

Fragments of the cycling exercise.

There is no such thing as 'pure' cycling.

People in the Netherlands often have several bikes for different kinds of cycling. In that setting, cycling is part of other practices like shopping, commuting, holidaying etc. Hence the 'station bike', the fun bike, the one for getting around.

There is a family of cyclings across which some elements are common, some specialised. Only some members of this family are relevant (to climate change).

To what extent is the bike a 'platform' to which other assorted elements are attached: luggage, lights, handlebars, saddles etc. Could we imagine not multiple specialised bikes but one designed to serve as this core platform for different cycling practices? The answer was no in that the very essence of the bike, the frame, was of different geometry for different genres of cycling.

We focused on issues of image and meaning and the valuing of the bike over the car in terms of flexibility. In these respects the bike has more in common with the car than with the train. Hence the idea that **the car is a type of bike**, and that it might be useful to consider a spectrum of overlapping elements of which continuity and discontinuity is formed. Not so long ago, car drivers also needed gloves.

Amazingly, some of the elements (of climate change relevant cycling) are shared with driving. Driving is therefore a form of cycling.

What is shared, relatively: shared surfaces, shared association with freedom-flexibility, safety. Road sense. Highway code.

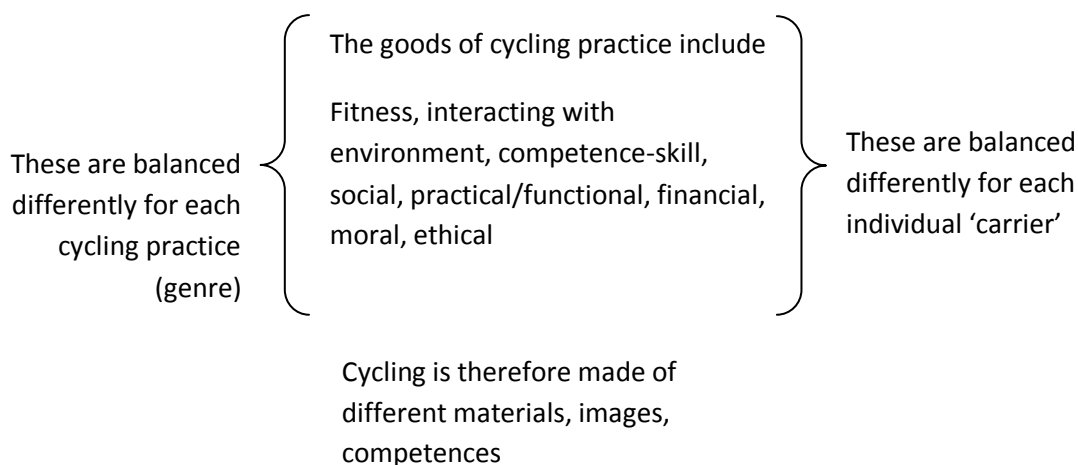
What is not shared (usually): helmets (other than motor racing); gloves (no longer shared); the boot/luggage space.

What could or should be shared and where: what kind of kinship relations to be built? How close to and or far away from related practices are different forms of cycling.

For example: deliberately creating hybrids like adding a boot to a tricycle to make it closer in this respect to a car.

The issue is therefore not one of simply 'promoting' cycling, but of identifying which kinds of cycling matter, and how these particular genres are related to other practices. In short where do different genres 'live' in different systems of practice? Along the way we noticed that different configurations of elements, e.g. in the 1940s in the UK, and in Amsterdam today, can result in the same quantity of cycle-based mobility. There is not one way to skin this cycling cat.

Representing the many cycles of cycling



For example: road racing:

Images: speed, fitness, competence, macho

Stuff: speed bikes, water bottles, lycra padded bottoms, clip on shoes, helmet, clubs, 'cycling weekly' races, raybans, timer.

Competence: race etiquette, fixing skills, skills in leading and following, cycling skills

For example: commuting by bike

Images: functional, A to B; health, money saving, fitness, environmental way of life; perceptions of being smelly.

Stuff: CCTv, helmets, folding bikes, high vis clothing, waterproofs, mudguards, lights, panniers, baskets, rucksack, cycle routes, cycle racks, showers, flat areas, shorter distances

Competence: road awareness, puncture fixing, some fitness

For example: off road mountain biking

Images: fitness, adrenaline, adventure, outdoors, trendy, hobby, fun

Stuff: mountain bike, baggy shorts, gloves, rack on car, gloves, off road track, goggles, repair kit, hills, info about routes, rucksacks.

Competence: brave, fit, strong, young, good at staying on/balance.

For example: family leisure

Images: kids learning to ride, family bike ride, holiday, hobby, health, get out of the city, tinkering, modifying, building

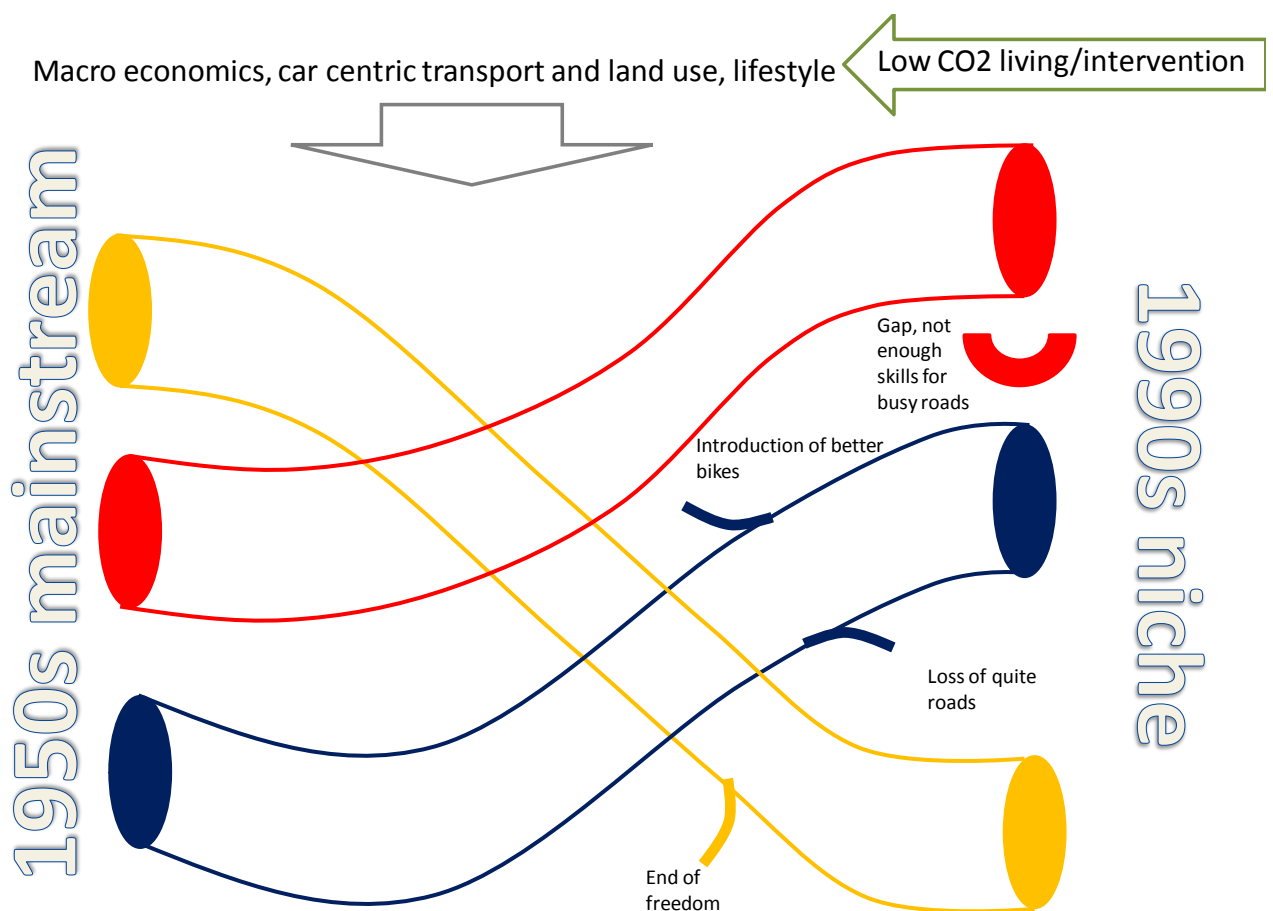
Stuff: family bike rack, basket, different style of bike, stabilisers, trailer or kids tandem, picnic and thermos, safe routes, bikes for kids.

Competence: basic levels of skills and fitness

What are the elements of your cycling practice? A pick and mix methodology.

In which different existing elements of image, competence and stuff can be combined to produce new hybrid genres and perhaps even personalised forms of cycling. For example: combining the materials of mountain biking with the images of commuting and the competences of cycle touring. This is an interactive operation that demonstrates the potential for innovation in practice through new combinations of existing elements. I can't reproduce here without acquiring more dynamic computer skills (sorry).

Decycling: a transition in practice.. what happened, why has cycling declined?



This figure blends aspects of Geels niche-regime transitions figures with the three elements of practice. In so doing it provides a graphic representation of changing elements described by another group below.

1. Cycling still exists as a practice but is recruiting fewer carriers. It has dwindled from mainstream to a niche.

2. Why?
3. What if we compare elements of cycling in the 1940s in the UK, and now.

1940s.

Images: (as far as we can tell..), seen as being efficient, broadening horizons, everyone did it, freedom, independence for young people, done for leisure, work, shopping, sport, ok to cycle very long journeys as well as short ones.

Stuff: bikes didn't wear out fast, brake pads, roads were good, much less traffic, but more traffic accidents and death than now.

Competence: taught skills as children, people expected to DIY maintenance, navigation may have been easier as most journeys were short.

2010.

Images: for pleasure, but danger, parental fear and crime; perceived need to shower afterwards (not in 1940s), wait to shower, carry gear;; for kudos and status; not only because you can't afford other options; bikes compared to cars in terms of comfort; perceived need for cycle lanes, not necessarily 'true' barrier to cycling.

Stuff: expensive gear, obviously good bike, nickable; better technology; electric bikes; bikes cheaper but can spend more; fast roads, congestion, some cities have lots of cycle paths, some have none.

Competence: different forms of cycling, different skills, e.g. mountain biking.

4. How did these elements change in this way? Are these changes the symptom not the cause of different patterns of cycling? The cause is pressure from other practices and conditions.

These include:

- Car use – cars are cheaper now and have created new standards of comfort; they have facilitated busy complex daily routines; they have created new expectations about travel, distance and time. They create lock-in in infrastructure.
 - Long working hours, complicated lives, two working parents, people moving jobs and living far from jobs.
 - Change in other practices, e.g. walking also link to cycling and may even be overshadowed by it in policy
 - Change in urban planning, infrastructure and land use, and images of where people want to live.
5. How to promote cycling and reverse the spiral of decycling
 - Address other practices and conditions including car use
 - Reshape the space of cycling
 - Address public images of cycling
 - Address policy makers perceptions of cycling

But hang on.. 'why do we want to increase cycling anyway?' is it the only answer to the problems we want to address. Do 'we' promote cycling as a multi-benefit policy or try to build a low carbon transport system in other ways?