

# Understanding the Role of Culture in Cycling Advocacy

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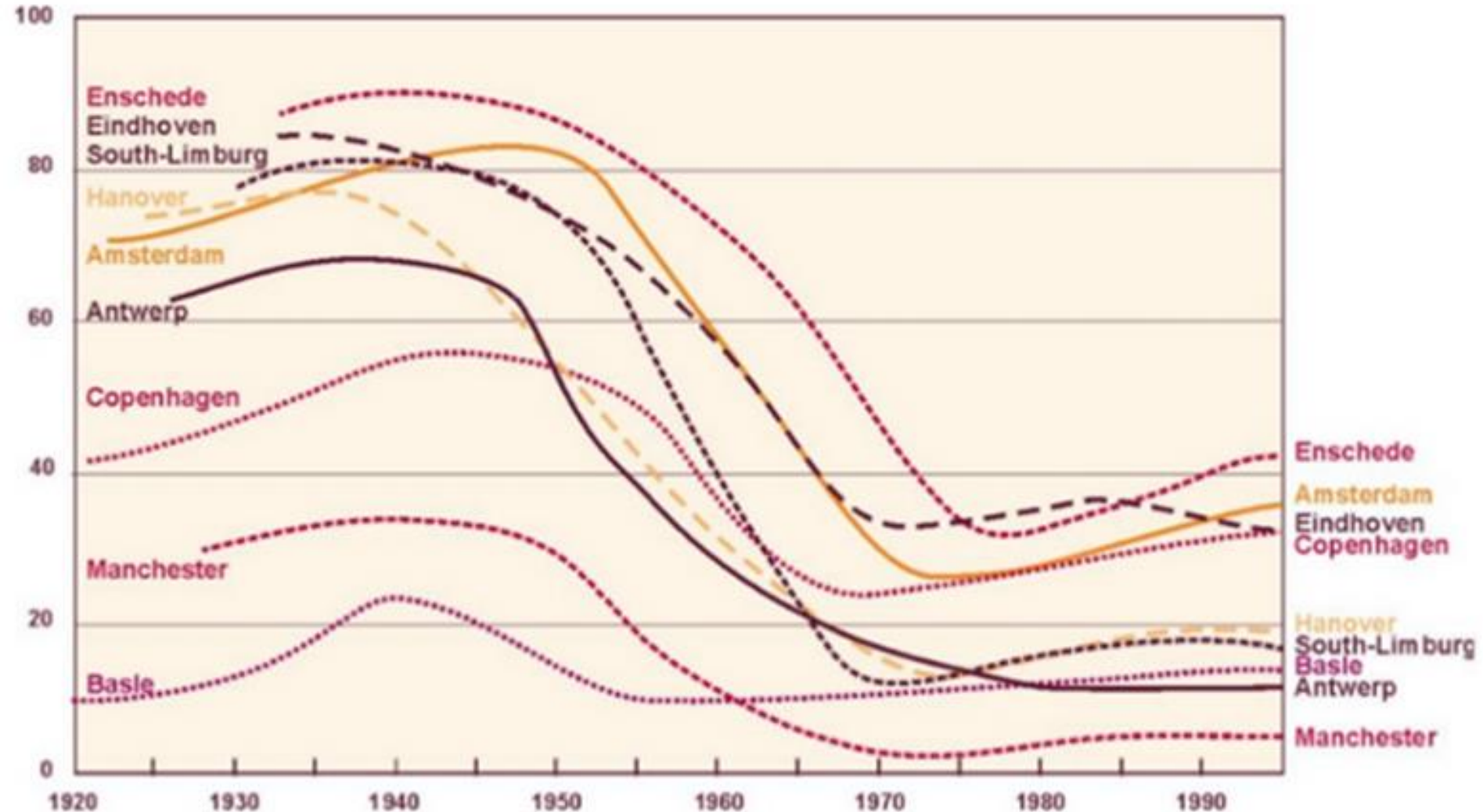
# Approaching Cycling

- Much attention within literatures in urban studies, transport policy, tourism, medical and sustainability journals (e.g. McClintock, 2002; Bowles et al, 2006; Hunt & Abraham, 2007; Gatersleben & Appleton, 2007; Garrard et al, 2008; Bauman et al, 2008; Heinen et al, 2010; Forsyth & Krizek; 2011; Zander et al 2013).
- A small literature has argued that understanding cycling requires awareness of the social constructedness of the activity (see Cox, 2005; Aldred 2010, 2014; Aldred & Jungnickel, 2012; Spinney, 2009; Kuipers, 2012).
  - ignored cycling as serious leisure and/or as sport



# Historical decline of cycling in selected European cities

Source: *The Guardian* 06/05/15



# Why we ride?

. . . The currency of my life is time and health . . . All those things outside work are for relaxation. So cycling I enjoy for that purpose, and it's exercise, but I do know that to enjoy life at the level I do, I need to exercise, it's like cleaning your teeth. I need to look after my body [and] the mechanics of it are good for my body compared to a lot of other exercises. (Graham, 64, M, interview, 22/04/15)

It's probably a combination of fitness, the freedom of going wherever it takes you.. . it's quite social, I've got a bit of a network of people if I want someone to ride with I can post on facebook. . . . Really nice people you come across. (Madeleine, 54, F, interview 23/04/15).

Cycling for me is an opportunity to escape, get away by myself and just go wherever I want to go . . . the second was the fitness side of it, you're getting fitter, going faster and using higher gears, that just fuels it really, and you've got the Tour De France and that fuels it further. (Peter, 44, M, interview, 24/04/15 ).

# **‘uses’ of the coffee ride**

The coffee ride for me works nicely because I can meet some people and spend time with others . . . There are lots of little groups around, but I don't really fit in with all of them . . . but sometimes I get the feeling that unless you're elite with the [shop] guys they don't want to know you. There are lots of little groups around, but I don't really fit in with all of them. (Peter, 44, M, interview 24/04/15).

The coffee riders are good because it's mainly older people, around my age slightly older, really nice bunch of people, it suits, Saturday morning 9 o'clock. We always have coffee afterwards, and I enjoy that side of it too. Times wise too – your Saturday morning has gone. You can get home and do your lawns and things like that . . (Tony, 54, M, interview 23/04/15).

They're just a really friendly bunch of people, quite supportive, they would never leave anyone behind, you could go places you might not bike on your own – sort of a safety aspect. (Chantelle, 49, F, interview, 28/04/15)

# Managing Conflict on the roads

- Peter: I don't agree with two abreast . . . It sets a bad tone, drivers get fed up and you get a backlash eventually
- MF: So you do feel it's important to be responsible on the road?
- Peter: totally, I think it will come back to bite you at some point anyway; cos you'll cheese that driver off. It annoys people . .
  
- Graham: As both an irate motorist and a cyclist I sit both sides of the fence; I see it from both perspectives, and all we can try and do is manage the risks. But the coffee ride . . . I feel safe, safer than I would riding alone. I'm happy to ride alone, but I'll pick a time, maybe 11 o'clock when the traffic is relatively low, and I'll go to opposite direction to where cars are going . . .

# The incompatibility of commuting

No, I don't. It's usually because I'm on a timetable and I've got to be somewhere. That's the nature of the world we live in. (Graham, 64, W, interview, 22/04/15)

I've ridden in to work before, but I find it a nuisance, I need to have my tidy [smart] clothes, I need a shower, by the time I do my hair and put make up on and all that crap, you know it's easier not to. (Madeleine, 54, W, interview 23/04/15)

No, it's tricky because I need a lap top, and lots of stuff with me, so I have to take a car (Chantelle, W 49, interview 28/04/15)

MF: Do you ever commute?

Peter: no, [but] I used to cycle to work reasonably regularly, but still in all the kit, I always do . . .

MF: what did your workmates think of that . . . ?

P: yes, I got the award for the mamil – the mamil award, last Christmas. . .

MF: So there's a bit of stigma?

P: Oh yes, you can get away with it until you're about 30, once you start getting grey hairs people think you should be slowing down, but why, why should you be slowing down?



# the gendered peloton . . .

Graham: My perspective is that all sports are up for anyone, and it's really just what your preference is, so whatever it is squash, basketball there's an opening whether you're a guy or a gal

MF: what about being a women in the groups and out on the roads generally, is that an issue?

Chantelle: No, generally, because if someone is going abuse you I don't think they know if you're a women or a man actually

Lynn: No, no, don't think it makes any difference (assertively)

MF: So when you go on the latte ride, there might be less women to men?

Lynn: No the guys that ride with us are always really good, and we've learnt a lot from them

MF: So you don't see gender as a factor?

Lynn: No, not at all.

# Conclusions & Implications

- Culture matters: ‘cycling cultures’ as diverse and contested
  - ‘Serious leisure’ riders ride with particular meanings, purpose and goals entangled with: ‘active aging’ and middle class aspirations/lifestyles
  - Antithetical to alternative ways of riding e.g. commuting
- Policy making, promotion and provision needs to:
  - Avoid seeing cycling as a ‘fixed’ activity
  - challenge stereotypes of cyclists
  - ‘everyday cyclists’ a useful source of knowledge about infrastructure – i.e. critical of some cycleway provision

