Engaging with Sustainable Urban Mobilities in Western Europe: Urban Utopias seen through Cycling in Copenhagen

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Abstract

Copenhagen has been branded as a city of cyclists, and through Copenhagen's city planning, cyclists have become an integral part of the city's mobility systems. The high number of cyclists who use the bike for their daily commute shows real promise when it comes to sustainable mobilities. In many ways, it represents a utopia for future livable cities. In this chapter I will discuss how research on the emotional and embodied praxis of cyclists in the city can initiate an understanding, and possible inroads, towards changing the path-dependent power relation in city mobilities. An important element here is the feeling of freedom associated with cycling.

I have been cycling Copenhagen for the last 20 years and before this I was cycling in the city where I grew up. Since my first year of school, cycling has been an everyday praxis, mostly reflected upon when it was absent. Like in the early 2000s where I spent approximately a year in New York. I loved the city but the two things I really missed were my friends and my bike. New York has excellent public transport facilities and at this time I'm not sure I would cycle anywhere even if I have had the opportunity. But spending a long time away from a daily-embodied praxis made me realize how important it was for me. For many people cycling is taken for granted in Copenhagen, and when Copenhagen is branded as a city of cyclists it is also possible because of the cycling culture in Copenhagen. Seeing and researching everyday routinized praxis is always a challenge because so many things easily become taken for granted. Using a multitude of methodologies in this chapter I will tell the story of how reflexive research made me consider how cycling can represent a utopia for future livable cities. By emphasizing the emotional and embodied praxis of cycling, an understanding—and possible inroad—towards changing the path-dependent power relation in city mobilities appears. Freedom from mobility is most often associated with the car, but I will show how this freedom is also related to cycling. This offers a different view than the one from 'inside the car' and, as such, it provides us with an urban utopia where the significance of freedom from cycling is aligned with the attempt to create both livable and greener cities.

By looking at Copenhagen and how it is wedded to mobilities, we get a sense of how utopian thought has tried to deal with ideal visions of sustainable urban mobilities through promoting cycling. Through a focus on how individuals experience, evaluate, describe and practice cycling, we get an understanding of cycling as a cultural symbol stemming from childhood memories of one's first bike. The chapter draws on empirical data compiled from several research projects on mobilities in Copenhagen between 2007 and 2014. The empirical data

consists in qualitative interviews, workshops, filming, and observations, as well as active engagement in two cycling NGOs, and meetings and conversations with Copenhagen planners.

I will start by outlining research done on cycling and illustrate the move towards understanding cycling as *more* than just a technical issue. Following this, I will situate the discussion in the city of Copenhagen where my primary research was undertaken. Mobilities research informs the theoretical outset for my research through its understanding of cities and their flows, where both cultural and embodied experiences of mobilities play a significant role. Through a discussion of my research field—and the methodologies than can examine these interests—I move towards a focus on freedom as a strong emotional and cultural idea within cycling and shows how this is linked to early childhood memories of this particular mobility

Cycling in the City

Cycling has a long tradition of being discussed primarily in relation to narrow readings of cycling as a technical matter, focusing on infrastructure, environmental issues and technology. This research is situated within transport research traditions bringing a largely quantitative methodological tool kit (see for instanse, Aultman-Hall et al. 1997; Parkin, Ryley, and Jones 2007; Snizek, Sick Nielsen, and Skov-Petersen 2013). This research tradition presupposes that cycling (and movement in general) is a rational process that can be predicted and changed through determinants such as cost, time, quality of infrastructure and other facilities. In this way the outset has been: "Rather than asking what cycling *could be*, such conceptualizations take a preconceived idea of what cycling *should be* into their research. Consequently, what is left unexplored are other ways in which cycling becomes meaningful" (Spinney 2009, 818).

Since the mid 1990s, though, attention has been drawn to how cycling produces particular meanings of place through a focus on how the practice of professional cycling is structured in relation to the bike, body and landscape (Palmer 2004; Spinney 2006). Through ethnographic studies, Palmer (2004) and Spinney (2006) show the meanings of the technology as a conjoining of bike and body as well as a discursive and mediatised object subsequently concretized through the practical. This research is empirically focused on cycling as a leisure activity or professional sport, which is how it is still primarily understood in many countries.

Another aspect—which is more strongly related to the city as a space—is ethnographic work done on bike messengers (Fincham 2006; Kidder 2005; Passell 2013). Here cycling becomes meaningful as a politicized practice more than the journey itself. The networks that surround bike messengers in the form of subcultures also lead into various forms of activism related to the fight for space on the roads. Cycling as a politicized practice 'on the right to the city' has become a meaningful symbol and tool for different groups. In these cycling cultures—where being a cyclist is a source of identity—the bike becomes an instrument of communication and political critique. The popular Critical Mass movement exemplifies this approach to cycling as a mode of urban resistance (Furness 2010; Furness 2007; Dave Horton 2006; David Horton 2007).

Along the same lines, Aldred (2010) discusses how the 'cycling citizen' explicitly constructs the cycle in contrast to the car. Through in-depth interviews, she compiles four different types of cyclist as citizenship: the environmental citizen; the self-caring citizen; the locally rooted citizen; and the citizen in the community. The different types are not necessarily framed in resistance to automobility (as most of her interviewees also owned and used cars); nevertheless, Aldred suggests that the ways cyclists define their praxis offers a potential alternative to the view from 'inside the car'.

On the planning level, different studies have looked at interventions to promote planning, for example Pucher et al (2010) that made case studies of cities with substantial increases in cycling. They concluded that it is unclear whether infrastructural or policy changes led to increased cycling levels, or vice versa. Their point is that just making better and more infrastructure doesn't necessarily mean that people want to cycle. Van Goeverden and Godefrooij (2011) have made a similar study in Holland (the country that has the highest percentage of cycling per capita in Europe) and concludes that in existing high-cycling contexts, interventions only have a modest effect. Their conclusions align with Pucher et al. on the importance of context, but still point to the benefits of interventions in cities with low cycling:

"In countries that start ''from scratch'' with low bicycle use and a poor bicycle network, interventions that promote cycling may have different (probably larger) impacts" (Van Goeverden and Godefrooij 2011, 3)

The question of interventions and culture when increasing cycling is discussed by Aldred and Jungnickel (2014) where, through qualitative material from the UK, they seek to develop a comparative cultural analysis so far rarely explored in relation to cycling. They point out that cycling is associated to social identities—such as, for instance, those of class and gender, as well as discourses guiding praxis and subcultures. They suggest that in order for cycling practices to be sustained it needs to be related with other practices, such as shopping, commuting to work, or taking children to school. Along the same lines, Green et al (2012) identified a normative discourse of mobility in the city of London where few people actually do cycle and explain how interviewees:

"…constituted car travel as a morally dubious choice which had to be defended, and cycling (in principle) as encapsulating 'moral mobility'. Cycling enabled the ultimate 'citizen

traveller' to traverse London, demonstrating knowledge of and belonging to the city, and (crucially) ecological commitment to the planet" (Green, Steinbach, and Datta 2012, 285).

Just as car-dominated mobility in cities socially disables those who cannot drive (Peter Freund and Martin 2004), cycling-dominated mobility regimes also put demands on movement praxis. Green, Steinbach and Datta (2012) show that when cycling through London—with its congested streets and fast moving traffic—many of their interviewees expressed the need to be constantly alert when cycling. Horton (2007) talks about the affective state in the dangers of cycling in car-dominated societies. With very little space available, cyclists rub shoulders with other cyclists and fight for space with cars, with the awareness that any collision between the two different modes is likely to injure or even kill the cyclist. In this sense, the cyclist is always constructed as the soft and vulnerable part, and, according to Horton (2007), the fear entangled in this constitutes a major emotional barrier to cycling.

Much of this research comes from England where "…cycling is not attached to a national identity but [is] more space specific" (Aldred and Jungnickel 2014, 85) but there are substantial national differences in the cultures of cycling. Pelzer (2010) explains the high amount of cycling in Holland with how cycling is specifically linked to national Dutch identity and how this linkage supports the cycling practice for many Dutch people. Cycling in the Netherlands is part of the country's cultural heritage (Stoffers 2012) and this is also the case with Denmark, in particular Copenhagen.

As the above research shows, cycling in the city, and the related identity and culture that goes with it, has grown throughout the last decade. Recently this has also spurred an interest with the embodied experiences of cycling, for instance weather, fears, and the physical labor involved. Jones (2012) talks about 'affective capacity' when cycling affects one with positive

and negative intensities like fresh air, bodily movement, discomfort, risks and exhaustion, which people have different capacity to manage. The embodied experiences of cycling are used to illuminate how routines and habits of cycling are embodied and emplaced through an auto-ethnographic approach (See for instance Jones 2012; Jones 2005; Larsen 2014). Cycling almost always provides a multisensory awareness of the weather and environment, in contrast to cars and public transport (Ingold 2011). "More generally, the affective capacity to cycle (and walking) has diminished in car-based societies where people have got used to, and dependent upon, technologies for transporting their bodies" (Larsen 2014, 63)

In his book *Reconsidering the Bicycle: An Anthropological Perspective on a New (Old) Thing,* Louis A. Vivanco (2013) focuses on both the sensory, embodied and identity-creating facets of cycling, and connects this with the change that needs to be brought about in the city. He suggests that the increase in bicycle trips and general interest in cycling raises questions about how urban landscapes change when people create and maintain social status and identity through biking. He also underlines that:

"... symbolic meanings of bicycles are in flux, especially in urban areas where concerns over environmental sustainability, public health, global competitiveness, car-choked streets, and the financial limitations of current patterns of public spending are on the table… bicycles can bring about large-scale social change and improvements in conditions of urban life…" (Vivanco 2013, 129)

Cycling in Copenhagen

In many countries, cycling in the city is seen as a hazardous activity implying liabilities and necessitating regulation (Aldred 2012; Spinney 2010). In Copenhagen, cycling is quite different when "'Copenhageners' use of bikes is not defined in terms of risk, but rather in

terms of urban everyday life on the move, with the sensuous, kinetic, and emotional power of biking emerging as a key to urban spatiality and vitalism" (A. Jensen 2013, 304). Also, Copenhagen's everyday cyclists are neither visually identifiable (except by their bikes) nor associated with stereotyped images or visual signifiers, such as Lycra and helmets are in the UK (Aldred 2013).

In Copenhagen, cycling is used strategically as part of urban development (A. Jensen 2013), and even if cycling is less dominant in most other Danish cities (with the exception of Odense, Aarhus and Aalborg) the health and safety of the cyclist is ingrained in Danish traffic laws, and the government takes responsibility for providing resources for cycling. This is quite different to UK, particularly in London, where cycling is viewed as an individual choice that comes with individual responsibilities (Aldred 2013). On top of the extended infrastructure provision in Copenhagen, the municipality also takes responsibility for promoting a "cycling community" through government-funded campaigns as well as by installing bike counters along the road. Tallying the number of cyclists communicates to the public that cyclists matter (Freudendal-Pedersen 2015b; Freudendal-Pedersen 2015a). This creation of a cycling community is not to be understood as a separate, closed community. The Copenhagen municipality uses the strong cycling community as part of a strategy to create a more livable city.

The work I have done with cyclists shows how cyclists see themselves 'as part of the city's organism'. This happens through exchange of 'short remarks while waiting at the intersection', 'hopping off the bike to enjoy a pause outside a sundrenched café', and 'being part of a flow where everybody knows what to do'. In this way cyclists share a relatively

unmediated embodied co-presence on the streets while moving through the city (Freudendal-Pedersen 2015b; Freudendal-Pedersen 2015a; Freudendal-Pedersen 2014a).

As the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen has half a million residents in the city and 1.2 million in Greater Copenhagen. On a daily basis 63 percent of Copenhageners cycle to work or an educational institution and three out of four that cycle do so all year round. If you look at all of the trips made in Copenhagen, including residents living outside the city: 30 percent are done by bike, 33 percent in cars, 20 percent by public transport and 17 percent on foot (Copenhagen Municipality 2014). Car ownership in Copenhagen is increasing but the number of trips done by car is declining. This creates issues around parking, but the major issue around increasing car trips in the city comes from people living outside the city that use the car for work, shopping and leisure in Copenhagen. Nevertheless, 32 percent of all car trips in Copenhagen are below the five km mark. One reason for the high number of cyclists in Copenhagen is due to the city's infrastructure. Copenhagen has an extensive network of cycle lanes, including green cycle routes separated from remaining traffic—approximately 360 km in all. 70 percent of Copenhageners believe that the cycling culture positively influences Copenhagen city life and atmosphere (Copenhagen Municipality 2014).

Research on Mobilities and its Importance to Current Urban Issues

My outset for research is based within mobilities studies because it holds an understanding that cities cannot be separated from the mobilities that support and develop modern lives within them. Todays cities are composed of complex settings of social, technological, geographical, cultural, and digital networks of mobilities (Graham and Marvin 2001; M. Sheller and Urry 2006). This interdependence has developed over time, through a series of large-scale technological transitions in transport and communications. Through this, cities

have has changed rhythm, speed and reach (M. Sheller and Urry 2006). Understanding the flow in cities purely as individual choices, technological transformations, or economic forces, overlooks the fact that practices and networks are culturally assembled when producing and performing city space (O. B. Jensen, Sheller, and Wind 2014).

Mobilities research is an emerging field of interdisciplinary approaches that analyses the large-scale and the local processes related to daily movements of people, goods, capital, and information (Urry 2000; Urry 2007; Canzler, Kaufmann, and Kesselring 2008a). In the book 'Sociology Beyond Societies', John Urry (2000) argued that the magnitude of virtual and physical movement is *"...materially reconstructing the 'social as society' into the 'social as mobility'"*(Urry 2000, 2). Since then mobilities research has generated research in a wide range of topics, such as technologies, transportation, communication, planning, globalization and urbanization (Adey et al. 2013). My research outset is thus based on an understanding of a close connection between physical and virtual mobilities and the fabric of modern societies (Canzler, Kaufmann, and Kesselring 2008b; Rosa 2013). During the last decade there has been a growing awareness about designing cities as *livable* cities with space for communal life. This idea collides with a predominant planning paradigm which is still 'technocentric' and focused on 'zero friction' (Hajer 1999). I have touched upon this contradiction in earlier work with relation to the different transport modes used in the city (Freudendal-Pedersen 2015b; Freudendal-Pedersen 2015a; Freudendal-Pedersen 2009).

My research aims to give voice to the conflicting interpretations and praxes in everyday life mobilities, the significance and meaning these mobilities and their end points have for people and thus the city they are part of creating. Within communicative planning theory and the 'argumentative turn' in policy analysis (Fischer and Gottweis 2012; Fischer and Forester

1993; Healey 1997), this is given particular attention through analysis of shifts in society's discursive patterns and structures. This outset necessitates a subject-oriented approach in urban planning where sustainability and socially cohesive cities are essential, rather than 'nice-to-have' features of a utopian post-materialist world.

The Research and its Methodologies

My interests in praxis starts with understanding individuals 'rationalities' for everyday praxis (Freudendal-Pedersen 2009; Freudendal-Pedersen 2014a; Freudendal-Pedersen 2015a) but with a focus on 'individuals in relation' as that which constitutes the city. Berger and Luckman (1966) describe the institutionalization and creation of knowledge engendered in a continuous construction where different actors characterize mutually habitual actions (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 72). This concept of institutions holds both the structure and system (in Giddens' (1984) terminology) in a process of structuration where human action simultaneously structures and *is* structured by society. We are living in a 'mobile risk society' (Kesselring 2008b) where environmental, economic, and social risks are increasingly crucial to the social structures of societies, their social cohesion and integration of individuals, and their future developments (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; Bauman 2000). Risks are not increased in modern societies but our knowledge on risks are increased because of increased mobilities (Beck 1992). Instant communication means an overload of information about global events and new knowledge (time space compression) therefore everyday life today means living with a constant component of a reflexivity and time pressure and thus a lot of choices made possible by mobilities (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992).

Birte Bech-Jørgensen (1994) understands everyday life as : "…the lives we live, maintain and renew, re-create and transform each day. Such lives cannot be defined with sociological

concepts alone. What can be defined are the conditions of everyday life and the way these conditions are handled" (own translation Bech-Jørgensen 1994, 17). In this understanding, everyday life is not divided into different spheres (like separating work from home life), or specific categories of activities. In line with this, Amin and Thrift (2002) point out that it seems understanding cities stops at the doorstep to people's homes. In order to change the way we plan and use cities, we need to understand everyday life as a whole that surrounds our praxis in everything we do. Activities (praxis) that construct everyday life through many different roles and places is surrounded and made possible through the mobilities of people, things, and ideas that shape modern lives (Urry 2007; Urry 2000).

Thus my approach toward changing praxis lies in changing the larger stories 'individuals in relations' use to guide their everyday praxis by questioning or re-conceptualizing the 'normality' or 'taken for granted naturalness' of specific praxes. Communicative planning and storytelling offer tools to understand the significance of creating new 'utopias' about everyday life rhythms, hopes, dreams and expectations (Freudendal-Pedersen and Kesselring 2016; Fischer and Gottweis 2012; Sandercock 2003). Even if these dreams and hopes are not the first thing that pops up, showing an interest in interviewee's everyday life stories opens up many new orientations towards possible different futures (Freudendal-Pedersen 2009; Kaplan and Ross 1987). Utopian reflection carries a critical potential to break through the barriers of convention and create common stories (Harvey 2000, 189; Lefebvre 1976; Friedman 2002).

These interests in praxis, the creation of meaning and understanding of everyday life, calls for qualitative methodologies. Methods need to be based on, and grounded in, what they are used for. The reflexive methodology (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000; Freudendal-Pedersen, Hartmann-Petersen, and Nielsen 2010) entails awareness of selections and de-selections made

in order to research specific topics. When concepts like freedom and utopias are in the centre of methodologies, a space for stories and construction of meaning is essential. In-depth qualitative interviews provide the opportunity to understand the praxis of everyday life (Kvale 1996; Freudendal-Pedersen, Hartmann-Petersen, and Nielsen 2010; Simonsen 2007). Through a methodologically controlled interplay between abstract and concrete questions, it is possible to approach difficult questions of freedom, and embodied emotions of cycling. Following the interviews, focus groups can provide knowledge on the negotiation of these themes and the construction of meaning and significance (Halkier 2010).

The empirical drawn upon in this chapter consists of 30 qualitative interviews and five focus groups with five to seven people in each group, with an equal number of men and women between 22 and 73 years of age, as well as a group of 14-year-olds. As is very common in Copenhagen, my interviewees use a variety of transport modes and can't be labeled solely as car drivers, public transport users, or cyclists etc. In Denmark, the middle-class is quite big due to the welfare society and this large middle-class possess a lot of power when it comes to validating and recreating stories, therefore the research is focused on the middle-classes (Freudendal-Pedersen 2014b). I also conducted some ethnographic fieldwork with the Bicycle Innovation Lab (BIL), an organization focusing on building "cycling communities" in Copenhagen, through utilizing a bicycle library and by bringing cycling issues to political platforms. For a year, I functioned as vice president in their organization to learn about their generation of ideas and their struggle to get finances to sponsor their work. Finally, I cycled Copenhagen with a GoPro camera. Initially, this gave me two things: first, the opportunity to actually *show* people who are unfamiliar with Copenhagen what it's like to cycle here. During rush hour you need to handle three lines of people cycling at different paces, consisting of cargo bikes, kids, and commuters travelling at both high speed and moderate-to-slow paces.

You also witness a variety of outfits from suits to short skirts and high heels, jeans and Lycra. This shows how the Copenhagen cyclist is not one specific group, but a variety of different individuals using their cycle to get to and from work or education or recreation. The GoPro camera also gave me a different kind of awareness on the multifaceted rhythms of cycling in Copenhagen. The awareness of how you turn your head, the small movements you make to avoid danger, and the different types of people that cycle past you, becomes more intense when you use the GoPro. I wanted to capture it all, to be aware of everything that I take for granted when moving around Copenhagen and thereby GoPro cycling provided a different sensibility when analyzing the empirical.

Foto: Malene Freudendal-Pedersen

Most of the interview quotes presented are without any provision of background and context, and show that differences in commuting distance, and complexity in everyday life chores, do

exist. However, my interest has been to investigate how interviewees make sense of how they navigate *their* everyday lives and to understand and take seriously how their 'rationalities' work. In most research on everyday life, individuals are divided into ideal types, place of residence or lifestyles used to explain praxis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of choice and the interdependence with materialities in everyday life. But my choice is built on an outset that sometimes preconceptions about gender, place of living and education, blur the ability to hear the *other* stories that might be common despite different types and living conditions. It is these stories I'm looking for in my research, and thus when presenting it I want to direct the reader's focus by taking away other navigation tools. There are many compelling gender and class issues within mobilities that would be interesting to follow, but this is not the aim of the research discussed here. The empirical work—specifically that on the cyclist—has been done as part of a research project titled 'Urban Cycle Mobilities,' funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research.

Freedom from Cycling

The freedom from mobilities is a dominant issue within mobilities research especially when related to the car (Freudendal-Pedersen 2009; Sager 2006; Conley and Mclaren 2012; M. Sheller 2004), whereas the freedom from cycling is scarcely examined. In my empirical material, the embodied interaction with the city came out as an important element in the feeling of freedom. The interviewees talk about how they smell, hear, and feel the city in a different way when you "*are not caged in a metal box*." Also the basic aspect of moving the body plays a big role: "*Above all the bicycle is freedom, that you simultaneously move across distance and move your own body*." Moving one's body is also described in opposition to sitting in a car: "*I have a bodily restlessness which comes out through biking, when I go by car to work I can feel that it doesn't work for me*." If we relate to the idea of storytelling

(Sandercock 2003; Freudendal-Pedersen and Kesselring 2016) these quotes offer the potential to change the interrelation between cars and freedom. By combining health and freedom in our stories on future cities, everyday life mobilities in the city performed on the bike *feeds* into discourses on the livable city as well as individualization in a mobile-risk society (Beck 2016; Kesselring 2008a; Hajer and Dassen 2014)

This is highlighted in the following quote. "*To me, it seems totally crazy to use the exercise bikes in the fitness centre, sometimes I use the running machine, but I don't use the bike.*" In this way cycling is a part of everyday mobility but can also be a form of intentional exercise or leisure activity, often woven into the activity of getting to work: "*On a bike you can get to more fun places than by car. It may be along the beach, it may be on some secret path, or on some hill.*" This quote is quite interesting, when the word 'bike' could be replaced with the word 'car', and appear in research on the significance of the car (See for instance Freudendal-Pedersen 2009; Featherstone 2004; M. Sheller 2004). Another example is the following quote: "*Cycling is freedom, in terms of transportation there is a great deal of freedom in cycling. One can take a detour into downtown, you can stop and enjoy the view.*" In my earlier work on cars, the potential entailed in the car (motility) was of great significance for buying and keeping a car. This idea of flexibility and freedom was very significant despite the interviewees reflexivity related to realizing this potential. The idea, the feeling it was possible, was what guided their praxis (Freudendal-Pedersen 2009)

These many descriptions of the connection between cycling and freedom led me to an unexpected path in the interviews, when suddenly a story about the significance of a person's first bike came up, and I then began to start asking interviewees about theirs. It turned out that

all my interviewees could remember their first bike in great detail, and even more interestingly it became part of a narration of their first feeling of freedom.

"I was around eight when I got my first bike. We lived in the countryside, and I had the chore of collecting milk daily at the dairy and then I got a bicycle. I was very proud. I was happy about the bike and proud of it. It was the freedom to be able to get around." (Woman 72).

"*I was probably eight- or nine-years-old when I got it. It was a Raleigh, one of these Choppers, it was sooo cool, you got a lot of attention with such a bike. It also had a shift lever at the front. And we just drove around the neighborhood, it was total freedom.*"

"Yes yes yes ... oh boy I can remember. I was six- or seven-years-old and I remember I inherited it from my big brother. It was blue and had UNOX marks, white and blue, I had a lot of UNOX stickers on my bike and I remember that I ran around the block, we called it the island, it was a good experience." (Man 29)

"Yes it was a used BMX, it was so nice and there was a Lucky Luke watermark on it that I was pretty crazy about. So it was really great. I grew up on a farm so there was no other way. On a farm you just bike otherwise you get bored, there is not much else to do. I have always had bikes." (Woman 22)

"I had a used bike that I inherited from my older brother that I rebuilt so it was how I wanted. I gave it colors and sounds and high handlebars so it became naughty. I bought the things that the others had on their bike, it was colours and ribbons on the handlebars and sounds in the tires and you could put stuff on the spokes. It was cool." (Man 26)

"It was a tricycle with tipper and after this I borrowed a bike and when I was six, I got a really nice bike that was blue. I can remember it clearly. I cycled into a carport and split my eyebrow because it had handbrakes and I had not exactly figured that out." (Woman 39)

These quotes are significant because the idea of freedom within mobilities is mostly related to the car as an autonomy provider, as the technology that evokes the sense of being in control of one's own life (M. Sheller 2004; Conley and Mclaren 2012). Automobility has, by definition (not least due to its role in modernization), been *the* technology that enables a sense of mastery. Also, the cultural embeddednes of the car is portrayed in music, road movies, advertisements, books and so forth. Many studies have shown the role of the car as much more than its instrumental value, in terms of its ability to satisfy symbolic emotional and affective needs (Anable and Gatersleben 2005; Bergstad et al. 2011; Collin-Lange 2013; Urry 2006). This underlines the persistent narrative of the car as being a status symbol, as well as an entry point to adulthood based on the needs (and requirements) for self-expression, self-verification and social group memberships (Peters, Kloppenburg, and Wyatt 2010; Collin-Lange 2013; Kent 2015). Within leisure and tourism studies, the idea of freedom is often related to (extraordinary) adventures to remote locations, typically alone (Hannam, Butler, and Paris 2014). The quotes from the cyclists above, draw on the exact same symbolic, emotional and affective elements related to cars. The interviewees remember the look of the bike (identity), how they modified it to look a specific way (expression), and how this 'grouped' them in relation to others. Also, being able to go wherever, whenever, and to go on explorative adventures autonomously is a strong narrative about their first bike. When freedom acts as a motivation for car use in a variety of ways, not least as feeling empowered (Steg 2005; Mann and Abraham 2006) one can ask the question if the bike, which is clearly

also embedded in the cultural and emotional (in a Danish context), can come to adopt this role.

The history of the car throughout modernity—as that which provided the opportunity to escape locally embedded lives—has made the car the primary symbol of freedom and independence for the individual (Doughty and Murray 2014; Freudendal-Pedersen 2009; M. B. Sheller and Urry 2000). In theory the car provides freedom to go wherever one wants, whenever one wants, and this emotion is all-compassing even if it has nothing to do with actual praxis (Freudendal-Pedersen 2009). The car has a very different range within certain timeframes than the bike. This motility (potential for mobility) (Kaufmann 2002) has a significant value even if a very large amount of trips made by car are short enough to be supplemented by the bike (Vivanco 2013; Road Directory 2016). Car motility can also explain the increase of car ownership in Copenhagen because even if people own a car they use the cycle for the daily commute. Thus to understand the individualized automobility we need to understand its relation to contemporary Western societies as hyperauto-mobile (P. Freund and Martin 2009; Graham and Marvin 2001). In relation to this, the concept of utopia, as a way to break free of conventional ways of thinking, is useful. The strong role of the car is also maintained through its connection to emotional and affective characteristics.

When the cycle possesses these values, it also creates the opportunity to shift roles. Cyclists themselves reflect on the significance of being respected as an equal mode of transport: "cycling is a priority in Copenhagen. There is a lot of talk about it, and they also do something about it. There are a lot of cycle lanes and that makes a big difference." To follow up on this, the municipality of Copenhagen has made many "simple" improvements to the infrastructure that makes a difference for cyclists and shows the intention of making this a fast and borderless mobility; for instance, the creation of cycle lanes on many city streets,

allowing cycling against one-way traffic (without cycle lanes). These streets usually have a 30-km/h speed limit, which creates possibilities for visual contact between cars and bikes, increasing the safety. Another improvement is the redesign of a main arterial road where cars have to give way to cyclists and buses. The redesign of this road is significant for cyclists who often feel squeezed in by cars in Copenhagen. One cyclist says, "One of the really cool things is Nørrebrogade - it's really, really cool that you feel you are a priority and privileged and that people have considered you, that there is room for you. There are many places where the bike path is as wide as the road. It is a real priority."

Concluding Remarks and Outlook

The car dominates cities' mobilities, and Urry (Urry 2007, 130) goes as far as suggesting "…civil society in most countries should now be re-conceptualized as a civil society of 'car-drivers' and 'car-passengers'" (130). This chapter discusses the possibility of creating sustainable mobilities in cities through the concept of freedom—often associated primarily with cars—in relation to cycling. Through a shift in focus away from individuals as rational economic beings when deciding which mobility to use in everyday life, perspectives on the embodied and emotionally driven praxis of everyday life mobilities become visible. This can help planning to create storytelling that responds to the needs and aspirations of citizens and politicians when suggesting alternative mobilities futures in the city (see for instance Freudendal-Pedersen and Kesselring 2016). In making sustainable cities—in political, environmental and social terms—it is necessary to find ways of making values both common and thus democratic. The empirical suggests that qualities associated with cars can be directed towards cycles, as it is already the case for cyclists. The large and growing CO_2 emissions associated with car driving and spaces to live, move and dwell, are important issues of outset here. Creating liveable green cities might *seem* impossible, but more knowledge on the potential of cycling might turn the focus towards pursuing the *possible impossibles*.

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