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The sensescapes of cycling

Visual perception is of uttermost importance for cyclists orienting themselves in urban environments, wherein the imperatives of 'See!' (and 'Be seen!') can make a dramatic difference between a safe ride and an unfortunate traffic event. Drawing from the work of J.J. Gibson (1938) in the domain of ecological psychology, in this paper I delineate the characteristics of the 'visual field of safe travel' in relation to cycling. In doing so, I also expand Gibson's overtly visual (and car-focused) account by bringing to the fore a plethora of other senses that make cycling a distinctive mobility practice. Arguing that senses not only function as mere sensations and feelings, but as effective ways of 'making sense' of the world (Rodaway 1994), I show how *cycling sensory scapes* are substantially different from those afforded by the car, where indeed one is often completely 'car-cooned' not only from risks and dangers, as Urry and Kingsley (2009) argue, but from a more rich and meaningful perception of the environment. The sensory scape surrounding the bicycle rider opens up her body not only to a more unmediated perception of the environment itself, but it makes possible the very articulation of political and cultural discourses about liberation, counter-culture, alternative and green(er) lifestyles or post-capitalist societies. This presentation draws from an auto-ethnography of my cycling experience in London, which is documented with a mixture of mobile methods (Büscher and Urry 2009), featuring video and audio recordings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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