Article

Negotiating Difference on Public Transport: How Practices and Experiences of Deviance Shape Public Space

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Abstract
Given the diversity of passengers, public transport has hitherto been described as a public space of encounters, conviviality, or conflict. However, other dimensions of publicness, such as codes of conduct, deviance, visibility, or resistance, have received less attention. Based on qualitative interviews with transport users whose physical or financial abilities, or mobility needs differ from default passengers, this article outlines daily experiences and practices of negotiating differences through situational and societal deviance. In particular, I examine the daily struggles of passengers travelling in Brussels during the Covid-19 pandemic or without a valid ticket, along with people who rely on public transport in Tallinn due to care responsibilities. By describing quotidian practices and experiences of deviance, I argue that understanding publicness as a process of ongoing negotiation and appropriation promotes more equitable and inclusive planning practices.

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1. Introduction

Travelling through cities, we may encounter "people standing like herrings to one another" (interview with a care mobilities [CM] study respondent, 23 February 2022) in buses, trams, or metros, and crowding through narrow corridors and stations. As a "mobile agora" (Jensen, 2009), public transport enables encounters with strangers and exposure to the unexpected. This diversity of people in temporarily enclosed spaces, or, as one passenger puts it, the fact that "there's not really a filter on who gets on the tram" (interview with Covid-19 [C19] study respondent, 26 February 2021), is echoed by scholars who conceptualise public space as open to all, publicly owned, and enabling conviviality (Neal, 2010). Many urban dwellers rely on public transport to cope with the diverse tasks of urban life—be it care, education, work, or leisure. Although claiming "no one uses public transport for pleasure" (C19, interview, 13 April 2021) may be exaggerated, many passengers actually find using public transport a waste of time or

stressful, possibly even triggering anxiety or fear (Bissell, 2018). One reason for this may be that technocratic transport planning and provision, focused on increasing speed, network efficiency, and channelling passenger flows, is geared towards standardised—often working, abled-bodied—users, and disregards diverse passengers' capabilities, traits, or mobility needs. As a result, many users encounter physical, mental, or financial barriers to using public transport and find that their abilities or practices deviate from societal or situational norms (Aritenang, 2022).

Such forms of deviance in public and the negotiation of differences are the subject of this article. On the example of public transport in Brussels (Belgium) and Tallinn (Estonia), I explore how the forced proximity between diverse users causes encounters shaped by rules of conduct and deviance. While previous research has considered public space as a site of converging diversity, such a perspective has been less applied to public transport. This article, thus, contributes to current urban and mobilities scholarship framing public transport as

a public space, where users from various backgrounds and diverse capabilities meet (Bovo et al., 2022; Kemmer et al., 2022; Sträuli & Kębłowski, 2022). In particular, it complements research on users' experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic and as fare evaders and brings new insights to public transport research by exploring care mobilities. I argue that beyond temporary interactions and a "throwntogetherness" (Massey, 2005) of strangers, it is the negotiation of differences as well as the tactics users adopt to use and access shared spaces, particularly those perceived as deviant, that constitute the publicness of public transport. In contrast to the prevailing notion of deviance as anti-social or criminal in transport research (Smith & Clarke, 2000), I draw on social psychology and critical urban theory to understand deviance as an everyday form of resistance that is not just an individual trait or behaviour but is situational or societal in terms of its perception and eventual condemnation (Goode, 2015).

To explore the relationship between diversity and deviance in public spaces, I draw on three qualitative studies. All three studies focus on public transport-dependent users who experience their daily mobility practices as deviating from societal or situational norms, giving light to passengers' practices not anticipated by transport planners, authorities, or operators during the Covid-19 pandemic or as regular fare evaders in Brussels and carers in Tallinn. The article opens with an introduction to the existing literature and theory on public transport as a public space characterised by diversity, encounters, deviance, and resistance, followed by an introduction to the case studies and methodology. I then outline how users perceive the publicness of public transport and describe the experience of deviance and the negotiation of difference using insights from each case study. In the conclusion, I discuss how conceptualising publicness as a continuous process facilitates more equitable and inclusive planning of public transportation and public space more broadly.

2. Conceptualising the Publicness of Public Transport

In attempts to define public space, scholars have asked how a space is legally defined, who pays for it or maintains it, who has access to it, or what role it plays in democracy (Neal, 2010). Accordingly, public transport may be framed as a public good, a public space, under public ownership or of public concern (Paget-Seekins & Tironi, 2016). However, I argue that the study of public transport as a public space, which has received little attention so far (exceptions are, e.g., Bovo et al., 2022; Rink, 2022; Weicker, 2022), reveals that publicness is not a static feature, but rather a continuous process of negotiating differences resulting from the confluence of diversity, deviance, and everyday resistance. To substantiate this argument, in the next subsection, I combine existing approaches to public space with concepts from social psychology and critical urban theory.

2.1. Public Transport as a Public Space of Diversity and Encounters

Mobility scholars analysing the coexistence and continuous flows of anonymous and diverse passengers often adopt a communal perspective on public space (Ocejo & Tonnelat, 2014). Such a perspective, prevalent in urban planning and policy, views public space "as an arena for people to meet and encounter one another" (Listerborn, 2016, p. 261). Accordingly, social justice scholars point out that public spaces provide situations where multiple trajectories of individuals converge, i.e., a "throwntogetherness" (Massey, 2005), and the potential to negotiate politics of difference that allows for the formation of diverse publics (Young, 1990). Similarly, scholars adopting "everyday multiculturalism" assume the recognition of differences and, beyond earlier policy-oriented and top-down approaches to multiculturalism, examine how processes of coexistence between individuals or groups differing in their values and normative frames of reference are "experienced and negotiated on the ground in everyday situations" (Wise & Velayutham, 2009, p. 3). For instance, everyday multiculturalism on a bus in Milan (Italy) is played out between economically, culturally, and socially diverse passengers encountering each other in enforced proximity, and affects passengers' bodily practices and experiences of solidarity, friction, or attitudes (Bovo et al., 2022). Thus, "mobile encounters" (Koefoed et al., 2017) on public transport force users to negotiate interactions and relationships beyond familiar social circles, and shed light on the multiple and complex strategies of balancing physical and ethical engagement (Kokkola et al., 2022; Porter et al., 2023).

While the importance of human interactions in public space—from ensuring safety to shaping cultural life (Jacobs, 1961; Low, 2000)—has been recognised by scholars across disciplines, opinions differ about the effect of encounters. Following psychological contact theory, many scholars assume that positive and relatively prolonged interpersonal contact between individuals, especially in the case of interracial or interethnic contact, would reduce prejudice or anxiety and contribute to the development of multicultural competences (Neal & Vincent, 2013). Koefoed et al. (2017) find that by transcending class, race, or ethnic boundaries, a bus in Copenhagen (Denmark) may provide a cross-cultural meeting place enabling multicultural practices. Yet, scholars also caution against idealising fleeting interactions and diversity as the basis for "meaningful encounters" and sociability (Valentine, 2008). Amin (2012) argues that while coexistence among strangers may result from physical proximity, a collective life or civic culture only emerges if contact aligns with a common purpose. Moreover, encounters in public spaces can be conflictual and representative of broader systemic inequalities. Accordingly, studying Muslim-looking passengers on public transport in various cities, Shaker et al. (2022) find that the experiences of "Othering"

become an integral part of their daily journeys, manifesting itself through stares, name-calling, or physical aggression.

2.2. Publicness Through Deviance and Resistance

Beyond diversity of users, public spaces differ from private spaces in terms of user behaviour. They embody an ethos of public sociability that is relevant for shaping solidarity and social interactions (Horgan et al., 2020). A public order, i.e., an "endogenous interactional organisation of collective life" (Horgan, 2020, p. 117), is formed through rules of conduct which regulate "face-to-face interaction between members of a community who do not know each other well" (Goffman, 1963, p. 9). According to Goffman (1963), any interaction that assumes physical proximity and mutual recognition among individuals involved can be attentive or inattentive as well as socially acceptable, i.e., civil, or inappropriate, i.e., uncivil. Passengers respectfully acknowledging others without interaction are committing to a minimal form of recognition, thus practising civil inattention. Small gestures of politeness, such as offering seats, are civil attention. Upon breaking the ritual of civil (in)attention, rude, or uncivil encounters ensue (Horgan, 2020). This "social practice" (Lefebvre, 1991), i.e., an ensemble of gestural systems, endowed with meaning and codes expressed in passengers' habits, norms, or knowledge, enables smooth interactions in public space. Since belonging "to a given society is to know and use its codes for politeness, courtesy, affection [as well as] for the declaration of hostilities" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 215), public life is based on a consensus about "normal appearances" and rules of conduct in a given socio-cultural context. Hence, every society or collective creates and maintains a set of norms that allow members to be judged by the degree of conformity. Members' efforts to ensure group conformity, i.e., social control, may involve positive or negative sanctions, exercised formally through a criminal justice system or informally through personal pressure (Goode, 2015). In public transport literature, a breach of such norms is usually considered a public order offence that is detrimental to conviviality, if not criminal (Smith & Clarke, 2000). However, drawing on social psychology and critical urban theory, I propose a more nuanced understanding of deviance as an inherent component of public space and everyday resistance.

In contrast to conformity, i.e., a socially acceptable course of action or trait, deviance is defined as acts, beliefs, or characteristics that violate social norms and attract repression in the form of stigma, condemnation, isolation, or censure. Increasingly popular in social psychology and sociology since the 1960s, deviance research has assumed a moral relativism that assesses deviance not as absolute, but as resulting from clashing ideologies and social, cultural, economic, or political interests (Goode, 2015). Deviance can occur at the individual but also the institutional level (Harvey, 2015), e.g., an economic system that is unable to create enough jobs or a fare system without concessionary tickets stigmatises unemployed or poor people and affects individuals' ability to participate in public life. Deviance is thus always defined in relation to hegemonic norms and the degree of likelihood of condemnation, ranging from mild, e.g., a negative comment, to extreme, e.g., a hostile attitude or social isolation (Goode, 2015). While societal or hierarchical deviance stigmatises a person's condition not conforming to the prevailing societal or legal norm, situational deviance refers to a person's action or behaviour violating a norm within a specific social or physical setting (Falk, 2001). Accordingly, travelling on public transport without a valid ticket is a hierarchical deviance, as the hegemonic view of transport authorities classifies it as such and predicts legal consequences. Travelling without pants, on the other hand, is a situational deviance, as the behaviour may be appropriate in a different context, e.g., a public swimming pool. Existing research on passenger-related disruptions focuses on crime and anti-social behaviour facilitated by overcrowding, lack of supervision, or passengers' irresponsibility (Smith & Clarke, 2000). Since deviant behaviour—often experienced by users in the form of harassment or bad manners—can cause emotional discomfort and discourage the use of public transport, operators have introduced measures of surveillance and access control, or customer service, e.g., posters encouraging passengers' contribution to a more pleasant transport environment (Schimkowsky, 2021). Similarly, practices such as fare evasion—widely perceived to harm fare revenues and encourage petty crime—call for increased controls, surveillance, or fines (Barabino et al., 2020). However, recent studies reframe evasion as a socially innovative practice that strengthens the public character of transport by challenging prevailing norms and inequalities in the fare system and creating encounters or solidarity between passengers (Assaf & Van den Broeck, 2022; Sträuli & Kębłowski, 2022).

Following such an approach, I propose to draw on theories of political public space to reframe deviance beyond its pejorative connotation towards its potential for publicness. As a world of artefacts in which "everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by all" (Arendt, 1998, p. 50), public space involves exposure and visibility. Accordingly, public space is an "arena of political deliberation and participation" (Harvey, 2006) where marginalised citizens, such as homeless people, are recognised and where people participate in public affairs, e.g., protests, social debates, or struggles (Mitchell, 1995). Yet, urban scholars criticise current neoliberal visions of public space for suppressing diversity and openness of public spaces through exclusionary politics, privatisation, and commercialisation (Mitchell, 1995). Consequently, public spaces are regulated through governance, policing, design, and surveillance that—depending on an individual's gender, race, ethnicity,

age, or ability—significantly affect users' experiences of and opportunities to access urban spaces and facilities (Listerborn, 2016). For minority groups, visibility and potential stigmatisation through (non-existent) infrastructure or hegemonic value systems in public transport space can cause physical stress, anxiety, discomfort, and, especially in car-oriented cities, transport poverty and related social exclusion (Lobo, 2014; Mattioli, 2014). As an alternative to a single, all-encompassing public sphere, Fraser (1990) argues that a multiplicity of publics with arrangements to allow contestation between them would better promote the ideal of participatory parity. Accordingly, publicness emerges from subaltern counterpublics, i.e., parallel discursive arenas in which members of marginalised social groups such as women, workers, or people of colour invent and disseminate counterdiscourses that express alternative interpretations of needs, interests, and identities. Similarly, De Certeau (1984/2011) identifies everyday forms of resistance that oppose institutionalised "strategies" of exercising power and surveillance by exploiting opportunities, blind spots, or quiet zones as "tactics." While counterpublics may function collectively or strive for visibility, I argue in this article that they can also function through everyday resistances in practised or experienced deviance. Public space, thus, is a liminal space between governance strategies and resistance from below, i.e., power struggles between citizens, owners or operators, commercial interests, and political authorities (Gibert-Flutre, 2021; Rink, 2022).

3. Case Studies and Methodology

This research sought to investigate how regular users experience public transport as public space, what hurdles they face in their daily mobility, and how they negotiate shared spaces. For this, I conducted three case studies in the cities of Brussels and Tallinn. These cities differ significantly in terms of population size and density, spatial and political order, and transport network. Since 2013, the city of Tallinn has operated a renowned policy of fare-free public transport, which allows registered residents to use all city buses, trolleybuses, trams, and trains, free of charge (Kębłowski et al., 2019). In Brussels, various operators run buses, trams, and trains under public service contracts. Fares, set by the main operating company in agreement with local authorities, include concessionary tickets for some population groups, but are high for most residents and are contested by rising fare evasion (Sträuli & Kębłowski, 2022). Despite such differences, both cities face common mobility challenges, such as high levels of motorisation due to decades of car-oriented urban planning and urban sprawl. Increasingly, the discourse at the political and planning level is shifting from the social relevance to the environmental sustainability of public transport, calling for a reduction in car traffic, clean energy vehicles, and alternative mobility solutions. Yet, such discussions often disregard the diverse needs, experiences, concerns, or fears of (potential) public transport users (Tuvikene et al., 2020). Thus, without claiming a comparative or quantitatively generalisable perspective on lived realities within or between different cities, I conducted this research to offer an alternative insight into individuals' ability to get around the city, meet daily needs, and engage with life opportunities. To this end, a cross-city study offers both an insight into place-specific mobility challenges and an overarching conceptual perspective.

The research presented was conducted between March 2020 and April 2022 with three groups of transport-dependent users who experience different forms of deviance in their daily mobility. First, I draw on the findings of a study conducted by the PUTSPACE project, for which I conducted 18 interviews in Brussels to understand how the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic affected mobility behaviour. The passengers interviewed, 10 men and eight women, all of working age and with no stated disability, shed light on conforming or deviating behaviour concerning new and therefore little established codes of conduct. Secondly, I interviewed 27 passengers who reported regularly travelling on the Brussels metro without purchasing or validating a ticket. Following existing research on fare evasion, respondents were predominantly young (all between 18 and 39 years old) and male (two-thirds of respondents; Barabino et al., 2020). Additionally, most reported evading for financial reasons, as they have a low or medium income (two-thirds of respondents) or are not eligible for discounted tickets as students over 25, trainees, part-time employees, or self-employed. Thirdly, I interviewed Tallinn residents who rely on public transport for care tasks, including accompanying children, household or administrative errands, and grocery shopping and experience social and situational deviance by perceiving their appearance and practices as discordant with social norms and transport infrastructure. As previous research on care mobility (Sánchez de Madariaga, 2013) has found that these tasks are predominantly undertaken by women, 16 of the 21 respondents in this study are female.

For all studies, respondents were recruited through social media channels, mailing lists, community organisations, and snowball sampling. Interviews were conducted by the author and research assistants in person or via video telephony in English or the local language according to respondents' preference. The semi-structured interviews included case study-specific questions, e.g., on fare evasion and care mobilities, as well as general questions on changes in mobility behaviour, perceptions of the atmosphere, encounters and interactions in public transport, and respondents' views on public transport as a public space. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed in NVivo using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Key findings from the interviews are presented in the following section according to the established themes,

i.e., publicness, negotiating difference, and experiencing or practising deviance in public space. For clarity, I cite interview excerpts throughout the article by respondent group, i.e., for the Covid-19 study (C19), for fare evaders (FE), for care mobility respondents (CM), and by date.

4. Three Case Studies on Publicness, Negotiating Differences, and Deviance on Public Transport

When asked about the perception of public transport as a public space, many respondents echo a liberal perspective, framing it as theoretically open and accessible to all (Neal, 2010) since "everyone can use it. There can't be restrictions…for the disabled or for mothers with children or for the president" (CM, interview, 11 March 2022). Due to public ownership, "no one can say…'This is my bus, you're not going to pass'" (FE, interview, 13 April 2021). Additionally, many reflect a communal view that assumes publicness to be a result of users' diversity and the coexistence of strangers. Accordingly, public transport is a space "occupied by all sorts of people who come from all sorts of places" (C19, interview, 3 March 2021). Respondents observe that although passengers are "in their bubble in transport" (C19, interview, 13 April 2021) and disconnect from their immediate environment by watching videos, listening to music, or reading, many still spend time observing others. Such glances or looks between passengers not engaged in purposeful interaction can serve as social control of inappropriate behaviour in public, or as initial acts of encounter, i.e., "face engagement" (Goffman, 1963), where two or more participants communicate and maintain a single focus of visual or cognitive attention under the public order. Thus, such interactions are guided by codes of behaviour that distinguish public from private spaces. Accordingly, a respondent explains that because public transport is "a closed space with a lot of people crammed together…there must be rules of behaviour" (CM, interview, 14 December 2021).

In the literature on public space and its planning, public transport usually receives less attention than parks, streets, or squares. Yet, features such as a predominantly (semi-)public ownership and management structure, a constant flow of strangers, temporarily enclosed vehicles, and physically delineated stations can illuminate our concept of publicness. Similarly, the characteristics mentioned by interviewees—openness to all, diversity of users, and prevailing rules of conduct—provide an initial delineation of public space. However, users' daily experiences and practices reveal that public space does not have a static, one-dimensional quality, but is constituted by a multitude of interactions and negotiations of differences, also marked by deviations. To support this argument, in the following subsections, I present three case studies, which trace different dimensions of situational or societal deviance and their impact on interactions and encounters with diversity in public transport.

4.1. Negotiating Encounters on Public Transport in Brussels During the Covid-19 Pandemic Outbreak

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, as witnessed in Europe in March 2020, has changed residents' mobility behaviour and experiences of public spaces, seemingly with contradictory positive and negative impressions (Kokkola et al., 2022). Particularly in the first weeks of the pandemic, public transport ridership declined as many users stayed at home or engaged in "compensatory mobility" like walking or cycling, which was found to increase connectedness within neighbourhoods (Nikolaeva et al., 2023). Yet, regular transport users in Brussels lament their immobility and lack of encounters in public. While direct or prolonged interactions "with other passengers on public transport [were] rather rare" (C19, interview, 14 May 2022) before the pandemic, they have decreased even more since. One respondent is concerned about how the pandemic has affected both the frequency and nature of such interactions:

> When I took the bus…conversations would happen quite easily…but now…it feels like you're doing something wrong and you're in a social space that is much more regulated.…An old lady on the bus…was very eager to talk and…if she had started talking to me in a park, I would have been more likely to engage in conversation…but in public transport, you also feel a bit judged or you feel observed at least.…So, people noticed that she took off her mask. What would they think? That I am inciting her into this reckless behaviour? (C19, interview, 26 February 2021)

For this interviewee, the changed situational context raises novel questions about the norms of interacting with strangers and sharing enclosed spaces. What previously may have passed for civil attention—a conversation with an elderly person—has become a situational deviance, replaced by avoidance behaviour. The reduced presence of other passengers and avoidance of interactions additionally affects the sense of safety and well-being in public. In line with studies indicating an increase of gender-based violence "perpetrated in a continuum of mobile spaces" (Murray et al., 2022, p. 2) during the pandemic, female respondents in Brussels report discomfort with the emptiness of transport and the potential of harassment.

Although decreased ridership reduces the possibility of "people watching"—a civil inattention acting as a social control mechanism (Goffman, 1963)—mutual monitoring of passengers does not seem to be absent, but rather focused on new conspicuousness such as coughing or non-compliance with safety measures. The introduced measures to contain the virus also affected interactions on public transport and users' engagement with the material environment, as they tried not to sit down or touch handrails, surfaces, or buttons. Particularly mask-wearing regulations stirred

debates about behavioural norms in public; for some, wearing "a mask is a must. You can feel the social stigma immediately. Walking into a tram without a mask makes you feel naked" (CM, interview, 30 March 2022). This stigma is expressed through uncivil attention when passengers berate each other for not wearing their masks (properly). Mask-wearing, then, becomes central to disputes between passengers and a cause of concern for users trying to balance public exposure with private safety (Porter et al., 2023). Yet, such regulations were also reported to increase instances of civil attention, when "people send signals to each other non-verbally and then people realise 'Oh, I have to put on my mouth mask'" (C19, interview, 9 April 2021) or when a respondent recalls that she "was searching for the mask [and] the lady who was sitting in front…took the whole package of masks from her bag and offered [it to her]" (CM, interview, 30 March 2022).

Thus, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated discussions about norms, social control, and interactions on public transport. Situational deviance, e.g., passengers not wearing masks despite the regulations, can have a fundamental impact on users' well-being and decision to use public transport (Schimkowsky, 2021). Recalling sentiments of mistrust, respondents reflect on how changes in daily habits and ways of interacting with others have shaped their understanding of publicness. While for many, public transport before the pandemic "wasn't an Agora where everyone talked to each other" (C19, interview, 5 March 2021) or "a place for solidarity" (C19, interview, 7 April 2021); the pandemic has reduced transport to a "place of passage [to] go to school or to work" (FE, interview, 2 March 2021).

4.2. Contesting Fares and Control Infrastructures in Brussels

One particular practice deemed deviant—if not criminal—by transport operators and authorities is fare evasion. Defined as the "non-violent act of travelling in public in disregard of the law…having deliberately not purchased, not validated or not correctly adopted the required travel ticket" (Barabino et al., 2020, p. 34), fare evasion is often seen as an opportunistic or rational-calculative practice that can—and should—be countered with increased surveillance, fines, or controls (Dauby & Kovacs, 2007). However, interviews with regular evaders reveal diverse motives to evade, ranging from financial, administrative, and opportunistic to ideological reasons, and practices to avoid ticket purchases, controls, or fines. In Brussels, a trust-based system deployed on surface networks allows evaders not to validate tickets while keeping an eye on upcoming inspections. In the metro, in contrast, evading the automated fare gates, so-called *portiques*, requires physical engagement with the infrastructure and exposure. Installed with the aim of controlling tickets, regulating passenger flows, and collecting data, the contested *portiques* are for seasoned evaders merely "a band-aid on a wooden leg, [because] there are plenty of techniques to get in anyway" (FE, interview, 2 March 2021).

As a form of everyday resistance, evaders adopt tactics to challenge structural injustices within the fare system and in the distribution of transport access. That these tactics can evolve into collective strategies is demonstrated by fare evaders through knowledge sharing and mutual support. In Brussels, transport users share information about current ticket inspections, network updates, or lost and found objects, and exchange humorous posts on various social media channels. Similarly, knowledge is passed on in the physical environment of metro entrances. For example, one interviewee reports regularly "giving advice, like 'hold the door like this' or 'press this button and it will open'" (FE, interview, 8 April 2021). With the help and knowledge of others, evaders' practices to circumvent control mechanisms have developed manifold: Climbing or jumping over barriers, pressing emergency buttons, or leaving stations before ticket inspection. Instances of civil attention at the *portiques* include paying passengers allowing evaders to pass, users lending each other tickets for validation, or helping others stuck behind or between barriers. The most common circumvention practice of bumping, i.e., squeezing through the gates with paying passengers (Reddy et al., 2011) facilitates interactions between strangers.

Nevertheless, paying passengers may perceive bumping as uncivil attention and warn: "You always have to be careful behind you if there's nobody there. There are people who are clear and who ask…but there are people who push you and say 'move over'" (C19, interview, 5 March 2021). As fare evasion is often seen as unfair behaviour towards paying passengers, as a threat to fare revenues or as an incentive for further petty offences, and constitutes a violation of the applicable transport laws punishable by fines, there is a broad consensus that it is an act of deviance. However, echoing recent studies from Brussels examining evasion as a social innovation (Assaf & Van den Broeck, 2022), it can be seen not only as a practice challenging prevailing legal norms and power hierarchies but also as raising questions about the sharing of public spaces and the provision of mobility. Accordingly, a respondent reflects on the reciprocity between transgression and controls:

I imagine that [the *portiques*] brought…quite a lot of money…since it is rather effective against fraud….From an ethical and moral point of view….I think that it raises questions about the way we fight against fraud as it is public transport….But at the same time…these doors are there for people like me who cheat. So I'm sure that there are many more now than before and I find that a bit of a dystopian vision. (FE, interview, 15 March 2021)

Hence, fare evaders in the Brussels metro contest systemic inequalities, infrastructural barriers, and social control. Evasion practices disrupt the public order by exposing the financial and physical inaccessibility of public space and by introducing new rules of conduct, such as asking other evaders to bump only with consent and be respectful towards others by not "just push[ing] people to pass" (FE, interview, 7 April 2021). While fare evasion thus becomes an alternative way of navigating a discriminatory system and reshaping publicness, most evaders still feel limited in their movement:

> From the moment you decide not to pay your ticket, the gates are a constraint because you have to know how to pass them. And there's the permanent stress of being checked....I don't feel totally free when I use transport. (FE, interview, 12 April 2021)

4.3. Negotiating Differences and Access for Care Mobilities in Tallinn

Similar to fare evaders in Brussels, passengers interviewed in Tallinn travelling with prams, shopping bags or wheelchairs, or accompanied by children are exposed to infrastructures and social control restricting daily mobility. Although not unlawful and therefore less conspicuous, these passengers experience situational or societal deviance, as their mobility needs are not met by commuter-oriented transport planning. By acquiring network-specific knowledge, e.g., by studying timetables indicating low-floor vehicles, researching accessible routes, modes or stations, or planning their journeys in due time, they appropriate public spaces for their own needs. Many find inaccessibility to cause "a lot of stress" (CM, interview, 3 December 2021) and to result in longer travel and waiting times. A respondent reports:

> [If a bus has] three or four steps and the handle in the middle [and] you don't have to get to the doctor at the time [you] wait for the next bus. [However,] if you have a child in the pram and it's winter and the next bus [comes in] 20 minutes, that's not an option. (CM, interview, 16 November 2021)

Additionally, many rely daily on the support of others to access public transport: "Sometimes you're like the only person on the bus stops...and there are three big steps with a pram. And even if you don't have any bags or something, you can't really do it on your own" (CM, interview, 29 March 2022). By asking acquaintances to practice with them, including them in daily mobility routines or asking strangers for help, passengers practice "doing accessibility," i.e., reframing accessibility into a relational practice involving users and materiality (Muñoz, 2021). While some respondents indicate having "always been offered help whenever it looks like I might need it" (CM, interview, 9 December 2021), others have not experienced "too much of this enthusiasm. Usually, the ones who are willing or offering help are older ladies or mothers themselves...because we know what we're in for" (CM, interview, 3 December 2021). One respondent criticises that "the social category you belong to is a criterion whether we are going to help you or not" (C19, interview, 7 April 2021). While letting "pregnant people or elderly...sit [seems] basic civility" (CM, interview, 21 December 2021), other respondents complain that when carrying a "big [shopping] bag, nobody is interested in [helping]" (CM, interview, 11 November 2021). Civil attention thus seems to depend on the assessment of others' conforming or deviating abilities.

Upon boarding a bus or tram, passengers are exposed to each other. Confronted with the uncivil inattention of strangers, a wheelchair user reports appropriating the space by having "to shout at [other passengers] or say please make room" (CM, interview, 11 March 2022). Similarly, travelling with a pram means having "to ask few times [for passengers to make space, otherwise] I'm blocking people getting on and off" (CM, interview, 8 December 2021). A mother explains how she employs looks as a means of communication in such situations: "[When others occupy] the place reserved for wheelchairs and prams, I either say something or give them a look, which makes them...give me the space I need" (CM, interview, 10 November 2021). As a form of uncivil attention (Horgan, 2020), however, gazes are also particularly directed at people who, because of their age, gender, or ethnicity, are perceived by others as not belonging or conforming, i.e., as deviating from a societal norm, which leads to demarcation and Othering (Shaker et al., 2022). That deviance can be multi-faceted is illustrated by the experience of a father who explains that when his daughter "sings some Estonian songs [and because] she doesn't look...typically Estonian...people look" (CM Interview, 12.11.2021). This family, thus, experiences judgemental looks due to both societal deviance, i.e., the foreign appearance within an Estonian context, and situational deviance, i.e., singing seems less appropriate on a bus than elsewhere. That such encounters become confrontational or unsettling can affect feelings of safety, well-being and travel behaviour, explains one respondent:

> [Having an African husband has irked people to ask] why my mum hasn't taught me how to carry on the Estonian gene....One time I had my husband with me and the fight was very close to getting physical....I...know the general time when a certain unpleasant man...is travelling, so I usually just try to avoid this area....Either I wait a little longer with my kids and go to the playground or I change my route and take a different bus. (CM, interview, 9 December 2021)

In such cases, subtle lines of deviance are revealed. While the harassed person is labelled as not belonging and affected in their safety and mobility behaviour, the deviant person is ultimately the one harassing

others based on their appearance and restricting their visibility and freedom of movement in public spaces. Nevertheless, most passengers report experiencing public transport encounters as predominantly convivial. Particularly when accompanying children, respondents receive positive and playful attention from strangers "making cute faces at the children…chatting…waving and playing" (CM, interview, 16 November 2021). Most parents recognise that "children talking loudly or complaining…can be annoying" (CM, interview, 14 December 2021) and therefore negotiate for themselves whether the behaviour is appropriate and monitor their child's situational deviance, accepting that "children love to talk and [if] someone doesn't like it, it's their problem…people have to understand that it's *public* transportation" (CM, interview, 14 December 2021).

5. Conclusions

This article explores public transport as a public space beyond diversity and conviviality. Previous studies recognise public transport as a space that allows for multiple exposures to the human and material environment, encounters across differences, and a "throwntogetherness" (Massey, 2005) of strangers with the potential for conviviality or conflict. Adding to this, I argue that publicness emerges—rather than as a static feature of space—from the negotiation of differences expressed through daily experiences and practices of deviance, and struggles for visibility and participation. I illustrate this argument with the experiences and practices of passengers who rely on public transport in car-dominated European cities, namely during the Covid-19 pandemic or while fare evading in Brussels and due to care responsibilities in Tallinn. The users' insights shed light on what it means to use and experience public space when one's physical or financial capabilities or mobility needs do not match the standard passengers or situations envisaged by technocratic transport planning. Respondents report instances of civil inattention acknowledging the presence of diversity, civil attention to mutual aid or support, uncivil inattention in disregarding people's different access needs, and uncivil attention to conflictual encounters, and experience public transport as a space of converging difference where social control—formally through legal regulation and informally through mutual observation—is pervasive. Moreover, the interviewed transport users describe a variety of practices they adopt to access, use, and appropriate shared spaces. This includes sharing knowledge and creating care networks, assisting fare evaders or passengers with prams, wheelchairs or shopping bags, or showing consideration towards other passengers during a global pandemic. Transport spaces thus provide a platform for collective action and networks of solidarity. As navigating such spaces often requires overcoming physical, infrastructural, financial, or social barriers, everyday mobility practices become tactics of daily resistance against hegemonic social norms, unequal fare

systems, or infrastructures of control. Publicness, thus, emerges through the negotiation of shared space and the contestation of social norms.

Although this study's findings are based on individual, diverse experiences, and case-specific examples, they provide a foundation for further research that explores different sociocultural and political frameworks or notions of ideal publics from a planning and policy perspective. First, since publicness is a process, focusing on everyday forms of resistance and experiences of deviance highlights the importance of human interactions and the negotiation of diversity in public space and promotes a social justice perspective on the politics of difference. This sheds light on the potential for convivial or conflictual encounters, as well as subtle variations of (un)civil encounters between strangers that have yet to be sufficiently researched (Horgan, 2020). Moreover, exploring varying experiences and negotiating differences through a micro-level qualitative perspective promotes a better understanding of broader, systemic inequalities at the city level and the planning practices that prioritise the needs of certain citizens over others. Second, recognising the communal and political function of public transport offers insights into potential functions of public space beyond conviviality or multicultural coexistence. As public transport is a public space offering marginalised populations visibility and opportunities to engage in political publicness, addressing the needs of vulnerable, overlooked, or criminalised users could create a safer, more inclusive, and sociable urban environment. Third, recognising that the materiality of built environments, control and surveillance infrastructures, combined with social control, significantly influence users' sense of safety and comfort, encourages the planning of public spaces that meet different abilities and daily needs and facilitates the provision of social and physical infrastructures that allow people to move, stay, and interact freely. To provide access to mobility services to a wide range of users and to promote sustainable cities, it seems essential to broaden the perspective of urban planning beyond the movement function of public transport.

Hence, this research advances the study of public space by highlighting its processual nature and expanding scholarship on public transportation to include previously understudied perspectives on care work and public space. By combining insights from the daily experiences of transportation users with concepts from critical urban theory, e.g., everyday resistance, and social psychology, e.g., social control and deviance, I offer a nuanced understanding of the micro-practices and bodily experiences of citizens in urban space. By redefining the concept of deviance beyond a criminalising gaze, I recognise it as a malleable and relevant concept that offers a way to delineate the fine lines of (in)appropriate behaviour in public space and highlight where certain hegemonic value systems undermine the (mobility) needs of diverse citizens. As such, this research

offers a potential perspective for more equitable and inclusive planning of public spaces.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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