as well. But when someone drops her mascara during morning rush hour, I

think 'Watch yourself!'" (Lola). Hence, the reason for travelling influences one's behaviour on the train and therefore also the way in which he or she engages with other people on the train.

4.7 Summarizing the results

In brief, one could say that the train features a community running on subtle forms of communication. Riders are not particularly focused on avoiding each other, but are keen on having a moment to themselves and thus do – most of the time – not actively seek conversation. Yet, meeting strangers is considered to be pleasurable from time to time, since it is nice to share a (temporal) bond with someone. The biggest problems concerning the sociality of travelling by train seem to be the lack of rules (and therefore the lack of control) and the differences in what people believe is reasonable behaviour to expect from others.

In the next chapter, the results described in this chapter will be translated into a conclusion featuring the answer to the main question of this research.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and discussion

This research focused on the topic of the sociality of travelling by train. Though a lot of data could already be found on encounters in public space and dealing with strangeness (i.e. Goffman, 1963; Lofland, 1973 and Augé, 1995), those topics had not yet been extensively applied to Dutch Intercity trains. Consequently, there was no considerable data either confirming or refuting the general feeling that, nowadays, people on the train are very individualistic (or even self-centred) and not attentive to their surroundings. In order to address this theme, this research was conducted with the following question in mind: *"How is the sociality of travelling by train assembled and shaped?"*

In order to answer this question, data was collected in various ways: by observing (25 single trips and two sessions of about five hours each), diary keeping (N=255) and interviews (N=16). The data resulted in an overall story describing the sociality of travelling by train, which was presented in the previous chapter (chapter 4).

In this final chapter, those results are translated into a conclusion, including an answer to the main question of this research. Subsequently, this chapter will discuss recommendations for praxis (primarily addressing NS). Lastly, there will be a critical reflection on this research and the methods used, resulting in recommendations for additional research.

5.1 The train as a social space

First of all, this research shows that the train is far from a socially stagnant space. Though many people on the train are withdrawn into their own (auditory) bubble (i.e. Bull, 2005), this does not mean that those bubbles are impenetrable: when a situation requires riders to pay attention or to act, they immediately know how to respond. Furthermore, a very subtle form of communication can be found on the train. As also described by Lofland (1973), people signal each other by making eye contact or facial expressions while they utilise body language as well. Those subtleties enable riders to communicate without actually engaging in a (verbal) encounter. Therefore, the claim that riders are self-absorbed and not social (i.e. Collard, 2010; Kraaijvanger, 2012; de Bruin, 2014 and Horn, 2017), is definitely not accurate.

One of the reasons riders do not necessarily engage in verbal interactions is that they do not view the train as a social space. The research participants agreed that the train is a functional space; a space where one can organize his/her time the way they want to. Some use the train for working or doing homework – "a riding office" – while others make use of their time on the train to catch up with friends (digitally or by travelling together), to eat, to listen to music, or just to drift away a bit. Whatever riders do to kill time, they have in common that they see the train ride as a time for themselves and therefore do not necessarily seek encounters. Therefore, riders mostly stay members of the same group in a spatial sense and not in a social one (Zurcher, 1979). Furthermore, most riders would not know what to talk about with strangers and believe that others do not want to engage conversation (see also Epley & Schroeder, 2014), thus that they would be bothering them. However, the research results show –

corresponding with Sommer (1969), Nash (1975) and Paulos & Goodman (2004) – that various (interrelated) factors do enhance conversations, such as unexpected events, the presence of less competent riders, crowdedness and trips with long durations.

In addition, when verbal interaction is initiated by others, this is not necessarily perceived as a bad thing: this research – agreeing with i.e. Granovetter (1973) and Epley & Schroeder (2014) – shows that contact and the temporal bond formed through this contact are considered to be pleasant and convivial. An important remark here is that people do have to feel like it, they have to be in the mood to engage in conversation and have the time for this (i.e. they are not swamped with work). When one would like to discourage others from approaching them, he or she can make use of situational withdrawal (Goffman, 1961). Similarly to Bull (2005) and Pinchot & Rota (2010), this research showed that this is mostly done by making use of distracting devices such as a mobile phone, possibly combined with headphones. Those devices are, however, not merely used to avoid others or shut others out but also for amusement. Furthermore, riders tend to practice defensive seating (see also Sommer, 1969) in order to encourage others from approaching them and to ensure their private space.

Seating oneself in a defensive way is already performed when entering the train. Most people choose to sit in a space were as few people as possible are boarding since this enhances the chances of claiming a seat and some (leg) space. However, defensive seating becomes more apparent during the ride itself. Most people choose to sit next to the window so they are able to look outside, but also because this increases their feeling of comfort: they feel like they are better able to do their own thing and relax since they do not have to stay observant in case the person sitting next to them wants to get out (see also Thomas, 2009). Furthermore, riders territorialize space by placing bags or other objects on the seat next to them (see also Sommer, 1969). Then again, this is not necessarily done to shut others out, but also for convenient and hygienic reasons. Moreover, the research results showed that it is quite conventional to keep an eye on the people entering the compartment and to remove your belongings as soon as you see that it is getting crowded, meaning the defence mechanism can be altered or shut off.

Thus, one could argue that people on the train are not seeking to act distinctly social, but they *do* look out for each other and are able to communicate in a very subtle way. Though this subtle language can, on the one hand, be viewed upon as inventive and clever, it also creates room for misconception. Since non-verbalism is very reliant on one's own interpretations and judgement of a situation, one quickly fills in what others might be thinking or feeling. This does not need to be a bad thing, but it can be when one needlessly interprets someone else's behaviour in a negative way, which creates feelings of discomfort and unpleasantness. As found by various researches (i.e. Argyle & Dean, 1965; Gudykunst, 2003; Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2010), the way one interprets other people's bodylanguage and facial expressions varries depending on personal traits such as one's gender or ethnicity. Therefore, non-verbalism can, on the one hand, be viewed upon as hugely convenient, while on the other hand it can serve as grounds for misconception and discomfort.

5.2 Expectations and (lack of) rules

Next to the problem of misconception, the prime problems regarding the sociality of travelling by train – as already mentioned in paragraph 4.7 – are the lack of rules and the differences in what is believed to be proper behaviour. This research showed that the way one should behave on the train is mostly regulated by unwritten rules, which are mostly thought by experience and upbringing. Hence, the *throwntogetherness* (Massey, 2004) of all kinds of people with different norms and values can lead to conflict or feelings of displeasure. Therefore, a typical feature of *public* space – "those present can conduct themselves as they wish" (Goodsell, 2003, p. 371) – that can be found on the train is not necessarily perceived as positive. On the contrary, adding rules and regulations – which is typically considered to be a facet of *private* space (i.e. Kirby, 2008) – can have a rather positive outcome. This shows in the silent compartment, where the rules are clear and where one, therefore, knows what can be expected of others and what "passenger role" (Zurcher, 1979) to take on. Furthermore, those rules empower riders to speak up if someone disobeys: they provide them with justifiable reasons. Therefore, the train as a *semi*-public (Terpstra, van Stokkom, & Spreeuwers, 2013; Jones, et al., 2015) or collective (Morales, 1992) space could benefit from a reconsideration of the balance between it's on the one hand public and on the other hand private character.

Moreover, the silence compartment offers another aspect that enhances comfort: uniformity. In this compartment, some people – people who want to talk or make phone calls – are excluded, which leads to a homogenous population of silent travellers who are provided with rules that empower them to speak up if others do not behave properly. Therefore, it becomes easy for riders to comply with Goffman's (1963) rule of "fitting in", since the compartment is occupied by riders with similar behaviour and expectations, with rules explicitly propagated. This feature of homogeneity will be discussed some more in the next paragraph.

5.3 Changing the conceptual model of sociality

At the beginning of this research, a conceptual model – based on the literature review – was created in order to shape how the topic of sociality of travelling by train would be approached (see figure 2.4). With the knowledge acquired in this research, this model needs to be altered and specificied to create a more complete and correct model of what shapes and influences the sociality of travelling by train. Figure 5.1 depicts what the renewed conceptual model looks like.

While the main components stayed the same as in the original model, this model differs in specificity and relations. Whereas the concept "context" was put quite generally in the original conceptual model, during the research it became clear that the context mostly means the level of crowdedness. When trains are crowded, people attach less value to i.e. picking the ideal seat and rather settle for *a* seat. Furthermore, dealing with other people and therefore the way one behaves becomes of bigger importance when the train is crowded and thus when one is surrounded by many others (in close

proximity). Since crowdedness (context) is of bigger importance than anticipated beforehand, the arrows that used to be dotted and thin were changed to thicker and solid lines.

To illustrate the prominence of the "togetherness" on the train, the line between the individual and fellow travellers has also been changed to a bigger, more significant line. Whereas the original model only included the concept of "behavioural rules", the renewed model also includes "expectations". As already expressed, riders have certain expectations of what their trip is going to be like, including how others are going to behave. This is formed by individual traits, such as one's experience riding the train (i.e. one's familiarity with a certain trajectory at a certain time), one's mood and one's reason for travelling (recreational vs. a "must" trip). Furthermore, most people have a preference for a certain seat, which is also dependent on those other individual traits (i.e. if one is going on vacation and carries a lot of luggage, they might prefer a four-seater over a two-seater) and the lay-out of the train and the people already in it. When those individual traits match the traits of the fellow travellers, it is very likely that one will behave in a similar way, or at least in a way that one anticipated on. Since riders like their expectations to become reality, it causes feelings of discomfort and frustration when this is not the case. Therefore, a "riders community" with similar expectations and behavioural rules (and therefore a homogeneous one) is likely to travel in a pleasant manner. However, as already mentioned, not everyone has the same expectations and rules in mind and since there is no clear representation of how one should behave conflicts can occur.
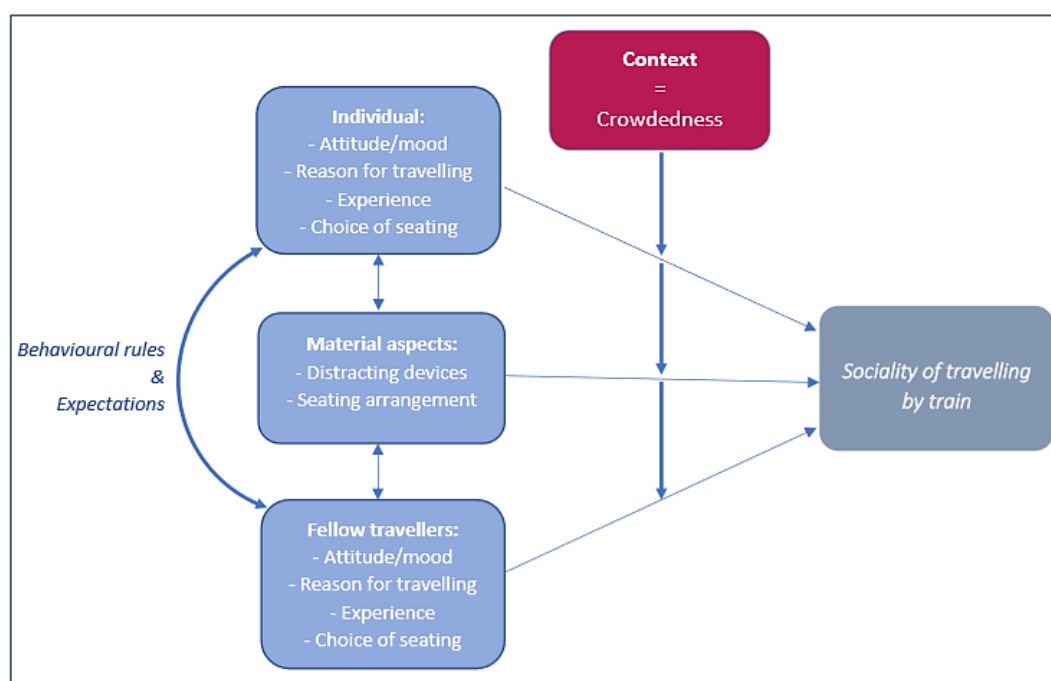

Figure 5.1 Renewed conceptual model

5.3.1 The notion of sociality

While this research especially considered the sociality *of travelling by train* (as shown in the renewed model depicted in figure 5.1), it also helped shape the conception of sociality in general. As mentioned

in paragraph 2.2 the notion of sociality is one that is applied in various fields of science, yet it has not extensively been defined.

Sociality, as found in this research, mostly corresponds with Watson's (2009) notion of "easy sociality" (the "lowest level" of sociality), encompassing the rubbing along of people who do interact with each other in a rather passive way instead of engaging in outspoken encounters. The social glue – meaning familiarity amongst the people present – which is considered to be an aspect of *everyday sociality* is not to be found on the train since only temporal bonds are formed and most respondents did not experience the presence of familiar strangers. Subsequently, sociality, as approached in this research, shows similarities with animal sociality as well: people act a certain way (mostly sticking to the code: Martinelli, 2017) in order to *survive* in the world of strangers, similar to animals working/living together in order to enhance their chances of survival (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). Furthermore – in accordance to Bissell (2010) – this research clarifies that sociality is not only defined by and dependent on the people involved, but emerges through "the complex interplay of technologies, matter, and bodies" (Bissell, 2010, p. 284).

While Bissell and Watson already hinted at sociality being very diverse and taking place on different levels, this research amplifies the concept of sociality by highlighting that sociality is not a *static* concept. Sociality is dependent on many factors, not only on the people present and their individual traits but also on the material elements involved, the context, the (unwritten) rules present and the ways in which those elements fit together. For example: there is no *one* sociality of travelling by train; although universalities and similarities can be found, the sociality can differ per trip. Sociality thus is a very fluid concept; it can be assembled differently in every given context, which may also explain why it is a notion almost impossible to grasp in one universal, compact definition or description.

5.4 Recommendations for praxis

Based on the previous information, it becomes apparent that progress can be made in the field of expectations and regulations. This does not mean that trains have to become areas under heavy surveillance, but riders could get great comfort from knowing what is expected of them and, subsequently, what is not. Of course, to some, rules are there to be broken, but if this happens, rules and guidelines will empower others to speak up and address this unwanted behaviour. Furthermore, expectations should not only be established in the negative sense (*"you should not behave like this"*) but can also be used to advertise that it is okay to sometimes start a conversation or to interact with your train-neighbours. It is believed that shaping and advertising expectations and rules will make riders feel more comfortable and therefore improve their experience of the journey. Therefore, the Railway Traveller's Handy Book of 1862 (mentioned in the introduction) might not have been such an odd idea after all! How exactly this needs to be conveyed in current times is not up to this research, but one could think in terms of an advertising campaign or by making adjustments to the trains themselves (similar to the stickers portraying the rules in the silence compartment).

Additionally, this point of improvement fits in with NS's current ambitions in customer experience and satisfaction. In former research (van Hagen & Bron, 2013), NS found – similar to this thesis – that train travellers like to be in control. While NS aims at creating this feeling of control by providing its travellers with sufficient information and a clear structure, this could also be extended to expectations on accepted behaviour and behavioural "guidelines". Additionally, NS found that the travellers experience their time *on* the train as the most pleasurable part of their trip (compared to i.e. waiting at the station). Being able to do your own thing is the biggest added value of travelling by train and NS, therefore, believes that this experience should be guaranteed for their customers. Since fellow travellers will always be part of this practice, the sociality plays a big part in this phase. If NS wants to assure that travellers can keep experiencing their time on the train as valuable and functional, they should definitely delve into the creation of behavioural guidelines since this can play a part in diminishing conflict and making riders feel at ease.

Furthermore, those recommendations for praxis do not exclusively apply to NS; they are quite possibly applicable to other railway/public transport operators or (semi)public spaces in general. In how far this research can be extrapolated to other situations, will be discussed in paragraph 5.5.

5.5 Reflection and recommendations for further research

Though this research has succeeded in reaching its goal – to write up the sociality of travelling by train – an ethnographer (or researcher in general) should be reflexive of his or her own work (Herbert, 2000). Therefore, in this final paragraph, there will be given a reflection on the research itself and some implications for additional research.

First of all, I will reflect on the methods used in this research. I believe that the combination of the three methods yielded a great amount of data, which enabled me to successfully write the story of the sociality of travelling by train. While I do believe in the importance of doing observations – since this was a great way of confirming if the respondents' stories matched the reality as seen on other trajectories and at different times – it was quite hard to observe on my own. Since a lot happens on the train, especially during rush hours, it is hard to really see everything that is going on. In addition, this overload of stimuli is very tiring, which makes it even harder to stay focused. So while I do still see the observing phase as an essential one in this research, it might not have been done in the most optimal manner. Therefore, in retrospect, it could have been useful to conduct observations in collaboration with a research companion in order to have "more eyes" available and to be able to divide the compartment so one should not have to take in the entire carriage.

Furthermore, I believe building the interviews upon the data gathered in the diaries has been a great plus in this research. By basing the interviews on actual situations the respondents found themselves in, the risk of only speaking in generalities and giving socially acceptable answers was diminished. Of course, one can never totally avoid that socially acceptable answers are given, but since most respondents felt comfortable expressing their annoyances (sometimes even using somewhat

abusive language) I believe this "problem" was of minor significance. Furthermore, I believe it was beneficial that I am about the same age as most respondents, as this made them feel comfortable using their own words and speaking their minds. However, this is also linked to a limitation of this research: all respondents were within the same age group (relatively young) and were experienced riders. Despite the fact that I did not specifically aim at this age group by making the call for respondents public, the reliance on my own network – consisting mostly of people my age – lead to a group of young respondents who are quite used to travelling by train. Whereas this group is interesting because they travel by train a lot and are the one's "born with a mouse in their hand" (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003, p. 24), for further research it would be very interesting to look into the group described by the respondents as "day trippers" (*dagjesmensen)*. Since most respondents spoke about this group of travellers as if they *knew* how those people like to travel and what their thoughts are, this research did not examine if this *actually* is the case. Therefore, a similar research into how day trippers experience the sociality of travelling by train would be very interesting. One should keep in mind that this research will take a lot longer, since collecting a substantive amount of diaries is harder with a group of people that do not travel by train that often. Furthermore, one could question if the digital diary version should be available for this group of respondents since they might not be as comfortable using a mobile phone.

Next to the methods chosen in this research, the *context* of this research – the second class compartment of NS Intercity trains – will also be reflected upon. As already explained in paragraph 3.1 the train is a very distinctive space because of its combination of public and private (Morales, 1992) and because of its moving aspect: not only the people present move through space, but it is also the space itself that moves. I think that the findings of this research and the recommendations for praxis could also be extrapolated to other forms of public transport (e.g. buses, planes and metros). While those other forms of public transport are not *exactly* the same as the train, they do share major similarities: the presence of strangers who get into your personal or intimate space (Thomas, 2009) and the resemblance to "total institutions" (Goffman, 1961), meaning the people aboard become encapsulated groups who are closed off from the outside world and who are, during their trip, challenged in their autonomy of action and privacy (Zurcher, 1979). Therefore, I believe the importance of expectations (and in how far those are met) and the lack of rules will also play a part in those places. Conversely, I believe the findings might be less applicable to (public) spaces that have an openness to them since they offer people the opportunity to flee the place when unwanted events occur and therefore allow people to distance themselves from the situation instead of having to deal with it.

Lastly, I would like to reflect on the qualitative approach of this research. Whereas this research showed that this is a great way of really collecting in-depth knowledge about feelings and motivations, I can imagine that it might be useful to give (quantitative) substance to this qualitative story. Since Goudappel Coffeng (the internship organisation) already periodically conducts research on the customer satisfaction for NS (the *OV Klantenbarometer*), it would be an option to incorporate the topic of sociality in this questionnaire. One could think of questioning people about their expectations and desires

regarding behaviour on the train, which would not only provide useful information for NS (and other public transport operators) but would also be interesting since so far sociality has mainly been researched in a qualitative manner.

In conclusion, one should acknowledge the fact that investigating sociality and adapting railway policies accordingly could greatly improve the comfort of travelling by public transport. Nowadays, in the Netherlands alone, over half a million people travel by train *every weekday* (NS, 2017) and since this number is even increasing over the upcoming years (Snellen, Romijn, & Hilber, 2015), the sociality of travelling by train is definitely a topic that should not be ignored.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Protocol for observations

Wat observeer ik? (+ reden waarom)

- Occurrence of interactions *(bepalend voor de affective atmosphere en dus voor de sociality / hier komen o.a. Lofland en Goffman in terug)*
→ Praten bekenden met elkaar?
→ Praten onbekenden met elkaar?
→ Is er sprake van non-verbal communication tussen strangers? (kijken, knikken, glimlachen, etc.)
→ Zijn er mensen aan het bellen?

- Ways in which people keep themselves occupied *(belangrijk om te kunnen bepalen hoe mensen zichzelf bezig houden en in hoeverre ze zich terugtrekken in hun eigen wereld → private realm)*
→ Lezen
→ Spelen op telefoon
→ Laptop
→ Slapen
→ Muziek luisteren
→ Bellen
→ Naar buiten kijken
→ Overig: …

- Rhythms of people entering and getting off the train (incl. choosing a seat) *(van belang om de rol van materiality te betrekken. Waar gaan mensen bij voorkeur zitten?)*

- Aspects that interrupt the natural setting (conducteur, railcatering, vertraging, etc.)

- Where do people leave their bags? *(ook dit is een aspect van private realm. Hoewel blijkt dat mensen dit niet perse met die insteek doen – uit NS onderzoek blijkt dat veel mensen dit uit gemak doen en niet willen dat hun tas vies wordt – geeft dit wel een signaal af naar de anderen en beperk je hiermee de kansen dat iemand naast je gaat zitten)*

+ **Overige dingen**: Wat valt me op?

Tip: wellicht helpt het om foto's of tekeningetjes te maken!

Appendix 2: Interview guide

Interview Guide – Basis (aanpassen aan iedere respondent)

Wie: (naam, geslacht, leeftijd)

Waar:

Wanneer:

1. Met welke reden reis je meestal? (hebben ze al ingevuld bij aanmelding, maar wat meer info)

2. Hoe vaak reis je gemiddeld per week? (idem)

3. Hoe kies jij je zitplaats?

- Kies je de eerste beste vrije plek? Kies je bewust (wie zit er al, 2 vs. 4-zits, etc.)?

- Hoe stel je je op tegen de mensen die er al zitten? (groet je ze, kijk je ze aan, etc.)

4. Hoe zou je de trein als plek omschrijven? Is dit anders dan een andere OV-vorm of openbare ruimte?

- Puur functioneel, meer dan dat?

- Wat voor soort mensen?

- Gedraag je je hier anders dan ergens anders?

5. Hoe *voel* je je in de trein?

- Ongemakkelijk, relaxed, etc.?

- In hoeverre is dit contextafhankelijk?

6. Hoe dien je je volgens jou in de trein te gedragen? Zijn er bepaalde regels? Hoe denk je dat deze 'regels' worden gehandhaafd en hoe weet je welke regels er gelden?

- Wat gebeurt er als iemand zich hier niet aan houdt?

7. DAGBOEKJE! (opvallende punten/situaties + relevante aspecten volgende pagina)

8. Hoe ziet jouw ideale treinreis eruit?

- & Als puntje bij paaltje komt: maakt het je dan uit?

Overige vragen, situatie afhankelijk (linken aan dagboek):

- Als mensen veel "hun eigen ding doen" in de trein: waarom doe je dit? (praktisch/afzonderen/uitrusten, etc.)

- Waarom interpreteert men non-verbale interacties op een bepaalde manier? Hoe voelen ze zich hierbij?

- Hoe voelen de respondenten zich over interacties? Als deze plaatsvinden: hoe draagt dit voor jou bij aan je reis? Voel je je verbonden, veilig, etc.? En hoe ontstaan deze gesprekken meestal? Als ze *niet* plaatsvinden: is dit iets wat je bewust niet zoekt, hoeft het voor jou niet zo, heb je het idee dat anderen dat niet willen, etc.?

- Voor mensen die vrij regelmatig hetzelfde traject reizen: Zijn er ook mensen die je vaak tegenkomt? Hoe voel je je daarbij?

- Voor mensen die wel eens samen reizen: hoe beïnvloedt dit jouw reis?

Appendix 3: Codebook (observations + intveriews)

Code Groups	Code	Grounded
"Ongewenst" gedrag	"Ongehoord/ongepast gedrag"	17
	Praten/bellen in stiltecoupé	14
	Muziek staat erg luid	6
Activiteiten/devices	Bellen in de trein	32
	Oortjes/koptelefoon	21
	Telefoon	21
	Meerdere devices/activiteiten	21
	De trein is functioneel	20
	Een momentje voor jezelf	18
	Naar buiten kijken	16
	Lezen	12
	Werken in de trein	11
	Eten/drinken in de trein	8
	Laptop	7
	Slapen in de trein	7
	Met oortjes in heb je minder in de gaten	6
	Met je telefoon kun je je afzonderen	6
	Binnen komen in de bubble	5
	"Distracting device", maar toch bewust	4
	Ik kan me goed afzonderen	4
Activiteiten/devices & "Ongewenst" gedrag	Meekijken/meeluisteren	23
Context	Wat fijn/normaal is, is situatieafhankelijk	32
	Stil/rustig in de trein	18
	Sfeer	16
	Verschil binnen/buiten spits	14
	Stiltecoupé	12
	Ochtendspits	12
	Drukke trein	12
	Ik hoef niet zo lang, dus het maakt me niet heel veel uit	10
	Verschil Sprinter/Intercity	9
	Middagspits	7
	Wifi	5
	De temperatuur in de trein is belangrijk	5
	Treinen zijn vies	4
	Reist vooral in het weekend	2
	Duitse trein	2
	Verschil eerste klas/tweede klas	2
De norm	Dat is normaal/iedereen doet dat	26
	Ongeschreven regels	25
	Iets dat "afwijkt" trekt de aandacht	15
	Omgaan met ongewenst gedrag	14
	Opvoeding/omgeving bepaalt of je de regels weet	10
Frequentie	Frequentie - 5 dagen per week (of meer)	6
	Frequentie - 4 dagen per week	5
	Frequentie - 2/3 dagen per week	2
	Frequentie - enkele keren per maand	2
Klaarstaan voor/rekening houden met elkaar	Reizigers helpen elkaar	26

	Ik wil anderen niet tot last zijn	10
	Mensen letten op elkaar	5
	Vertrouwen in andere reizigers	4
Klaarstaan voor/rekening houden met elkaar & De norm	Opstaan voor ouderen	7
Non-verbale interacties (vreemden)	Situatie lezen (voornamelijk: ruimte maken)	39
	Voor anderen denken/invullen	31
	Aankijken/observeren	30
	Niet aankijken/geen aandacht	15
	Glimlach	12
	Geïrriteerde blikken	6
	Knikje	6
	Voordat een gesprek begint, is er non-verbaal contact	5
	Snel wegkijken	4
NS-gerelateerd	Conducteur/Conductrice	23
	Reactie op omroep	12
	Omroep = sturend	9
	Railcatering	3
	Ipsos	1
Reisreden	Trein = enige optie	11
	Reisreden - vrienden/familie opzoeken	11
	Reisreden - studie/stage	10
	Reisreden – werk	6
	Ik kies bewust voor de trein	6
Samen reizen	Samen reizen/Gepraat	51
	Samen reizen, maar andere activiteiten	14
Type reizigers	Reizigers onder invloed	10
	Kinderen in de trein	9
	Andere houding tegenover oudere mensen	9
	Diversiteit in de trein	9
	Dagjesmensen	9
	Familiar Strangers	6
	Forenzen	4
Verbale interacties (vreemden)	Korte interactie (vreemden)	41
	Ik spreek anderen niet aan op hun gedrag	17
	Als iemand contact zoekt, is dat leuk	14
	Groeten (reizigers onderling)	14
	Ik zoek interacties zelf niet op/hou ze af	14
	Andere mensen beginnen een gesprek	10
	Als het "nodig" is, heb ik wel contact met mensen	10
	Lange interactie (vreemden)	10
	In de stiltecoupé worden mensen aangesproken	8
	Verbale interactie (negatief)	7
	Als je wil, kan je wel interacties hebben	3
	Soms is het niet leuk als anderen contact zoeken	2
Verbale interacties (vreemden) & Non-verbale interacties (vreemden)	Gedeeld leed sharen is fijn	8
Verbale interacties (vreemden) & Samen reizen	Praten over de trein	12

Zitplaats	Veranderen van plaats	33
	Tassen op stoelen	27
	Zitplaatskeuze	23
	Strategisch kiezen	20
	(Voorkeur voor) tweezits	18
	Mensen staan	17
	Voorkeur voor alleen zitten	14
	Zitten is belangrijk	13
	(Voorkeur voor) vierzits	12
	Mensen aan gangpad (met lege stoel)	11
	Vierzits-schuin (vreemden)	10
	Voorkeur voor bij het raam	10
	Instappen waar het rustig is	8
	Zitten op het balkon	6
	Ik kies niet bewust voor de stiltecoupé	6
	Vreemden leunen naar buiten	5
	Met een vreemde in een tweezits kan ongemakkelijk zijn	5
	Ik kies bewust voor de stiltecoupé	5
	Vierzits vreemden - naast/tegenover elkaar	4
	Mensen aan raamkant	4
	Je hebt minder ruimte als mensen in het gangpad staan	2
	Niet strategisch kiezen	1
Overig (zonder codegroep)	Een rustige treinreis en/of ruimte is fijn	17
	Als het druk is, stel ik niet zo veel eisen	13
	Je eigen plekje	13
	Ik voel me relaxed/fijn in de trein	11
	Verwachting	11
	Hoe de reis eruit ziet, maakt me niet heel veel uit	10
	De trein is duur	4
	Het is fijn om te weten waar je aan toe bent	4
	De ideale trein komt op tijd	4
	Afremmen = een teken	3
	Reis aanpassen vanwege spits	3
	Bagagerekken	3
	Ik gedraag me anders in de trein	2
	Ik voel me bezwaard als ik een zitplaats heb en anderen niet	2