

Negotiating Everyday Infrastructures for Cycling: Rule-breaking, Rule-following, and Social Justification



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Thinking about what is a Road Space?

- Roads are shared spaces, where people in various ways move, interact and negotiate with one another.
- Viewing roads as a *commons*, highlights the tensions between the everyday uses of this resource and its institutional arrangements.
- This raises questions of how people come to make sense of the right and proper ways to use this shared resource.



Transport Studies and the Road Space...

- Transport studies have largely been quantitative in their focus on how the road network operates as a space for movement by different users.
- Road users are framed as idealised rule-following individuals, in models seeking to realise the efficient movement of people between nodes.
- Rather than model-out sub-optimal behaviour, should we not be better understanding these everyday actions that are a fundamental part of how the road network operates?

Thinking through the Everyday Uses of the Road

Towards an Ethnography of Infrastructures

- Examining how people use road infrastructures as a space for cycling, as they negotiate these carriageways, footways and cycleways with others.
- Transport Studies must help identify what are ‘good cycling environments’ in places with low rates of cycling. *(Aldred, 2013:181; Latham and Wood, 2015)*

Making Sense of a Situation... Social Justification

- People in explaining why they act the way they do, speak of their own justifiable sense of what is right for a given situation. *(Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006)*
- Claims about this appropriateness, speak to the varying relevance of rules and social norms around what is right and proper. *(Ellickson, 1991; Taylor, 1995)*

Method: Making Sense of Cycling Infrastructures

14 Participants...

- Initial Chat
- Ride-along filmed using a Go-Pro
- Interview based upon video-clips

During Interviews...

- Talking about their cycling shown in the video.
- This provided insights into their own sense of the *appropriate* ways to use the road network.



Cutting Through: Footpaths as Cycling Routes



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Footpaths: Additions to a Network for Cycling

- From one perspective, using footpaths are a choice, capable of opening up critical connections between less trafficked parts of the road network.
- From another, carving out routes using footpaths, for many, compensates for being forced off arterial carriageways seen as unavailable for cycling.
- Though known to be illegal, many spoke of a *common* understanding around how they negotiated pedestrians, which acted as a conditionality over whether this cycling for them was appropriate for a footpath.

Rules, Commons and Sharing the Road

Availability of Roads, from those Cycling

- Footpaths provide critical connectors supplementing and compensating for the perceived varying availability of the road network.
- Riding on the footway ‘like a pedestrian, except that on a bike’, for those cycling, contributed towards legitimatising their cycling on footpaths.

Conceptual Value of Commons and Social Justification

- Those cycling provided social justifications in reference to their own sense of both the extra-legal micro-norms associated with the places for legitimate cycling and how the whole infrastructural system operates.

The Road Ahead, by...

- Engaging with the ways different people use different spaces for their everyday cycling, while sharing it with others.
- Staging conversations with different road users, to get their sense of the moral economy of the road network in relation to cycling.
- Exploring how these claims overlap and differ, as the basis for improving future interventions to grow cycling.

