

The sensescapes of cycling

Cycling and Society Symposium
Manchester, 14 September 2015

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Kraftwerk on cycling soundscapes

'We were inspired by recording breath and heartbeat and other sounds from bikes. The other thing with cycling is that when it's really going well, it's really silence. You just hear the wind. That's what gave the music its flow on this album. We know that from cyclists, when they listen to our music, they understand; they listen, and they understand how the music is composed. It's important when you move with your bicycle to listen to the environment, the surroundings, the wind and your own breath' (Rolling Stone 2015).



Auto-ethnographic account of cycling sensescapes
[*\(link YouTube video\)*](#)



Daily commute in London. Aldgate - British Library

- Eliciting the vivid sensory activity produced as I cycle at rush hour in Central London
- How senses operate, how they relate the self with the environment and how they finally orient us in the social world.



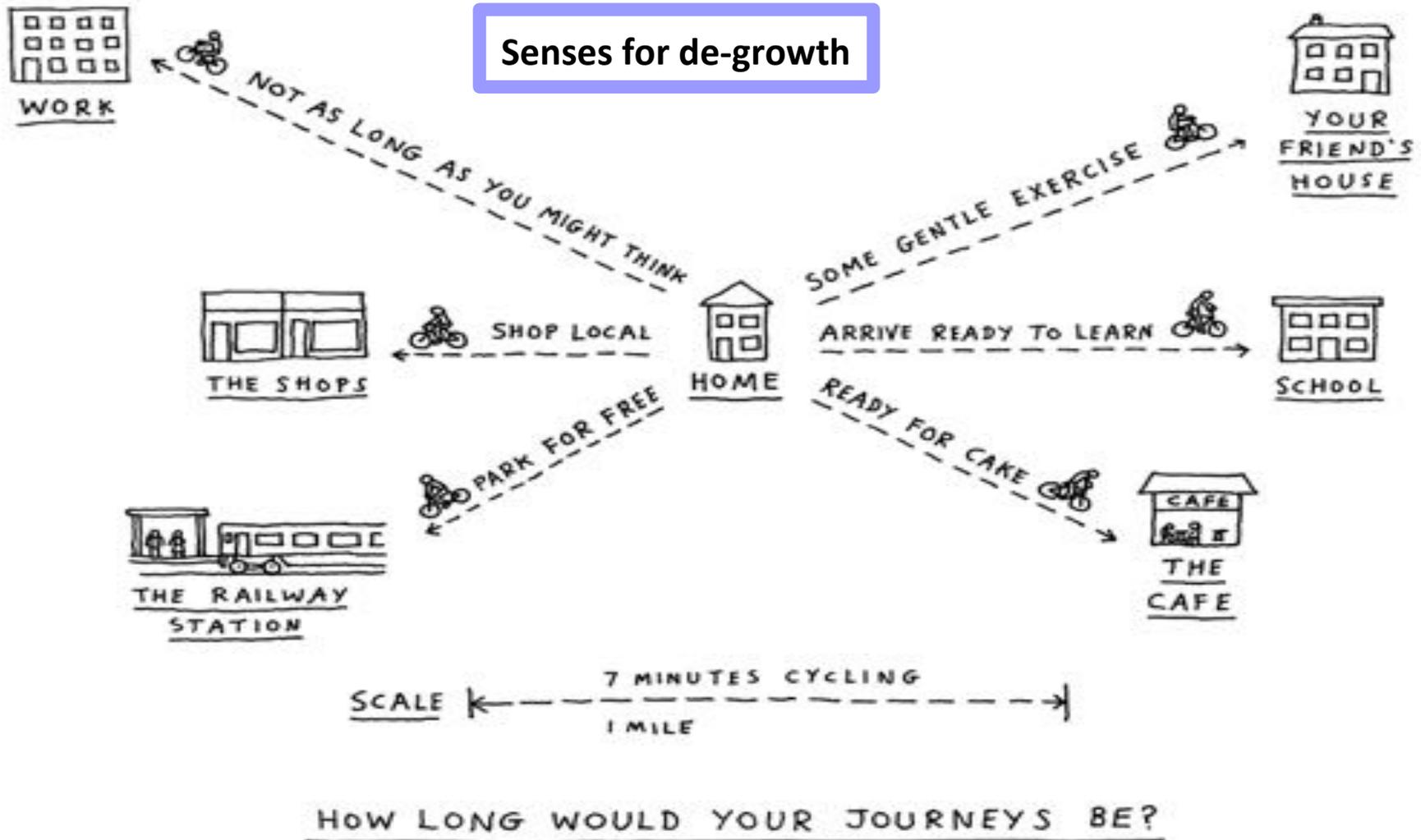
Credit: Rentz ! (Behance)

Senses and sociabilities

Merleau-Ponty: visual perception is more than a mode of participation, it is a mode of being through movement

'My body is the seat or rather the very actuality of the phenomenon of expression ... [It] is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my 'comprehension'' (Merleau-Ponty 2013 [1945]:235).

Senses for de-growth



Credit: Dave Walker

The way in which the senses of cyclists operate reflect a more or less hidden desire for de-growth in our societies.

De-growth is 'an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that increases human wellbeing and enhances ecological conditions at the local and global level, in the short and long term' (Schneider et al. 2010:512).



Cycling, utopianism and the reciprocity of senses

Credit: Ugo Gattoni

The reciprocity of the eye changes with automobility. BUT it can be repaired with cycling!

'Automobility precludes both of these achievements of the eye. Especially for the non-car-user roads are simply full of moving, dangerous iron cages. There is no reciprocity of the eye and no look is returned from the 'ghost in the machine'. Communities of people become anonymized flows of faceless ghostly machines. The iron cages conceal the expressiveness of the face and a road full of vehicles can never be possessed. There is no distance and mastery over the iron cage' (Urry 2004:30).

**MOTORISTS
DISMOUNT**



**TO
CROSS
ROADWAY**

COPEN
HAGEN
IZE
EU

Car thinking and bike thinking

- 'Bicycle minded thinking' (Bendiks 2015)
- A system of the bicycle with no traffic signals and signs. Senses alone are making navigation possible

Credit: Copenhagenize



Run the red light



Green waves for cyclists



Foot stop



Rain sensors for cyclists at traffic lights

Conclusions

- Unmediated gearing to the world; no similar mediation as with the exoskeleton that both protects and alienates the car driver.
- Dispelling the myths of 'reckless' and 'self righteous' cycling; the perception of the environment informs the highly situated actions of cyclists
- Reappraising speed and distances; an utopian agenda of de-growth

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Questions?
Thank you!

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