

Think piece: Trauma and the vehicular-cycling campaigner
Author: Katja Leyendecker, Independent Researcher (DE / UK)

Based on my experience as a campaigner and advocate for cycling infrastructure, I would like to express an idea on the linkage between trauma and vehicular-cycling campaigning. Recently participating at a meeting of the German cycling organisation (city-level meeting), I made a few observations about the behaviour of the proponents of vehicular cycling. To me, they appeared like a traumatised group in need of approval, passing on their trauma to others: people newer to cycling were initiated into vehicular cycling. The experienced cyclist, experienced in hyper-arousal cycling, fighting traffic, initiates the younger, by explaining the rules of the road, the practices of vehicular cycling, asserting space, taking the lane.

Vehicular cycling is a somewhat over-arousing type of cycling practice (moving amongst cars, at high speeds, with no separated infrastructure). To me, it seems to link to a reality constructed around risk-seeking and the denial of (di)stress. The vehicular cyclist is in a state of fight (i.e. sympathetic nervous system response). I propose to consider this basic stance of fight the trauma of the vehicular cyclist: a constant state of arousal that impacts the ability to act dispassionately, take a wider view. The window of tolerance is narrowed. The vehicular cyclist feels s/he has to fight for their life, for their journey, for their space, out of fear of the potential of not being seen by drivers. Underlying all this, I suggest, may well be an unresolved fear about society and life at large - a trauma - that narrows the vision of the vehicular cyclist so much, that s/he can only imagine cycling as a fight. This would explain why, when infrastructural solutions are proposed that make cycling comfortable, calm and uneventful, the vehicular-cycling campaigner rejects these vehemently.

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My blog <http://katsdekker.wordpress.com>

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