The sociabilities of cycling outside the city

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Simmel: proximity, distance and movement, the importance of social 'association' 

Changing relations of proximity and distance; cultures of movement and mobility 

Sociability: 'the play-form of association and is related to the content-determined concreteness of association as art is related to reality' (Simmel 1910 [1949]).

Limits of the simmelian sociabilities: static situations; little to say about what happens outside the city
Urry (2007): there are important aspects of meetings which make travel obligatory for sustaining 'physical proximity'.

Five reasons why people travel: Legal, economic and familial obligations; Social obligations; Time obligations; Place obligations; Live obligations; Object obligations
Sociology of affect to complement the sociology of sociability. Emotions and affect are important in re-framing the sociabilities as they are described by Simmel.

Creswell (2006), Adey (2010), challenge the sedentarist understanding of mobility and highlight the often fleeting and ephemeral meanings associated with it.

The practice of 'doing of mobility' must go beyond just the visual and the representational.
The sociabilities of cycling - studied mostly in relation to the practice of cycling together; little attention paid to what happens 'off the saddle'.

McIlvenny's (2013) : Co-riders perform and negotiate 'a mobile sociability with the bicycle as a device that affords particular forms of movement and co-mobility'.
The number of clubs in the UK: around 1700 affiliated to British Cycling

Their history spanning on more than 100 years: CTC (the Cyclists' Touring Club) was founded in 1878

The increasing number of clubs in recent years as a result of Bradley Wiggins and co.

The different types of cycling and users that these clubs accommodate: off road, BMX, cycle speedway, road riding; young riders, families and leisure riders, racing.
Simmel says about the sociability that it is material-free. But there are so many materialites involved in the sociabilities of cycling: the bicycle, the road, the cafés, the various mobile devices used by cyclists.

Actor-Network Theory: the social has vanished into associations, things have their own agency.
The traffic also made the social ride a bit less social. We couldn't ride all the time two abreast and every time a car would approach from behind somebody would yell 'car behind' to let the others know they should get closer to the kerb. The back lights were already turned on on most of the bicycles and at that point I realised the importance of the high-viz jackets everybody was wearing.

(Fieldnotes, 8th December 2013)
“You should join a bicycle club. It is the best way to socialize if you are a newcomer”, tells me Gordon. He's a cyclist I met on my ride to Scorton, which is a small village at around 17 km from Lancaster. I stopped him to give me directions on how to get to The Barn, a café in Scorton where each Sunday at noon there are dozens of cyclists gathering for breakfast before getting back on their saddles. It was Richard, a guy in Lancaster who refurbishes steel frame bicycles, who told me about this place in Scorton. I met again Gordon two hours later at the Barn, together with three other club mates. (Fieldnotes 19th May 2013).
I just replaced last evening the worn out bicycle chain, the cassette as well. Successful mission apart for the back wheel that kept on dragging once reinstalled. Frustration, then eventually compliance. So went to the bike shop in the morning. They can only have a look at it on the 1st September, I should better look for 'the sweet spot' myself in the meantime, they kindly advised me. It's that discrete yet vital process of adjusting what only the skillful would dare name 'your cones' on the rear hub. Went on YouTube and found the holy G spot in like 5 minutes, no more mysteries for the day, thank you! (Fieldnotes 20th August 2014)
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Discussions

Why is the sociability of cycling important?

What other categories of sociabilities would be relevant for research?

Are there other appropriate methods to study cycling sociabilities?
Thank you!

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