Making the personal political

Overlaps in feminist theory and cycle activism

Cycling and Society Symposium
8 August 2017 in London

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Involvement & interest

The basis for my analysis

• Auto/ethnographic look at newcycling.org (Newcastle’s local cycle campaign) which I co-founded in 2010

• Reading of literature on feminism (as part of my PhD)
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A fair deal for women
Making it happen

Position in society / dominant paradigm / norm >> out/in

Where does change come from? How does change happen?
Conceptualisation of change
The personal is political

Second wave
Researcher, personal experience
Truth/knowledge production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Positivism</strong></th>
<th><strong>Constructivism</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology:</strong></td>
<td>All can be known</td>
<td>Bits can be glimpsed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods:</strong></td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Qualitative/quant/mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher:</strong></td>
<td>All knowing</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objective outsider</td>
<td>Part of the equation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiencing the political

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Radical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>Individual strength</td>
<td>Societal learning</td>
<td>Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State role</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Social-supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action level</td>
<td>“You”</td>
<td>“Us”</td>
<td>“Bigger than us”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symbol:

- Conservative: YOU
- Liberal: People holding hands
- Radical: Tree

Based on Stone (2001)
Comparison to transport cycling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transport cycling</th>
<th>Feminism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome</strong></td>
<td>Social change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant f/norm</strong></td>
<td>Automobility</td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td>Subjective/inclusive safety</td>
<td>Personal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Framework</strong></td>
<td>Include the environmental context</td>
<td>Socio-ecological model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison to transport cycling

- Transforming urban design = radical demands
- Social justice by radical demands

Campaigning

- Personal responsibility (conservative)
- Social norm (liberal)
- Structural (radical)

Political view ...
Policy ...
Strategy ...
Demands...
Methods...
Conclusion

Parallels can be drawn between feminism and cycle campaigning
• History and progression
• Demands
• Approaches

In the UK (and elsewhere), cycle campaigning has undergone a shift from liberal to more radical strategies and demands in recent years

This shift necessitates new skills and strategies to be used and explored:
• To orchestrate effective actions, cycle organisations should adjust to new realities
• Needs collaborative working models and a sharing attitude
Potpourrie of feminist authors

Jean Baker Miller, Sharon Beder, Simone de Beauvoir, Liz Bondi, Chris Booth, Judith Butler, Beatrix Campbell, Rachel Carson, Nancy Chodorow, Raewyn Connell, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Margrit Eichler, Carolyn Ellis, Nancy Fraser, Betty Friedan, Clara Greed, Margaret Grieco, Sally Hacker, Susan Hekman, Jane Jacobs, Jill Kirkup, Ursula Lehner-Lierz, Jo Little, Judith Lorber, Doreen Massey, Linda McDowell, Margarete Mitscherlich, Nancy A Naples, Kate Nash, Ann Oakley, Laurie Pickup, Shulamit Reinharz, Helen Roberts, Sue Sharpe, Dorothy E Smith, Rebecca Solnit, Daphne Spain, Gloria Steinem, Deborah Stone, Deborah Tannen, Elisabeth Wajcman, Carolyn Whitzman, Mary Wollstonecraft, Sue Zielinski ...
Abstract

I start from the point that a lack of conceptual oversight is one major trap that cycle activism can be ensnared in – especially at a time when democracy and democratic processes are in crisis. Where can cycle activists turn for knowledge and ideas?

With that backdrop in mind “What can cycle activism learn from feminism?” is a question worth asking: not only does feminism hold a rich and undulating history of activism, it can also provide academic theory and concepts relevant to cycle advocacy and academia. Employing feminist theory and revisiting the history of feminism I want to draw out parallels to cycle activism. I also hope to uncover new avenues for cycle activism to advance its radical cause for social justice: happy citizens and their communities in healthy cities with prospering local economies.

The basis for my analysis is an auto/ethnographic look at newcycling.org (Newcastle’s local cycle campaign, founded in 2010). I will compare newcycling.org’s origins and progress (its linkages with politics and inter/national cycle activism) to radical feminist theory, thus plotting parallels, overlaps, diversions and partings. In closing, learning from the comparison, I will attempt to draw an outlook for an emancipated cycle activism.
Thank you!

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