Cycling on Copenhagens super cycle tracks – the experience and culture of cycle mobility

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Outline

• Introduction
• Theoretical framing – Cycle experiences in the context of cycle cultures and urban places
• Cycle mobility on Copenhagen super cycle tracks
• Concluding
Introduction

• Pocacito – post-carbon cities: Cph and Malmö
• Costs of transport rising in urban areas – affecting social and environmental inequality
  – Transport extremely hard to control
  – Many cites increase attention to cycling
• Cycling as mobility – policy and practice – embeds key trends in present society – and affects those who cycle and their being-in-the-world in particular ways
Introduction

• Thus cycling cities target new groups of cyclists → super cycle highways

• RQ:
  – How do people *do* commute cycling – and why do they choose to cycle in particular ways?
  – Why can specific cycle initiative such as super cycle tracks promote cycle mobility in urban areas?
  – How do these initiatives affect cycle mobility?
Theoretical framing – cycle experience

- Cycle experience (Degen, 2010; Massumi, 2002; Thrift, 2004)
  - Sense scapes – the sound, smell, vision, tactile fabric of cycling on super cycle tracks
  - Emotinal/affect – feelings, atmospheres, social interaction, memories
  - Embodied – corporal and becoming
  → Are ephemeral but also entrenched in mobile spaces, contingent and becoming, non-representational responses in the interaction with the world

- Takes place in situated mobile spaces of the city
  - Infrastructures – SUPER CYCLE TRACKS – with particular meanings and embedded in particular policies

- Never in a void – embedded in the cycle cultures of the city
Theoretical framing – cycle culture

• **Cycle cultures** (Jensen, 2010; Vaninni, 2010; Schwanen et al, 2012; Aldred, 2010)
  – Identity – related to specific mobility practices, capacities
  – Mobility habits
  – Codes and knowledges of cycling, shared perceptions
  – Social relations – of cyclists; on the track
  – Spatialised in material structures

• Cycle cultures positioned in daily urban life
  → Cycle stories and histories
Methods

- **Qualitative interviews**
  - Who: Companies in city centre & commuting cyclists handed flyers
  - Experience: Sensescapes, emotions, body responses, events
  - Cultures: History, stories, position in daily life, family and peers, identification,
  - Perception: Meaning, motivation, identity, Copenhagen

- **Videos by participants (on-going)**
  - Capture non-representational aspects
  - Commented

- **Participants observations and auto-ethnographies**
  - Cycling along as regular commuter – own body, experiences and emotions
  - Systematised observations – fellow cyclists’ way of cycling, social encounters, equipment, speed,
Theoretical framing

• Why people cycle and how super cycle tracks affect cycle mobility and urban spaces investigated in the nexus between cycle experience and cycle cultures in the context of particular mobile spaces of the city

• Investigated qualitatively
  – In-depth interviews, video recordings, ethnographic observations
Commute cycling in Cph

• Cph cycle mobility and the policy of super cycle tracks
  – Urban mobility policy and the urban strategy Eco-Metropolis objective of 50 per cent urban travels on cycle and post-carbon city

• The Farum track
  – 2\textsuperscript{nd} super cycle track – follows the motorway but in separated system
  – Extending existing cycle infrastructure, adding airpumps, foot rests, removing obstacles...
  – Connecting via green spaces and residential areas to suburbs to the North
  – Connects to increasing health awareness and interest in active life styles
Experiences of cycle commutes on the Farum track

- The Farum route frames commute cycling
  - Alternative to car queues and uncertain train services
  - Dependent on access to shower, safe parking, at work
  - For many the earlier departure must fit social life, for others they develop coping strategies to maintain this
Experiences of cycle commutes on the Farum track

• The environment of the route matters
  – The tunnels and lack of light stirs fear of attacks/tripping
  – Night time insecure – people bundle on the widest track side
    • ‘I never ever would cycle when its dark – that’s why I don’t cycle in the winter, I don’t mind the cold at all...but when it’s dark, the boogieman is waiting for me in the tunnels, you know, by the moor – and someone was raped there last spring...but when I cycle with Michael, its ok, even though he says he’s the hugest chicken..haha..’ (Josephine, mid 40s, cycles 2-3 times a week)
  – The social housing intimidating
  – The uninterrupted flow and the green of e.g. the lake areas almost meditative: problem solving, leaving work – the transformation or tackle challenges
  – Contact with natural shifts – the changing smells and colours
  – Major shift when the track enters the build environment
Cycle cultures of commute cycling on the Farum track

• Identity
  – Multiple ways of being a commute cyclist....
    • ‘I like to do the long cycle trips, always have...and cycle with speed, its my way of moving – but I am NOT a lycra with all the smart gadgets and all...’ (Benn, in 50s, cycles every day)
  – Significant for self-perception
  – Reflects often long time experiences
Cycle cultures of commute cycling on the Farum track

• Active lifestyles
  – The distance provide a sports element that you share with fellow commuters, competing with strangers and your self
  – The body responds – the feeling of getting fit
  – Is active involvement with the environment of the route – the green spaces significant
  – Weather doesn’t stop me...
  – For cyclists is intertwined with how they are with family and friends
Cycle cultures of commute cycling on the Farum track

- Recognise the speed and local traffic codes – becomes a rhythm for the commuters
  - Changes when ‘ordinary’ cyclists enter the route in the city

- Social relations amiable
  - part of the family stories, something you share with colleagues, friends, neighbours
  - links to cycling as family activity and normalised short-trip daily transport
  - But challenged by those who do not follow the codes or threatening outsiders (e.g. intimidating youths of the social housing, the attackers at night)
Concluding

• Connectivity and flow, changing sensescapes and atmospheres make commute cycling a fellowship as well as very individualised, corporal experience – intensive sensuous and emotional experience that become habitualized
  – Fear and joy strong
  – Physical challenges nited

• Fits the active life styles and connects to many ways of being a cyclist – to cycle histories and to daily lives
  – Multi funcitonal for many
Thank you for your attention!