Understanding the links between cyclists' behavior and cyclability in French cities
A mobile method with real-time discourse
Plan

– Context: expected bicycle modal share vs reality
– (French) literature about urban cycling and its limits
– The cyclists, their environment and their practices
  – Methodology
  – Story telling
    – The mobile method
  – Conclusion
One goal: modal shift
A positive image...
Some well-known benefits

According to a report written by Brigitte Le Brethon (2004), 90% of French people have a favourable opinion of cycling.
A weak modal shift

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Strasbourg 2001 / 2009

Paris 2002 / 2008
How to explain it?

French literature about urban cycling:

- technical documentation about infrastructures
- arguments to convince politicians and citizens
- articles of transport economy
- books about cycling history in France...

... but what about the cyclist as a person?
Urban cyclist vs urban environment

Where do I want to go?

Which way is the easiest?

Hmm, one more pothole!

Is this car really running into me?!

It's going to rain.

What if a door opens?

At least I have a backwind today.

... keep your balance...
Urban cyclist vs urban environment

Affects

Mental representations

Habits

Emotions

City knowledge

Riding skills

Self-confidence

Cycle lanes and paths:
Are they really designed for cyclists?
Which cyclists? Children? Vehicular cyclists? ...
Cyclists and their practices
Questions

Who are urban cyclists? Who is more likely to cycle in an urban environment?

What makes them decide to cycle (and other people not)?

How do they deal with their environment?

Do they have skills that other people do not have?

How did they learn to ride a bicycle?

Etc.
Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative:

The qualitative part:
- Story telling → To know more about what makes people use a bicycle, and how they learn to do it.
- The mobile method → To know more about how they use a bicycle and how they deal with their environment.

The quantitative part:
- Surveys → To (in)validate the results of the qualitative part and extend the understanding of the results.
Story telling: methodology

- Creating a group on a famous social network
- Adding to this group about 300 people who use a bicycle as a means of transport

- Asking people in the group to describe:
  → The context in which they grew up and learned to ride a bicycle.
  → The context in which they decide to use it as a means of transport as an adult.
  → The context in which they use it today, and the frequency.
Story telling: a few results

45 answers (people who frequently use a bicycle, or used to)

Most of the people who answered have grown up in a non urban environment.

→ Examples: small villages, quiet neighbourhoods...

People who grew up in an urban environment say they used a bicycle in a different environment.

→ Examples: holidays in the countryside or on a quiet island…

Some people have grown up in foreign countries with a significant bicycle modal share (examples: Germany, China...)

⇒ Is there a link between bicycle use as an adult and bicycle learning conditions during childhood?
The mobile method: goals

Identify and know cyclists' habits and skills:

→ What are the skills related to a well-known route? And those which are necessary to find a new route?

→ What are the skills related to a given experience?

→ What are the internalized factors which are essential to ride a bicycle in an urban environment? And how the processes of internalization occur?
The mobile method: goals

- Highlight the fact that cyclists have different ways of riding, different use of the same infrastructure, different behaviours, etc.
The mobile method: methodology

Observe cyclists in their daily environment.

Follow them on a well-known route (for example home to work) then ask them to find their own way to another place.

Film them and record their comments (live discourse) with an embedded camera.

→ let them describe their environment in real time, without any influence from the researcher.
→ give the opportunity to see their behaviour without filters.
Mobile method : the first results
Conclusion and perspectives

– The main goal: to question individual practices, in order to know how to make people cycle more, and how to create more cyclist-friendly infrastructures.

– The results of the first qualitative step (social network) → new hypotheses and questions.

– The goal of the second qualitative step (mobile method) → enrich the knowledge on the cyclists’ behaviours, and make other hypotheses.

– The goal of the quantitative step (surveys) → validate hypotheses (or not).

– Future projects: comparisons with other countries, new surveys or experiences, etc.