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Tacking: Improvising and Navigating Mobilities and Everyday Life

Abstract

This paper aims to deepen and extend theoretical understanding of mobility by exploring some of the mechanisms by which it operates. It introduces the concept and practices of 'tacking' as a as a frame for examining the creative processes of navigation and improvisation through which people approach and reflect on the irregularities and uncertainties of their everyday rounds, enacted or otherwise narrated as spatial biography; lives conceived in mobile-spatial terms. 'Tacking' also travels beyond this frame of reference, i.e. it is 'good to think with' across different substantive contexts of social interaction. Tacking suggests ongoing adjustment and modification that respond to shifting circumstances and may create new facts on the ground, which elicit further adjustments.

Key words: **Mobility, improvisation, navigation, spatial-biography**

Introduction:

We introduce a concept and practices of 'tacking' as a way of deepening and extending theoretical understanding of mobility by examining some of the creative modalities through which people approach the uncertainties of their everyday rounds. We will argue that 'tacking' can also be heuristically useful beyond this frame of reference, across a variety of substantive contexts of social interaction.

In the recent surge of mobility studies, two orientations are particularly relevant. First, is a growing willingness to consider the relationships between different sorts of journeys. Rather than assuming a priori that different forms of travel necessarily constitute separate silos of investigation, there is a much greater willingness to critically explore the convergences between them (Salazar 2016; Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; Amit, 2012; Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006). Second, are moves away from treating mobility in terms of linear trajectory (Urry 2007:28-29). Yet the notion of mobility as a planned movement between two points, oriented towards clear goals still lingers even in literature that celebrates the openings afforded by an expanded notion of mobility. Jeffrey H. Cohen and Ibrahim Sirkeci welcome the reconceptualization of migration as 'mobility' for providing a 'dynamic term that emphasizes the changing, floating, fluid nature of this phenomenon and captures the regular as well as irregular moves of people' (2011:7). But they insist that migrants embark on journeys with well considered 'plans and goals in mind' and that the 'outcomes of moving, regardless of the conclusions are executed strategically and in a rational fashion (2011:13).' It is precisely the 'regardless' that Cohen and Sirkeci relegate to a subclause that we wish to focus on in adopting the concept of tacking as an alternative to trajectory. Migration, we suggest, rarely involves

one guiding plan because it rarely involves just *one* decision. It is more likely to involve a succession of choices over the course of changing circumstances. And an important aspect of moving around these shifts is the capacity to improvise, to navigate a change of course, to make new choices, to respond to new possibilities. Rather than dismissing the need for constant extemporization and *re*-preparing as a failure to achieve a planned objective, we suggest that these onuses deserve interrogation in their own right as central aspects of mobility and daily life more generally.

Tacking: Improvisation and Navigation

The dictionary definition of tacking has several connotations that are relevant to our concern with the interpolations shaping mobility:

(i) a 'method of dealing with a situation or problem'

(ii) fastening pieces together temporarily

(iii) 'add or append to something already existing'

(iv) 'change course'

(v) 'make a series of changes of course'

 (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/tack)

In all of these usages, tacking suggests processes of ongoing adjustment and modification. To keep moving, a person may have to shift away from their original destination rather than continue to navigate in a direct line. But this kind of shift relies on a combination of knowledge, experience and improvisation. In its nautical application, sailors who have learned this maneuver still have to exercise their own capacity to evaluate which of

several possible tacks they might employ in shifting conditions. Tacking should not, however, be reduced only to the simple plotting of detours to get to one's original destination because the shifts of course entailed in tacking can also create new facts on the ground that in turn require further adjustments, choices and orientations.

When applied to daily lives and mobilities, tacking is creative but modest in its immediate ambitions: people trying to improvise in response to new information or changed circumstances, to get by, rather than to radically challenge the structures through which they are navigating. In this sense, tacking is consonant with de Certeau's (1984) notion of tactics, rather than strategy. But this modesty of ambitions should not blind us to the possibility that its ramifications may be more or less consequential for the navigator. Nor can we know at the outset the cumulative effects of these small- scale actions and choices. As Tim Ingold has noted, the simple movements of pedestrians can dramatically transform the landscape. 'When the same paths are repeatedly trodden, especially by heavy boots, the consequences may be quite dramatic, amounting in places to severe erosion. Surfaces are indeed transformed' (Ingold, 2004: 333). Far from digressions from an overriding plan, the extemporaneous redirections and combinations that tacking invokes are integral to the way in which people move through the world and reflect on it prospectively and retrospectively.

Tacking thus relies on processes of navigation and improvisation that we have found useful in our previous work (Amit 2012 and 2010; Amit & Fog Olwig 2011; Knowles 2014a,and b, 2013, 2012, 2010, and Knowles and Harper 2009) and that work well in translation. Concepts based on practices like navigation or improvisation are 'good to think with' *across* different situations, and we hope that our use of them in

exploring different forms of mobility can highlight their relevance to other social contexts of everyday life and biography.

Not only are a variety of different activities and situations shaped by processes of navigation and improvisation that we are associating with tacking but as mobility itself is an integral part of living, so it is deeply imbricated in the composition of people's lives. Mobility can be conceptualized as biography-conceived-in-mobile-spatial terms. We call this spatial biography: the presentation of life-stories as a threading together of its places of enactment, sequenced by time, and, the travel and other spatial connective practices linking them. While all lives are mobile in the sense that living is an inherently motile activity; lives that have been lived across distinctive territories are often conceptualized and narrated in terms of their spatially imagined sequences, as lived here and then there. Spatial biography may be narrated as verbalized stories; yet simply living in sequences of distinct spaces is a form of narration as enactment, as *doing* spatial biography, and these too are open to the scrutiny of researchers. While spatial biography is an individual set of enactments, it intersects with others' biographies too, opening spaces for agreement, dissonance and negotiation.

Finally we want to note that concepts like tacking, navigation and improvisation assume the continual emergence of new circumstances and unforeseen eventualities, on different scales. Two things then become important: the temporalities and intensities of change; and the attention, flexibility and overall creativity required to navigate it.

Improvisation:

Improvisation is an in-between phenomenon –or better, some sort of paradox. It is always situated between the known and the unknown, between planned action and unintended behavior, between the unique and the routine (Breyer et al, 2011:188).

While it is not unusual to find reference to improvisation in scholarly accounts of everyday encounters, it has more often been invoked in its commonsensical understanding as an impromptu performance or creation than as a fully developed analytical concept[1]. Two notable and linked exceptions to this tendency include detailed attention to improvisation within studies of the performance arts, especially of jazz (Banes, 1980; Berliner, 1994; Faulkner & Becker 2009) along with the recent interest in improvisation within organizational studies inspired by the 'jazz metaphor' (Da Cunha et al, 2003:567). There are three areas of concern in the interrogation of improvisation in these and other fields that have particular relevance for our interest in mobility: (i) inventiveness; (ii) timing; and, (iii) the unexpected.

(i) *Inventiveness*: How inventive is improvisation? In reflecting on his experiences, the sociologist and jazz pianist Howard Becker argued that most improvising is 'not quite so inventive as the language we used […] made out' (2000:171). While spontaneous, 'created at that moment' and distinctive to a degree, the solo choruses performed in jam sessions were assembled from bits and pieces performed many times. The repetitions of slight variations on familiar themes, when extended to accommodate the multiple solos of guest musicians, were as likely to bore participants as to surprise them. Becker argued that this reflected the 'etiquette' of jam sessions, which among other considerations had

to respect audience expectations about the kinds of improvisations they anticipated. Debra Cash has criticized Becker's account for overly minimizing the *surprise* proffered by improvisation (Cash, 2000:179). Cash has further argued that the particular circumstances of Becker's semiprofessional experience –shared traditions of musical training, familiar performance landmarks and hierarchies of skill – cannot be treated as 'paradigmatic of improvisatory art in general' (2000:178). Similarly da Cunha et al argue that as a metaphor for organizational improvisation, jazz is limited because its performance settings are much less variable than its organizational counterparts (2003:585). In other words, jazz, that archetype of creative extemporization, actually seems to present a rather conservative and predictably structured format for improvisation.

But Becker's observations have usefully highlighted a more general question in the dynamics of improvisation regarding the interaction between the known and the unknown, the planned and the unexpected. How much innovation is actually involved in most improvisations? How much of improvisation is a matter of 'making do with available materials' (Da Cunha et al., 2003:580) rather than introducing entirely new elements? What degree of digression does it take for an improvisation to be analytically significant? In their concern to identify the factors involved in 'successful organizational improvisation', Da Cunha et al. opted to focus only on those improvisations that involved 'considerable' deviations from routine practices or planned actions (2003:578). In delineating their field of inquiry in this way, they were drawing on a longstanding scholarly tradition that has tended to associate innovation with *extra*ordinary disjunctures (Amit 2015). But training our analytical attention only on improvisation that achieves a

certain magnitude or dramatic surprise (Cash 2000) restricts its significance to the kind of extemporaneousness that produces broader paradigm shifts or entirely new cultural forms; dismissing as insignificant the forms of inventiveness through which most people respond creatively to the world around them.

Many of the improvisations that are fashioned by people in the course of their journeys may be personally meaningful to their own plans or circumstances but otherwise seem invisible. The improvisations that may be involved when a traveler changes tack because of news about an unexpected roadblock, a cancelled train or flight, vicissitudes at their intended destination or new visa requirements may be more or less consequential for the person in question or their immediate interlocutors, but of little concern beyond. These improvisations are more usually attributable to the realm of 'tactics' than 'strategy' (de Certeau 1984).

(ii) *Timing*: According to de Certeau, 'a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing". Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities" (1984:xix).' de Certeau's description resonates with the conventional notion of improvisation as being of the moment. In this interpretation tactics are a matter of 'making do', making the most of circumstances as they arise rather than the power to stipulate the conditions in which resourcefulness is practiced.

Yet, the temporal embeddedness of these kinds of improvisations goes beyond either the moment in, or the relative degree of power/ powerlessness through, which they are exercised. Improvisation is both retrospective and prospective (Amit 2015). It draws

on elements, skills and experiences that predate the moment or opportunity in which it is implemented and its form involves anticipation of the potential impact of implementing this tack (Becker 2000; Breyer et al 2011). But the reverberations of an improvisation are likely to reveal themselves in a variety of forms and interpretations over time. The outcomes of an action/decision might only become manifest as the situations it has influenced gradually emerge. The, implications of an action or decision may also be subject to a variety of interpretations as people age. One of the reasons that life histories have become so prominent in migration research is the way in which they reveal the selection of particular decisions or actions as critical dis/junctures in the light of subsequent decisions or actions rather than at the moment of implementation, including whether or not these were planned or improvised passages.

The notion that particular moments assume critical significance in fashioning life histories and/or subjectivity has resonated in recent scholarly literature through concepts such as 'vital conjuncture' or 'decision-event'. Jennifer Johnson-Hanks introduced the term 'vital conjunctures' to denote 'experiential knots during which potential futures are under debate and up for grabs' (2002:872). She argued that rather than posing 'liminal states between stable statuses[…][m]ost vital events – such as marriage, motherhood, and migration –are instead negotiable and contested, fraught with uncertainty, innovation, and ambivalence' (2002:865). Caroline Humphrey used the complementary concept of 'decision-event') to denote a moment out of the ordinary in which people 'open themselves to a radically different composition of the self, a switch that has a lasting effect' ((2008:371). These conceptions of key life moments are primarily future-oriented.

Yet a moment, a decision, or a change of tack might only become 'vital' or 'radically different' in retrospect.

A problem with the insistence on the life altering, paradigm shifting, *extra*ordinary significance of pivotal moments of innovation is its implicit assumption that this intersection is *always* clear. The insistence on the distinction between everyday changes of tack and significant improvisation, between strategy and tactics, between vital and less consequential conjunctures, between more or less ordinary circumstances presumes a manifest and immediately apprehendable eureka moment. It also positions key life choices and changes of tack outside quotidian forms of improvisation. In contrast, Hallam and Ingold challenged 'the idea that the capacity for creative improvisation is exercised by individuals against the conventions of culture and society. Improvisation and creativity, we contend, are intrinsic to the very processes of social and cultural life' (2007:19).

Applied to the study of mobility, this positioning of improvisation enjoins us to examine the myriad judgments, reflections and changes of tack that are involved in moving through the world without prejudging their respective significance. Such an effort would be enabled by relinquishing any presumption that the continuum of shorter and longer journeys that we make over the course of our lives are oriented in a particular trajectory. If people on the move are not viewed as making their way towards one orienting destination and situation, then the question of significance becomes more readily sidelined towards a consideration of the more immediate as well as cumulative effects (or lack of them) of these day-to-day decisions and actions.

(iii) *The unexpected*: Two principal treatments of the unexpected dominate scholarly discussions of improvisation. One concerns the unexpected nature of some forms of improvisation in and of themselves. In this, improvisation introduces unexpected elements into an environment or set of practices. It is this interpretation that Cash is drawing on in her argument that Becker's portrait of a jazz performance understates the *surprise* produced by improvisation. Drawing on Banes' (1980) description of 'contact improvisation', Cash argues that these performers 'were not "solving problems" in the way Becker assumes some jazz musicians will do in the privacy of a working session, but rather inventing new problems on the spot and pushing themselves to answer their own questions in ways that stressed and valorized the unexpected' (2000:179).

The second treatment frames improvisation as a necessarily unscripted response to unpredictable elements or developments. In some circumstances, the unexpected nature of these developments may be surprising because they demarcate an emerging gap between what protagonists envisaged would occur in a particular situation and what actually happened, and the improvised response that this gap obliged. Other circumstances can be expected to comprise unpredictable elements. The participants in these situations know that they cannot entirely anticipate the elements that this state of affairs comprises. In such a circumstance, one can *expect* the unexpected.

Some of the most interesting questions delineating mobility concern the extent of reliable information that people on the move can bring to different kinds of journeys and the factors that may shape the availability of this knowledge. To what extent are the features, conditions and outcomes involved in different forms of mobility knowable before the voyage is undertaken? Are travelers themselves aware of what kinds of

processes they can't anticipate before embarking on particular journeys? What is the relationship between the expected unexpected and the surprising unexpected in different forms of mobility? Does physical distance serve as a likely influence on these questions of predictability? Are the resources – financial, network contacts, electronic communication, education, previous experiences of mobility, and so on – that travelers bring to their journeys critical interveners, shaping whether they are able to anticipate and plan? Or are these resources just as likely to shape the nature and effectiveness of the improvised responses of the traveler to the unknown elements of their journeys? Where some components can't be known in advance, does the preparation of the traveler enhance his/her capacity to assess and effectively improvise in response to these elements as they emerge?

These various modes of interface between the unexpected and improvisation are not mutually exclusive. A fruitful area of inquiry regarding mobility thus involves efforts to probe the relative significance, effects of and interactions between, the different forms of the unexpected, through which changes of tack by travelers take shape.

Learning from Improvisation: Improvisation is an unexceptional aspect of daily life. Even the most repetitive of tasks and routines are imbricated with some degree of extemporization. It is hard to imagine how one could get through a day without setting in motion opportunities 'on the wing' or implementing unscripted responses to events as they occur. But many of these forms of inventiveness are sufficiently mundane that they can recede into the background. But if we overlook these practices as not sufficiently

dramatic to warrant much in the way of attention, we risk seriously underestimating the degree of ingenuity, calculation and effort that it takes to get through the day.

Attention to everyday improvisation serves as a useful link and caution. It reminds us of the dynamic and complex interaction between institutional constraints, resources, familiar conventions and mindful extemporization that link the crafting of mobility with other social practices. It reminds us that tacking pertains to shorter as well as longer journeys; it also links voyages of different scales and orientations to one another. After all, a change of tack is often a matter of shifting into a different kind of journey, even if only briefly.

Navigation

Navigation is commonly understood as a set of practices that facilitate crossing spaces separating distributed points, between a beginning and an end in a (broadly) linear fashion. It involves forward movement in a direction calibrated around a destination, and, sometimes encoded in a set of enabling technologies in maps, global positioning system (GPS) etc. It is understood in relation to the technologies appropriate for crossing a distance, a cognitive or actual measurement of the space separating two points; walking, driving, riding trains, bicycles etc. Navigation is about defined and spatially distributed points and the trajectories connecting them; it carries plans, strategies for achieving them and a sense of destination. This is *not* the understanding of navigation we want to work with.

Instead we propose a concept of navigation that is open and fluid, that condenses the lessons of many years of empirical engagement with transnational migration, and

which is closer to the ways in which people conceptualize and practice mobility. One that acknowledges that navigation involves motion within motion: that landscapes as well as people are cast around the choppy volatilities of uncertainty in some of the ways Henrik Vigh (2009) suggests. Our approach coheres around a number of strands of thinking.

The first is that we need a concept of navigation that dialogues with the practices and epistemologies of movement, with what movement might be, with the ways in which it can be understood, and with the ways in which it works. Brian Massumi (2002) points in some promising directions in suggesting that movement is always already underway, rather than discrete, temporally defined events with beginning and end points. Movement is usefully conceived as continuous transit, located in the scenes of everyday life, rather than requiring separate analytic treatment. Massumi also suggests that while movement inevitably dialogues with what constrains it, not least gravity, it is open to all sorts of possibility. In describing it as a kind of controlled falling, he suggests we understand movement as a letting go that opens into myriad unknown possibilities and indeterminations.

Building on this we suggest that navigation be disconnected from the determinations of trajectory, acknowledged as a much freer set of practices engaged in mobility-work, with finding a way through the world – way finding (Ingold 2000) - and embedded in processes and mechanics of continuous motion. We understand navigation as absorption with motion in un/conscious ways; continuous processes deeply imbricated in everyday lives, which do not need an end point, or any point. Way finding has a meandering uncertainty to it: setting off without the conceit of purpose or direction like

Benjamin's (2002) flanneur.

Instead of finding a way through a terrain of spatially distributed points articulated as a trajectory, we suggest that navigation is open to all kinds of possibilities; that it operates in small-scaled, localized, encounters with time and space. We think navigation is about next steps, rather than grand plans. While transnational mobilities involve finding a way between widely distributed locations across nation state borders, these are the outcome of small local steps that precede them, and they open onto further local steps in new landscapes of everyday life. Navigation is pragmatic and concerned with short-term exigencies. Which raises interesting questions about which pragmatic short term exigencies lead on to distant landscapes and which do not.

The second strand of thinking is that navigation involves a deep and intense theoretical knowledge about how the world works on the one hand, combined with the flexibility to experiment as unforeseen conditions prevail, shifting what we think we know, on the other. Even in familiar territories there are surprises. Gell (1985) points out that navigation never involves a straightforward or fixed relationship with space. Discussing sailing between Micronesian Islands without the benefit of navigational instruments, Gell (1985:283) following Gladwin (1970) suggests that sailors adapt the navigational lore passed on by master navigators as theoretical knowledge, used to take account of prevailing winds, ocean currents and other factors (Ibid), which are never exactly those on which the theory is based, and which never quite fit what we think we know. Thus navigation demands deep knowledge, close attention, and the capacity for invention when things don't work in expected ways. Chance, risk and experimentation define navigation as flexibly operationalizing and adapting a deep 'intuitive' knowledge

of the how the world works. Even in the most directed end-point forms of navigation, plans go awry and experimentation offers the next move. We contend that navigation is an inherently fragile and tenuous process, articulated in shifting dialogues between knowledge and its application as practice; processes that are re-invented as situations evolve.

A third strand of our thinking relates to topographies. Navigation is about finding a way through the physicality of the world. But we know that space is socially formed: constituted through social relationships and social activities (Lefebvre 1991, de Certeau 1984), that it is open, emergent, and relational (Crouch 2010, Massey 2005). This opens all manner of contingencies in navigation that clearly entail social-spatial, and not just spatial, orientations. Navigation is thus a flexible set of practices for finding ways through complex social activities, relationships and apprehensions. In finding ways through spaces forged in complicated, layered social activities, relationships and movements, all sorts of unknown and unknowable contingencies are unleashed in what are delicate interactive processes with unknowable directions and consequences.

This is complicated in transnational navigation by the opacity of translation between more and less familiar social fabrics, compounding uncertainties in way finding. In transnational navigation knowledge of familiar social fabrics and practices often form a starting point in approaching the unfamiliar. Efforts at maintaining certainty in the face of overwhelming difficulty are particularly fragile and easily collapse when confronted with unexpected challenges.

A fourth strand of our thinking, extending understanding of the social textures of space, is that navigation, a repertoire of flexible actions for negotiating movement, is also

one of space's constituting practices. Navigation itself construes the living vitality of space (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000, Crouch 2010:6, 62, Knowles 2014a) through the mobilities that converge upon it (Darroch 2010). Navigation shapes the character of space and how we might think about it, through the movements of people and objects it routes: what passes through a street, a neighbourhood, a city, co-constitutes it. Navigation must negotiate already moving elements of social fabrics; transit within further forms of transit, adding multi-layers of complexity, emergence and contingency.

These four strands of thinking reorient navigation away from settled points and the trajectories connecting them in an ordered sequencing of time and space. Instead we offer moving layers of complexity, contingencies that cannot be predicted, circumstances that demand constant reappraisal, movement within movement, provisional knowledge quickly superseded by new knowledge: all demanding new practical repertoires in dealings with the world and interactive social landscapes that morph unexpectedly. All bring the prospect of endless experimentation in finding a way to the next steps. In these iterations of navigation, time and space are anything but ordered and settled. In the absence of sequencing, they wait to be investigated contextually as they are enacted, as they are tacked together, as they are deployed in edging this way or that in surfing the prospects that present themselves at any given moment.

Having set out a more flexible framework for thinking about navigation, we turn to what is being navigated. The larger sweep of everyday life and different kinds of travel imbricated in it, are what is navigated. Mobility is integral to dwelling itself; dwelling, on whatever scale, is inherently mobile (Edensor 2007, Ingold 2000, Heidegger 1962). Transnational migrants also participate in shorter circulations with interlocutors who have

not necessarily moved as far. They transport these scenes of everyday life to new locations, inter-dispersing short routine journeys with longer ones, in ways that have the potential to reshape landscapes of everyday life.

This formulation lies closer to how mobility is practiced and conceptualized by migrants themselves: part of the broader fabrics of their everyday lives and subject to repeated reinterpretation over the course of their lives. This is consistent with our understanding of navigation outlined above, which suggests that the reflections and decision-making entailed in tacking are called into play in routine and non-routine mobilities, in short and long distance movement. Although quotidian journeys take place on the equivalent of autopilot, this masks meticulous navigational performances, in which 'subliminally, information is being recorded, processed and manipulated in complicated ways' (Gell 1985:275). The everyday may be about repetition, but this doesn't equate to it being fixed, static, simpler, or already known. There is huge potential for the new (Hallam and Ingold 2007) and the unexpected, even in the routines of everyday. Everyday life is open ended and fluid (Edensor 2007; Gardiner 2000); it constantly mutates (Harrison: 2000:502) demanding a shifting and flexible repertoire of navigational strategies.

Everyday lives and navigational repertoires implicate the biographical subject. What are also being navigated are the stories of *lives* in mobile-spatial terms: spatial biography. Spatial biography foregrounds the spaces that condense the movements connecting and constituting them: the telling of a life through its scenes of enactment and co-composition, a here, and then a there, weaving time flexibly through the prism of memory, and the reconfigured modalities of space, as personal stories. These are narrated

through their compositional enactment, as forms of doing; they may or may not be narrated as verbal stories too. The latter require skills in reflecting upon life in these particular, spatial-temporal, terms. This is more likely in lives constituting spaces that are distinctive from each other; and which involve long-distance mobilities. Space, in other words, becomes legible in its distinctiveness and through the navigational practices involved in negotiating it. But enactments of space cover all forms of mobility, including the small-scaled and routine, made legible through mapping them. Pursuing an understanding of spatial biography a bit further we explore conceptions of subjectivity that underpin the biographical subject.

Spatial biography is neither about existential freedom, where anything can happen, nor is it over-determined by social conventions constraining movement and possibility. Subjects, what it means to be a person in the world (Taylor 1989:40), are generated through social conventions, flexible templates through which mobile subjects shape their lives. Briefly examining these exposes how much room for maneuver there is in being able to tack in different directions.

Subjectivity is conceptualized as mobile (Freeman 1993): adult subjects leave home and make a way through the world (Taylor 1989), along pathways directed by imperatives of self-development. More than encouragement to lead a particular kind of life, the trope of the journey embeds biblical wisdom guiding lifelong improvement. While journeys are heavily freighted with the imperative of self-improvement, this has no evident trajectory or endpoint, and is open to multiple directions and detours. Subjectivity also embeds ideas about a 'good life' (Taylor 1989) including industry and work, long ago noted by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. This, too,

leaves room for maneuver. Subjectivity is understood as intrinsically social (Mead 1952:144) and dialogical: selves operate among 'conversational partners' in webs of interlocution (Taylor 1989:35-36). If we add conceptions of subjectivity as episodic and discontinuous, as generated in the back and forth of social encounter, (Shotter 1997:9), there is scope for variation as interactive self-production generates new possibilities. Spatial biographies – like everyday lives - are negotiated with significant others: everyday life lived along the way.

Conclusion:

In this paper, we have argued that the emphasis on recalibrations, combinations and innovations connoted by the concept of tacking provides a useful frame through which to consider quotidian processes of navigation and improvisation. Tacking helps to reorient our attention away from the emphasis on planned trajectory that still lingers on in some literature on mobility towards the creative extemporization imbricated in movement over space and time (spatial biography) as well as in everyday life more broadly.

Endnotes

[1] A notable exception is Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold's edited collection on *Cultural Creativity and Improvisation* 2007.

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