

Online Workshop about Trauma and Cycling, Wednesday 23 March 2022

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Summary

For obvious reasons, cycling researchers usually concentrate their analyses on cycling behaviour, cyclists' experiences and preferences, and promotion of cycling across different demographic profiles. However, the reality in most cities is that considerable population groups do not have access to cycling. To nuance the universality of access to cycling, I present a vignette of Elaine, an older research participant who took cycling lessons as part of 'exercise on prescription'. This learning experience was very beneficial to her physical, social, and mental wellbeing. The vignette documents her mobile biography, cycling experiences at the time, and abrupt ending of her cycling aspirations. Elaine witnessed a fall of a fellow learner and no longer dared to ride a bike. With this vignette, I want to highlight three issues for exploration in this workshop: 1) the fragility of the cycling biography and bodily competence beyond the influence of physical infrastructures; 2) the relationality of cycling group dynamics and shared trauma, creating new mental barriers to cycling; and 3) the way in which I treated this vignette as an "outlier" in subsequent analysis, informed by its focus of continuity of cycling at the expense of the ruptures, delays and returns that characterise the cycling biography.